On remembering and silencing the past: the adult children of the disappeared of Argentina and Uruguay in comparative perspective

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If human beings had no memory, they would be happy. F. Nietzsche.
-But would they realize?

He who controls the past controls who we are. David Middleton

Abstract

This paper explores the remembering processes and practices of children of the disappeared in the Southern Cone post-authoritarian societies of the 90s. Despite the adverse cultural and social situation posed by the unresolved human rights problems during the transition governments in Argentina and Uruguay, the now adult children of the people disappeared by the military regimes have formed associations that still actively remember the past and its legacy of unsolved problems.

Through interpretive cultural analysis of testimonies and observations of two groups of children of the disappeared (hijos de desaparecidos) in Buenos Aires and Montevideo respectively, and against the backdrop of an historic-comparative analysis of each nation’s transitional path facing the human rights problems, I explore their memory-building efforts in process and practices.

Because they are intensely embodied, personal potentially-traumatic memories generate a powerful inner motivation to remember that persists over time with extraordinary resilience. However, I found very distinct “meaning making” processes, social relations and practices in relation to the past in each group in Argentina and Uruguay. Even when people are bound to remember, they do not do so in the same way. I posit that remembering is an ongoing effort to articulate and reconcile the tensions between the inner world of emotion and the intersubjective world of social relations in which remembering is embedded (Prager 1998). The distinctive character of the national collective memory in Argentina and Uruguay yielded different social, symbolic, emotional and intersubjective practices in each ”community of memory” of children.

My findings bring into sharper focus that memory is not only a cognitive product of the social context, but that it can be better understood as intersubjectively constructed, socially embedded and emotionally embodied. Thus, my theoretical contribution points to the importance of designing a more intersubjective approach to the sociology of memory.

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La represión se alimenta de silencio

Introduction

The aftermath of twentieth century authoritarian regimes have revealed an unsuspected danger: political regime’s systematic attempts to control collective memory and forget. Post-authoritarian governments have ruled through official politics that attempted to ignore, erase, disguise or transform the traces of the past. However, where authoritarian legacies have put a ban on the past, keeping the collective memory alive has become a form of contention for opponents and victims (Nerone 1989, Schudson 1989, Todorov 1995: 9-11, Jelin 1999).

Such has been the case for over a decade now, Southern Cone societies in transition from dictatorship to democracy. Confronted with the challenge of dealing with the authoritarian legacy of unprecedented systematic uses of terror and human rights abuses by the military regimes of the mid-70s to the mid-80s – particularly the legacy of the disappeared political prisoners --, transition governments in Argentina and Uruguay have ultimately implemented “policies of oblivion,” intended to control and silence debate about the abuses committed by the military. This has led to a complete lack of accountability for state human rights abuses in Uruguay, and a reversal of initial human rights accountability policy in Argentina. In the face of this situation, human rights movements --and very particularly the organizations of Mothers and Relatives of the disappeared political prisoners -- have continued the keep memory alive and mobilize for decades to contest official policies on ethical grounds, demanding “truth and justice” for such abuses.

In the light of this battle of the powerful to restrain people’s memories of what happened -- in particular the “problem of the disappeared”– some communities feel what happened during the dictatorships now more than 20 years behind, is very present in their lives. How is it that some people still remember under these conditions? This paper asks about the relationship between a society’s collective memory and collective understandings and practices of remembering within that society. My empirical research explores the social conditions of the collective memory in Argentina and Uruguay, and the possibilities and circumstances of a “community of memory” such as the now adult children of the disappeared, to remember. In the following section I outline the theoretical framework I use to analyze the social processes of collective remembering of the young descendants of the disappeared in the Argentina and Uruguay of the mid-90s.

This paper explores the relationship between collective memory and the remembering practices of two groups of adult children of the disappeared (hijos de desaparecidos) in the 90s in the Argentinean and Uruguayan contexts respectively. The efforts of each group to seek out the “truth” of what happened during the dictatorship and keep memory alive in two different contexts of institutionalized “settled accounts” by the state are exemplary cases of the resilience

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2 Disappearance was the euphemism for illegal political abductions and murders of political opponents by the military, whose fate the military claimed not to know. It was an innovative way for these Southern Cone military regimes to legally "get away" with their crimes (because there was no proof of the crime, no information on the person's whereabouts and no corpse), and also to rule by terror. Disappeared, detainee-disappeared, or desaparecidos were the political opponents illegally made prisoners by the army.
3 Impunity or “lack of punishment” for state human rights abuses, as defined by Amnesty International 1994.
4 This “problem” includes arbitrary and systematic kidnappings not only of young adult activists and bystanders of all ages, but also very young children and babies abducted with their parents, never to be seen again.
of memory. In each case, the unresolved human rights questions of the past haunts their different efforts to reconnect the present to the past. The study of collective memory, with its potential as an important conceptual tool, has been until recently under-analyzed in the social sciences. If memories are constructed from present needs as influential social theories of memory suggest (Halbwachs 1992, Mead 1932, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1985), this would imply that memory is at the mercy of powerful control by political regimes. However, recent research on social trauma suggests that memories are highly resistant (Perelli 1994, Rapaport 1997, Schudson 1989, Schwartz 1997, 1991, 1982, Olick 1999a, 1999b).

I argue that the cases of traumatic memory pose a challenge to the constructionist Halbwachian argument that these cases have the potential to show the limitations to the full manipulation of the past from the present and thus pose a limit to the constructionist pragmatic argument. I argue that even if the past is necessarily filtered through the lens of the present, such lens is in turn colored by the interpretations and meanings of the past (Olick 1999, 1997, Rapaport 1997). I propose that a comprehensive theory of collective memory that theorizes the mutual interpenetration of past and present is a needed analytic tool to illuminate all processes of social remembering in their full complexity and dynamism.

A note on potentially traumatic memories: Perelli (1994) has coined the apt phrase of blood(y) memories (memorias de sangre) for traumatic memorialized experiences that are difficult to represent or transform meaningfully into a narrative or explanation as a results of extreme personal and/or collective emotional experiences of fear, pain and loss that violently disrupt people's lives into a “before” and “after” the event, so vivid that they become the criteria of distinction between friend or foe, what to remember or forget (Perelli 1994: 40). I will argue that drawing from similar emotionally intense experiences, the children of the disappeared have gathered in groups to share and inquire about the fate of their parents and to somehow challenge the present dominant political culture about the past dictatorship. They share an undisputed moral sense that keeping the memory alive serves to prevent the recurrence of what happened to their elders (Nunca Más dictadura), a certitude that the unresolved problem of “truth” will not simply vanish or fade into oblivion, and the indignation at official policies and distrust of politicians for their pragmatic reasons for supporting impunity and withholding the truth. These blood memories, as I argue, are truly embodied memories (Prager 1998).

1. Theoretical Framework

Until recently, the debate over collective memory in the social sciences has distinguished between two dichotomic views of the past –two types of distortion, one might add-- on the basis of the different emphasis placed on the relationship between the past and the present (Schwartz 1991a). This debate developed mainly between a Durkheimian traditional conception of the past, which assumed that the past has a permanent and resilient influence in shaping the present (Durkheim [1915] 65). The contrasting “presentist” Halbwachsian approach placed the center of gravity in the present (Aguilar 1995, Schudson 1989, Schwarz 1991). Halbwachs’ ([1950] 92) enduring contribution was to conceive the past as a social construction constantly reshaped on the basis of the present, assuming that there is incongruity between past and present constraints.

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5 Remembering is commonly associated with the realm of thought, i.e. bearing in mind. I use it to convey the realm of intersubjective community practices, including symbolic, emotional and material ways to remember. I am inspired by the Latin etimology of remember in Spanish, recordar (re-cordare), literally means "to pass again through the heart" (Galeano, 1994).
When people forget painful memories, Halbwachs wrote, “by definition, a past constraint has ceased to be operative.” However, Halbwachs did not specify how or why the past purportedly “ceases” to constrain present life, he even recognized that traumatic memories have “an incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived” and “recur in our present with the force of the moment when they happened” (Halbwachs 1950/92: 49-50). Each theory has “a half of the truth” (Schudson 1989, see also Schwartz 1997, 1991a). Even when we agree that the past is a continuously evolving product of social interpretation and definition, contemporary critics have built on a certain working consensus that constructivist theories fail to fully capture the continuity of historical traditions and inherited sensibilities that feed social solidarity alongside with historical innovation. Further, the official interest in the control of information and memory is in itself proof that memory is intrinsically social and political (Todorov 1995), and an empirical demonstration that collective memory does powerfully shape practices. Remembered pasts do not solely serve present interests, because the ways in which communities remember are molded in part by the socio-historical, cultural context of the remembering practices that went on before them, by their contemporary social and relational milieu as well as by their emotional intensity. New generations rewrite history, but they do not do so “on a blank page” (Coser 1992: 34). Under certain constraining conditions, the past resists the efforts to manipulate it at will. By locating the significance of events exclusively from the standpoint of the observer, the presentist view falls short of the relativist trap that the past is entirely at the mercy of contemporary conditions and that nothing in history transcends the particularities of the present (Schwartz 1982: 376). Even if the meanings that motivate the interpretation of the past are grounded in contemporary concerns, Schwarz has demonstrated that such constructed past does rely on some of the original meanings, and that factual events "can only be selectively exploited"(Schwartz 1997: 396, Schwartz 1991, see also Middleton 1990, Schudson 1989). Similarly, Holocaust and other trauma studies in Germany and elsewhere have provided historical evidence that resilient elements from the past limit their full construction or manipulation, and have conceptualized how the remembered pasts do shape and constrain the present (Gordon 1997, Olick 1999, Olick and Levy 1997, Olick and Robbins 1998, Prager 1998, Rapaport 1997, Shils 1981, Todorov 1995). For example, from their studies of how the memory of the Holocaust operates in German contemporary politics, Olick and Levy (1997) have powerfully demonstrated prescriptions and proscriptions by which the German collective memory, through constraints such as taboos and duties, prohibitions and requirements, obliges the present (Olick and Levy 1997: 933). Schudson (1989) further supplied three sets of constraints by which “the past becomes part of us” (Schudson 1989: 109-112): (1) the materials available for memory-building (that I call sources and resources below), such as formal and informal institutional practices (including language), documents, artistic and cultural objects and literature (memory artifacts) that become popular or classic (also see Schwartz 1997); (2) psycho-dynamic processes, such as personal emotions and trauma, the weight of people’s investment in the past, and (3) intersubjective conflicts over of the past, by which memories become a culturally and politically contested terrain (Schudson 1989: 112).

