

Memories of Boys, Girls, and Adolescent Victims of Political Prison and Torture by the Chilean Military–Civilian Dictatorship

Journal of Interpersonal Violence

1–27

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DOI: 10.1177/0886260517721897

journals.sagepub.com/home/jiv



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Abstract

This article reconstructs and analyzes the memories of victims of political prison and torture during the Chilean Military–Civilian Dictatorship who were minors when they experienced this violence. Participants in the study were 11 adults, six women and five men from the region of Valparaíso, who were victims of State terrorism during childhood and adolescence. The information production technique used was the focus group. A textual analysis was performed, based on interdisciplinary contributions from interpretation theory and discourse theories. The analysis of the information identified distinctive elements in the traumatic memories according to the sex-gender system associated with the private/public and passivity/agency dimensions. The results of this study reveal the urgent need to recognize boys, girls, and adolescents as people with rights who should be protected by both adults and States. Moreover, these results emphasize the need to implement early intervention programs in people affected by psychosocial traumas and disasters of different types, and improve their quality of life.

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Keywords

childhood, memory, military–civilian dictatorship, political prison, torture

Boys, girls, and adolescents (BGA) in different parts of the world have been and continue to be exposed to experiences of political violence (Cummings et al., 2013). The traumatic nature of political violence is due to the unexpected impact of many life threats and the resulting internal disorganization of the subjects, their family structure, and the social groups to which they belong (Lira, 1990).

Various studies point out that after experiencing political violence, a significant number of BGA react in a disruptive way, with alterations in their achievement of normal developmental tasks, their school performance, and their social skills (Cairns & Dawes, 1996; Cummings et al., 2013).

In Chile, after the coup d'état in 1973, many BGA were affected by the political violence the country experienced. Most of them suffered the tensions produced by the military coup and life under a dictatorship (Díaz, Faivovich, Carrasco, Glavic, & Vivanco, 2013), whereas others felt the repressive measures more directly, either because they were children of left-wing militants or sympathizers (Castillo & González, 2013; Verdejo, Maureira, & Dalla Porta, 2014) or because of their own social and political participation (J. Rojas, 2010).

According to the report by the National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation (hereinafter NCTR),¹ 107 BGA were detained and made to disappear or executed by State agents between September 11, 1973, and October 1989 (Comisión Nacional de Verdad y Reconciliación [CNVR], 1991). A total of 102 boys and girls were arrested along with their parents, or born during the political imprisonment of their mothers (Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura [CNPPT], 2004).² Other victims of political prison and torture were 956 minors under the age of 17 and 1,515 young people from 18 to 20 years old (Comisión Asesora Presidencial para la Calificación de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Ejecutados Políticos y Víctimas de Prisión Política y Tortura, 2011). These data only represent families and individuals who voluntarily gave their testimonies and were recognized by the State.

Torture is an extreme form of violence consisting of premeditated and planned acts involving both physical and psychological attacks (Deutsch, 2007). Its objective is to destroy the victim's beliefs and convictions, altering the fundamental characteristics of his or her identity (Améry, 2010). It also produces social effects by sending a warning message to family members of victims and the general population to keep them under control and foster an atmosphere of continual threat and fear to consolidate power (Deutsch, 2007). Between the 1970s and 1990s in Chile, the survivors of torture had to return to

family and social life in a context affected by silence and the denial of political violence, as well as the impunity of military and civilian authors of these events (Faúndez & Hatibovic, 2016). This situation produced lasting effects on victims, their families, and their broader social circles (Brinkmann, 2009).

The systematic human rights violations committed during armed conflicts, civil wars, and dictatorships are problematic for the construction of individual and social memories. Reviewing the past and confronting memories about these events are always complex processes for individuals and societies (Peñaloza, 2015). In Chile, the military coup has been and continues to be an epicenter for the battle of memories from our recent past (Stern, 2013). The story of that day is told in many ways, whether in the privacy of family life or through public complaint (Guichard & Henríquez, 2011; Manzi, Helsper, Ruiz, Krause, & Kronmüller, 2003).

Memory corresponds to individual and collective recollections that subjects and groups have of their past (Halbwachs, 2011; Rousso, 2012). Remembering involves interpreting the past according to the position the subject or group holds in the cultural-historic tradition (Halbwachs, 2011; Portelli, 2013). It is impossible to find only one memory or interpretation of the past. There can be a strong consensus about certain historic moments or periods, but there will always be other stories, memories, and interpretations in the resistance or private world (Jelin, 2002; Pollak, 2006).

In Chile, very few studies address the violence experienced by children during the dictatorship (Álamos, 1992; Magendzo & Rubio, 1999; Maggi, 1984). These cases have been made visible by human rights organizations seeking acceptance and recognition of the victims (Venegas, 2014). This article aims to recover the memory of BGA who were victims of political prison and torture during the Chilean military–civilian dictatorship (between 1973 and 1990). Specifically, the aim is to respond to the research question:

Research Question 1: How are traumatic events due to political violence remembered by men and women who were victims of political prison and torture during childhood and adolescence, 40 years after the coup d’etat in Chile?

