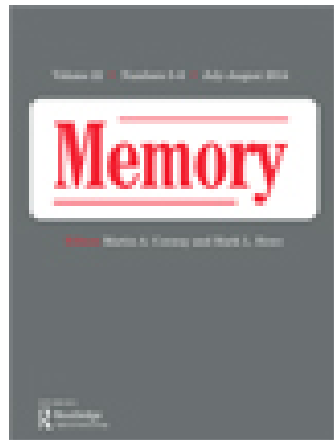


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## Memory

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# Argentines' collective memories of the military Junta of 1976: differences and similarities across generations and ideology

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Although memories about a nation's past usually are semantic in nature, a distinction needs to be made between lived and distant semantic collective memories. The former refers to memories of community-relevant events occurring during the lifetime of the rememberer, whereas the latter to memories of distant events. Does the content of lived and distant semantic collective memories differ? Employing both free and cued recall, we examined the memories of younger and older Argentines of the Military Junta of 1976. We also examined the effects of political ideology. Content analysis indicated that (1) lived semantic collective memories were more likely to contain personal recollections than distant semantic collective memories, even though those with distant semantic collective memories could have incorporated memories of the parent's personal experience in their recollections, (2) lived semantic collective memories contained more causal statements, and (3) those on the Right with distant semantic collective memories were more likely to claim that they "Don't know" or offer positive accounts of the Junta, suggesting a need to "defend" the reputation of those on the Right. The results are discussed in terms of the goals and plans different generations might have when recollecting their nation's past.

**Keywords:** Collective memory; Distant semantic memory; Lived semantic memory; Generations; Ideology.

In the past few decades, cognitive psychologists have explored autobiographical memories, in large part because it is widely recognised that the way people remember their personal past has substantial bearing on their personal identity (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Rubin, 1996). Less investigated by cognitive psychologists are the collective memories people have of their nation's past. This neglect is surprising inasmuch as it is widely recognised that national collective memories have a bearing, to a large extent, on now national identity (Hirst & Manier, 2008;

Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, & Levy, 2011). We are interested here in generational similarities and differences in collective memories of nationally important events. According to Mannheim (1923/1952), generations are best defined, not in terms of objective characteristics, such as the time period in which one lived, but subjective characteristics. Applied to memory, Mannheim suggests that different generations should have different memories, at least in terms of content and accessibility (see also Conway, 1997, for an illuminating discussion of this point). We focus in this paper

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on a particular event that figures centrally in national past of Argentina, the Military Coup d'état of 24 March 1976. Do different generations of Argentines have different collective memories of this important event? And if there are differences, what are they?

We are not concerned here with historical renderings of a nation's past, but the way laypeople remember this past. Since Halbwachs (1992), social scientists have been careful to distinguish *history* from *memory* (e.g., Nora, 1996; see Klein, 2000 for a review). Although the exact way of framing the distinction is still debated, history is often treated as rendering the past in a manner constrained by professional rules and standards. A historian must get the facts "right" and must be accountable to these facts, though, to be sure, they also need to create a strong narrative (White, 2014). Memory, on the other hand, even a memory shared across a community, can get the "facts" wrong or be silent about some facts and still be a memory. For example, Americans tend to remember that the Americas were "discovered" by Columbus, even though Norse sailors had settled in Canada 400 years earlier, not to mention the presence of the Taíno upon Columbus's arrival (Zerubavel, 2012). Whereas professional historians cannot simply ignore these facts, laypeople can legitimately say that these facts may indeed be the case, but that is not how they think about and remember the "discovery" of the Americas.

## TYPES OF COLLECTIVE MEMORIES AND GENERATIONAL EFFECTS

According to Hirst and Manier (2008), collective memories are shared individual memories held across a community that bear on this community's identity. A generational memory, then, would involve the individual memories a generation shares. These memories are unlikely to be *episodic* when discussing the collective memory of a nation. For instance, consider memories surrounding the attack of 11 September 2001. Only a relatively small cohort directly experienced the collapse of the World Trade Towers. This cohort no doubt formed individual episodic memories of the disaster and, more critically, these individual episodic memories are likely to share many of the same features across the cohort. One could reasonably refer to these shared memories as an *episodic collective memory* (see Hirst & Manier, 2002, for a

more detailed discussion of the distinctions we develop here.) But for most Americans, the memories they have of the collapse would more properly be referred to as *semantic*. Most Americans experienced the event through TV or other media, or heard about it from friends. Inasmuch as they did not directly experience the buildings' implosion, it would be wrong to say that they formed an episodic memory of it. The episodic memory is of, for instance, watching the collapse of the north tower on TV. Inasmuch as Americans saw the broadcast at different times and in different places and watched different TV channels, one could not talk about a shared episodic memory of learning of the collapse. But the facts surrounding the attack and many of the images associated with them, for instance, the video images of the Towers' crumbling, might properly be called *semantic collective memories*.

Hirst and Manier (2002) suggested a further differentiation of semantic collective memories into those about public events that take place while one is alive (or at least old enough to appreciate the significance of the event) and those that take place prior to one's birth (or cognitive awareness). They referred to the former as *lived semantic collective memories*, the latter as *distant semantic collective memories*. In both instances, the referred-to event is learned about not through direct experience, but indirectly—through cultural artefacts, such as a TV broadcast, or through face-to-face communication. Despite the mediated nature of the experience, an individual—and indeed a community—can have the sense that they are "living through" the event. The first author of this paper might not have been directly impacted by the military Junta, but he nevertheless feels that he experienced it as it was unfolding. No one today would be inclined to say that they "lived through" the War of 1812.

One can reframe our interest in generational differences in memory, then, into one about differences between lived and distant semantic collective memories. Some distant semantic collective memories are transmitted from one generation to the next solely through "cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitations, practice, observance)" (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 129). Argentines' collective memory of the founding of Córdoba by Jerónimo Luis de Cabrera would fit this category. Assmann and Czaplicka referred to such collective memories as *cultural memories*. Other distant semantic collective memories can be transmitted

from one generation to another through more direct communication, for instance, through face-to-face contact. Assmann and Czaplicka refer to these memories as *communicative*. The Military Junta of 1976 still has the potential to be a mix of both cultural and communicative memory for Argentines. That is, the younger generation in Argentina still has the possibility of learning about the Junta by talking to members of the older generation about their personal experiences, as well as through school and other cultural institutions, artefacts, and practices.

### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LIVED AND DISTANT SEMANTIC COLLECTIVE MEMORIES

A number of studies suggest several differences between lived and distant semantic collective memories. Lived semantic collective memories, for instance, appear to be deemed more important to history and are more mnemonically accessible than distant semantic collective memories. Schuman and Scott (1989), for instance, asked survey respondents to name “one or two” of the most important historical events in the past 50 years. They found a generational cohort effect, with respondents tending to list the events that occurred during their late adolescence and early adulthood. In other words, public events during this time period were regarded as more important and were more readily accessible events than were those from other time periods (see Koppel & Berntsen, 2015, critical review of the relevant literature).

The content of lived and distant semantic collective memory may also differ. Kansteiner (2002) speculated that what we are calling distant semantic collective memories are less emotionally intense than lived semantic collective memories. Also highlighting the role of emotion, Zaromb, Butler, Agarwal, and Roediger III (2014) found that their younger sample rated the events they associated with World War II, distant semantic memories for them, as less positively valenced than the rating older sample gave to the events they associated with WW II, which for them were lived semantic collective memories. Zaromb et al. speculated that their results reflected the narratives participants formed of the war. The largest difference between valence ratings was found for the bombing of Hiroshima. The younger sample might have taken a less

nation-centered perspective than the older sample, with the latter focusing on the end of the war for the USA and the former concentrating on the precedent setting destruction it symbolised.

Examining the content of the events further, both Stone, van der Haegen, Hirst, and Luminet (2014) and Schuman and Scott (1989) noted that the memories of those who lived through a historical episode, such as World War II, tend to include personal, autobiographically relevant events, whereas the recollections of those with distant semantic collective memories, for example, those of the grandchildren of individuals who lived through the war, tended not to, failing to make few, if any references to their grandparent's experiences. Finally, again investigating content, Welzer (2005) demonstrated that the youngest generation of Germans tended to misremember their grandfathers' involvement in the Nazi party, “heroizing” their performance during the war rather than recollecting their Nazi membership in an undistorted manner.

Although these findings stress the differences that arise between lived and distant semantic collective memories, the presence of similarities also must be acknowledged. First, as Schwartz (2000) argued, although memories differ from historical facts, memories must still be accountable to the facts, at least to some degree. Indeed, people will correct their memories to conform to acknowledged facts. For instance, Hirst et al. (2015) found that the errors people made about the facts surrounding 9/11 tended to be corrected over time, in large part, because the media supplied the necessary corrective material. To be sure, errors can persist (Lewandowsky, Stritzke, Oberauer, & Morales, 2005), but Schwartz is right that people's recollections do not occur in a factual vacuum.

Similarities across lived and distant semantic collective memories also arise because both tend to be built around similar *narrative schematic templates* [Wertsch, 2002; also see Liu et al., 2012, who stressed the transnational nature of some of these templates]. The tendency to build memories around such templates can be seen in Russians' inclination to render their national past as one in which a neutral Russia is treacherously and viciously invaded, faces almost total defeat, but through heroism, and against all odds, eventually triumphs. Such templates stabilise national memories over long time periods, spanning at least several generations. Zaromb et al. (2014) adopted this perspective to account for the albeit

limited similarities in the events reported by their different samples.

## FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: THE PRESENT STUDY

Can the study of intergenerational memories of the Military Junta of 1976 help us further understand the similarity and differences of lived and distant semantic collective memories? In the present study, we first collected freely recalled narratives of the Junta and then asked a series of questions designed to probe into participants' knowledge of the facts, causes, and consequences of the coup. We had two participant samples: those below the age of 30 years and those above the age of 47. We chose the age of 47 because we wanted participants in the older sample to be at least 10 years old at the time of the coup, presumably, we believed, old enough to appreciate what was happening. Those below the age of 30 have distant semantic collective memories of the Junta; those above the age of 47, lived semantic collective memories. Our interest focused on several aspects of the reported memories: (1) the extent to which participants knew the facts surrounding the Junta, (2) how well they could place these facts into a larger context, and (3) how they reacted to the events.

Data analysis mainly consisted of coding the memory reports. Our coding scheme was designed to capture the three topics we were interested in. The scheme developed by Hirst and Manier (2008) nicely does this, in that it divides the elements of a memory report into (1) facts, states, actions, or events that make up the narrative contained in the memory report (*narrative tellings*), (2) editorial or expressive emotional reactions to the facts, actions, or events (*affective–evaluative remarks*), and (3) the larger context in which these facts, actions, or events take place (*contextualising statements*). By larger context, Hirst and Manier meant the contextual aspects of the reported events, actions, states, or facts outside the immediate spatio-temporal surround, for example, that the Junta took place because the economy in Argentina had been poor for a long time. We modified Hirst and Manier by subdividing the first component (narrative tellings) into personal and non-personal, following Stone et al. (2014), the second component (contextualising statements) into causes,

consequences, and other. Here, we followed Manzi et al. (2004), who in their study of the Chilean coup, divided the recollections they collected into facts (already captured by Hirst and Manier under the label *narrative tellings*), causes, and consequences. Finally, we divided affective–evaluative remarks into those that were positively, negatively, and neutrally valenced. Thus, elements of the recollections we collected were divided into narrative tellings (personal, non-personal), affective–evaluative remarks (positive, negative, and neutral), and contextualising statements (causes, consequences, and other).

How might these distinctive types of narrative elements differ for lived versus distant semantic collective memories? Do the responses to the specific probes support the results obtained coding the freely recalled narratives? Although a wide variety of factors might affect what is remembered across generations, such as how much family members talk to each other about the national past, we focus here on what motivates the distinction between lived and distant semantic collective memories, that is, that one involves events that the rememberer lived through, the other, events that occurred before the rememberer was born (or was old enough to appreciate the event). Our central claim is that if one lives through a public event, even if one does not personally experience it, then the event is likely to have greater personal resonance and significance than if the event is from a more distant past. Such a difference could account for Kansteiner's (2002) claim about the diminished emotional intensity of what we are calling distant semantic collective memories. It might also explain the tendency of those who lived through a public event to frame their recollections in terms of personal, autobiographically relevant related events.

Although the effect of self-reference has not been applied to collective memories, based on the literature on the self-reference effect (Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977), if lived semantic collective memories are more likely to be processed in personal terms than distant semantic collective memories, then the former should be both memorable and more elaborated than the latter. That is, lived semantic collective memory should contain more narrative tellings, contextualising statements, and, in particular, more causal statements, than distant semantic collective memory. To be sure, as already noted, other factors might also be at play. The younger generation may learn about the events in a more structured and



organised manner than the older generation, inasmuch as they study the Junta in school and through textbooks (e.g., González, 2012). The organisational presentations in textbooks, for instance, might make the material memorable. Moreover, inasmuch as we are dealing with a communicative memory, the younger generation might also learn about the Junta from the older generation. These intergenerational exchanges might provide a rich base on which to construct a memory. Finally, at least for a segment of the younger generation, the Junta might be personally relevant because of their parents' involvement in it. We expect, however, our sample will be diverse enough to allow the effects of "lived-through-ness" to be detectable, at least to some extent, despite the contribution these other variables might make. We should note that we did not systematically attempt to find participants in either generation who were themselves, or were closely related to, actors in the Junta or victims of it.

