

Memorias y Amnesias: How Do Argentineans Remember the Dictatorship?

Susana Kaiser
skaiser@mail.utexas.edu
Institute of Latin American Studies
The University of Texas at Austin

Prepared for delivery at the 1998 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association
The Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois
September 24-26, 1998

Introduction

This presentation is part of a larger work: a project to explore the construction and transmission of Argentines' collective memories of the military dictatorship (1976-83), where an estimated 30,000 people disappeared. My focus is the process of collective remembering violent and traumatic political events, and how these memories have been shaped by inter-generational dialogue, education, and the communication media, through exposure to different messages and discursive networks that develop within families, friends, co-workers, or classmates. I am concentrating on young people who were not directly affected by the repression, are not political activists, and were either small children at that time or born after the dictatorship had ended. Therefore, their knowledge is mediated.

The paper is divided in two parts. First, I summarize the relevance of the project and outline the theoretical framework and methodology required for this kind of study. Second, I share preliminary notes of my fieldwork, including the political environment, the methods of inquiry, and some of my findings regarding the media's role as source of knowledge of this historical period. Regarding the latter, I highlight comments about *La Noche de los Lápices* (The Night of the Pencils), a film that was quoted by most participants of my study as a primary reference point.

General Background and Theoretical Considerations.

Why this Kind of Research

We know that nations are political constructs, imagined, contested and shaped through political processes. Moreover, as Ernest Renan noted more than one hundred years ago, "the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (in Anderson, 1983:199.) This insight is very graphically illustrated by processes of democratization after a violent past. These usually incorporate the notion of reconciliation and therefore require the construction of a shared history (i.e., South Africa.) In today's Argentina, thus, we can talk of a process of re-constructing a common history and memory. And, while it is widely assumed that the communication media are extremely powerful in the reproduction of ideologies and human rights is a widely researched topic in democratic transitions, the media's role during these processes has not been given the attention it deserves.

Over the years, young people may have received a variety of accounts of the dictatorship's massive human rights violations, including silence or no information at all, but we know very little about their readings of those historical versions. My aim is to fill some blanks regarding content and source of their historical awareness: what do the young know about this period, how did they learn what they know, and what conclusions

do they draw from it. Hence, I am studying how a society, especially its government, institutions, and media, deals with its violent political past and frames a new historical discourse. This research will provide data that may help to classify the discourses circulating in society, identify versions of the past that have been transmitted from one generation to the next, grasp people's readings and decodings of different historical accounts, understand better how memory-construction processes work, and shed some light on the influence and power of communications to produce, manipulate, and transmit collective memories of a violent past.

Theoretical framework

This type of research requires a multi-disciplinary theoretical framework in order to integrate two main areas of analysis: collective memory and communication, which in this case are tied in directly to human rights issues and the contested democratization process. It includes, therefore: theories of collective remembering, including the role of the media in shaping society's memories of political events, and theories of the relation between political power and communication media.

By collective memories I mean those memories that are shared by individuals within different groups of society. In using this term, I include what is called, often rather vaguely, social memory, cultural memory, historical memory, or popular memory, to refer to socially and culturally influenced memory. Some characteristics of these memories are specially relevant for the proposed study:¹ a) Collective memories have a discursive nature and are based on communication. They become collective precisely because they are discussed. They are constructed, transmitted, and modified through talk. b) Collective remembering is a dynamic process by which images of the past are influenced by discourses in the present and reinterpreted according to the context in which they are articulated and by reference to their future implications for a nation's self-understanding and political priorities. c) Collective memories are contested: groups battle for the acceptance of their different versions of the past and a society's memories are negotiated and defined within a context of debate, sometimes fierce and sustained.

My broad conceptualization of communications includes both mainstream and alternative media. By alternative I mean the different content of a traditional form as in print or radio, or the medium itself, as street demonstrations, songs, or graffiti in walls. Therefore, I am concerned with how ideas circulate within society, from the basic communication act that requires, at least, an issuer and a receiver of a message to the broadcast of a television program that reaches an audience of millions. A central assumption guiding my study is that it will not be possible to understand cultural and political processes, including the social construction of memory, if we do not eventually include people's interaction with the media in the research agenda.