Theoretical Background

Coup d’etat in Chile and Military–Civilian Dictatorship

On September 11, 1973, after the coup d’etat that overthrew the government of president Salvador Allende, a military–civilian dictatorship began that was in power for 17 years. Justice department investigations of cases of human

rights violations in Chile have made it possible to establish a new conceptualization that refers to a civilian–military dictatorship. This term is used to reveal the important role played by part of the civil society and the political right-wing in the de facto government.

During the entire period, the dictatorship applied a repressive, systematic, and massive institutional policy against left-wing groups referred to as the “internal enemy.” This repressive policy was carried out in three stages (CNVR, 1991). In the first stage, from September to December 1973, the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) and the Order and Security forces (Police and Investigators) took control of the country in just a few days. The repression toward civil servants and supporters of the overthrown government took place through massive detentions in concentration camps. In this period, 661 minors (from 0 to 18 years old) were illegally detained and imprisoned, whereas 26 males under the age of 17 disappeared (CNPPT, 2004). During the second stage, which took place between January 1974 and August 1977, the National Intelligence Direction (DINA) initiated the planned repression of organized members of the opposition. In these 3 years, 236 minors (from 0 to 18 years old) were illegally detained and imprisoned (CNPPT, 2004). The third stage occurred between September 1977 and March 1990, when the repression was headed by the National Center for Information (CNI), which depended on the Ministry of Defense and whose function was to maintain the prevailing system. The victims were chosen much more selectively than in earlier stages. In this stage, torture continued to be practiced systematically, and forced disappearances continued, but to a lesser degree. According to official reports, 183 minors (from 0 to 18 years old) were illegally detained and imprisoned (CNPPT, 2004).

The State terrorism committed in Chile during the dictatorship includes behaviors typified as crimes against humanity. These crimes had high visibility to spread the scare tactics, paralysis, and subjugation from the individual body to the social body by transmitting terror to the population (P. Rojas, 2009).

Memory and forgetting. During the past four decades in Chile, human rights groups fought constantly for recognition of these events, for justice, and for the maintenance of the memory, facing many obstacles, including forgetting (Maillard & Ochoa, 2014; Peñaloza, 2015). When addressing forgetting, we have to talk about memory. There is no universal memory, as every memory is supported by an individual or group in a limited space and time (Halbwachs, 2011; Jelin, 2002, 2004). In the social memory, contradictions, differences, and controversies are elements that allow complex dimensions to be constructed. There will always be other memories and alternative

interpretations to the more official or hegemonic memory (Jelin, 2002; Portelli, 2002).

Social forgetfulness (Lira, 2009; Vinyes, 2009) has been a reoccurring practice used by hegemonic groups to maintain and legitimize their rise to certain power (Valensi, 1998). Forgetfulness is constituted as an antagonist of memory, although it is produced differently, with different materials and procedures and an additional actor: power. The dominant group holds the power and can use it to direct or manage the political process. It dictates norms and influences the practices of dominance that will greatly determine what has to be forgotten and what should be remembered (Lechner & Guell, 2002; Mendoza, 2005).

Social forgetfulness has been defined as “the impossibility of evoking or expressing significant events that at one time had a place in the life of the group, society, or collective” (Mendoza, 2005, p. 10). For Jelin (2002), the fight against social forgetfulness or silence hides a battle between different rival memories.

The Chilean military–civilian dictatorship systematically used practices that fostered social forgetfulness, imposing denial, silence, only one version of events, and the senselessness of the information, among other forgetfulness tactics. Although these are processes that operated fully during the dictatorship, many of them remained operative in the postdictatorship period (García, 2011).

Childhood during the dictatorship. One of the most silenced phenomena in social memory and history is violence against BGA for political ends. Studies carried out in Spain (Souto, 2014; Vinyes, 2009; Vinyes, Armengou, & Belis, 2003) point out that around 43,000 boys and girls were deprived of their freedom, given up for adoption, or kidnapped by State agents during Franco’s dictatorship. During the first years of Francoism, a legal framework was set up that allowed parents and children to be separated. Thus, in Spain today, they talk about the “expropriation” of children, which implies the existence of a state policy and laws that uphold these actions (Souto, 2013). In Spain, there were never any clandestine detention centers. The systematic expropriation of boys and girls had the objective of ideologically exterminating and “purifying” the country of future anarchists and republicans (Vinyes, 2009).

In Argentina, after the Military Coup by the Armed Forces in 1976, human rights violations against children were also recurring. According to data of the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo group, around 500 children of political militants were victims of illegal appropriation (Villalta, 2013). Identity restitutions were able to establish that more than half of the appropriations occurred through false registration as the adoptive parents’ own children, whereas the

rest of the children restituted were given in adoption or some type of legal guardianship (Villalta, 2013). The term *appropriation* has been used to refer to the theft of children in that country. Appropriation in the dictionary, in addition to “taking ownership of something that belongs to someone else,” means “to resemble.” The first definition describes the act of robbery, whereas the second is implicit in the final objective: equalize and perpetuate assimilation. In the words of Arfuch (2004), “taking away the identity, the right to this story that defines me as the subject, is a double crime: the scandal of the theft of genealogies and that of its perversion” (p. 70).