The one factor beyond "Lived-through-ness" we will consider here is ideology. We do so because the importance it is thought to play when remembering political public events, which the Military Junta of 1976 decidedly is (van Dijk, 1998; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). There are many ways to classify ideology. For instance, some scholars highlight two dimensions on which classify ideology: one that goes from Communism to Neo-Liberalism (which often have the traditional labels of Left and Right); the other stretches from Libertarianism to Authoritarianism (Schmitt, 1985). The Argentine Junta might be considered both Authoritarian and Neo-Liberal in economic policy, making those who might be classified as Right-Libertarian uncomfortable with the Junta's policy. However, inasmuch as these more fine-grained distinctions may not exist in the larger public's discourse, and both Authoritarianism and Neo-Liberalism could be considered "Right" leaning, we confine our discussion to what we believe is the widely used distinction between Right and Left.

We should also note that we confine ourselves to the ideology participants hold at present, not the ideology at least the older generation might have held at the time of the Junta. We do so for a couple of reasons. First, memory for previously held political positions is notoriously unreliable in that people tend to make their memories conform to their present viewpoint (Ross, 1989). Second, if we are to compare ideology across

generations, then we would want to deal with ideology held within the same temporal framework, which, necessarily, would need to be present ideology.

Would ideology moderate any of the variables we plan to code for? In particular, would it moderate the level and kind of affective–evaluative remarks found in the narrative? Few today view the Junta in positive terms. However, though many in the Right today cannot accept its extreme actions, they might still be comfortable with the Junta's neo-liberalism and even, in a way, its move toward authoritarianism as a means of coping with an extremely dire social and economic circumstance. This latter acceptance might even hold for Right-Libertarians, in that they often accept a strong government when a strong defense is needed. We might therefore expect to see more positive affective–evaluative remarks from participants on the Right than those on the Left.

## METHOD

### Participants

A total of 63 subjects participated in the study. All were citizens of Argentina. The mean age of the participants was 40 years (range 19–75). Because of classification difficulties, described below, the final sample was composed of 38 women and 22 men. Thirty-five participants were students from Universidad de Belgrano, who participated in the study in exchange for academic credits. The remaining participants were university employees and other volunteers who received \$40 Argentine pesos as compensation. Participants were recruited so that they fell into two classes: those above the age of 47 years, who presumably would have lived semantic memories of the Junta, and those below the age of 30, who presumably would have distant semantic memories.

Thirteen of the participants defined themselves as ideologically Right-oriented, 20 were Left-oriented, and 30 were Center-oriented. Inasmuch as people who classified themselves as in the Center often lean toward the Right or the Left, we decided that it would be better to fold this group in the Left-oriented and Right-oriented groups. Two coders performed this reclassification using the politicians and political party with whom individuals reported they identified. In this reclassification, there were only 7 disagreements, and

these were resolved through discussion in all but three cases. We did not analyse these three cases further. Thus, one final sample of participants consisted of 60 participants, which, incidentally, 30 were in the Right-centered group and 30 in the Left-centered group. Each ideological group further consisted of 15 participants probed for *lived semantic collective memories* (range 47–75, mean 55 years old) and 15 for *distant semantic collective memories* (range 19–30, mean 24 years old). Because this procedure involved treating ideology as a dichotomous variable, we also reclassified each participants ideology on a 1–5 scale, going from strongly towards the Left to strongly toward the Right. Again, we used participants' self-reports, as well as their pattern of voting to determine where on the scale they might fall. Two coders classified all participants. Their scorings were significantly correlated,  $r = .97, p < .001$ .

Finally, we asked for participants' level of education. There was no difference between those on the Left and those on the Right ( $p > .50$ ). Moreover, the level of education for those with lived semantic collective memories did not differ significantly from those with distant semantic collective memories ( $p > .50$ ). Overall, 31% of our sample had greater than a high school education. None of the participants reported that they or a relative or close friend were directly impacted by the Junta, either through arrests, interrogations, or economic hardship or through active employment in the Junta's activities.

## Materials

The questionnaire contained three sections. In a section on demographics, participants were asked for their age, sex, education, and political ideology (Right, Center, or Left-oriented), as well as the political party and the politician with whom they identified most and the political candidates they had voted for in the past. Finally, they indicated, on a 10-point scale, the degree of their political participation at present and, if applicable, in 1976 (0 = none; 10 = intense). Inasmuch as this variable did not moderate any of our results, it is not discussed further.

In the section eliciting a free recall, participants were given a sheet of paper with the following instruction (in Spanish): "Please write everything you know about the events that took place on 24 March 1976 (when the last coup d'état took place, and the last military dictatorship began)

and about the previous and subsequent events related with that day".

In the section eliciting cued recall, participants were asked 23 questions about facts, causes, and consequences concerning the Junta. This section of the questionnaire began with the instruction (in Spanish): "Please read carefully the following questions and answer them in as much detail as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in studying what people remember about these events".

The questions assessed facts, causes, or consequences. The fact questions were about the events of 24 March 1976, the day the democratic government was overthrown, and the events that immediately preceded or followed, for example, "What do you recall about those who were the main protagonists of those days?" and "What eventually happened to the overthrown president, Isabel Martínez de Perón, in the weeks following the coup?" As to questions about causes, these assessed participants' knowledge of events and the political, social, and economic context often attributed to leading to the coup and subsequent actions, for example, "What do you remember as the causes of the coup of March 1976?" and "Do you remember any political causes?" As to the questions about consequences, again, the emphasis was on both general and specific political, economical and social consequences, for example, "What were the main consequences of the coup d'état?" and "Do you remember any social consequences?"

## Procedure

After obtaining consent, participants were handed a printed version of the questionnaire and asked to fill it out. The order of the sections in the questionnaire was always the same: demographics, free recall, and cued recall. The order of the questions for the cued recall section was randomised for each participant. Participants provided written responses and were given as much time as they needed.

