Department of Communication Arts and Sciences

CHILEAN NATIONAL IDENTITY:
THE VARIOUS ITERATIONS OF CHILEAN IDENTITY
IN THE MINERS’ ACCIDENT OF 2010

A Thesis in
Communication Arts and Sciences

by
Bernardita M. Yunis Varas

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts

August 2015
The thesis of Bernardita M. Yunis Varas was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Kirt H. Wilson  
Associate Professor of Rhetoric in the Department of Communication Arts and Sciences  
Director of Graduate Studies, CAS  
Thesis Advisor

Stephen H. Browne  
Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences

J. Michael Hogan  
Liberal Arts Research Professor  
Co-Director, Center for Democratic Deliberation

John Gastil  
Professor and Head of Department of Communication Arts and Sciences

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
This project looks at the accident and rescue of 33 Chilean miners in 2010 as a constitutive moment in the creation and expression of Chile’s national identity, both within the nation and for international audiences. A critical examination of the rhetoric that surrounds this moment reveals how Chilean identity was (re)constructed in different ways. This thesis seeks to understand how versions of Chilean identity differed, what tensions were evident among the various versions, what common ground existed between Chilean media and international visions of Chile, and how this moment operated within a historical context of Latin American visibility and invisibility for U.S. audiences. To approach these questions, the project analyzes several different types of discourse: Chilean and U.S. newspapers, governmental press releases, and direct quotes from actors who participated in the Chilean mining accident and rescue. By analyzing how these voices created distinctive narratives, this project participates in conversations within rhetorical studies and Latina/o communication studies about identity creation, invisibility, temporality, tokenization, iconicity, testimonio, and the effects of characterization in narrative. Further, examining the accident and the rescue through a rhetorical lens illuminates how Latin American leaders and the media utilized language and discourse to influence perceptions about Chile, and it helps us understand how the miners searched for their own agency within difficult circumstances. This analysis demonstrates that the media attention given to this moment temporarily shattered the invisibility of Latin American nations in the United States, forcing American and international audiences to recognize Chile. But while Chile forged a space for itself in the collective consciousness
of the international community, this space did not last. In the end, the “Chilean Way”
advanced the political careers of a few Chilean officials, but the miners and the Chilean
people could not escape either the stereotypes or lack of recognition that so often
determines Latin America’s relationship to the rest of the world.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the help and support of many people, only some of whom I will give particular mention here. Above all, I would like to thank my parents, Enrique Yunis and María-Angelica Varas, for their unwavering support of my education, and particularly throughout this thesis process as they have believed in me when I doubted, and encouraged me when I couldn’t. Likewise, I must thank my sister Carolina Yunis, who has been a constant source of strength, motivation, inspiration, and even sustenance, and my brothers Nicolas and Pablo Yunis who acted as my coaches and wiser companions. I also must acknowledge the rest of my family, including Andrea Riquelme, who has seen me through many days and nights of endless work, always providing love and encouragement, and friendly nudges to keep me dedicated and on task.

It would have been impossible to write this work without the guidance and wisdom of my graduate and thesis adviser Dr. Kirt H. Wilson, whose patience has been long lasting, and whose critical eye helped shape not only this project, but my whole graduate education. Likewise, Dr. Stephen Browne and Dr. J. Michael Hogan who provided me with vital critiques to improve and finesse my research. I am grateful for my thesis committee’s belief in my ideas and for helping me see them to fruition.

Finally, I must thank my “thesis coach” and comrade in the trenches, Dr. William O. Saas, who was my sounding board and sanity throughout my entire Masters program at Penn State, mentoring me through the long-lasting thesis process. Lucy Blanco, Annie Marrou, Charis Domador, Lisa Hannigan, Lauren Maxwell, Alex Diaz-Ferguson, and countless others who were cheerleaders and thesis-writing boot camp coaches, giving me that extra push I needed to get to the finish line. Undoubtedly, this project would never have been completed if it weren’t for my favorite human in all of time and space, Annie Sansone, who never failed to read my drafts and provide many a vital spark of inspiration. My Boo, you got me through college and grad school and then some. You deserve an EGOT.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“Criticism is a struggle to name that which has never been noticed.”¹
- Wallace Martin, Recent Theories of Narrative

A growing number of rhetoric scholars are turning their attention toward the communication patterns and public concerns of the largest minority group in the United States, the Latina/o community. Karma Chávez, Lisa Flores, Bernadette Calafell, Michelle Holling, Stacey K. Sowards, Alberto Gonzalez, and others are currently engaging the stories and voices of Latinas/os, Latin Americans, immigrants, expatriates, and border-dwellers. This research does not simply attend to the unique interests and identities of the Latina/o community. It situates the varied identities within that community among a political and rhetorical horizon of possible action. That is, Latinas/os are not only an important U.S. demographic, they also are an important voice in deliberation about immigration reform, agricultural labor practices, international policies in Latin America, etc. Following in the critical tradition established by Gloria Anzaldúa, the scholars identified above argue that the rhetoric of Latinas/os reveals as much about modern mainstream America as it does about Latin America or the immigrant experience.

My Masters thesis enters the growing academic conversation about Latina/o communication and rhetoric by focusing on a single phenomenon, the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue of 2010, which transfixed much of the world for 69 days in August through October. In this thesis I contend that this highly mediated event was significant rhetorically for three reasons. First, it was a discursive moment of national identity re-

construction for the country of Chile and for people of Chilean descent that live around the globe. Second, it was a rhetorical process that, however briefly, reconfigured at least the symbolic if not the actual material relationships between Chile and Western countries. Third, it functioned, rhetorically, to partially reconfigure Chile’s history, distancing the country from a past plagued by fascism and toward a future where Chile is an advanced industrial country, a global player in the new technological world.

At the center of this thesis is a theoretical presumption that rhetoric, even heavily mediated rhetoric, can shift human perceptions about a state’s identity, its characteristics, and its people. In the case of Chile, evidence suggests that there is a substantial difference between how Chileans define themselves—as hardworking, obdurate, faith-filled, intelligent, and ingenious individuals with a rich history of industrial success—and how citizens of the United States view the country—as just another South American country with a history of military dictatorships and third-world conditions. I contend that the international media discourse that surrounded the Chilean mining incident provided a brief moment when Chileans’ self-perception and the perceptions of non-Chileans converged. That is, the personal histories and stories of the miners along with the dramatic media narrative of the accident and rescue provided a unique frame of reference where audiences inside and beyond Chile collaborated to construct a moment of recognition for the Chilean people and the nation. Of course, as is often the case with heavily mediated rhetoric, conflicts and differences emerged. The voices of the miners, of Chilean leaders, of Chile’s national media, and the international media did not always coincide. This project, then, is an investigation into how different actors articulated narratives that sometimes converged and sometimes diverged.
The narrative rhetoric that surrounds the Chilean mining accident provides researchers with an opportunity to examine at least four distinctive voices: the interpretive frameworks of the Chilean and U.S media, the political and cultural voices of Chilean leaders, and the individual statements of the miners. What at one level can be understood as simply a tragic but not unusual industrial accident became, instead, an opportunity to reconfigure Chile’s international relationship with the rest of the world and especially with U.S. citizens. Through the rhetoric that characterized this moment, North American perceptions of Chileans were negotiated for U.S. citizens who knew little or nothing about Chile and renegotiated for U.S. citizens whose only memory of Chile revolved around the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Throughout the coverage of the mining accident, different facets of Chilean culture and industry came to the attention of average Americans, and, for a brief moment, as America’s miners rushed to aid their industrial brothers, the United States and Chile were locked in a relationship that moved beyond the traditional forms of American intervention in Latin American affairs. This awareness, on the part of the American people of both the North and the South, had implications for what several scholars refer to as “the politics of recognition.”

The Politics of Recognition

The question of “recognition” is a significant concern among scholars who analyze the Latina/o countries and their relationship to the West. Most critical scholars contend that the countries of Latin America, at least from the perspective of most U.S. citizens, are cloaked in a form of “invisibility.” This situation is indicated in multiple examples, including the easy way in which U.S. citizens co-opt the term American,

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forgetting that the term can be applied to residents of North, Central, and South America. There is also the common misconception that one Latin American country is just like the other, without acknowledging the many differences that make them unique in history, culture, and identity. The ubiquity of the term “Hispanic,” despite its colonial origins, is another case in point. Recent conflicts over immigration, especially the border-crossings of children from across Latin America and the West Indies, are yet another example of how the differing interests and motivations of Latinas/os in coming to the United States are erased in a blanket objection to or fear of the brown “illegal-alien.” The general population of the United States often believes many of the mediated stereotypes about countries below the equator, applying characteristics of one nation to all. A final example involves the not infrequent use of the term “Mexican” to stand in for Spanish and the use of the term “Spanish” to signify anyone from Central or South America.

Through this project I argue that the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue temporarily disrupted both the invisibility and the simplistic way in which Latin American countries are framed, placing aspects of Chilean politics and industry squarely in the frame of U.S. public attention. As the Chilean and U.S. media created the characters of the miners as complete individuals in a powerful, hopeful narrative, this accident disrupted the invisibility that historically envelops the region, especially South American nations. Suddenly and for the duration of their ordeal, they could not be ignored.

The Study’s Focus

To understand the implications of this mediated event, this project pursues the following major research questions:
1. How did the Chilean mining accident in Copiapó in August 2010 and the subsequent rescue efforts through October 2010 provide an opportunity for the construction and reconstruction of Chilean national identity?

2. What tensions are evident between the different symbolic representations of Chilean national identity: i.e., governmental officials talking to the Chilean national media about rescue efforts, the U.S. media reports on the accident and rescue process, and the statements and stories of miners who discussed the ordeal as reported by both the Chilean and the U.S. media?

3. Do media representations of Chile differ across national origin (Chilean versus U.S. media)? What can we learn from these shifts?

4. How do these various representations of Chilean identity operate against or in harmony with historical representations of Latin America?

**The Study’s Rationale**

The sub-field of Latina/o communication studies is a young area of research within the discipline of rhetorical studies, and this project seeks to contribute to the sub-field’s maturation. In the absence of a robust literature, conducting critical studies of Latina/o voices to determine their rhetorical strategies and inherent theories is challenging. However, it is a necessary challenge to demonstrate Latinas/os’ relevance for rhetorical practice at both the national (United States) and international levels. Through this project, I want to incorporate Chile into rhetorical studies, and, in turn, highlight Latinas/os’ contributions to rhetoric, both as scholars within the field and as agents of rhetoric within Latina/o communities. In this manner, this work participates in Marty Medhurst’s call that rhetoric and public address expand beyond the domestic borders of
the United States to consider international rhetorical practices. While Chicana/o Studies has grown in the recent decades, U.S. studies of nations in the South American cone are far less frequent. This project pulls those ethnicities and cultures to the forefront of our attention.

Second, this project is important because it will extend rhetorical studies by merging traditional rhetorical methods of analysis with concepts like racial recognition, “testimonio,” and “voces,” and Latin American national identity. Rhetoric’s power and influence were present throughout the mining accident and seeing this moment for its rhetorical qualities can illuminate how Latin American leaders’ use rhetoric to influence perceptions of the event, how the miners and the individuals they represented searched for agency in that situation, how various public memories of Chile were shaped by the event, and how the U.S. media represents that region. Furthermore, I contend that this moment highlights the process of how U.S. and Western media “recognize” Latin America. Charles Taylor, Erik Doxtader, and Neil Gotanda are just a few of the individuals who contend that recognition is a key moment in rhetorical exchange. Whether or not recognition takes place and how such recognitions are negotiated can reveal much, not only about the racial identities that become suddenly “visible,” but also about the community that “sees” the “Other” differently.

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Third, by considering Chile as a distinct international space, this project will consider how the nationalism of Chilean identity, through the mediated rhetoric of Chilean politicians and the miners, is distinct from or similar to the identity construction that exists in the United States. Toward this end, this project will seek to answer questions like, what is Chile; how does Chile want the world to view it; who speaks for the country; what do they say; whose voices are left unheard? These questions address the factors that play in this moment of cultural identity expressions, including considerations for Western ideals of what a nation should be. Therefore, I argue that through this moment of heroism and determination, Chile and its people attempted to position the country as a beacon of pride of the Western world, an example of the industrious spirit of a rising, developed nation, much like the United States. Through this challenging moment, the nation tried to prove it is a country fitting of American standards.

**Process and Method**

Since one of the important goals of this project is to analyze how Chile and its citizens represent themselves and are represented by others within public rhetoric, two important methodological considerations should be discussed. First, this project is necessarily comparative, requiring access to texts and materials that originate in both the United States and Chile. To this end, I will be looking at news coverage of the accident and rescue, with particular focus on the coverage surrounding the rescue process, from various television networks and other mediated sources. These include the CNN network and the *New York Times* coverage in the United States, and Chilean newspaper coverage from *El Mercurio*, *La Tercera*, and *La Segunda*. All of these sources are accessible through their online websites and archives, but I have also used my personal connections
with friends and family to secure documents that are not available online. In addition to
traditional journalism in both countries, I also examine popular mediated culture,
including comedic references of the miners in jokes on *The Daily Show*, the *Late Show
with David Letterman*, and Stephen Colbert’s entrance to the *Rally to Restore Sanity/Fear*
on 30 October 2010 in a Phoenix capsule like the one used to rescue the miners carrying
a Chilean flag (see Figure 5.3-5.5).

Second, to accomplish this project it is necessary to be bilingual. Fortunately, I am
fluent in Spanish, which aids my research and the interpretive methods that I will use as I
conduct the study. Having this skill opened avenues for thorough, inclusive, and
representative inquiry about many aspects of the event, but especially about the miners’
own statements as portrayed in both the U.S. and Chilean media. My aim is to examine
the Latina/o and Latin American experience from a rhetorical perspective, understanding
the purposeful and persuasive factors of communication in a culture’s self-expression and
identity negotiations. Through this research, I want to investigate how language creates
social reality and can be a constitutive force of the public sphere, further evidencing the
effects of rhetorical practice in everyday reality and self-identification, and especially
how race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion, etc., can influence an individual’s ability
to become part of the public. As this project will observe, a culture’s self-expression is
always negotiated further by media representations beyond the scope of that country or
that culture. This is a particularly intriguing process for the experience of Latinas/os and
for the nations in Latin America in general as they work to negotiate their identities
within the international community and as both products and producers of globalization.

**Literature Review**
In approaching this project, I enter conversations within the field of rhetoric regarding public memory, cultural identity, ethnicity, representation, and communal agency as individuals participate in the construction of their own identity. The project will bring front and center a modern-day, media-related moment of identity expression and representation by and of the Chilean people as it is negotiated and expressed through various means of communication.

**Public Memory and Identity, Representation and Subjectivity**

Scholars within the field of rhetoric have theorized public memory, identity, and representation as part of rhetorical processes that define culture and society. Stephen H. Browne, Kendall R. Phillips, Judith Butler, Kenneth Burke, Stuart Hall, and others explore issues of public memory, representation, identification, and cultural identity. Texts of particular interest to this project are *Framing Public Memory* by Phillips and the theories of Hall, e.g., *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Important to Hall is the complex nature of identity and its structure as a “production” that is “never complete, always in process.”

Hall’s perspective serves as a theoretical foundation for this study as he focuses on identity “as constituted, not outside but within representation.” Further, his research highlights how stable identity is often disrupted due to modernity since modernity makes people aware of inner differences, contradictions, segmentations, and fragmentations of the “collective social identities” already established. Thus, he looks at

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7 Hall, 236.

an intersection point where a set of theoretical discourses cross with “a whole new set of
cultural practices” that emerge and alter identity. In particular, this project is influenced
by his book, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices Culture,
Media, and Identities.*

In addition to the work of Stuart Hall, this project is grounded on the work of
communication scholars who have examined identity construction. How the human
subject is influenced and defined, how it influences and defines itself, and how it is
affected by different audiences, are processes that I engage as I seek to understand the
identity of the Chilean miners. These questions of subjectivity and the location of the
speaker and subject relative to an audience are particularly important when discussing
international and intercultural communication. Research in these subfields of
communication, like Lisa Flores’s work that appears in *Readings in Intercultural
Communication: Experiences and Contexts* and *Readings in Cultural Contexts* highlight
the importance of what is often termed “border rhetoric,” or the public discourse that
emerges at the borders of nation states as individuals cross from one to the other. A
moment like the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue cannot be understood fully—in
terms of expressions of Chilean identity—without facing the presence of international
media coverage of the whole ordeal.

**Latina/o Communication Studies**

Latina/o Communication Studies research is an ever-growing subfield within
communication. Scholars in this area like Angharad N. Valdivia, Bernadette Calafell,

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9 Hall, 42

Karma Sánchez, and Lisa Flores use their research to work through critical struggles of identity in their writing, legitimizing the complexities of Latina/o experience and identification. The scholarship produced attends to the issues faced by Latina/o and Latin American community, but that also has relevance for the public sphere, generally.\textsuperscript{11}

Collections like \textit{Latina/o Communication Studies Today} edited by Angharad N. Valdivia and \textit{Latina/o Discourse in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de una voz?} edited by Michelle A. Holling and Bernadette M. Calafell bring to the forefront issues of identity, representation, and the media as they relate directly to Latinas/os. This research highlights the diversity of the Latino community. My project, which focuses on a Latin American group that receives less attention in the media than nearer neighbors of the United States, will contribute to this conversation. It will add another voice in a scholarly discussion that attempts to demonstrate that Latinas/os are an eclectic group that is hardly homogeneous or quickly defined. By looking both at representations that appear in the media and statements of politicians, as well as the voices of the miners, this project will highlight the difficulties faced in representation and attempt to intervene in the literature by not just representing but also endeavoring to give agency to the miners themselves.

Suzanne Oboler’s \textit{Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States} speaks directly to Latinas/os representations in the United States and the struggle this community(ies) goes through to maintain its cultural heritage and unique identity(ies). Bernadette M. Calafell’s \textit{Latina/o Communication


Chávez, Karma R. \textit{Spatializing Gender Performativity: Ecstasy and Possibilities for Livable Life in the Tragic Case of Victoria Arellano}. 
Studies: Theorizing Performance incorporates the theory of performativity to the study, which can shed light on aspects of the miners’ rescue and expressions of Chilean pride and nationalism, like Camp Hope, as well as the roles played by various characters in the story—from the miners, their families, to the President and his administration, to the rescue teams. In this text by Calafell, she engages with D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera and their conception of performance as a “contested concept.” Drawing from these various scholars, I, too, will use performance “as a way of creation and being” as opposed to mere entertainment. The story of the miners is an example of the bridge between performance and identity; consequently, I will participate in studies of performance as it is used to “make culture, affect power, and reinvent … ways of being in the world.” Understanding that identity can be a performance gives credence to the analysis of certain aspects of this ordeal as expressions of an evolving Chilean identity.

Latina/o (or Hispanic) identity, as mentioned, is an important area of analysis due to the conflicts and complexities surrounding it. Research on the matter has focused on critical analysis in the literary sphere, like Marieke Krajenbrink and Kate M. Quinn’s Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction, the historical influences with countless examples, and even in modern-age media and technological studies like Erica Schlesinger Wass’s Addressing the World: National

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Identity and Internet Country Code Domains. For Chileans, constructing an identity is important as it works through redefining itself in various political contexts—democracy, a failing state, a dictatorship and military regime, and a new, modern, capitalist-socialist democracy for the last two decades. These struggles to define itself as a nation are evident in the writing of various authors including exiled Chilean Ariel Dorfman and Peruvian-born Chilean writer Isabel Allende, who is also now a U.S. citizen. Her particularly convoluted trajectory is a testament to the complexities of definition many Chileans face.

Chile

While there is no rhetorical or communication scholarship that focuses specifically on Chilean national identity, what analyses do exist examine the country’s identity through the disciplinary traditions of history and sociology. Several scholars focus directly on Chile’s violent history and the country’s recovery from that past: e.g., Giti Chandra’s Narrating Violence, Constructing Collective Identities: To witness these wrongs unspeakable and Kristin Sorensen’s Media, Memory, and Human Rights in Chile. Beyond the field of communication, Chile’s history, particularly in politics, is crucial for understanding the nation. Works like Lois Hecht Oppenheim’s Politics in Chile: Socialism, Authoritarianism, and Market Democracy, and Paul E. Sigmund’s Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964-1976 give such an understanding of twentieth century Chile. Gertrude Matyoka Yeager, on the other hand, looks at politics and early history of Chile together to see the initial formations of Chilean national identity in

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14 In Chapter Three titled “Chile’s .CL: A Virtual Home for Chileans Worldwide,” Patricio Poblete discusses how it was Chile’s entrepreneurial thrust combined with a strong understanding and passion for Chilean identity that pushed computer scientists to claim the country code domain early on. Krajenbrink, Marieke, and Kate M. Quinn, Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction. New York: Rodopi, 2009, 31-42.
Barros Arana’s Historia Jeneral de Chile: Politics, History, and National Identity.

William E. Skuban does the same, moving in time to the years of land disputes and wars with Peru in Lines in the Sand: Nationalism and Identity on the Peruvian-Chilean Frontier. Lessie Jo Frazier’s 2007 Salt in the Sand: Memory, Violence, and the Nation-State in Chile, 1890 to the Present provides a comprehensive understanding of the nation with a penchant for questions of memory as it creates, dismantles, and recreates a people.

Kelly J. Knudson and Christopher M. Stojanowski, on the other hand, look at Chile’s geography in Bioarchaeology and Identity in the Americas to define and understand the nation’s identity. In an even more daring approach, Ana Mariella Bacigalupo looks at the Mapuche culture in Chile, one group of indigenous people in the region, and focuses on the shamans to make a statement of political manipulations and reactions in Shamans of the Foye Tree. “Misrepresenting the critical capacities of social theory in the name of politics of speech,” Bacigalupo says, “produces no useful analysis of the contraptions of power, nor does it improve the lives of the oppressed.”15 By looking at the struggle of a minority group and its own inner minorities and oppressions within the greater system of Chilean society, Bacigalupo highlights the difficulties in representations, specifically looking at how a group is represented from the outside. These negotiations are a challenging process and her studies point to all the spaces where confusions, accidental, and deliberate miscommunication may occur. This study presents a model for one approach that this particular project will take—the miners’ attempts at self-expression, and the representations evidenced through the media.

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Likewise, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs’s *Communal Feminisms: Chicanas, Chilenas, and Cultural Exile. Theorizing the Space of Exile, Class, and Identity* examines Chilean literature and interviews in a manner that is similar to this project. Using the Chilean mining’ accident of 2010 and the miners’ rescue as a subject, this project will try to understand how identity was expressed or represented through three different filters: political sphere, media, and the miners themselves. While literature exists on the San José Mine accident in Copiapó, nonfiction accounts like Manuel Pino Toro’s *Buried Alive: The True Story of the Chilean Mining Disaster and the Extraordinary Rescue at Camp Hope* and Jonathan Franklin’s *33 Men: Inside the Miraculous Survival and Dramatic Rescue of the Chilean Miners* retell the facts, but do not provide the reader with conclusions and new understandings of what this extreme situation speaks to about Chile.

Through understandings of public culture and representations of national pride, this project will examine critically the accident and the rescue that ensued. While this is a moment to awe at the resiliency and determination of the human spirit and of people coming together for a cause and common goal, this moment in Chilean modern history is rich with rhetorical moments of identity creation that deserve deeper analysis. Theories about identity, cultural representations, public memory, and media through rhetorical studies will inform the focal points for this projects as it looks at one moment of expressions of Latina/o identity and the influences of international communication on this process.

**Chapter Preview**

This project’s first critical chapter—chapter two—will consider how the Chilean media represented the accident and the miner’s rescue. Along the way, this chapter will
set the stage for later chapters by walking through a detailed chronology of the events that transpired over the relevant three-month period. This chapter also will introduce some of the theoretical concepts that will frame the analysis: identity and representation. One of the major qualities of the miners’ accident and rescue is that it was from the beginning a nationally and internationally mediated event. Minute by minute, the global community could live through the ordeal and experienced the rescue in real time; consequently, this first analytical chapter will examine this process of media representation, focusing on how Chilean media played this story out.

Chapter three of this thesis project will act as a contrast to chapter two by examining how The New York Times constituted a Chilean identity for international communities to consume. By contrasting the coverage of this event in Chile with similar, though distinct, coverage in the United States, these two chapters help the reader understand how this moment and the rhetoric that surrounded it characterized and defined the nation and the people of Chile. Further, these chapters demonstrate how these two media depictions temporarily broke an invisibility of the Latin American region common to American audiences.

While media representations are a major source for understanding how national identity is constructed and reconstructed, the third analytical chapter of this project—chapter four—examines the rhetoric of the Chilean government. Specifically, this chapter examines how Chilean politicians and their political motivations played a role in articulating a particular understanding of this ordeal, and how Chilean politicians hoped to benefit from a certain narrative about Chile. As necessitated by the subject matter, this chapter contextualizes both politicians and their rhetoric within a historical context that
illuminates the overarching concerns Chile’s leaders. Further, this chapter will demonstrate how the Chilean president Sebastián Piñera used the miners’ rescue as an opportunity to secure and legitimate his power in an economic, social, and political context of unpopularity and unrest. It argues that President Piñera and other political leaders manipulated the media so that it mostly broadcast positive aspects of the ordeal and the admirable qualities of the Latin American nation. By skirting around the issues that created the catastrophe in the first place—like conditions for laborers, corporate responsibility, etc.—President Piñera and the government shifted the audience’s attention to the heroism of the miners, the communal efforts of the nation, and the cooperative qualities of the rest of the world. This, in turn, created an intense feeling of nationalism within Chile that temporarily helped President Piñera career.

Chapter five of this project focuses on vernacular spaces by creating a space for the “voces” of the miners. Although their stories were mediated, this chapter seeks to understand the miners’ concerns as directly as possible. It seeks to answers questions such as, what were the miners’ stories? How did they tell their own tale? Was there any opportunity for them to speak on their own behalf, and, if so, how did they accomplish it and how limited was it? Focusing on the personal stories of the miners and their families, this chapter will give a platform for their experience and the Chilean identity that their rhetoric suggests. I contend that a focus on the miners’ vernacular rhetoric or “voz” reveals some of the blindspots that exist in other narratives of the event. While acknowledging the heroic elements of their stories, it is important to understand and consider, critically, how these stories were insufficient to change a set of labor practices that were detrimental to workers’ wellbeing. Placing the miners’ voces in the spotlight for
analysis will shine a different light on Camp Hope and the miners’ expressions of faith. This chapter will force us to look critically at how there is a lack of balance of power and access to representation in the media that limited our access to the miners’ firsthand accounts.