In Chile, one of the phenomena most silenced by the military–civilian dictatorship and post-dictatorship³ was the political imprisonment and torture of BGA (Venegas, 2014). In the country, almost no academic studies delve into the direct violence suffered by children as victims during their political imprisonment.

Since 1980, the Foundation for the Protection of Children Harmed by States of Emergency (PIDEE) has done an exceptional job turning psychosocial attention toward BGA affected by political repression in Chile. In general, the children treated by the Foundation were sons and daughters of disappeared detained political prisoners and those who returned from exile.

According to Álamos (1992), the smallest children generally presented symptoms such as loss of sphincter control, anxious bonding, and sleep and eating disorders. The school-age children presented behavioral problems, depressive symptoms, and low school achievement. The feeling of fear was present across children of different ages and manifested in many ways: fear of the dark, social relationships, death itself, or someone else.

Method

This study follows the logic of exploratory, descriptive, and qualitative social research. It is exploratory because, as mentioned above, in Chile, no previous studies have dealt with the memories of BGA victims of political prison and torture during the dictatorship. The study is descriptive because it is oriented toward reconstructing and describing these memories.

Participants

The participants in this study were 11 adults, six women and five men, who were BGA when they suffered political prison and torture practiced by agents of the military–civilian dictatorship. All of them lived in the region of Valparaíso when they were victims of torture, and they currently continue to live in that region. The average current age is 53.7 years (54.5 years for the

women and 53 for the men). The average age at the time of their arrest was 13 years (15 years for girls and female adolescents and 11.1 years for boys and male adolescents). The average number of days of detention was 27 (37.6 days for girls and female adolescents and 15.6 for boys and male adolescents). The study participants suffered experiences of detention and torture between 1973 and 1974. All of the participants are members of the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture.

Procedure

The FONDECYT 11140137 project, which allowed the production and analysis of data, was reviewed and approved by the University of Valparaíso Institutional Bioethics Committee for Research With Humans. After receiving the committee's approval, the authors contacted and invited potential participants, members of the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture, to a meeting with the researcher and a research assistant. In the meeting, they were informed about the study procedures and objectives, as well as aspects related to ethical considerations of their participation in the project. Those who agreed to participate read and signed the informed consent.

The focus groups were audio-taped and fully transcribed by a team of transcribers/inter-analysts, three psychologists, four psychology students, and one person with a degree in history, who all signed confidentiality contracts. To safeguard the quality of the study and make the analytical work more rigorous, reflection notebooks were kept by the researcher and the transcriber (Cornejo, Besoain, & Mendoza, 2011).

Techniques for Information Production and Analysis

Based on the research question and objectives, focus groups were used, in the form of group interviews addressing the participants' experiences (Canales, 2006; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). In general, what attracts participants to this type of interview is the feeling of a shared experience, in this case, the experience of having been a political prisoner during childhood or adolescence. In the focus group, the discussion is subject to an outline imposed by the researcher, in terms of both the topics and each participant's turn to speak (Canales, 2006).

Two focus groups were held, one with women and the other with men. This gender division favored the development of a fluid conversation and greater openness to contents associated with the experience of direct violence, the question at hand.

The guidelines for carrying out the focus groups were created based on a review of the specialized literature and the objectives of the research project. The questions that guided the groups' conversations were the following: What are their memories as victims of the dictatorship? What experiences have they had of transmitting memories about political violence during the dictatorship? To whom have they told them? How are these topics expressed in families, with friends, at work? What is the reason for this? What aspects of the experience do they tell and not tell? How do they narrate this experience? In what contexts do they tell their story?

Although, in the present study, there was a risk that narrating their memories as victims of the dictatorship could cause symptoms and/or emotional damage to emerge in some of the participants, this did not explicitly occur. To avoid this risk, certain ethical safeguards were used. First, the focus groups were led by two female researchers, a psychologist and a feminist historian with training and experience interviewing victims of the dictatorship. In addition, both interviewers had commitment and sensitivity to the topic, which allowed in-depth listening and the development of "empathic distress" (La Capra, 2005). Second, the decision was made to hold the two focus groups with members of the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture. This structure facilitated the in-depth listening to the painful memories. And finally, all the participants willingly agreed to participate in this study in a free, informed, and voluntary way. These measures were designed to guarantee the participants' well-being.

In the information analysis stage, a textual analysis was performed, based on interdisciplinary contributions from interpretation theory and discourse theories (Barthes, 1980, 1993). The analysis was intended to detect minimum units of analysis to interpret their meaning. These units were later related, comparing the groups of men and women and looking for possible differences between them.

Results

Each participant in this study narrated a different experience of the violence endured. Some were detained in their homes along with their parents and siblings, whereas others were kidnapped on the street while walking alone or with family members, and then transferred to clandestine detention centers. Other participants were arrested in public political demonstrations and taken to public prisons. In any case, they all had in common the fact that they were direct victims of the State terrorism practiced in Chile from 1973 to 1990 at a young age. The state agents responsible for their detentions did not take their condition as BGA into account.

