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Collective Memory Processes Associated with Traumatic War Experiences: Social Sharing, Emotional Climate and the Trangenerational Transmission of Information in the Case of the Portuguese Colonial War

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Psychological Effects of Traumatic Events

Epidemiological research has shown that between 25% and 40% of people who were either victims or initiators of massacres, combats, or wars, as well as those who were victims of other forms of extreme violence, endure symptomatic states amongst which Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This percentage increases to 60% in rape victims (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Davidson & Foa, 1991; Echeburúa, 1992; Modell & Haggerty, 1991). The more these traumatic events display characteristics of collective violence and repression, and the more intense they are, the more they tend to generate psychological disorders (Davidson & Foa, 1991; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). The psychological concomitants of traumatic events comprise several dimensions: psychophysiological hyperreactivity (Davidson & Foa, 1991; Janoff-Bulman, 1992), intrusive thoughts and memories (Horowitz, 1986; Steinglass & Gerrity, 1990), cognitive and behavioral avoidance symptoms, as well as problems to seize, grasp and express inner emotions and to establish intimate relationships (Davidson & Baum, 1986). In addition, traumatic events drastically alter the view of oneself, of the world and of other people (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), resulting in a lack of the positive cognitive biases that characterize normal situations and positive mood (Taylor & Brown, 1988; Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Apparently, traumatic events have but a relative impact on individuals: In general, in the months and years that follow the experience of a traumatic event, only 50% show any signs of important psychological disorders, and, from these 50%, only about one third go through a phasic process of shock-disturbance-bereavement-recovery; finally, there is a small percentage who may present a state of chronic

bereavement (18%) or delayed bereavement (3%) (Wortman & Silver , 1989). So, an important number of subjects who have in somehow taken part in a collective catastrophe adapt without having to process lasting negative emotions. Still, there is a large number of people who do suffer from intrusive memories and affective disorders, alternated with cognitive, behavioral and affective avoidance. Although social support is known to help reducing the impact of traumatic events (Davidson & Baum, 1986; Janoff-Bulman, 1992), individuals cannot easily find such support when they attempt to overcome the impact of these events (Pennebaker, 1990).

Because there is an important number of subjects who remember traumatic events vividly and privately, one may wonder how these massive traumatic events are processed in social memory. One way to deal with these events is institutional and informal forgetting and repression. A second one, is transgenerational transmission of information about the traumatic event. Another, is the collective reconstruction of the past.

Institutional Responses to Traumatic Events: Forgetting and Repression

In countries were collective catastrophes and repression took place, like Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, just to mention a few, the institutional response has been to forget and to neutralize what happened (Becker & Lira, 1994). A nice illustration is the French case: “Once the IV Republic was stabilized... extreme meticulousness was quickly replaced by a desire to erase wounds, hide the degree of national involvement in a twin repressive regime: Vichy and Berlin. Enhance the myth of the liberation fight against the occupying forces, an event which has gone down in history under the name of the Resistance. All this implied that in a short term span there were a lower number of sentences, and a marked tendency towards amnesty. The main goal seemed to be to soften charges of “collaboration with the enemy”, in other words, treason. This climate of permissive forgetfulness was intellectually stirred in the 1960s when the North American historian Robert O. Paxton wrote a book on the Vichy years. Field-marshall’s Petain regime allied itself with Hitler much more deeply and enthusiastically than the Nazis had demanded. Petain (whose death sentence was commuted by De Gaulle for life imprisonment), played a major part, not only in repressing the Resistance but also in doing so with the Jews. The myth of Petain´s “inside shield” whilst De Gaulle had the “outside sword” was blown to pieces. Vichy’s was a racist and autonomous national project and not a mere vassal of the occupying forces” (El País, 1994, 14).

The above illustration seems to stand for a general phenomenon in post-war Europe: event forgetting and repression as an important way to deal with collective traumatic events in social memory. Further, as we shall discuss later, it shows that forgetting may function as the basic process allowing subsequent reconstruction of the past. The creation of a myth of active resistance of the general population to the detriment of evidence of active and passive support of the nazi and fascist regimes (Fusi, 1995).

According to Pennebaker (1993, 41), silenced events are shared events which lead to an important change, and so people avoid talking about them. This avoidance may be imposed by a repressive government or an authoritarian institution. It may also result from its perception by most of the population as a shameful event of which it is better not to talk about. That is, institutional forgetfulness is not specific to dictatorial forms of government or drastic political changes. Voluntary forgetfulness also predominates in pacific transitions from repressive dictatorships to more or less tutored democracies without sharp rupture with the past. Not unusually, different forms of amnesty emerge, which leave the repressors alone and the repressive institutions as they are. In Spain, for instance, after the transition of Francisco Franco's dictatorship to the present monarchic democracy, "an implicit agreement reached during the transition repressed any reference to the Franquist era (and to anti-Franquism). Reasons of political prudence recommended that it should be this way. But possibly it is not good to indefinitely prolong this caution: as psychoanalysts state, that which is repressed comes back if we do not face it" (Unzueta, 1994, 18). This is a good example of the belief in the return of the repressed past, an idea clearly based on a Freudian approach.

Concerning the institutional repression of traumatic memories, Freud states that collectivities confront common crimes by covering "the site of the crime with discrete monuments which allow us to forget them". This may take the form of modernization and embellishment. In the same vein, Pennebaker (this book), discusses how collectivities that have been stigmatized following the occurrence of political crimes -- as is the case of the city of Dallas, Texas-- tend to modernize their buildings instead of commemorating tragedy sites with monuments.