In my conclusion, I will place the San José mine collapse and miners’ rescue at the center of a critical conversation about identity and representation within the Latin American community. The various chapters described will grapple with the question of how Chilean identity is defined and expressed through three distinctive rhetorical spaces—media, politics, and the vernacular. By conducting this analysis of Chilean identity in this particular moment, a more thorough and critical understanding of national identity of Chile, especially in the twenty-first century, will be evident.
Chapter 2

**Chilean Print Media:**
*A Valiant Country Emerges from Disaster*

On 5 August 2010, the mines of San José Chile collapsed. Located approximately 45 kilometers from the northern desert city of Copiapó, the San José mines had a history of minor accidents that had resulted in several deaths. Then, on 5 August, two levels of the underground route into the gold and copper mine fell, trapping thirty-three miners. Friends, family, and representatives of the San Esteban Mining Company had no idea if the trapped miners were alive or dead. The miners left on the surface could see no immediate way to break through the layers of rock to determine the condition of their co-workers. The only information available to those who were not underground was that the miners or, perhaps, their bodies were deep underground and it might take weeks to discover their situation. Thus began a 69 day ordeal that became a media spectacle witnessed by the world.

In this chapter, I argue that the print media in Chile portrayed this event as a demonstration of the special resilience of the Chilean spirit and the power of dedication, team effort, and technological expertise that Chile possessed. Through the domestic media’s narrative the world watched as these 33 men formed what news sources called a foundation of support and a thorough organization that was vital to getting the miners through 18 days in total darkness and many additional weeks waiting for rescue.\(^\text{16}\) The miners and the nation alike worked tirelessly until their final extraction from the mine


was complete on 14 October. The Chilean media framed this remarkable effort as more than just an impressive attempt to rescue the trapped miners. They cast the story as a national epic, a trial that tested the entire nation in a struggle to survive what were presented as indomitable circumstances. This narrative, I will argue, was the context against which Chile’s identify was reformulated. Because of the horrors and unprecedented struggle of the national trial were, in fact, overcome, the character and qualities of the nation became equally remarkable. An extreme challenge demands a heroic protagonist, and for the Chilean media the entire country became that protagonist.

Chilenas/os: How The Country’s Media Depicted A Nation

In instances of accident and major catastrophe, news media typically respond to the event and react to situations as they unfold. However, because the mining accident and its resolution took so long, news media in Chile were forced to adapt their coverage in an attempt to make meaning of the event even when there was nothing new to report. Starting 5 August 2010, the day of the accident, Chilean newspapers began reporting daily about the situation. The story of the miners took over news coverage and media outlets as the country watched and waited for news about the livelihood, survival, and extraction chances of the 33 men. Day in and day out, audiences nationwide were fed heroic tales of the rescue, anxious searches for a culprit, and emotive personal stories, all of which fed a nationalist pride and identity. The majority of the news entries analyzed in this chapter appeared on the front page of major Chilean newspapers. Eventually, as the ordeal continued and the rescue strategy unfolded, the miners were given their own section in different newspapers where readers could find all the news and details on the rescue efforts.
News reports from Chile followed a specific chronological development that is best understood as a series of stages. What is particularly interesting about the evolution of media coverage in this instance is how reporters worked back and forth between a \textit{reactive mode} of reporting the facts and a \textit{proactive mode} of creating stories that kept the ordeal at the front of Chileans’ minds even when there were no new developments to report. At first, journalists followed a common mode of reacting to a recognized news event, reporting the facts and circumstances as a coherent story. As it became evident that a speedy resolution was not forthcoming, the media took a more proactive stance and actively searched for additional stories, circumstances, and information that they could bring to Chile’s people daily. This move from a reactive to a proactive stance explains, in part, how the chronological duration of this event forced the media to speculate and create new meanings for the ordeal \textit{and} how the media coverage emerged as a series of stages. In their attempt to make meaning out of the event, the media took a linear sense of time and segmented it into different stages that represented different media stories, frames, and understandings of what the accident and rescue actually were. Further, as new events transpired on the ground, the media shifted back to a reactive mode of reporting, trying to fit new external facts into an already established story or set of stories. Thus, the Chilean press began in a reactive stance, moved into a more proactive stance, and then back to a reactive stance as they accommodated events that they had not known or highlighted in an earlier stage of the mediated narrative.

\textbf{The Seven Stages of Chilean Media Coverage}

In Chile, on 5 August 2010 the collapsed mine immediately became part of the daily news cycle, and it did not leave main newspapers until weeks after the rescue was
completed in October. In the first days after the accident, the news focused on what transpired physically and mechanically to cause the collapse, using a cause and effect perspective. Chilean news reports were speculative in nature, attempting to get the facts straight about what had occurred. Because it was early on, the information was often limited and sometimes inaccurate. For example, early reports suggested that 34 or even “35 miners were trapped” underground. This first stage, however, covered not just the facts of the mining collapse. That focus was quickly followed with information about the rescue efforts that began, according to media reports, almost instantly. Articles from 6 August had subheadings that read, “Around 130 people are working in the area to bring about rescue efforts.” In these stories, a brief description of the collapse was followed by descriptions of the rescue efforts—when they started, what the growing rescue team looked like, and how many different public sectors were engaged in the effort. One of La Tercera’s articles from that day began like this:

At least 33 miners are trapped after an accident in the San José mine, located in the Arenita area, owned by Minera San Esteban, 80 km north of Copiapó, as confirmed by the National Emergency Office of the Interior Ministry (Onemi).

Firefighters from Copiapó, Caldera, Chañaral and Diego de Almagro are executing rescue work since just after 9:00pm, while the health status of

“Producto del desprendimiento de rocas del techo de la mina San Esteban, ubicada en el sector de camino Los Japoneses, a 45 kilómetros al noroeste de Copiapó, 35 mineros quedaron atrapados ayer, según informó la Onemi”
As a result of the release of rocks on the ceiling of the San Esteban mine, located in the Los Japoneses sector, 45 km northeast of Copiapó, 35 miners were trapped, according to Onemi reports.

the trapped workers is still unknown, said the shift manager of the Onemi, Osvaldo Malfanti to latercera.com.

During these hours they have been integrating more people into the operation, having about 130 people working on this—including firefighters, members of the Gope, other mining brigade members, and Samu staff—until late this morning.

Local authorities from that city, province, and region also reached the scene.¹⁹

The focus during the first stage of media coverage demonstrates how Chilean news sources implied that the country had little time to pause, mourn, or dwell on the accident. Instead, newspapers reported that the country needed to focus its energies on understanding and quickly moving to fix the problem. While perhaps not deliberately, the representation of Chileans in these first days—as shown above—was of a people who are quick to respond and resolve crises. This representation is more evident in later stages as news stories continued to move more and more from what happened to what they were doing to correct it.

As the media continued to cover the event, it transitioned to a different set of stories that represent the second stage of the Chilean media coverage. The primary feature of stage two involved articles and stories that sought to establish blame for the accident. In this stage, Chilean news sources ran articles that fleshed out various explanations of what might have gone wrong in the mine, speculating about the causes of

¹⁹ “Al menos 33 mineros permanecen atrapados luego de un accidente en la Mina San José, ubicada en el sector Arenita, propiedad de la Minera San Esteban, a 80 km al norte de Copiapó, según confirmó la Oficina Nacional de Emergencias del Ministerio del Interior (Onemi). Bomberos de Copiapó, Caldera, Chañaral y Diego de Almagro se encuentran realizando trabajos de rescate desde pasadas las 21.00 horas, mientras que aún se desconoce el estado de salud de los trabajadores atrapados, sostuvo esta madrugada a latercera.com el jefe de turno de la Onemi, Osvaldo Malfanti. En el transcurso de las horas se han ido integrando más gente al operativo, llegando a estar trabajando unas 130 personas -entre bomberos, efectivos del Gope, brigadistas de otras mineras y personal del Samu- a altas horas de esta madrugada. Las autoridades comunales, provinciales y regionales también llegaron al lugar del accidente.” Ibid.
the collapse. Unlike the stories in the first stage, which described the facts in an objective, non-partisan way, the stories of the second stage provided readers with coherent narratives that speculated about potential guilty parties. This speculation demonstrates a transition to a more proactive approach to news reports. Reporters began to tell a tale that placed blame on specific individuals from either the mining company or from among the mining industry regulators who had made what were judged as bad calls that led to the cave-in. This narrative of blame not only had implications for specific individuals who might be charged with a “quasi-crime” for the accident, but it also impacted how Chileans understood their own responsibility to the miners who labored for the country’s benefit.  

One entity that was identified fairly early in the crisis as a critical actor in this accident was the Health Authority of Atacama. According to several stories, the “Seremi de Salud” (Health Authority in English) had mismanaged a prior mining incident. Months before the major event in Copiapó, a miner lost his leg in a mine accident. Despite this traumatic injury, Chilean journalists noted that almost immediately the “Seremi” approved reopening of the mine in late July 2010. “Supposedly,” according to one article, “corrective measures” were taken to fix what caused that earlier cave-in. This


21 Health Authority of Atacama that authorized the reopening of the San José mine in July 2010 steps down as he faces blame for the collapse/accident that led to 33 men trapped underground. “Renuncia seremi de Salud de Atacama que autorizó reapertura de mina San José.” El Mercurio Online, 30 August 2010. http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2010/08/30/433405/renuncia-seremi-de-salud-de-atacama-que-autORIZO-reapertura-de-mina-san-jose.html

22 Ibid.
promise for corrective action was cited as the reason the mine had been reopened. The use of the word “supposedly” as a qualifier in the *El Mercurio* story introduced a measure of skepticism about the Health Authority’s management, but it also acknowledged that reporters were without clear knowledge. It left open the possibility, from a reader’s point of view, that the individuals who oversaw the mine’s safety might not have been acting in good faith. This impression was solidified when, on 30 August 2010, the “*Seremi de Salud*” Raúl Martínez Guzmán resigned from his post as the head of the Health Authority. Newspaper reporters implicitly identified Guzmán as a responsible party in the accident at Copiapó, speculating that his previous lack of oversight likely contributed to the collapse that trapped 33 miners and set in motion the biggest rescue effort Chile had ever witnessed.

Similarly, during the second stage newspapers focused their attention on the National Geology and Mining Service agency (Sernageomin). This organization was and remains responsible for supervising the fulfillment of security measures in the country’s mining industry. After the August 2010 accident in the San José mine, Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne asked Alejandro Vio, Director of Sernageomin, and two of his colleagues to resign. The President of Chile Sébastian Piñera himself acknowledged there were errors and deficiencies committed by this agency in the past. When resigning on 12 August, Vio publicly accepted “political responsibility” for the lack of supervision.

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23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

of these security measures, but tried in that same statement to redirect people’s concerns toward the search and rescue efforts:

As the technical authority, I am to take [political] responsibility...My conscience is clear. Today, the important thing is to rescue the 33 miners trapped in the San José mine, and in order for that to be a successful effort, I will continue cooperating extensively.\textsuperscript{26}

News sources focused on a third major party during the second stage: the San Esteban Primera Mining Company, which owns multiple mines in Chile, including the San José mine in Copiapó. Vincenot Tobar Muñoz, an expert on mine security and risk prevention had been forced out of the private company earlier that year due to safety irregularities in other mines. After the major collapse, newspapers used him as a source because he was willing to point fingers at the San Esteban company and its owners, Alejandro Bohn and Marcelo Kemeny.\textsuperscript{27} Tobar Muñoz attacked the company claiming that despite their expressed concern for the miners, they generally did not “connect with the people,” their workers, and this lack of connection and concern was demonstrated when they failed to enforce safety and labor regulations in the past.\textsuperscript{28} Likewise, Alejandro Pino, the director of the Chilean Association of Security (AChS), pointed the finger at the company for not reporting issues to the AChS. Pino’s report prior to the accident stated that Sernageomin is the only “entity with the technical capacity to determine if a mine

\textsuperscript{26} Alejandro Vio asumió su responsabilidad política en la falta de fiscalización y por la reapertura, durante su gestión, de las faenas de la mina San José, que fue cerrada en 2007. En una declaración pública dijo que “se me pide que como autoridad técnica haga efectiva una responsabilidad política (...). Tengo la conciencia tranquila. Hoy lo importante es rescatar a los 33 mineros atrapados en la mina San José y para que esa tarea tenga éxito, seguiré cooperando ampliamente.”
Ibid.


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
deposit complies with operational conditions.”

Therefore, it was imperative that the company made the agency aware of any potential deficiencies. According to Pino, the company failed to do so. In running these stories, the Chilean media embraced an interesting role. They did not accuse others directly, but they eagerly quoted individuals, such as Tobar Muñoz, who blamed others. In the process, the media transformed the story of a major industrial “accident” into a perceived potential crime. This frame did not last long, however. It was soon overwhelmed by stages three and four.

Stage three began less than a week after the accident, even as the blame game of stage two continued in the news. In the third stage, which I argue lasted about 12 days, journalists detailed the immediate efforts to discover the fate of the miners. How could the miners be rescued was the question that appeared most frequently in news articles. What was remarkable at this point is that the Chilean media had no evidence that the miners were even alive. Despite this absence, journalists insisted that the miners were likely to be alive and that a rescue was still possible. This optimism established a tone for the news coverage that kept most stories about the accident from sliding into grief or hopelessness. In fact, reporters almost seemed to see their job as one of communicating the hope evidenced in Camp Hope to the readers—a hope that the miners’ would be

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29 Álvarez, Rodrigo. “Expertos en prevención advirtieron en junio que había riesgo de derrumbe en la mina San José.” El Mercurio Online. 17 August 2010. [Link no longer available]

30 On 1 August 2013, news broke that after a 3-year investigation on the cause of the accident, the San Esteban Primera Mining Company was found not guilty of all charges and the case was dropped, to the dismay of the miners involved in the accident. This is just another example of how there is lacking a deep concern for the workers and to doing justice by them. Escobar Chavarria, Paula. “De los 33 mineros chilenos: la justicia no llega.” The Huffington Post: Voces. 2 August 2013. http://voces.huffingtonpost.com/paula-escobar-chavarria/la-justicia-no-llega_b_3696687.html
found alive and that an ultimate rescue was possible.\textsuperscript{31} They highlighted interviews with families and shared the images of faith and hope that those waiting for their loved ones demonstrated through their stay in Camp Hope: “Their expectations, their religion, and their temperance fought against their discouragement” and “a group of women tried to lift up people’s spirits with shouts and songs of hope: “\textit{Vamos, vamos chilenos, que ya pronto los vamos a sacar}” (Let’s go, Chilenos. We will soon get them out).\textsuperscript{32} In fact, the only negative emotion that appeared in these stories was a frustration over the fact that it would take time.\textsuperscript{33}

It was a hard slap across the face, cowardly and fastidious. The nerve-wracking countdown of the effort to rescue the 33 miners trapped at the
bottom of the mine continues to be prolonged and the strenuous efforts to get them out alive collide with tons of dirt and frustration.\textsuperscript{34}

As the days wore on and this hopeful spirit waned slightly, news media demonstrated an obdurate determination to find positive news to share with readers. In attempts to manage the complex mixture of a realistic perspective with hopeful yet hesitant optimism, reporters reminded readers that rescue efforts were ongoing.\textsuperscript{35} Playing the supportive role of priestly adviser or therapeutic counselor rather than an objective observer, journalists attempted to balance a seemingly unrealistic optimism with the hopeful commitment that rescue planners and reporters were vigilantly searching for evidence that the miners were alive. For example, reporters recounted the focused plans of the rescue efforts despite its precarious nature in the unstable mine. Further, they sprinkled this with symbols of hope in what seemed like an effort to maintain their readership’s faith in the rescue:

The engineering calculations are shocking against the implacable realism of a miserable hourglass. Despite all, fringes of hope illuminate the ever colder and solitary nights of the desert. A little roadside shrine set up in the camping grounds. Another, an offering for the rescuers at the mouth of the

\begin{flushright}
34 “Fue un bofetazo duro, cobarde y mañoso. La nerviosa cuenta atrás del intento de rescate de los 33 mineros atrapados en el fondo de la mina se prolonga y los denodados esfuerzos por sacarlos con vida chocan contra toneladas de tierra y frustración.”

\end{flushright}
mine. And a whisper invoking San Lorenzo, the patron saint of miners, whose feast day is tomorrow Tuesday.36

Even with these demonstrations of faith in the face of seemingly impossible odds, news sources tried to be practical and realistic in their reporting. They shared details of rescue plans while refuting false hope.37 When reports prematurely stated that a drill had reached the workshop inside the mine, news sources clarified that it was “ruled out” as the place where miners were trapped.38 Despite not knowing the fate of the miners, news stories continued to represent Chileans as people with unrelenting hope and faith in the successful rescue of their compatriots.

In the news reports of this period, hope, even more than acting as a catalyst of faith, began to define the Chilean people in a particular way. According to journalists, the Chilean people were capable of believing in even the impossible. This characterization added a divine dimension to the ordeal, but it also configured Chilean citizens as especially spiritual people, individuals who believed in the impossible. The rhetorical choice to report on a faithful people instead of a despairing nation is critical for the representation of Chileans character and the pragmatic function of the media to keep the


“Los cálculos ingenieriles chocan contra el realismo implacable de un mezquino reloj de arena. Pese a todo, flecos de esperanza iluminan las cada vez más frías y solitarias noches del desierto. Una pequeña animita dispuesta en el campamento. Otra, ofrendada por los rescatistas en la boca de la mina. Y un desgarrador susurro invocando a San Lorenzo, el santo de los mineros, cuyo día es precisamente mañana martes.”


38 Ibid.
country from despair.\textsuperscript{39} Despite the uncertainty and lack of information, news stories articulated or interpolated into their stories a Chilean identity that was full of religious fervor, a people who used their faith as a reason to be hopeful even in the absence of evidence. This faith had simultaneously a religious and a secular quality in the mediated reports. Though rooted in a religious conviction of God’s power—that in truth may not be representative of the whole of the people of Chile—this portrayal was presented as representative of a larger commitment of the Chilean people to believe in the Divine as an actor in this rescue. President Piñera was quoted early on as saying, “This is not only in our hands, but it is also in the hands of God.”\textsuperscript{40} While potentially inaccurate representations of the entirety of the population of this country, reports of a faithful nation such as the ones mentioned served to give people hope, comfort, and a way to deal with their anxiety.

Not only did the Chilean people and nation appear in news sources to maintain a remarkable faith in the successful resolution of this ordeal, but news stories also reported how the nation was moving forward despite the ordeal. Since 2010 was the nation’s bicentennial anniversary, there were many events organized for those weeks that news stories reported on taking into consideration the miners’ accident. As then former-President Michelle Bachelet was quoted in the media, continuing with the festivities for their independence day on 18 September would be “a commemoration, because the word

\textsuperscript{39} Chilean independence is celebrated on 18 September. 2010 commemorated the 200th anniversary Chile’s independence from Spain.

‘celebration’ sounds too strong under these circumstances.” Reporting on the commemorative bicentennial events further supported the image that Chile was a strong nation that would not be defeated by this ordeal. The country was able to face adversity while still demonstrating national pride.

Stage four the Chilean newspaper coverage was an important turning point for the entire ordeal. Seventeen days after the initial accident a small piece of paper was pulled from one of the drills that had been searching for the miners. That piece of paper read:

“We are fine in the shelter, the 33” (See Figure 2.2).

With that note on 23 August 2010, the optimism and faith expressed in previous news stories was exchanged for euphoric celebration. Furthermore, stories about who was to blame for the accident began to fade from the media coverage, as proof of the miners’


This is a message that miner Mario Sepúlveda later revealed was written when they no longer had any hope of being found. “En tanto, el suplemento The Mail on Sunday, del diario británico Daily Mail, publicó una entrevista a Sepúlveda. El minero revela que el mensaje "Estamos bien en el refugio, los 33" fue escrito cuando ya no tenían esperanzas de que los encontrarán. Recordó que pasaron 15 días sin sentir ruidos que indicaran un rescate, y que dos días después oyeron una perforación a la distancia, pero que se detuvo. Creyeron que se había dado por terminada la búsqueda y que morirían allí. Pero la perforación se reinició y comenzaron a caer algunas piedras, lo que provocó tanta alegría en el grupo que incluso comenzaron a bailar.” Vergara, Carlos and Ivonne Toro. “Los mineros son ejemplos de supervivencia, no modelos de vida.” La Tercera. 18 October 2010. http://diario.latercera.com/2010/10/18/01/contenido/pais/31-41902-9-los-mineros-son-ejemplo-de-supervivencia-no-modelos-de-vida.shtml
existence became the catalyst for stories of celebration, almost as if the miners actually had been rescued.

News reports in stage four presented the relief and simultaneous joy at the evidence that the faith of the Chilean people, represented in the news reports of stage three, was justified. This was a moment of elation for the nation at large. We see this in journalists Carlos Vergara and Consuelo Argandoña’s account of that night:

There are those who say that chronicles of this magnitude don’t go directly to the heart without stopping in the brain. And it’s true. More than a miracle, this is the story of a dream. Of an entire country that came together in a great and unachievable feat and that, after weeks of standing precariously on the brink of devastating grief, the ordeal ended at the last minute by cashing in an unfunded check that was issued by all, on behalf of the miners in Chile.\(^{43}\)

Of course, the miners remained trapped deep underground at this moment. Nevertheless, Chile’s media exalted the nation and its efforts as though it had already won. The hope that held the country together waiting for that moment when it would know the fate of the miners had paid off.

As a motivating factor, this moment propelled news media reporting forward with a newfound determination to keep hope of a successful rescue alive (See Figures 2.5-2.7,
Entire sections of newspapers were created to cover all the emerging details and to run new stories about the individuals who were trapped underground. After the note revealed that the miners had survived 17 days underground, alone without food, water, or sunlight, journalists started to write stories that personalized the miners. Note that in the initial days after the accident, newspapers like *La Tercera* and *El Mercurio* printed only the workers’ names (see Figure 2.1). Perhaps at that point the media were reluctant to share much information for fear that if the miners did not survive, the impact on the country would be lessened. After 23 August, however, the news media began to publish story after story about who each miner was, what their lives had been like prior to the accident, what their families were going through, and how they were beginning to reconnect despite the obstacle of being trapped (see Figure 2.3). For example, the fact that the miners were alive might have led to the decision to print the faces of the miners. Whereas they had not been seen before, the faces that appeared in newspapers after it was

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44 “El Mandatario destacó que esta es la mejor manera de comenzar a celebrar el mes de la Patria. "Pero ahora tenemos que seguir trabajando, tenemos que entubar la sonda con alimentos, luz, comunicaciones, pero lo más valioso ya llegó, el apoyo moral”. (“The Chief Executive highlighted that this was the best way to begin to celebrate the "mes de la Patria." “But now we have to continue to work, we have to fill the probes with food, light, communications, but the most valuable thing has arrived, the moral support.”)”


learned that they were alive became a symbol of Chile’s well-founded hope—the evidence that the country’s faith was not in vain.

Of course, this reporting also humanized the miners. They became, for many people in Chile, “friends” about whom the reader could and should care.47 We see this, for example, in the story that highlighted Mario Gómez, who proved to be a leader among the miners and vital for their survival (see Figure 2.3).48 In the subheading of the article alone, readers quickly learn important details about Gómez: “He is the most experienced of the group. He is 63 years old and started to work in the mines when he was 12, following his father’s footsteps, who ‘left us’ in his youth.”49 As journalists told his story, Gómez was a dedicated, hardworking miner, continuing a legacy. Gómez wrote a letter to his wife—one of the first things to come from underground to the families. It was presented by news sources as an aliento—a breath of hope: “We’re going to be happy forever together with our family,” he wrote to Lily his wife, who could not contain her emotional reaction upon reading his message.50 In retelling this story, reporters wrote


48 Ibid.

49 “Es el de más experiencia en el grupo. Tiene 63 años y comenzó a trabajar en yacimientos desde los 12, siguiendo el mismo oficio de su padre, que ”se fue” joven.” Ibid.

50 “Dale muchos besitos a todas mi hijas y nietos que los amo mucho, que estén tranquilas. Para ti con amor más grande, te amo demasiado. Vamos a ser felices para siempre juntos con nuestra familia.” Ibid.
in sentimental terms, describing her reaction as “the same [emotion] that would break anyone facing such a story of sorrow and miracles.”

In addition to amplifying the emotional dimension of the miners’ personal stories, news sources in Chile also shared anecdotes from the accident site and printed images of Camp Hope, the tent city built around the mine by families who wanted to stay close to their loved ones (see Figures 2.5-2.7). The images of the camp, which often accompanied stories of the miners, depicted family members in visibly emotional states—in powerful embraces, waving Chile’s flag while celebrating the miners’ discovery, with rescue workers and families excited by the possibility that their husbands, sons, and brothers would be saved soon. It was evident that real people were involved in the ordeal, and newspapers made a concerted effort to share in their joy so the rest of the nation and international community could witness and be part of the experience.

Notably, during this stage, newspapers also ran stories about the miners’ daily experiences underground. Article titles included: “Lack of Ladder Impeded Miners From Fleeing in the First 48 Hours” and “The Organization and Routine That Allowed Those Trapped To Wait During 17 Days.” In addition, the media ran stories about the conditions in which miners were found (“Miners Have Lost 10 Kilos and Worked Under 36°C

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51 “Cuando Lily, su esposa, la leyó, no pudo ocultar su emoción, la misma que podría quebrar a cualquiera, tras esta historia de dolor y milagro.”

Ibid.

52 The entire digital print of this newspaper for 23 August covers the accident and the surfacing of the miners’ note, showing images of the campground, the note, and rescue plans. La Tercera. 23 August 2010. http://papeldigital.info/lt/?2010082301#2
In the article, “Organization and Routine That Allowed Those Trapped To Wait During 17 Days,” there is a clear shift in the representation from the Divine interventionist perspective (that we saw earlier from President Piñera and others) to an understanding that the miners had played a large role in their own survival:

[That was] the most impressive part. The courage, the strength, and determination with which they faced their confinement. How they gave lessons in leadership that MBAs from the best Ivy League universities would want: how they organized, contained disagreements, formed routines, rationed the food, and, above all, busied themselves in concrete activities that made them forget that the possibility of getting out was remote.

From what we know of their stories, their capacity to organize, contain themselves, take care of each other, channel their energy into concrete tasks and routines, was key for their survival and to not fall into a pessimistic hole, that in this case would have been more than realistic.