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6 I follow Caruth’s (1995) Freudian definition of trauma as defined by the way in which subjects process overwhelming past experiences that they cannot ignore "even when they would like to." Put in psychoanalytic terms, the potential of trauma is placed not in the event itself but in the belatedness and intensity of the subjective experience.

7 In economic terms this has been described as "sunk costs": "There are some facets of the past we cannot ignore or forget without feeling the loss of some part of ourselves" (Schudson 1989: 111)
Schwartz has poignantly observed that since inherited and invented memories coexist and limit each other, it is not useful to have two different theories to give account for each (Schwartz 1997:377, 1991 b: 234, 1982). Thus, recent work on the sociology of memory has converged in pointing towards the need for more complex theorization to transcend the past-vs.-present dichotomy and to explore further the ways in which remembering is integral with (symbolic and material) social practices, which carry an important cultural legacy of both tradition and invention (Middleton and Edward 1990: 1). Memory's contents, processes and experiences cannot be understood by reference to contemporary social processes alone, but in the light of the operative mentalities and ideology of everyday symbolic, affective and communicative practices which are inherited and re enacted, resignified and (re) invented. In this light, I understand the collective memory (of a community, an institution, a nation) as an ongoing socio-political-cultural process of negotiation over meanings through time, neither unchanging and absolute nor wholly contingent to contemporary need in the present (Middleton 1990, Nerone1989; Olick and Levy 1997: 923, Prager 1998). A more comprehensive, multidimensional and intersubjective approach that conceptualizes the interconnections between past and present, the personal and the social, internal and external processes would be a significant contribution to the cumulative social knowledge of memory and would open a fascinating path of research on the relationship between collective and personal remembering.

While theorists like Schwartz, Schudson and Olick have explained the external constraints of remembering practices, Prager (1998) has outlined a complementary theory of the internal pressures to remember by exploring the intersection of the subjective and social processes (and external constraints) of memory. I argue that Prager's intersubjective theory has the potential to allow for one unified theory of collective memory. [Transcending dichotomic understandings, an intersubjective conception offers an important alternative to both types of distortion of memory: one that sees the present exclusively in relation to a determinative past, the other which sees the past as a mirror or projection of present interests (Prager 1998: 126). By emphasizing the reciprocal interconnections between past and present, individual and social, mental and body processes, and specifying the symbolic, cultural and emotional inscriptions of the past in the present, Prager conceives the remembering experience not only as a permeable and multi-layered embedded social and cultural process but also as a process embodied in the interpersonal world, the (conscious and unconscious) psycho-dynamic forces that give it meaning, and the cultural frames available for “meaning-making” constitutive of the particular encounter of past and present, the self and the social (Prager 1998: 115-116).]

People actively engage in practicing remembering in (implicit or explicit) dialogue with others present, past and future, so memory is seen as located at the intersection of the rememberer with her/his interpersonal relations, which occurs intersubjectively through the encounters of the remembering self with its own self and others, with the socio-cultural world (Prager 1998: 125). Succinctly, interpersonal relations as well as socio-cultural contexts are generative, constitutive and re-constitutive of memories (Prager 1998: 89).

**An intersubjective, embodied approach**

Remembering is socially embedded, because the rememberer cannot be thought separate from the specific socio-historical cultural context that is its external source, resource and frame which (in)forms the moral distinctions and meanings that people use to interpret, select and make sense of their past. Meanings, in turn, are dependent not only on the social but also on the subjective categories of perception and interpretation culturally available for “meaning-making” (Prager 1998: 115-116). Further, remembering is not only a symbolic representation but is also a
personally embodied process, “inscribed” in people's bodies through emotion. Emotionally inscribed experience, both inherited and present, provides the internal motivation to remember, express and transmit the experienced past to others (Prager 1998: 107-108). This notion of memories embodied in social subjects that integrates a theory of mediating selves and emotions is one of Prager's main contributions. He supports the idea of malleability of memory in the present and at the same time specifies the internal constraints to the full construction of the past. While memory's social embeddedness throws light on the weight of the present in shaping the past, the motivation to remember stems from the past's embodiment through innerfelt experience (Prager 1998: 91-92, 143). The self, our own subjective understanding, is itself a socio-historical product (Prager 1998: 141).

Next, I compare the transition processes in Argentina and Uruguay in the 80s, to provide the social frameworks by which to understand the emergence, similarities and contrasts of the remembering practices of the groups of children of the disappeared within the frames of meaning in each nation regarding the recent past in the 90s.

2. Transitional Human Rights in Argentina and Uruguay

The discourse on memory first emerged in the Southern Cone in the context of the human rights movements’ struggle for truth and justice against impunity during the transition to civilian rule in the mid-80s. In this section I briefly sketch the contrasting socio-historical and cultural in which the remembering processes and defiant practices of the adult children were embedded in Argentina and Uruguay.

**Repression, Transition and Impunity in Argentina (1983-89) and Uruguay (1985-86)**

The Southern Cone went through intensely polarized processes of social change in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by institutional reactionary processes that culminated with military intervention, justified under the extreme nationalist ideology of the National Security Doctrine (NSD). In this context, Argentina and Uruguay couldn’t be closer in terms of general culture. However, similarities notwithstanding, there were striking historical and political-cultural differences in the transitional processes of these two nations. While the 1976 Argentinian coup was one among many in a nation’s history marked by political instability and military uprisals since the 1930s, the 1973 Uruguayan military coup came as an “exception” to an apparently solid traditional democracy marked by a heavily consensual political system and a strongly unionized workers’ movement.

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8 The National Security Doctrine (NSD) sustained that the nation was in an internal state of war -- known as “dirty war” in Argentine slang- set against a purported pervasive Marxist Conflagration Against the Nation, that was threatening the moral values (and private property!) of the Western Christian Civilization. Faced with such “threat,” the armed forces purportedly had no choice but to assume their “moral duty” as Guardians of the Nation. For this, they appealed to any legitimate or illegitimate means to sop the enemy (Roninger 1997: 95). This policy resulted in unprecedented use of terror for the internal repression of civilians in the region, resulting in systematic torture and death, exile and disappearance of thousands of citizens, classified as “political opponents” according to the NSD frame of explanation.

9 They are regarded – and regard themselves-- as highly influenced by European culture in terms of their common history of Colonial Spanish rule, struggle for independence, structure of the state, political party system, perceptions of European identity, musical (tango and folklore) and gastronomic culture, language (very similar accents, slang and manerisms and use of humor in contrast with the rest of the region). Argentines joke that Uruguay “is just another of their provinces...”
Both military Juntas appealed to the same general terrorist doctrine of legitimation (described in footnote 7) and used terror as a systematic means of political repression of their citizens, but each regime developed its own idiosyncratic ways of repression. While Argentinean generals aimed at the physical annihilation of the enemy, resulting in the massacre of an estimated 30,000 people, brutally disappeared and murdered; the Uruguayan Junta, instead, exercised an Orwellian vigilant control of the population. Even when it was more restricted in scope, Even if the Argentinean regime was disproportionally blood-thirsty, the Uruguayan Junta has been depicted as the most totalitarian in its use of terror and silence to demobilize the population (Weinstein 1988, Weschler 1991), and it has been argued that its impact—because of symbolic, cultural and demographic conditions—was “as strong or even stronger” (Roniger and Snajder 1997: 57).

In setting democratic rules, both transition governments of the 80s were confronted with similar challenges of the legacy of authoritarianism, balancing the normative principles of democratic institutions with the pragmatic political contingency of the fear of a military comeback (Roniger 1997: 90), and having to deal with the tensions from two fronts, the military pressure for immunity, and the pressing ethical demands from the human rights movements. But each process followed a very distinct historical path, and I would argue, different results, in spite of the fact that the final outcome in effect was for the larger part, impunity for gross human rights violators.

