Crisis and historical memory: The coup d’état of 1973 in Chile

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Objectives and questions

• Inquire about the shape in that memories of crisis events can be “stored” into the collective memory about history.
  – Particularly the Chilean coup d’état of 1973 and the later military dictatorship.

• Questions:
  – Are there generational differences in the remembering of Chilean dictatorship?
  – The memories about Chilean dictatorship are related to theoretical assumptions about crises?
  – Is it possible to speak about an intergenerational historical memory around the Chilean dictatorship?
Theoretical framework

- Most part of personal memories about our past, refers what happen into a period of “opening to the world” between the adolescence and early adulthood. (Conway & Rubin 2005, Mannheim 1993[1928], Schuman & Scott 1989)

- Memories about life experience is something that is “stored” into the individual psyche as memories, but those refers to shared experiences into a shared social and historical environment (as time, place, and life conditions), and their recall is associated to a communicative social act. (Elder 1995, Halbwachs 2004, Jelin 1998)
Theoretical framework

• Memory as a source of individual and group identity, as well as it is related to human existence and these may result to generational historical memories (Aróstegui 2004, Devriese 1989, Guichard & Henriquez 2011, Lalive d’Epinay et al 2008, Mannheim 1993[1928])

• Crises events in history are strong markers for the collective memory about history at individual and social level. (Jelin 1998, Mazade 2011, Olick & Robbins 1998, Ortega 2011)

• Crises events can introduce ruptures into individual everyday life, having consequences at subjective and collective level. Remembering around those events are mostly defined by individual- quotidian experiences (Jelin 1998, Schuman & Corning 2011, Settersten & Martin 2002)
Research CEVI

Changements et événements au cours de la vie
Changes and events across the life course

An international study:
Argentina – Belgium – Brazil – Canada – Chile
China – France – India – Italy – Mexico
Switzerland – Uruguay

International coordination:
S. Cavalli & C. Lalive d’Epinay
(CIG, University of Geneva)

http://cig.unige.ch/recherches/cevi.html
Questionnaire

Analyses based in question 3 about the remembering of socio historical facts...

Let us now consider the main changes and events which occurred in your country and in the world during your life. What are the ones which most struck you?

(You may answer up to four events)

1. Description: ........................................................................................................................................................................
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Why did this event strike you?
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Year(s): .......  Your age at that moment: ......  Place of the event: .................................................................
Methodology

• Between January and March 2009, in 6 municipalities of Gran Concepción, Chile.
• Sample N=623
• Sample non-random, stratified by age and sex
• 5 age groups:
• Questionnaires self-administered
• Data collected by sociology students of the University of Concepción.
Results
The five socio historical changes most mentioned by individuals for each age group

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<td>Football</td>
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<td>Election Obama</td>
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<td>Pinochet decease</td>
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<td>Attacks 11/9</td>
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<td>Earthquake Valdivia 1960</td>
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<td>Visit Juan Pablo II</td>
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<td>Election Obama</td>
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<td><strong>65-69</strong></td>
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<td>Earthquake Valdivia 1960</td>
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<td>Governement Allende</td>
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<td>Attacks 11/9</td>
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<td>Earthquake Chillan 1939</td>
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<td>WW 2</td>
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<td>Gov. Radicals (1938-52)</td>
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Relation between mentions and historical time

Mentions / Year of CSH (N=1490 mentions)

- Youth 1923-29
- Youth 1940-44
- Youth 1955-59
- Youth 1970-74
- Youth 1970-74
- Chillán 1939
- Valdivia 1960
- Coup d’état 1973
- Democ. 1988-90
- 11/9/2001
## Categories domain Coup d’état/Dictatorship

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>35-39 ans</th>
<th>50-54 ans</th>
<th>65-69 ans</th>
<th>78-86 ans</th>
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<tr>
<td>% coh n</td>
<td>40% 49</td>
<td>68% 85</td>
<td>72% 88</td>
<td>66% 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coup d’état 1973</td>
<td>23% 28</td>
<td>60% 76</td>
<td>56% 68</td>
<td>55% 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictatorship</td>
<td>10% 12</td>
<td>2% 3</td>
<td>15% 18</td>
<td>6% 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple mentions (coup 73)</td>
<td>2% 3</td>
<td>5% 6</td>
<td>1% 1</td>
<td>2% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights and repression</td>
<td>2% 3</td>
<td>0% 0</td>
<td>2% 2</td>
<td>3% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (coup 73)</td>
<td>6% 7</td>
<td>1% 1</td>
<td>1% 1</td>
<td>1% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allende’s death</td>
<td>0% 0</td>
<td>2% 2</td>
<td>3% 3</td>
<td>3% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N sample cohort</td>
<td>129 53</td>
<td>124 88</td>
<td>126 93</td>
<td>122 85</td>
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</table>