The miners designated different areas of the mine for various aspects of life: from resting, to eating, to working, and other essential and basic necessities. According to news stories, the wisdom, organization, and reasoning demonstrated by the miners led to intelligent

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54 “Luego está lo más impresionante. El coraje, la fuerza y determinación con que enfrentaron su encierro. Cómo dieron lecciones de liderazgo que ya se quisieran los MBA de las mejores universidades Ivy league: cómo se organizaron, contuvieron sus discrepancias, hicieron rutinas, dividieron la comida y, sobre todo, se ocuparon en actividades concretas que los hicieran olvidar que la posibilidad de salir de ahí era remota. Por lo que sabemos de sus relatos, fue clave esa capacidad de organizarse, contenerse, cuidarse mutuamente, canalizar la energía en cosas concretas y rutinarias, para sobrevivir y no caer en el pozo del pesimismo, que en este caso hubiera sido además lo más realista.”
decision-making, which allowed the men to survive.\textsuperscript{55} While concepts of God and the Divine helped the nation have faith when there was little reason to hope, news stories after the miners were discovered alive began to shift toward an emphasis on human agency, the power of the miners, the rescuers, and even the nation to perform heroic deeds.

Towards the end of the fourth stage, news stories began to incorporate discussions about how a rescue plan would be implemented. Given what was reported about the miners’ conditions over the days that had passed, news sources started to discuss what the future held for the miners in the weeks and months to come. They discussed the conditions and limited lifestyle they would face underground.\textsuperscript{56} While the press had some ideas of what the rescue would entail, this initial discussion was little more than speculation and developments of the rescue would continue throughout the reports in the fifth, sixth, and seventh stages (see Figures 2.4 & 2.8).\textsuperscript{57}

The more detail news media gave regarding the plans for the rescue the more urgent calls for its success became. The longest of the stages, the fifth stage, involved the daily reporting of rescue efforts, setbacks, minor successes, plans, and developments. During stage five, the media faced a significant problem. The rescue was dragging on without an end in sight, but the euphoria and emotion of stage four was unsustainable.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{57} Due to the time they would have spent underground by then, the miners would be extracted one by one from the ground, their eyes would be “blindfolded and it would take almost a week to take them out of the rescue tunnel,” sources speculated. “Obreros saldrán con ojos vendados y tomaría casi una semana sacarlos por túnel de rescate,” \textit{La Tercera}. 24 August 2010. http://diario.latercera.com/2010/08/24/01/contenido/pais/31-36413-9-obreros-saldran-con-ojos-vendados-y-tomaria-casi-una-semana-sacarlos-por-tunel.shtml
The public’s appetite for new information was insatiable; now that the miners had become national celebrities, the entire country was invested in their status and survival. That said, there was nothing new to share, so the media reported primarily about the efforts of government and rescue officials who were working around the clock to rescue the miners. By reporting thorough and often complex technological details, the media tried to maintain the nation’s interest in the story.

Not only did a focus on the smallest details of rescue efforts demonstrate an attempt by the media to maintain the nation’s interest, but it also demonstrated the interests and influence of the Chilean government. That is, because regular reports from the scene of the accident took up most of the media coverage, relatively little coverage was given to the “blame frame” and the investigation into who was responsible for the accident. (I will cover these dimensions of the situation further in chapter four). Instead, government and mining officials were portrayed as active participants in the rescue plans. The officials and, subsequently the media, focused on even the most minor details of the rescue, which caused each new problem and solution to seem like a success rather than further evidence of stalled progress. Therefore, news reports conveyed the idea that things were completely under control.

This enumeration of details served a second rhetorically interesting purpose. By sharing minute details of the rescue efforts, news reports transformed the reader into a mining expert, reconfiguring the reader from a spectator role into an active participant in the story. Just as fans of a sport or sports team can become experts by obsessively following the details of a season or game strategy, Chile’s citizens were presented with daily information that allowed them to comprehend and, virtually, participate in the
complex process of a mine rescue. This investment of time and energy seemed worthwhile for audiences, because the personalization process that characterized stage four, had made readers emotionally connected to the survival of the miners, collectively and individually. The rescue details provided in stage five further extended this connection, moving the reader from being a spectator to becoming an active participant, especially among those who followed the story daily. This transition was also an important moment in the development of Chile’s national identity. It helped to transform the image of Chile into a technological force where engineering expertise was widely shared and even the reading public had the ability to understand and solve complicated engineering problems. This development reflects an ethos of industrial and technological expertise that through this media portrayal defined the nation.

In focusing on the rescue and struggles during this stage, Chilean media sources also paid special attention to the psychological impact of the accident and rescue on both the miners and their families. Articles were printed that discussed not only the physical logistics necessary for their safe removal from the mine, but also the emotional support that the families and miners were receiving. The picture that came through in the media was that government and rescue officials were doing everything they could to help the families and the miners endure this ordeal. Psychologists, nutritional plans, and communications technology and processes were all present and discussed in the media as important measures that supported family members and the miners.\(^{58}\) The accident was not a one-dimensional story—it involved layers of human relationship that the Chilean

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media attempted to share. Articles on implementing a plan to help maintain conviviality highlighted an awareness of the delicacy of the miners’ mental state and described how the miners were divided into three main groups.\textsuperscript{59} Given that these 33 men were virtually strangers or merely co-workers prior to this incident, these three groups helped appease the relational conflicts the 33 men could experience by separating them by their tasks and creating smaller support groups where they could help each other and coexist more effectively.\textsuperscript{60} The miners were given clear guidelines to follow in order to help themselves through this process—from sleep schedules, to division of labor, meals, and recreation.\textsuperscript{61}

With these tactics and other methods, news media highlighted Chilean rescuers, miners, and families’ awareness of the subtle yet significant psychological effects of their lengthening experience.\textsuperscript{62} As news media coverage evolved, it began to portray rescuers not just as individuals who were heroically attempting to rescue the miners, but also as surrogate parents, mothers, and caretakers of the miners as well as their families. Through this line of reporting, we see how rescue and support efforts existed at the same time, demonstrating the varying priorities of rescuers and government officials leading the

\textsuperscript{59} Ibíd.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibíd.


efforts. For example, families were told not to share information about familial conflict with the men so as to not exacerbate their sensitive mental condition.\textsuperscript{63}

Despite limitations, families and rescuers brought miners some comforts from home, including: meals of “\textit{marrarqueta con palta}” (Chilean bread and avocado); the chance to watch a Chilean soccer match against Ukraine; the opportunity to celebrate in their own fashion the Chilean independence festivities of 18 September—singing songs and dancing the Chilean national dance of \textit{la cueca}.\textsuperscript{64} These activities and small pleasures acted as mental and emotional support systems for the miners, keeping their spirits high and encouraging them to look towards the future. The media’s choice to spend so much time and energy sharing these details with its readership demonstrates how these parallel efforts of mental and emotional support to maintain the morale were just as critically important to rescue organizers, and continued the humanization process of both the miners and rescuers that we saw in stage four.

Another significant development that transpired during stage five involved the arrival of international aid. In late August, NASA experts travelled to Chile to assist in the rescue effort. Prior to their arrival, Chilean newspapers heralded the arrival of these experts.\textsuperscript{65} Of particular interest is how the newspapers focused not on the experts, but on


\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.


the expert’s opinions of Chile and its efforts to date. In one news article, Michael Duncan, leader of the NASA experts going to Chile, stated that Chileans:

are well organized, have many resources, disposition, and have done much for the miners…the very own miners have done a lot for themselves underground, which demonstrates their desire to survive.66

As Chilean news sources reported on what foreigners thought of their efforts, a sense of national pride and power began to emerge. Journalists told the Chilean people that they were being watched by the world, and newspaper articles emphasized that this international attention would enhance Chile’s international reputation. In addition to reinforcing positive accounts about how the country was handling the crisis, articles emphasized that the world was impressed with Chilean ingenuity. In one report, Isabel Allende, an expatriated Chilean author, was quoted telling both miners and rescuers that the “faces of the 33 miners, the name of Chile” are seen in television screens around the world.67 According to Allende, the world was noticing, praying for, and encouraging the rescue efforts. By highlighting the international media attention that the accident and rescue had received, the national media in Chile, in a recursive move, seemed to be stroking its own ego at successfully representing the positive qualities of the nation and the miners for the international community.

66 Ibid.
Continuing this process of self-adulation, when the news media found nothing to report directly from the mine site, the media turned their attention to related aspects of the evolving situation that also highlighted a successful representation of a positive image for the country. For example, several filmmakers arrived at the scene and began documenting what was going on. News reporters wrote that there would be a made-for-TV movie and an HBO documentary that would be filmed on the site, retelling the story of the accident and the rescue.⁶⁸ Vice President of Production and Development of Discovery Networks Latin America was quoted in the papers, saying,

> We were interested in recording all the efforts that are being made in the rescue of the 33 trapped miners. We found a project that apart from what it represents from the standpoint of human survival, it is also a major engineering feat, unique in this world, which is why we should be present.⁶⁹

Filmmakers, producers, and others showed interest in the story and in being the voices to retell this ordeal to the world. Indeed, “what has occurred with these 33 miners found alive has not failed to capture the attention of both international and local communication media,” and local media in Chile was proud to publicize this in their own reports.⁷⁰

However, not all the media coverage during the fifth stage was positive. Although rare, a few stories informed readers that the families of at least some of the miners were building lawsuits against the owners of Minera San Esteban, and even against the Chilean

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⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.
According to journalists, the criticism of lax security at the mine was not confined to just the miners’ families. In early September, Cardinal and Archbishop Emeritus of Santiago Francisco Javier Errázuriz came to offer mass and speak to the families and miners. During his visit, he criticized the security conditions in the mine. The Archbishop took the opportunity to also highlight the miners’ organization in this extreme situation and stated that they are an “example” of how “Chile should be in the future.”

Continuing the proactive mode of finding or constructing the news, media sources recounted details throughout the month of September and beginning of October of the rescue efforts, including describing the three drilling options for creating the tunnel through which the miners would get out, the progress of each plan, and eventually which was successful—Plan B. Media also shared details about the capsule named “Phoenix

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73 Ibid.

2” that would be the vehicle that would carry the miners out of the mine one by one.\textsuperscript{75} In the first 10 days of October, the prospect for the future began to change as the drilling progress suddenly accelerated, leading into the sixth stage of news reporting.

Returning to the reactive approach, in stage six Chilean news media covered the actual rescue of the miners, representing it as the triumph of Chilean ingenuity and genius. In the days before 13 October, the media gave details of how the rescue would play out, how the “Plan B drill” was reaching its goal earlier than anticipated, and what role the miners would play in their own rescue.\textsuperscript{76} Three army nurses would be going down into the mine to assist the miners, news reports stated, because Health Secretary Jaime Mañalich felt that they would have the best training to deal with the complicated situation that this ordeal created.\textsuperscript{77} Army officials were quoted saying these three men were highly qualified for the job “not only from the point of view of their medical competency,” but also from a military perspective since they possess the “character, the experience, and the profound commitment and interest of contributing to this cause.”\textsuperscript{78}

In the early hours of 10 October, Plan B drill, operated by U.S. miner Jeffrey Hart, reached the shelter where the miners were, and, according to news reports, Camp Hope


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
exploded with emotion.\textsuperscript{79} Reports told of how mining operators, Secretary Golborne, and other officials who participated in the search and rescue, along with families and friends burst into uproarious joy and hugs in celebration, drinking champagne, thanking the saints, and relishing in the “little details that make history.”\textsuperscript{80} These details again continued the narrative thread of a faithful and hopeful nation.

In an effort to look forward, as the rescue proceeded, news media and families speculated what the future would hold for the miners and what the aftermath of this experience might be. Representing again the role of surrogate caretaker, \textit{La Tercera} surveyed the miners’ families to gauge their three main concerns post-rescue. These were: the effects of the overexposure the miners would experience upon coming out of the mine and facing the media attention, the psychological scars this ordeal might leave behind, and the delicate health state in which they might find their men.\textsuperscript{81}

Reporters continued to tell tales and details of the rescue, like how after various thorough successful tests of the Phoenix 2 capsule, rescuers were ready to begin the extractions just a couple of days after reaching the miners, and weeks before their original calculations.\textsuperscript{82} Thus began in the late hours of 12 October the official extractions of the miners, one by one, from the cavernous hole that had been their prison for 69

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\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.


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days. For over 24 hours straight, the entire Chilean media industry focused intently on the rescue, watching the Phoenix descend each time and rise out from the hard rock some 27 minutes later with another miner alive, awed, in disbelief, and filled with gratitude. Each a new face, reporters stated, “that is today part of the history of this country.” Quotations like this one demonstrate how the detailed storytelling of the actual rescue was another palpable opportunity for news sources to define and strengthen the Chilean identity they had depicted throughout their weeks of reporting.

During this, the penultimate stage, journalists expressed themselves in an almost poetic narration of the events, demonstrating that they were not above the overflow of emotion evidently taking over the country. Journalists Carlos Vergara and Patricio Carrera were two vocal voices, representative of what was printed in Chile at the time:

Let it be well known: in the real world, miracles like this one don’t usually happen… where the crude battle between unrest and hope are ending with a last [attempt at] the frightening of the vultures that at one point flew above this mine, waiting for the 33 men that did not belong to them. Camp Hope, that little town that these 33 families became, that went through the wait and calvary of those 17 days of biblical punishment and so many others of merited hope, exploded in one heartfelt jubilant cry.

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84 Ibid.

85 “Más tarde debían venir Juan Illanes, el veterano del Ejército, el boliviano Carlos Mamani y todos esos rostros que hoy son parte de la historia de este país.” Ibid.

86 “Sépalo bien: en el mundo real no suelen suceder milagros como éste, en el cual esa cruda batalla entre el desasosiego y la esperanza están terminando con esta última espantando las aves de carroña que alguna vez sobrevolaron el yacimiento, a la espera de 33 hombres que no les pertenecían. El campamento Esperanza, esa ciudadela en que terminó convertida la señera patriada de 33 familias que pasaron por la espera y el calvario de 17 días de castigo bíblico y otras tantas de merecida ilusión, explotó en un sentido llanto de júbilo. La carpa de los Avalos se desarmó de una sola vez.” Ibid.
Journalists declared that no one in the whole country of Chile shut an eye that entire night as they watched as the “mine birthed…one by one all 33 miners that moved the world with their toughness and temperance,” who did not know at the time of their original descent into the mine that this “would be the longest shift of their lives.” As they came out on “a new day,” it was also the beginning of a new day for Chile, the journalists wrote. The rescue stage of reporting concluded when the shift leader and unofficial group leader, Luis Urzúa, was hoisted to safety.

In the seventh and final stage of news reporting, reporters returned to traditional modes of coverage as they discussed the “after stories” of individual miners. First, on the days immediately following the rescue, news reports focused on the health of the miners. In particular, they discussed the surprising good health of most of the miners and how quickly they were discharged from the hospital. According to news sources, only a few of the miners suffered from complications, like dental procedures needed to avoid infections, as well as one suffering from pneumonia. There was also positive news in regards to the miners’ vision as none presented any major lesions. All in all, the miners were in better health than expected and were reunited with their families during their stay in the hospital.

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87 “Chile entero no ha pegado los ojos en toda la noche. Uno tras otro, desde Avalos y Sepulveda en adelante, la mina paría -hasta el cierre de esta edición- uno por uno a los 33 mineros que conmovieron al mundo por su dureza y templanza, los mismos que algún día bajaron al pique, sin saber que aquél sería el turno más largo de sus vidas.” Ibid.

88 “Florencio Avalos Silva inició su ascenso cuando moría el día martes 12 de octubre, para salir a la superficie hoy, miércoles. Un nuevo día, para él y para Chile, había comenzado.” Ibid.


90 Ibid.
Throughout this last stage of reporting, news sources discussed how parties and celebrations continued, and, later, how certain after effects of the ordeal began to surface. The first miner to end up back in the hospital was Edison Peña, who about a week after the rescue, had an emotional crisis manifested through mood swings, anxiety, and lack of motivation. Another main concern that emerged in the news during the weeks after the rescue was excessive alcohol consumption. The miners, it would seem, were using alcohol not just to celebrate their rescue, but perhaps to manage the emotional and mental trauma that continued.

The mental and physical health of the miners thus emerged as an important part of the “after” story discussed by journalists. Articles appeared that told of how the Chilean Association for Security (AChS) provided health support for the miners. A state supported psychologist, Alberto Iturra, stated that miners would be given whatever they required as they requested it. In many respects, even though the actual rescue was complete, news sources continued to characterize the miners as individuals who needed rescuing. The newspapers continued to identify other Chileans who would play the roles of caretaker, rescuer, and healthcare provider for the miners. In an interview with Iturra published on 18 October 2010, the psychologist shared some of the protocols in place for the rescue. His job during the rescue was to maintain the emotional stability of the

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92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.
miners. He shared his initial communication and evaluation of the miners while they were underground, discussed his role in helping manage the relationships both between the miners, as well as between the miners and their families, and shared about the process of reengaging them when they surfaced. While much of this coverage emphasized the important role that Iturra was playing, Iturra himself argued that the miners had faced all the odds against them and had come through in a miraculous fashion, seemingly almost unscathed.

One of the last topics that the news media covered before President Piñera declared the event “over” was that of financial cost—both the cost of the rescue and the cost of ensuring and resolving the security issues in the mine. According to El Mercurio, it would cost $2 million U.S. dollars to resolve the security issues in the San José mine. The collapse presented a complicated challenge for securing the mine for various reasons, including the compensation to be given to the miners that increased the company’s debt. Interestingly for this project, news sources included a financial “benefit” in their post-coverage of the event, the “incalculable value” of the rescue on the image of Chile among the international community. Reporters stated that because of the


95 Ibid.


98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.
accident and rescue, other countries now saw Chile as a country of engineering expertise. In addition, reports noted the wisdom that Chilean leaders showed in seeking help from other countries and agencies like NASA, and Chile’s “solidarity, unity, and its brave character,” as evidenced in the stories analyzed throughout this chapter.  

Finally, during stage seven, the Chilean media attempted to reassure Chilean audiences that the problem with mining safety had been resolved. These stories focused on the President’s response and what that response told audiences about Chilean priorities. In particular, news media reported of Piñera’s declaration that the task had come to an official successful end. They also noted the President’s tribute to the miners as each was awarded with a medal of honor as “Bicentennial Heroes.” News stories declared that, moving forward, the government would be able redirect its attention to tackle other pending matters for the nation. Thus, as news reports noted, this advanced, mature, developed nation, having tackled an immeasurable task successfully, could now go on to tend to its other matters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at the diverse coverage of the accident and rescue of the Chilean miners in Chilean print media. The reports here defined Chilean national identity by focusing on the heroic rescue, the faithfulness of the people, the blame game to find a guilty party, and the personalization and personal narrative of the miners in efforts to further connect with and create empathy for the miners in a potentially


disconnected, more urban population of the news media’s readership. In the next chapter, we will direct our attention internationally to consider, critically, news reports from the United States.
As noted in the previous chapter, one of the most important rhetorical qualities of the miners’ accident and rescue is that it was, from the beginning, an internationally mediated event. The people of Chile noticed this international media attention; indeed, the Chilean media were anxious to inform the nation that they were under an international microscope. As a result of this attention, many people in Chile expressed pride and even emotional comfort in the fact that millions of people from across the world were paying attention to their country. While Chileans desired to have a positive image presented for the rest of the world, the international media that covered this story interpreted these events in their own ways, which sometimes fit and sometimes conflicted with how the Chilean media represented the nation.

In this chapter, I primarily use articles from the *New York Times* to study the news coverage of non-Chilean media sources. For the purposes of this thesis, the *New York Times* will act as a barometer of U.S. media coverage and representations. Although this chapter includes references to other media sources, the *Times* coverage is largely representative of U.S. media coverage generally; consequently, stories from the *Times* serve as my primary material. Further, there are significant differences between the *Times* coverage and the news reporting that I discussed in the last chapter. By contrasting the Chilean media with that of a source in the United States, this chapter considers how the mining accident became an opportunity for non-Chilean media to portray and represent Chilean identity. This was a nation that few Americans
considered before it became part of the U.S. news cycle, and, through this news event, the Times did its part to shed light on the South American country.

Chapter two demonstrated that Chilean news reports of the miners’ accident and rescue were thorough and detailed. The story remained in the news—and mostly on the front page—each of the 69 days of its occurrence and beyond. Media in the United States, on the other hand, covered the story less frequently and in broader strokes. The Times, for example, published 35 articles throughout the entire ordeal, a significant number, but far fewer than what appeared in Chile’s major newspapers. Despite this difference, in many respects it is remarkable that the accident and rescue received the coverage that it did in the United States. No other single event in modern Chilean history has received as much sustained coverage in the Times. Further, the fact that the seeming invisibility of this Latin American country was, for a moment, shattered by an industrial accident is surprising. Such accidents are a regular occurrence in many parts of the world, including Latin America. Through this analysis, I will explore what made this story unique enough for U.S. media to consider it not just newsworthy but important enough to warrant the kind of attention that the media typically reserves for major crises in the United States.

In the following pages, I argue that, in part, these stories served to encourage American audiences to identify with the small Latin American country, and I will attempt to evaluate the success of these efforts. In addition, by selectively incorporating representations from other U.S. media sources like late night television, I demonstrate how, eventually, the reverence and respect granted to Chileans by the U.S. media turned the miners into caricatures of the Chilean man, transforming these individuals from heroes to entertaining stereotypes for American audiences. Although, initially, the Times recognized Chile as a modern nation, adding new layers of respect
and admiration for the country’s technological expertise and indomitable spirit, eventually Chileans—the miners and others—reverted to stock characters representative of the Latin American “Other.” This chapter will examine these themes and discuss their implications in the definition of Chilean identity to international audiences.

**The Themes of U.S. Media Coverage**

At the core of this analysis, I argue that the Chilean and U.S. media representations of the event reveal important differences and similarities in how each country’s media portrayed Chile’s national identity. To do this, I will first identify specific themes that are evident in the *Times* coverage. As these themes reveal, the coverage in the United States mostly amounted to a sensational story of improbable and heroic survival. From an underdog narrative arc theme, to a self-reflexive theme, to one that analyzed the global reception of the story, and finally to appreciating the human triumph and emotional narrative of the event, these themes show how the accident and rescue were a sensational spectacle. It was, I conclude, the spectacle dimensions of the event that first attracted the U.S. media to intense coverage and, eventually, led to its reframing as a form of easy entertainment. In an “underdog narrative” where the miners and the Chilean people were unlikely heroes, life hung in the balance. Thus, while this story was immediate and personal for Chile, defining the nation’s character, the U.S. media portrayed the event as a dramatic narrative of unlikely, almost miraculous triumph. This framing gave the event an almost film like character in the United States, prompting interest and appreciation, but also, ultimately, an easy commercial consumption and distancing.

**The Underdog Narrative Theme**

The first important difference between the *Times* coverage and the Chilean media’s coverage is that the *Times* articulated a different narrative arc. The reporting in the *New York
begins later, at the moment when word arrived from the miners that they were still alive. Focusing on the dramatic nature of the story, U.S. media took a temporal step back after the miners were found and sought answers to basic questions such as why are the miners trapped, who was involved, how did it happen, what could have caused it, how had they survived so long, and what were the next steps. Overall, articles in the Times discussed everything from the timeline expected for the rescue, to the actual efforts, and the international aid. While articles in the United States were lengthier than those published by Chile’s newspapers, U.S. news media sometimes grazed over details in order to focus on a major narrative arc that framed the event as a tragedy mixed with an underdog story of unlikely triumph.

Chile and its industrial history were unfamiliar to U.S. audiences; consequently, U.S. coverage differed in its depth and detail and in how the story was told. They detailed not only that the miners had sent a message to their potential rescuers and what may have caused the cave-in, but also how mining was an important industry in Chile. By contextualizing this event, U.S. media seemed to be trying to educate their audiences not only on the relevant facts of the moment, but also on the larger issues of the Chilean economy. While Chile’s press assumed that its readership knew the story’s major plot points, the U.S. media, the Times in particular, had

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to retell the story from the beginning on multiple occasions, making the process of education perpetual. Thus, the story of the Chilean miners’ accident moved from a moment of recognition, when the miners were found alive, to providing the public with information about the cause of the accident days earlier, to characterizations of the miners, their families, and, by extension, the Chilean nation.

After setting up the context, the Times continued with coverage of the efforts to rescue the miners. Coverage in the United States reached a climax weeks later in the minute-by-minute reports of 13 October 2010 (evidenced not only on the Times website, but also in television coverage). The Times reported the news in such a way as to show that they were sharing this process and this victory with Chileans—miners and spectators alike. In fact, published letters to the editor demonstrated this phenomenon:

At a time in which there is so much sorrow, tragedy, atrocity and depravity in the realm of news, the world thankfully has the spectacular story of the against-all-odds Chilean miners’ rescue upon which to focus.

According to USA Today, about 8.5 million viewers watched the coverage of the first rescue that Tuesday on three major cable networks, a surge from the average 6.2 million average audience in the three hours prior to the rescue. In an even more dramatic increase, CNN doubled its audience at 11p.m. eastern that night.

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104 CNN reported for at least 24 hours consecutively as the rescue was ongoing, and covered as each miner was brought up from inside the mine and greeted by President Piñera and other Chilean officials on site.


107 Ibid.
Throughout the weeks-long event, emotions such as anticipation and elation filled U.S. newspapers.\textsuperscript{108} For example, articles detailed the triumphant and “meticulously planned” engineering feats that led to the rescue. Of particular interest is that such reports expressed a respect and regard for how other Chilean miners and international resources labored to rescue the trapped men.\textsuperscript{109} From the perspective of U.S. media, Chile demonstrated technological abilities and a dedication to order that made it a “very controlled operation” that ensured the safety of the miners at every point.\textsuperscript{110}

However, while news coverage in the United States admired the technological prowess of the nation, it also acknowledged, even if peripherally, the significance of the accident for Chile’s infrastructure going forward. Several articles identified the “lessons” Chile should glean from this ordeal. One of the main lessons identified by the U.S. press was that Chile needed to improve mine safety to prevent future accidents and the death of more miners.\textsuperscript{111} Chile’s mining ability may have been impressive, but the implication of these stories was that Chile lagged


\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

behind the United States in its concern for the mining industry’s workforce. Reporters highlighted testimony from Chile that established this lesson, like this quote from Father Daniel Pauvif, a Roman Catholic priest who came often to Camp Hope to visit with the families: “The miners are being called heroes, but they are in reality, victims of a great injustice in work conditions.” As the ordeal came to a close, coverage in the *Times* emphasized these observations and, in many respects, the emphasis on “lessons learned” served to provide closure for the coverage. By answering the questions “what has Chile gained from this ordeal?” and “where does the nation go from here?”