Next, the results are presented, grouped by the gender of the participants. We start by presenting the women's memories of the political violence experienced, and then the memories of the men. The results are discussed in light of other studies and theoretical work.

Memories of Girls and Female Adolescents Who Were Victims of Political Violence

The meeting with the group of women was characterized by a relationship of warmth and trust toward the interviewers, based on knowledge about their work and the study objectives. At the beginning of the focus group, the emotional climate was characterized by the sadness, suffering, and frustration of remembering the terrible life episodes of each of these victims of repression as minors. They introduced themselves individually, briefly describing their repressive experience. This experience was related to the political violence to which they, and sometimes members of their families, had been subjected. In general, the women's discourse was linked to the experience of being victims of political violence as minors. They expressed their emotions and talked about the harm and lack of recognition associated with this experience. The next part was characterized by an emotional climate of respect and empathy associated with the women's stoicism. They shared an effort to silence their story within their families to avoid hurting their loved ones.

The memory of the girl-victim of political prison and torture. In general, the women participating in the study presented themselves in a plural manner. They identified themselves from various positions as girls-victims of political prison, in some cases, as daughters of former political prisoners, and currently, mostly as wives, mothers, and grandmothers.

The memory of political prison and torture was related to the position of girl-victim. It was a first-person story that broke the silence accepted in the past. The participants spoke for the girl-victim who had no voice. The women, in the present, evoked the pain of the past while talking, as if the pain were still there.

My name is Silvia Muñoz, and I'm 53 years old. I'm from Valparaíso. I was a prisoner and tortured at the age of 11 in 1973. I was with my parents when my father was detained on October 16th 1973, . . . What hurts me the most is that they took away my childhood, they took away our right to keep playing, they took the right to study, the right to live as children, with our family . . . A lot of times they don't believe you because they still think children don't have memories, that they don't absorb and realize things. (GF 1, Silvia, 3, 51 and 54)⁴

State terrorism was experienced by the participants as the residue of something that cannot be recovered: childhood. State agents treated children and adolescents like enemies, systematically applying torture techniques to them.

The participants' testimony also proposed that the condition of girls and female adolescents who were victims of State terrorism had been silenced and denied. These subjects had been relegated to a place of forgetfulness, amnesia, and complete ignorance.

Now, more than 40 years after the events occurred, the participants had vivid memories of what they had suffered, and they managed to identify with the subjectivities of childhood. They expressed the fear and confusion they felt after the break-ins, kidnappings, and tortures, and they described the social discrimination toward them and their families after the events of political violence. Through their story, they denounced the injustice and impunity of the events that took place, demanding justice and compensation from the State.

We were very healthy and innocent. So, nothing justifies that they went to our houses to look for us and detained us for a week, that they hit us, and that they said horrible things like that they were going to kill our parents, that here in the next room is your sister and listen to her shouts. All of these kinds of things you don't ever forget . . . so what I want to say is, I hope, before I die, that there will be justice and the impunity will end. (GF, Paola, 45 and 101)

Schooling appeared in their stories as an interrupted project in childhood and adolescence. Many of them had to leave formal education after the violence they experienced, either because they did not find support in the community or because they were discriminated against, persecuted, or expelled by the school authorities. The girls and female adolescents were treated like negative, harmful, and contaminating elements for the rest of the school community. Leaving formal education was an experience that marked the lives of these women. For some women, the feeling of frustration due to discontinuing their studies seemed to be alleviated by proudly narrating that their sons or daughters had finished their university studies.

So I recently began to be aware of what I had experienced at the age of 14 and that I was discriminated against in school. Because at school they did not want to receive me later because I was a bad element and could contaminate my classmates with my ideals. (GF1, Verónica, 81)

The women who participated in the study attended the national meetings held by this group each year, and they received psychosocial support from the NGO Exil.⁵ Many women spoke for the first time of the political violence

experienced in childhood in these meetings. They pointed out that in these spaces, they obtained the necessary support and comprehension to talk about political prison and torture.

. . . I first spoke about 6 years ago . . . It was something that was very sad in my life. So it is something I want to forget, but I can't. I want to have girlfriends I can trust, but I can't do that either. So I have my psychiatrist, I take medication when I get depressed, I spend a week sleeping . . . that's my life. And from then on it was all suffering until I found out about this Group . . . But for 40 years I have carried torture, hunger, bullet wounds in one leg, and rape in my body. And my husband threw that in my face all my life, and that is the memory I have). (GF1, Dora, 33 and 35)

One of the areas where the effects of the torture experienced could be seen was in the marital relationship. For various women, it was very difficult to tell their husbands about their experiences and maintain their sexual life with their partners. This can be interpreted in various ways, one of them related to the fact that almost all of these women who gave their testimony as victims to the CNPPT (2005) said they were victims of sexual violence, an experience that many of them did not want to discuss. Another possible interpretation is related to the androcentric bias and heteronormativity on which the social order is based (Martínez, 1996) and the lack of recognition of the role of women in spaces for political participation and struggle in the history of Chile (Stuven & Fernandois, 2011).

