

## Final Narrative Report

### **Research Activities:**

#### **March-May 2005**

- Initial meetings with Dr. Salomon Magendzo, director of the School of Psychology of the University Academy of Christian Humanism to discuss beginning of the project and coordination of activities
- Meetings with Mr. Jorge Pantoja, is a psychologist and university professor, who was assigned by the School of Psychology to work with me during the selection process conducting the participants' interviews, and during the workshop as co-facilitator.
- Conducted a pilot project where Mr. Pantoja and I interviewed two young people who had participated in a hunger strike. Transcription and analysis of material and wrote a joint paper entitled “ *Body and Mourning: Political practices of oblivion and memory* *Cuerpo y Duelo: Practicas políticas del olvido y la memoria* “.
- Presented paper at the Conference of the International Association for Counseling “expanding the counseling profession within a context of profound and ongoing change” in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 2005
- Read related literature, attended conferences and events, contacted people for advisory committee.

#### **June – August 2005**

- Contacted participants.
- Schedule and conducted individual interviews of possible participants.
- Review of relevant literature.

#### **August-September**

- During the months of August and September I conducted 6 artistic workshops where I gathered the data. I had originally planned 5 workshops, however due to the interest in

the topic and the need and desire of the participants to complete the artistic piece they were making I had to add an extra workshop in order for them to complete their work.

### **October – January 2006**

- Transcription of the material gathered in the six workshops
- Preliminary analysis of the material.
- Review of relevant literature
- Rewriting of dissertation chapters
- Meetings with advisory committee

### **February – May**

- Review of relevant literature
- Rewriting of dissertation chapters
- Meetings with advisory committee
- Analysis of data
- Compiling and writing of initial research findings
- IDRC report writing

### **June**

- Presentation of paper with preliminary findings entitled “*The political body as resistance and healing*”, *El Cuerpo Político como Resistencia y Sanación*” at the IV World Congress on Traumatic Stress “ Trauma and Community; Global Perspectives and responses for a better world”, in Buenos Aires, June 24, Argentina.

### **July**

- Interviews with individual participants
- Transcription of interviews
- Preliminary analysis of data

## Narrative Report

### **Introduction**

The purpose of my doctoral research is to further our knowledge of people's responses to institutionalized violence, and other intentionally caused traumatic experiences. In this study I seek to understand the processes by which people developed individual and group non-violent responses to denounce and resist the violence of the dictatorship in Chile by transforming their bodies into sites of resistance and memory. These resistance practices included among other things: people chaining themselves to public structures, engaging in hunger strikes, blocking traffic with their bodies while singing a song about freedom or forming spontaneous human chains to stop the arrest and possible death of someone. This movement into action also included the use of the body as a memory site to remember those who have been disappeared or killed by the dictatorship. This process of memorialization of the body is clearly represented by the relatives of the disappeared and their use of a picture of their loved ones pinned to their hearts.

This research project explores the active participation of HIJOS, a group of young people whose parents and relatives were "disappeared" and "executed" by the military, who engage in practices of resistance and memory as a way of denouncing impunity and demanding justice from the current democratic governments.

The study explores the following research questions: (1) How do HIJOS, a group of children of the disappeared, use their bodies as a site of resistance and enactment of collective memory? (2) How do these young people understand and make meaning of the value of these practices of resistance and memory in their ongoing effort to promote democracy? (3) What is the therapeutic value of exploring these practices through a series of creative workshops?

The research objectives are the following (a) to increase knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of those participating in practices of resistance and memory; (b) to investigate the personal and collective meaning of these practices; (c) to determine the healing value of these practices for those who still participate in them; (d) to pilot an innovative workshop method to explore the therapeutic value of using expressive art as a means of exploration collective healing; (e) to empower the participants by exploring and validating their experiences in these practices of resistance and memory; (f) to explore the trans-generational

effects of socio-political trauma; (g) to involve these young people and community members in public discussions about the value of memory as a way of understanding and transforming past traumatic experiences; (h) this study will allow us to identify gender differences in the way these young people understand and make meaning of peace-building and healing processes; (i) a gendered understanding of these practices of resistance and memory will inform community discussions and future curricula development about historical memory.