## Coding

For the free recall analysis, we followed Hirst and Manier's (1996) coding scheme, which first identifies structural units (those that capture a single idea) and then divided these into narrative and

**TABLE 1**  
Coding scheme for free recall

<i>Structural unit</i>	<i>Definitions and examples</i>
Non-narrative units	Metamemory statements “I am very poor at remembering things”
Narrative units	
Personal narrative tellings	States or events related to a central topic or theme of the narrative that involved a personal anecdote or relevant fact or state, dealing either directly with the person recalling the material or with someone personally known “I was studying at the moment the military went into the Casa Rosada”
Non-personal narrative tellings	States or events related to a central topic or theme of the narrative that did not have the characteristic of being personal, as described above “The military pushed people alive out of the planes”
Contextualising statements	Narrative tellings related to events or states outside the immediate spatio-temporal context of the narrative, adding “context” to the narrative tellings E.g., when discussing the disappeared, a responder stated “The AAA (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance) had already begun to make people disappear.”
Consequences	Statements about one event or state having a consequence to another “The military government increased the external debt and had harmed the country long after they left”
Causes	Statements causally linking one event or state to another “Previous political violence and anarchy led to the coup.”
Affective–evaluative remarks	Editorial judgments or expressions of emotional reactions to the narrative tellings “It was a hard time.”
Positive	“Some members of my family were happy about the coup because they assumed order would be established again.”
Negative	“It was just terrible.”
Neutral	“We couldn’t do much to avoid repression.”

non-narrative units. The narrative units are further divided into narrative tellings, contextualising statements, and affective–evaluative remarks. Following Stone et al. (2014), we further divided the narrative tellings into those that were personal and those non-personal. We also divided the category of affective–evaluative remarks into those that were positively, negatively, and neutrally valenced, and contextualising statements into causes, consequences, and other (see Table 1 for details). When a structural unit did not fit into one of these categories, it was classified as “None”. The two coders divided responses into the categories in this table, as well as “None”. There was initially 89% of initial agreement between coders. The discrepancies were discussed and resolved. In the end, raters agreed on 98% of the codings. The remaining 2% were not further analysed.

Cued recall responses were analysed in terms of frequency of responses. Because there were no a priori predictions about the range of possible categories in which the responses would be grouped, two coders first sorted individual responses across participants into categories, with two responses being put into the same category

if they captured the same concept, idea, or event, that is, if they seemed to have the same content. The guiding principle was to group responses so that their shared content could be described by a single category label. Possible categories were differentiated into smaller categories until there was no readily available one to three word label to describe the items in a further differentiated group. The coders, then, revisited categories to identify those similar enough to be grouped together into a single category. Table 3 provides details about the coding scheme, under the sub-heading *coded categories* associated with each question. These are the categories used to code the responses for these questions.

Using this coding scheme, two additional coders determined the appropriate category label for each fact, cause, or consequence discussed in the cued recall. There was 14% of disagreements between coders. All discrepancies were resolved.

## RESULTS

In what follows, we first examine the results of our analysis of the free recall and then turn to the cued



**TABLE 2**  
Mean proportion of different type of responses as a function of memory type and ideology

	<i>Lived</i>		<i>Distant</i>	
	<i>Left</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Left</i>	<i>Right</i>
Narrative tellings	.43 (.26)	.56 (.30)	.62 (.26)	.68 (.33)
Personal	.19 (.26)	.17 (.26)	.01 (.03)	.06 (.14)
Non-Personal	.24 (.19)	.39 (.26)	.61 (.24)	.62 (.31)
Contextualising statements	.43 (.23)	.18 (.23)	.31 (.27)	.13 (.22)
Causes	.34 (.26)	.16 (.21)	.16 (.16)	.03 (.07)
Consequences	.01 (.03)	.02 (.05)	.03 (.07)	.02 (.04)
Affective–evaluative remarks	.10 (.18)	.26 (.23)	.07 (.08)	.17 (.09)
Positive	.00 (.00)	.08 (.10)	.00 (.00)	.02 (.06)
Negative	.09 (.18)	.16 (.15)	.06 (.09)	.13 (.16)
Neutral	.01 (.04)	.02 (.05)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.05)

Figures do not add up to 1.00 for each Coding Scheme because some items were classified as Other. Standard deviations in parentheses.

recall to determine if we find parallel results. We will discuss, in the following order: (1) the number of facts participants remember, (2) the content of these facts, and (3) the remembered causes and consequences of the coup. For each of these features of the data analysis, we will determine if the performance of participants with lived semantic collective memories differed from the performance of those with distant semantic collective memories, whether performance also varied as a function of ideology, and finally whether there was an interaction between memory type and ideology.

### Free recall

Unless noted otherwise, for the data obtained from coding the free recall, we undertook Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs), with two factors: memory type (lived vs. distant) and ideology (Left group vs. Right group). The dependent variable changed with the issue we were addressing. As noted in the Coding section, we not only divided participants into a dichotomous ideological variable (Left vs. Right), we also created a 1–5 scale to capture ideology. We undertook a series of linear regressions to analyse whether we found any difference between our results using the dichotomous measure and the more fine-scaled measure. For each regression analysis, the independent variable was the scaled ideological ratings. As with the ANOVA, the dependent variable changed with the issue we were addressing, for example, the number of words in a free recall. In no instances did we find a difference in

our results using the regression analysis and our results with the ANOVA. That is, significant main effects for ideology always produced significant fits for the associated regression, and vice versa. Ideology accounted for between .11 and .18 of the variance in the regressions for which it turned out to make a significant contribution. Given the parallel findings, we only report the results for the ANOVA here.

*Amount recalled.* We first examined the number of words in the free recall offered by participants. We only found a significant main effect for ideology,  $F(1, 56) = 7.48, p = .008, n_p^2 = .12$ . Participants with a Left-orientation ( $M = 202, SD = 159$ ) used more words in their free recall than did participants with Right-orientation ( $M = 112, SD = 86$ ). As to the number of narrative tellings, again, there was a main effect for ideology,  $F(1, 56) = 9.82, p = .003, n_p^2 = .15$  (Left:  $M = 12.02, SD = 6.45$ ; Right:  $M = 7.80, SD = 3.91$ ). There were no main effects or interactions for non-narrative tellings.

*Content of free recall.* In our coding scheme, we divided narrative units into personal versus non-personal narrative tellings, contextualising statements, and affective–evaluative remarks (see Table 2). First, we focused on narrative tellings. We undertook a three-way ANOVA, with Personalness (personal vs. non-personal narrative tellings) as a within-subject factors, and memory type (lived vs. distant) and ideology (Right vs. Left) as between-subject variables. We found a main effect for Personalness,  $F(1, 56) = 48.92, p < .001, n_p^2 = .47$ , and a significant interaction between Personalness and memory type,  $F(1,$

56) = 19.90,  $p < .001$ ,  $n_p^2 = .26$ . For personal narrative tellings, there was a main effect for memory type,  $F(1, 56) = 13.28$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $n_p^2 = .19$ . Now, participants with lived semantic collective memories ( $M = 0.18$ ,  $SD = 0.16$ ) recalled higher proportions of personal narrative tellings than did participants with distant semantic collective memories ( $M = 0.03$ ,  $SD = 0.16$ ). As for the proportions of non-personal narrative tellings, again, there was a main effect for memory type,  $F(1, 56) = 19.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $n_p^2 = .255$ . Now, participants with distant semantic collective memories ( $M = 0.62$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ) recalled a higher proportion of non-personal narrative tellings than did participants with lived memories ( $M = 0.31$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ). This pattern nicely complements our findings for personal narrative tellings.