As the focus group proceeded, warm, empathic, and supportive listening was observed among the women. They already knew each other and realized that there was a previous affective tie. They listened to each other with respect, and they supported each other during the meeting. This became evident when one of the participants cried while telling her experience, and the other women came to her, held her hand, and offered her a glass of water and a handkerchief.

The memory as secret. The women also presented themselves as holders of a secret. The memory of their experience of Political Prison and Torture (PPT) during childhood was something they did not tell to just anyone. For years, it was a denied and silenced experience, even within their family circles. For many women, the participation in the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture and the lawsuits initiated led to their first opportunities to talk about their experiences during the dictatorship.

But the truth is that in my family almost no one knows. I told them some things, I throw them out little by little. I feel like it's too intense for them to understand. I have a 22-year-old daughter, and she knows I was detained, but she doesn't

know I was abused, they don't know I was hit, she doesn't know the things I went through . . . I wouldn't know how to tell her or my husband something like . . . I wouldn't know how. (GF 1, Mónica 20)

The silence maintained in the families had the objective of protecting the loved ones (parents, husband, and children). For the women, it was very difficult to transmit the experience of physical and sexual violence to which they had been subjected. They feared, above all, the negative impact or harm that these experiences might have for their loved ones.

. . . when we arrived home, they detained me with my older sister. When we returned home, my father said: "Here no one talks about this anymore, you come here and I don't want to see you mixed up in anything and this topic is not mentioned again" So that is like what happened to all of us, we closed the door and that remained in the past, and we went on. (GF1, Verónica, 38)

The negative cultural view of women's participation in politics exposed the participants in this study to symbolic and physical violence. Thus, after their liberation from prison, silence was implicitly imposed. In some cases, the silence was explicitly imposed, with the father censoring the topic. In other cases, the couple relationships became tense because of this experience. Some women said they never told their husbands the details of the abuses out of fear of rejection, and in other cases, the women associated their marital break-ups with having spoken up. They did not tell their children either for fear of hurting them.

Fear, shame, and guilt. The State terrorism practices produced fear, shame, and guilt in the victims. These feelings remained intact in spite of the time that had passed. The women associated the fear with many of their behaviors, including avoiding talking about what happened during the detention and political imprisonment, behaviors of withdrawal in the presence of someone in uniform, and not filing a complaint about what happened or initiating criminal charges against those responsible.

I have had to overcome many fears to be able to do things. I told you about the lawsuit, but I didn't want to because I was terrified of appearing in the lawsuit and that this would come to light, and they would know I was there, and that this would have consequences . . . (GF 1, Paola 41)

My younger sister, who was 8 years old, peed on herself if she saw a person in uniform nearby until about ten years ago, she wet her pants. So the fear was very strong. (GF 1, Silvia, 56)

In many cases, the fear came to be paralyzing, so that some women said they had abandoned political participation. For many, the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture meant a return to militancy.

The feeling of shame, present in the women's story, was mainly associated with two situations. In some cases, it was related to having been detained and transferred to a reclusion center, where they were beaten and mistreated alongside common criminals, and in other cases, it had to do with having been victims of sexual abuse or rape by State agents.

In both situations, shame was the consequence of the humiliation of having been physically and psychologically mistreated. Both cases involved humiliating external stimuli or attacks internalized by the women since they were girls and female adolescents. The humiliation experienced left a deep mark on their lives that remained long after the political imprisonment and torture had ended.

The feeling of shame was so strong that it limited their actions. They pointed out that this feeling silenced them. They could not tell people that they had been detained because other people might think they were delinquents. This feeling also limited their actions with regard to seeking justice. For many women, filing a complaint against those responsible for their imprisonment and torture was a feared experience and avoided due to the high level of exposure involved.

I could not say that I had been arrested because I still feel guilt about it, as they make you feel like you are at fault. If you were detained, it's as if you were a criminal, and that isn't true. (GF 1, Paola 40).

In addition, the feeling of guilt was associated with the fact that most of the women believe they were detained and abused because of their own actions (political or community sympathy or participation, etc.), and this caused and continues to cause their families pain. The responsibility for the events that took place was internalized, and the women felt that they were mainly responsible for the events.

So one gets used to feeling guilt. I felt like it was my fault because I did volunteer work, because I got together with kids from the Young Communists. So, I felt guilt about all the problems we started to have as a family and between my parents. They blamed each other, my father blamed my mother for being too lenient with us, and she said "Well, but when I didn't give them permission, you did." In the end, they blamed each other. (GF 1, Verónica, 79)

Fear, shame, and guilt were the emotions mainly recognized by the female victims of political violence in childhood and adolescence. These emotions

limited and still limit their performance as political subjects, and they partly provoked the prolonged silencing of their experience as victims of State terrorism.

Memories of Boys and Male Adolescents Who Were Victims of Political Violence

The beginning of the meeting with the group of men was characterized by an emotional climate of mistrust toward the interviewer, the research, and its ends. The participants expressed their apprehensions through questions and doubts presented to the interviewers about their role, identity, and origin. An attempt was made to answer each question with honesty and frankness. This process produced a climate of greater trust, which allowed the participants to speak about certain aspects of their experiences of political violence, fighting, and resistance.