By human rights I mean civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as defined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in international law instruments.² Within the context of my research I am mostly referring to violations of civil and political rights that constitute crimes against humanity and include detention without trial, kidnaping, torture, murder, disappearance, and the theft of babies born in captivity.

Methodology

The kind of answers that this study seeks require qualitative research methodology, specifically interviewing in a variety of formats. We are looking for data to understand how processes of collective memory construction work--not for percentages of who believes what at a given moment in response to an identically-worded survey questionnaire administered by a stranger. We are exploring how memories are shaped over time, through exposure to many different messages and informal discursive networks. Our goal is not to achieve the authority of cause-and-effect studies but to provide tentative and limited answers.

In arguing for this methodology as a way to know what Argentines have done with the media in the realm of human rights issues, I rely on seminal work in the area of media reception studies.³ Research on the media effects on people switched from the *Hypodermic needle* concept, implying a quasi total power of the media over a passive public, to the idea of a powerful active audience that can barely be influenced. Today, the trend centers around how people make meaning when they interact with a diversity of media. In-depth research of the kind I am advocating, allows us to go more deeply into the social act of using media and provides ways of connecting the specificity of micro-contexts with the overall macro-context. In-depth interviewing and focus group discussions were the main components of my fieldwork.

Preliminary Notes from Fieldwork

Political Environment.

My fieldwork was conducted during May-August 1998 in the city of Buenos Aires, which, including its metropolitan area, was the site where more than 35% of Argentines lived. It was a very special moment to research collective memories of the dictatorship. Former dictator Videla was jailed because of his involvement in the kidnaping of babies born in captivity from prisoners who were then murdered or disappeared. Kidnaping and hiding of minors and change of civil status are crimes not contemplated by *Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida*, the laws that granted amnesty to those responsible for crimes against humanity.⁴ Therefore, the military can still be held accountable and prosecuted for these crimes. There was extensive media coverage of the

events, making headlines in the major newspapers (i.e., Clarín, La Nación, Página 12) and was discussed in television programs ranging from *Hora Clave*, the established news show conducted by Mariano Grondona-- a former supporter of the dictatorship who has recently expressed some repentance for his opinions during that period--, or the popular *Almorzando con Mirta Legrand*, conducted by an actress whose program has invited people to lunch and debate daily over the last thirty years.

Media coverage of the dictatorship, an issue that had been practically vanishing from the mainstream media, intensified after 1995, a year in which former navy officer Scilingo declared that political prisoners had routinely been thrown alive into the ocean. By 1998, the coverage continued to increase and other issues discussed included the trials against ranking Argentine military officers conducted in Spain and other European countries whose citizens had been mistreated or killed by the former dictatorship, debates over the revocation of amnesty laws, or the rebuttal to president Menem's controversial decree to turn a former concentration camp (ESMA) into a monument to National unity.⁵ Furthermore, since murderers and torturers are free, they had a presence in the streets and the television screens.⁵ As a result, Argentines are forced to co-exist with criminals and former victims sometimes meet face to face their former torturers (a reality comparable to the fiction in Ariel Dorfman's play *Death and the Maiden*) either in restaurants or on television.⁶

In short, at the time of my fieldwork, it was almost impossible for a person who watches television, listens to the radio, or reads some newspapers and magazines to be unaware of the human rights violations committed during the dictatorship or issues of legal retribution and impunity.

Methods of Inquiry

Over three months, I interviewed approximately sixty participants, aged 15 to 22 years old (fifteen years had passed since the return to civilian rule and twenty two since the military coup, hence the reason for the selection of this age-bracket to secure participants from different ages but who were born after the coup.) These participants belonged to several environments and social groups: college students, high school students from a variety of schools including public and private institutions, and employees. They comprise a community defined mainly by their age, the daughters and sons of a generation that experienced traumatic historical events. Access to them was provided by teachers, professors, friends, and colleagues. To contextualize my data, I also interviewed professors, human rights activists, and journalists, went to talks and lectures related to my topic, and, last but not least, participated in several human rights marches and demonstrations, including one that was brutally repressed by the police.⁷ I mention this incident as a reminder that, although of a different magnitude, human rights

violations were not a problem of the past. (An important difference is that scenes of police repression were also broadcast.)

