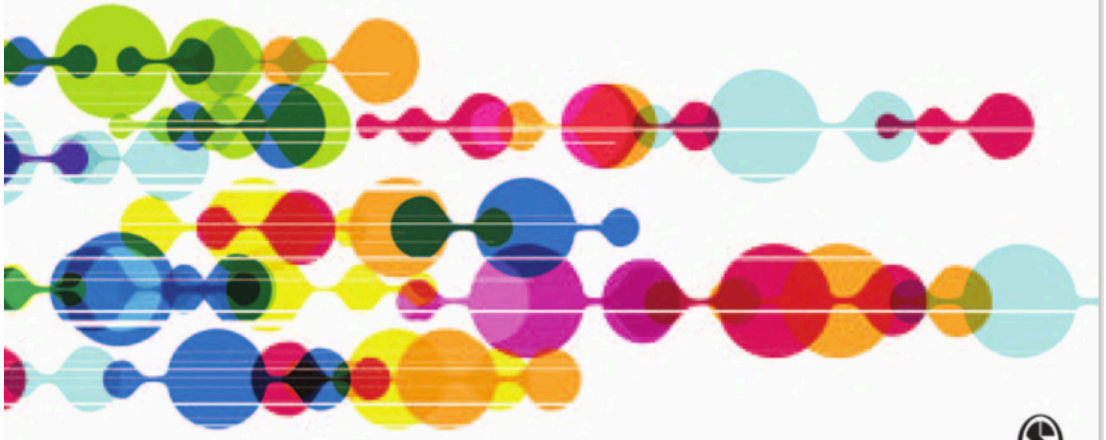
Celine-Marie Pascale

SOCIAL INEQUALITY & THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

A Global Landscape



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Framing Extreme Violence

The Collective Memory-Making of Argentina's Dirty War

Roberta Villalón

Introduction

Thirty-five years ago, one of the bloodiest phases in Argentine history began. On March 24, 1976, the *Junta de Comandantes en Jefe* led by militarists Rafael Videla, Emilio Eduardo Massera, and Orlando Ramón Agosti, assumed governmental power with an explicit mission: to restore order and regain the state monopoly of the legitimate use of force by eliminating "subversive" activists and organizations. In the historical context of the Cold War, military governments fighting leftist groups were not breaking, but rather conforming to this pattern. As was the case in many other countries, this type of political action resulted in tens of thousands of deaths (Romero, 1994).

In Argentina, the casualties of seven years of military rule—of this so-called *Guerra Sucia* (Dirty War)—are still in the process of being found and counted: at least 10,000 people were considered "detained/disappeared" (that is, kidnapped, apprehended, tortured, murdered and buried, or eliminated without keeping public record of the person's identity), and 2,422 people were killed (with a public record of their identities) by the security forces of the state. It is reported that the total number of direct victims of this repression is estimated at 30,000 people. Of the people who were detained/disappeared, 70% were men and 30% were women, and of those women, 10% were pregnant. The majority of the people who were detained/disappeared were between 16 and 35 years old, and they were mostly blue-collar workers (30.2%), students (21%), secondary sector employees (17.9%) and professionals (10.7%) (CONADEP, 1984). This information was compiled and published in the *Nunca Más* report by the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (National Commission on the Disappearance of People) or CONADEP, which was created by the democratic government that took over power in 1983 in order to clarify "events relating to the disappearances

of persons in Argentina and investigate their fate or whereabouts" (CONADEP, 1986, p. 428). The investigation that CONADEP completed served as complementary evidence for the trials of the military and paramilitary in charge of the systemic repression, most of whom were condemned by the courts in 1985. However, these trials did not close "the horrible chapter" of Argentinean history (Solá, 2005). To this day, the process of seeking justice and healing remains open. On the one hand, two Argentinean laws, *Punto Final* (Full Stop) enacted in 1986, and *Obediencia Debida* (Due Obedience) in 1987, limited the extent of possible accusations and trials. Furthermore, presidential decrees in 1989 and 1990 pardoned military and civilians condemned for their participation in the *Guerra Sucia*. On the other hand, in 2003 the National Congress nullified those laws (*Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida*) and they were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Justice in 2005, and then in 2007, a federal court overturned the presidentially decreed pardons. Since then, and at the time of this writing, several trials of the military have been reopened and are in process.[1]

Throughout the last 28 years of democracy, the complex sociopolitical process of understanding the *who*, the *what*, the *how*, and the *why* of this political time has been ongoing. A number of human rights organizations, grassroots, and political groups are mobilizing to raise levels of public awareness and to reach justice. In turn, many scholars and researchers are (re)thinking these issues in order to keep the process of remembering and comprehending, alive and growing. Divergent interpretations of "a past 'that does not pass'" have emerged (Jelin, 2003, p. 101), as history, "a continuous recomposition of the past in the present," continues to be rewritten (Chizuko & Sand, 1999, p. 137). Through this contentious politics of representation and collective memory-making, people and groups with various ideologies and capitals have striven "to affirm the legitimacy of 'their' truth" (Jelin, 2003, p. 26), while hierarchies of knowledge and power have been socially (re)organized (Bietti, 2009). In this chapter, I identify hegemonic and counter-hegemonic frames that have been used to create meanings and organize experiences of the Dirty War. I propose alternative frames (an intersectional frame and an emotions-conscious frame) with the aim of contributing to the collective efforts to understand this phase of history. By looking into the report prepared by CONADEP, which included hundreds of testimonies by survivors of torture and their acquaintances, and taking it as an open source for furthering the still ongoing process of (re)framing the past, I discuss how the *Nunca Más* became a hegemonic narrative from which subsequent interpretations (including counter-hegemonic readings) of the Dirty War emerged.

At the core of the CONADEP report were the testimonies offered by the survivors of torture, and the victims' relatives and acquaintances. The inclusion of these personal stories as part of the new official narrative of history was a radical change from the past, not only in historiographic terms (Phelps, 2004), but also in contrast with the obliteration of all the voices that were not considered to be "in tune" with hegemonic ideals of the nation during the military regime. The testimonies of those who had been forced to become "voiceless" (Jelin, 2003, p. 68) require of their readers "the capacity to identify their own identities, expectations, and values with those of another" (Beverley, 2005, p. 550). Testimonies "might be seen as a kind of speech act that sets up special ethical and epistemological demands" (Beverley, 2005, p. 550), allowing for a transition to democracy that included the respectful listening to these testimonies by a citizenry that had been politically polarized, as well as subjected to extreme levels of fear and repression. It is believed that testimonies allowed direct and indirect victims of violence to recover their lost sense of self and provided a new ground for Argentineans to rebuild a dignified collective identity as a people in a democratic context where all voices are in principle worthy to be heard (Phelps, 2004; Jelin, 2003; Rey Tristán, 2007; Kaplan, 2007).