**Truth, Crime, Punishment and Reversal in Argentina**

Argentina's transition presents several striking features: it was the result of the military defeat in the 1982 Malvinas-Falklands war. As the first in the region, the Argentinean transition had no immediate regional referents, and the initial human rights movement’s expectations of justice were high. Even though the Junta's last act had been to issue a self amnesty decree, an implicit recognition of crime (Roniger et al. 1997: 89), the initial transition government of Alfonsín (1983-1986) immediately revoked the military's self amnesty and implemented two unprecedented human rights measures: (1) the creation of a respectable independent “truth” commission (CONADEP) that produced an official report of the military crimes perpetrated during the dictatorship, which has had a deep and enduring impact on public opinion; and (2)

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10 Demographic conditions should be noted here in connection to repression startegies. Uruguay is a small country with an easily controllable and visible population of 3 million, 2/3 highly concentrated in Montevideo and a few other urban centers (Weinstein 1988). Argentina, instead, because it is a much larger and spread population of above 30 million distributed in several large urban areas is more prone to "covert violence and overt denial" of state violence (Roniger et al. 1997: 60; Rial, in Corradi 1992). Population size and number of disappeared victims is nevertheless not a good indicator if one should ever want to compare the intensity of repression, since the number of Uruguayan imprisoned and torture victims was proportionally the highest in Latin America (selon Amnesty Internatinal 1979).

11 Estimates vary between over 8,000 to 30,000 disappeared depending on sources, and like number of imprisonment, torture and exile, see Argentina: Nunca Más, 1984.

12 Even when 300 -- a relatively much smaller number -- people were disappeared or murdered, Uruguay had the highest ratio of political prisoners in the world. One in 500 citizens were imprisoned, 1/ 50 were arrested at least once (Americas Rights Watch Report 1989; Uruguay Nunca Más, 1989. Disappearances vary between 140 and 300 depending on the sources.

13 At the time, the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials were the only such precedents.

14 The CONADEP Comission, led by renowned writer Ernesto Sabato, published a summary report in Argentina: Nunca Más (Never Again) in 1984, otherwise known as Informe Sábato. It includes details of the dictatorship's
the conduction of exemplary trials of the Junta members responsible for human rights violations, that held public opinion expectant during most of 1985, and led to guilty verdicts which marked the height of Argentine symbolic thrust in democratic principled values. However, growing civilian - military polarizations and escalation of military unrest ultimately led to a reversal of Alfonsín's initial normative human rights policy. By 1987 the Argentine Parliament approved amnesty laws - the "Full Stop" and "Due Obedience" Laws - to absolve middle rank officers from all legal responsibility and put an end to all pending trials, and by 1989 the spiral of regressive measures towards impunity - in spite of massive mobilizations against it - would be completed when successor President Menem granted full pardon to all military commanders. It is ironic that by 1998, due to a complex combination of international prosecution of crimes of Argentine European bi-nationals and advances in legislation, some of the high commander cases would be re-opened by the prosecution of crimes against kidnapped babies, which would put dozens of retired officials in prison again and some would be prosecuted for the first time.16

No truth, no justice in Uruguay
In sharp contrast, the Uruguayan transition started when the Junta suffered an unexpected political defeat at a 1980 referendum, but the Uruguayan Junta still had a relatively strong position to negotiate a certain level of power and immunity, that had been accorded during the secret political negotiations with the majority of the parties (the famous Naval Club Pact, August 1984). A social consensus was formed to support the negotiations, while the human right movement and the rest of civil society were apparently unaware of any secret implications, their exact implicit or explicit terms remain secret to this day (Roniger et al. 1997:128). Despite his democratic rhetoric, Sanguinetti, President-elect in 1985, never attempted any substantial human rights policy, military exemplary trials nor official reports. Appealing once again to the rhetoric of national security and democratic stability, the president finally passed a military amnesty law in December 1996, nullifying the power of the state to legally pursue crimes during the dictatorship. Despite an unprecedented independent human rights' massive campaign led by the mothers and relatives of the disappeared to revoke this law on ethical grounds - which was supported by 25% of the electoral signatures, 57% voters ultimately ratified the Expiry Law in the 1989 Referendum, reflecting a sharp division among the constituency.20

horrifying repressive tactics and methods, testimonies of survivors, lists at least 8,961 verified desaparecidos, 365 clandestine detention centers, and names of 1,350 identified perpetrators. The report became an all-time best-seller when it was published in 1984, selling over 250,000 copies in 20 editions (the last one appeared in 1995). (Argentina: Nunca Más: 1995, 20th edition).
15 The heads of the first Junta received prison from 4 years to life sentences, although four of the nine members of the other Juntas were acquitted and released, to the disappointment of the popular movement. The trials were televised, and there was even a weekly publication exclusively devoted to the trials, El Diario del Juicio. (May 1985-January 1996), that sold 250,000 copies weekly at the time (Roniger et al: 1997).
16 This process is a supra-national process also linked to the prosecution of Gral. Pinochet from Chile and several Uruguayan officers, protected by national unconstitutional (i.e. incongruent with international treaties about torture and disappearance) interpretations and implementation of laws in their respective countries.
17 The 1980 referendum in Uruguay is one of the few paradoxical cases worldwide in which a dictatorship not only lost its own election, but it also accepted its results at the same time as it delegitimized itself.
18 The Expiry Law or “Ley de Caducidad de la Pretension Punitiva del Estado” is an unconstitutional law popularly known as the "Impunity Law." The Argentine Amnesty Law, called "Due Obedience" law, was based on more pragmatic considerations of the difficulty of determining institutional and personal responsibility for middle ranks purportedly obeying hierarchic orders.
19 This meant collecting and presenting before an unsympathetic Electoral Court more than 600,000 in 2.5 million
The Legacy of Authoritarianism in Argentina and Uruguay

The transitions left us with perplexing results. While in Uruguay, after heavy mass mobilizations for ethical human rights values, voters legitimated official pragmatic policy to waive their right to hold the military state accountable for human rights crimes, in Argentina a combination of political and military pressure ultimately de-legitimated official normative human rights policy to hold the military former regime accountable.

Even when these outcomes converge in closing the chapter of the state’s responsibility over human rights crimes during the dictatorships, there are still crucial symbolic, cultural and processual differences—that have kept developing to this day. I would summarize these differences as follows:

(1) Human Rights Policy: First, initially, Argentina and Uruguay were in most respects inverse cases regarding human rights policies and discourse on memory, “truth” and justice. While Alfonsin first prompt measures in 1983 were to demolish the former Junta’s legislation and publicly implement the prosecution and exemplary punishment of the military with great expectations, support and pressures from the human rights movement, by 1985 Sanguinetti’s gradually but solidly—having learnt the lesson from Argentina?—orchestrated a minimum top level political consensus to fulfill the terms of an implicit pact with the military, and achieved to grant them total immunity giving his back to human rights movement’s demands by the end of his second year. Consider the enormous symbolic, cultural, legal and political import of enforcing the rule of law and inquiries concerning state abuses and accountability, as opposed to denial and omission of such instituting acts. Second, while in Argentina an official truth report was promptly and widely publicized and distributed, which became a crucial informational resource with ample impact on public opinion, in Uruguay there were inefficient inquiries and ultimately official silence to this day.21

(2) Military-Civic relations: As the Argentinean military openly threatened democracy and forced a reversal of presidential legislation to grant them immunity, the Uruguayan generals only had to support the government's policies and issue discursive “warnings” between the lines to achieve similar effects.

(3) Government-Civic relations: While the human rights movement in Argentina pressed the government for a deepening of official human rights policies of truth and justice that challenged military interests, the Uruguayan human rights groups had to mobilize against governmental policies of impunity (See Appendix I). Finally,

(4) Social Movements: in Argentina despite the presidential pardons to the military perpetrators, the human rights movement continued to actively and vociferously demand truth and justice and continued to mobilize, this time against Menem policies.22 Instead, after a

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20 The Comision Nacional Pro Referendum succeeded in producing 25% of electorate signatures after much tempering of signatures by the Official-controlled Electoral Court. The Expiry Law was voted and ratified on April 16, 1989, which was interpreted by official practices as a definitive legal and juridical seal to the question of human rights abuses, in spite of the fact that the law calls for an investigation of what happened and has been repeatedly contested by supra-national legal organizations and human rights institutions.

21 SERPAJ—Uruguay, the well respected human rights umbrella non-governmental organization, did produce a “truth” report in 1989, almost four years after the transition was on its way and after the referendum campaign, with limited resources and diffusion of only 3,000 copies (in 3 editions). (“Uruguay Nunca Más,” September 1989). SERPAJ (Servicio de Paz y Justicia, Peace and Justice Service) has hosted the Madres, mothers of the disappeared and now Hijos also meet in their basement.

22 1998 marked an important dent on the impunity regimes with the international prosecution of Chilean Gral.
majority of Uruguayans ultimately voted for military immunity, and the government consistently interpreted it as a total closure of any judicial or legal process, human rights supporters were defeated and demoralized, and tended to demobilize after 1989. Such defeat of the human rights movement remains a haunting issue for Uruguayan progressives, the implications of which are far-fetching and remain largely unexplored. I will attempt a further reading of this crucial difference in my comparative analysis of the hijos de desaparecidos remembering practices in Uruguay in contrast to Argentinean in discussion below.