I want to point out the multiplicity of sources but highlight that this is neither a statistically representative sample of Argentinean youth nor will my study claim to provide that. Some research methodologies require a representative sample from which generalizations can be drawn. But we do not generalize from this type of study and our interest in individual histories is a way to know about larger social, political, and cultural processes. The task is to demonstrate how these individual cases contribute to the larger picture, to build bridges between them and Argentine society. Thus, rather than identifying a typical informant we should ask how the informant fits into a larger scheme of things.

There is data that illustrates how certain ideas or discourses have been transmitted that can only be obtained with the methodology I am using. For example, polls reveal that a high percentage of Argentines want the military to be punished.⁸ But my respondents revealed the different meanings of punishment for some young people: death penalty, life-term, prosecute only those who gave orders--the first civilian administration's official discourse--, or even torture them to death. Rather than assessing who and how many believe in prosecution and punishment--crucial information indeed--we can detect how punishment is conceptualized. Thus, this methodology can also complement quantitative research by providing data that can become the grounds to design other studies.

I looked for how different versions of the human rights violations that took place during the dictatorship have been transmitted by the different media and appropriated by my participants. Hence, I aimed to observe a cultural and political process through people's accounts of their encounters with different texts and messages. I researched media reception by inquiring into participants' reactions, readings, and experiences when, for instance, they saw a particular movie, watched a television program, or read a book related to the dictatorship. My questions were open-ended and constantly strove to be sensitive to the moods and nuances of my respondents. When focus group sessions were conducted, I triggered topics for discussion and debate but tried to keep my participation at a minimum.

Because the topic is such a controversial, intense, and traumatic one, I was specially careful that participants would not fashion their answers in order to please me or avoid controversy. One of my typical initial questions was: how would you describe to a foreigner, who knows very little about this country, what happened here at the political and social level in the second half of the 1970s? In this way, I avoided labeling the period and allowed for any definition they wanted to give--i.e., *Adictadura*, *Aproceso*, *Aguerra sucia* (dictatorship, Process [of National Reconstruction], the name given by the military to this period, dirty war.)

The Media as a Means for Memory Transmission

Participants' recollections of how they learned about the dictatorship provided details on how collective memories are transmitted through three main sources of information: 1) the family, including extended family, friends, and different groups to which the person belongs--i.e., neighborhood, church; 2) education: text books, official and alternative curricula (Argentinean professors have great autonomy in deciding what and how they teach), and classmates; 3) the communication media: television, radio, press, film, music, demonstrations. These sources mix and overlap, becoming at times difficult to separate. The media emerged constantly as a reference for family conversations or what took place in the classroom.

Moreover, what people say about their media consumption habits is often contradicted by other statements they make. This is not usually because people lie but because it is hard to know and remember where and when we learned about something. These are considerations we have to keep in mind when doing this kind of study. For instance, some participants who told me that they watched television news everyday had no idea of events that have been extensively covered by the mainstream media at the time of my interviews. Or a person who affirmed that watching the news was not something that she did regularly would comment on the police repression of a human rights march repeating almost word for word the Chief of Police's version broadcast by the media: **A**They were repressed because they were throwing stones.⁹

In what follows, I briefly discuss how the communication media, mainly films and television programs, were quoted as sources of knowledge about the dictatorship and as discussion topics at home and the classroom. To better illustrate this, I concentrate on the film *La Noche de los Lápices*. Some words are necessary regarding the substantial differences between showing a film or watching a television program in a group, followed up by a debate, and my way of asking about a past event, which I was not present to observe, and whose account is tinted and filtered by the passage of time. In a sense, I am also talking of memories of encounters with the media. And we know that memories are subject to change and what people remember is not necessarily what happened. What happened to them at that time, that specific moment, is present only in their memories. Although it is important to remind ourselves of the limitations and problems involved in this kind of research, we need to see the relevance in listening to what people have to say on how they experienced--and remember--their learning of such a traumatic historical event. Also, this method allowed the incorporation of other voices, of what others who were with them at that time had commented about a film or television program.