The role of testimonies, however, has been problematized. Are testimonies trustworthy sources? Can testimonies be taken at face value? What is left out? Is it even possible to express the pain of violence through language? Who is able to speak up? Can testimonies be collective? Who is to pay attention to which testimonies? Do testimonies reify violence and generate yet another opportunity for a voyeuristic, and thus abusive, attitude on those who did not experience the violence and/or those who perpetrated it (Hartman, 2004; Jelin, 2003; Scarry, 1985; Franco, 1987)? Far from deterring activists and scholars from using testimonies, enthusiasts have included critical analyses of the way in which testimonies are collected and shared, as well as an analysis of their content and implications (Marín, 1991; Yúdice, 1991; Mallon, 1994; Chizuko and Sand, 1999; Brison, 1999; Memoria Abierta, 2005; Assmann, 2006). Despite debates, the report with its testimonies became the dominant source—or *master frame*—from which to develop historic understandings and alternative explanations of what had happened during the dark years of the military regime.

Therefore, I take *Nunca Más* as an open source for furthering our understanding of what I believe is one of the densest and most dividing phases of Argentine history. My study of the report, while focusing on the testimonies, intends to contribute to the still ongoing, collective process of (re)framing the past, and re-membering a conflicted society (Phelps, 2004, p. 50). So, instead of judging whether the report was partial or impartial, inclusive or exclusive, official or subaltern, I try to understand how it presented events in particular ways. I want to comprehend which voices were included, how they were included and organized, and ultimately, how one can continue to learn about the *Guerra Sucia*, Argentina, and about political violence, torture, and the process of overcoming such traumatic experiences. By reading scholarly analyses on this matter, and analyzing testimonies published in other venues, I identify various primary frames that have been utilized to comprehend the hidden and atrocious occurrences during the military regime and, by articulating alternative frames, provide yet another round of interpretation.

I draw from Goffman's (1986) frame analysis theory to understand the complexities and nuances of processes of collective memory-making, particularly in regard to historical periods of acute abuses of power. While this use of frame analysis may be considered "unorthodox" (König, 2004, p. 1) since scholars do not generally impose a frame on a document—by doing so, I intend to demonstrate the power of framing and reframing as tools to animate what existing frames may be masking and thus to reach deeper levels of subject comprehension. By looking into the politics of "framing public memory" (Philips, 2004, p. 1), I hope to contribute to the ongoing "process of (re)construction of individual and collective identities in societies emerging from periods of violence and trauma" (Jelin, 2003, pp. 17–18). The politics of framing public memories can be thought of as a long-term dialogue between parties with diverse views and power, yet all struggling for legitimacy and recognition of their version of the past, and thus, their expectations for the future (Weine, 2006; Jelin, 2003; Cohen, 2001). This kind of politics is thus a process of contestation that continues to develop over time and space where a set of diverse and changing social actors become involved (Roniger & Sznajder, 1999; Jelin, 2003). The various (re)framings are necessarily multilayered and reflective of psychological, sociological, political, cultural, and ideological intersections that may allow for certain aspects to be brought forth or put back, to be connected in particular ways, and hence, to yield new understandings.

In my analysis of the politics of (re)framing public memory of the traumatic experiences of Argentina's *Guerra Sucia*, I highlight the power of framing and suggest that an intersectional and an emotions-conscious reframing may further elucidate what occurred during the years of extreme violence. First, I find that certain structures of power—along intersecting gender, sexual, racial/ethnic, religious, and class lines—pervade the way in which repression was instrumented during the Dirty War. Second, I find richness in including the space that feelings occupied in the process of surviving violence by noting the rift between emotional and nonemotional testimonies published in *Nunca Más* and in the book *Pájaros sin luz* (Ciollaro, 1999).

In what follows, I expand on frame analysis and collective-memory studies. Then, I focus on the way in which the CONADEP report was structured and consequently how it provided a particular interpretation about the *Guerra Sucia*, which became the master or hegemonic frame. Next, I propose an intersectional, counter-hegemonic reading that may further the analysis of Argentina's *Guerra Sucia* by including portions of testimonies published in the report as well as in other venues. After that, I discuss how an emotions-conscious frame may contribute to understanding the central role played by feelings during the repression. Also, by presenting illustrative portions of testimonies of survivors of torture, I discuss the process of collective memory-making and personal/social healing. Finally, I share concluding thoughts about how the continuous, contentious, and complicated processes of (re)framing help in reaching deeper levels of historical comprehension.

Frame Analysis and Collective Memory

In my work, I put frame analysis in dialogue with collective memory studies; a dialogue that I believe can bear fruitful results, particularly when interjected with ideas coming from the literature on subaltern studies and the role that testimonies have played in processes of democratization and social struggles for justice and equality. Indeed, the long-lasting process of collective memory-making of the years of the last regime in Argentina emerged and has been maintained by groups of people who had been considered subaltern, who had been silenced and pushed further into the margins of society by the military. These groups (including survivors of repression, relatives of the disappeared, and numerous political activists for human rights) have explicitly and collectively worked to recover the voices of the detained/disappeared, to uncover the hidden abuses of power on the part of the military (and, to a lesser extent, of the paramilitary forces), and to legitimize a collective memory that defied official histories. They have accomplished this by locating the subaltern, their experiences, and their testimonies at the core of the alternatively created narrative of the *Guerra Sucia*. I propose to think about the labor of collective memory-making by these subaltern groups and its fruits (which include the CONADEP report *Nunca Más*) as processes of framing—that is, of understanding and organizing the experiences and events of the *Guerra Sucia*. Moreover, I suggest looking into how these initial processes of framing motivated further reframing given the concealed, extreme, tortuous, and complex character of the deeds by the military and paramilitary forces, and the complex and long-term nature of historical comprehension and collective healing.