I would like to agree here with those who underscore the importance of the initial truth report and trials in Argentina, especially when contrasted with the official blockage of any attempts at truth or trials in Uruguay. Even when impunity in both states may have legitimized a powerful commandment to close the chapter of human rights abuses and political pragmatism may have ultimately triumphed –at least in part in Argentina and definitively in Uruguay, after 1989, the official report and public trials in Argentina provided a unique historical opportunity for both public knowledge and official acknowledgement of wrongdoing and an important normative model, that we find lacking in Uruguay. Many scholars, activist and citizens have recognized the symbolic importance of a founding moment for Argentine democracy. Argentines are now publicly informed of what happened, and keep a potent symbolic image in their collective memory of the nine army members sitting before the jury (Jelin et al. 1996, 1995). These distinct exemplary moral lessons in Argentina, despite their limitations, contributed to break the silence and allowing a social process that opened up the debate about visions of justice and democracy, not only for this nation and its neighbors but also worldwide. As a result, even if in both countries the dictatorship literally scared people away from public expression and practices, in Argentina people seem to engage in public practices of remembering and active commemoration of the recent past more openly, while in Uruguay people show reluctance and distrust of any organized public enterprise regarding the crimes of the recent past.

However, official policies did not ultimately achieve the expected closure, even in Uruguay. Despite a relative period of silence, the unresolved issues of the transition periodically resurfaced before the public eye in the 1990s, and continue to revolve around the intensely debated principles and demands of Truth, Memory, Justice, and Nunca Más (Never Again).

Analysis of the transition history and contending official and human rights cultures regarding the past in Argentina and Uruguay has shown that the textures of collective memory-making processes in each nation provided different frameworks to constrain and shape the remembering resources, processes and practices of the young. Socialized in this fermental space, inspired by first generation human rights activists and constrained and provoked by the official policies, the next generation, the now adult children of the disappeared -- in the distinct ways we

Pinochet for genocide and torture, and of other Argentinean generals for kidnapping of children of the disappeared, a complex, painful and promising process still unfolding today before our eyes, and there has been a revoking of the Due Obedience (Amnesty) Law in Argentina.

Beyond social and cultural movements and changes in the last few years, the legal situation has not changed to this day. And any case presented before a national court has been inexorable denied in the last 10 years, although there may be some indication that changes in national governmental and international situation may be starting to develop alternative arguments to the past consensus on how to interpret the amnesty law, in particular art. 4, which calls for the inquiry of cases of disappearance.

Since the 80s, Argentina has become one of four cases worldwide of a civilian government serving trials and guilty verdicts to a former military Junta for human rights violations, including Bolivia, Guatemala and South-Africa (McAdams 1997).
shall see below -- adopted the moral and legal distinctions transmitted from Madres y Familiares and the families they were socialized in.

3. Analysis: The groups of children of the disappeared in Argentina and Uruguay

In what follows I ask how the collective memory of the dictatorship and transition in the different national social contexts of Argentina and Uruguay affects, shapes and/or frames the remembering practices in each community of hijos de desaparecidos in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. By “practices” I mean the personal, interpersonal and social meaning-making understandings that frame communications, relations, and actions (Ricoeur 1971).

For this purpose, I analyze interviews 25 with children of desaparecidos (hijos thereof) in Argentina and Uruguay, to explore their personal group remembering processes and practices. I first compare the historical emergence and character of the Argentinean and Uruguayan young group respectively. Then, I observe the intersubjective quality of remembering practices. Under "practices" I include interpretations of the past (or meaning-frames), interpersonal relations, language and communications, group interactions, emotions, and activities. For this purpose, I have discriminated two levels of analysis. (I) At the social level, in terms of national collective memory I look at the (1) availability of information and materials about the past, at the interpersonal, social and institutional level, to trace what types of sources and resources for memory-building people may access in each country; and (II) at the group level, intersubjective "themes": (1) quality of social and interpersonal relations, by looking at the emotions and language expressed (vocabulary, tenses, expressions) in relation to the past, their own group, and the media; (2) quality of personal embodied memories, trying to trace the interactions, moments and/ or processes that triggered personal memories; and (3) group activities, asking whether they were public or private, whether they used available resources. In the discussion, I attempt to illuminate the relationship between the historical paths and national collective memories in Argentina and Uruguay and hijos, and draw insights for an intersubjective conception of collective memory outlined earlier in the concluding remarks. For the sake of brevity, I will refer to the children of the disappeared in Argentina as HIJOS-A, and to the children of the disappeared in Uruguay as Hijos-U.

The emergence of networks of children of the disappeared in the mid 90s

Two analogous social events in Argentina and Uruguay indicate that the memory of the dictatorship – far from being a demobilizing factor, is still a haunting social problem. Demonstrations commemorating the disappeared have surprisingly increased in numbers as time

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25 The comparative analysis is based on my participant observation of the two groups and 35 in-depth open interviews with children of the disappeared (See Appendix III ) in Montevideo and Buenos Aires (1996-97). I conducted 15 interviews with founding members of Hijos - Uruguay in Montevideo, from an estimated total membership of 20. In Buenos Aires, I conducted exploratory interviews with some members of the group H.I.J.O.S. – Capital. However, for the purpose of a richer analysis of Argentina I used 20 extensive and systematic published interviews by Argentinean writer Juan Gelman and Mexican psychoanalyst Mara LaMadrid ("Hijos de desaparecidos: Ni el Flaco Perdón de Dios," 1997). In terms of comparability of the material, through a personal communication with the authors, I verified that our interview method was similarly open, to “let the children talk” and listen about their life story and observe how they structured their meanings and understandings. The range of topics covered is also very similar, covering their personal life story and story of participation in the group, their perceptions of dictatorship and transition, etc.
goes by, around the 20th-25th anniversaries of the coups. Not only existing human rights groups, like the legendary Madres y Familiares, continue active, but also new social groups have emerged in the 90s, particularly among the youth in the last few years. Among them, the adult children of the disappeared -- now in their twenties -- have renewed interest in raising the painful moral and legal questions of truth and justice, identity and memory related the fate of the disappeared, forming groups and networks to question the realpolitik of oblivion and the legitimacy of impunity.

A portrait of the distinctive character of hijos groups in Argentina and Uruguay

Both groups of hijos share a sense that the past had been an unfolding mystery since childhood. Some of them knew whatever “truth” was available about their parents' disappearances -- some even witnessed their abduction or were kidnapped themselves; others had not been told what had happened. Most could not make sense of the meanings of disappearance and its political underpinnings until after the democratic "opening" (in their early or mid teens). Both groups share an understanding that they still have an indelible right to know the essential pieces of the puzzle of their parent's personal stories, part of their own identities, that they feel were stolen, and share the motivating thrust – they put it in terms of “need”-- to recover their parents’ silenced memories. Initially, in both cases networks of hijos wereformed when these young people coincided in commemorative acts convoked through personal or human rights networks. Soon, spontaneous encounters born from the need to exteriorize memory led to support meetings to get to know each other and share their stories. I have two very different experience of my own from the encounters with each group during my participant observations as an “insider-outsider” participant-researcher. In Uruguay, most people (12/15) received me in private and usually sought a quiet and reserved place within the NGO building where they usually meet or at home where we could converse uninterrupted. It felt as if we were "plotting" something forbidden, breaking taboos, talking about silenced matters. Even though some people stated that they had never talked about some of the issues that came up in the interviews, they all tended to narrate their stories in a relatively detached way, to use an apt phrase, "as if their parents had been historical figures" (Bar-On 1989: 328). In Argentina, in contrast, and despite the fact that most did not know me previously, they received me without reservations, open to talk either alone or in groups, in their meeting or work place. Even though it was not the first

26 In Argentina, Plaza de Mayo demonstrations act as a sort of national thermometer; demonstrations went from an estimated 5,000 people to repudiate the 1987 military uprisals, to the largest concentration of people repudiating the dictatorship during the 20th anniversary of the coup (5,000 - 10,000 people, depending on the sources), and more than 7,000 in the 1997 "March of Resistance"or Marcha de las Antorchas (Clarín, Buenos Aires). In Uruguay, the "March of Silence" (Marcha del silencio) organized in the memory of the disappeared during the 24th anniversary of the coup was reported to have been the largest demonstration in recent years (a few thousand people) (Brecha, May 23, 1997).

27 In Argentina, there are at least nine Human Rights NGOs: Madres de Plaza de Mayo split into Linea Fundadora and the Hebe de Bonafini line, Familiares de desaparecidos, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos, Movimiento Ecumenico de Derechos Humanos (MEDH), SERPAJ-Argentina, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), and Servicio Ecumenico (Skaar 1993). In Uruguay there are five NGOs all under the umbrella of Coordinación de Derechos Humanos (Madres y Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos, SERPAJ-Uruguay, Servicio Ecuménico, SERSOC, and IELSUR).

28 I must clarify here that I participated in what now Hijos-U consider their “pre-history” as a member, as a member of the generation of the “children of the dictatorship” although I myself fortunately didn’t have to live through an experience of disappearance of any of my parents.
time most of these people talked about their stories, these were told with emotion, loving, crying and cursing as if it "actually happened."

Beginnings
In Argentina, children of direct victims of the dictatorship first gathered during a commemoration in honor of the disappeared at the University of La Plata in April 1994. A network of groups was formed in there and also in the capital, and other impacted cities followed, growing from their initial 350 to 600 members in their first year. By 1995, they had named themselves after the agreed principles that form the acronym H.I.J.O.S. (Children for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence). HIJOS-A have since been very public and vocal about their founding principles and demands. They reaffirm their right to ask and talk publicly about their parents' and their own stories and their ideals; reject the amnesty decrees as immoral and unconstitutional. They work towards the moral condemnation of the perpetrators of their parents' deaths, contesting the military version that the crimes were justified for national security. They openly call the military genocidal and deny any possibility of reconciliation or forgiveness without truth and justice.