Silenced events may be the most important events in the development of collective memories. Moreover, when people try to avoid thinking about undesirable thoughts they usually cannot do so. For example, in Spanish speaking South

American countries, the decision to forget the atrocities and tortures purported by the army has been officially sanctioned by law, as was the case of the Argentinean "Punto Final" law. This is a very important political decision which shows that forgetting is not opposed to memory but in fact is a "form" of memory (Brossart et al. 1992, 25-26). Accordingly, it is also quite unusual for collectivities to commemorate negative events. Historical episodes considered to be negative, painful, humiliating, etc., usually are not remembered by a collectivity or institution. Brossart (1992) mentions several examples of this. In France the "bloody week" of 1871, the 1940 surrender, Dien Bien Phu, are not commemorated. In Germany, May 8th is a normal labour day. As Robert Frank once said: "what is sadly memorable is commemorated with difficulty" (Brossart, 1992, 60). In Portugal, the 28 May 1926 --the beginning of the dictatorial regime-- is just a calendar day. Similarly, the occupation of the former Portuguese colonies of Goa, Damao and Dio by the Indian Union army, in December 19, 1961 is not remembered.

Informal Silence and Forgetting

Not only is institutional forgetting frequent, the voluntary informal silence of negative events quite often occurs as well. In the case of traumatic events there are elements which suggest that a collective dynamic of silence and forgetting takes place both among those defeated and those who have won. For example, only 30% of those who survived the holocaust had shared their experiences in the USA (Sichrowsky, 1987; Pennebaker, 1990; Padilla & Comas-Díaz, 1986; Faúndez, Hering & Balogi, 1990). Research conducted in the field of social history is a reminder of the problems which emerge when trying to actively remember a negative past, and of the predominance of an attitude aimed towards forgetting. Thompson (1988) mentions some examples of this: In the words of Quinto Osano, a metallurgic worker at the Fiat car company who survived the Mauthausen concentration camp, "we do want it to be told, but in our inside we want to forget; deep inside, in our thoughts and our hearts. It is instinctive: try to forget although we make other people remember it. It is a contradiction, but that´s the way it is"... Similarly, in the city of Torino, the stronghold of the Italian labor movement, the humiliating period of the fascist domination under Mussolini has been seldom mentioned in the workers´ spontaneous life stories; a self-censorship, a silence which Luisa Passerini describes as a deep "scar, a violent supression of the many years which human lives are a testimony of a deep scar in everyday experience" (Thompson, 1988, 164). An ex-concentration camp prisoner and writer, Jorge Semprún, exemplifies in the following

paragraph the difficulty of remembering and forgetting his experience in Buchenwald: "...during a long time I did not want to write about this experience. I knew that forgetting was the only way of not commiting suicide. And I forgot. I had an amnesia cure but from the day I wrote the first book on my experience of solitude "The Long Trip" all has come back again. My cure has worked only in some ways" (Alameda, 1994, 76). In brief, societies confront traumatic events by repressing the event and/or displacing its meaning. Nevertheless, due to its traumatic nature and to the lack of a cognitive effort aimed at assimilating them, repressed events re-appear and re-emerge: that which is repressed crops up again.

Institutional Forgetting and its Consequences for War Veterans

Freud developed his hypotheses on the compulsion of repetition, precisely by having to confront many Austrian veterans´ repetitive war thoughts and dreams. Traumatic events that are assimilated with difficulties cannot be remembered because they are extremely painful, leading people to attempt to forget them. But, simultaneously, and due to their impact, they emerge again and again, putting people in a situation in which they cannot remember and they cannot forget (Horowitz, 1986). Without known exception, research on the traumatic effects of war (e.g. Freuds´s studies on war neuroses after World War I, or research on PTSD during the last few decades) supports this fact. In most cases, this research considers involuntary memories of traumatic events held by people who have lived through a lost war as mere psychological symptoms, to the detriment of the social dynamics from which they emerge and in which they evolve.

On attempting to forget the war, society hardly gives the veterans any social support. Veterans are thus deprived of institutional support or professional help to view their experience in a positive way (Modell & Haggerty, 1991; Pennebaker, 1990). Consequently, and paradoxically, this silence and lack of assimilation of the negative events will increase the number of informal memories on what veterans are trying to forget. This is a clear case of silent collective memory (Pennebaker, 1993). In support of the damaging effects of such collective silence, namely, in the USA, several studies showed the existence of higher rates of PTSD among the Vietnam veterans than among veterans from other wars or among non-veterans. For instance, in a study conducted in 1987, Modell & Haggerty (1991) found that 30% of the Vietnam veterans suffered from PTSD at some time of their lives, and that 15% were still suffering from it when the study was conducted. These percentages were

six times higher than those found in veterans from other wars, and 12 times higher than those found in people of the same age who did not go to war.

Institutional forgetting is, no doubt, a frequent response to collective traumatic events. Collective silence and dismissal of the role of society as a whole ends up by reinforcing the strength of individual-level as well as collective informal memories. As a result, what appears, at the surface-level, as institutional forgetting and silence, actually corresponds to hidden rumination and suffering. But forgetting and silence are neither the only processes, nor necessarily the most important ones to deal with traumatic events. Probably more adaptive is reconstruction of the past. Indeed, groups and collectivities may apply to more creative strategies to cope with this kind of events. In many cases, one can observe an active effort of reinterpretation, so that what was initially soiled, felt as a tragic disaster, or as a frustrating event, progressively becomes spotless and easy to deal with. One important question is thus how do groups and individuals remember and informally reconstruct past traumatic events. In fact, this is the main theme both of this book and the present chapter.

The Social Activity of Sharing and Reconstructing the Past: Freud, Halbwachs, and Bartlett.

As discussed elsewhere in this book (Paez & Basabe), Halbwachs (1950/1968) and Bartlett (1932/1973) stressed the institutional basis of remembering and its social activity nature. Freud, on the other hand, stressed the motivated nature of forgetting: individuals repress that which is negative, or, if they remember it, they do so in a distorted way.