According to Goffman,

> when individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: "What is it that's going on here?" Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion and doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand (Goffman, 1986, p. 8).

Individuals use "basic frameworks of understanding available in [their] society for making sense out of events and to analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject" (Goffman, 1986, p. 10). Frames are social principles of organization that govern events and the subjective involvement of people in them. Frames organize experiences and when analyzing these frames, one can comprehend the "structure of experience individuals have at any moment in their social lives" (Goffman, 1986, p. 13).

Primary frameworks or schemata of interpretation render "what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is

meaningful" (Goffman, 1986, p. 21).[2] Primary frameworks and particularly "framework of frameworks" reveal central aspects of the culture of social groups and societies, which tend to prefer order, organization, and stability over change, disorganization, and instability (Goffman, 1986, p. 27). In regard to this tendency, Goffman makes reference to how stories about extraordinary events are told: he notices that people use conventional frames as a means to

> cope with the bizarre potentials of social life, the furthest reaches of experience. What appears then to be a threat to our way of making sense of the world turns out to be an ingeniously selected defense of it. We press these stories to the wind; they keep the world from unsettling us (Goffman, 1986, p. 15).

Hence, the application of primary frameworks not only provides meaning, but concomitantly organizes experience, maintains a sense of stability, and allows individuals (and groups) to form "conjectures as to what occurred before and expectations of what is likely to happen now" (Goffman, 1986, p. 38).

By applying these concepts to the case of the *Guerra Sucia*, I find that (a) people who were detained/disappeared and those who survived used primary frames to make sense of the exceptional situation in which they found themselves during (and after, if they survived); (b) members of the CONADEP who collected survivors' testimonies and organized them in the report also utilized primary frames in order to comprehend the past and contribute to the process of collective memory-making; (c) scholars and activists who interpreted the report and its testimonies, and/or collected new testimonies after the publication of the report not only used primary frameworks, but also built on the master frame resulting from the report itself and created (partially) new frames of understanding; and (d) the employment of these various frames by all of these individuals and groups in different circumstances have not only organized the extreme characteristics of the *Guerra Sucia* (and thus restored a sense of collective order and social stability) but also shaped the development of our knowledge about it.

In this chapter, I analyze the mounting layers of frames in the CONADEP report, the testimonies in the report, exemplar scholarly analyses of the report and the *Guerra Sucia,* and testimonies published in alternative venues. These texts have become open, living sources where generations on generations have looked for answers to remaining and new questions about the past. Since "texts are not just effects of linguistic structures and orders of discourse, they are also effects of other social structures, and of social practices in all their aspects" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25), I believe that a sociological reading of a selection of key texts can lead to a deeper understanding of the dynamics beneath the collective processes of memory-making. Moreover, I claim that this use of frame analysis can help in furthering the process of collective memory-making of the *Guerra Sucia* in Argentina because of the central role that framing has in these kind of processes in general. Individually and collectively, simultaneously and consecutively, people try to make sense of the events that affect them, by directly or indirectly applying various frames of interpretation that work as "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 6). Thus, when making use of primary frames, people prioritize certain aspects while minimizing, dismissing, or ignoring other aspects that indeed may have been important; when framing, individuals tend to simplify for the sake of reaching at least some understanding of the situation—an understanding that usually is appropriated as control over past and current circumstances.

While subjects make use of these frames in all and every "normal" situation, it is particularly revealing to pay attention to how people frame extraordinary events (like being detained and tortured, and having a repressive government implementing such techniques systematically and secretively) both during times of repression and after these extreme circumstances occur. Argentina's *Guerra Sucia* is a case that has triggered very deliberate efforts to better comprehend what happened, to whom, and why, given both the hidden and atrocious nature of its events. Each round of interpretation has built on previous frames; each round of reframing has brought further depth and complexity into the process of understanding this chapter of Argentina's past.

The *Nunca Más* Report as the Hegemonic Frame of the *Guerra Sucia*

Much has been written about the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas,* CONADEP (National Commission on the Disappearance of People) and its report *Nunca Más* that has been "recognized as the first serious attempt to use a truth commission to reckon with the past" (Phelps, 2004, p. 82), "considered successful" (Phelps, 2004, p. 84) and celebrated both in Argentina and across the world. In the report, one finds only a fraction of the 50,000 pages of documents and evidence gathered by members of the CONADEP, who went around the country and abroad to collect declarations of people who were kidnapped, tortured, and liberated, and about people who were killed and disappeared. The report also identified secret detention centers, and documented irregularities in hospitals, clinics, morgues, cemeteries, police headquarters, and other institutions that may have been involved in the system of disappearances.

The *Nunca Más,* almost 500 pages long, includes a prologue written by the chair of the Commission, Ernesto Sabato. The prologue makes the tone and logics of the report explicit and describes the six sections of the document that is structured to try to make sense of Argentina's recent, obscure past: (1) The Repression, (2) The Victims, (3) The Judiciary during the Repression, (4) Creation and Organization of the National Commission on the Disappeared, (5) The Doctrine behind the Repression, and (6) Recommendations/Conclusions. The prologue and the report itself reflect the Commission's politics of framing the *Guerra Sucia*—it is a politics shaped both by the official (hegemonic) and alternative (counter-hegemonic) histories of these years of dictatorship and great political activism and violence.

In the prologue, the Commission makes clear that it did not have the power or intention to judge those responsible for the excesses that took place during the regime of the *Junta de Comandantes en Jefe* (that was the task of the judicial branch of power). Yet, the Commission's investigations led its members to assert that "the recent military dictatorship brought about the greatest and most savage tragedy in the history of Argentina" (CONADEP, 1986, p. 1) and to claim that

> we cannot remain silent in the face of all that we have heard, read, and recorded. This went far beyond what might be considered criminal offences, and takes us to the shadowy realm of crimes against humanity (CONADEP, 1986, pp. 1–2).

Given that, in a systematic fashion "human rights were violated at all levels by the Argentine state during the repression carried out by the armed forces," the Commission dismisses those who may claim that the events were the result of "individual excesses" or that they were "inevitable in a dirty war," and argues that the calculated kidnappings, tortures, killings, and disappearances were conducted by military officers "who were carrying out orders" of senior officers (CONADEP, 1986, p. 2).