The questions framed to explore exposure to, and reception of, different messages included: With whom have you talked about this period? What have you seen or read about it? Where? When? With whom? Why? What do you remember about that book,

film, or video? What did you learn? What was your reaction? Did you discuss this material with anybody? Their answers and comments showed very interesting angles on how the media played a role as a source of knowledge about the years of the dictatorship. Let me give some examples: **A**I was a little kid when the trials of the military junta were taking place and while they were commenting about them on television, my mother used to discuss with her father, my grandfather, who is kind of *gorila* (term used to describe reactionary and conservative people.)@**A**I have seen some videos on television, but I cannot remember their names.@ **A**Our teacher showed us a video and then we were asked to answer questions.@**A**I remember talking with my mother one day that they were going to show on television *La Noche de los Lápices*. She sat with me and my brother and gave us a little background of the events.@ Such references to television, videos, and films were constant.

Other remarks indicate the difficulties in categorizing television programs, films, or books as the media for the transmission of that period. **A***De alguna manera u otra, todas las películas argentinas tienen que ver con esa época*@(In some way, all Argentine films deal with this period) said one of my informants, noting how topics like fear, exile, or repression are recurrent and present in many films, even when the films are not explicitly dealing with the period. Moreover, her comments revealed a perception of both the different ways that the dictatorship affected the whole society, and how that is reflected in a broad variety of cultural products. This type of data is extremely useful to identify the various forms in which historical versions are being transmitted. It also shows the complexity of this kind of research and the emergence of elements of analysis that may not have been foreseen. This unpredicted information is what the chosen methodology can provide, something that could be lost when relying in standard survey questionnaires.

La Noche de los Lápices

I will now turn to the analysis of a particular media product, and its usage at the time of my research, namely *La Noche de los Lápices*. The film's title refers to the night (September 16, 1976) known as the **A**night of the pencils@when ten fine arts=teenager students--therefore the reason for **A**pencils@to name that night--who were activists and demanded a student bus fare were abducted by security forces.¹⁰ All of them were brutally tortured; three survived and the rest remain disappeared.¹¹ The events have become the symbol of military repression against students. Pablo Diaz, one of the survivors, collaborated with director Hector Olivera in the script for the film of the same name. It is a very intense and dramatic production that conveys in a very graphic way how state terrorism operated and its methods for the elimination of dissidents, who were all labeled as **A**subversive terrorists@for being involved in workers=organization, student activism, religious education, or armed struggle. It depicts fear and terror--paramilitary groups storming into houses in the middle of the night, torture, rape, murder,

disappearances. As mentioned, most participants referred to it and for some of them it was the only feature film that they had seen about this period.

Many are the reasons for its popularity. The first time that it was shown on television it reached an estimated audience of 4 million (more than 10% of the country's population.) It has been--and continues to be--rebroadcast in several occasions. It has become *the* film to show in schools, either by professors in their classes or in screenings organized by student centers, mainly because it is based on real facts and the protagonists are students, whose activism centered around their school activities. The young can certainly identify very well with the ordeal represented in it. The month of September marks the commemoration of the events of *La Noche de los Lápices* and it is the time of the year where, apparently, most schools have organized and continue to organize screenings. It is also the occasion of special marches and demonstrations.¹²