Nevertheless, as put forth by Erdelyi (1990), the reconstructive processes of memory posited by Bartlett (levelling, accentuation, assimilation and conventionalization) are very similar to those proposed by Freud (repression, displacement, condensation and rationalization). We could compare the memory processes proposed by Freud and Bartlett as follows:

General Process	Bartlett	Freud
Forgetting and Retention	Levelling forgetfulness, ommission of some details and retention of others	Repression forgetfullness of unpleasant facts and feelings

Recall and Simple Distortion	Accentuation numerical, qualitative, and passo de la periferia al centro	Condensation unification of separate parts in a whole meaning
Recall and Reconstruction	Assimilation addition of detail, and distorsion in light expectations, theme, prejudice, attitudes, and values	Displacement change in meaning
Explanatory Process	Conventionalization adaptation to the culture	Rationalization justification of negative facts and feeelings under a positive light

As can be seen in the above scheme, these processes of forgetting, distorting and reconstructing allow us to parallel the memory of traumatic events with the social frames of reference built around the dominant values and beliefs (conventionalization). One interesting aspect of these scheme is that it allows to put together a motivational (or “hot”) explanation of the reconstruction process, aimed to defend social identity, with a cognitive (or “cold”) explanation of the same process, due to the an effort at understanding the social world on the basis of social memory frameworks or “schemas”. With respect to Halbawch’s work, it is also interesting to notice the implicit agreement between this author’s and Freud’s and Bartlett’s views. On insisting on the normative nature of a collectivity´s memory and on its basis of the collectivity’s current attitudes and needs, Halbwachs implicitly assumes that collective memory is biased towards forgetting that which is negative while aiming at the construction of a positive image of the past and of the collectivity. The following example issued from the oral history of the labor movement in Italy, sets a nice illustration of how the conventionalization and justification functions of collective memory of a social mobilization emerge in individuals’ discourses: “Nearly half of the metallurgic workers whom Portelli interviewed when recalling the history of the postwar strikes, located the death of a worker at the hands of the police in 1953 instead of 1949. They also located it during the three days of barricades and street fights which followed the gunning of 2.700 men from the steel works, instead of in the context of a peaceful strike in which it really happened. In fact nobody died during those three days. But... the events are not the most interesting part of this story. The

death of Luigi Trastulli would not mean that much for the historians if it were remembered “correctly”. After all, the death of a worker by the police in the postwar years in Italy was not so strange.... What makes it interesting is the way in which the people´s memory works” (Thompson, 1988, 157). This quotation clearly shows how events are condensed and re-organized for internal coherence (conventionalization and justification), and, at the same time, to provide with a heroic vision of the workers’ movement. This vision would be a prescriptive lesson of the past, therefore fullfiling a normative function.

Another example of conventionalization of the past may be found in Portugal. After the 1974 revolution in Portugal, the former dictatorship’s secret police was disbanded, and many of its agents and officers were put to prison for responsibility in common crimes like torture, unfounded imprisonment, or physical elimination of political dissidents. But, by the beginning of the 1990s, the Portuguese government endowed some ex-agents of this police, who served as informants in the ex-colonies, with a medal for “honorable services to the country”. In other words, there is an assimilation between the past activities of a secret police under the old regime and the current activity of other organisms which serve the present regime, under the common denomination of “loyal services to the country”. Our second study was exactly aimed at illustrating the operation of a similar process of repression and reconstruction of the past in the case of the Portuguese colonial war, and also the transgenerational transmission of information.

The Portuguese War in Africa

The war in which Portugal was involved against the liberation movements of its former colonies in Africa shows many similarities with the Vietnam war (cf. Guerra, 1994). The African war started in Angola, in 1961, and swiftly spread to Mozambique and Guinea-Bissao. By that time, about 1,500 soldiers were based in Angola, and a few batallions were present in the remaining colonies. When the war ended, in 1974, there had officially been 280.000 troops involved in combat in the three colonies. As in the United States, many were the internal attempts against the continuation of this war. Some of these attempts were lead by officials close to the regime. Others were lead by student movements, by political parties who maintained their solidarity with the colonial liberation movements, and by sectors of the Catholic church. However, the Portuguese form of government was not a democratic one, and these attempts

faced institutional repressive actions, namely from the state police (DGS). According to official statistics, the war, held in these three fronts, caused 8.831 casualties among Portuguese soldiers, and about 30.000 were wounded. From the latter, about 4.000 were permanently disabled (Guerra, 1994). Among the members of the Portuguese association of disabled war-veterans (ADFA), one can count about 14,000 people suffering from psychic and physical illness. The estimation of prevalence of PTSD among all the veterans who participated in that war, ranges between 30 and 140 thousand, according to different sources (Albuquerque, 1992; Guerra, 1994). In epidemiological terms, these estimations would indicate that, in Portugal, PTSD would be from 1.5 to 7 times higher than the percentage found in North America, across the entire population.

Stress factors associated with the death of fellow soldiers, the actual fight and wounds in combat, are the most important features found in any war. Other factors common to the two wars were civilian abuse, tough survival conditions and atrocities, which are usual in guerrilla warfare. However, Portuguese soldiers had to stay for two years in the combat zone (Albuquerque, 1992), with, ocasionally, a short-period leave, while North American soldiers stayed less than a year in the Vietnamese combat front and had leaves which took them away from the combat zone (Disabled American Veterans, 1987). Also, Portuguese soldiers had the advantage of being called into ranks and leaving for the combat zone always with the same unit, and so they could count on the social and psychological support of people they got to know fairly well. This is something which did not always happen in Vietnam. Table 1 is a comparison between the Portuguese colonial wars and Vietnam.