As coverage entered its final days in the United States, newspaper articles discussed the ways in which the miners survived and how they were being sustained. These stories helped advance a narrative that told of the simple ways in which these common, unremarkable men became remarkable heroes. The amazing story of survival seemed to intrigue and impress U.S. audiences. After the miners were safely above ground, news reports changed again, now focused on the future: the future of the miners, of this story, etc., and of the potential celebrity status that the miners could now enjoy. Reporters discussed how the miners received special honors from the Chilean President, and how they traveled around the country and the world to share their story. The miners were given gifts, especially in the form of travel. After the rescue, they were

112 On 1 August 2013, news broke that after a 3-year investigation on the cause of the accident, the San Esteban Primera Mining Company was found not guilty of all charges and the case was dropped, to the dismay of the miners involved in the accident. This is just another example of how there is lacking a deep concern for the workers and to doing justice by them. Escobar Chavarría, Paula. “De los 33 mineros chilenos: la justicia no llega.” The Huffington Post: Voces. 2 August 2013. http://voces.huffingtonpost.com/paula-escobar-chavarria/la-justicia-no-llega_b_3696687.html


invited to go on vacation to Greece, to visit to Israel, and to go on a trip to play with the Manchester United fútbol (soccer) club.¹¹⁶ Their survival awarded them a celebrity status and special treatment from observers around the world. Edison Peña, for example, went to New York to run in the New York City marathon that year and in 2011.¹¹⁷

This fascination with the miners as celebrities goes hand in hand with how the media portrayed the event as a sensational, movie-like drama. In fact, as noted in the previous chapter, there was quite a bit of discussion about turning the entire event into a Hollywood movie, and news of these rumors got traction in the U.S. press as well.¹¹⁸ Discussions about movie rights “began while they were still trapped underground.”¹¹⁹ While the story remained dormant for much of the following four years, taping on the upcoming film Los 33 about the accident and rescue wrapped in the summer of 2014. The movie will be released on the 5th anniversary of the accident (5 August 2015), and trailers are available as of June 2015.¹²⁰ As Times journalist Tim Barrionuevo, Alexei. “Rewards for Miners Rescued in Chile.” The New York Times. 14 October 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/15/world/americas/15chile.html?ref=chileminingaccident2010


¹¹⁸ The movie is now done with production and will be released in mid to late 2015.


¹²⁰ Watch the trailer for the film here: https://youtu.be/f_r1T81FmNw

Arango wrote, “For better or worse, the miners’ story [became] one of calculation, of who gets paid, and who controls the manipulation of the story in the popular culture.”\footnote{121} I will return to this comment in the next section, as well.

However, not everyone involved with Hollywood argued that the event was a pay-day for the film industry. Michael Shamberg, producer of the film *World Trade Center*, was quoted in the *Times* as follows, “you can’t make a story about the 33 miners and not try to help them.”\footnote{122} The idea that the miners might benefit from a film treatment of their ordeal became an important point that appeared frequently in news coverage. Quickly, different media developed detailed accounts of the whole ordeal to share the story at length. Not a month after the rescue, a book was published about the story by a journalist from the United States who had lived in Chile for 15 years.\footnote{123} Similarly, by 26 October 2010, the first documentary on the story was released by PBS titled “NOVA: Emergency Mine Rescue.”\footnote{124}

As with many narrative arcs, the news coverage in the United States resolved itself with a series of codas, explanations, and reports several weeks after the rescue, which explained not only what the miners did but framed their actions as part of a remarkable underdog story. Mark

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Ensalaco, a human rights scholar who specializes in Chile, spoke with the *Times* and drew conclusions about Chilean national history from the event. Referring to Chile’s dark history in the 1970s and 1980s under General Augusto Pinochet’s military regime, Ensalaco stated, “What was once a place of tragedy is now a place of hope...What a difference a democracy makes.”

Ensalaco was alluding not only to Pinochet generally but also to the violent history of that particular region of Chile. In 1973, Copiapó and the area near the mine had been the site of 16 murders by the Chilean government. As this article expresses, the miners’ rescue in that particular place brought back memories of that dark time. Angelica Palleras, a photographer, was quoted as saying, “it is our historical duty to keep this memory alive... and to dishonor the officers responsible for these crimes.” Palleras was not immune to the significance—she had lost her brother close to that mine site 1973.

Within the United States there was little additional coverage of the event once the “wrap-up” stories were printed. While the miners have continued to face struggles after the rescue, the story faded from the attention of U.S. news. There have been reports here and there regarding the miners’ well-being and legal struggles, but most reporters have not returned to Chile to discuss the condition of the mines or the workers. In the end, the narrative in U.S. media had a happy ending—the miners were alive and being treated as heroes and celebrities worldwide.

**The Self-Reflexive—Media Criticism—Theme**


126 “A squad operating under Brig. Gen. Sergio Arellano Stark executed the men using weapons that included military knives called corvos. Altogether, the unit, which came to be called the Caravan of Death, killed more than 70 Chileans suspected of leftist activities that month.” (emphasis added). Ibid.

127 Ibid.
One distinguishing aspect of the U.S. media coverage was that as the event developed over several weeks reporters began to discuss their own reporting. That is, the media became not just a conduit for the event’s narrative, but also the subject of coverage. I alluded to this fact above when I quoted Tim Arango’s reflection on how the miners’ story became about who controlled the narrative in popular culture in America. Many other examples of this “self-reflexive” commentary exist, as journalists in the United States turned their reporting on themselves, making themselves part of the story. In the *Times*, Alexei Barrionuevo acknowledged that “more media outlets [were] covering the fate of the miners than [had] reported on Chile’s 8.8-magnitude earthquake” that February. Barrionuevo seemed to find the differences of media attention ironic, if not problematic, because the earthquake that killed many in Chile was “one of the most potent in human history.”

In the article, “The Rescue on TV: Elation and Elvis,” the *Times* reported on how the media were using various methods to report the event. Live streams online, tweets through Twitter, and reports on shows like the *Today* show, *Fox News*, and around-the-clock, day-long reports on CNN (see Figure 3.1) were an essential dimension to the U.S. media effort. Choosing to discuss their own coverage of the accident brought front and center the sensational quality of the event and the labor of U.S. reporters to frame and reinforce the event as a remarkable spectacle. A number of articles and televised reports acknowledged that the accident and the ensuing rescue were tailored made for their 24/7 media consumption format. In *USA*

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Today, Emily Brown and Kate Patterson boasted that the “thrilling Chilean miners rescue was made for TV.” It was an event that was “truly deserving of national and global celebration,” wrote Times editorial board. In this self-reflexive way, media ended up reinforcing the shock and power of the spectacle. Further, the tone of this coverage seemed to congratulate the U.S. media for its decision and effort to bring the story to the attention of the world.

The Global Reception Theme—Reporting on the International Reaction

Due to the pervasive coverage, audiences could watch from all over the world—from New York City to Shanghai to Bolivia—and U.S. media took note of this attention. “In a world of so much division,” read the Times’ 14 October editorial, “and one where technology too often seems to be the enemy — the miners’ survival and rescue was truly deserving of national and global celebration.” The Times and other U.S. media outlets seemed to take some pride in how the world was listening and watching their reports from Chile. “We are on the surface of the moon here, it’s rocks and sand,” said Jeffrey Kofman, a Latin America correspondent for ABC News. “Yet the Chileans understand that in a certain way this media event, not by design but by circumstance, is really going to paint the world’s perception of this small country.” Reporters and Chileans alike understood the impact that this worldwide reception could have for the nation’s image across the world.

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133 Ibid.


135 Ibid.
This attention to the global reception demonstrates, I contend, an awareness to the impact of this event on the country’s international relations. In the Times’ article “China Cheers Rescue Halfway Around the World,” David Barboza focused on China’s reception of this ordeal. He suggests that China was a country that both identified with Chile in their mining history, but also a nation that came to aid in the rescue of the miners; consequently, making this accident relevant for the far away nation. Barboza’s article included a number of quotations that exemplify how this accident became personal for viewers around the world. For example, he quoted Guan Yanping, a poet and blogger, who wrote: “That Chilean mine accident, as a matter of fact, has nothing to do with me. But because I’m reading about their news every day, I now feel as if my family were also trapped underground.”

This contrast between physical distance but emotional immediacy and connection was not only made possible by international media coverage; it, too, became part of the story of why the event mattered. Times reporter Alexei Barrionuevo wrote that Lilianett Gómez, daughter of miner Mario Gómez, who was “interviewed by people from as far away as China,” understood that the presence of international journalists would “help and transmit our struggle to the world.” People in Chile, as well as journalists in the United States, demonstrated an understanding of how this international media attention was a powerful phenomenon because it could act as a bridge between Chile and other countries who could help rescue their loved ones.

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ones.\textsuperscript{138} It also helped connect people around the world, like we saw in Yanping’s quote above. Yet another important connection emerged as the \textit{Times} began to discuss how Chilean expatriates in the United States valued the services of the U.S. media in bringing the story to them. Reporters quoted people like Julio Fiol, Chile's consul general in New York, who declared that the rescue was a "matter of national pride."\textsuperscript{139}

Moving beyond just a connection with the country, journalists seemed to focus on how the international reception would impact Chile’s relationships with other countries. One \textit{Times} article addressed Bolivia’s reaction to the accident. Bolivia, a country that struggled with poverty and social problems on a scale that Chile did not, provided an interesting contrast for U.S. reporters.\textsuperscript{140} Bolivia had a more obvious connection with the accident than most countries in the international community, because one of their citizens was trapped in the mine with the 32 Chileans—Carlos Mamani. That said, the media portrayed the interests of Bolivia’s President in geo-political terms, as a potential opportunity to ease relations between two countries that had been enemies historically. According to one article,

\begin{quote}
The prospect [of a rescue] has made for an interesting commingling of political opposites. President Sebastián Piñera of Chile — a billionaire who is one of Latin America’s most conservative leaders — said over the weekend that his Bolivian counterpart, Evo Morales, a former coca farmer and one of the region’s most radical leftist presidents, was planning to come here to witness the rescue of Mr. Mamani and the other miners, which is expected to begin as soon as midnight Tuesday (11 p.m. Eastern time).
\end{quote}

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The participation of Mr. Morales, who has already offered Mr. Mamani a guaranteed job if he returns to Bolivia, could open the way for a possible improvement in the way Chile is viewed there. In Bolivia, schoolchildren are taught as soon as they can read about the War of the Pacific in the late 19th century, when Chile annexed mineral-rich lands belonging to Bolivia, landlocking its neighbor by depriving it of a Pacific coastline.141

Curious if this would change political relationships for the nation, journalists in the United States framed the ordeal in the context of South American history and politics.

The media in the United States reported the opinions of many other individuals who were not political elites. The comments of celebrities and everyday citizens appeared often in U.S. print media. The Times reported that Michael Caine, Justin Bieber, David Blaine, and were discussing how they felt about the rescue on Twitter. The tweets quoted by the Times highlight the “infectious” quality of the whole ordeal.142 Rick Hampson and Oren Dorell of USA Today added more examples:

In New York, Chilean-born restaurant manager Jaime Rodriguez felt pride in his native land. Watching on his computer as the first miner surfaced, he says, “I cried a little bit.” Seeing them emerge as if from death, “I felt a little like I was born again.”143

And

“We have a good-news deficit in this world,” says Kitty Thurmer, 56, of Washington, D.C., for whom the mine rescue evoked America’s pride in the moon landing in 1969. “This is a human, tactile event we can share electronically. It’s a shared joy.”144

141 Ibid.

142 Caine tweeted, “watching the happiest moment I’ve ever seen on TV.” Bieber also shared, “Miracles do happen.” Blaine, the showman who in 1999 was entombed in an underground plastic box for seven days, told CNN the miners’ survival was “absolutely mind-blowing.” Ibid.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.
By discussing how people within the United States were reacting to the rescue, the U.S. media portrayed everyday citizens as more than spectators. They transformed not only the press but also U.S. citizens into active participants living through the historic moment with Chileans.

As the rescue drew to a close, media reports analyzed the meaningful effects of this major event for not just Chile, but the world at large. U.S. sources highlighted how this was an operation made possible by the “community underground, the fierce shared bond among those miners, and the community aboveground.”

Antonio Skármeta, Chilean author of *The Postman*, a film about Pablo Neruda, wrote in a *Times* op-ed, “No expense was spared” and “this time, Chile demonstrated not only its emotions but its effectiveness.” Skármeta added that the rescue was a product of global “goodwill,” as people everywhere came together to provide assistance, joining “with a generous heart” that spoke “volumes about the reserves of goodness and solidarity that exist on this planet.” As one *Times* article read, Chile “sensibly and graciously accepted help from the international community…” In the end, this successful and “riveting rescue,” U.S. sources noted, was the result of action by the “people, leaders and

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Jeff Hart, U.S. miner who came to assist in drilling the hole through which Phoenix 2 would lift the miners to safety, stated he would not be there during the actual rescue. “I want to let this become the miners’ and their families’ story and let them have their time,” Hart stated.

good governance.”

Through this theme, the media’s role becomes clearer—to both show the world the ordeal on the ground, and to connect the people on the ground with the rest of the world.

The Human Triumph & Emotional Theme

Reporters chose to tell this story with a great deal of both textual and visual imagery, which brings us to the last theme present in the U.S. media coverage of the event—human triumph and the emotional journey of the Chilean people. Not only did the Times tell the story of the miners, but it also painted a picture of the heroism of Chileans through visual and textual characterizations of the miners, their families, the rescuers, and the Chilean people at large.

Journalists did so by describing these people that gathered at Camp Hope. While U.S. citizens read about Chile’s technological advancements through the rescue plans described by reporters, they also saw the patriotism and faith of the nation in the community that built around the rescue site. Through reporters’ storytelling, news in the United States painted a more vivid picture that also represented the emotions and relationships that existed at Camp Hope. With this theme, the U.S. media conveyed and created emotional connections between its readers and Chile.

Consequently, the story entailed a strong human dimension that allowed for emotional resonance within readers. This made the narrative more compelling and allowed readers to identify with the miners and those who waited at the surface.

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150 This post by Kaufman expresses this sentiment well: “So far, the miners appear to be in good shape following their long ordeal, and it is reasonable to expect that this truly impressive operation will succeed in rescuing all of the trapped miners by the end of the day (learn more about the 33 miners, and how are they rescued). The resourceful miners, their relatives, the government and its leadership, as well as many expert workers from Chile and abroad, deserve enormous and shared credit in this remarkable tale of survival and ingenuity. The successful rescue of the miners is no “Chilean Miracle.” It is not the result of a supernatural act from above, but instead stems from the heroic strength of those entombed below ground and the indefatigable efforts of many others at ground level. The rescue is an act of people, of leaders and of good governance.”

The characterization began with the images presented in both pictures and in texts. Throughout the reporting, some of the main imagery in these articles was of Chilean flags hoisted up around the area of Camp Hope and the site of the rescue, and of the families of the miners waiting outside the mine (see Figures 2.10-2.11). Reporting on everything from the faith- and hope-filled conversations heard around the camp to the religious and patriotic artifacts visible, reporters for the Times set a specific stage—a scene sprinkled with red, white, and blue Chilean flags flying all around the desert in the makeshift city of Camp Hope.

This imagery along with word choices like in the following title highlighted how this story and the group of miners and their families synecdochically became a representation of the nation as a whole: “A Relieved Chile Braces for a Long Mine Rescue.” Coverage in the Times established the idea, for American audiences, that the people of Chile were united in a common emotional experience. All Chileans shared in the jubilant celebrations of families, friends, and compatriots upon hearing from the miners. Barrionuevo, the Times journalist who wrote extensively on the miners’ accident, quoted Omar Rojas, the son of one of the trapped miners, saying, “When the country suffers from a tragedy, everyone unites… And this is a mining country. It is as if this was happening to all of us.” The country, all together, suffered and erupted in joy at the news of the accident and the survival of the miners respectively. A great visual representation seen in the United States was when articles reported on how the miners were reached by the rescue teams for the first time and were able to “use a modified telephone to

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153 Ibid.
sing Chile’s national anthem to hundreds of teary-eyed relatives celebrating above.”\textsuperscript{154} In those same moments in Santiago, Chile’s capital located hours away from the site, reporters discussed how Chileans celebrated in the streets and subways as they heard of the miners’ survival.\textsuperscript{155}

The \textit{New York Times} article titled “Carnival Air Fills Chilean Camp as Miners’ Rescue Nears” from 10 October, continued to describe the elated, jubilant atmosphere at Camp Hope and the rescue site through vivid descriptions.\textsuperscript{156} See the following excerpts:

Clowns dance and pass out caramels. The wives and girlfriends of the 33 trapped miners are picking out sexy lingerie and getting their hair and nails done to receive their men. And relatives of the miners trapped nearly half a mile underground for more than two months have learned a new phrase — “motor home” — from their hundreds of new journalist friends. . . .

Such is life in Camp Hope, a moonlike outpost that has sprouted up as the temporary refuge for family members and about 1,300 journalists, many of whom have arrived in recent days to this gold and copper mine in northern Chile. . . .

Today the camp is dotted with Chilean flags, hanging laundry and posters with messages of support for the miners. Volunteer clowns roam the dusty roads blowing plastic horns and entertaining miners’ children, who study during the week in a makeshift classroom.

Despite its isolation, there is rarely a quiet moment at the camp. Musicians perform on a small stage in front of the cafeteria tent. A barbershop quartet sang last Wednesday afternoon. There was a children’s costume party on Sunday morning with boys dressed as Spiderman and girls as witches.

And there seems to be a constant stream of religious services, including a Mass on Sunday afternoon filmed by some 40 journalists, where Samuel Cerna, a Catholic missionary who drove eight hours to reach the mine, included them in his motivational sermon.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{157} Ibid
These descriptions painted a vivid picture for U.S. and international audiences of the hope-filled and celebratory families preparing to receive their husbands and sons. These textual descriptions evidenced how families’ and miners’ emotional states were supported and prioritized through these festivities. These rhetorical choices highlighted the awareness that news sources had about the emotional and psychological toll of living and witnessing this ordeal. Outlets like the *Times* seemed to demonstrate to worldwide audiences the importance of the mental support needed by the Chilean nation, the miners, and their families. News articles and imagery conveying deep emotion of how people were cared for at Camp Hope encouraged “strangers” across the world who were watching and worried about the miners’ well being. As President Piñera stated early on (and was quoted in the *Times*), the unity witnessed among the miners was an uplifting, hopeful, and a reassuring “strong message for the whole country,” and, thanks to international media, also for the world.\(^{158}\)

Reporters in the United States also wrote about individual miners, humanizing them in a way that allowed audiences to understand them more concretely. For example, by focusing on one of the miners, Luis Urzúa, the narrative in the United States gave an individual face to the miners. This made it easier to internalize and for audiences to embrace the story as a version of Chilean identity. Urzúa was an important source of hope for the miners. The *Times* reported on how the foreman and shift leader Urzúa banded the group together through this struggle, helping them remain hopeful and be “ready to be reborn.”\(^{159}\) Urzúa became a heroic face that U.S. media could showcase—his story fit this heroic personal narrative often seen in U.S. media


when covering tragedies. Telling the story of Urzúa’s role with the trapped miners fits within the context of a greater dramatic story of survival that is familiar to American audiences because it was a plot line they have experienced before in Hollywood movies and shows.

The details shared in the coverage in the *Times* demonstrated how the miners’ own humanity (evidenced in card games, energized fandom, and development of routines, among other descriptive details) were factors that helped sustain them in potentially insurmountable circumstances. U.S. reporters seemed impressed with the resourcefulness of the miners themselves and how they came to survive the ordeal.160 As journalists reported, despite the grueling accident they had endured, the miners were found to be mostly in good health “defying dire predictions.”161 The *Times* reported on the efforts by rescue crews, including psychologists, to keep the miners “working as a team and their minds focused” by playing games like dominoes and cards, and not revealing to them the grim reality of the potential length of their rescue so they would not lose hope.162

In imagery that furthered Chilean nationalism, news media both in Chile and internationally published photo after photo of the area showing Chilean flags surrounding the campground and other symbols of Chilean pride and unity of the nation (see Figures 2.10-2.11).163 Media outlets highlighted these symbols as evidence of the people’s patriotism


162 Ibid.

163 The entire digital print of this newspaper for 23 August covers the accident and the surfacing of the miners’ note, showing images of the campground, the note, and rescue plans. *La Tercera*. 23 August 2010. http://papeldigital.info/Lt/2010082301#2
and as a beacon of hope for the families and miners alike. These representations helped spread a message nationally and globally: this is “the Chilean way” and this is how united Chile’s people are. These expressions of unity and pride in the country provided support and brought together those waiting to be rescued, their families, and the nation at large. The overall imagery, which relied heavily on emotional appeals, created, I believe, admiration for the Chilean nation within the United States, both for its technological prowess as it prepared to rescue the miners, but also in its emotional and spiritual character that sustained them throughout.

**Media Coverage and Chilean Identity**

As we have seen with these four themes U.S. media coverage helped to define a particular identity for the country in the minds of international audiences. Journalists, both in the United States and in Chile (like we saw in Chapter 2), chose to report on stories that told of Chilean practicality and resourcefulness, advancing an image of an unrelenting, problem-solving, Chilean spirit, a spirit of both romantic optimism and pragmatic hard work. Reporters quoted President Piñera himself as being aware of the influence this moment had in representing the nation to the international community when he dubbed their efforts to deal with the crisis as “The Chilean Way.”

As mentioned, American reporters also noted how Chileans were well aware of how this story could influence the international reputation of their nation. Journalists wrote about how during the actual extraction of every miner to the surface through the Phoenix—the rescue capsule that sported a Chilean flag—audiences could witness a choir of patriotic cheers of “Chi!

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165. “President Piñera put it quite aptly as soon as everybody was out of the mineshaft when he said, “We did it the Chilean Way,” a phrase that other heads of state have since repeated.” Vargas Llosa, Alvaro. “The Chilean Way.” *Real Clear Politics*. 20 October 2010. http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/10/20/the_chilean_way_107646.html
Chi! Chi! Le! Le! Le! Viva Chile!!” President Piñera also waited for each miner, demonstrating that the country had not abandoned its citizens. Reactions to this imagery around the world were extremely positive. For example, U.S. President Barack Obama was quoted in the Times saying, “This rescue is a tribute not only to the determination of the rescue workers and the Chilean government, but also the unity and resolve of the Chilean people, who have inspired the world.” This crisis united Chile, USA Today noted, and “its pride was infectious.”

The media in Chile did a good job through the representations of this dramatic event to highlight the moments that put Chileans forth as this self-reliant, problem-solving, loyal, hardworking, obdurate, and faith-filled people. The media in and out of the country shaped a narrative that created a positive character for Chile, despite the terrible circumstances. They chose to highlight the patriotic artifacts and cheers that abounded at Camp Hope, and the rigorous work being done to rescue the miners. “With Latin stubbornness, they did not give up,” said Chilean opinion writer for the Huffington Post Paula Escobar Chavarría, “and through a system that was baptized as the Chilean way, they were able to get [the miners] out.”

One important result of this framing was that the news media presented the event, the survival, and eventual rescue of the trapped miners as a communal or collective victory for the

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entire nation.\textsuperscript{170} Although, as I will discuss in the next chapter, certain individuals received a great deal of attention during the process, the overarching narrative distributed the honor and glory of the rescue’s success across the nation as a whole. “Despite the concerns” expressed regarding the facts of the accident, news sources reported that “the rescue attempt ha[d] energized the entire nation” especially after the earthquake it had just experienced in late February of that year.\textsuperscript{171}

There were different nuances and discrepancies in the portrayals presented by Chile’s news outlets and U.S. channels based on their various priorities and audiences. We see this in how within media sources in the United States, Chilean culture ran the risk of being commoditized. Because of the emotional and dramatic nature of U.S. coverage, it was easy to shift the miners from “heroes” to stock characters. For example, the stories of Yonni Barrios and Edison Peña are examples of how the Chilean miners eventually became an object of entertainment.\textsuperscript{172} Barrios emerged from the mine to find a messy situation with his spouse and alleged mistress, creating what the \emph{Times} described as a story having “a bit more sizzle.”\textsuperscript{173} Upon exiting the mine, Barrios’ ex-wife and his new partner were both waiting for him. The melodramatic situation was so popular among U.S. audiences that it led to both a song on

\begin{itemize}
YouTube, many Halloween costumes that year of “miner number 21,” and to Barrios becoming, in a way, a hero of a different persuasion for American audiences (see Figure 3.4). Peña, on the other hand, came to be known for his affinity for Elvis Presley music and impersonations. When the 12th miner was rescued, CNN played “Jailhouse Rock” and the anchor announced, “Edison Peña, this is for you!” CNN was not the only one to focus on this affinity. When Peña flew to the United States in early November for the New York City marathon and to be a guest on The Late Show with David Letterman, he sang some Elvis tunes for the audience (see Figures 5.1-5.2). These two stories, shared by various media outlets in the United States, demonstrate how reports helped to create a caricature of the Chilean man, commodifying them into symbols of entertainment.

This chapter shows how potential complexities of Latina/o experience were not evident in this simplistic portrayal, but rather were easily reduced in U.S. media to the “juicy” details, making the miners and the nation an entertaining novelty. Halloween costumes of Chilean miners in 2010 are a perfect example of how a moment that initially redefined a nation’s identity in particular ways, in the end, merely made possible yet another stock character for the entertainment of American audiences. This process shows how the eclectic nature of Latinas/os could so easily be blurred and the gravity and incredible feat of surviving a dangerous mine

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collapse quickly diminished.177 For U.S. audiences, the miners were never really “like us” after all. They were just objects of entertainment.

In the end, due to television appearances and the explosion of Chilean miners as jokes and amusing characters, I believe that a cycle of ignorance about Chile continued. While the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue temporarily disrupted the invisibility that usually veils Latin American nations, it was not able to reconstitute in any lasting manner the image of Chileans held by the U.S. public in the media.178 These politics of recognition, discussed by Charles Taylor, recognize the failure of that recognition to be long-lasting.179 In the end, Latin Americans continue to be perceived as one undifferentiated group of people. While Chileans originally were recognized and respected for their efforts, this recognition evolved into one that made them stock characters representative of the Latin American “Other,” turning into them into entertainment that eventually disappeared into the same backdrop of a generalized Latin America.

**Conclusion**

Language plays a large role in the creation of social realities and can be a constitutive force of the public sphere, evidencing the effects of rhetorical practice in everyday reality and in self-identification. In the case of the Chilean miners, it is possible to see how a subject is

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178 On 1 August 2013, news broke that after a 3-year investigation on the cause of the accident, the San Esteban Primera Mining Company was found not guilty of all charges and the case was dropped, to the dismay of the miners involved in the accident. This is just another example of how there is lacking a deep concern for the workers and to doing justice by them. Escobar Chavarría, Paula. “De los 33 mineros chilenos: la justicia no llega.” The Huffington Post: Voces. 2 August 2013. voces.huffingtonpost.com/paula-escobar-chavarria/la-justicia-no-llega_b_3696687.html

influenced and defined through the media, how it influences and defines itself, and how different audiences in turn try to define it. The miners’ accident was a moment that, due to its relatively widespread media coverage, presented a rhetorical process that attempted to reconfigure international relationships between Latin America and the international community, specifically the United States. These two chapters engaged these concepts by envisioning how the media defined an identity of Chileans and the miners and what differences, if any, were evidenced in Chilean media versus U.S. media. In a moment that calls for awe at the sight of resiliency and determination of the human spirit and of people coming together for a cause and common goal, the public culture in Chile and representations of national pride were evident examples in news reports of a particular national identity. They demonstrated the points made by Stuart Hall when studying the structure of identity as a “production” that is “never complete, always in process.”