The Film as a Tool for Human Rights Education

What had the film to offer as an educational tool? Let us propose a set of guidelines to evaluate a cultural product for its relevance as a medium for human rights education.¹³ We could talk of a *human rights cinema*, meaning by this a cinema that is a tool for human rights education, a cinema with a political agenda with the goal of consciousness raising so people think, talk, organize, and act. It can be about past or current events, either to call for an end to violations or to remind society so they do not happen again.¹⁴ Among the issues to analyze in a human rights film we might include: who is the rapporteur(s) or the narrator(s); to whom is the film talking--its audience; which is the message and what are the central topics addressed; whose points of view are present; whose voices are heard; if it takes sides or aims to present an *objective* account; what are the historical background, context, and details provided; if there is identification of agents and structures that cause these violations; if it encourages reflection, critical analysis, discussion, further research, or action; who are presented as victims and who as victimizers; what is the position, if any, regarding accountability and justice; and what is absent from the story told.

Rather than beginning by personally analyzing the film, I want to share responses to the film from two of the most active human rights groups in Argentina: *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (mothers of *desaparecidos*) and H.I.J.O.S (An organization formed by daughters and sons--most of them now in their twenties--of either *desaparecidos*, murdered political activists, or activists forced into exile.) The acronym stands for *Hijos Por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (Daughters and Sons For Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence.) Both groups disagree with the film, with how the story is told. According to Juanita Pargament, one of the Mothers, they are producing a video that would offer an alternative to *La Noche de los Lápices*. It is my understanding that

their new video centers around the same events from a different perspective and is intended as a tool for educators and activists.

Members of H.I.J.O.S. have pointed out some specific details on what they see as questionable aspects of the film.¹⁵ They consider that the students' struggle for the reduced bus fare is presented as a project disconnected from a broader political movement.¹⁶ They think that the film fails to show that many struggles were taking place at different fronts, and that there were strong links and affiliations between the students' movement, political organizations, or workers' associations. It was not an isolated group of teenagers selected out of the blue for extermination but an organization that was part of a larger movement struggling for change and social justice, a movement that became the target of a repressive apparatus in a society that the military authorities had divided into either friends or foes, where the latter had to be eliminated. Another considerable problem that they see is the level of violence showed in the film and the too graphic scenes of torture. Although this level of brutality was a common element of what the military called counter-insurgency operations, members of H.I.J.O.S. feel that this show of horror may have a paralyzing effect on the audience. In other words, that after seeing this film many young people will think twice before becoming involved in any kind of activism.

The representation of violence and terror poses many problems: How much needs to be shown? What needs to be avoided? How graphic should the portrayal of violence be? Does *Amore* guarantee a stronger report? Should the violent horror of real life be softened for public screening? I do not think that we have yet answers for all these questions. Hebe de Bonafini, president of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, when asked how would she approach an educational strategy about this historical period, told me that she would be very careful in how she presents torture because graphic descriptions are not the most important and certainly not the first information that should be given to the young.¹⁷ In addition to the potential paralyzing effect, this show of terror may also have a saturating effect: how many times can a person read a description or see a representation of a torture? What are the effects of providing this information?¹⁸

So we know that the film, as evaluated by some human rights groups, has problems as an efficient tool for human rights education. We could continue to analyze its message, treatment, or the ideology behind it, even speculate that there is a reason to make it the most widely distributed film about the period, one to which young audiences can relate. One of the desired effects of showing the film could be to warn the young that they should not question the system or organize to change it. The film would be a reminder of what can happen if they dare to do so. But we cannot be so simplistic. Why the film has acquired this relevance is probably rooted in many factors, including that it is the only one centered on repression of students. And for some of the professors with whom I talked, it is therefore a valuable medium to discuss the dictatorship.

However, one of the key problems in communication is learning how people consume the messages to which they are exposed. Text analysis is only one step to understand the making of meaning in the complex process of production, distribution, and reception of a message. As we have noted, media reception studies are concerned with audiences= activity, with what people do with the media.¹⁹ What I want to do next is to comment on its reception according to what some participants have said. Their remarks shed light on the environments where the film has been seen and what were some of the reactions to it.