TABLE 1. A comparison between the Portuguese colonial war and the Vietnam war

	Vietnam war	
Length of the war	9 years (1964-1975)	13 years (1961-1974)
Total number of troops	2.8 million	800.000
Troops in combat	1 million	280.000
Casualties (by 1.000 soldiers)	0.54	0.29
Chronic psychological problems	500.000	30.000-140.000

(Albuquerque, 1992; Guerra, 1994)

Another important factor to keep in mind is that PTSD has not been officially recognized in Portugal as a discapacity produced by the colonial war, and so most pacients receive little economic compensation or specific medical or social help (Albuquerque, 1992). Even the medical community does not pay much attention to this disorder, showing a great lack of understanding in the diagnosis of this disorder. There are two possible reasons which could explain this situation:

a) the nature of the psychopathology (especially the patient´s avoidance of any stimulus or reference to the war) may induce the physician not to establish the link between past and present symptoms and the war experiences,
b) the predominant political climate in Portugal which tries to forget some of the unpleasant consequences of the colonial wars (Albuquerque, 1992).

In the remaining of this chapter, we will concentrate on two studies conducted in 1993-1994 in Portugal. In these studies, male and female youths aged from 14 to 18 years old answered to questionnaires on issues related to the Portuguese participation in the colonial war. These pupils did not live through the war days (which ended in 1974), and present day school manuals generally include little information about the Portuguese colonial war. Although there are several official accounts of the Portuguese colonial war (e.g. Resenha Histórico-Militar, Portuguese Army Headquarters) and several commemorative events have taken place by relatively

small groups and institutions, in 1994, with the 20th anniversary of the end of this war, more widespread actions and social discourses emerged in the Portuguese media. Our data were collected just before the emergence of these commemorative actions. Hence, we were able to check for the transgenerational informal transmission of information, and its impact at the emotional and explanational levels. We also attempted to analyze the pupils' perceptions of those veterans and the war in general.

In one study (herein referred to as Study 1), we asked a sample of 82 high-school pupils of both sexes to report on their memories about members of their families being involved in traumatic events, of general character (e.g. "During the 40 last years were you ar any member of your family victims of an accident, theft, muggings, etc.?") and two questions of political character (e.g. "During the last 40 years, were you or any member of your family involved as victims (or actors) in a violent event, like torture or war?"). From all subjects, 21% reported that close acquaintances were both victims and actors, 12% reported that these acquaintances were victims but not actors, and 18% reported that acquaintances were actors but not victims of political violence. These results may illustrate the effects of the former dictatorship and colonial war in Portugal. We also asked subjects to report on their rumination, reevaluation, inhibition and social sharing relative to this topic, independently of their direct personal involvement in the event. The answers were provided in response-scales ranging from "never"(=1) to "very often"(=8). Supportive of the neo-freudian idea according to which repression induces reevocation, we found positive correlations between avoidance or inhibition of social sharing, and rumination about collective traumatic events ($r=0.31$, $p<.05$ and $r=0.29$, $p<.05$, respectively for victims and actors of war-related and political violence). Notice that, as shown by Paez & Basabe (this book), social sharing is equally related both to rumination and to inhibition. Results in the Portuguese study again supported the relationship between, on the one hand, social sharing and rumination ($r=0.28$, $p<.05$, $r=0.16$, $p<.10$, respectively for victims and for actors) and, on the other hand, between social sharing and reevaluation. Further, in line with Paez and Basabe, the latter correlation was stronger than the former ($r=0.49$, $p<.05$ and $r=0.61$, $p<.05$, respectively for victims and actors). In brief, the results indicate that there is a relationship between inhibition or repression, and repetitive thoughts. However, social sharing is not the opposite of inhibition, and it reinforces rumination and reappraisal.

In this study, we also observed that a negative perception of political and social

climate (e.g. “In your opinion, the social climate of the country is... fearful, hostile, sad”; 1=low; 8=high) was positively associated with social sharing and reevaluation about an indirect experience of violent events, either as victim or actor. In other words, according to our data, the more the subjects talk about a member of their family or an acquaintance having been a victim ($r=0.27$, $p<.05$) of violence, or an actor ($r=0.19$, $p<.10$) in, this kind of violence, the more negatively they evaluate their country’s political climate. Because, from 1975 on, Portugal was not directly involved in a war, and torture was eradicated from the political system, it is worth to note that these responses were given as regards social memories of the youth who answered to the questionnaire. This fact shows that the trangenerational transmission of traumatic past events reinforces a negative view of the contemporary social system, while showing the impact of the past over the appraisal of the present.

In our second study (herein referred to as Study 2), we attempted to more directly tap the image of the Portuguese colonial war and veterans in 98 Portuguese pupils. All subjects reported to be acquainted with, at least, one veteran. Half of the subjects considered this veteran to be a close relationship. Also, 67% of the subjects reported their acquaintance to be alive. 12% of these personal acquaintances present permanent physical problems; 37% suffered from temporary physical problems. With respect to mental health, 12% of the subjects reported that their acquaintance presented chronic pychological problems, against 51% who reported temporary psychological problems. Subjects also reported veteran’s family problems in 27% of the cases. In more than 50% of the cases, the war experience, as told by their acquaintances, was considered from “negative” to “very negative”. In 38% of the cases, this experience was judged as “neither positive nor negative”.

Briefly, these preliminary results reveal that Portuguese youths recollect a collective traumatic event which is certainly akin to the former dictatorship and the colonial war. But our data in Study 2, regarding the perception of colonial war veterans, suggests that silence about the war was the modal response. Indeed, 67% of our subjects reported that their personal acquaintance talked very little about the war in the family, and 62% reported that these acquaintances did not speak about the war, in general. The data of Study 1 also suggest that members of the subjects’ primary groups who were victims of war- and of political-related violence, share more than do other individuals who do not have close relationships in these conditions (means are 4.85 and 3.96, respectively; $t76=1.79$, $p<.05$, one-tailed). These results are congruent with other results (see Paez & Basabe, in this book), and, at least in

the case of victims, support the idea that closeness to traumatic collective events increases coping mobilization. Our results also testify that sharing about experiences in the Portuguese colonial war is directly related to the negative impact in the social environment of the subjects. Confrontation and social sharing about traumatic events is supposed to fill an adaptative social function (Rimé, this book), and to extremize attitudes towards past collective issues and the current society (Paez & Basabe, this book).