In the prologue, the Commission also makes explicit that its "arduous" task was filled with "sadness and sorrow" as well as insults and threats, and that the Commission's members were only able "to piece together a shadowy jigsaw, years after the events had taken place, when all the clues had been deliberately destroyed, all documentary evidence burned, and buildings demolished" (CONADEP, 1986, p. 5). They offered appreciation of those who provided "the statements made by relatives and by those who managed to escape from this Hell or even the testimonies of people who were involved in the repression but who, for whatever obscure motives, approached us to tell us what they knew" (CONADEP, 1986, p. 5).

The CONADEP adopted a perspective that I label a *humanistic frame*: it portrayed all victims as equal in their condition as abused human beings and it included selections of their testimonies as evidentiary material while reaffirming their human worth. Most testimonies in *Nunca Más* included names, last names, or initials, gender, and age; there were graphics indicating professions and occupations of the detained and/or disappeared. In the section titled "Victims," there were eight subsection categories: "Children and pregnant women who disappeared," "Adolescents," "The family as a victim," "The repression did not respect the sick or disabled," "Members of the clergy and religious orders," "Conscripts," "Journalists," and "Trade Unionists." In the section titled "The Judiciary during the repression," there was a subsection devoted to the "Disappearance of lawyers."

As presented in the report, the victims not only included adult men and women, but also minors and pregnant women. The victims were not individuals alone, but also entire families. The victims who were disabled or had some sort of ailment were not treated differently but further victimized. Moreover, victims who were actively involved in professions or occupations usually associated with free speech, critical thinking, and social justice—such as journalists, union leaders, lawyers, human rights activists, and members of religious organizations "who were committed to helping the less fortunate, or who denounced the violation of human rights" (CONADEP, 1986, p. 337), were especially targeted.

It is important to note that these groupings qualified the universalized victim: yes, they were all humans, and their human rights were unfairly abused; but there were certain attributes of these people that pointed to the moral unacceptability as well as the strategic planning by the military in their implemented system of abduction, torture, and disappearance. Thus, the humanistic frame under the human rights umbrella did not preclude the CONADEP from pointing to the particularistic way in which the Dirty War developed, as well as indicating the Commission's worldview.

Therefore, the *Nunca Más* report provides *a* frame—a frame that soon became the hegemonic text or metanarrative of the *Guerra Sucia*—through which the reader can make sense of how the system of repression and killing came to pass, as well as learn about the actual experiences of "pain and horror" based on the hundreds of first-person testimonies included in the text (CONADEP, 1986, p. 9). However, the Commission warns the readers that the cases included in the report comprise a selection made "in order to substantiate and illustrate our main arguments" and accepts responsibility for possible errors and points out the fact that other cases may have been more adequate to justify their points (CONADEP, 1986, p. 7). This warning, together with the prologue, can be read as disclaimers through which the Commission showed that it was cognizant of its own ideological, political, and thus, particular and potentially controversial position regarding what they found out about the *Guerra Sucia*. Indeed, as researchers Dworkin (1986), Nino (1998), Roniger and Sznajder (1999), Jelin (2003), Phelps (2004), and Crenzel (2008a, 2008b) among others pointed out, the report was bound to reflect certain politics of representation and memory. To be aware of this politics does not erase the value of the report, but rather allows for more nuanced readings of what became "Argentina's biggest bestseller" (Phelps, 2004, p. 84).

The report became "the canonical narrative about the disappearances [that] occurred in Argentina" (Crenzel, 2008a, p. 48). At the same time, this "master narrative" (Jelin, 2003, p. 27) became a fundamental open source to learn, think, and (re)write about that very critical portion of this country's history. The *Nunca Más* generated diverse reactions (Camacho, 2008) and further investigations that allowed for alternative and presumably better understandings of these traumatic years of history. For instance, Phelps (2004) emphasizes the central role that storytelling has had in the process of individual and national healing, and argues that the new democratic state should make the effort to include divergent voices into the new national narrative.

Crenzel critically analyzes the reasons and effects of CONADEP's strategy to depoliticize the persona of victims and survivors. He points out that the limitations of the *Nunca Más* cannot be attributed solely to the state (represented by the Commission), but also to the difficulties that Argentinean society has had to "think in complex terms about the past of violence that ripped it apart" (Crenzel, 2008a, p. 59).

Jelin (2003) explores the complexities of memories and collective memory-making and argues that all memories are bound to highlight something while leaving other things in the shade—both metanarratives and their alternative narratives are inevitably partial. Roniger and Sznajder (1999) and Rey Tristán (2007) critique the report for failing to offer a subsection devoted to the experiences of political exiles, despite their large quantity and important role in the struggle for democracy. Kaufman (1989), Graziano (1992), Braylan, Feierstein, Galante, and Jmelnizky (2000), and Navarro (2011) all examine the problematic way in which religious and ethnic issues were presented in, or excluded from, the report. Several authors offer a gendered reading of the *Guerra Sucia,* pointing to the role that the mothers and the grandmothers of *Plaza de Mayo* had in bringing the dictatorship to an end (Taylor, 1997; Waylen, 2000; Bejarano, 2002; Navarro, 1989), addressing the role of sexual violence (Franco, 1987; Taylor, 1997; Kaplan, 2007), and uncovering the silenced issues around sexual orientation (Bazan, 2004; Oviedo, 2010).

These various alternative readings of the CONADEP report and the *Guerra Sucia* can be analyzed as part of the long, contentious, and complex process of collective memory-making. In my view, the *Nunca Más* and the following reinterpretations of what happened should not be simply read as a conflict between history written from above (official history) and histories written from below (subaltern histories) (Mallon, 1994; Beverley, 2005). I argue that this report breaks this dichotomous view of history making: the official/subaltern (hegemonic/counter-hegemonic) binary opposition is challenged by the combination of (a) the sociopolitical conjuncture when the report was written, together with the central role that testimonies occupy in the elaboration of the report and the text itself, as well as the Commission's recognition of its own subjectivity, and (b) the fact that indeed further readings and writings were developed and published later on. In particular circumstances, history has been (re)written as a result of a (more or less contentious) dialogue within and between members of the official or dominant groups of power and those of subaltern or subordinate groups of power. However, these groups are never unified, homogeneous entities. These are heterogeneous groupings with members who have diverse interests, various degrees of power, and therefore, disparate levels of influence.