As to the proportion of affective–evaluative remarks, now, there was a main effect for ideology,  $F(1, 56) = 8.76$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $n_p^2 = .14$ . In this case, participants from the Right ( $M = 0.21$ ,  $SD = 0.21$ ) reported higher proportions of affective–evaluative remarks, overall, than participants from the Left ( $M = 0.08$ ,  $SD = 0.08$ ). This finding arose because those on the Right provided more positive remarks than those on the Left. In an ANOVA focusing on just positive affective–evaluative remarks, we only found a significant main effect for ideology,  $F(1, 56) = 12.88$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $n_p^2 = .19$ . Separate ANOVAs in which negative affective–evaluative remarks and neutral affective-evaluated remarks served as the dependent variable produced no significant results. An example of a positive remark from the Right is: “I remember that, in general, people were happy [about the coup d’état].”

Focusing now on the proportion of contextualising statements found in the free recalls, we found a main effect for ideology,  $F(1, 56) = 10.18$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $n_p^2 = .15$ . Participants of the Left group ( $M = 0.38$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ) showed a higher proportions of contextualising statements in their Recall than participants from the Right ( $M = 0.16$ ,  $SD = 0.22$ ). There were no other main effects or interactions. Interestingly, contextualising statements also figured in an analysis that involved dividing the older generation into two groups, those who were between 10 and 16 years of age in 1976 or those who were 16 or more. We split our sample this way to explore whether the very youngest of the older generation behaved differently. They may not have been old enough to appreciate what was occurring at the time, though given the

length of the Junta we do not believe that this concern has much force. We failed to find any significant differences on all our measures for these two groups, except for contextualising statements. The proportion of contextualising statements was significantly higher for the older group (those 16 or older in 1976:  $M = 0.42$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ; younger than 16:  $M = 0.20$ ,  $SD = 0.22$ ,  $t(28) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = .89$ ). Clearly, those who were young during the beginning of the Junta may not have attended to the way different events connected to each other, but the largely insignificant results suggests that our age range did not distort our results.

An example of a contextualising statement of one free recall is:

The self-called “Proceso de Reorganización Nacional” (National Reorganization Process) began in coordination with other dictatorships, that for some years were already governing other South-American countries, all of them articulated in what was called Operation Condor, with the Intelligence Service of the United States, because those countries had strong interests in the maintenance of the military governments, which were functional to their general battle against the advance of Soviet Communism.

58.3% of the Units classified as contextualising statements were also classified as causal; 10.4% were classified as consequences. When examining those elements classified as causal statements, we found a main effect for memory type,  $F(1, 56) = 6.49$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $n_p^2 = .10$ . Participants with distant semantic collective memories recalled a smaller proportion of causal utterances ( $M = 0.11$ ,  $SD = 0.14$ ) than did participants with lived semantic collective memories ( $M = 0.24$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ). It would appear that those who learned about the Junta solely through textbooks and other media—that is, those who did not live through the Junta—were more likely to mention facts than were those who lived through the state terrorism. It appears that what the live-through generation lacked in terms of facts they made up in terms of causes. They were proportionally more likely to mention causes than were those who were younger and did not live through the Junta. Examples of causal statements contained in lived semantic memories are: “The previous days were characterised by controlled prices, social chaos, violence and confrontations.” “After Juan Domingo Perón’s death, the government of Isabel Perón lacked power and credibility”. “The government of Isabel Perón was adrift, with big

macroeconomic imbalances and serious political problems. Besides, paramilitary groups were committing terrorist acts.” Although one might construe these statements as “facts”, they were classified as causes because they were uttered as explanations for the coup or the Junta.

## Cued recall analysis

*Amount recalled.* As with the free recall, there was a main effect for ideology,  $F(1,56) = 14.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .21$ . Here, the dependent variable was the word count summed over all the questions in the Cued recall section of the questionnaire. The word count for the Left ( $M = 431.16$ ;  $SD = 178.51$ ) was greater than the word count for the Right ( $M = 270.26$ ;  $SD = 141.39$ ).

*Content of answers.* In the following analysis, we considered each coded category separately (see Table 3). Thus, when examining Question (1), we examined separately the coded categories: Militaries-Armed Forces, Videla, Massera, Agosti, Unions, AAA, López Rega, Montoneros, Militantes, ERP, Left Peronismo, Isabel Perón, Establishment, Media, Church, Civil Society, Others, Don't Know. For each coded category, we created two  $2 \times 2$  contingency tables, with the columns either lived and distant or Left and Right and the rows the presence or absence of the coded category. We then performed a chi-square test to determine whether the presence of the coded category differed as a function of memory type or ideology. Although we found differences, which we discuss below, it is noteworthy how frequently we did not find differences. That is, to a remarkable extent, the content of the cued recall was similar in content across memory type and ideology. In what follows, however, we focus on the differences. In order to keep the presentation of the data to a reasonable length, we only present the data for these differences (see Table 3).

As noted, in their free recall, the Left-oriented participants provided more narrative tellings than the Right-oriented participants. The cued recall allows us to examine how the content of their memories might differ from those of the Right. Unlike Manzi et al. (2004), who studied the Chilean Junta, we *did* find differences in the content as a function of ideology. The Left-oriented participants often offered specific types

of responses more frequently than did participants who were Right-oriented. As Table 3 indicates, Left-oriented participants were more likely to mention than the Right-oriented participants the categorical responses to specific questions as follows: the role of the armed forces and financial institutions, the actions of militant groups (from the Left, Montoneros and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo; from the Right, Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), the limits placed on democratic institutions, the Junta leadership of Massera and Agosti, and the kidnappings. The only time participants with a Right-orientation mentioned a coded-for response more than those of the Left-oriented participants was the leadership of Jorge Rafael Videla during the Junta. We can offer no explanation for this exception and suspect that it is simply an aberration.

In several instances, the prevalence for the Left-oriented participants to offer a specific response to a question was moderated by memory type, and in interesting ways. For instance, only those with a Left-orientation who lived through the Junta mentioned “students” as one of the groups that the Junta persecuted (Question 4). One can imagine that these respondents, who were most likely at the time students or have friends who were students, had a personal recollection of the persecution that their political compatriots from a younger generation obviously did not have.