### **Participants**

The participants are ten young people: five men and five women. Their ages range between 29 – 34 years of age. All of them have secondary education and most of them have graduated from university or in the process of completing their university undergraduate and graduate degrees. All of them are members of HIJOS, a group of young people who are sons, daughters or relatives of disappeared, or executed prisoners.

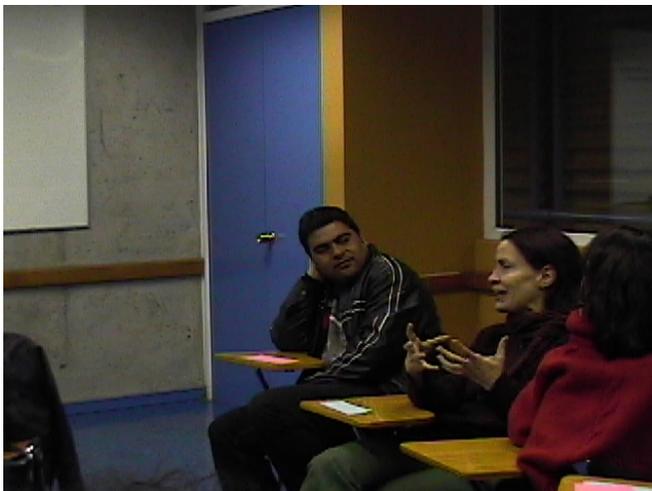
### **Methodology**

The design I have developed to answer the research questions is Liberatory Action Research. This method draws from the main premises of pedagogy of the oppressed developed by Paulo Freire; liberation psychology developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró; participatory action research developed by Orlando Fals-Borda; and theater of the oppressed developed by Augusto Boal. The main premise of these approaches is the promotion of collective processes of knowledge and meaning generation through the on-going reflective practices that attempt to uncover sources of local knowledge and by doing so to empower the participants. Therefore, the research process becomes a dialectical activity where the ideas, knowledge, and experiences of both the participants and researcher enrich each other's experiences and understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

The exploration of these practices of resistance and memory and their meaning was carried out through the implementation of a series of workshops that use artistic expressions such as writing, theatre of the oppressed, and collage to explore how these young adults continue to use their bodies as a site of memory and resistance.

## Session one: Introductory Workshop (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

This first workshop was designed to build group safety through games and exercises aiming at developing trust in each other, the facilitators and the group process. This first meeting included a section where we discussed the participants' initial ideas about memory and resistance. These initial notions proved to be key elements to assess the growth in their understanding and awareness of these concepts throughout the study.



## **Session two: Memory Workshop (August 12, 2005)**

The objective of this workshop was to start the reconstruction and exploration of the concept of collective historical memory through individual and collective narratives, in order to set up the context for the embodied exploration of this concept.

The main exercise of this workshop is called the “memory container.” The participants were asked to imagine a big memory container that was located outside of the room and that contains all the memories of our collective past. Once participants were able to visualize the container, they were guided to bring it in, to open it up and to imagine and to search for visual memories, objects, letters, music, people that are part of our individual and collective memory that live in that container. Then they were asked to choose from those memories one image that represents their past. Once they identified that image they were asked to feel it with all their senses until they were immerse in that memory. Once they had a clear image in their mind, participants were brought back out of the visualization to the room and to debrief the experience by allowing whoever was ready to share that image with the group. After that they were given some guideline to write a narrative of that image. There was also a long piece of cardboard on the floor that represented a “timeline”, that was marked with different dates such as 70’s, 80’s 90’s. Once they completed their narratives, they were asked to identify the period, in which this memory was created, to place themselves on the timeline and to read their story from that position to the rest of the group. Following this part, they were asked to draw, paint and decorate the timeline. After the exercise was completed, there was a period of analysis and debriefing of the experience.

## Workshop # 2



### **Session three: Liberating our Bodies (August 19, 2005)**

The use of the body through techniques drawn from theater of the oppressed was the focus of the third workshop. The objective of this session was to introduce the participants to some exercises that bring them into contact with their bodies in order to explore the concept of resistance.