For example, in the case of Argentina's narrative of the *Guerra Sucia*'s history, the groups that may be identified as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic were indeed very heterogeneous and replete with debates about the recent events as well as the political future of the country (Roniger & Sznajder, 1999; Jelin, 2003; Rey Tristán, 2007; Crenzel, 2008b). Moreover, the group that authored the new official narrative of the *Guerra Sucia*, the CONADEP, built its version of the events in collaboration with many human rights and other grassroots organizations of civil society, and on the basis of the testimonies provided by survivors of political violence and acquaintances. These various organizations and individuals had been considered the subaltern, the other, and subversive—not only by the military but also by significant sectors of the population who considered their activism as marginal and insubordinate. As Roniger and Sznajder (1999) claim, "For the first time in the history of violence and turmoil of Argentina, the story told by victims and from the perspective of the victims was published with an official seal" (p. 194). However, while it is true that the *Nunca Más* report "officialized" the histories of those who had been labeled and punished as "the subaltern" during the military regime, I believe that standing hegemonic/counter-hegemonic divides were displaced by the more complex realities of each of these groups, and by the processes of interaction

involved as these heterogeneous forces rewrote a collective memory/history.

Intersectional Reframing of the *Guerra Sucia*

By paying attention to the way in which the CONADEP framed the occurrences of the Dirty War, how the *Nunca Más* report became the hegemonic text, and then, how this master frame emphasized certain aspects over others, I point to the strength of using frame analysis and identifying subsequent framing or interpretations of the metanarrative. At the same time, the identification of subsequent alternative readings (reinterpretations that emphasize, for example, the depolitization of the report, the missing perspective of exiles, or the gendered and sexualized aspects of the military regime) furthers the understanding of the various processes at play during the Dirty War. However, as one learns from intersectional theory, each of these social dimensions do not work alone, but overlap in particular ways configuring unique forms of oppression (Hill Collins, 1986). Thus, I propose to apply an intersectional frame of analysis with the goal of comprehending how violence and repression interacted with factors such as class, gender, sexuality, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, religion, and politics. I believe that an *intersectional reframing* will contribute to further develop counter-hegemonic readings of the *Nunca Más* given one of the main characteristics of such epistemology: the unmasking of how latent or hidden sociological factors overlap with manifest ones and configure specific forms of oppression.

An intersectional reframing demonstrates how sexual violence was not only intrinsic to the way in which repression was implemented by the military but also intersected with gender dimensions, religion, race/ethnicity, and social class. For example, from the testimonies in *Nunca Más* one learns that rape and other forms of sexual abuse were systematically used by the military to humiliate and subjugate detainees. The way in which sexual violence was implemented against women and men, regardless of their age or health conditions, showed that this kind of aggression worked as a way to strengthen the hypermasculine gender structure of the military. On the one hand, military male officers belittled women by treating them like worthless objects that were to be used and abused sexually and violently. The rape of women in groups with several officers watching and cheering as if the violations were "collective feasts" (CONADEP, 1984, p. 52) also worked to reaffirm the hegemonic masculinity of the military officers who showed to others their uncontrollable sexual desire and power, and the "pleasure" that these sexual manifestations generated (CONADEP, 1984, p. 37). On the other hand, military officers belittled subversive men by demeaning their potency through sexual molestation and by having military women introducing "burning chemical liquids" through their penis (CONADEP, 1984, p. 48).

The use of sexual violence fed not only hypermasculine gender regimes, but also a certain racial/ethnic order that prioritized white Catholics (an order that implied a particular social class hierarchy with the idea that this racial/ethnic group was worthy of higher socioeconomic status). The testimony of Mónica, who was a Jewish pregnant woman, illustrates this point,

> I was taken to the torture room by some men who began to hit me because I refused to get undressed. Then, one of them tears off my shirt and they throw me to a metal table in which they tied me by my hands and feet. I tell them that I was two-months pregnant and the 'Turco Julián' replies: 'If so-and-so could endure the (torture) machine being six months pregnant, you can stand it, and be raped too.' Then the torturers became more and more incensed with me, for two reasons: because I belonged to a Jewish family, and because I did not cry, which exasperated them (CONADEP, 1984, p. 346).

The testimonies of Jewish survivors and other victims who were addressed in racial terms illustrate how an intersectional reframing allows one to expose dimensions of repression that would otherwise remain opaque. In other words, if the frame utilized was exclusively focusing on sexual violence, the fact that the religion of the victim affected the way in which violence was implemented would be ignored or dismissed as unimportant. However, with an intersectional framework in mind, one is prone to identify the various degrees and complexities of violence with multiple intervening factors. For example, Daniel testified

> that the Jewish were punished only for the fact of being Jewish [. . .] and were subjects of all types of tortures, but principally one that was extremely sadist and cruel: 'the rectoscope' that consisted of a tube that was introduced in the anus of the victim, or the vagina of the women, and inside the tube a rat was inserted. The rat would look for an exit and tried to enter by biting the internal organs of the victims (CONADEP, 1984, pp. 74–75).

The case of Rubén Schell shows the intersection of race/ethnicity and religion. Rubén, who was of German descent, ended up receiving "better treatment" because of his "Aryan" looks. He declared that "after a long session of torture, 'Coco' or 'the Colonel' said to me: 'Listen, *Flaco* (Man), what are you doing amongst these niggers? With your looks, you should be an S.S.'" Then, the Colonel showed him "a swastika he had tattooed on his arm," giving orders that from then on, Schell had to be well fed. "From that day on I was not longer tortured," added Rubén (CONADEP, 1986, p. 68).

The intersection of race with social class, politics, and sexuality is illustrated in the testimony of D.N.C. who shared that after being raped, the officer who raped her told her that the irony was "that he was a *cabecita negra*[3] who wanted to be with a blonde woman but did not realize that she was actually a guerrilla warrior (*guerrillera*)" (CONADEP, 1984, p. 155). In this case, one sees the use of sexual violence to transgress racial/ethnic and class social divides that separated Argentineans of European descent (people with a lighter phenotype, identified as whites, usually middle-class, and predominantly of the Radical Party) from Argentineans of indigenous or African descent (with a darker phenotype, mostly *mestizos*, but catalogued as *negros*, usually lower-class, and predominantly of the Peronist Party).