Watching *La Noche de los Lápices*

There are a wide range of reactions to the screening of the film, including emotional catharsis, comparisons to action films, and questions regarding its historical accuracy. Some people have told me that they cried throughout the screening and that they couldn't speak a word afterwards. Others closed their eyes to avoid watching some of the most graphic sequences. A young man, who insisted that he did not believe in politicians= words and promises or in what the media tell, found the film a credible and accurate testimony of the human rights violations that took place. He was shocked by the atrocities he saw because he realized that they really had happened. I have also heard statements that it is too sympathetic to the students, or that it conceals certain of the activities that went beyond agitating for a discounted bus fare--the perception that shows only one angle of their activism compares to how members of HIJOS analyze the film.

But for some participants there was not a clear connection between what the film portrays and the historical events. For them, the film became another action thriller and they could not engage with it in the sense of seeing it as a representation of repression targeted to people who could be their peers. This association needs to be analyzed more deeply. It can be a sign of denial, the effects of extensive exposure to violence in the screens, or both. At this point, I have no answers regarding this. Some participants had seen this film more than once, including watching it alone at home when their relatives were not there because the parents had not allowed them to see it arguing that they were not ready for it. We wonder if the parents were not the ones who strongly resisted talking with their children about the dictatorship, how they had lived during it, why it happened, where they stand in relation to it.

If a film is used to educate about a historical period, what we talk or write about what we watch becomes as important as the screening itself. Critical analysis of a text allows the audience to deepen their knowledge about the period, identify the perspective from which the story is told and those who benefit from a particular version of events, connect it with a broader historical context and, in this specific case, evaluate its relevance for human rights education. Judging from my interviews, what has resulted during group screenings at schools has varied depending, among other things, on the ability of a professor or organizer to lead a debate or question and answer session.

Some accounts reveal intense discussions among students who had different versions of what happened during the dictatorship, probably resulting from what they have been told by their families. There was also the situation of students for whom this was one of the first encounters with a part of history mostly unknown to them. In other cases, the film was shown *Acold,* without an introduction providing contextual information or a follow-up discussion. I have been told the case of a teenager who, after the screening, visibly shocked, stood up and with tears in her eyes told her classmates and the professor that her aunt had been disappeared and that what had happened to thousands of people was terrible, only to be told by the professor that that was not the time and the place to discuss it. When, if not on that occasion, is the first question that comes to mind. But the episode provides an example of how school screenings may be sometimes an imposition from higher authorities and not an individual decision from a teacher, and also an indication of how unprepared is the society to address this past honestly.

Conclusion

In this presentation, I sought to provide an overview of my project to explore Argentineans' collective memories of the dictatorship and the theoretical framework and methodology required for this kind of study. To illustrate what it means to research content and sources of memories, while identifying ways in which the communication media shape these memories, I gave some details on the way I conducted my fieldwork and noted how the media in general and a film in particular emerged constantly as sources of knowledge about the dictatorship. My preliminary findings confirm that we need to consider the media's role in processes of construction and transmission of collective memories. Also, that we cannot isolate the media from other contexts, but rather, we must look at how different messages serve to create and enlarge alternative public spheres, within the family, the school, or the neighborhood. In the specific case of post-dictatorial Argentina, it seems that, for some young people, the media provide essential historical references. As the title of our panel states, they are *foros de la realidad social*.