In July 1996, a visit of a small delegation of HIJOS - Argentina to Uruguay provided the opportunity for a handful of Uruguayan Hijos (or Hijos-U) to gather. By contrast, their small number slowly rose from the initial 6 or 8 to 17 or 20 throughout 1996 and 1997, as Hijos-U originally met reluctantly and ambivalently, with no other aim than to talk about their story in lieu of the official silence.

Media and Social Perceptions
HIJOS-A immediately started to appear both in progressive and mainstream media portrayed as an unusually committed, active, unique group, developing a relatively strong public presence in Argentinean society, promoting their principles by organizing a broad range of their own public educational activities, commemorations and legal actions. There have also been strong and unprecedented social reactions both opposing and supporting HIJOS in Argentina, from intimidating threats by undercover secret service agents to invitations by the mainstream media to participate in TV debates. After a commemorative rock concert on the 20th anniversary of the coup in Buenos Aires in 1996, 10,000 youth spontaneously formed a column and followed HIJOS to the Supreme Court to present a collective habeas corpus for the disappeared.

29 Soon after, real and virtual networks developed in Chile, Venezuela, France, Spain, Holland, Sweden, Mexico and the U.S. of mostly the Argentinean diaspora, but also some Uruguayan hijos resident abroad.
30 H.I.J.O.S. in Argentina (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia, contra el Olvido y el Silencio). In Uruguay they name themselves after los Hijos ("the children") to distinguish themselves from the Argentinean acronym.
32 The military version or "theory of the two devils, as it has been called, is regarded as a cynical effort to place equal responsibility on the victims's side for "threatening the security of the nation" to justify their crimes (the genocide of an estimated 8,000-16,000 Argentineans, and more than 150 Uruguayans in coordination with the Uruguayan army).
33 Although it is hard to have accurate numbers of children of disappeared -since there has been no official report on the subject- Madres y Familiares have gathered a list of aproximately 50 children and Hijos estimate there may be as many as 80 in the country. Sources, Madres archives, Montevideo, Sept. 1997.
34 Marcha de las Antorchas, Buenos Aires, March 24, 1996 (see La Maga and Clarín, March 25, 1996 ).
The only two published newspaper articles about the existence of Hijos-U, in turn, emphasize their “normalcy,” their only distinction from the rest of their generation being the state’s denial (via referendum) of the possibility of knowing what happened to their parents. In their own words, consider an account of the way Hijos-U perceive some of these differences with their neighbors HIJOS-A:

These things don’t happen from one day to another. In Argentina they are already 4 or 5 years old....the timing is different, and in Uruguay the idiosyncrasies are perhaps a little different too... the different idiosyncrasies [between Argentina and Uruguay] change because of numbers, they are lots and we are very very few ...it is more like a small town here, [Argentina and Uruguay are] similar but we [Uruguayans] are more like a neighborhood, a small town feeling, right? In Argentina everything happens more quickly, more actively, more speedily, more violently. [Argentina] is bigger. We are more backwards. Not so backwards, but people's minds are more calm ... maybe more fearful (interview # 6, Anibal, 26, Mvdeo)

The crucial distinction between the Uruguayan and Argentinean group -- as I hope what follows demonstrate -- lies in (1) the different ways by which each group of hijos presents itself, researches, and shares its remembering process and practices and (2) each group is perceived and received by social and media agents. From the start, Uruguayans have tended to be cautiously private, while Argentineans have ventured more publicly and politically.

I. Collective memory sources and resources

When questioned on how they learned what they know, interviewees in both countries have had different experiences. A large majority state that everything they know about the past is unspoken, and are not able to specify how -- from listening at home, on their own. Others had the opportunity to establish some sort of dialogue with their close family about the circumstances and meaning of the disappearance or even remember what happened, and were able to relate it to the ideological activities of their parents.

However, there are indeed important differences both in the availability and the creativity of sources and resources (inherited or readily accessible) about their past from one state to another. In Argentina, there is a wide and growing variety of collective memory sources and resources available that range from personal and familiar sources, to documents, to several

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35 Brecha August 1, 1997. Incidentally, a second article has appeared as I write this paper, Brecha, March 27.
36 All interviews cited in the analysis, unless otherwise noted, are my literal translation from the Spanish original. For the interview list, see Appendix III.
37 By source I mean original information (i.e. familiar eyewitness, neighbor, perpetrator, the army, etc.); by resource I mean tool, supply, means of production of information (social and institutional means to access information).
38 See Appendix III for a reference list of interviews. See interview # 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, in Montevideo; and interviews # 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, in Buenos Aires.
39 Such sources, or information originators are: (a)personal or familiar; i.e. at home or outside, dialogue with close relatives or remaining parent, friends, neighbors/ witnesses, former companions and survivors of that time, remaining personal documents from the past, such as personal letters, diaries, photos; (b) several organizations of family and relatives of the disappeared, as well as (c) military and governmental sources, including testimonies and confessions. Resources are public or private social institutional means to document and transmit the past, and
organizations of family and relatives of the disappeared, as well as public and private institutional sources and resources such as the military, the governmental commissions and truth report, including testimonies and confessions of army members and government agents, professions and “artifacts” of memory; to a quite unique one, a team of forensic anthropologists. Argentineans seem to have not only more personal and familial collective memory sources to draw from, but also have accessed and produced a plurality of public, social and institutional -- even military -- resources. In Uruguay, instead, sources seem to rely more exclusively on the personal and private arena than in the Argentinean case.

Since official silence in Uruguay has not been broken during the transition, collective memory sources and resources are unsurprisingly substantially more scarce. HIJOS-A simply seem to have more support for their memory, while Hijos-U seem to be gasping for words to fill in the gaps in their past. The capacity to publicly break the silence in Argentina seems to have led to more availability of words, testimonies, materials, to foster memory. This socio-political and institutional process of relative abundance seems to correlate with the support of the personal and familiar sources and resources as well. A plausible hypothesis is that complete official silence in Uruguay led to diminishing availability of collective memory sources and resources and is also having an effect in intersubjective relations and familiar practices; whereas the existence of an early and timely public report -- used for the trials -- in Argentina may have been instrumental to stimulate collective memory production in the public/ institutional, organizational and private/ familial-personal realms.

(II) The remembering processes and practices of hijos in Argentina and Uruguay

Intersubjective emotions and language

Because I have posited that memory is intersubjectively constituted, I look at how the relational processes interplay with the communicational and practical realms. During my interviews I remarked that while Argentinean accounts seemed emotionally closer to their personal experiences and transmissions, expressing love and anger openly, Uruguayans, by contrast, seemed relatively less vivid and more elliptical, emotionally detached and mutely indignant. HIJOS seemed to tell their stories with more psychological sophistication, more emotional elaboration than Hijos. My evidence suggests that this is not merely a chronological or historical difference, as the groups had distinct emotional relational expressions from their very beginnings. HIJOS-A’s initially developed particularly intense emotional family-like relations and feelings from the very beginning:

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40 See list of Human Rights NGOs in footnote 27.

41 Hijos in Uruguay researched information largely by their own means, listening around adults’ conversations, at home, finding letters, photos. It is less frequent for them to find information from political groups, although some have benefited from trips to Argentina, Chile or Paraguay in search of clues, since many people actually disappeared abroad.
We had barely met half an hour before and we were already all tied up together, hugging as if we had known each other for years and crying all together... that is the way the network [la red] was formed ... There was camaraderie, a need to share the stories that each of us had experienced and a lot of reencounters... It was wonderful (Interviewee # 6, Patricia, Buenos Aires; See Appendix III for interviewee list)

The kids took to seeing each other all the time, every day. Calling each other, taking care of each other, minding for the lives of the others as if they were their own, loving each other frenetically. It is a very rare thing ... to receive whoever just arrived as if they were a sister or a brother...we fell in love with each other."[italics are mine] (# 8, Mariano, Bs. As.)

By contrast, Hijos-U showed profound initial distrust and reluctance to meet:
In the beginning people were a little distrustful, the "what is this for," you see?...that mistrust that we always talk about. We come to know each other and see who we are, sometimes we look at each other and sniff each other like dogs do, like saying "who are you? and what are you doing here?" (Interviewee # 6, Anibal, Montevideo)

Contrasting with the Argentinean’s self-empowering sense of pride, Uruguayan Hijos’ emotional expressions about the group remain cautious and reserved -- apparent in most interviews -- even after two years:

Now we have ties...it is a little addictive, when we do not meet it feels as if there is something missing... There are things between us that are understood, that we do not need to explain (Interviewee # 1, Elena, 22, Montevideo)

While Argentineans express themselves in a language of intense emotions, talking directly about breaking down and crying (including getting emotional and actually crying in some of the interviews), Uruguays report mildly recounting their "sorrows" in the group (contarnos las penas), without openly expressing feelings in the group (or the interviews).