Memory of the former young militant. The male participants in the study tended to introduce themselves in a more reserved way than the women, revealing very few aspects of their lives. Most of them introduced themselves as ex-militants of left-wing political parties and ex-political prisoners. Through individual first-person narration, they broke some of the silence they accepted after the political detention, and they talked about events from the public sphere of their past: militancy, dangers, and trials they had to undergo during the PPT experience.

I was a political prisoner, practically, from September 11th. I was a student leader at my school, and I also had a political function, I was active . . . I was arrested the month of the military coup, They went to look for me at my house . . . My father was a trade union leader. They didn't look for him, they looked for me, they looked for me. (Fidel, GF, 66)

The men presented less plurality in their accounts than the women. Most of them avoided going into intimate aspects associated with political prison and torture, except the youngest of the male participants, who told about his experience as a 2½ year old child, victim of political prison and torture. This participant narrated a memory constructed from memories of others, mainly his parents. It is possible to interpret that this man spoke out because of the exemplary nature of his story. His experience illustrated the absurd, terrible, and unjust actions of State agents during the dictatorship. Furthermore, his story mainly presented the subjectivity of the adults, represented by his father.

I was always held in my father's arms or rode on his shoulders . . . we arrived to the company, and at almost nine-thirty or ten in the morning they surrounded the company. The military, marines, and police were there . . . they surrounded the company, they said no one could leave the place and that everyone was going to be arrested. There were older people, elderly people, women, children, everyone. And there was a day care center where there were children . . . And they took us from the company in a white truck that belonged to the marines. And there they separated my father and me, in the Air-naval Base of Belloto, which was the confinement center for those detained . . . There my dad did not know anything more about me, nor I about him. I was detained for 14 days, and in the end they found me there, in the Silva Palma Headquarters, 14 or 15 days later . . . (Andrés, GF, 42, 44, 46)

Unlike the women, most of the male participants did not refer to the subjective impact of political prison or torture. In their accounts, the subjectivity of the child or male adolescent from the past did not emerge. They referred to events in public life, survival, various dangers, and the long-term consequences of political prison and torture. When speaking about their political participation, they told an epic tale about the adventures and misfortunes of political persecution.

Account of the adventure. In general, it is possible to interpret that the narration of the male participants had a heroic sense. They spoke about survival and the risks and dangers faced, whereas there was no mention of the experience of torture, explained in some cases as the desire to avoid examining this topic.

. . . therefore, we went through some unpleasant things . . . and later I got involved in politics on a resistance committee, we had pamphlets . . . and everything . . . until they caught us. (Enrique, GF2, 263)

I started to be active at the age of 13, and I was tortured at 17, in general, I don't want to give any more details . . . (Jorge, GF2, 80)

The hermetic behavior of the male participants in relation to the experience of torture was greater than in the female participants. In the men's discourse, an unpassable limit could be noted. They did not allow themselves to talk about the torture, not even in its general categories. This occurred except in the case of the youngest participant, who was detained when he was 2½ years old. This participant narrated the experience of his father's arrest and his mother's desperate attempt to find him and his father.

My mother went out to look for me. No one knew the place where . . . my mother could not leave the house either because the place was surrounded by marines. Then when she found out about the detention, she went out to look for us at hospitals, the Red Cross, all the centers where a person could be found. She arrived at the Base and they told her that we weren't there, that we went out another way . . . And the torture started. I have the scars, for example, with cigarette burns. I am deaf and from that, when I was tortured I lost one of my ears, and today I still live with that. And after 14 days, my mother found me in the Silva Palma Headquarters in Valparaíso . . . (Andrés, GF2, 50-55)

Psychosocial consequences. The narration highlighted the negative long-term consequences of the experience of political violence associated with three different areas: job instability and impoverishment, physical and mental health problems, and problems with social and family relationships.

The participants complained about job instability and the accompanying economic impoverishment associated, according to them, with not continuing their formal education after the coup d'état. This was due to voluntary attrition or educational establishments' direct expulsion of their own students because of their political backgrounds.

most of them do not have anything stable, they don't have stable jobs, they don't have a stable profession . . . (Andrés, GF2, 139)

They kicked me out of the University because I entered in '74, into Architecture, and six months later they kicked me out . . . and I didn't know that I had a number of dangerous extremist . . . because of that, because of prison. (Isaac, GF2, 113)

It's not going well for me here . . . Handcrafts are not selling. It's cold, and there are a lot of poor people. I have serious problems with money, and housing, and everything. (Fidel, GF2, 74)

The participants who were political prisoners during adolescence also associated the job instability with the fact that after the detention, they still had criminal records. This situation was not reversed until 2007 (Ley 19.962). The objective of the legal measure was to comply with the reparation mandate by erasing the criminal records of victims of human rights violations, especially people classified by the National Commission of Political Prison and Torture.