Personal experience did not always lead to selective access, of course. Sometimes, those with distant memories responded with comments that were generally not observed by those with lived memories. For instance, the Younger Generation with a Left-orientation was, proportionately, more likely to mention than any other group the “Robbery of Babies”, a topic of current interest in Argentina (Question 12).

These results involve specific responses to specific questions. Of particular interest are those instances in which participants simply stated that they “Don't know”. In the two instances in which there was a significant preponderance of “Don't know” responses, those offering this response seemed to want to distance themselves from the Junta. In each instances, it is Right-oriented individuals who had not lived through the Junta who indicated “Don't know”. For instance, those Right-oriented members of the younger generation were significantly more likely to indicate “Don't know” than any other groups to the question about the “flights of

**TABLE 3**

Coding scheme for cued recall: Questions about facts, causes, and consequences as well as significant differences in responses as a function of memory type and ideology

**FACTS**

1) *What do you recall about those who were the main protagonists of those days? (Who were they? What roles they played?).*

*Coded categories:* Militaries-Armed Forces, Videla, Massera, Agosti, Unions, AAA, López Rega, Montoneros, Militantes, ERP, Left Peronismo, Isabel Perón, Establishment, Media, Church, Civil Society, Others, Don't Know.

*Significant Differences:*

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Videla	3	8	5	8

Videla,  $\chi^2 = 4.44, p = .03$  (Right)

2) *Who were the main groups involved in the violent episodes before the uptake?*

*Coded categories:* Military and Armed Forces, Montoneros, AAA, Left Militants, Left Peronismo, Right Peronismo, ERP, Unions, Others, Don't Know.

*Significant Differences:*

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Military-ArmFc	7	3	6	2
Montoneros	8	6	10	3
AAA	8	1	6	0
ERP	7	2	6	1

Military-ArmFc,  $\chi^2 = 5.07, p = .02$  (Left)

Montoneros,  $\chi^2 = 6.65, p = .01$  (DSM), and  $\chi^2 = 5.45, p = .02$  (Left)

AAA,  $\chi^2 = 7.77, p = .01$  (LSM, Left), and  $\chi^2 = 7.50, p = .01$  (DSM, Left)

ERP,  $\chi^2 = 4.65, p = .04$  (DSM, Left) and  $\chi^2 = 8.52, p = .004$  (Left)

3) *What do you remember about the country's economy at that moment?*

*Coded categories:* Very Bad, Bad, Regular, Good, Very Good, Excellent, Others, Don't Know.

*There were no significant differences.*

4) *Do you remember who were in the "Black lists"?*

*Coded categories:* People Who Opposed to the Junta, Guerrilla, "Suspicious Citizens", Politicians, Union Leaders, Artists, Intellectuals, Students, Activists, Journalists, Others, Don't Know.

*Significant Differences:*

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Students	6	0	3	1

Students,  $\chi^2 = 7.50, p = .008$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 7.68, p = .006$  (Left)

5) *Do you remember how the Military Junta justified the coup?*

*Coded categories:* Fight Against Terrorism, Bring Back Order, Overcome the National Crisis, Social Demand, Fight Violence, Pacify, Security, Others, Don't Know.

*Significant Differences:*

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Don't Know	0	1	2	8

Don't Know,  $\chi^2 = 5.40, p = .03$  (DSM),  $\chi^2 = 5.45, p = .02$  (Right)

6) *Do you remember who were the members of the "Primera Junta Militar"?*

*Codes Categories:* Videla, Massera, Agosti, Others, Don't know.

*Significant Differences:*

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Videla	13	8	10	4
Massera	13	11	10	4
Agosti	13	8	7	2
Others	0	2	0	3

Videla,  $\chi^2 = 4.82, p = .03$  (DSM), and  $\chi^2 = 8.29, p = .004$  (Left)

Massera,  $\chi^2 = 4.82, p = .03$  (DSM),  $\chi^2 = 4.59, p = .03$  (Left)

Agosti,  $\chi^2 = 6.66, p = .01$  (Left)

Others,  $\chi^2 = 5.45, p = .02$  (Right)

7) *What do you remember about the "security measures" immediately taken by the Military Junta?*

*Coded categories:* State of Siege, Curfew, Limits to Press Freedom, Arrests of Suspects, Others, Don't Know.

*There were no significant differences.*

8) a) *What do you remember about the immediate destiny of the constitutional president? b) What happened to her?*

a) *Coded categories:* Arrested and Jailed, Left in Helicopter from the Casa Rosada, Others, Don't Know.

*There were no significant differences.*

b) *Coded categories:* Left to Spain, to Montevideo, South of Argentina, Others, Don't Know.

*There were no significant differences.*

9) How did the militaries proceed with the democratic institutions? (Congress, Justice, etc.).

Coded categories: Institutional Control, Closing of Democratic Institutions, Change of Functionaries, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Closing	11	8	8	2

Closing,  $\chi^2 = 5.40$ ,  $p = .03$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 5.40$ ,  $p = .02$  (Left)

10) Do you remember how did the military operate (modus operandi) to commit the crimes?

Coded categories: Arrests, Interrogation of "Suspects", Detentions in Clandestine Centers, Disappearing People, Tortures, Assassinations, Kidnappings, Robbery of Identities, Robbery of Babies, Appropriations of Goods, Death Flights, Others, Don't Know.

There were no significant differences.

11) What can you remember about the "vuelos de la muerte" (death flights)?

Coded categories: Throwing People Alive from Airplanes to the River/Sea; Throwing Corpses into the River/Sea, Others, Don't Know.

Significant differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Live people	13	9	10	6
Corpses	5	0	6	2
Others	0	4	0	1
Don't Know/DA	0	2	0	6

Live People:  $\chi^2 = 4.59$ ,  $p = .03$  (Left)

Corpses,  $\chi^2 = 6.00$ ,  $p = .02$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 7.95$ ,  $p = .005$  (Left)

Others,  $\chi^2 = 4.61$ ,  $p = .05$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 5.45$ ,  $p = .03$  (Right)

Don't Know,  $\chi^2 = 7.50$ ,  $p = .008$  (DSM),  $\chi^2 = 9.23$ ,  $p = .002$  (Right)

12) a) What do you remember about the robbery of babies? b) Do you remember how many and in what way some of them recovered their identity?

a) Coded categories: Role of Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Children of Missing People, Stolen from Hospitals and Detention Centers, Given to Families with Military Ties, Sold, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Children of Missing	4	1	6	1

Children of Missing People,  $\chi^2 = 4.68$ ,  $p = .04$  (DSM),  $\chi^2 = 6.66$ ,  $p = .01$  (Left)

b) Coded categories: 107 (around 100), Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
107 (around 100)	6	0	4	1
Others	0	4	1	2

107 (around 100)  $\chi^2 = 7.50$ ,  $p = .008$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 9.01$ ,  $p = .003$  (Left)

Others,  $\chi^2 = 4.61$ ,  $p = .05$  (LSM)

13) Do you remember what are the official and unofficial rates of "missing" persons ("desaparecidos") during the last military dictatorship?