Such distinctions are also apparent in the interviewees' different language about the past: while HIJOS use direct, explicit words to name situations, Hijos either use ellipsis and understatements, leaving sentences in mid air, or appeal to very rational descriptions. While HIJOS have recognized the tragic character of their recent history, Hijos tend to normalize, or even banalize, the extent of the pain and irreparable damage suffered. Here is a Uruguayan example of such normalization of the experience of disappearance, a daughter who witnessed her father’s abduction, but is stunned by a friend’s direct comment on the situation:

She told me: ' Look, S... I think it would be really good for you to go to this group [Hijos] because I can see that one of your problems is that you deny...you deny the story of your life, what your reality is really like...and it might help you to realize that you are not the only one that went through that ... [no allusion to disappeared father] and that what happened to you was a tragedy...' Nobody had ever told me that my life was a tragedy! And I felt she was exaggerating! (# 3, Sandra, 29, Mvdeo)

In contrast, HIJOS-A use explicit vocabulary of the past traumatic events:
When they killed my dad I suffered a psychological trauma and stopped talking. I didn't talk for a year and a half. What happened is that I fell in prison with my mom and they tortured her in front of me. I lost not only speech, I also lost the memories. The memories I have of my first four years of life I have recovered only recently...(#1, Maria Laura, Buenos Aires)

Argentineans in general have coined a rich new vocabulary of nouns and verbs of terror, such as desaparecer (disappear), encapuchar (hood), escrache (to scratch, or denounce publicly) and others, to describe the new reality, pervasive in all interviewees.42 In Uruguay, people talk elliptically. Generally speaking, Uruguayans have tended to fall short of incorporating new words for things related to repression in their daily expressions. In my interviews this is pervasive. Rather than dictatorship they tend to say "the process" (el proceso, shorthand for military process), they tend to say "they were taken away" (se los llevaron) rather than "disappeared" when talking about their parents. Verbs like disappear, kill, murder, and words like killer, subversive, traitor, trauma, tragedy, or genocide (commonly used by HIJOS-A) are curiously almost absent from Hijos-U's interviews. Here is a contrasting example of direct language in HIJOS-A and of "lack" of words in Hijos-U:

Democracy betrayed me because the killers are free and they do whatever they like. I am very scared that this might happen all over again and that this time they may target us for being who we are, children of subversives43 as they say and well, that they may do something to us... (#9, Guadalupe, Buenos Aires)

It was good to meet, it was about finding a lot of common points, otherwise all this -- the past-- could have been a fantasy! My context was really conducive to denial, so as I talked with others... it was transformed into something real... I just do not find the words to tell [to outsiders to the group] (#4, Lorenzo, 22, Montevideo)

This language usage contributes to create a distinctive picture of the two groups. Hijos-U tend to keep the disappearance of their parents private, restricted to a personal circle or their group.

Communications: Silence and Publicity

Comparatively, the interviews repeatedly give a sense that HIJOS-A have been in an ongoing process of breaking the silence for years, the product of a process of searching and coming to terms with a violent past, while Uruguayan descriptions of the past suggest that Hijos-U are just starting to break with a sense of denial of the tragic consequences of the past in the present. The difficulty may be due to lack of public acknowledgment of the past and its unsolved issues. Accounts suggest that people have not felt a clear break away from the use of silence and denial as a "survival strategy" from dictatorship to democracy. Hijos-U say they are still conducting an inner struggle to defeat fear in their lives and not to let denial defeat them.

42 See also MargueriteFeitlowicz's excellent “Lexicon of terror” 1998.
43 Subversive was a name the military used to stigmatize/demonize their "internal enemy," accusing political opponents of a communist conspiracy against the nation, to justify what they called the "dirty war." Being suspect of subversion was enough to disappear, be imprisoned or exiled (Roninger et. al: 1997: 1.33).
Another aspect of the different weight of silence in Argentina and Uruguay is their very different practices towards publicity. Fear and threats do not seem to stop HIJOS-A from being outspoken and making public appearances in demonstrations, commemorative acts and media events. For example, the daughter of a desaparecido acknowledged relief to have "come out of the cold," by giving a public testimony on national TV viewed by several million Argentineans (# 7, Raquel, Bs. As.). Another example, after a series of threats from undercover agents in Buenos Aires, HIJOS-A published a defiant letter in the national press entitled "Who protects us from those who protect us?"

We do not accept to be 'protected' by the same forces that have clearly demonstrated their institutional vocation for violent repression... These actions make clearly visible the continuity of the methodology of terror initiated during the dictatorship and later legitimized by this government through the pardon to the military murderers... 45

In contrast, Hijos-U have had extremely limited contacts with mainstream media and have seldom appeared even in the alternative media, to which they have responded reluctantly. For example, a Uruguayan hija voices their fears after a reporter photographed and interviewed the group for the first time:

I got scared, I thought what if they [the military] come for me now? What if they put a bomb in my house? I got all those fears you know from giving my name, my face...my imagination flew and I told myself: goodbye! I am done for! But then I cannot live my entire life scared because I am not doing anything wrong, it is supposedly a democracy and well, I can talk, can't I? (# 3, Montevideo)

(similar reluctance to appearing in public, specially of being photographed or filmed, is expressed in # 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15)

Paradoxically, in spite of open threats, HIJOS-A still acknowledge a certain relief to be expressive, wanting to break the silence and abandon anonymity, while Hijos-U are cautious to break the silence nor abandon anonymity. A continuity with threatening ways of the past (and the concomittant fears) paradoxically seem to still be operative in Uruguay.

(Inter) Subjective processes: the embodiment of past memories

Accounts from both countries show there is an emotional timing to "be ready" to assume the symbolically charged identity of being the son/ daughter of... (hijo/a de...) and to experience the stories of the past as embodied memories. Questions during childhood tended to ask randomly, as if young children were somehow aware of the silence, pain and fear involved, and they became specially vivid during their formative period (early teens and twenties), as they felt more prepared to know. Such processes coincided with the unfolding of the political transition, and became specially vivid as they hit the age of their parents’ disappearance. However, there are important differences in timing and embodiment of these processes in each country.

44 A testimony of the threats appears in interview # (P.) in Gelman 1997: 279.
45 H.I.J.O.S. bulletin number 1, 1995.
46 As of June 1998. More recently they have gained more public presence, but their relations with media haven’t changed substantially, as all treatment of “the problem of disappearance” by Uruguayan mainstream media.
In Argentina, the vivid circumstances have made HIJOS-A face crude realities such as accepting the death of a loved one, including recovering and burying their remains to put a conclusion to the story. Most HIJOS-A accounts emphasize the importance that such need to bury the dead had for their decision to search for the "truth". In this particularly Catholic country, burial not only literally puts a person in her place, but also symbolically places the missing person within their role and history in the community:

To find him and to bury him was like putting things in their place. Disappearance is bad for Argentina. It is a country of Catholics, and Catholics bury their dead.... Burying the dead is a human necessity. When you bury them in a certain place, that place becomes yours. You determine the limits of your territory when you bury your dead. These are such difficult feelings to explain, the sense of belonging... and you feel the responsibility towards what really belongs to you (# 1, Maria Laura, Bs. As.)

In Uruguay, instead, after an initial period of rejection or reluctance to assume the weight of being a hijo de desaparecidos in public, Hijos-U have just started to feel their traumatic situation. I have observed this embodiment of traumatic memory in progress in an important number of Uruguayan interviewees (# 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9). This is noticeable both through a more self-reflexive use of the language in the present tense, in contrast with past tense in Argentinean accounts:

[Going to Hijo-U] is making me think of things that I never...maybe I thought them before but I never allowed myself... I am not sure how to give you an example; it is as if I am now thinking of them more inside of me ... I have even dared remember my father. I used to remember him superficially from the outside, but I never really remembered him... I don't know how to put this, with sentiment, I don't know... This way I learned to see him in a different way, too (# 3, Sandra, 29, Mvdeo)

Here is a particularly sharp example of this interpenetration of self and social relations in the process of placing oneself in relation to the past and one's own history that I attempt to illustrate. Similarly, the following Hijo-U felt connected to a new sense of himself, his position in the family and the community when he engaged in the process of making sense of his father's disappearance. He tells how, full of emotion, he found himself and his disappeared father in the massive 20th commemoration of the disappeared, la Marcha del Silencio (Mvdeo, 1997):

It overwhelms me... there are some moments where it is so strong that I cannot deny it: so then I have to ask, who am I? That is the moment when you can start really seeing your father for yourself and accepting him. Only then you can go to a demonstration or wherever, not carrying the weight of your father anymore -- that is what you used to do when you were a kid and the whole thing went over you -- but you are now going because you are the son of such and such and that is it. You are now you... This [Marcha del Silencio] is the first time that I go knowing who I am. It was very special. I got home and I was punching the walls and I cut my finger. With my blood I wrote: 'dad, I love you' ... I really don't know how this happens. You end

47 Accepting the death of a disappeared person is symbolically equated to killing the person by most clinicians who have specialized in work with these kinds of trauma (Lira and Kobalskys 1985, Viñar 1985).
up accepting your father as your father and...you start your own search. That will bring you to confront with others... because now you are grown up and you are asking questions, you want to know some things...You are now another person [italics are mine] (# 4, Lorenzo, 22, Mvdeo)

Such a passage illustrates an incipient awareness in many interviewees of the social implications of their parents' disappearance, through the realization that beyond their personal suffering, what happened was also a collective experience due to social causes, i.e. political commitments undertaken by their parents. In some cases, this embodiment fosters a sense of social responsibility that opens up the polemical question of what practices they should get involved in. These different relationship with their own personal history also reflect in the qualitatively different ways each group developed their activities.