Chapters two and three conclude with a picture of how media sources saw and constituted a Chilean identity at this particular moment. These chapters explain how the media both in Chile and in the United States, through the choices of what and how they told the story of the miners, represented the Chilean person. In the next two chapters, I will analyze in more detail the discourse that surrounded Chile’s President and other politicians, as well as the voces of the miners when they got to speak. The focus and presentation of Chilean pride evidenced in the media was effusive and incurred emotional responses from audiences around the world. However, what did this boisterous portrayal do for other forms of identity that may have been present? Chapters four and five will look at different agents of Chilean identity and what these different voices had to say in comparison to what we have seen here. Chapter five will try to

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give a platform to the potentially unheard voices the media blocked out, diminished, or ignored for the sake of a more sensational story. What do the miners say that media sources grazed over in terms of their working conditions and the dangers of this line of work, as well as what compensation they receive for their work? Before that chapter, however, I would like to focus on the voices that emerged from the Chilean government. In many respects, government agents and politicians collaborated with the Chilean media to construct a particular interpretation of the accident and the rescue. Nevertheless, an analysis of the specific comments made by government officials does reveal some important differences and an opportunity to investigate the risks and rewards that the Chilean government pursued in how it discussed this event.
Chapter 4

A Government’s Narrative: 
Speaking for the People, Defining the Spirit of Chile

As noted so far, the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue was a moment that temporarily altered how the world viewed Chileans specifically, but also Latinas/os generally. The previous chapters looked at media representations in Chile and the United States, observing common threads and points of dissonance between the story told by Chilean media and the narrative of U.S. media. While both Chilean and U.S. media focused on the story of struggle, survival, brotherhood, the rescue efforts, and national pride exhibited during this moment, eventually U.S. media distilled the story to the Chilean miner as entertainment. The depiction of Chileans evolved from first an individual nation, then a respected and revered country, to iconic caricatures and jokes of the Latin American “Other” only to disappear into the backdrop of Latin American sameness that audiences in the United States seem to prefer. One can even say that the brief moment of recognition was, itself, an illusion, an ephemeral occurrence that lasted only a few weeks. In the end, the idea of who Chileans are in the United States remained almost unchanged.

While the media had a strong hand in creating images of Chilean identity, it was also a platform and tool used by other parties to express a related vision. That is what I would like to engage in this chapter. In this chapter I will examine how the Chilean government—and its officials—did its part to shape the story and how each of the characters of the story was represented. As we look at the government’s narrative, there will be some overlap with the media chapters. This is not surprising since government officials
used the Chilean media, and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. media to advance their agenda. Where the analysis in this chapter will differ is in its examination of how the narrative both used time and evolved over time for officials’ political advantage.

The government officials in Chile that I will discuss here had a clear understanding that this accident was a risk but, more importantly, also an opportunity. They tried to affect control over the story and, thereby, over the vision of Chile that the world would receive. In this chapter, I argue that “controlling the narrative” for government agencies meant creating specific representations of Chile and insulating certain government officials from blame. Rhetoric in this scenario “exists for the purpose of wielding power by enacting the interest of a speaker in a specific, real-world context.” 181 Through rhetoric, the Chilean government tried to enact its own priorities from within the real world context of the accident and rescue. This rhetorical process required a sophisticated entanglement of textual constructions with real-life contexts and the “audience’s active participation.” 182 In the end, the government’s narrative about who Chileans are became “true,” as it was consumed (through news media) by worldwide audiences. By contextualizing or carefully “adapt[ing]… rhetorical narratives to the specific context of the discourse in which they appear,” the potential effects of the story narrated by government agencies become evident. 183

In this chapter, I contend that the Chilean government sought to control the narrative surrounding the accident and the rescue through creative articulations of two narra-


182 Lucaites, 100

183 Lucaites, 98
tive elements—time and characterization. That is, through a careful and strategic discourse that created temporal boundaries and points of chronological emphasis, government agencies sought to direct the media—both domestic and international—toward an understanding of the event that portrayed the Chilean government and its interests in the best light possible. Further, by characterizing the rescuers, the miners, and the government itself as remarkable, extraordinary heroes in a difficult situation, government agencies both became part of the heroic story and reinforced a particular character for the nation of Chile. In addition to examining government officials generally, this chapter will examine two important government officials, Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne and President Sebastian Piñera, in relation to the Chilean miners and to a powerful Chilean identity that impacted both officials’ careers, though not in the same way.184

**Characterization in the Narrative**

The characters within a narrative are, of course, major building blocks of storytelling because they help move the action forward. Aristotle wrote in *Poetics* that, “thought and characters—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success and failure depends.”185 He defines character as that “in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents.”186 Characters are a critical part of the narrative they define; therefore, the characterization of certain parties within a narrative is crucial. They are woven together from “strands of action, information, and personal

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186 Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Chapter VI
traits.”187 The actions define the characters, and the characters build the narrative arc.

Boris Tomashevsky and Roland Barthes, as quoted in Wallace Martin’s 1986 work Recent Theories of Narrative, also make “characters an integral part of the narrative,” and thereby acknowledge there is a “dominance of character over action in modern narrative.”188

With these thoughts in mind, I turn my attention to the characterization of government actors and how these actors characterized the other agents in this drama to understand the essence of the government’s story.

Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne: An Official Face for the Rescue Effort

One of the most critical actors throughout the mining accident was Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne. An analysis of characterization within the rescue narrative would be remiss if it did not include an overview of the persona created by and for the Secretary. The media and other government officials discussed Golborne with the adoration typically reserved for celebrities. In many respects, he became a celebrity with the press who followed his travel plans and activities on a nearly daily basis.189 Even before the rescue was complete, news articles talking about Golborne discussed how he was rat-

187 Aristotle’s Poetics, Chapter VI


189 During a display of the Phoenix II capsule used during the rescue just a few days after its completion, “it was without a doubt Minister Golborne who took home the applause and the love of the people, and from whom people even asked for autographs.”

“Pero fue sin duda el Ministro Golborne quien se llevó todos los aplausos y el cariño de la gente y al que incluso le pidieron autógrafos.”


Laurence Golborne had only been Secretary of Mining for a few months (since Piñera took office on 11 March 2010) when the mining accident occurred. This accident was his first test as Secretary for the industry, and, as news reports and press releases seemed to show, Golborne took to the job with efficacy and dedication. Ministry press releases discussed how he took control of the rescue operations, leading important meetings regarding detailed technical considerations as they moved forward with the plans for the rescue.\footnote{“Ministro Laurence Golborne lidera reunion de coordinación técnica en mina San Jose.” Comunicado de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 6 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-laurence-golborne-lidera-reunion-de-coordinacion-tecnica-en-mina-san-jose/} In many respects, Golborne became not just a leader but the face of the government. When he spoke, he acted for a government that, according to news reports, fully supported his every statement and decision. According to government releases and media reports, Golborne worked in “complete coordination” with authorities and techni-
cal personnel in planning the logistics of the rescue, reviewing zoning models, and planning the details of the extraction process.\textsuperscript{194} Even before the miners were removed from their underground prison, Golborne started to work on improving the mining industry by presiding over a committee meeting about the restructuring of Sernageomin, the Chilean government agency that helps regulate the mining industry.\textsuperscript{195}

Once the rescue was over, Golborne spoke at the Chamber of Deputies’ investigative commission on the San José mining accident to describe the rescue, the cost, and results, and to advocate for increased protection of laborers in Chilean mines—particularly since, as affirmed in the meeting, employee safety is “not a priority of the private companies” who own the mines.\textsuperscript{196} At this meeting, Golborne called on “businesses and workers to be aware of the importance of taking measures that protect the integrity, life, and health of each one of the[ir] employees.”\textsuperscript{197} Upon his return to Santiago and to the Ministry of Mining headquarters after a successful rescue, Golborne was “received with applause and happiness” by his department.\textsuperscript{198} Golborne gave a call to continue to improve the mining industry in Chile, and then returned his audience’s affection by thanking the


\textsuperscript{195} As noted in Chapter 2, Golborne asked Alejandro Vio and two collaborators to resign after the errors of the agency came to light to explain the cause of this accident. “Ministro Laurence Golborne preside reunión de comité de reestructuración de Sernageomin.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 14 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-laurence-golborne-preside-reunion-de-comite-de-reestructuracion-de-sernageomin/

\textsuperscript{196} “Ministro Golborne concurrió a Comisión Investigadora de la Cámara por accidente en la mina San José.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 10 November 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-golborne-concurrio-a-comision-investigadora-de-la-camara-por-accidente-en-mina-san-jose/

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.

“civil servants of the ministry for their vital management on the “Operation San Lorenzo”.”

Due to the success of the rescue operation, and even before it was completed, Golborne became a “political phenomenon.” He went from being one of the least known members of the cabinet—with 16% popularity rating in July—to becoming the highest graded member of the cabinet—with 67% rating in early September, and, finally, a 78% approval rating for his performance at the end of the ordeal. Goldborne added to his mystique of being a legend with humble statements. He was quoted as saying, “it is important to have your feet on the ground and not get confused. I am no rockstar. I am a secretary of the State.” This deference did not stop speculation from other members in government that Golborne would be running as a presidential candidate three years later.

While the miners were referred to as heroes throughout the ordeal, Golborne also assimilated quickly into the role of lead organizer and rescuer. Golborne’s characterization helped advance the identity narrative that Chileans are a hardworking, dedicated,
faithful people, with public servants whose main concern are the Chilean people. This narrative then emphasized that idea that Chileans are a tough, yet humble and warm community that cares for each of their own, much in the way its political figures—like Secretary Golborne—demonstrated.

**Creating a Temporal Framework**

In addition to characterization, this critical analysis considers the question of time and its relation to narrative. Early on in the development of the miners’ story, government officials became involved in the process of creating a specific sense of time and narrative for the media to distribute to the public. John Frow states in the introduction to his 1997 collection of essays *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* that specific forms are “understood as a central constituent of reality.”

Through this chapter, I argue that time and its unfolding is one of these central narrative forms that constitute how reality is perceived by audiences. Many theorists, philosophers, and public address scholars have demonstrated concern with time, its intellectual conceptions, and reception by audiences. From Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Poetics*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, and Heidegger’s *Being and Time* to Paul Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative* and Wesley Kort’s *Modern Fiction and Human Time: A Study in Narrative and Belief* among many others, authors’ analyses have been fraught with struggles to understand time and its effects on reality.

Michael Leff, for example, discusses temporality in the context of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural in a 1988 issue of *Communication Reports*. Among close textual critics like Leff and Stephen Lucas, the study of time as it unfolds within a textual object reveals

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much about how that same text constructs meaning and reality. As Leff states, “close reading [of certain texts] demonstrates” that temporal progressions are “more than a device for separating gross structural units of these discourses.”

Like this chapter shows, “temporal movement… seems essential to [discourses’] rhetorical economy,” framing the action of the text that is then projected “onto the public events that form the subject of the discourse.” Therefore, these temporal frames used in the retelling of the event “seem to inform one another and to cooperate in imparting meaning to events,” as will be evident with the political narrative in the miners’ accident.

In rhetorical scholarship, more criticism on time and its rhetorical power exist in the work of Michelle Bolduc and David Frank. Bolduc and Frank critique Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s theory of time as delineated in The New Rhetoric.

They discuss the importance of time for human experience, particularly in argumentation. “In the new rhetoric’s constellation,” state Bolduc and Frank, “the audience is a construction of the speaker who is affected by exigences; similarly, reason and logic are constructions yielding to the forces of time and context.” As we will see be-

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206 Leff, 26

207 Leff, 31 “The speech is a verbal act that embodies the limitations of human action. In the perfection of its utterance, it yields to the imperfections of the human condition, and by yielding, transcends them. Lincoln well understood the limits of any single voice in influencing the course of political history. That understanding permeates the speech, drives its symbolic action forward, and leads its author to a mood of reverie from which he only partially returns.” Leff, 30; Leff’s analysis continues: “The mediation between these frames is effected by the rhetorical action of the text itself, which embodies the connection and, in doing so, induces us to accept its plausibility as an explanation of the moral significance of political events.”


209 Ibid.

210 Ibid, 313.
low with Paul Ricoeur, these thinkers look at how context and previous knowledge and circumstances create pieces of the narrative and, therefore, the overall narrative itself. But most importantly for this piece of the analysis, time then is an element to which the narrative must yield.211 “Everything changes when it enters time… therefore, time changes and defines everything,” write Bolduc and Frank.212 While the orator can decide and define timeframes in which to house her or his narrative, so the orator is also “affected and limited by the time and place” she or he occupies.213 Therein lies the power and limits of rhetoric in the context of time—it can create a narrative, but it also limits the narrative.

Ricoeur’s work also supports the theory that time can be used to constitute new realities. He theorizes about the connection of time to narrative and human experience, postulating that “time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.”214 In this symbiotic relationship, one creates and extends the other. Thus, temporal constructions in narrative can be vital functions of storytelling, and, thereby, of the construction of rhetorical identities. This understanding supports Wesley Kort’s claim that

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211“Their model begins with the analogy of argument as a "succession of knots" within a larger flow of human consciousness. These knots are expressions of reasons that have both diachronic and synchronic meaning. Both the object of argument and its logic are affected and shaped by a preceding history, the exigencies of the moment, and visions of the future. Argument is carried out within planes of time that overlap. Operating within the limits of time, those who engage in argument must make choices, as advocates will never command all of the reasons and proofs available or necessary on a given issue. There are precedents and models one can rely on to launch an argument, but because inertia rather than good reason may impel an advocate to use them, they may be subjected to interrogation.”
Ibid, 314.

212 Ibid, 315

213 “The last, a notion causing the greatest confusion and controversy in the new rhetoric's system, is the vision an orator has of what a universal audience would find reasonable. Even this vision of universality, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca conclude, is affected and limited by the time and place occupied by the orator.”
Ibid, 315


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time has primacy, and is trustworthy yet complex. According to Kort, the “sequence of events is prominent, even dominant,” making plot “important for the force and meaning of the work.” Creating this narrative plot “grants wholeness or meaningfulness,” giving purpose and a sense to humanity, whose time “must be understood indirectly, by way of narrative plot.” Time, therefore, plays a crucial role in the development of a narrative where the historical framework of a specific event is critical. It creates an arc and has a “mediating role” of, as Ricoeur states, “emplotment between the temporal aspects prefigured in the practical field and the refiguration of our temporal experience by this constructed time.”

From this perspective, time, dependent on its prior framework but with a new reformation, is crucial for the creation of a certain narrative meaning. In a narrative like this instance—specifically in news reports—there is a “destiny of a prefigured time”—the previous event, the context, of what has occurred—“that becomes a refigured [or reconstructed] time through the mediation of a configured time.” The original moment of the mining disaster was redefined temporally into a narrative that was expressed by government agencies and then distributed in the press. Seen from this perspective, the entity, the Chilean government, that attempted to control the temporal construction of a narrative used its agency to create a certain “reality” or meaning.


216 Kort, 3

217 Kort 9, 4

218 Ricoeur, 54

219 Ricoeur, 54
Analysis of the Chilean Government’s Narrative

During the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue, government agencies attempted to reconfigure the reality of the accident by focusing on three temporal elements. First, they prioritized a narrative that features the *duration* of the miners’ time underground, the future of the rescue, the *length* of the rescue efforts, etc. Second, they manipulated the *frequency* of how often their narrative and talking points were presented before the public. Third, within their talking points they used a continuous *redundancy* of timelines.\(^{220}\) In this third element, we see a *chronology* of events that is repeatedly recounted in press releases and communications from government officials, and in turn in news stories. In this way, time was woven into the fabric of storytelling of this major national event in Chile, maintaining the government’s grip on the facts presented.

From early on in talking about the situation, government officials representing the Mining Ministry in the Chilean government made sure to give a timeframe for the accident and the potential rescue of the miners. Headlines quoting government officials informed readers that the earliest the rescue could occur would be just before Christmas.\(^{221}\) For officials, giving a potential timeframe by which the ordeal would end was important, but they were careful not to be too optimistic. Their comments served to give comfort to both the miners’ families and the Chilean people. In addition, discussing a timeframe for the rescue established an expectation for the rest of the world and affirmed that Chile was in control of this difficult situation.


While discussions about what originally went wrong occurred earlier on—as evidenced through the blame game in chapter two—official statements from government agencies did not focus much on what led to the problem but rather on the changes that needed to be made for the future. Discussions quickly moved the focus from talking about the past, which focused on the accident, to planning and imagining the future, which allowed government officials to redirect the attention to the rescue efforts and highlight their active role in remedying the disaster.

In order to do this, the narrative from government agencies moved from a cause-and-effect narrative to a rescue narrative quickly. The version presented by government agencies featured detailed attention to the minutest aspects of daily life and rescue efforts: from how many miners underground and how long they had been trapped, to what they were doing to sustain, entertain, and prepare themselves for the rescue. In addition, government officials discussed the physical details of the situation and how the government and its agencies were actively working towards a successful rescue. Officials’ focus on the minute details of the rescue efforts demonstrated that this was a complex operation but that it was ultimately manageable for government agencies, who had the Chilean

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222 As stated in these articles, quickly after the accident, the only mention the government made of the errors that may have led to the accident were in reference to government’s efforts to remedy these issues.


“El Ministro de Minería agregó que situaciones como esta “confirman que hay que revisar normas de seguridad en faenas mineras” y que los empresarios deben tomar conciencia que deben seguir estándares de seguridad, y tienen un deber ético, porque la seguridad de las personas está de por medio”,”


223 Ibid.
people’s interests at heart. In addition, the continued focus and repetition of the rescue’s timetable created the idea of expertise on the part of the men and women involved, as directed by the Ministry of Mining. By focusing on the present and future in this particular fashion, the message the government sent was one of competence and technological expertise as opposed to the highly probable narrative of tragedy and chaos caused by prior government and industry negligence.

Again, even though reports early on included information regarding the history of the mine, these eventually fell to the margins, leaving eye-catching headlines about the rescue as the primary focus: “Desperate Fight Against Time to Find Miners Alive,” “Experts and Government Afraid Rescue of Miners Could Take Months,” “Rescue with Excavating Machine from Codelco Will Take 3-4 Months.” These headlines and the stories that followed them directed the public’s attention toward the rescue plans and efforts, rather than the problematic cause of the accident. Direct communication from the government—in the form of press releases from the Ministry of Mining—continually refocused the public’s attention on the immediate actions underway. Secretary Golborne, for example, immediately traveled to the region and created a task force to work on the

224 Like the focus on the efficacy and expediency of the actual extraction process:
“The rescue operative will not cease until we can count with all the miners back with their families and all rescuers back safely. Starting now, the rescue will occur in a continuous fashion so that each miner can complete the trajectory that lasts approximately 16 minutes in the capsule.”
“El operativo de rescate no cesará hasta contar con todos los mineros de vuelta a sus familias y con todos los rescatistas que desciendan. A partir de ahora el rescate se realizará de forma continuada para que cada minero cumpla el trayecto que dura aproximadamente 16 minutos en la cápsula.”

search and rescue. “Government authorities, emergency services, and technical experts from diverse companies and entities are working without rest to free these people in optimal conditions,” said one government release (emphasis added). The release further established that the government placed “all human and technical resources” at the disposal of those who were working to solve this emergency “as soon as possible.” In fact, Secretary Golborne himself, according to a government spokesperson, “worked intensely on-site to accelerate the rescue efforts that [would] take around 3 to 4 months.”

One temporal strategy used by government officials was to divide time, segmenting the accident and the rescue into digestible chunks each with its own important elements that officials could address separately. Some of the temporal frames and markers governmental reports focused on were: how long it had been since the accident, how long it would be until they could get the miners out, how long the process of extraction would take, when the world finally heard from the men underground, how long they survived underground on their own, what routines and schedules they created to survive, and even how long they would spend inside the Phoenix 2 capsule on their trajectory up the mine.

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226 Ministerio de Minería, Chile. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/


228 Ibid.

229 As stated, news sources and official governmental press releases used temporal boundaries for the mining accident in Chile to isolate the issue and focus primarily on the rescue.
These temporal divisions oriented audiences towards the immediate facts of the rescue and policies now in place to resolve the issue, making the ordeal manageable not only for the public to process, but for the government to handle.

Government press releases’ emphasis on the solutions processes had the effect of presenting a positive spin and favorable image for the government. Maintaining the focus on the rescue efforts (not before, not after) was critical to set the tone for a new President’s administration. The Ministry of Mining in Chile understood how important it was to craft this particular timeline for this crisis, because it understood the power that narrative and plot have to create a specific reality and the vital need to be part of the group of storytellers guiding that reality. The government needed to direct the narrative so its story of efficacy and success would prevail. For this reason, officials tried to influence media conversations from the onset. It was vital that Chileans saw the administration’s approval and effectiveness while in office in order to prove that the administration was an advocate of the people, an efficient and dedicated entity running the nation. To do this, government and Ministry of Mining officials released frequent press releases and participated in interviews with journalists to define the limits of the situation and contain the conversation to the rescue efforts rather than to a history where the government’s oversight of the mining industry may have been lax.


“The rescue operative will not cease until we can count with all the miners back with their families and all rescuers back safely. Starting now, the rescue will occur in a continuous fashion so that each miner can complete the trajectory that lasts approximately 16 minutes in the capsule.”

“El operativo de rescate no cesará hasta contar con todos los mineros de vuelta a sus familias y con todos los rescatistas que desciendan. A partir de ahora el rescate se realizará de forma continuada para que cada minero cumpla el trayecto que dura aproximadamente 16 minutos en la cápsula.”

A Transcendent Timeline: Using the 200th Anniversary of Chilean Independence

As the rescue plans and efforts moved forward, the government took advantage of an unrelated event to enhance their efforts to control the media narrative and guide the country into a transcendent, positive future. 18 September of 2010 was the bicentennial anniversary of the country’s independence and many celebrations had been planned in advance of the accident to commemorate the milestone. However, when the rescue of the miners looked bleak, the media expressed concerns that the accident might affect plans for the upcoming nation celebration. In official press releases, however, the government and the Ministry of Mining, made it clear that the nation would proceed with the bicentennial plans. In what can be seen as efforts to maintain some semblance of equanimity and reassure the nation of the government’s ability to work through this terrible struggle, officials told the country, repeatedly, that they had faith everything would end well and that the nation’s independence would be celebrated as planned. In fact, they used the opportunity to praise the nation and impart more expressions of national pride, taking positive meaning out of the ordeal with the miners, as we will see below.

Most notably, and before a speedy rescue of the miners was ever certain, the Ministry of Mining reported that a piece of rock from the San José mine would be included in a time capsule to be opened one hundred years later by future Chilean generations. In a ceremony placing the items in the Bicentennial Capsule, Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne stated,


In 100 years more, we will be witnesses, we will remember this heroic deed, and those 33 enterprising miners that were able to overcome a unique situation, and a country that together fought united for their rescue, and that demonstrated that when we set out one single objective and we all push in the same direction, we can accomplish great results.\textsuperscript{233}

For national leaders like Golborne and President Piñera, the opportunity to include a piece of the mine into the capsule as a “witness” to this moment led to explicit comparisons between the mine, the ongoing rescue, and the Chile’s transcendent identity as a nation. This “piece of rock from the mine is solid and hard,” said Golborne, “like our conviction and certainty that we will be able to rescue them, and like the unity that the nation has shown in these days.”\textsuperscript{234} This moment presented them with the opportunity to bring the country forward, and highlight those qualities present throughout the miners’ accident and rescue that, according to these leaders, represented the entire nation.

In many news reports and press releases, Golborne is quoted expressing great urgency about completing this rescue process in time so the miners could spend Christmas together with their families.\textsuperscript{235} As noted in Wesley Kort’s discussion of time, these priori-

\textsuperscript{233} “En 100 años más vamos a ver este testigo, vamos a recordar esta gesta, a esos 33 esforzados mineros que lograron superar una situación única, y a un país completo que luchó por su rescate unido, y que demostró que cuando planteamos un solo objetivo y todos empujamos en la misma dirección se pueden lograr grandes resultados”, dijo el Ministro de Minería.

“Ministro Golborne entrega trozo de roca de Mina San José a la Cápsula Bicentenario.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 15 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-golborne-entrega-trozo-de-roca-de-mina-san-jose-a-la-capsula-bicentenario/

\textsuperscript{234} “En la oportunidad, el Ministro de Minería incluyó en la cápsula que guardará los recuerdos del Chile actual para las futuras generaciones del tricentenario, un testimonio y un recuerdo de la tragedia de la Mina San José, representado en un “testigo”, trozo de roca que han sacado las máquinas que perforan para rescatar a los 33 mineros que aún permanecen atrapados bajo la tierra. “Este es un testigo, un trozo de roca de la mina, es sólida y dura, como nuestra convicción y seguridad de poder rescatarlos, y como la unión que ha demostrado el país en estos días”, afirmó.”

“Ministro Golborne entrega trozo de roca de mina San José a la capsula bicentenario.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 15 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-golborne-entrega-trozo-de-roca-de-mina-san-jose-a-la-capsula-bicentenario/


ties demonstrate how the time established by the government did not allow the tragedy of the accident to interfere with the larger timeframe of the nation or its continued development. It also helped to give hope and keep the miners’ spirits up. Quite explicitly, the government argued that the celebrations of Chile’s independence and founding as a nation needed to coexist with the inevitable rescue of the miners, and in fact, functioned within the rescue as inspiration and motivation. During the bicentennial celebrations in September, there was a concert in the Atacama desert near the site of the mine collapse. President Piñera, his wife, Secretary Golborne, and other government officials attended the concert, demonstrating both their faith in the eventual success of the rescue and their commitment to celebrating the nation. As a sign of gratitude from the miners, but also another opportunity to express the shared hope for the nation, President Piñera was presented with a Chilean flag signed by all 33 miners who were still trapped underground.236 This symbol of pride coming from deep within the mine plays into the narrative that for this nation, even for the trapped miners, their love of country and all it means to them is almost pivotal to their own survival. It is the strength that allows them to continue to persevere despite so many adverse conditions.