By using an intersectional frame to read the testimonies, one finds a more intricate equation of power and its abuses during the military regime. For example, it was not only the gender of the victim that shaped the ways in which he or she was treated (a conclusion that one could come up with by reading the *Nunca Más* report with its special subsections devoted to pregnant women, for example), but also the victim's social class, race/ethnicity, religion, (assumed) political affiliation, and sexual orientation. These nuances are apparent in testimonies published in other venues, such as in the book *Pájaros sin luz: Testimonios de mujeres de desaparecidos* (Ciollaro, 1999). This book is not an official government account but rather offers accounts of lived experiences by wives and partners of men who disappeared, as well as the experiences of many women in that group who were themselves kidnapped and tortured. While Ciollaro's focus is intentionally directed to women, and thus her book allows for a gendered analysis of trauma and survival of political violence, the testimonies included in her book become valuable data that can be interpreted intersectionally.

For instance, Eva's declaration shows the overlapping of social class and gender. She observed,

> the workers were the ones that disappeared the most, they were always putting their bodies in all the struggles, in the strikes, against the coups, however they are the least recognized. And if these men are not recognized, how would we, the women, be recognized? (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 263)

Read with intersectional lenses, one learns about the class distinctions but also how these were affected by gender as well: low-income men were particularly targeted but minimally acknowledged in their struggles; low-income women also were distinctively attacked, but

because they were women, they were ignored and silenced even more.

When looked at from an intersectional perspective, María del Socorro's account reveals the interplay between the issues of gender, social status, and the underpinning weight of the ideals of motherhood maintained by the military and that were socially hegemonic at that point in time in Argentina. She addressed the issue of how to deal with the social suspicion about women who were activists together with their husbands or partners, but who ended up not being killed:

> the malicious question of 'how is it that you are alive and he is not?' made many women walk away in a lot of pain, some left politics for ever, while others did what they could, maintaining their activism, supporting, collaborating, but always with a low profile. . . . Ironically, these women are most of the mothers of the sons and daughters of the disappeared . . . those who had to fight alone, with those kids. . . including the fact of being looked down upon as an irresponsible mother and questioned because you were an activist while having kids (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 285).

The links between ideals of motherhood and citizenship, and how these reflect social hierarchies along intersecting gender, sexual, racial/ethnic, religious, class, and political lines can also be seen in the testimonies from and about pregnant women and their children. Captured women delivered their babies in the infirmaries of the clandestine centers of detention, in their jails, or in military hospitals, sometimes with medical assistance, at times without any, but always under surveillance, most of the times tied to their beds and blindfolded, which prevented them from seeing their babies and where they were detained. In the *Nunca Más* report, one finds Adriana's declarations about the experience of Inés,

> after twelve hours of contractions, (the officers) took Inés to the kitchen of the jail and put her on a dirty table, blindfolded, and in front of many other officers, she had her baby with the assistance of presumably a doctor, who only shouted at her while the rest of the officers laughed loudly. She had a boy called Leonardo. After 4 or 5 days of having him with her in the cell, the officers took him away (CONADEP, 1984, p. 305).

The "kids of the subversive women," as a gynecologist of a military hospital called them (CONADEP, 1984, p. 312), were to be permanently separated from their mothers, in order to save them from their subversive parents and to make them "good" citizens. In addition to taking away babies at birth, the security forces kidnapped kids when they removed "subversive" parents from their homes (CONADEP, 1986, p. 14). The CONADEP and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo estimated that between 170 and 200 kids were kidnapped by these two methods (CONADEP, 1984, p. 299).

By adopting an intersectional framework of analysis, I find that the strategy of the military regime to eliminate "subversive" mothers, to separate the children from their "subversive" families and to assign them to "good" families reflected a particular politics of motherhood. This kind of politics determined that women's citizenship was defined by their biological differential characteristic from men (the possibility of childbirth) and consequently, their political duty as citizens was limited to the private spheres of rearing good citizens. The conservative, heteropatriarchal, and moral issues behind these politics took extremely violent forms during the years of the military regime by emphasizing the selective aspect of "good" motherhood. Ideally, "good" mothers were politically conservative, Catholic, middle-or upper-class women who followed the hegemonic path of femininity and did not take action against the politics enforced by the military regime. Conversely, "bad" mothers were "subversive" women who were suspected of being politically active and having liberal/progressive ideas, or simply women who did not fit the traditional profile because of other reasons (such as believing in sexual freedom or gender equality). This type of action violated not only women's reproductive privacy (Roberts, 1995), but also reinforced the heterosexual conceptualization of a woman's body as a reproductive (and disposable) machine (Briggs, 1998). What emerges is a moral doctrine: women were considered reproductive moral machines who were to be destroyed, if they did not fulfill both of those functions.

As a whole, an intersectional reframing allows for a more nuanced understanding of what happened. Narratives are always more than factual accounts, simply by virtue of the fact that they must always be situated in particular contexts, perspectives, and interests. In other words, the collection and presentation of testimonies always expresses certain politics of framing (be it by the governmental institution gathering the declarations, the researcher doing the interviews, the human rights activists calling for the documentation of abuses, etc.). An analysis of framing does not invalidate the legitimacy of the accounts, but reveals the circulation of knowledge and power that give accounts particular kinds of value (Taylor, 1997). In particular, an intersectional reading of the politics of framing of the *Nunca Más* goes against the grain of the document itself and can make it possible to identify how overlapping systems of oppression rendered the experiences of certain victims more important than others by emphasizing specific traits while submerging and/or omitting others.

Emotions-Conscious Reframing of the *Guerra Sucia*

While the hundreds of accounts of abduction and torture in *Nunca Más* most certainly mobilize the readers' feelings, I found that the testimonies of repression in the report appeared to be robustly factual yet lacking in emotional content. An example is Adriana's declaration,

> After 3 or 4 hours of being on the floor with continuous contractions, and thanks to the shouting of my mates, (the officers) took me to a police car with two men in the front and a woman in the back (who was called Lucrecia and who participated in the tortures). We left toward Buenos Aires, but my little girl could not wait [. . .] and they stopped the car in the side of the road, where Teresa was born. Thanks to those things of nature, the delivery was normal. The only attention that I got was that with a dirty piece of cloth, Lucrecia tied the umbilical cord that had Teresa together with me because they did not have anything to cut it with. In less than five minutes, we continued our way to the theoretical 'hospital.' I still had my eyes blindfolded and my baby cried in the seat [. . .]. [After arriving to a detention center, a] doctor [. . .] made me undress and in front of an officer, I had to clean the bed, the floor, my dress, the placenta, and, ultimately, they let me wash my baby, all in between curses and threats (CONADEP, 1984, p. 305).