The male participants also mentioned physical and mental health consequences in their accounts. Even though they are now middle-aged men, they have chronic physical and psychological diseases. Thus, they stated that the tracks of the torture are present in their bodies and psyches.

For example, I have so much psychological damage, the body's memory doesn't leave me . . . so my own body is reminding me of what happened. (Fidel, GF2, 425,429)

Every year, I have worse health, mood, more depression. They try to give support but, physically and mentally, I don't feel in the same conditions. (Andrés, GF2, 408)

The third area addressed by some participants had to do with negative consequences of political prison and torture in family and relationship ties. Some participants pointed out that having been a political prisoner produced rejection and discrimination within the family.

I was a problem, I had to walk all around asking my family for help . . . they were my mother's brothers, but after a week they said, I can't let you stay here anymore . . . (Jorge, GF2, 441)

. . . My family lives in the south, and there they are afraid to have contact with me or receive me. I have gone there, and I feel that they look away and don't want me to be there with them . . . (Fidel, GF2, 74)

Others associated the experience of political prison and torture with their failures in their relationships with their partners. According to the participants, these failures were mainly due to their partners' lack of comprehension and empathy about their condition as a former political prisoner. They pointed out that telling them their version of the experience as former political prisoners damaged their relationships to such an extent that they ended.

I haven't been able to have a partner for the same reason . . . because, for example, I had a partner and as soon as she knew what I experienced in the dictatorship and the Coup, good-bye partner. (Andrés, GF2, 395)

I tried to tell the partner I had, who I married, about the situation I experienced. I tried to trust in her and tell her some things. It was worse. (Jorge, GF2, 445)

As pointed out above, the male participants emphasized the events of public life, survival, various dangers, and the long-term consequences of political prison and torture. When talking about their political participation, they narrated an epic tale about the adventures and mishaps of political persecution, highlighting the long-term effects of the experience of political violence, which, as we have seen, they associated with the areas of work (reason for instability and impoverishment), health (physical and mental health problems), and relationships (family and intimate partner problems).

Discussion

Theoretical Discussion of the Results

The present study investigated the memories of victims of political prison and torture 43 years after the coup d'état in Chile. The results of the study revealed differences between the memories of men and women who were victims of political prison and torture during childhood and adolescence. These differences were mainly associated with the type of violence, hegemonic social roles, and cultural expectations associated with the gender-sex system (Hiner, 2015; Jelin, 2002; Rubin, 1986).

When recalling the past, the women took a position of greater passivity and fragility. They expressed their emotions and did not talk directly about their activism or present themselves as protagonists of their stories. By contrast, the men presented themselves as active protagonists of the story told, they did not express their emotions, and they distanced themselves from the events of private life, placing an emphasis on the public realm. These experiences are coherent with the prevailing machista ideology in the country, which relegates women to the background, making their own stories invisible, but at the same time enabling them to better recognize and express their emotions. Hiner (2015) points out that the Rettig Commission's report does not manage to link the political violence with the gender perspective. The specific violence suffered by women (the sexual violence), like the political violence experienced by indigenous people, gay men, and lesbian or trans women, is marked by an "otherness" and, therefore, "punished," and not officially recognized by the Chilean State.

The women manage to identify subjectively with the experience of many girls and female adolescent political prisoners. Most of the men do not present this childhood experience, and they talk about the events in terms of action, but not through a subjective positioning of a boy or male adolescent. According to Jelin (2002), the differences in the way women and men remember are due to differences in gender socialization processes. Thus, the women narrate their memories according to the more traditional women's role, that is, "living for others." Therefore, they tend to recall events in more detail and express their feelings, whereas the men's memories are framed around a rational and political logic, without expressing their emotions.

In the women's accounts, it is possible to distinguish what Gilligan (1985) calls the "ethics of caring." In their discourses, the women reveal that the silence about the violence experienced is associated with caring for others, especially their families. In the men's accounts, a discourse emerges that emphasizes the experience of activism and survival. They avoid talking about torture, without clearly explaining the reason for this

silence, which, in any case, indicates a lack of ability to emotionally connect with their experiences.

Most of the female participants in the study recognize having experienced psychological, physical, and sexual violence during political prison. In the case of the sexual violence, this was carried out mainly by male aggressors (Memoria Abierta, 2011). This violence took place in the context of sociocultural gender norms that strictly controlled the limits of what was allowed sexually (Hiner, 2015). In Latin America, during the 1960s and 1970s, sex outside of marriage was considered a sin, and the woman was expected to be a virgin on her wedding day. In addition, women were “taught” not to talk about these traumatic experiences (Hiner, 2015).

Of the 28,459 cases of political imprisonment and torture qualified by the CNPPT (2004), 94% mentioned having been a victim of torture. The methods used were both physical and psychological, with the use of feminine and masculine sexual torture being quite common (Agger & Jensen, 1990). According to the Commission’s Report, almost all of the former prisoners considered that prison and torture had had devastating effects on their lives. In addition to mental and physical health disorders, there were disturbances in their social, affective, and sexual relationships that often managed to deteriorate family and social ties (CNPPT, 2004).