By rooting the rescue in the context of a bicentennial anniversary, Golborne and other government officials did multiple things: firstly, it affirmed the government’s faith, for the nation and international audiences, that the rescue would succeed even before it was executed. Secondly, it affirmed the importance and value of the miners and their fam-

236 This concert not only celebrated the country’s independence, but also served to commemorate the declaration of a national park as a protected wildlife area.
ilies to the entire nation. Thirdly, it commemorated the moment as a historical source of national pride, helping to move the nation forward and out of this moment of fear. The crisis was not only contextualized in the nation’s larger history, but this focus on the nation’s 200th anniversary helped these government agencies be able to lift the public—the nation at large—from a crisis and out of this moment in time. It was a vehicle to extract Chileans from this frightening tragedy and time of crisis, and helped them transcend into a commemorative time that reveals the important qualities they see in Chile. The commemorations and celebrations of the nation’s hard fought independence amidst the rescue efforts helped create a palpable feeling that through their perseverance, they would succeed. The miners then exemplified the characteristics that are important for the Chilean people as they understood and expressed an important part of national identity in the bicentennial celebrations.

**Characterization of the Miners and Government as a Whole**

In the analysis of the media narratives in the previous chapters, audiences were provided with answers to various character questions: who were the miners? What did they look like? Who were they emotionally, psychologically, socially, etc.? In this section, I ask, what were the critical qualities highlighted by official government communicators? What does this characterization say about the construction of identity and the role of the government in its creation? How did it differ from what the media established? These questions address the issue of the government’s agency in creating the narrative of this story, highlighting how characterization (of the miners and other figures) played an important role in the formation of the ultimate character—that of Chile as a nation.
As mentioned in the previous chapters, this identity is not just about “‘who [Chileans] are’ or ‘where [they] came from’, so much as what [they] might become, how [they] have been represented and how that bears on how [they] might represent themselves.”

While Chilean officials “play[ed] down the importance of the rescue to Chile’s [national] image and that of Mr. Piñera’s government,” the government was spending millions on the rescue and “seem[ed] always to be one step ahead of the growing international horde,” catering to the influx of international reporters that were arriving to cover the rescue. Alessandra Stanley of the *New York Times* called it a “reality show expertly produced by the Chilean government” that “spared no expense to free the miners and accommodate media coverage.” Thus, officials expressed outwardly that their only focus was on rescuing the miners, but their efforts to catered to journalists and structured a coherent mediated narrative that demonstrates their awareness of the opportunity for a representation of Chile that was positive and international in scope. For this reason, government officials also took great pains to present specific qualities of the miners, of Chileans, and of course, of the President, and his administration.

When asked about the civil actions that would be brought against the state to determine which public officers were responsible for the accident, officials from the Min-

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238 Secretary of Mining Laurence Golborne was quoted by *The New York Times* as saying, “I have no problem with the idea that everybody is watching this. … We are very focused on rescuing these guys. I don’t give too much attention to that.” “In the past week earth-moving vehicles have cleared new parking lots, and new cell towers have sprouted up to ensure that the media have high-speed Internet and cellphone connections. More portable toilets have appeared. (The BBC rented four toilets for its team of more than three dozen reporters and technicians, but has scaled back to two.).” Barrionuevo, Alexei. “Carnival Air Fills Chilean Camp as Miners’ Rescue Nears.” *The New York Times*. 10 October 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/11/world/americas/11chile.html?ref=chileminingaccident2010

istry of Interior responded, “we have in the mine a rescue operation, and we are not involved in matters of the courts as they are part of a different circuit.” Government officials repeated this statement, and it functioned to set the agenda or to “prime” the public away from questions of blame and responsibility. In the process, Chilean government officials worked to maintain the image that Secretary Golborne had presented less than a month before the accident. In that statement, the Ministry of Mining hailed the great contributions of that industry to the national economy and to the value of its citizens. “We should be proud to be a mining country,” Golborne had said just a couple of weeks before the accident.

The government’s desire to present itself and Chileans as intensely dedicated to the effort of bringing these men to safety began immediately after the accident. In early August a press release from the Ministry of Mining stated,

Government authorities, emergency institutions, and technical experts from diverse businesses and other entities are working without rest to free the people in optimal conditions. The government has put all of its re-

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241 This press release focused on motivating the nation to be proud of its mining industry and the contributions it provides for the nation as a whole. It also highlights a need to take care of communities in the surrounding areas to mining, since these communities have not developed a higher quality of life or reached standards of developed nations. Marcos Lima, professor at the Universidad Católica de Chile, stated that in order to improve the mining industry’s contributions to the nation and to the perception that it has of the industry, it is necessary to “do research and diffuse the information; make the “Norte Grande” a developed nation; be open to the community and opinion leaders; incorporate itself to the financial sector; and integrate itself to production chains.” These are interesting prescriptions to note given the inordinate amounts of attention that the mining industry received due to the accident.


sources, human and technical, to solve the emergency as soon as possible (emphasis added).\textsuperscript{243}

While the government never addressed the question of who was to blame in the accident, they did address the concern of mine safety, but they did so only after the miners were rescued. Throughout the rescue, governmental communications focused on the efforts being made. Afterward, when final reports were presented, Golborne called on “businessmen and other workers in the mining industry to realize the importance of taking measures that protect the integrity, life, and health of each of their employees.”\textsuperscript{244} These concerns for changes in the industry demonstrated how government’s focus shifted over the course of the rescue. Now that the rescue was a success, the government could address the issues of cause and effect. In statements like the one referenced above, we see government officials emphasizing the need to protect the future of mining, but most importantly the welfare of its people.\textsuperscript{245}

Other moments that present the government’s efforts to define the Chilean spirit include the preparations for the bicentennial celebration in mid-September, as noted above, when a piece of the mine was included in the Cápsula Bicentenario. Secretary

\textsuperscript{243} “Autoridades de Gobierno, organismos de emergencia y expertos técnicos de diversas empresas y entidades se encuentran trabajando sin descanso para liberar a las personas en óptimas condiciones. El Gobierno ha puesto todos los recursos humanos y técnicos para solucionar la emergencia a la brevedad.”


\textsuperscript{245} “El Ministro de Minería agregó que situaciones como esta “confirman que hay que revisar normas de seguridad en faenas mineras” y que los empresarios deben tomar conciencia que deben seguir estándares de seguridad, y tienen un deber ético, porque la seguridad de las personas está de por medio”.”

Golborne used this opportunity to define the character of the miners, and, in turn, that of Chileans. As noted above, Golborne used the metaphor of the piece of hard rock to define Chileans’ conviction and certitude in the rescue “like the unity that our country has demonstrated in these [difficult] days.”246 The Mayor of Santiago at the time, Pablo Zalaquett also highlighted these qualities, stating that future generations must know what these government officials have “lived and how they have faced this symbolic year.” He referred not only to the mining disaster but also to the challenges faced on and after the 8.8 earthquake on 27 February 2010 that struck the heart of the nation.247

It was also evident in these bicentennial commemorations how the miners were presented as heroes for their feat of surviving underground for 18 days without light, food, or water, as well as for their unrelenting spirit that fought to survive and work towards their rescue out of the mine. In the government’s characterization, the miners were representative of an all-encompassing Chilean spirit and character. Golborne, when describing the moment when officials and rescuers received the first signs of life from the miners, declared the miners as “tremendously skillful and intelligent.”248 That fighting spirit of survival noted as representative of the miners quickly began to represent the nation as a whole. Weaved into all the reports of the crisis were allusions and declarations about this ideal national character of Chileans and how they faced adversity in the

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246 “Ministro Golborne entrega trozo de roca de Mina San José a la Cápsula Bicentenario.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 15 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-golborne-entrega-trozo-de-roca-de-mina-san-jose-a-la-capsula-bicentenario/

247 “Ministro Golborne entrega trozo de roca de Mina San José a la Cápsula Bicentenario.” Comunicados de prensa, Ministerio de Minería. 15 September 2010. http://www.minmineria.gob.cl/comunicados/ministro-golborne-entrega-trozo-de-roca-de-mina-san-jose-a-la-capsula-bicentenario/

“Chilean way.”

President Sébastian Piñera in Camp Hope

The characterization of the Ministry of Mining and Laurence Golborne were not the only ones whose representation influenced the narrative during this ordeal. President Sebastian Piñera, who had assumed office five months prior to the accident, had a real need to have a prominent and positive role in this situation. Although it was early in his presidency, Piñera already had experienced a dip in approval ratings, a trend that he desperately hoped to reverse. His actions, words, and the persona presented in interviews during the long weeks that the miners’ were trapped became a means for him to shift that trend. Through his role in this ordeal, Piñera tried to impart more information about who he was and how he would represent Chileans as President. Piñera understood that in a difficult situation such as this one, the President’s role is to comfort a nation, to provide security and assurance that the resolution would be expedient, and to prove he would keep the people’s best interest at the forefront of his mind and efforts.

From the start, Piñera expressed his deep concern for the miners. Headlines dating back to the first days after the accident showed how the President responded quickly. He rushed his return to Chile from an international tour, canceling his participation in the inauguration of Colombia’s new President José Manual Santos to attend to the situation. Even before he returned to Chile, reports noted that the President was preoccupied with


the situation. He was described as “distracted” and “restless” in meetings with international leaders.\textsuperscript{251}

Upon his return, he met with his cabinet and went to the site of the accident where he spent time with the families of the trapped miners. In a shift from other government officials who focused on solutions, Piñera’s initial reactions, as reported in the news, were to demonstrate authority through swift action by finding responsible parties for this accident. The news reports after the President’s visit to Copiapó stated that “La Moneda,” the home and office of the Chilean President, “announced that it would investigate responsibilities in this tragedy.”\textsuperscript{252} His administration then established investigative committees to find out what occurred and take immediate action. Piñera quickly removed Alejandro Vio, the director of Sernageomin, the National Geology and Mining Service agency of the Chilean government, from his post for his failures to “supervise the completion of security measures of the mining sector.”\textsuperscript{253} As mentioned in the previous chapter, the New York Times stated that “Piñera fired top officials of Chile’s mining regulator and vowed a major overhaul of the agency in light of the accident.”\textsuperscript{254} Through these swift actions, the Presi-
dent of the Republic was presenting himself as an assertive and concerned leader taking expedient action in response to this dramatic, difficult situation.

Piñera’s apparent concern for his citizens was highlighted throughout reports of the incident. Not only did he demonstrate a staid character and realistic expectations, but he also worked to maintain a hopeful spirit for himself and the nation. Encouraging the faith of others, Piñera chose to talk about his religious faith with the public with statements like, “This is not only in our hands, but it is also in God’s hands.” During the extraction process and harking to the Chileans’ general faith-filled feelings, he reiterated that “to whom we need to ask [for help] is not below, but rather up above,” reminding those present that his ultimate trust and faith was in God.

Before the miners were found alive, Piñera both tried to maintain hope and remain realistic. He did so explicitly by expressing outward hopefulness that the miners would hear sound waves from the drilling, but also by quickly squashing false hope and rumors about how the rescue was moving forward. On 16 August, the online website for the newspaper El Chañarcillo posted that the drilling had made contact with the trapped miners, giving false hope to families and the nation alike. To this, Piñera responded saying,

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255 Wilson, J.M. “Piñera adelantó regreso a Chile…”
I want to be very realistic…and recognize that the situation is complex. We are working on a rescue 700 meters deep inside a mine that has proven to be very unstable, yet hope remains strong.\textsuperscript{259}

As communications from La Moneda and Piñera evidenced, his administration was quick to respond and attempt to reign in control of the narrative in the media regarding the ordeal, even if in turn the narrative they presented was not entirely positive.

Throughout the ordeal, we see official government responses maintaining a tight grip on the facts that were presented, both good and bad. From his particular position as President, Piñera was both able and necessitated to provide hope while making sure the expectations given to the nation were realistic. In a somewhat grim article from mid-August, La Moneda warned against false optimism and highlighted the difficulty of the ordeal facing the nation.\textsuperscript{260} In this piece, the President took on the task of “neutralizing expectations surrounding a successful operation,” which La Moneda advised each time was less probable.\textsuperscript{261} While remaining realistic, news media reports stated that Piñera and his administration actively worked on alternatives and reached out for international counsel—including the United States—to find new formulas for the rescue. Eleven days into the ordeal, the government demonstrated clear efforts to keep glimmers of hope alive while preparing the nation for all possible scenarios.

As the nation and the rescue efforts moved forward, Piñera maintained his hands-on involvement in the rescue efforts and with the community at Camp Hope, the pop up tent city where the families of the miners lived throughout the ordeal. Once the miners

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{261} Ibid.
were found alive, he took an even bigger “leading role,” which he sustained throughout the rescue. After the rescue, media reports credited Piñera for his leadership, and in particular, for his “media savvy” ability to take advantage of this opportunity to present “what some are calling a badly needed new image for Chile.” During the entire extraction process, Piñera stood by the mine and welcomed each miner as they came out of the Phoenix 2 capsule with an embrace and cheers. Piñera and his wife Cecilia Morel Montes maintained a permanent presence during the day of the rescue, creating and ensuring the image of a caring Chilean President that was present and stuck by his people because they were his priority. Piñera aimed to show he had faith in his people and that he credited the success of this rescue to the determination and perseverance of the people of his country. According to him, it was the people’s “motivation, faith, and commitment” that kept the government searching, and in the end, succeeding.

Eventually, Piñera took his message global. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the tours that the now famous piece of paper of the first signs of life made around the world—with stops in Los Angeles, New York, all the way to London, and Berlin. Only five days after the miners’ rescue, Piñera embarked on an international

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264 Ibid

tour himself. During his stops, Piñera presented heads of state from around the world with pieces of rock from the San José mine as “mementos of the historical rescue.”

This gesture, as well as the meeting itself with the heads of state, were critical diplomatic moments that, if only temporarily, impacted the relationships of the countries involved.

Piñera worked to project the national success of the rescue to international audiences. One way he did so was by sharing personal stories of his experience during the ordeal. In an international interview with CNN after the rescue, Piñera told a story about when he heard that Sunday in late August of this “magnificent” moment when the miners were found alive. That same day his father-in-law passed away, but before he died he told Piñera, “Don’t give up. Keep searching. It is your responsibility. It is your duty.” According to Piñera, he urged him to go back to work at the site of the accident. When he arrived there after his father-in-law’s death, he found out that the note from the miners had arrived.

Sharing this story accomplished several rhetorical ends. First, it connected the personal dimensions of the miners’ ordeal with a personal aspect of the President and his own private loss. Second, it signaled the President’s love for Chile and his commitment to the people of his country, which went beyond even his commitment to family. In many respects, through this narrative, Chile becomes a family that is equal to Piñera’s immedi-

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266 “Piñera entregó rocas de mina San José a primer ministro británico y a la reina Isabel II.” La Tercera. 18 October 2012 http://www.latercera.com/noticia/politica/2010/10/674-300499-9-pinera-entrego-rocas-de-mina-san-jose-a-primer-ministro-britanico-y-a-la-reina.shtml


268 Ibid
ate family. The image of the President holding that sheet of paper from the miners (see Figure 4.1) became iconic within the entire miners’ rescue story, especially as government officials expressed that story. It represented for Piñera and for the rest of the nation the hope that these 33 men would be rescued successfully and in the most optimal conditions possible. Piñera turned the note into a symbol of the soon-to-be coined “Chilean Way”—that of extreme perseverance and dedication to survival and success in ultimately adverse circumstances.269 He stated,

This [note] came out today from the bowels of the mountain, from the deepest of this mine, where they tell us they are alive, united, and waiting to see sunlight and hug their families… the entire nation of Chile has been moved to tears, and what I want to say is thank you to the miners for having resisted two weeks, alone; thank their families, who never lost hope; thank this whole team of manpower who did not spare any effort. With this news that fills us with happiness, with strength, I feel more proud than ever to be Chilean and to be the President of Chile.270

One crucial dimension to the government’s narrative and characteristic of Piñera’s unique place in that narrative is how the President told the country and the world that it was only the government who could rescue the miners. In a CNN story from 18 October

269 Articles post-rescue point out how the government evaluated a change to a slogan for the image of the country from “Chile is good for you” to “Do it the Chilean way” in an effort to capture the worldwide effect that this event provoked. This is due to the fame that President Piñera gave the phrase, incorporating it in Power Point presentations and mentioning it in his visits to London, Paris, and Berlin.

270 "Esto salió hoy día de las entrañas de la montaña, de lo más profundo de esta mina, es el mensaje de nuestros mineros, que nos dicen que están vivos, unidos y esperando ver la luz del sol y abrazar a sus familias”, dijo el Mandatario… "Quiero decir que Chile entero está lleno de emoción, pero lo que quiero decir es agradecer a los mineros por haber resistido dos semanas, solos, agradecer a los familiares, que nunca perdieron la esperanza, agradecer a todo ese equipo humano que no escatimó en ningún esfuerzo, la noticia nos llena de alegría, de fuerza, me siento más orgulloso que nunca de ser chileno y ser Presidente de Chile", dijo Piñera.

2010, five days after the rescue, Piñera explained that the private company that owned the mine did not have the resources to undertake the search and rescue. The duty of rescue had fallen on him. He said it was “either us, the government, or nobody.”\textsuperscript{271} The lives of 33 miners rested on his shoulders. Of course, these statements emerged only after the miners were rescued. While it was true that government officials took control of the rescue, it is also true that Piñera spoke about this ultimate responsibility only after this “blind search, against all odds” concluded successfully.\textsuperscript{272}

The conversations in the media that Piñera engaged in during 2010 as well as his endeavors to search for the miners and lead the nation during this strenuous time pushed Piñera’s approval ratings up to 63%. Journalists in Chile called this “Piñera’s Best Moment.”\textsuperscript{273} Piñera himself said that the faith of his people “reinforced” his own convictions and moved him to stay dedicated to this effort.\textsuperscript{274} At the time, he painted this faith and the Chilean people as being in a symbiotic relationship where their faith supported him, and his commitment lifted the nation.


\textsuperscript{272} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{274} Anecdote from this article about when the last miner, the shit foreman, came out of the phoenix and his exchange with President Piñera:
“Piñera bear-hugged him. As he did all the others, all the way to number 33, Luis Urzua, the shift foreman who chose to be the last out.
Urzua told Piñera: "I am handing the ship over to you."
Piñera replied: "You have been a very good chief. A very good captain. Because you never abandoned your ship until all your men were safe. You were the last one. That was your duty and I'm so proud for that."

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Unfortunately, The Economist reported that by the spring of 2012, Piñera’s “ineptitude” as a politician had caused his approval ratings to drop again, this time to 29%.\(^{275}\)

Being a good businessman and having skills in public relations enabled him to successfully maneuver through the mining disaster, push for a positive solution, and present the nation and himself in positive light. But, despite his best efforts, Piñera failed to sustain that image throughout his presidency. As noted earlier in this chapter, the true star of this story—outside of the miners themselves—was Secretary Golborne. He was distinguished as a “hero” and his popularity did not diminish.\(^{276}\) Through the rest of his presidency, Piñera was disliked for his arrogance. The mirage of the caring President faded and while Chileans seem to appreciate his intelligence—despite all his efforts during the miners’ rescue—“he hasn’t convinced them he has a heart.”\(^{277}\)

**Conclusion**

Character, Aristotle wrote, is “that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids.”\(^{278}\) In the miners’ ordeal, characterization was a process by which the Chilean government, its agencies, and officials chose to reveal their overall moral purpose in the face of a terrible accident. Defining their character in this moment as hardworking and dedicated to each miner and all people within the Chilean

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Quote from Arturo Fontaine of the Centre for Public Studies (CEP), a liberal think-tank.

\(^{278}\) Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Chapter VI
community was critical in order to shine the best possible light on the government and the country of Chile as a whole. “This is Chile,” the government seemed to say. This is “the Chilean Way,” Piñera called it. “This is how things are done in this country and why it should stand out in the international community.” But, just as important for its own power is the fact that the government’s characterization affirmed, “We are Chile.” While the uplifting outcome of the current episode contrasts with the tragic loss of hundreds of lives in the earthquake and tsunami, both episodes highlighted the strength of the governance in Chile and the enormous distance travelled by the country from its more undemocratic days of Pinochet in the late twentieth century.

This was a moment that proved what Daniel Kaufman wrote—that “Chile’s governance rating is superior to a number of rich industrialized economies, placing it around the top 30 countries in the world.”279 As we have seen throughout this chapter, government officials put great effort into portraying the accident in a particular light—through temporal boundaries that demarcated the story to a certain moment and moved the nation in a particular direction, and the deliberate characterization that highlighted specific qualities and ideals of the Chilean nation. All these rhetorical choices contributed to the image the government aimed to present where this moment was evidence of the successful governance of the country.

Through the government’s narrative, we see the depiction of Chile as a country with a determined spirit, unrelenting faith, resourcefulness, and a strong community with love for one another. This depiction, Piñera hoped, would influence this South American nation’s relations with other countries in the region and beyond, and in turn set his admin-

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istration up for success nationally and internationally. For however short a time, the Chilean government succeeded in making Chile an example. Like President Piñera declared:

The lesson that we can take from this accident is [that] when a country is united and committed with faith, with hope, using the best possible technologies and the best possible team of manpower, we are able to achieve goals that for some people seem impossible.

In the end, it did not matter how remote and removed Copiapó is from London because the story of the miners was deeply intertwined in international relations. This was in part because of the vast media coverage, but also due to the involvement of other nations’ technological and physical help and how people around the world could connect in the shared story of struggle. Thanks to the widespread dissemination of this story, it became intertextualized into a greater “unified narrative paradigm of human communication, or a universal narrative metacode,” as will be discussed further in chapter five.

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280 Piñera was quoted saying:
“Because of all this, Chile is a country more known, but even more important than that, it is a country that is more respected, and even more important than that, it is a country more loved in the world thanks to the example that you gave.”
"Por todo eso, Chile es un país más conocido, pero mucho más importante que eso, es un país más respetado y, más importante aún que eso, es un país más querido en el mundo entero gracias al ejemplo que dieron ustedes ", agregó.


283 “To fail to attend to the social and political implications of specific narratives, then, is to undermine our purpose in searching for a narrative paradigm or a metacode in the first place.”
Lucaiates, 105
Chapter 5

The Vernacular “Voces” of the Chilean Miners

While there was certainly a larger narrative occurring as the story of the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue unfolded, it is important to note that the media and the Chilean government spoke on behalf a large mass of people—the entire Republic of Chile and, to a lesser extent, the interests of American spectators of the event. Their depictions expressed what they wanted Chile to be for the rest of the world, and while these depictions carried a lot of weight, they were not the only descriptions available. Indeed, nations do not have a single definition, but multiple, sometimes competing, definitions. After all, identities are “constantly in [a] process of change and transformation” and represent a history, language, and culture that is “in the process of becoming rather than being.” For this reason, I would like to turn my attention to another “voz,” a vernacular voz, as yet another vehicle capable of representing a vision and identity for Chile—the miners themselves.

One of rhetoric’s purposes is that “of wielding power by enacting the interest of a speaker in a specific, real-world context.” So far in this study, I have focused on the interests of the media, the Chilean government, and, to a lesser extent, the interests of the

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284 The use of the Spanish word *voz/voces* throughout this chapter is a deliberate choice by the author to highlight the need for the voces of Latin America—nations and individuals—to be more equally represented. This chapter’s purpose is to both demonstrate the lack of equality in representation and provide a space for the underrepresented voces to have a more prevalent platform. I use the word “voces” in order to participate in the “purposeful violation of normative writing practices” that Holling and Calafell call for in the chapter cited here. Their discussion regarding the use of translations in academic pieces, of italicizing words in Spanish (or other languages), and what that means for perpetuating beliefs of difference inspires the use of terminology that does resist norms of dominant language expectations. Specifically, being that this is a work about a specific group of Latin@’s (or Hispanics) written by a member of the same group, this choice becomes not only important, but necessary, particularly in a chapter that focuses on the unique and representative voice of minority groups. Holling, Michelle and Bernadette Calafell. “Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communication.” *Latina/o Discourse in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de Una Voz?*, Lanham: Lexington Books. 2011. 27

Chilean people as they witnessed the accident and rescue. Those voces that had access to the media exercised their power and worked to shape the story. Through the coverage of the events, Chile became a presence in the world where the circumstances of a specific situation demanded the attention and active participation of an audience in order to sustain a certain definition of the country. The media and the government’s rhetorical choices demonstrate that they understood how communication “operates within and makes communities possible.” While these actors possessed a power to control parts of the narrative, shaping the representation and identity of Chile for the rest of the world, they were not the only individuals with a voz. There are aspects of this story that still need to be addressed, and entities—the miners—involved in the ordeal whose voces deserve our attention.

For Latina/o scholars, “voz” is “political with multi-layered ideological reverberations; it has the potential to enable change, gesture toward new possibilities, and reveal systems of power and oppression.” We must analyze critically what these voces reveal about the different systems of power that exist in Chile. The dominant voces we have heard so far have wealth and influence; however, it is crucial to note that the main characters of the drama were relatively poor laborers. This chapter attempts to give them a plat-


287 Lucaites, 100


289 Ibid

290 Holling, “Introduction” xvii
form so their voces can be heard. Of course, hearing these voces is not easy. The texts I analyze exist only because of media interviews; consequently, the miners’ vernacular rhetoric is still mediated by reporters and television crews that are a part of the more official systems of power.\textsuperscript{291} Nevertheless, I maintain that it is important to study and analyze “historically marginalized and disciplinary Othered voices” like the miners “as a means of rectifying social and disciplinary blindspots.”\textsuperscript{292} Despite the fact that their voz is structured by the media, their own comments can reveal “community and/or identity formations” that sometimes differ from the dominant expressions.\textsuperscript{293} Whatever these voces do, I am committed to giving them whatever space I can.\textsuperscript{294}

\textbf{Vernacular Discourse}

Michelle Holling and Bernadette Calafell declare in “Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communication” in \textit{Latina/o Discourse in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de Una Voz?} that “[c]ritical examination of vernacular discourse is directed at discerning the impact marginalized voces have on culture, both locally and writ large, identifying liberatory possibilities latent in the discourse, and identifying the ways in which community formations are possible” (emphasis added). This is the idea that animates this chapter. By looking at how the story of the miners, in their own words,

\textsuperscript{291} However mediated these interviews were, short of actual conversations with the miners, these are some of the only available documents with words directly from the miners and will be used throughout this chapter as the evidence and examples of vernacular discourse to be analyzed.