In Study 2, to analyze the relationship between the manner in which veteran acquaintances talk about and explain war, and the perception of the war by the subjects, we asked subjects a series of questions about (a) the way in which veterans share, (b) the affective impact of such sharing on the subjects and on the veterans' families, (c) the subjects' attitudes towards the war, and (d) the explanations of the war and the veterans' participation in it. A second order factor analysis on questions about the impact of war as well as on about the level and quality of social sharing yielded five core dimensions, according to which subjects organized their perceptions. These dimensions included:

I. personal changes in the person and existence of family problems;
II. social integration, participation in activities related to the war, friendships in the war, and, absense of family problems;
III. feeling at ease when they talk about the war, and, talking favourably about the war;
IV. receiving medical treatment, and involvement on war violence; and
V. talking frequently about the war, in general and in the family.

Subjects also answered one question about the frequency with which they heard someone talking about the war and one question about the level of closeness to the person talking about the war. These latter two questions showed a coherent correlational pattern with the last dimension ($r=0.58$, $p<.001$, and $r=0.35$, $p<.001$, for frequency and closeness, respectively). This result shows that social sharing is related with these two variables. In addition, the more subjects heard about the war, the more they perceived a negative mood ("unhappy", "worried", "sad", "anxious") in the veteran ($r=0.19$, $p<.05$, one-tailed) when he shared about the war. A similar phenomenon occurred with respect to the perception of the veteran's family climate: the more they heard about the war, the more they perceived the family climate to be a negative one ($r=0.38$, $p<.01$, for veteran's family negative climate; see Table 2). In

the same vein, the subjects' emotional appraisal of the war varied as a direct function of the frequency with which they heard the person talk about the war ($r=0.18$, $p<.05$, for "sadness", "fear", "anxiety", and "embarrassment"; $r=0.21$, $p<.05$ for "disgust", "anger", and "contempt"). Finally, a higher frequency of hearing about war was related to a negative attitude towards this historical event ($r=0.35$, $p<.01$, for "injustice", "massacre", "an evil to the country"; $r=0.24$, $p<.01$, for "unimportant", "meaningless", "mistake"; $r=-0.15$, $p<.10$, for "a good thing for the country", "important", "necessary"). Frequency of hearing was related with dimensions IV and II ($r=0.18$, $p<.05$, and $r=0.19$, $p<.05$, respectively). That is, the perception of personal changes and problems as well as of social integration increases with social sharing. The latter result may explain why a higher frequency of hearing about the war was also related to a relatively positive emotional appraisal of the war ($r=0.43$, $p<.001$, for "joy", "surprise" and "interest").

The results indicate that whereas a majority of veterans talk very little or not at all, and, in any case, in a negative way, a minority talks much more frequently and in a positive way. Clearly, one cannot deny a direct relationship between the frequency and the tone with which veterans speak about the war and the frequency with which subjects hear about it. However, the effects of social sharing seem to be, to some degree, ambivalent: The more the veterans talk about the war, the more the subjects perceive them as having been successfully integrated in their army social environment; still, subjects also perceive more personal changes and more problems in the veteran's family in this case. More generally, the frequency and tone with which veterans speak about the war and the frequency with which subjects listen about the war are not straightforward determinants of the subjects' image of both the veteran and the war. Indeed, the former variables seem to be less important than is the frequency with which subjects hear about the war, in generating a negative image of both the veteran and of the war.

The fact that the frequency of hearing about the war was related to a perception of social integration and positive experience during the war, suggests that some form of positive reconstruction of the war was present in some instances of social sharing. As we pointed out above, not only is forgetting and silence something usual when confronted with traumatic events, there is also an active construction of meaning. For instance, our subjects in Study 1 report that they share more (mean=4.29), they confront more by reevaluation (mean=3.62) than they avoid (mean=2.41) or suffer ruminations (mean=2.28) about traumatic political and war-related events, when the

acquaintance lived through these events as victims (all ts significant at least at the p<.05 level, to the exception of the comparison between avoidance and rumination). In this process, and from the point of view of those directly involved in the situation, we may distinguish three different mechanisms. First of all, it is quite normal to blame oneself either due to one's own behaviours or to one's personality traits. Janoff-Bulman (1992) states that this is a form of reconstructing the belief in a just world. If one is in part reponsible (behavioral self-blaming) for what has happened then one can also, in someway, control the event now or in the future. Social comparison with those who are worse off than oneself is also quite normal among victims of traumatic events. It is also usual to believe that one confronts the negative events better than other people do (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). A third form of reconstructing the meaning of the traumatic event is to re-evaluate it under the light of some positive aspect. It is seen as a sacrifice or as a way of learning more about life (the "real" priorities) and about oneself (see what you really can do) (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

From the above mentioned coping mechanisms, the third one seems to be the most adaptive. Indeed, a research which compared Second World War veterans with and without PTSD showed that those who had less symptoms used as their main coping device with war memories that of stressing the positive aspects of the situations they had lived during the war. They also thought that the memories were less stressful and more controllable than those veterans who did suffer from PTSD. Those who showed stronger symptomatology used as their main coping mechanism that of isolating themselves, blaming themselves for what had happened, phantasizing about dreams come true and seeking emotional support in order to confront war memories (Fairbank, Hansen & Fitterling, 1991). This confirms that self-blaming, avoidance or inhibition, and simple social sharing (i.e. talking about negative past events) reinforce psychological distress. Below, we present a summary table of the relationships between the five most important dimensions, and the factors comprised by these dimensions, as extracted by the second-order factor analysis in Study 2(Table 2).