The main exercise used in this workshop was *the sculptor and clay*. Participants were asked to visualize an image related to how they have used their bodies, or seen others to resist during the dictatorship. Then they broke up into pairs. In each pair one person was the "clay" and the other the "sculptor". The sculptor works with the "clay" to form a statue, which represents that memory of resistance. The sculptor did not talk or explain the image or the feelings associated with it; rather she/he used the body of the other person to embody it. The statue then comes to life and acts out what they think the memory of the "sculptor" is telling them, based on their bodily understanding of it. Then, both clay and sculptor debrief the experience and then switch roles. After they finished the exercise, they were asked to talk about the memories they created and feelings experienced and construct a sculpture based on their common experience of being part of each other's memory. Once each participant had created a sculpture, the participants were divided into two groups. The first one represented the sculpture that had been constructed with their bodies, while the second group observed and analyzed them individually and as a group sculpture focusing on similarities and differences. Then they switched roles. The session finished with a group sculpture where each member was asked to find a comfortable place within the group structure. Once the group sculpture was done they were asked to pretend they were part of a big machine and to perform a sound or noise and a movement related to the image they were representing. The sculpture then came to life to represent the experience of individual and collective resistance. Polaroid pictures were taken throughout the workshop for later use.

### Workshop # 3



#### **Session four and five: Memorializing the Body (August 24, and September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005)**

The purpose of these workshops was to integrate the lived experiences of resistance and memory they experimented with through the construction of sculptures to the notion of the body as a site of memory.

For this workshops the participants were given in advance a disposable camera and they were asked to take pictures that represent their personal or collective embodied experience of the dictatorship. The pictures were developed by the facilitators and given to the participants on the day of the workshop. They were also asked to bring memory objects such as letters, music, poems or a piece of their writing and anything else they find relevant to make a personal memory collage. All the group pictures taken in previous workshops were also available to the participants to use in this exercise as well as crayons, paint, ribbons, shells and other objects to be used in their collage. Participants were also given a large size image of a human being on a piece of white wood. The participants had been previously asked to think of a posture for this image. They decided that it should represent a genderless person with one hand reaching down as if it was holding a child, and the other hand extended up as if it was reaching for a hand. Based on their understanding of memory and resistance as an embodied experience they were asked to represent them by placing these objects onto the figure.

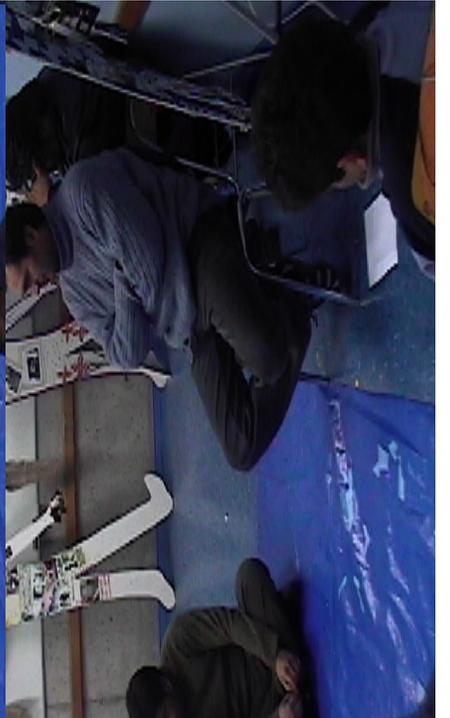
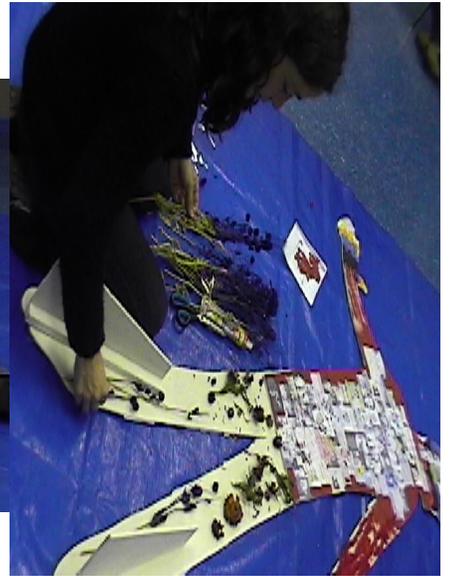
During this workshops the participants, were incredibly involved and animated and also frustrated because they did not had enough time to finish their work, so they asked for an extra session. Therefore, a new session was added the following week.