Coded categories: Official 9000, Official 30000, Official Others, Official Don't Know, Unofficial 30000, Unofficial Others, Unofficial Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Official 9000	3	3	6	1

Official 9000,  $\chi^2 = 4.65$ ,  $p = .04$  (DSM)

14) What do you remember about human rights policies held by democratic governments since 1983, as they concern the events that occurred from 1976 to 1983?

Coded categories: Trial of Military Juntas, Laws of Obediencia Debida (Due Obedience) and Punto Final (Full Stop), Recovery of Identities of Victims and Children of Missing People, Support to Victim's family, Role Played by Alfonsín's Government, Role Played by Kirchner's Government, Constitutional Reform of 1994, Pardons, Nunca Más, Others, Don't Know.

There were no significant differences.

## CAUSES

15) What do you remember as the causes of the coup of March 1976?

Coded categories: Incompetence of Isabel Perón's Government, Social Discontent, Economic-Social-Political Problems, Political and Social Violence, Guerrilla, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Others	10	4	4	2



Others,  $\chi^2 = 4.80, p = .03$  (Left)

16) *Do you remember any political causes?*

Coded categories: Militaries Against Isabel Perón's Government, Influence of Policies from IMF and U.S., Presence of Armed Groups, Ideological Fear, Bad Administration of Previous Governments, Lack of Authority and Political Stability, Guerrilla Intentions of a Communist Regime, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Others	10	4	7	4

Others,  $\chi^2 = 4.82, p = .03$  (LSM),  $\chi^2 = 5.55, p = .02$  (Left)

17) *Do you remember any economic causes?*

Coded categories: Inflation, Non-developing Economy, Economic Crisis, Deficit, Devaluation, Unemployment, High Levels of Poverty, Inequality, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Economic Crisis	5	0	7	1
Others	10	4	1	3
Don't Know	1	4	4	8

Economic Crisis,  $\chi^2 = 6.13, p = .02$  (DSM),  $\chi^2 = 11.88, p = .001$  (Left)

Others,  $\chi^2 = 4.82, p = .03$  (LSM)

Don't Know,  $\chi^2 = 4.02, p = .04$  (Right)

18) *Do you remember what were the social causes?*

Coded categories: Social Discomfort, Presence of Armed Groups, Social/Political/Ideological Violence, Social Polarization, Social Disarray, Insecurity, Military Opposition to Isabel Perón, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Social Discomfort	4	3	6	1

Social Discomfort,  $\chi^2 = 4.65, p = .04$  (Left, DSM)

19) *Do you consider that the 1976 coup was avoidable or unavoidable? Why?*

Coded categories: Yes, No, Others, Don't Know.

There were no significant differences.

**CONSEQUENCES**

20) *Do you remember what were the consequences of the coup and Junta in the mid and long term (that is, from 1983 to present)?*

Coded categories: Psychological Consequences, Missing People, Loss of Loved Ones, People Who Don't Know Their Identities, Civil Rights Violations, Rise of External Debt, General Political Consequences, General Economic Consequences, Assassinations, Promotion of Human Rights, General Social Consequences, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Psychological Cons	4	0	4	5

Psychological Consequences,  $\chi^2 = 4.61, p = .05$  (DSM)

21) *Were there any political consequences?*

Coded categories: Dictatorship, Restrictions to Freedom of Expression, Mistrust of Government, Limiting Political Parties, Closing of Congress, Power Grabbed by Armed Forces, Democracy Recovery (Alfonsín), Malvinas War, Loss of Political Involvement by Citizens, Others, Don't Know.

There were no significant differences.

22) *Were there any economic consequences?*

Coded categories: Expropriations, Economic Crisis, Neoliberal Economic Policies, Rise of Foreign Debt, Rise of Imported Goods, Unemployment, Deindustrialization, Inflation, Deficit, Rise of Poverty Levels, Privatization, Ties with IMF, Others, Don't Know.

Significant Differences:

	Lived Semantic Memory		Distant Semantic Memory	
	Left	Right	Left	Right
Rise of Foreign Debt	9	6	7	2
Deindustrialization	0	2	4	0

Foreign Debt,  $\chi^2 = 4.44, p = .03$  (Left)

Deindustrialization,  $\chi^2 = 4.61, p = .05$  (DSM)

23) *Were there any social consequences?*

Coded categories: Negative Psychosocial Consequences, Fear of Expression, Missing People, Exile, Genocide, Robbery of Identities, Human Rights Violations, Killings, Destruction of Art and Culture, Others, Don't Know.

There were no significant differences.

death” (when prisoners were disposed of by throwing them alive off planes into the Rio de la Plata) (see Question 11). Finally, with respect to a question that elicited justifications for the actions of the Junta (Question 5), although one might expect that the Right might be more likely to offer justifications for the Junta, for those on the Left, we found, at least for those who did not live through the Junta, the opposite pattern: Those from the Right were more likely to say that they “Don’t Know” when asked how the Junta justified their actions than those on the Left. Rather than offer justifications to a point in Argentine history with whom they presumably did not want to be associated, they simply wrote “Don’t know”.

In sum, although the overall similarity of responses would speak to the similarity in the memories of those who lived through the Junta and those who did not, as well as the similarity in the memories of those on the Left and on the Right, differences did emerge. They tended to reflect the personal experiences of those who lived during the event, as well as the tendency of those on the Right to distance themselves from the Junta, especially those who could effectively do so, that is, the younger generation. We will explore in the General Discussion whether these latter responses are best viewed as response biases or actual differences in memory.