Of particular importance in Table 2, are the results relative to dimensions I and II. These results show a reconstruction effect, so that those who frequently talk about the war are judged to do it under a favourable light. On the other hand, when subjects perceive a negative mood on the part of the veteran, they also report a more negative veteran's family climate and apparently depict a contagion effect, which is expressed by negative personal emotions. This general result shows a

parallel between our subjects' perceptions and veterans' actual responses. Actually, previous research (e.g. Fairbank et al, 1991), showed that World War II veterans with better affective balance emphasized the positive aspects of their participation in that war when remembering their experiences.

Emphasis on the positive aspects of participation in the war also emerges from the subjects' reports as regards those veterans who talk frequently, in general and in the family (cf dimension IIa. in Table 2). In this case, our subjects depict a more positive image of the veteran. Indeed, they dismiss dispositional explanations of the war (Dimension Va; $r=-0.20$, $p<.05$) as well as psycho-social vulnerabilities (Dimension Vb; $r=-0.21$, $p<.05$) in their attributions for the veterans' participation in the war. Similarly, Dimension IIb. indicates that, when veterans talk voluntarily and at ease about the war, subjects dismiss more external social-political explanations of the colonial war ("uprising of the African population", "the Portuguese did not want to abandon Africa", "cultural conflict", "the Portuguese dictatorship"; $r=-0.19$, $p<.05$). Dimensions IIa and IIb are negatively correlated with situational individualistic explanations given by subjects for veterans' participation in the war ("the person was forced", "he was in service when the war started", "he had to go in order to avoid problems", "he didn't have people pulling strings for him";$r=-0.17$, $p<.05$, and $r=-0.28$, $p<.01$, respectively). This phenomenon is akin to the positive emphasis put by semiotic devices (movies, narratives, monuments, etc.) on the same subject (Igartua & Paez, this book): the positive aspects of individual participation, like group solidarity, heroism, altruism, etc., are stressed to the detriment of the social-political causes of the war. Probably, the positive side of participation in the war does not appear very clearly from these responses, due to the fact that even this side would be negatively valued in the present social-political context.

TABLE 2. Emotional Climate, Social Sharing, Attitudes Towards the War, Perceived Veteran Problems, and Causal Attributions to the War: A synthesis of the main results obtained in the Portuguese study

DIMENSIONS AND FACTORS	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS
Dimension I. (Negative) Emotional Climate	
a. Mood depicted by the veteran when talking about the war	unhappy, sad, anxious, worried
b. Perceived negative family climate when the veteran went to the war	unhappy, worry, sad, fearful

the veteran went to the war	anxious, fearful, embarassment, sadness
c. Emotions felt by the subject when thinking about the war	disgust, contempt, anger
d. Emotions felt by the subject when thinking about the war:	
Dimension II. Positive Content Social Sharing	
a. Social sharing 1	veteran's high frequency of speaking about the war in general and in the family
b. Social sharing 2	veteran's speaking frequently and at ease about the war
	veteran's speaking positively about the war
	subject's frequent listening about the war
Mood depicted by the veteran when talking about the war	joyful, euphoric, pleased, interested
Dimension III. (Negative) Attitude Towards the War	
a. Subject's attitude towards the war 1.	injustice, massacre, a bad thing to the country
b. Subject's attitude towards the war 2 (inverted load)	a bad thing to the country, unnecessary, unimportant
c. Subject's attitude towards the war 3.	meaningless, a mistake
Dimension IV. Perceptions of Veterans	
a. Perception of problems and changes in the veteran	changes in personality and ways of reacting, and existence of family problems
b. Impact of the war in the veteran	medical treatment and participation in war violence
c. Causal attributions to the veteran's participation in the war (Naive Patriotism)	to defend the country, candid, believing that the colonies should remain Portuguese
Dimension V. Explanations of the War	
a. Causal explanation of the colonial war (Dispositional Explanations)	violence of the Portuguese and the Africans, there always have been wars, the Portuguese are puffed-up with pride, the population of the colonies didn't know what was best for them

b.	Causal attributions to the veteran's participation in the war (Psycho-Social Vulnerability)	driven by family, social, and economical problems, liking for guns, racist, being a soldier's son, being afraid to desert

Table 2 displays another aspect which renders the colonial war similar to the Vietnam war: As reported by our subjects, there is a dominant negative attitude towards the war (means are 4.61 for "injustice, bad thing, massacre", 4.19 for "meaningless, mistake"; and 3.01 for "good thing, important", for 1=disagree and 7=agree; both t97 are significant at least at the $p<.02$ level); personal changes showed by veterans are generally associated to physical and mental health problems, and, explanations given to their participation in the war are based mainly on what we designated as naive patriotism, a result which parallels many recent popular accounts of North American veterans' participation in the war, from which Oliver Stone's "Born in the 4th of July" is but one striking example. Naive patriotism explanations show a higher mean than explanations based on psycho-social vulnerability (means are, respectively, 4.00 and 2.27; $t97=9.71$, $p<.001$). However, situational individualistic explanations were the most important ones (mean=4.81), as compared to psycho-social vulnerability ($t97=12.58$, $p<.001$), and to naive patriotism ($t97=4.05$, $p<.001$), which is also a common-sense account for mobilization (e.g. Robert Zemeckis' movie "Forrest Gump").