Notes

1. See, among others, Burke, 1989; Fentress & Wickham, 1992; Halbwachs, 1980, 1982; Huyssen, 1995; Jing, 1996; Nora, 1989; Páez et al., 1997; Popular Memory Group, 1982; Sturken, 1997
2. See, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966); American Convention on Human Rights. Pact of San Jose (1969); United Nations General Assembly Declaration on Disappearances (1992); Vienna Declaration (1993); Interamerican Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons (1994)
3. See, Ang, 1996; Katz, 1996; Lull, 1988; Morley, 1992; Moores, 1993; Radway, 1984.
4. Law No. 23493 (12/23/86), known as *Punto Final* (Full Stop), established that criminal prosecutions against the military were extinguished after sixty days of promulgation of the law. It does not cover the crimes of change of civil status and kidnaping and hiding of minors. *Obediencia Debida* (Due Obedience) Law No. 23521, (6/4/87), provided that torturers and murderers--except top Chiefs--were exempt from punishment by virtue of having followed orders from their superiors. The law does not cover theft, rape, change of civil status, and stealing of babies born in captivity, as those crimes are not considered to be included in orders.
5. For presence of former agents of repression in television programs see Claudia Feld's *El relato del horror en la television: los represores tienen la palabra* in *La Cultura en la Argentina de fin de siglo, ensayos sobre la dimension cultural* Mario Margulis y Marcelo Urresti compiladores, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1997; and Marguerite Feitlowitz's *A Lexicon of Terror*. New York, Oxford, 1998
6. The latter being a sign of some journalists' concern for a distorted concept of *Objectivity* based on presenting *All sides*, including the presence of torturer and tortured person in the same program and, more worrisome, a naturalization of the reality of living with criminals.
7. The *escrache* by H.I.J.O.S. to former navy torturer Peyon on July 15, 1998. See below for information on the group. *Escraches* are demonstrations organized outside the homes where former torturers and assassins live. The goal is the social condemnation of the criminals by symbolically *marking* their homes and telling the neighborhood who is living there.
8. A recent poll (July, 1998) by Hugo Haime y Asociados found that 85% of those aged 18-29 years think that former dictator Videla must remain in prison. (Página 12, 7/20/98,

p.7)

9. I participated in that march. For what I saw, and according to other participants, not a single stone was thrown by demonstrators.

10. The night of the disappearance of several lawyers who defended political activists or worked in human rights is known as **A**the night of the ties.@

11. For a detailed account of the ordeal, see La Noche de los Lápices, Maria Seoane and Hector Ruiz Nuñez, Editorial Contrapunto, Buenos Aires

12. For instance, in September 1996, to commemorate twenty years of that night, 8,000 thousand students marched in a demonstration to the Government Palace. A main speaker was one of the survivors, Emilce Moler, who after twenty years of **A**internal exile@and silence came public in order to keep alive the memory of past atrocities.

13. The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education was launched on January 1, 1995. The goal of human rights education is human rights literacy, or the dissemination of theoretical and practical information, to all individuals, that any deprivation of basic rights is a violation to their human rights. Human rights educators claim that consciousness raising about fundamental rights is a process of empowerment and that individuals aware of their rights become better citizens. Thus, these programs are seen as tools for the development of civil society and the strengthening of democracy.

14. The content of human rights cinema can be as varied as political repression, violence against women, racial discrimination, or the plight of starving **A**street children.@ Probably the best examples can be found among the films showcased at the annual Human Rights Watch Film Festival. Throughout the years, the festival has dealt with a broad variety of human rights issues, with works by directors from around the world, both in fictional and documentary genres. Their web site is: <http://www.hrw/iff.htm>

15. I had many conversations with several members of the group during June and July, 1998.

16. In a recent interview, Emilce Moler, one of the survivors, states that they were all members of the UES, Union de Estudiantes Secundarios, and that she believes that they were taken away for their political activities beyond the struggle for the reduced bus fare.

Página 12 on-line

(www.pagina12.com.ar) (9/15/98.)

17. Interview with Hebe de Bonafini, July, 1998

18. Commenting on the report of the commission of disappeared people, which was a detailed description of life in the concentration camps, Graciela de Jeger, one of the Mothers, has noted that: **A**The book was paralyzing because they describe all this horror and they don't give a way out**@**(Fisher, 1989:131.)

19. See, Ang, 1996; Katz, 1996; McQuail, 1993; Morley, 1992; Moores, 1993. Pioneer studies include: Ang's **A**Watching Dallas,**@**Katz's **A**Dallas,**@**Lull et al.'s **A**Families Watch TV,**@**Morley's **A**Nationwide,**@**Radway's **A**Reading the Romance,**@**and research on women's consumption of soap-operas as in the work of Mary Ellen Brown, Dorothy Hobson, and Andrea Press.

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