**Remembering and commemorative activities**

**Quality of commitment: pride and weight of social responsibility**

The Argentineans' embodiment of the past and the realization of the social dimensions of their experiences has been underway for a time and seems to be a powerful motivation to engage in public or even political action:

It seems we all reached an age when we said either I talk now or I remain silent forever...I believe this has a lot to do with the country. We inherited a real heavy weight....My personal responsibility towards my parents has now become social because it has to do with the collective memory of the country... (# 15, Bs. As.)

**HIJOS-A** have developed a wide variety of activities towards the community directed to create social awareness of the moral issues at stake, and in fact use their socially charged position as a power in the reticent ears of society:

The best of **HIJOS-A** is, it is the first time we can say with pride, yes, we are hijos de desaparecidos, so what? (...) We feel, roughly speaking, as a "pain in the neck"...we think this "authorized" word we have to talk is important.... the fact that they [society, the army] cannot throw anything back at us, there is no excuse to tell us. We are not asking society to take charge of our pain, but to acknowledge that state terrorism existed (#15, Josefina, Bs. As.)

We said: let's come out and show ourselves so that people know that we remember our old people [parents] and that we want the others to remember. We will be like a little flea in their ears that says: 'Remember, this is what happened'... (# 11, Bs. As.)

As observed earlier, **Hijos-U** again differ qualitatively in this regard. While **HIJOS-A** have generally shared feelings of pride from their inception, and feel “authorized” to talk, which translate into a sense of social responsibility, most **Hijos-U** initially felt uneasy with the weight of the public responsibility of being known as the daughter or son of a desaparecido, fear they will be de-legitimized, and expressed reservations, distrust and reluctance to participate in anything reminding traditional political activism:
My initial reaction was rejection, I didn't want to know anything because I imagined that it was going to be the same all over, I was scared that they would force me to do something that I did not want to do (# 3, Sandra, 29, Mvdeo).

Social responsibility and participation

Consider the following representative illustrations of visions of their social role for HIJOS-A and Hijos-U:

As you gain awareness of your own history you feel like doing lots of things. It is good in the face of violence to be able to invert the situation and to give some answer… It is feelings that move the world. That is something that I think is very nice: to be able to say: since they already stole the person away for us, let us at least recover what is still ours. Even God's thin forgiveness is not enough. (# 1, Maria Laura, Paris/Buenos Aires) 48

I think that this thought must be in many heads: "my old man made a commitment, not only that, he took the risk, and see where he ended up!" This fear is very tangible, very real...who can give you assurance that tomorrow they won't come and knock on your door and take you? ... We now have the advantage that we know what happened. My parents were not conscious of what could happen to them. Now we are conscious of the risks and we have fear, because of what happened to them we were left always with the question that all of my generation ask themselves: if the same happened again, what would I do? It is very difficult! Ultimately, we know what happened and so we can say, I don't know if I would do it, of course! I don't know if it is worth it... probably not. Their unawareness spared them... We are not going to do anything at the moment, as much as we may want to change the world, we are not going to move a finger. Or maybe we will, who knows? (# 6, Lorenzo, 22, Mvdeo)

Even when both historic experiences left a common legacy of fear which can be summarized in the common statement “No te metas” or "Do not get involved, Mind your own business,” and both groups have very tangible fear of repression, the evidence suggests that Argentinean and Uruguayan hijos seem to have different trust in their power to mobilize or appeal to governmental institutions. Perhaps they are faced with the different paths of truth and justice, after the 1989 referendum in Uruguay seems to have “sealed” any further solution, the lessons to forget and demobilize have clearly been reinforced and a sense of defeat has set in, while in Argentina there were legal re-opening of cases of disappeared children eminent at the time of these interviews. Unlike HIJOS-A, who still claim for justice, Hijos-U no longer stress principles of justice and accountability, but emphasize truth and memory:

Nowadays justice and punishment is something that, in part, we would all like …but you know it is something unattainable [irrealizable, that cannot happen in practice, like a dream] at this time, but the only way that we could elaborate all this [eliptical reference to the dictatorship and impunity!] would be by having justice and

48 Phrase that gives name to Gelman’s book: Ni el flaco perdón de Dios (Not even God's thin forgiveness).
punishment...so we need to work in practice for ‘Nunca Mas’ … If you stay put, this can happen tomorrow all over again! (interview # 2, Nestor, 23, Montevideo)

I went to one of their meetings [in Buenos Aires], and these kids were asking me about our referendum and thinking about demanding to revoke Due Obedience and Full Stop. You see… they are crazy!!! That’s impossible! (# 15, Laura, 30, Montevideo).

The most important thing is memory, if there cannot be justice, if we cannot know the official truth, at least people must know the other version of the story. It is impossible to forget the disappeared... To be able to say no, the issue is not finished, until the truth is known this issue is not finished... Then you want to seek for your family members, you want to know what happened, then you cannot know the truth, you cannot recover the remains of your family members, understand? All this robbery they did of your story, all the pain that this inflicted on you! So I think that in some ways we must try to do something so that this situation does not continue this way... The topic won't be closed until truth is known. If we are not allowed to judge them from the judicial point of view, well, then, we will have to do it from the social and moral point of view, so that society knows… (Interview # 1, Elena, 23, Montevideo; shared by all interviewees)

I suggest that this closed path to truth and justice as a result of two years of mobilizations may have left an unexamined lesson, a lesson that may be making all the difference.

In sum, this analysis has shown how the quality of hijos’ remembering practices, i.e. emotions, relations, language and public appearances regarding their past, normative and general psychological similarities notwithstanding, contrast sharply from one national group to the other. Looking at each group's interpersonal relations (emotions, language), communications (silenced or public) and activities (private or public, engaged or detached), the evidence has repeatedly confirmed that while in Argentina HIJOS have tended to be active and publicly committed to the principles they named themselves after from the start, Uruguayan Hijos were involved in a comparatively more cautious, inward-looking, trust-building memory processes both personally and in their group, and so far have remained ambivalent about public involvement.

4. Discussion

This paper asked whether there is a relationship between the different socio historical frameworks within which distinctive textures of national collective memory are shaped, and the different outcomes in the ways hijos in Argentina and Uruguay remember.

Shaped by the present needs of a formative moment and by a powerful inner motivation to "bridge the gaps" of their blood memories with meaning, my analysis suggests that haunting issues of memory can not be ignored for long in either society, because now the past for these young people has become an embodied “a part of their present” (Schudson 1989: 109-110, Prager 1998). Far from forgetting, a combination of inherited and contemporary forces powerfully presents these young people with the choice to either embody or evade their stories.

But collective memory-building processes and practices among hijos in Argentina and Uruguay have also yielded vivid differences. I have observed memory's personal embodiment through timing and emotional processes, expressed through the language of timing and emotion;
and memory's social embededness, by contrasting private and public practices of collective remembering and by looking at group, social and institutional resources at hand. The evidence suggests a different relationship between memory’s embeddedness and embodiment in each national group. The distinct images and interpretations of the past they draw, shaped by in turn distinct national collective memories, have yielded qualitatively different practices in remembering the potentially traumatic stories of their parents.

What could account for these differences?

These in many ways opposite socio cultural contexts and political conditions of addressing the human rights problems described above i.e. transitional partial justice and truth in Argentina, and the lack of justice and truth in Uruguay, seem to have so far crystallized in qualitatively different historical lessons about collective mobilization, drawn from the contemporary ways in which the national societies as a whole have processed the thorny issues regarding the recent past. While in Argentina partial justice left a relatively more open climate for human right activists to strategize and try new ways to contest the legitimacy of the impunity laws, in Uruguay human rights activists find it harder to find any legal-political way open. I suggest these were crucial to generate and constitute qualitatively different types of “collective memory-cultures,” that is, sensibilities, dispositions and expectations connected to people’s understandings, willingness and trust in public action in each national community.

As the ethical struggle for of truth, justice and hope suffered an ambivalent defeat in the 1989 referendum over human rights violations in Uruguay, if the referendum campaign had indeed been –as I believe it is-- “part of a fundamental process of overcoming fear and learning again to trust”…. (Roniger and Snajder 1997: 66), then the extent of this historical lesson for younger people remains unexplored. I agree with analysts such as Roniger and Snajder that point to that defeat as a crucial moment in Uruguayan history and identity, “imprinted” in the collective experience as “the crucial event through which the society elaborated in a cathartic way the legacy of the past and the possibility of the future…” (Roniger and Snajder 1997: 58-59, 76).”

These empirical cases, far from being the exception, join a wider enduring counter-hegemonic cultural struggle, in opposition to contemporary authoritarian political cultures that command the silence of their constituents.49 This supports Prager's intersubjective theory that remembering is the result of the articulation of an internal motivation to remember with the external social realm. Following Prager, I have argued that the motivation to remember is embodied, powerfully instilled from the inner world of emotion and meaning. I have indeed observed this need -- even if varied in form -- in both cases. The existence of these communities of memory of younger people at their formative stages in both countries (and in the region) suggests that the basic motivation to remember is not only fundamentally constructed by the external social environment in which remembering occurs, although it is indeed tempered and shaped by it. The emergence of remembering processes in Argentina and Uruguay shows that, at least in these cases of blood memory (Perelli 1994), memory cannot be erased or manipulated at will, because its embodiment is a powerful inner motivation to remember (Prager 1998).