The dictatorship installed its essential traits in the Chilean political culture, and these have persisted until the present day: the repression and use of force, the criminalization of protest, and the impunity of political violence remain and permeate the relationships between the State and the new social actors. Therefore, there are constant lawsuits presented by national and international actors (Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos [INDH], 2015) about violence and torture toward various collectives of Mapuche and university students, among others.

All the study participants were victims of State terrorism during childhood or adolescence, but none of them had received psychosocial attention right after the events. Most returned to family life, had to leave formal education, and were silent about their political imprisonment and torture. Political violence is known to cause psychological distress. Various studies (Atwoli, Stein, Koenen, & McLaughlin, 2015; Fafous, Peralta-Ramírez, & Pérez-García, 2013; Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998; Ibrahim & Hassan, 2017) draw correlations among war trauma, torture, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In 2005, the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture was created to seek recognition, reparation, and justice. Based on the work of this Group led by victims, BGA who were victims of political prison and torture began to talk about the past, sharing vivid memories from their silenced past.

Pollak (2006) proposes the vividness of the buried individual and group memories, in contrast to official memories. These buried memories are transmitted, as in this study, in the framework of affective and/or political social associations and networks. These unspeakable or shameful prohibited memories were carefully protected by the participants in informal communication structures, and for many years, they went unnoticed by society in general.

Millions of boys and girls in the world have been assassinated, mutilated, or displaced in modern wars (Slone & Mann, 2016). It has been estimated that more than a billion children and adolescents under the age of 18 currently live in countries affected by armed conflicts (Machel, 2016) and that more than one third of all deaths of mothers and children occur in these contexts (Bhutta & Black, 2013). In the specific case of Chile, official reports show the high percentage of boys, girls, and young people who were victims of State terrorism, compared with the total numbers. Nonetheless, political repression against children and adolescents is one of the phenomena most silenced by the military–civilian dictatorship and the later democracy (Venegas, 2014).

Based on the above, it is possible to state that the State of Chile used violence against BGA as a way of producing terror in the population. This was accompanied by multiple methods, at both national and international levels, of hiding and silencing what happened to the victims (Lira & Castillo, 1991). State terrorism and silence accentuated the distinction between the self and the other, destroying solidarity between groups.

According to Venegas (2014), State terrorism against BGA presents a context where there are two dominant subjects: the State and the adults that make up this State. The children and adolescents who were political prisoners and tortured were subordinated by the State and by the adults who composed the State, finding themselves in a position of greater vulnerability.

The results of this study show the urgent need to recognize BGA as subjects with rights that must be protected by both adults and by States. Furthermore, these results make it possible to consider the need to implement early intervention programs for people affected by psychosocial traumas and disasters of many kinds, and promote the quality of life of the victims.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Directions

This study, on one hand, grants visibility to a phenomenon that occurred in Chile and has been socially and scientifically silenced. On the other hand, it contributes to the construction of useful knowledge for understanding the immediate and long-term consequences of torture in children. In addition, both the theoretical-methodological proposal and the results obtained in this

study provide clues for the development of future lines of research associated with traumatic memories.

However, the study also has limitations that should be considered when designing future studies. One limitation is related to the fact that all the participants in this study belong to the Group of ex-Minor Victims of Political Prison and Torture, and all of them have given their testimonies to qualifying commissions. These are two relevant antecedents, but undoubtedly, they do not characterize the broad sector of victims of political prison and torture. However, they raise questions about the unique characteristics and possible differences presented by victims who have followed other paths. Therefore, one future avenue of research would be to carry out new studies that can examine the experiences of victims of torture who have not maintained a social or political participation and have chosen not to give their testimonies to qualifying commissions.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This article has been funded by the FONDECYT 11140137 project awarded by the National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT).

Notes

1. The National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation was an organism created in Chile in 1990 by President Patricio Aylwin Azócar, to contribute to the global clarification of the truth about the serious human rights violations committed between September 11, 1973, and March 11, 1990. The commission was headed by the lawyer and politician Raúl Rettig; therefore, it is commonly known as the Rettig Commission, and its outcome is the Rettig Report.
2. The National Commission on Political Prison and Torture, presided by Monsignor Sergio Valech (and called the Valech Commission), was a Chilean organism created to clarify the identity of people who were deprived of their freedom and tortured for political reasons, due to acts of State agents or people at their service, in the period between September 11, 1973, and March 10, 1990. On August 18, 2011, the commission—presided by María Luisa Sepúlveda after the death of Sergio Valech on November 24, 2010—presented a second report where Chile officially recognized a total of 40,018 victims, with 3,065 dead or missing.
3. The “post-dictatorship” concept offers a critical alternative to the idea of a “transition to democracy,” as this period in recent history has been called in Chile,

although not very analytically.

4. Vignettes are included corresponding to textual quotes coming from the focus groups. They are identified with the participant's pseudonym, the focus group number (GF1 and GF2), and the paragraph number from the transcription. All the names of people or places included in the vignettes are fictitious.
5. The Exil association is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to medical and psychological attention to people traumatized by different types of Human Rights violations. This association has headquarters in Brussels, Barcelona, and Valparaíso.

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