Labelling and Explanations for War

To examine how the social labelling of the past allows to assign different meanings to the war, and, particularly, how this process mobilizes different causal explanations of it, we performed an experimental research. In the old dictatorship, referring to the African war as a "colonial war" was forbidden. The official designation was "Overseas war", since, according to the regime, the colonies had the status not of colonies but rather, of "overseas provinces". After the 1974 revolution, and following the designation which had never been abandoned by the left-wing, clandestine, movement, the war became to be referred to as a "colonial war". Therefore, whereas the former designation has a clear conservative and even imperialist consonance, the latter became more generally employed, although it still very much presents a left-wing connotation. We, therefore reasoned that the semantic, ideological content induced by the use of each alternative designation, could trigger different explanations, particularly in the case of youths who did not live through the war and

do not have a very structured political stand.

As part of Study 2, we randomly divided subjects in two conditions, according to whether they received a version of the questionnaire “on the Portuguese colonial war” (n=48 Ss) or “on the Portuguese overseas war” (n=49 Ss). These two groups did not differ in terms of political opinions (50% moderate left; 50% right, in the total sample), religiousness, frequency with which they heard about the war, and closeness to veteran personal acquaintances. There was, however a marginal tendency for subjects to differ according to the amount of talk about the war by veteran acquaintances. This variable was used as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.

A MANOVA on the causal explanations about the war and the veterans’ participation in it showed a marginally significant effect of the “colonial versus overseas” labeling ($F_{6,89}=1.86$, $p<.10$). Univariate F tests are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Explanations Given by Subjects as a Function the “Colonial versus Overseas” Labeling

	Colonial (N=48)		Overseas (N=49)			
	M	SD	M	SD	F(1,89)	p
Causal attributions to the veteran’s participation in the war (Naive Patriotism)	3.76	1.61	4.23	1.37	3.73	<.06
External social-political explanations	4.53	1.18	4.97	1.05	4.05	<.05

In brief, the results suggest that when the war was labeled with the conservative and legitimizing “overseas” tag, subjects emphasized external and conjuncture factors,like the “the influence of other countries” (e.g. USSR, People’s Republic of China, Cuba), the “overall conjuncture”, but also, “the dictatorship”. Simultaneously, under this tag, subjects attribute the veteran’s participation in the war more to explanations relating to naive patriotism (see Table 2, above). Instead, subjects who received the “colonial” tag agree less with the external attribution to war and dismiss

a causal explanation of individual participation in the war based on naive patriotism.

Regardless of the effects of the “colonial versus overseas” induction, we found other interesting results by means of a correlational analysis of explanations and attitudes towards the war. This analysis showed that, not only labeling, but also different explanations may legitimize or undermine the social meaning of the war. After reversing positively-oriented scores, we computed an overall index of negative attitude towards the war, as the averaged sum of subjects’ raw scores to attitudinal questions. We then correlated this score with causal explanations of war and veteran participation. Positive attitudes towards the war were related to explanations based on the human nature and social factors ($r=-0.13$, $p<.10$). Negative attitudes towards the war were associated with conjuncture and external explanations ($r=0.13$, $p<.10$). In addition, positive attitudes towards the war were associated with explanations of the veteran’s participation based on psycho-social vulnerability ($r=-0.19$, $p<.05$) and naive patriotism ($r=-0.14$, $p<.10$). Finally, a critical attitude towards the war was related to the perception of forced participation on the part of the veteran acquaintance ($r=0.21$, $p<.05$). We also found a marginally significant -0.12 correlation between political opinion (1=right wing; 5=left-wing) and depreciation of the war, such that right-wing subjects showed a more positive attitude towards the war. This phenomenon is coherent with the previous discussion. To contrast the simultaneous effect of political opinion and explanations, on the subjects’ expressed attitudes towards the war, we performed a multiple regression analysis which showed that those subjects who believed veteran participation in the war to be forced were also those who had a more negative attitude towards the war.

The correlational nature of the present data, prevents us to ascertain the causal direction of the attitude-explanation relationship. Indeed, it may either stand as an effect of the reconstructive nature of memory, in which case as suggested by Halbwachs (1950/1968), attitudes would be the causal factor, serving as a framework for such reconstruction. Conversely, it may be that social sharing acts as means of transmission of facts and critical explanations of the past collective event -- i.e. the colonial war -- therefore forming the subjects’ attitudes. This would be in line, both with Freud’s notion of return of the repressed, and with Halbwachs’ idea according to which collective memory acts as a normative process of construction of individual attitudes and identities. Nevertheless, all the results obtained for the association between hearing about the war and perceiving in the veterans and reporting personal negative feelings, as well as the relationship between social

sharing and negative attitude towards the war reinforce the latter alternative explanation. Partially reinforcing the above explanation is the fact that measures of personal mood in Study 1 were not related to the amount of collective traumatic events recalled by the subjects.

Conclusions

The two studies summarized in this chapter yield what appears to be valuable data about the social concomitants of a collective trauma, at the informational level, at the emotional and attitudinal level, and at the reconstruction level. At the informational level, 51% of young school pupils report that their family members or acquaintances suffered from war or torture consequences. In addition, those pupils who indicated that their acquaintances suffered from war- and torture-related problems, show the highest tendencies to engage in social sharing and reevaluation processes about this topic. Complementarily, most subjects reported that their veteran acquaintances talk very little about the war. Key informants belonging to the Portuguese association of disabled war veterans (ADFA) corroborated this fact: Veterans attempt to forget, it is hard for them to speak about their negative experiences at war; those who are strongly disturbed have the tendency to avoid sharing and to ruminate.

At the emotional-attitudinal level, the results indicated that, the more subjects share about past traumatic collective episodes, the more negative are their views of current society and the war. Namely, the more they hear about the war, the more negatively they perceive the veteran's mood, the more they perceive the veteran's family climate to be a negative one, and the more their personal appraisal of the war is fearful and hostile. These results, even if their retrospective and self-reporting origins suggest caution about the conclusions, indicate the existence of a general emotional climate marked by anxiety, fear, disgust, contempt, and anger. Moreover, our results show that this was the most important organizer of the perceptions about the Portuguese colonial war (see Table 2, Dimension I).