49 Other cases in point are Central/Eastern European, Central American and African/Southsfrican transitions.
But *hijos in each country do not remember in the same ways*. Because their efforts to make the past a part of the present are embedded in different socio-political cultures, building upon the existing inherited collective memory, comparatively more supportive in Argentina than in Uruguay, each group engage in qualitatively different remembering practices. A comparison of "intersubjective themes," social and group relations, emotions, language and activities in Argentina and Uruguay has yielded striking differences in remembering processes and practices between them. Their visions have so far crystallized in very different paths of practices and action. The sharp contrasts between these two groups suggest that the distinctive ways *hijos* in each social environment are experiencing and interpreting the past (dictatorship and transition) is indeed affected by the legacy of collective memory embedded in each society, memory's essential intersubjectivity and social embeddedness.

5. **Conclusions: Towards a comprehensive social theory of collective memory**

My cases show that memory has been differently processed, embodied and expressed collectively in each group, embedded in demonstrably different historical, social and cultural contexts in Argentina and Uruguay, thus reinforcing the conception that collective memory is tempered by its inscription in particularly distinct cultures. My empirical studies of the remembering practices among children of the disappeared in the context of the collective memory cultures in Argentina and Uruguay demonstrate that memory is not only socially embedded but intersubjectively constituted.

In sum, a comprehensive intersubjective theoretical perspective applied to my specific cases has provided the following insights: (1) When memory is embodied, it is a powerful inner motivation to remember. Cases of intense autobiographical memories, such as *Madres* or *hijos de desaparecidos* in Argentina and Uruguay, are more likely to be “selected” into personal and collective remembering precisely because they are embodied (i.e. blood memories). This internal constraint helps understand their resilience. (2) Memory is socially embedded, simultaneously socially and intersubjectively constituted. A similar tragic problem -- the problem of the disappeared -- embedded in demonstrably different socio-cultural and group contexts, yielded qualitatively distinct remembering processes and practices, as a result of memory's social/intersubjective generative embeddedness.

This paper has been a modest contribution towards a more comprehensive explanatory framework, subsuming constructionist and critical insights within an intersubjective conception presented above.\(^{50}\) In my two cases of political and historical dislocation in Argentina and Uruguay, I hope to have demonstrated this approach’s explanatory power to account for the dynamic interpenetration of personal and popular memories, their complex interpenetration of the personal and social, past and present within their contemporary and archaic elements. I hope to have started to demonstrate the utility of a comprehensive intersubjective approach to memory’s concomitant reproductive and innovative processes, to understand the complexities of how memory-building practices paradoxically endure in our imaginations and yield new practices. In further research in this direction I hope to explore memory transmission practices to further explore its explanatory potential.

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Olick, Jeffery. 1999a. “Collected Memory and Collective Memory: Two roads to the Past.” *Sociological Theory* 17, #3 (forth.).


________________ 1989."The present in the past versus the past in the present."


_____________ 1989."The present in the past versus the past in the present."


Zerubavel, Eviatar. “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past.” *Qualitative Sociology,* v. 19, n. 3: 283-299.
# Appendix I: Comparative variables of transition and impunity in Argentina and Uruguay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables of the transition</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Uruguay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demography</strong></td>
<td>Vast territory Dispersed population (36 millions)</td>
<td>Small territory (size of an Arg. province) Densely concentrated urban population (3 millions, 2 million urban)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political &amp; Army traditions</strong></td>
<td>Military intervention</td>
<td>Democracy - Military subordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army initial position</strong></td>
<td>Weak Military defeat No bargaining power Army Self Amnesty Revoked by President</td>
<td>Relative strong Polls defeat Bargaining power - Secret Pact Amnesty to Military Voted by President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Army Development</strong></td>
<td>Increasingly strong Pressure, Rebellions</td>
<td>Implicitly strong Implicit Warnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social mobilization</strong></td>
<td>Very strong (# NGOs) Independent, combative</td>
<td>Very strong until 1989 (few NGOs) Embedded in political parties Unprecedented attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official HHRR Policies</strong></td>
<td>Unprecedented attempts Publicity of HHRR issues</td>
<td>No attempts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official Report</strong></td>
<td>Argentina: Nunca Más 250,000 circul.#</td>
<td>No official report Uruguay: Nunca Más, SERPAJ 3,000 circulat. #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trials</strong></td>
<td>Exemplary trials Pardoned after trials</td>
<td>No exemplary trials, no attempts Amnestied before trials by president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impunity Laws</strong></td>
<td>Full Stop&amp;Due Obedience Staged in 6 years Pardon by President</td>
<td>Caducidad (Nullification) Staged in 2 years Ratified by popular referendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics of Oblivion</strong></td>
<td>Partial Truth Partial Justice Policy Reversal Partial Impunity</td>
<td>No Truth No Justice Matter considered “settled” Total Impunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome in 1989</strong></td>
<td>Re-opening of cases</td>
<td>Still unresolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcome in 2000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

Children of the disappeared: Relative group differences between Argentina and Uruguay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Uruguay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition started earlier (1983)</td>
<td>Transition started later (1984/5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>350-600/ a few thousand potential #</td>
<td>20/ 50-80 potential #</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Disappeared</td>
<td>* 9,000 - 30,000</td>
<td>140 - 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name &amp; identity</td>
<td>Defined name and identity</td>
<td>No name, not defined yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>heterogeneous (in age and origin)</td>
<td>homog. (only <em>hijos,</em> early 20s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public, active outwardly</td>
<td>Private, reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocal, incisive, emotional</td>
<td>Timid, reserved, detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>distrustful, secretive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Not yet committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral/ Social demands</td>
<td>Truth and Justice, Memory, Identity</td>
<td>Truth, Memory, Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ni olvido ni perdon</em></td>
<td><em>¿Donde están?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Nunca Más, against impunity</em></td>
<td><em>Nunca Más, against impunity</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal and social condemnation</td>
<td>Social acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate mission statement</td>
<td>(Sense of hope?)</td>
<td>No clearly stated mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Sense of defeat?)</td>
<td>(sense of defeat?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Many and varied range</td>
<td>Not many, meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational &amp; info projects</td>
<td>No ed. or research projects yet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Commemoration</td>
<td>Commemoration but no publicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media contacts</td>
<td>Very little media contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination with other NGOs</td>
<td>Support of <em>Madres y Familiares</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escrache activities (public denounciations)</td>
<td>Silence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective indexes</td>
<td>Self empowered, Emotionally intense</td>
<td>Self conscious, more detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologically more open</td>
<td>Psychologically defensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(therapy accepted as a need)</td>
<td>(therapy more stigmatized)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of tragedy of genocide</td>
<td>Normalization of traumatic events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inwardly and outwardly, &quot;for action.&quot;</td>
<td>mainly inwardly, &quot;safe space.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group relations</td>
<td>Distrust of institutionalized movements</td>
<td>Distrust of militantism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active advocates of social justice</td>
<td>Cautious about activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visions of activism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>Trust, social responsibility</td>
<td>Distrust, evasive of soc. resp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Argentina: *Nunca Más*, CONAPRO Report; Uruguay: *Nunca Más*, SERPAJ Report*
### Appendix III

**Hijos-Uruguay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Birthyear &amp; Age in Sept 1997</th>
<th>Parents disappearance data</th>
<th>Interview Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Elena</td>
<td>1974 23</td>
<td>Both parents, 1979 in Buenos Aires</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nestor</td>
<td>1975 22</td>
<td>Paternal Uncle, 1977 in Brazil/Paraguay</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sandra</td>
<td>1965 32</td>
<td>Father, 1977 in Montevideo</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lorenzo</td>
<td>1975 22</td>
<td>Father, 1974/1975 in Montevideo</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lucia</td>
<td>1973 24</td>
<td>Father, 1973 in Chile</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Pamela</td>
<td>1975 22</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Juan</td>
<td>1977 20</td>
<td>Non-relative (boyfriend of # 8)</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Andres</td>
<td>1973 24</td>
<td>Grandfather, in Montevideo</td>
<td>Montevideo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Anibal disappeared in Argentina, lived with a military family, restituted to his family in 1985.

### HIJOS – Argentina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Birthyear &amp; Age in 1995</th>
<th>Parents disappearance data</th>
<th>Interview Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Maria Laura &amp; Silvina</td>
<td>1971/1975 24/20</td>
<td>Father, 1975 in Oleverria, Argentina</td>
<td>Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Federico</td>
<td>1965 30</td>
<td>Father, 1977 Mendoza, Argentina</td>
<td>Bs. As.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mariano I</td>
<td>1973 22</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Bs. As.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Maria &amp; V.</td>
<td>1975 20/20</td>
<td>Father/ Mother in 1977 in Bs. Aires</td>
<td>Bs. As.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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51 Both sets of interviews present in similar order (1) childhood memories of the parents’ disappearance, (2) fear and silence during the past dictatorship (when they remember), the transition and at present; and (3) the circumstances and meaning of their participation in the group of children of the disappeared. I reconstructed their process and paid special attention to why they chose to reopen the unresolved issues in spite of the impasse in each country after the institutionalization of the politics of oblivion and the final outcome of impunity in 1989.