*Causes and consequences.* If we examine the number of different coded categories appearing within responses to the questions about Causes (Questions 15–18), we find that those with a Left-orientation had a more diverse range of responses than the Right, consistent with the extensiveness of their free recall (average number of responses outside of Don’t know: lived, Left:  $M = 4.80$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ; lived, Right:  $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ; distant, Left:  $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ; distant, Right:  $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ; main effect for ideology:  $F(1, 56) = 5.97$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ ). This finding is consistent with Manzi et al. (2004). When differences did emerge in the distribution of specific coded categories, we observe several differences, generally paralleling the results we found for the free recall (again, see Table 3). To the question (#15) about causes in general, those who lived through the Junta with a Left-orientation were more likely to say “other” than anyone else. When we asked about economic causes of the military coup (Question 17), participants from the Left group reported

with a higher frequency “economic crisis” than those on the Right. Moreover, those with distant semantic memories mentioned “economic crisis” more than those with lived semantic memories. Participants with a Right-orientation were also more likely to respond “Don’t know” than were participants with a Left-orientation. In what is a departure from this general pattern, for the question about social causes (Question 18), participants with distant memories and from the Left group answered with a higher frequency “social discomfort” as a social cause than participants from the Right.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the Introduction to this paper, we argued that people are more likely to relate a public event to themselves, that is, to espy its personal relevance, if the event took place during their life time than if the event occurred before they were born (or were old enough to appreciate the import of a public event). As a result, differences should emerge across generations, thereby underscoring Mannheim’s assertion that generations are defined in subjective, not objective, terms. On the basis of what is known about the relation between self-relevance and memory, we predicted that people should have better memories for lived semantic collective memories than distant semantic collective memories. We probed for this claim in a variety of ways: in terms of narrative tellings, affective–evaluative remarks, and contextualising statements, including consequences and causal statements. We found differences, but not in terms of narrative tellings in the free or cued recall. If anything those with distant semantic collective memories were more likely to answer factual questions than those with lived semantic collective memories. This better memory on the part of the younger generation may have arisen because they studied the Junta in school, in most instances, only a few years ago (González, 2012). Clearly, there are multiple forces at work shaping generational memories, not just whether one lived through an event or not.

We did find a difference in the extent to which participants could connect the facts causally. Professional historians connect facts, weaving them into a coherent story. The average citizen does not face the same professional demands. Constructing a story out of a set of possibly

disconnected facts takes effort. Any teacher clearly observes how difficult it is for students to see the general overall picture. The same may hold for the younger generation when it comes to consequential distant events, as the Junta no doubt is. Members of our younger generation appear to know the facts about the Junta, but still do not clearly see how the facts are causally connected. On the other hand, those who lived through the events may feel that there is more at stake for them. They lived through the events and hence they need to understand why the coup occurred. They need to give meaning to events that loomed large in their life, even if they were only indirectly involved. We cannot determine whether this goal shapes the way the memories are initially formed, or whether causal connections are made subsequent to the events, as the interested parties learn more about them or recall them (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). The difference in the causal connections figuring in the memories of the respective groups is evident, however.

Another difference across generations was the extent to which participants offered personal narrative tellings. Others have found similar generational differences (Schuman & Scott, 1989; Stone et al., 2014). Again, the personal relevance of the Junta to the older generation no doubt figured in this difference. In a way, none of the participants from either generation were directly affected by the Junta, in the sense that no individual, family member, or close friend was arrested, lost their job, experienced a substantial loss as a result of the Junta, or, alternatively, actually worked closely with the Junta. The younger generation may have told their parent's or grandparent's story if there had been personal involvement on the older generation's part. But that situation did not occur in this study. On the other hand, although there was no direct involvement in the Junta, the older generation clearly "lived through" it. They were alive during the Junta, watched it unfold, and however indirectly, lived with it for seven years. As a result, it had greater personal relevance for them. We suspect that given the historical importance of the Junta, the older generation felt the necessity to underscore its personal relevance by telling personal, but relevant stories. Thus, we found a 48 years-old participant recalling: "I remember my father having an argument with my mother because she had books that were hidden in the house and that you were not supposed to have. He wanted to

burn them". Another participant of the same group recalled: "I remember being registered at the university entrance; they were looking for guns, and they registered the content of my bag".

When do people feel the necessity to personalise historical public events? Although the older generation in our sample did so, the event we focused on was highly charged emotionally and unquestionably consequential both for individual living during that time and for Argentine society as a whole. In this regard, although they differ in terms of the time span that is involved, there is a similarity between the personalisation we see in our results and the personalisation observed in studies of flashbulb memories. By definition, a flashbulb memory exists when people remember the circumstances in which they learned of a public event as well as the event itself. In other words, these are instances in which the personal and historical intersect, just as the personal and the historical intersected in our older generation's memory for the Junta. Although there may be many paths to the formation of flashbulb memory, it appears that, like the memory for the Junta, one critical, albeit not necessarily sufficient, criterion is the consequentiality of the event—again, both for the individual and for society. Thus, citizens of France formed a flashbulb memory of the death of French President Mitterrand, whereas French-speaking Belgians did not (Curci, Luminet, Finkenauer, & Gisle, 2001). And British citizens formed a flashbulb memory of the resignation of Margaret Thatcher, whereas continental Europeans did not (Conway et al., 1994).

But, as noted, personal relevance or consequentiality is not a necessary criterion. There are other ways to discuss the instances in which the personal and the historical intersect. For instance, focusing mainly on people's spontaneous dating of autobiographical events in terms of ongoing public events, Brown et al. (2009; see also Svob & Brown, 2012) argued that people "live in history" when their daily life is sufficiently disrupted to make the period transitional. This criterion rests on how much the world around someone changes, not necessarily how personally relevant the change is to an individual. As to flashbulb memories, not every personally relevant public event leads to a flashbulb memory; indeed, most do not. For instance, the appointment of Anthony Scalia to the Supreme Court has had personal consequences for many Americans, even though few can probably report the circumstances in which

they learned of the appointment. Clearly, we need to explore further when historical events are told in personal terms. The present study emphasises their live-through character; other factors no doubt also come into play.

Turning now to the findings concerning ideology, many of these are quite particular, for example, those who were Right-oriented were more likely to mention the leadership of Videla than were those who were Left-oriented. Although mainly *post hoc* explanations could probably be offered for some, if not all, of these differences, there are two differences deserving more extended comment. First, those on the Right offered more affective–evaluative remarks, in large part, because they offered more positive affective–evaluative remarks. Second, those on the Right with distant semantic collective memories responded “Don’t Know” more often than anyone else. We cannot determine from the responses whether the responder is recalling the requested information, but simply withholding an answer; could recall the information if she wanted to, but decided not to make the effort’ or genuinely answered “Don’t know”. Whatever underlies the response, it is clear that the responder does not want to delve into many of the negative features of the Military Junta, that is, they adopt a defensive stance (Gross, 1998). To be sure, at times, they offered positive appraisals of the Junta, at other times, they offered more defensive “Don’t Know” responses. Both may reflect their desire to not fully reject the Junta, at least publicly.

The present results, then, suggest that there may indeed be a qualitative difference between lived and distant semantic collective memories. Understanding how the lived quality of public events shapes the memories individuals hold of these events is critical to appreciating how these members of a community remember its past. Although we may have only captured some of the ways in which the “lived” nature of a historical memory shapes its content, by emphasising both the personal nature of the memories, their affective–evaluative quality, and their causally elaborated nature, we have begun to discern how memories might differ across generations and across ideologies.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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