### Individuals that mention Coup d’état 73/Dictatorship

![Graph showing percentage of individuals mentioning Coup d’état 73/Dictatorship](image)

- **DOMAIN**: Total percentage
- **Coup d’état 1973/Dictatorship**: Percentage of individuals mentioning Coup d’état 1973/Dictatorship
- **Multiple mentions (coup 73)**: Percentage of individuals mentioning multiple events around 1973
- **Human rights and repression**: Percentage of individuals mentioning human rights and repression
- **Others (coup 73)**: Percentage of individuals mentioning other aspects related to 1973 coup
- **Allende’s death**: Percentage of individuals mentioning Allende’s death

The graph above illustrates the percentage of individuals across different age groups mentioning specific categories related to Coup d’état 1973 and Dictatorship.
A theoretical analysis model for the reasons to mention SHC

INDIVIDUAL

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

ABSTRACT

Bifurcation

Collective memory

CONCRETE

Social trauma

Memory of interactions

COLLECTIVE

Official history?

Autobiographical memory

CRISIS:
- Alteration biographic timing
- No collective or individual responses
Reasons to mention the Coup d’état in Chile (1)

### Individual – Concrete

“My husband was arrested and I was left alone with my children and without employment.” (Woman born in 1939, 70 years old)

“We had to be enclosed, we listened the armored vehicles out of the house, the machine gun blasts, the only thing that we did was pray” (woman born in 1929, 80 years old)

“Not have shared with my biological father (political exiled)”. (Man born in 1970, 39 years old)

“The soldiers killed many people and here we saw they take people to Quiriquina Island all days.” (Man born in 1940, 69 years old)
Individual- Abstract

“I’ve like it by the evident order and tranquility in the life”. (Woman born in 1942, 67 years old)

“Because was a dolorous fact, tragic, an outrage to that what I believe, that was democracy, the liberty”. (Woman born in 1955, 54 years old)

“Was a period of the history that was very hard for the people’s life, we haven’t liberty” (Man born in 1942, 67 years old)

“Nephew of police captain, and I was sergeant, I had tradition, principles, of course my support was unrestricted [to coup d’état].” (Man born in 1940, 69 years old)
Reasons to mention the Coup d’état in Chile (3)

Collective - Concrete

“By one side the country was ordained, but the fact of they killing people is something that I hope will never happen again.” (Woman born in 1928, 81 years old)

“Was a hard time, above all to can buy to eat, we has suffered hungry.” (Woman born in 1923, 86 years old)

“Is the worst that could happens to a country, was too much injustice, too much murders by think different, by have other ideas”. (Man born 1955, 54 years old)

“Because the “coup” [d’état] comes to finish with all the abuses and hardships of previous government.” (Man born in 1939, 70 years old)
Reasons to mention the Coup d’état in Chile (4)

Collective – Abstract

“Without army’s intervention the country was destroyed completely.” (Woman born in 1943, 66 years old)

“Because it was broke a tradition in Chile. What happened after; I’ve never saw it before.” (Woman born in 1925, 84 years old)

“It was one of the governments where we’ve had more order and tranquilly.” (Man born in 1957, 52 years old)

“It was madness and the people lived with fear that they were killed.” (Man born in 1959, 50 years old)
Conclusions (1)

• Density of memories around Chilean dictatorship is mainly related to the experience with the coup d’état of 1973
  – This defines different densities of memory for the youngest age group. Those are determined by the experience with this initial event.

• Generational differences in memory (in a demographical sense) are minimum due to the force and impact of the event in everyday life of Chileans.
  – This period marks all generations that lived it, independently of the “opening world” period for each age group.
Conclusions (2)

• Reasons to mention this period are strongly related to « crises » assumptions.
  – The most part of mentions about the period, are related to references about individual and concrete experiences.
  – But there is an important number of reasons based in collective –abstract sense, fact that speak us about the component of social trauma related to this period in history.
  – In reference to entire history (collective/abstract), as well as the specifically collective experience *in situ* (collective/concrete).

• The period of the coup d’état and later dictatorship shapes a socio-historical generation related to all of those that has lived it.
  – The socio historical change is mentioned by the most part of people that has lived it., accomplishing our criteria for define a collective memory (around a 50% for each cohort).
  – There is an intergenerational memory related to the period, associated mainly to the idea of a socio historical change that has impact the individuals.