\textsuperscript{292} Holling, Michelle and Bernadette Calafell. “Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communication.” \textit{Latina/o Discourse in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de Una Voz?}, Lanham: Lexington Books. 2011. 27

\textsuperscript{293} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{294} Holling, Michelle and Bernadette Calafell. “Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communication.” \textit{Latina/o Discourse in Vernacular Spaces: Somos de Una Voz?}, Lanham: Lexington Books. 2011. 18

Holling, “Introduction” xv

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departs or does not depart from the overarching narrative, I hope to understand more fully how this event impacted Chilean culture and identity. In this process, this chapter participates in the conversation that is part of the “starting point [of] the examination of discourse by marginalized groups as a means to reveal [and liberate] community and/or identity formations.” As such, it seeks to “locate the relevance of the personal in relationship to the social, political, cultural, and economic, thereby adding clarity to the everyday challenges of Latin@s performing within and against ideological barriers.”

To do this work, this chapter attempts to create a bridge through which the miners can move from being subjects of a major story to being active participants in the storytelling of their own struggle. This chapter, along with the thesis project in its totality, engages in a process of bridgework as methodology in the way Aimee Carrillo Rowe describes in an interview with The Critical Lede. Instead of the researcher (or critic) having a “power relation over the subject,” there should be a sense of “alliance with the subjects,” says Carillo. Therefore, instead of exacting power over the subject in order to represent them, through this alliance with my subject, I hold myself accountable to the miners and see them not as subjects from which I can extract certain information, but

295 Holling, “Introduction” xv

296 Holling, “Introduction” xix

“Theorizing its properties also asks that critics account for the cultural specificities and nuances shaping communities and their discourse(s).”

297 In this interview, Carillo-Rowe talks about subjectivity, how we might form alliances across the power-lines of race/gender/sexuality, and about the insufficiency of relying on experience as a tool to unpack the implications of these power-lines. Carrillo Lowe, Aimee. Interview Podcast with The Critical Lede, 15 December 2010, http://www.thecriticallede.com/The_-Critical_Lede/The_Critical_Lede_Podcast/Archive.html (http://bit.ly/dwMps2 old link)

298 Carrillo Rowe
rather as companions from whom I have something to learn. For this to take place, I must recognize my own “positionality” relative to the miners and this project.

Personally, my connection to this project is as a Chilena naturalized in the United States. Here I seek in the subject of the miners to find a voz that speaks to a greater identity of Chileans, enhancing previous notions of who Chilenas/os are, including all varieties within the nation. While I attempt to do this, I am aware of how my identity and role as a critical researcher illuminates and interrupts this process. Since this is an effort to find the voces of the miners and give them a platform, I use this space to acknowledge how my own consciousness affects this mediated process. At the same time that this work becomes the medium for the voces of the miners, my own subjectivity is also “formed and located.”

In this way, this chapter in particular, and the thesis generally, become part of my own testimonio of my expatriated Chilean experience. I do this by expressing a critic’s understanding of Chilean identity—a critic who happens to be Chilean—while also acknowledging my own subjectivity in the process of giving a platform to the miners’ testimonio.

**Testimonio**

We spontaneously began to weave testimonios, stories of our lives, to reveal our own complex identities.

The notion of testimonio is critical to how I understand the value of vernacular discourse, especially as it relates to expressions of power and identity. Testimonio is a Latina/o genre of literature, a form of testimonial that tells the stories of the lives of the

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299 Carrillo Lowe

speaker, retelling historical events and is a “crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure.” Testimonio is a dialogue from an eyewitness perspective. Like in poetry, there is an “emotional force and intellectual depth” in testimonio that, as Sonia Saldivar-Hull says, not only speaks, but it “‘hollers’ social and political intersections frequently absent from metanarratives of globalization, mainstream feminisms and Chicano nationalist discourses,” so much so that it is a “springboard for theorizing about latinidades.” Latinas/os are not all one people with the assumed “common Latin[a/o] experience.” This is a group of “complex identities” in their nationalities, ethnicities, cultural experiences, and political commitments. Testimonios create a space where Latinas/os can “translate ourselves for each other” and “structure the ways we come together and tell our stories[, which] affects how we tell our stories.” Implicitly, this is a “key theoretical and political move away from a project that works within a “hierarchy of oppressions” to one in which all racial-ethnic groups and identity markers…carry equal force.” The miners, through their testimonio as formed and presented in this chapter, attempt to speak for themselves about their experiences and desires—their experience underground, through


302 The Latina Feminist Group. 2

303 The Latina Feminist Group. 4

304 The Latina Feminist Group. 4, 11

305 The Latina Feminist Group. 10

306 Ibid.
the rescue, and, most notably, their experiences before and after the accident.\textsuperscript{307} These are all experiences that could reflect “systemic violence and nurturance, injustice and empowerment” that testimonios like the ones in this chapter help to express.\textsuperscript{308}

In this chapter, I argue not only that the interviews and conversations with the miners that occurred after the miners were rescued function as a form of testimonio, but that this testimonio addresses some unsavory dimensions of industrial labor practices in Chile. It is important to note that these pieces—interviews and conversations covered by the media—were the only way to access the miners’ own words short of traveling to Chile to meet them in person. Since that was not a possibility in this case, the next best scenario was to pull any moments in which the miners expressed their experience in their own words and use those as their testimonio. Through examples provided below, we see how testimonio provides a “rhetorical space” where individuals come to voice their grievances and other issues through “the rhetorical construction of their experiences with capitalist exploitation, which also spurs their need to speak.”\textsuperscript{309} In their testimonio, the miners are “reclaiming both memory and human agency” in a process of change and thus, the miners become individuals with unique “subaltern testimonios” that express potential reactions against the dominant narrative and hegemonic voces.\textsuperscript{310} Their words in interviews—what can be considered “everyday sites” for viewers of news media—are where “vernacular discourse by Latin@’s materialize,” where “Latin@ culture is enacted,”

\textsuperscript{307} The Latina Feminist Group. 14

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{310} The Latina Feminist Group. 21
where “notions of identity, community, collective empowerment and struggle are
gleaned,” and where “power relations” are mediated.311

The Miners: In Their Own Words

In the years right after their rescue from the fallen mine of San José, the miners’
lives saw many transformations. Their brief moment of fame caused drastic changes in
their lives. Even while they were being nominated by Time magazine for Person (or Peo-
ple) of the Year, their individual stories did not transform into those of fame and fortune
in the long run.312 Their pseudo-celebrity status was brief, and the reality of their lives
soon fell into place. The following are some of their words and stories.

Edison Peña

Especially post-rescue, Western media shifted its interpretive framework from
merely reporting the stories of the miners to focusing on the character of the miners.
Eventually, as we see in this particular example, the study of that character became the
articulation of a caricature. Early in November, Edison Peña, one of the rescued miners,
made a television appearance on The Late Show with David Letterman. Of the entire
interview, what turns out to be most notable for audiences is Peña’s Elvis Presley
impersonation. Though he spoke about the accident, the rescue, and the conditions of
mining industry in Chile, the immediate audience and their critical reflection focused
primarily on how curiously Peña impersonated Elvis. Major news outlets and blog stories

311 One shortcoming of this project is the limitations in access to the miners words. In a larger project, the ideal scenario for
developing this chapter would involve in person or phone interviews with the miners themselves.
Holling, Michelle and Bernadette Calafell. “Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communi-
The Latina Feminist Group. 21

revista-time.shtml
for several days after the interview highlighted how the miner was “so cute” with his impersonation (USA Today article), and “totally adorable” (The Washington Post blog). However, there is more to this man than his inadvertently comedic impression.

Edison Peña was one of the most frequently interviewed miners after the rescue. Interviewed by various newspapers and Chilean television shows, Peña also traveled to the United States and was given a larger international platform. Not only did he appear on David Letterman’s Late Show, but he also made multiple appearances throughout the United States. Frequently, he was asked to perform his Elvis impersonation. The request was based on at least one incident that transpired while he was trapped in the mine. When the rescuers were able to contact the miners, Peña asked for some music by Elvis to lift the spirits of his fellow men trapped in the mine. Since that point, he had been known as an Elvis fan, a seemingly innocuous bit of human interest to add to media narratives, but one that helped portray Peña as a comedic character.

But before he became the “adorable” miner who did Elvis impersonations touring North America, Peña spoke critically about—and to—the mining companies in Chile.


On 15 October immediately after his rescue, Peña strongly questioned the security of the mines and the two companies that operated them. He said,

> Why do these things happen?! The employer keeps his money, and what happens with the workforce?! Estoy recaliente, I am speaking because this can serve as an outlet [for people to learn of this situation and so] this can change.\(^\text{316}\)

His passionate plea demanded that this should “never happen again, neither in this country nor [anywhere] in the world.”\(^\text{317}\) In an interview with *La Tercera* where he responded to questions submitted via Twitter, Peña said that he did not believe the measures taken to avoid new disasters were enough “because people keep dying” and the businesses that own mines in the north of Chile keep ignoring the requirements for security measures.\(^\text{318}\) In 2012, he went as far as to claim companies paid money to avoid implementing security measures, and he “was not afraid to say it.”\(^\text{319}\) As is evident, even years after the accident, Peña continued to argue that not enough had been done to protect the workers.

Peña’s criticism was heartfelt, but it also was complicated by the fact that the miners chose to be careful about what they shared with the media after their rescue. In fact, the miners made a pact amongst themselves not to speak publicly for one another, and, especially, not to discuss those first 18 days underground before contact was

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\(^\text{317}\) “Edison Peña hace fuerte…”


\(^\text{319}\) Ibid.
made. As a group, they agreed that when they did speak publicly, they would share only their own individual experiences, speaking in the first person. At one level, this pact seems to reflect their understanding that talking about it created a special kind of reality about the event—there was power in speech. In addition, however, the miners seemed concerned that no one spokesperson should be able to write a universal story about the whole group. Perhaps for this reason, early in the interviews with Peña, he was mostly quiet about specifics and gave only hopeful, “motivational” messages to those clamoring to hear from the miners. He shared his gratitude with the rescue teams who worked tirelessly to get them out and he expressed thanks to everyone who had kept the faith that they were alive even when they hadn’t heard anything. He highlighted how during their time without contact “the sound that something was out there looking for you was motivating, and no sound was disheartening.”

In talking about the larger experience once he was out, Peña added that he “did not want to talk about his comrades in the mine” because “the whole world already knows what has happened to [them].” In Peña, we see a vocal critic, a grateful victim, and a vulnerable, struggling individual. “Today,” he said in the days after the rescue, he is

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321 While other miners corroborate the existence of this pact (like Juan Illanes), Omar Reygadas indicated that “there is no pact of silence, there is nothing to hide. We inside the mine were comrades, and we never did anything to be ashamed of. Of what we will speak, we will do in groups so that we can tell the story as it was.” He added, “hopefully it will be a book, so that everyone knows what we lived in there.” Quote from “Omar Reygadas: “Nunca hicimos algo que nos avergoncemos”” La Tercera, 17 October 2010, http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2010/10/680-300265-9-omar-reygadas-nunca-hicimos-algo-que-nos-avergoncemos.shtml

322 “Minero Edison Peña concede extensa…”

323 Ibid.
“most grateful for seeing the sun again.” 324 Unfortunately, his life, as for many of the 33, has been difficult since the accident. He is no longer married to the woman who had sent him a picture of the sun while he had been trapped hundreds of feet below the surface. As of 2012, he did not have a regular job or financial security. Despite the terrible ordeal, Peña has said that he would like to go back mining, because the years that have passed have not made his life any better than it was before.325 In response to being asked what his current situation was in 2012 and if he was able to overcome the trauma of being trapped for so long, Peña stated,

I have not moved neither forward nor sideways from getting away from all of this. [Today] I am not in anything, because all the lights and fame did not mean anything. I believe that some may think now that we are a danger for different jobs, who is going to give us work? … Who is going to give me responsibility, with how I am now? Yet I want an opportunity.326

Soon after the rescue, Peña moved to Puerto Ventanas in Quintero, “escaping civilization” with the intention of “finding tranquility,” but he now lives off his parents.327 He states, “I don’t want gifts, but I want to go back to work, reinsert myself into work, and start anew.”328 Peña, who became an icon for the world of perseverance, energy, and

324 Ibid.


326 “Yo no he logrado quedar al frente ni al lado, de quedar separado de todo. (Hoy día) no estoy en nada, porque todo lo que fueron los “flashazos” eso no significó nada. Creo que estar un poco pensando que nosotros somos quizás un peligro para los trabajos, ¿quién nos daría trabajo? (…) ¿Quién me daría una responsabilidad a mi cómo estoy ahora?, yo quiero una oportunidad.” Ibid.


328 Ibid.
many times amusement that helped him survive, now aches to feel fulfilled in his work-life and to be reintegrated into society. His struggles remain unabated.

José Henríquez

Miner José Henríquez, often referred to as the miners’ “spiritual guide,” expressed a vernacular story that focused on religious faith.\textsuperscript{329} He did not criticize the mining companies, but focused his commentary mostly on the spiritual journey that the miners went through. He was called a “shepherd” to the miners and was recognized as a spiritual leader even in the days underground.\textsuperscript{330} His life was a testimony of his religious convictions, starting with his strong belief that they were saved by their belief in God.\textsuperscript{331} During their time underground, through their doubt that they would survive, Henríquez organized prayer sessions and Bible readings twice a day. His leadership and this reflective time helped the miners remain calm through their ordeal and maintain their unity and strong faith in God.\textsuperscript{332} Henríquez had a strong sense that this was a duty and “objective, [a] job that was entrusted to him.”\textsuperscript{333}

Henríquez’s “faith” testimonio extended to the point that he believed the accident was a message from God, and went counter to much of the narrative we have seen thus far.

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\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{331} “Minero dice que estaban seguros que morirían antes de que sonda los contactara.” La Tercera, 18 October 2010, http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2010/10/680-300560-9-minero-dice-que-estaban-seguros-de-que-moririan-antes-de-que-sonda-los.shtml
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\textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
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far. In interviews and occasions like the ceremony where he was honored as an “illustrious son of San Clemente,” the town where he was from, Henríquez emphatically called the citizenry to listen. He told the audience that,

God is trying to tell humanity something, through all these major events, like the earthquake [in February of 2010 in Chile] and what happened to us [in the mining accident], because what happened to us is no small thing. God has moved the five continents with this, and we should give thanks to be an instrument to communicate that God is coming and He is reminding us of his death to sensitize us and search for Him, because He is a living God, who answers prayers, as this has proven.

Through this moment of faith-filled intensity, Henríquez demonstrated a deep conviction in God that he used to help maintain his and the faith of his fellow miners. So much so, that he saw the attention and impact of the accident as examples of how God’s hand acting on earth—how it reverberated and had worldwide breadth. In Henríquez’s eyes, the entire situation—not just the rescue—were messages from God. This understanding that God was actually in the accident itself diminishes some of the importance given to the technological feat of the rescue efforts by the government’s narrative. In turn, while demonstrating the deep faith of this Chilean as I argue below, Henríquez’s example becomes less about Chile and more about God’s hand in the world. What is defined is not the country for the world, but a God and its power and influence.

While counter to the main narrative about Chilean identity that we’ve seen so far, Henríquez’s story as a shepherd to his fellow miners does attest to one angle of the identi-


335 Ibid.

ty presented in the media and by President Piñera in the previous chapter—the steadfast and unwavering faith of the people of Chile. José Henríquez viewed himself as a man of faith. To him, to be this spiritual leader for his comrades, and to be a testimony of God for others, was a great honor. He was committed to work through a difficult moment of pain, fear, and doubt, and to help the other miners get through that crisis, remaining optimistic and grateful for the work he did for his God. Only days after the rescue, Henríquez already talked about having to return to the mine in San José to work. While facing the reality of working in the mines that swallowed them up for weeks, he demonstrated a great commitment to his faith and to his role as “the man that has to provide for his family.”

Luis Urzúa & Richard Villarroel

Another miner interviewed and quoted worldwide was foreman Luis Urzúa, the last miner to be rescued from the mine. He was the leader that news sources credited for keeping the miners alive for two months. Urzúa was described and even revered as a man of strength, selflessness, and dedication. He was called a man of deep human qualities that helped him to care for his fellow men. He understood their essential need to survive, or at least attempt to get through this nightmarish situation for as long as they could, and he dedicated himself to this goal. He was, in other words, the manifestation of the underdog hero that the U.S. news media used to describe the entire event.


339 Ibid.
Taking charge after the collapse, Urzúa led the group democratically using a majority vote process for making decisions, which he credited as his secret for keeping the men “bonded and focused on survival.”\(^{340}\) “You just have to speak the truth and believe in democracy,” Urzúa said.\(^{341}\) He rationed food and kept order among the men, which NASA specialists who monitored the crisis said was “vital to keeping up morale and preventing” further discord.\(^{342}\) It kept the miners organized so that “all the workers in the mine fulfilled their roles,” Urzúa said.\(^{343}\)

While the fact that they did survive is heroic, the situation underground was not entirely rosy: “squabbles, disagreements, and even physical confrontations” did arise, and many miners suffered from depression.\(^{344}\) Urzúa’s narrative—and what was said of him—reflects this story. His testimonio speaks of how he had to “keep them focused and raise their spirits.” In his story we start to see a human reality of the deep struggle that the miners faced underground. Reporters from *The Guardian* wrote that Urzúa worked with the miners in facing these dire circumstances by instilling “a philosophical acceptance of

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\(^{340}\) Ibid.

\(^{341}\) Ibid.


\(^{343}\) Ibid.


fate.” Miner Richard Villaroel spoke of this influence on the group as a whole and the miners individually:

Every day [Urzúa] told us to have strength. If they find us they find us, if they don’t, that’s that. Because the probes [drilling towards us] were so far away, we had no hope. Strength came by itself. I had never prayed before, but I learned to pray, to get close to God.

Urzúa realized that they had to be strong to get through this ordeal, but part of that strength was also involved facing and even accepting the possibility of their death. As a leader, Urzúa said he “had enough strength to talk to the workers, [tell] them what was happening,” and try to “keep them laughing and smiling” through to the end. With a constant dose of realism and sometimes humor, Urzúa worked to maintain the group’s strength and their desire for life.

After the rescue was over, Urzúa paused to reflect on how different each of the miners was and what it was to be “imprisoned together” with so many different “personalities and ways of being.” He observed that they “had a stage here in our lives that we never planned for… I hope to never live again like this, but that’s the life of a miner.”

His words demonstrate his understanding, like all miners seemed to understand, that there

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346 Ibid.


348 Gregory, Andrew. “Chile miners foreman Luis Urzua tells how they survived on tiny rations in underground hell.” Mirror Online, 15 October 2010, http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/chile-miners-foreman-luis-urzua-254203#ixzz2gFtVuVg2


350 Ibid.
were hazards to working in the mine. These men were dedicated to their work—that this was their livelihood. Urzúa is quoted saying that miners’ understand and “always say that when you go into the mine, you respect the mine and you hope to get out.”

While speaking of the influence Urzúa had on the group, Richard Villaroel’s words quoted above also help paint a more complex picture of what went on inside the mine. His depictions give a different reality of this accident and rescue, creating a counter narrative to the hopeful message presented by the media and the government: “We were waiting for death,” said Villaroel. “We were consuming ourselves—we were so skinny.” Despite their efforts to organize and help themselves survive in those first days, this narrative from Villaroel demonstrates that the miners were very afraid and that they struggled with despair. They prepared for a “lonely, drawn-out death by starvation” during those first 18 days, he said. At the heart of the ordeal there was a story of despair and human coping with ultimate adversity. The miners lived through an experience they defined as hopeless—a prolonged death, like Villaroel described.

Early on, this was not a story of faith and hope that the media and government officials worked hard to portray. As the ordeal continued and once the probe did finally reach the miners, things shifted and hope and euphoria filled the mine, but only after those 18 days of what they presented as solitude, darkness, and despair. “It was huge happiness for us all. We sang the national anthem as soon as the tube arrived. We painted

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351 Ibid.
353 Ibid.
354 Ibid.
it. With so much adrenaline in that moment, we could not think,” stated Villaroel.\(^{355}\) His testimonio presents a complicated emotional and mental journey, demonstrating the heavy effects this ordeal had on the mental state of the miners.

**Other Testimonios Below and Above the Surface**

Victor Segovia, Juan Illanes, and Mario Sepúlveda, are three of the miners who criticized the mining companies like Edison Peña did. Illanes and Segovia both recognized how dangerous the mine was at the time of the accident due to the lack of enforced security measures, but as Segovia stated, “what was I going to do? One has to work *nomás*.”\(^{356}\) While testifying to their lack of agency in changing their work environment, Illanes made the owners of the mine Alejandro Bohn and Marcelo Kemeny directly responsible for the accident in his accusations. He made the claim that the company prioritized business and profit over the miners’ lives. He said that all Bohn cared about was production and that Kemeny funded the company, but did not get involved in its day-to-day handling. In Illanes’s eyes, though, since Bohn and Kemeny owned the company, “they should have protected [the miners], not only to abide by the law, but because of ethics and morals.”\(^{357}\) In the miner’s mind, this accident stood as evidence for the company’s complete failure of ensuring the safety of their workers.

Mario Sepúlveda, the second of the 33 miners to be rescued, agreed with Illanes and also condemned the owners saying they deserved to go to jail, but “not just Capuchi-

\(^{355}\) Ibid.

\(^{356}\) He also added that the miners’ original expectations when underground were that they would be rescued quickly, in a week’s time. Ansa. “Víctor Segovia: “Pensamos que estaríamos encerrados apenas una semana.”” La Tercera, 16 October 2010, http://www.latercera.com/noticia/nacional/2010/10/680-300098-9-victor-segovia-pensamos-que-estariamos-encerrados-apenas-una-semana.shtml

\(^{357}\) Ibid.
nos,” which is a white-collar criminals’ jail in Santiago.358 “That would be rewarding them! Public jail, sirs, because that’s where the criminals are,” he exclaimed.359 In late October after the rescue, when interviewed, Sepúlveda continued to express his dismay and “very low opinion” of these men because, he stated, “they know what has been done there, that it has been done because of bad labor management.”360 More critically, he added a compelling moral judgment, affirming that they did not “demonstrate respect for [human] life [because the miners’] lives did not matter to them.”361 The miners, according to Sepúlveda, prayed that the owners would be “removed from their post” so that new staff would do something to consider the workers’ safety, but his dreams are “finished and buried” in the mine now.362

In an emotional conclusion to his testimonio that evidences the inner turmoil caused by the harrowing experience they endured, when asked if he misses the mine, Sepúlveda responded:

Today, if you ask me if I prefer to be here or to be inside still. I tell you that due to the sacrifices that people made, no; but for the beautiful things we lived as human beings inside and to reunite with people that I ended up loving, I prefer to stay inside.363


360 Ibid.

361 Ibid.

362 Ibid.

363 Ibid.
Sepúlveda’s statement highlights the paradoxes that the miners found themselves in after their ordeal and rescue. Sepúlveda, while grateful to the nation and the rescuers for all they did to get them out, also demonstrated concern for both his work and emotional conditions. He mentioned conversations with fellow miner Yonni Barrios before they were rescued, who pointed out how different things would be when they got out. “We may be fine one or two months, maybe even 6 or a year, but we could possibly lose our minds, because our lives will change,” he recalls Barrios saying while still inside the mine. Family members expressed concern early on about what the aftermath of this ordeal and the effects all the media attention would have on the mental state of their family members buried underground. Time proved that these concerns were well founded since many of the miners have gone through various difficulties—physical, emotional, psychological, financial—as well as continued unemployment.

When Artifacts Speak: Attempts to Pay Homage To Their Struggle

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364 Sepulveda was hugging everyone around him. "We are so happy and very proud of our country for all they did for us," he said.


366 Paula Escobar Chavarría discusses the upcoming movie project on the miners’ story and discusses the effects of the ordeal on the miners:

“The final part of this story is that after the complete happiness of being outside, started the difficulties of adapting to a new life. Of course, fame changes many things, and for many, it was a difficult avalanche to manage. The wiser ones went back to their own lives, while for others it was harder to process all of this. This is also part of the lessons of this episode: in the mediated 21st century, the display and loss of privacy can be highly devastating. What changed for better or for worse in the lives of the 33 and in the other Latin miners and workers that go to their jobs every day? Were we as a society—not just Chile, but globally—able to reach a point of reflection or was the opportunity buried with the media?”

Like the piece of paper—the sign of life—that traveled the world, so the miners, too, have made appearances after their incredible rescue. Their international popularity, however temporary, highlights the international aspects of the ordeal they faced. Temporary museums popped up in Chile displaying “mementos of the historical rescue” much like the ones given to other heads of state, including the Phoenix capsule itself, to honor and remember the struggle and spirit of the 33 miners. Their story became part of a “narrative metacode” of the human story of survival. The museums and other mementos erected “attend to the social and political implications of [their] specific narratives,” because failing to do so undermines the search for this “narrative paradigm or a metacode in the first place.” For the President and other leaders, the rescue of the miners represented the remarkable qualities of Chile: this was a united country filled with faith and hope that came together with international help (technological and human) to achieve the impossible. The Phoenix capsule is cause for “pride and part of the history of the country now,” said Carlos González, governor of Concepción, urging people to take advantage of the opportunity to see it when it was exhibited in that city. Businessman Carlos Cardoen felt compelled to “rescue” emblems of the rescue, which he would later include in a

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368 Lucaites, 105


museum of mining. These examples demonstrate a movement by political leaders and others to commemorate a critical moment in this nation’s history where it could see and present itself to the world.

The miners’ testimonio of the events align, in part, with the positive tale told by officials. This was a story of struggle, survival, brotherhood, rescue, and national pride that the miners themselves described then and now. However, as the miners explained in their own words, it was also a story of failings caused by what they described as unabated corporate greed and lack of concern for the mining company’s workforce. Specific ideals for Chilean identity were highlighted, like a determined spirit, unrelenting faith, resourcefulness, and organization seen in how they survived 18 days of darkness underground. What must be highlighted in the miners’ story versus that of the nation’s leaders is the struggle in the mine and, more importantly, their anger and frustration with the companies who did not establish good security measures in their mines. Rather than highlighting the heroic rescue efforts and the Chilean spirit—the Chilean Way, as Piñera had coined it—the miners used that platform to speak about what went wrong and how it should never go wrong again.