Adriana's matter-of-fact testimony is moving, and readers may assume that these traumatic experiences were highly emotional for the victims, even if feelings are not mentioned at all. Indeed, one may wonder whether the overt inclusion of emotions in the testimonies is at all necessary given the fact that most appreciations of the *Nunca Más* report point to its harrowing quality. Dworkin (1986) calls it "a report from Hell" (p. xi) and Crenzel (2008a) acknowledges its "high emotional density" (p. 55). I believe like Jaggar (1997, p. 386) that "emotions may be helpful and even necessary rather than inimical to the construction of knowledge" about the politics of violence, death, and survival of Argentina's *Guerra Sucia.* The way in which emotions are included, submerged, or omitted speaks to "how intricately the problem of pain is bound up with the problem of power" (Scarry, 1985, pp. 11–12) and with the politics of representation.

The lack of emotion in the testimonies in *Nunca Más* should not be attributed to a faulty performance on the part of the CONADEP or on a disguise purposely put forth by the victims when they shared their experiences. Instead, the omission of emotions is fairly typical in the narration of violence and trauma. The fact that emotions themselves are missing in the testimonies points to how "the atrocities committed defy language and representation" (Taylor, 1997, p. 139). Extreme "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it" (Scarry, 1985, p. 4). "Even where it is virtually the only content in a given environment, it will

be possible to describe that environment as though the pain were not there" (Scarry, 1985, p. 12). However, pain as well as other emotions such as anger, rage, despair, anguish, sadness, and love are fundamental aspects of the politics of violence and survival.

Based on her personal experience, Ciollaro (1999) wrote about the paralyzing effects of the dictatorship and the system of disappearances. Her book, *Pájaros sin luz: Testimonios de mujeres de desaparecidos* emerges as a project that came out from the "darkness" of silence and pain she endured when her husband was abducted in front of her and her children (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 32). Twenty years after his abduction and disappearance, her recollection was triggered by one of the many crises her children went through. At that point she writes that she began to "talk with many other women who had gone through similar experiences in order to see myself, to feel myself, to know what happened to me" (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 32). In an effort to remember and recover, to "feel that it is important to be alive" (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 32), she made a deliberate effort not to deny the role of emotions. Consequently in her book, her interviews with women include significant expressions of feelings. Ciollaro's book is a great example of how an emotions-conscious frame can lead to even more of an understanding of the events of the *Guerra Sucia* and its aftermath.

In *Pájaros sin luz*—the title references the lyrics of the tango song "Naranjo en flor" by Homero and Virgilio Expósito, and points to the impeding effects of a traumatic past that puts people in a state of fright like "birds without light" (*pájaros sin luz*)—several women talked about how this sentiment permeated their experiences. Marta made reference to the impossibility of talking given her suffering; she said "it was very difficult to talk . . . I cried and cried; I could only cry, I could not do anything else, there was nothing else" (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 205). Delia linked pain, anguish, and silence, "it was difficult to raise the issue of the disappearance of the father because the family did not talk about it; did not talk about it because of pain, not to generate more anguish" (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 44). Ada spoke of fear and its paralyzing and long-lasting effects,

> inside, I had fear, and if there is something that I have not lost, it is fear. The person that does not know fear is able to do whatever they please, but when one knows fear, one is partially broken (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 215).

María explained her surprise about the emotional aspects of repression, and also talked about silence, denial, and the long-lasting effects of experiencing violence:

> I was ready for all the political aspects, including torture. The truth is, my emotional shock, which I believe I still have, was not to be ready for the other. For the disparaging, for watching (the torturers) spend a whole night raping a minor and killing him after [. . .] Things that normally are not talked about, but [. . .] In order to survive and move on, live a normal, correct life, one had to hide all these in some part of one's brain, and then, it is very difficult to think that after going through all of that, one would be able to believe in something [. . .] Nothing surprises me anymore (Ciollaro, 1999, pp. 272–273).

Eva talked about anger and pain,

> I have a lot of anger. It is terrible the anger that I have. I see other people that have had worse experiences than I did, but they can manage things in a better way. And me, no, I have a horrible anger. And what do I do with this anger? Lately, what I do is to feel bad, because I see that justice is getting worse and worse. Justice has been sold. I see the assassins free, in the streets, the torturers, the thieves of kids, relaxed, everywhere. I thought that there was going to be justice. But the way things are gives me pain and anger. It doesn't let me live (Ciollaro, 1999, p. 259).

María del Socorro shared her pain and rage after losing her baby following repeated torture, and how she tried to be hopeful again:

> they gave me a shot with a drug, Cristerona Forte, to which I did not resist because I thought that it was to save my pregnancy, afterwards I found out that it was an abortive. Two days later, I discharged something bloody looking, black. It was only then that I realized that . . . well, that there was nothing that could remain, that I did not have anything else . . . nothing. I kept what I discharged in a little bag. Next morning, when the officers were counting us, I smashed it in the face of one of the officers. That is all that was left from my son. Later on, I would try to feel better by thinking that eventually I would be able to be back again with Guille and that we would have a dozen of children (Ciollaro, 1999, pp. 274–275).

In her testimony, María del Socorro also included the letters that her partner, Guillermo, wrote for her in captivity, pointing to the role that love plays in keeping people alive and enduring torture,

> I feel strange writing this letter to you without knowing how I am going to send it away, but at the same time, it is painful not having been able to tell you how much you helped me in the most difficult moments. When at night the handcuffs were hurting me, when the cold made me as stiff as wood or the wounds became unbearable, thinking about you, remembering all the minutes we had had together, took me out of that world and brought back the strength that they were trying to take away from me. I also remember your screams and my desperation when I heard them and my constant insomnia in order to distinguish which ones were yours in the loud screaming nights [. . . .] And I want you to know that the memory of yours was the most resistant shell that I had and will have, and that I deeply wish to be together with you and tell you things with my eyes, with my hands, with my mouth and heal all that is there to be healed, and laugh without knowing what we are laughing about, and make love until we fall asleep and keep loving each other in a dream that lasts a thousand years (Ciollaro, 1999, pp. 286–287).