At the reconstruction level, the data indicate that the minority of veterans who frequently talk about the war are perceived to do it in a favorable mood (joyful, pleased, interested, at ease). This generates a more positive image of the veteran on the part of subjects, as shown by the subjects' dismissal of explanations based on psycho-social vulnerability (social and psychological problems) and situational individualistic explanations (he was forced) to the veteran's participation in the war. Simultaneously, subjects scoring higher in the positive content social-sharing

dimension (Table 2) rejected more external social-political explanations of the colonial war as well as naturalistic dispositional explanations. In brief, these subjects hold a more positive image of veterans, reject more the human and social-political constraints of the war than do subjects whose acquaintances speak less frequently and/or more negatively about the war.

As regards the relationship between social reconstruction and labeling, the data support the idea that, when the war was labeled as “overseas war”, subjects emphasized external and conjunctural factors as explanations of the war. In this case, veteran participation was explained in light of naive patriotism. These explanations somehow appear to be a “better” justification of Portugal’s engagement in the war than would be that employed by subjects who answered to the “colonial war” condition. These latter subjects rejected more the above mentioned explanations. Because “overseas war” was the official designation of the African struggle, this fact clearly indicates that social labeling is not a neutral process and that it may have ideological, justification, and behavioral effects which go beyond the mere status of a semantic artifact. Finally, a less negative view of the war was related to explanations based on “human nature” and global factors as well as to the naive patriotism explanation for veteran participation. This would be a way to depict war, as well as individual participation in it under a somewhat more positive light. Conversely, negative attitudes toward the war were related to conjunctural and external explanations and to veterans’ forced participation.

This is a social psychological context which gives veterans the double role of actors and victims of war violence: As soldiers, they probably were victimizers of, at least, part of the African population. But, as participants in a war that was lost and perceived as unlegitimate by many, both before and after the fall of the regime, they can be conceived of as victims. With important differences, this situation is analogous, in some aspects, to that of the German soldiers after World War II. In this vein, analyzing the German case, Mitscherlicht (1972) suggested that victimizers, i.e. those who commit an abuse, generally build or create a defensive meaning for the event. In the case analyzed by this author, German subjects used as a collective defensive mechanism that of an affective dis-inversion of the past. Namely, they forgot about their support to the nazi party, in spite of the fact that, in the election held just before World War II, nearly 90% of the population voted for Hitler, even in areas where the nazis did not have total control. After the war not talking about it or not accepting the possibility of being judged for their past was the predominant

attitude. Mitscherlicht states that out of a total number of 4.000 files obtained from the psychosomatic clinic in Heidelberg not even one patient established the relationship between their symptoms and the events which took place during the nazi era. These results suggest a systematic silence in relation to this era. We may find, here another parallel with the Portuguese case, as shown by the general silence about eventual active participations in the past regime (e.g. by some of those military who made the revolution, or by public figures).

Another important attitude was that of denying defeat and identifying with the "winner". This is the most predominant attitude in present days as we can see by the fact that in interviews conducted on the topic of D-Day, 69% of the population think that the end of World War II and having defeated nazism was a liberation for the German people. Only 13% see it as a defeat and 14% have an ambiguous stance towards it (Comas, 1994). This attitude may be described as "identification with the winner" (Misterlicht, 1972). In Italy, a very popular joke says that the night Mussolini was led to resign, Italians went to bed as fascists, and, the next day, they wake up as antifascists. Another joke in Portugal says that the Portuguese are the only people who can "pull down" a bridge much like the San Francisco's Golden Gate and built a new one overnight: the day before the revolution, they had "Salazar bridge" (named after the main figure of the old regime); the next day, they had an "April 25" (the revolution day) bridge. This latter bridge still exists. The identification with the winner also seems to be existed in this country, at least by most of the population. Specifically, the fact that the military --who were engaged in the war-- played the crucial role in the revolution helps understanding why they acquired a very positive image, at least during the first years after the revolution.

Another way of creating a positive meaning for traumatic events is to generate attributions blaming the victims. Although this phenomenon does not seem to have emerged in Portugal, this seems to be a psychologically useful process to maintaining a belief in a just and meaningful world. As a case in point, one third of the Germans, and the most part of those who are over 40 years old, are in total or partial agreement with the idea that "it is the Jews own fault if they have been persecuted for centuries" (Martí-Font, 1992). The wife of a Russian civil servant who worked in concentration camps states, even in 1989, this belief in a just world in relation to the gulag: "There were innocents who were unjustly jailed, that is true, but the rest, the majority, those were bandits" (Potel, 1992, 402).

The effort to provide a traumatic event with meaning is a normal feature, although it is not always possible to do so (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). But in more appropriate social-political circumstances the strive against forgetting and the existence of testimonial comemorations are mechanisms which allow people to give individual intrusive memories of collective traumatic events a social meaning (Jodelet, 1993), while also decreasing symptomatology (Becker & Lira, 1989). As stated by one key informant of the Portuguese disabled veterans' association, attempts at discussing the African war, generally faced society's poor receptiveness. Even members of this association decreased their effort at disseminating this discussion.

Faced with traumatic events that divide a society those rituals aimed at remembering do not have a unifying normative nature as Halbwachs thought. For the victims and those who are close to them, commemorating a collective catastrophe may lead to render it a positive meaning: let us remember as a way of recognizing that it happened, that it was unjust and that it should not happen again (Jodelet, 1992). For those responsible of the catastrophe avoiding that memory or conventionalizing it has the same function although its contents may be different. In the Portuguese case, the recent construction of a monumento to the African war veterans in Lisbon provoked public polemics. For some parcels of the society, this monument was a recognition of the heroism of Portuguese soldiers. But, for others, it was no more than the mystification of the real status of war veterans: that of normal people having been victims of an illegitimate war.

Author Notes

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