In 2014, we saw an interesting turn in the miners’ narrative that continues to align with the official narrative. With the selección Chilena—the Chilean soccer team—heading to Brazil for the 2014 World Cup, the miners retold their story through a new process, in a new context, and for a much different purpose. In a television commercial for Banco

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de Chile entitled “Nothing is impossible for a Chilean,” the miners’ appeared in a video send-off for the team that was a motivational, inspirational message.\textsuperscript{373} This commercial helped define the miners’ survival story into the narrative metacode of the Chilean identity even further, highlighting the story of survival, of resilience, of strength—that Chilean way.\textsuperscript{374} At the same time, their story was part of an advertisement, it was a commercial-ized message. The ad, featuring all 33 men standing shoulder to shoulder, was filmed at what once was Camp Hope in the Atacama desert. Sepúlveda leads the commercial with a rousing speech “about the relentlessness of the Chilean spirit.” The text follows:

In this same place we were trapped for 70 days.
The earth had swallowed us.
It was then when we had to prove what we were made of.
We knew outside millions of Chileans believed in us. And this soil was witness to all of this.
That is why we will take this soil to Brazil to the practice field of our national team to fill it up with hope and courage and show the world that nothing is impossible for a Chilean.
Spain is tough? Netherlands is tough?
We don't fear the “death group”! We don't care about death! Because we defeated death before!
C - H - I (CHI) L - E (LE) CHI CHI CHI LE LE LE VIVA CHILE!\textsuperscript{375}

\textsuperscript{373} Watch the video of the commercial in the following link.
McCarthy, A.J. “This World Cup Commercial Featuring the Chilean Miners Will Give You Chills.” Slate. 13 June 2014 http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_spot/2014/06/13/chilean_miners_world_cup_commercial_this_amazing_banner_de_chile_ad_will.html

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid

\textsuperscript{375} “En este lugar quedamos atrapados por 70 días. Nos había tragado la tierra. Fue ahí donde tuvimos que comprobar de que estábamos hechos. Sabíamos que afuera había millones de chilenos que creían en nosotros. Y esta tierra fue testigo de todo eso. Por eso esta tierra la llevaremos a Brazil a la cancha donde entrenara nuestra selección para llenarla de esperanza y coraje, y así demostrarle al mundo que nada es imposible. España es difícil? Holanda es difícil? No nos asusta el grupo de la muerte. No nos importa la muerte! Porque la muerte la hemos vencido antes! C - H - I (CHI) L - E (LE) CHI CHI CHI LE LE LE VIVA CHILE!”
Ibid.
In an emotional montage of clips from 2010 and the rescue efforts the video takes you through their journey. Close up shots of the miners today solidify their survival story as a story of Chile’s bravery, courage, and strength that continues into the future.

**Lost Translations in the Vernacular**

After the harrowing rescue effort was over and the miners were safely above ground, all that was left for American media was the character of the Chilean miner that became an iconic figure of resilience and fervent patriotism. Increasingly, however, this imagery became disconnected from the images of Chile that the nation chose to highlight. In U.S. media after the rescue, the image of the Chilean miners became lighthearted and associated with humor. At Halloween that year, hundreds of people in the United States dressed up as miners with Chilean gear. This gear, like flags worn on their shirts to demonstrate Chilean nationalistic pride, were first seen as symbols of celebration of their successful rescue and pride in their nation. However, they soon became inane and decorative, a sign of the deterioration of that recognition that had existed over the previous two months.

This crucial turn is important because the miners were now not merely a presence in news media, but they also were part of nightly comedy bits and a topic of the blogosphere. Chilean miners even made appearances on television themselves, as we saw with

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Peña’s interview on Letterman, and figuratively as allusions and jokes.\textsuperscript{377} Through such jokes, unfortunately, the Chilean miners became punch lines for many of these talk show hosts during this time period, as seen in Figure 5.5 of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. Days prior to this interview and only two weeks after the rescue, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert alluded to the miners in jokes during the Rally to Restore Sanity/Fear (see Figure 5.3 and 5.4). At this event, Colbert arrived in a cylindrical capsule called Fenix, the Spanish spelling of Phoenix, deliberately reminiscent of the capsule used to extract the miners from the collapsed mine. He also ran across the stage with a large Chilean flag and led the crowd in a CHI – CHI – CHI LE – LE – LE chant that is typical of Chilean demonstrations of patriotism (and was often heard from Chileans in American media throughout the coverage of the rescue).

A surprising news report from CNN and the New York Times in 2011 discussed the fact that concern for the miners’ well-being had fallen by the wayside 12 months after their rescue. Anecdotal evidence also supported the claim that even in Chile, the accident and the miners have not been topic of conversation in the years since the rescue.\textsuperscript{378} There seems to be a prevalent presumption that the miners rescued are living comfortable, happy lives. However, as I have argued in this chapter, this presumption is false. Rather than face this reality, the world dealt with the spectacle and crisis as it happened and let go of the Chilean miners after their rescue when their story was no longer novel or newsworthy. Newly embraced, the invisibility of the miners, and of Latin American nations, is ob-


vious in errors like this one: the Guinness World Record book authors wrote that the 33 miners rescued were Bolivian, when only one of them was. This entry appeared only 14 months after the rescue. Such occurrences suggest that perhaps international perceptions of Chile did not change, or, if they did, the moment was short-lived.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to address what I believe are important omissions in the retelling of the miners’ ordeal. Firstly, it wants to give the miners a platform from where their voces can be heard and where they can tell their stories, concerns, and grievances. It also takes on the challenge of showing how multi-dimensional these individuals truly are in contrast to the depictions in the media. Even though there are multiple facets to every person, through the process of tokenization, Latinas/os have often been pigeonholed and marginalized into stock roles. With the miners, this is evident through the stories of people like Edison Peña who quickly became a character—the Elvis impersonator—and to whom few audiences listened when he critiqued the mine operators. Like the authors of the testimonio anthology *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* write, there is a poignant frustration felt with the “marginalizations of difference and token nods in the direction of diversity.” It can be said that in a peripheral process to the storytelling of the miners’ accident and rescue the miners themselves became tokenized in news

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381 “… in feminist political organizations or women’s studies programs.” Ibid.
media. Molina Guzman and Valdivia take this kind of critique a step further by introducing the concept of iconicity to go along with tokenization. The miners became icons of Latino culture, where quirks and curiosities were highlighted, as we saw in the introduction to this chapter. This evidenced a contemporary Latina/o iconicity that can be used to theorize about and go beyond “gendered and racialized narratives of ethnicity” used for the commodification of ethnic authenticity. This chapter attempts to show how there can be “symbolic resistance embodied in hybridized Latin[a/o] bodies, identities, and cultures” seen in testimonios.

This chapter tries to examine whether the miners were able to resist these commodified notions of Latinidad or if they eventually succumbed to the simplistic identity generalizations engendered for Latinas/os. The depictions of Chileans in this story underwent a simple de-evolution, as mentioned in chapter three and that we have seen throughout this project. They were recognized in the first place as an individual nation, moved to be respected and revered for their resolute spirit to fight for their lives and saving their fellow Chileans underground, to iconic characters representative of the Latin American “Other.” The stories retold in this chapter help to begin the process of revealing

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382 “...in popular culture, a phenomenon that Isabel Molina Guzman and Angharad Valdivia take on in their piece “Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture” where they critically analyze the roles played by Salma Hayek, Jennifer Lopez, and Frida Kahlo in both their work and in society at large.” Molina Guzman, Isabel & Angharad Valdivia. “Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture” The Communication Review. Routledge: 2004. 205–221

383 Iconicity is defined by Molina Guzman and Valdivia as a form of representation that involves the “transformation of meaning [arising] through the interactive relationship between an image, the practices surrounding the production of that image, and the social context within which the image is produced and received by audiences... These images “resignify” meanings surrounding a particular image.” Molina Guzman & Valdivia, 209

384 Molina Guzman & Valdivia, 207

385 Molina Guzman & Valdivia, 207
the lengthier story behind the miners’ struggle, smiles, impersonations, and chants. Today, the Chilean miners are at best a faint memory, even in their own country. Their World Cup commercial is a moment in which they embrace the identity presented by others, choosing to express their nationalism in support of their team. But, beyond that, there is no glaring uniqueness or difference among Latin American nations for international audiences. Instead, it is easy for Chileans to be confused with citizens of any Latin American country yet again.386

While the issue of invisibility of Latin American nations is not completely shattered in one chapter or one thesis project, this chapter uses the testimonio and vernacular voces presented here to address this invisibility. These aren’t just Latinas/os, Latin Americans, or Chileans. They are Edison, José, Victor, Juan, Mario, Yonni, and 27 other men and their families who suffered real problems—fear, health issues, emotional distress, substance abuse, and psychological torment—due to this accident. Their struggles continue on after the lights and cameras from around the world shut off and the gifts stopped coming. Their individuality and unique stories become a macrocosm where individual identities within a larger group are recognized. Much like this larger project attempts to do, this chapter uses the miners’ words to make their voces heard alongside that of news media sources and governmental officials. This was an effort to rectify the blindspots that Holling and Calafell mention and create a fuller image of the uniqueness of the nation of Chile.387


387 I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the shortcomings and limitations of my research since I did not have direct access to the miners for interviews myself.
Chapter 6

Conclusions

Summary

As noted throughout this project, language shapes reality and can be a constitutive force in the public sphere that provides proof for the effects rhetorical practice can have on everyday reality and self-identification. Through the discourse that surrounded the Chilean miners’ accident of 2010, we witness the power of rhetoric to define a situation, articulate that definition through the mass media, see how it influences and defines those who are involved, and how different audiences, in turn, try to define it. Further, by examining critically the Chilean miners’ accident of 2010, this project aimed to answer questions surrounding collective identity creation and perception: Was this moment a clear opportunity for the (re)construction of Chilean national identity? Were there different iterations of this identity? What rhetorical processes were used to create these identities? Looking specifically at the media representations, expressions by Chilean government officials, as well as the voces of the miners, are there any tensions and/or common ground in these various definitions of Chilean identity? Do these media representations differ across national origin (Chilean versus U.S. media sources), and is there any news in these differences? Finally, how does this moment operate within a historical context in which Latin America is perceived in negative terms, or, potentially, ignored and not perceived at all?

To answer these questions, this project looked at news stories from Chilean and U.S. sources to see how the story of the miners’ accident and subsequent rescue was reported on, as well as governmental sources like press releases and other statements. For
the vernacular chapter, the voces of the miners came from news stories in which they were interviewed and those few moments when miners were able to share their grievances and tell their side of the story, however limited and mediated these channels were. By looking at these sources, I was able to identify patterns and a distinct narrative of the story of the Chilean people as it played out in this particular moment. This project is thus necessarily comparative, analyzing how a Latin American nation and its citizens represent themselves in comparison to how they are represented by others; namely, the United States vs. Chilean media, government officials vs. the miners themselves. Using knowledge of Spanish as the first language I learned and spoke as a child and young adult, I was able to pick up on nuances and details from the Chilean sources that complicate the conclusions I reached.

As previously discussed, the sub-field of Latina/o communication studies is a relatively young area of research within the discipline of rhetoric, and this project seeks to contribute to the area’s growth by observing the phenomenon of identity creation both within and beyond a Latin American community. In this way, Latinas/os can engage in the development of rhetorical studies as active participants in rhetorical practice—both as agents and critics. Looking at this moment for its rhetorical qualities illuminates various analytical conclusions. Firstly, it illuminates how Latin American leaders’ used rhetoric to influence perceptions of the event and of Chileans. Second, how the miners searched for agency under the circumstances. More broadly, how various public memories of Chile were shaped by the event. Lastly, how U.S. media represented that region through its broadcasting of the events. As noted, this moment in time acted as the vehicle that temporarily shattered the invisibility of Latin America in the United States and forced the
recognition of the individual nation of Chile on the international stage. Through these efforts to represent itself, this nation attempted to create a space where it could be present and recognized by the international community. As evidenced by the generally positive representations of the nation’s character put forth by the media and political channels analyzed in this study, Chileans’ goal seemed to be to create an image of heroism, industriousness, highly advanced technologies combined with a relentless determination and perseverance innate to the nation’s character. The following are some of the findings garnered from this research project.

**Findings & Interpretations**

In analyzing the media representations of Chileans in both Chile and the United States, clear rhetorical devices are evident. Through an ebb and flow between a reactive and a proactive framework, the narrative from Chilean sources created an image that had an observable emphasis on the resiliency of the human spirit, an ability to survive unthinkable odds, and a determination to work towards the common goal of survival. The media used this reactive/proactive approach to frame events at different moments in the story, whether to respond to a new event or moment or in search of material that would “fit” the story the media wanted to tell. This process demonstrates a sophisticated use of the medium for the purposes of guiding the narrative and ensuring that representations of Chile supported the positive and productive identity that the narrative established. In this narrative, we hear an impassioned voice demonstrating an effusive nationalistic pride.

In Chapter 3’s comparative analysis, we see a different approach to telling the story. By using a framework of what I called “themes,” Chapter 3 highlights four crucial dimensions of the story articulated by the U.S. media: the underdog narrative, the self-
reflexive theme, the global reception theme, and, finally, the human triumph and emotional narrative theme. Looking at U.S. media’s representations of this story through these four themes shows how the accident and rescue became a sensational spectacle for American audiences. In fact, within the United States, events in Chile became news—and by extension, relevant—only as they became sensational. For Chilean audiences, it hit home from day one. Chapter 3 shows that while there were similarities in the two representations, in the end the differences were not enough to change perceptions. The character that was attributed to the Chilean people in U.S. media—persevering, hardworking, faithful—was not sustainable and the potential complexities of Latina/o experience became blurred in a much more simplistic portrayal that reduced Chileans to an entertaining novelty in U.S. media.

Chapter 4 focused on the official political voices of the accident and rescue. This chapter argued that political officials in Chile were extremely conscious of and tried to manage the domestic and international opinions of Chile. The miners’ accident was a moment when, due to its ubiquitous media coverage, presented a rhetorical opportunity to reconfigure international relationships between Latin America and the international community, specifically with the United States. President Sebastián Piñera was cunning and strategic in his use of media attention to present a positive image of the nation and of his presidency. Piñera’s public relations and business savvy was in full use as the President used characterization and narrative to focus on the heroism of the miners and the rescuers, the community effort by the nation, and the cooperative qualities that produced tremendous effort from around the world to help bring the trapped miners to safety. Government officials attempted to control the temporal boundaries of the narrative and to create a positive story out of this terrible ordeal while also using deliberate
characterization that defined the specific qualities and ideals of the Chilean nation. Not surprisingly, these qualities were attributed to everyone from the miners to Secretary Golborne to the President himself. The focus on time, on the process, and on the rescue diverted attention from the accident and its causes, emphasizing, instead, the proficiency of the government in resolving the situation. Notably, according to the political narrative, this moment represented not just the miners and rescuers, but also the overarching illusion of the Chilean man (and woman). This citizen was characterized as hardworking and dedicated, an integral part of not only the Chilean but also the international community.

The nation, according to how the governmental voice presented it, was obdurate in the best of ways, and this accident and rescue demonstrated how Chileans did things the right way—“The Chilean Way,” like Piñera declared.388 The government’s guidance of the narrative presents a Chile with a determined spirit, unrelenting faith, resourcefulness, and a strong communal love for one another. Piñera believed that this depiction could influence the relationships of the South American nation with other nations in the region and the international community abroad.389 Despite the distance between the remote location of Chile and the city of Copiapó behind the Andes Mountains, the story of the miners reached far and wide across the world. Thanks to the widespread dissemination, this story was intertextualized into a greater “unified narrative


389 Piñera was quoted saying: “Because of all this, Chile is a country more known, but even more important than that, it is a country that is more respected, and even more important than that, it is a country more loved in the world thanks to the example that you gave.” Vargas, Felipe. “Piñera asegura que Chile es un país más respetado y querido en el mundo tras rescate de los 33 mineros.” El Mercurio Online. 12 October 2012. http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2012/10/12/564426/pinera-asegura-que-chile-es-un-pais-mas-respetado-y-querido-en-el-mundo-tras-rescate-de-los-33-mineros.html
paradigm of human communication, or a universal narrative metacode,” which made the
Chilean government a success in making this nation a positive example for a worldwide
audience.\footnote{Lucaites, 105; “To fail to attend to the social and political implications of specific narratives, then, is to undermine our purpose in searching for a narrative paradigm or a metacode in the first place.”}

In Chapter 5, this project amplified the “voces” of the miners. Weaving the first
personal stories of the miners and their families into “testimonios,” as defined in Latina/o
Communication Studies, this chapter forwarded the miners’ own experiences and their
Chilean identity. In the process, it attempted to rectify the blindspots that existed in the
previously described narratives. In the media and the government’s narrative, the miners
are lauded as heroes that represent for the world an indomitable human spirit. Chapter 5,
in aiming to rectify various transgressions in the retelling of the miners’ ordeal, took on
the challenge of also showing how multi-dimensional these individuals truly are. Through
the telling of stories of specific miners, this chapter evidences how the mediated
reduction of these individuals into stock characters overshadowed the more critical
stories of class struggle, labor issues, and personal experience.\footnote{Oboler, Suzanne. Ethnic Labels, Latino Lines: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation …}

While acknowledging

the heroic elements of their vernacular stories, this chapter attempts to understand how
these stories were not vociferous enough to change a set of labor practices that led to the
accident and that are detrimental to workers’ wellbeing by not ensuring safer mines,
wealth, or security (in their job, financially, etc.). Placing the miners’ voces in the
spotlight for analysis shone a different light on Camp Hope, then, highlighting the cracks

in the paint. It also gives us an opportunity to witness the miners’ faith and think critically about the collective stories of the miners and their struggles.

By addressing these issues, the chapter also joins conversations in the fields of Latina/o Communication Studies and Chicana/o Studies that discuss the effects and frustrations of the “marginalizations of difference and token nods in the direction of diversity.”392 Instead of allowing for the possibility of the miners’ diverse interests and identities, the stories that became prevalent of the public narrative only demonstrated how the miners were turned into Latina/o stereotypes with quirks and curiosities that added to sensationalized narrative tidbits that were highlighted for audience consumption.393 By letting the miners speak, this chapter joins in the “symbolic resistance embodied in hybridized Latin[a/o] bodies, identities, and cultures.”394

While the issue of invisibility of Latin American nations ebbs and flows, an important realization this chapter hopes to bring to light through the use of testimonio and lifting up vernacular voces articulated here is that there are complex, individual human beings involved in these stories. Their struggles with health, emotional distress, and other economic and personal problems continue long after the lights and cameras from around the world shut off. By giving their words another space on which to be heard, this chapter (and thesis project at large) attempts to give these voces the attention they deserve.

Further, Chapter 5 attempts to create a fuller image of the complexities of the nation of Chile.

392 “... in feminist political organizations or women’s studies programs.”

393 Molina Guzman, Isabel & Angharad Valdivia. “Brain, Brow, and Booty...” 209

394 Molina Guzman & Valdivia, 207
Relevance

As discussed, this thesis demonstrates how the Chilean miners’ accident and rescue was a discursive moment that constructed and expressed Chile’s national identity for the country and people of Chile, however limiting that identity may have been in the short and long-term. It was a window to Latin American culture that showed at least some of the complex and multi-faceted nature of the region. While Chilean media and government officials were proactive in taking advantage of the attention the nation was receiving and attempted to depict a strong, hardworking nation, this effort was limited by a short attention span among U.S. audiences and media. I cannot claim that this redefinition of Chile created an enduring new identity for the country in the eyes of international community. In fact, I believe that this thesis demonstrates how Latin American countries, the United States’ neighbors to the South, seem to only exist for U.S. audiences only when the events within those countries is sensational enough to catch America’s attention.

While for Chilean audiences, American culture is ever-present in media and markets, the relationship does not work in the other direction. This particular event made the country of Chile relevant in the United States, because it was a widely televised and mediated dramatic event. Soon after it was all over, the miners and Chile left the headlines and lost the public’s attention. This speaks to the larger struggle Latin American nations face in making themselves relevant and significant members of the international community. The analysis presented here demonstrates that in the end, the

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focus on the sensational aspects of the story—such as the miner with the wife and the mistress, or the Elvis impersonator, etc.—prevailed, only perpetuating the problem of invisibility that Martha Cottam discussed.396

By looking at this specific case study, this research project attempts to show how there is more to the Latin American region than this unilateral and limited perspective. Chilean media and government officials understood that they had the world’s attention during the ordeal and attempted to take advantage of this the best way they could to present the most positive, unique image, despite the potentially tragic circumstances. It is even possible to say that within the country of Chile, the identity depicted during the miners’ ordeal and rescue represented and solidified the nation’s new twenty-first century identity it has for itself that is in direct contrast to its identity during a difficult political past of the late twentieth century. Chilean people in 2010 were depicted as coming together, supporting each other, and working hard for the common goal of saving their countrymen. From a public relations perspective, this was a great campaign to present a good image. Having control over the narrative and how the story was reported gave Chileans (from media sources to government officials) rhetorical power to not only articulate a national identity, but also, in the process, reconstruct this identity and attempt to animate its people in that surge of nationalistic pride that rode on the advancements the nation had made in the last two decades (post the Pinochet years).

As noted in Chapter 5, however, the main characters in this story also played a role in the creation and expression of that identity. Unfortunately, with all the efforts to express ultimately favorable aspects of Chileans, social, economic, labor, and political

issues fell by the wayside. This neglect of the miners’ own lived experience—both after
but especially before the accident may have led to the accident in the first place and
highlights a problem within Chile. The focus on the outward representations and
positivity to get people through a traumatic ordeal can have damaging effects of erasure
and blindness towards the domestic Chilean communities that most need the attention.
Marginalized voces must be heard since, like the miners did in this situation, these voces
provide vital criticism that can help nations grow and improve further.

More broadly, this project successfully incorporates Chile as a subject of study in
rhetorical studies, particularly when observing identity, identification, representation,
characterization, tokenization, as well as vernacular discourse as a vital part of the overall
rhetorical traditions of a people. Through these observations, we see how Chileans—
media, governmental officials, and vernacular spaces—act as rhetorical agents who
further the definition and understanding of this nation. It also contributes to scholars’
understanding of an area of the Latin American community that is not part of the
dominant discourse in Latina/o Communication Studies or Chicana/o Studies. This study
participates in Marty Medhurst’s call to action of expanding beyond domestic borders to
further understand international rhetorical practices.397 By seeing traditional rhetorical
methods of analysis merge with concepts from Latina/o Communication Studies—
testimonio, tokenization, iconicity—this project is a step forward in bridging the fields of
study.

Rhetorical studies would benefit from developing further ideas about rhetorical
strategies within Latina/o Communication Studies, especially as those strategies impact

Public Affairs 4, 2001. 495-522
the general public’s perceptions of Latina/o communities. Ideally, being critical about these moments of discursive identity formation will bring attention to a subject that is not regarded often in research but that merits more notice. Furthermore, engaging with scholars within the region will provide greater opportunity for understanding rhetoric itself. By developing case studies and theories about rhetoricians within the South American region, we can improve our field’s understanding of its own functions and how they vary between the nations and individuals studied there. This might even have an impact on our international relations.

Research Limitations

While this project aims to extend an important conversation, it does have limitations. First, the sources I used were expansive in the sense that I studied material published in Chile; nevertheless, my access to a larger variety of Chilean sources—especially texts that were not online or provided by my personal network of Chilean family and friends—was limited. Consequently, the scope of this research project determined largely by online sources and observations that were available only through online specific vehicles. There may have been other voices that were not currently accessible that may have provided different insight to the findings at hand.

I felt this limitation most keenly in Chapter 5, the analysis of vernacular voices. That chapter might have been improved if the research it included had involved interviews with the miners and their families. Unfortunately, the direct quotes used for this analysis came from newspaper stories and other interviews that were highly mediated, and therefore filtered. I admit, further, that some of these mediated quotations might have been taken out of context. Given what this project shows, it is appropriate to
assume that the miners have strong feelings and opinions about their potentially dire work conditions and the circumstances that led to the accident and rescue. Given direct access to these individuals, perhaps some of the insights I provide in Chapter 5 would have been strengthened or altered.

Lastly, this project’s resources were limited to what was presented by various media—news sources for the most part. Having more direct access not only to the people involved, but also to the national culture and context both of the rescue process as well as the country itself would have enhanced this study immeasurably. While I am a Chilean transplant in the United States, I have lived outside the country long enough that I no longer directly identify with the country and its people. While I want to further my understanding of my cultural origin through projects like this one, I cannot pretend to represent or fully give voice to a nation I have become unfamiliar with over the years. This is why being there, not only at the time of the ordeal, but even in the years since, would have given me great insight that is as of now unavailable to a transplant. This knowledge might have helped answer questions such as, where there any critical feelings within the Chilean community about the process of the rescue? What was the talk amongst people not directly involved?

Despite these shortcomings, however, I believe there is considerable value in the observations presented here. They begin to paint a picture and chip away at misconceptions present regarding Latin American nations, specifically Chile. This was an important step to start a critical conversation that has hopefully opened up a window into a new area of rhetorical research, allowing us to better understand America’s neighbors to the South.
Where To Go From Here

As stated, this project contributed to the start of a conversation that needs to continue to grow and expand in order to include more voices. With more time and access, as well as other researchers to contribute their insight, this study can grow into a general study of Chilean identity as expressed to the international community. Working with organizations within Chile, like the Federation of Tourism Businesses of Chile whose primary task is to manage Chile’s image to the rest of the world, we can gain more resources to understand Chileans’ rhetoric of self and national definition. Likewise, this kind of project can spur similar studies about the other nations in the Southern cone of Latin America and the rest of the region so that they are all individually represented and given the platform to express themselves in rhetorical studies.

This project is a starting point for work I hope to continue. This project has provided me with initial access to resources, the ability to reach the communities I want to work with, and the opportunity to analyze rhetoric as fairly as possible. In the future, I will more directly reach out to the community in Chile and spend time learning from them about it and the ways in which rhetorical practices play out so that I can continue to bridge the Chilean community (as a part of the larger Latin American community) with audiences in the United States. The hope is that my research will contribute to the improvement of interactions between the United States and Chile, and by extension the often homogenized Latin American region.

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398 FEDETUR, Federación de Empresas de Turismo de Chile http://www.fedetur.org/
Appendix

Illustrations

Chapter 1

No Images

Chapter 2

Figure 2.1

El desahogo nocturno en el campamento Esperanza

Figure 2.6

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1

Search results from Washington Post for “Chilean mining…”

Figure 3.2

'Camp hope': Marta Salinas, wife of trapped miner Yonni Barrios, waits at the San Jose mine in Copiapo, Chile
“Hill overlooking the mine with flags planted, one for each of the men trapped below”

Yonni Barrios Halloween Costume
“Estamos bien en el refugio los 33”: El hallazgo del histórico mensaje cumple dos años.”
Chapter 5

Figure 5.1

Miner Edison Peña doing Elvis impersonation on the Late Show with David Letterman. Image from Worldwide Pants Inc.

Figure 5.2

Miner Edison Peña on the Late Show with David Letterman. Image from Staab, CBS/AP
Figure 5.3

Stephen Colbert arrives at the Rally to Restore Sanity/Fear in a “Fenix” capsule. Image from Getty Images.

Figure 5.4

Stephen Colbert runs across stage during the Rally to Restore Sanity/Fear in front of the U.S. Capitol Building. Image by Photographer Jason Reed, from Reuters.
Figure 5.5

Jon Stewart during *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Image from *Comedy Central*. 
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