As all of these excerpts illustrate, testimonies that are framed in terms of an emotional content provide a more comprehensive (and more painful) portrayal of how victims experienced torture in particular, and the military regime in general. Emotions, however, may be perceived as a complication of what seemed to be an orderly (and thus more manageable) description of the events as presented in the *Nunca Más* report. By telling what happened without emotion, victims, investigators and readers are able to frame a chaotic and extreme history of violence into what is commonly associated with rationality. Emotions may jeopardize this apparent order, which may be a reason why the testimonies included in the CONADEP report avoided presenting feelings as a constitutive element of the events of the *Guerra Sucia*.

CONADEP's rational, nonemotional framing of traumatic, systematic repression implemented during the military regime offers a comprehensible narrative that is uncomplicated by feelings. It is plausible that the addition of emotions in the testimonies could have become too incendiary in a time when the democratic government was trying to leave behind a phase of extremely high and violent political activism that had "ripped [the country] apart" (Crenzel, 2008a, p. 59). However, it cannot be denied that emotions were a fundamental element in how people experienced violence, managed to survive, dealt with losses, and kept politically active to fight for democracy and claim for "memory, truth and justice" to this day.[4] Their central role deserves the attention of researchers, particularly of those who are willing and able to deal with the uncertainties raised when looking at social issues in all of their complexity.

Concluding Thoughts

The *Nunca Más* report, in particular the testimonies of repression, is an open source that continues to generate analyses that contribute to the development of a more complete comprehension of Argentina's *Guerra Sucia*. The politics of representation that are implicated in the process of collective memory-making include

highly contentious and intricate processes in which heterogeneous groups of changing social actors struggle to present their version of the truth. The diverse framing and reframing of what happened in the past lead to diverse understandings of the future. These highly dynamic processes reflect as well as challenge existing structures of power that are continuously changing yet constantly oppressive at some level.

In this chapter, I maintain that a critical frame analysis of the report and testimonies provides a more complete and complicated version of the *Guerra Sucia*. In addition, it offers insight into how processes of analysis and interpretation have been affected by competing political forces and intersecting social structures of inequality. By looking into the structure of the report and the content of the testimonies included, one can begin to understand the politics of framing in Argentina's construction of a public memory of the military regime. The *Nunca Más* report, which became the celebrated hegemonic narrative of the dictatorship, reflects a social order that is not as oppressive as the one enforced by the military *Junta*, however it still represents a certain normative hierarchy that prioritizes certain groups of people and events over others. For example, subsequent critical analyses of the report offer counter-hegemonic interpretations that complicate the dynamics of repression instrumented by the military by examining the omission of politics, gender, and sexuality as structuring dimensions of the Dirty War. My own analysis contributes an intersectional reframing of events that points to the overlapping of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religion, class and political affiliation.

In addition, my analysis highlights the role that emotions played in the politics of repression and survival. While the emotional experiences of the people who were detained and disappeared can be inferred from the factual testimonies in the master report, there is a need to look for alternative sources (like Ciollaro´s book) where more complete accounts are compiled. Arguably, including emotions in the reports and in the analyses of them, challenges state efforts to order or organize the chaotic and horrific events of the *Guerra Sucia*. The passage of time has allowed for more and different analyses of the period to be written. It also has allowed for increased analytical complexity—a complexity that may be enriched by incorporating the potentially disturbing power of emotions.

These research strategies—that is, to read between the lines of and beyond the limits of the *Nunca Más* report, to analyze the frames and consecutive reframing of the report, and to develop counter-hegemonic readings—are only feasible because of the intrinsic wealth of the report, its testimonies and the rich growth of literature on the topic. All of this work is the result of the enduring efforts of many people and organizations involved in one way or another with the process of re-membering (Phelps, 2004) and comprehending what happened in Argentina (Jelin, 2003).

In the same month that the *Junta* took power, I was born to parents who were catalogued as "subversive" and "threatening to the nation" because of their occupations and ideologies. We were among the fortunate; we were not detained or disappeared. Now I hope my work contributes to the long-lasting, collective processes of history-making. I hope it adds to the ongoing process of imagining alternative futures—futures that Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain (2003) describe as not trapped in an unresolved past, an unfair present and a given order, but that instead grow out of processes of understanding, elaboration, and contestation. A frame analysis of collective memory-making can certainly help us move forward in this direction.

Notes

1. See, for example, the article by Alejandra Dandan (2011) on the status of the trials on crimes against humanity, which was published together with the March 24, 2011 special section of the *Página 12* newspaper commemorating the 35 years since the Junta coup (http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/especiales/index.html). See also the article on the still ongoing work of forensic anthropologists in La Nación (http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1352743), as well as the piece on the acts that will be held to commemorate the coup, including the several organizations that continue to be active in their human rights claims (http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1359821-marchas-y-actos-a-35-anos-del-golpe).

2. Natural primary frameworks "identify occurrences seen as undirected, unoriented, unanimated, unguided [. . .] due totally, from start to finish, to "natural" determinants" (Goffman, 1986, p. 22). That is to say that these frames attribute events to so-called natural forces. Social primary frameworks "provide background understanding for events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being" (Goffman, 1986, p. 22). Socially and natural primary frameworks are mutually related, particularly because socially guided acting "cannot be accomplished effectively without entrance into the natural order" (Goffman, 1986, p. 23). At the same time, it is important to note that Goffman's binary distinction is not comprehensive of all meaning-making processes, which are now understood to be more complicated than what can be captured by the natural/social primary frames.

3. "*Cabecita negra*" (literally "little black head") is a term that has been used in Argentina to indicate a person with darker skin color, usually dark hair, who has a lower socioeconomic status and little (if any) formal education. The term has been used politically in various ways, and is certainly derogatory and discriminatory. "*Cabecitas negras*" were assumed to be affiliated with the Peronist Party—and the military regime was openly against this political force.

4. See the events planned for the 35th anniversary of the coup at http://encuentromvyj.wordpress.com/ and http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/ultimas/20-164831-2011-03-24.html.

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