Once they completed their individual pieces they were asked to place the figures forming a line up in order to analyze them first individually and later collectively. The analysis part of the session focused on the meaning of memory that they found in each individual piece and in the collective construction. At the end of the workshop they were asked to participate in a collective representation of memory by holding their images as a group sculpture. The workshop finished with a debriefing of their feelings and emotions brought up by creating their images.

## Workshop # 4



# Workshop # 5



### **Session six: Moving into Action (September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005)**

The purpose of this workshop was to integrate the use of the body and memory to acknowledge and honor the individual and group experience in the workshops. We attempted to accomplish this by creating an artistic piece that in turn represents a collective memory of the experience of participating in this series of workshops.

This closing session incorporated some techniques of theatre of the oppressed, as well as drawing, painting, and writing. First the participants were asked to use their bodies to represent one feeling associated with their experience of being in the workshops. The facilitators then took a Polaroid picture of that individual image. A group picture was also taken. In the second part of the workshop people were given a large paper flower petal and their Polaroid picture to be glued onto it. The group picture was glued to a large circle representing the centre of the flower. People were asked to use their individual petals to draw, paint or write those elements that have helped them in the workshops or the meaning or feelings they had experienced. In the third part of the workshop the participants sat together on the floor in a circle with the centre of the flower that contains the group picture. The following part was a game similar to musical chairs. As music was played, the participants were asked to draw, paint or write what they had in their mind in relation to the collective experience of the five workshops on the centre of the flower. When the music stopped people moved to the seat next to them and continued what the other person was doing or did something new. The exercise continued until people were back to their original position. At the end of this exercise each individual petal was glued to the centre of the flower. The analysis and debriefing session focused on the total experience of the six workshops and the collective experience of creating memory and meaning as well as their emotional experience during the process.

# Workshop # 6



## **Data Collection**

The material gathered during the workshop represent a first level of data gathering. I have also keep a journal with notes from each workshop with my impressions. I have also asked my co-facilitator to write notes and keep a journal. His insights and opinions have helped me expand my understanding of the process.

A second level of the data collection process involves individual and group interviews. These individual and group interviews focus on three areas: (a) their reflective understanding and experience of using their body as a site of resistance and memory; (b) the personal meaning they assign to these practices; and (c) people's experience of participating in these workshops. I used a semi-structured interview format where I asked questions to help the interviewees' access their emotional, cognitive and bodily experience and the meaning making process associated with it. The individual interview process is expected to be completed by the end of July.

In the group interview, participants will be asked to talk about their individual experiences. By sharing their experiences, the group will construct a "cultural group narrative" which is the sum of the experiences presented in the group session. This refers to the specific characteristics of the participants such as: the common cultural and social background, the traumatic experiences lived during the dictatorship, the loss of their parents, the traumatic memories of those events, but also their experiences in using their bodies in resisting and creating memory. The group interview is not completed yet, but it is schedule to take place by the end of July, beginning of August. After that I will be able to complete the data analysis and begin writing the final results and conclusions.

## **Preliminary Analysis**

A preliminary analysis was conducted using four interpretive readings. The first reading looks at all those elements that reflect or speak to their embodied experience of resistance, that is images, sensations, memories. The second reading looks at those elements that describe their experience or understanding of using the body as a site of memory. The third reading focuses on the participant's meaning assigned to these two experiences of the body that is, as a site of resistance and memory. This analysis concentrates on their personal meaning as well as meaning in relation to others (family, friends, or society in general). In this context, the analysis also focuses on relations of power as they pertain to oppression, racism, sexism etc. I will also

include an analysis of voice in the narratives (self-silencing, implicit messages, cultural discourses involved in the narratives (e.g. dominant narratives, etc). The fourth interpretive reading analyzes those elements that describe the overall experience during their participation in the workshops. The four types of reading mentioned above were applied to the transcribed data gathered in the six workshops and in the individual interviews.

## **Preliminary Results**

The following summary of findings is divided in two sections in order to illustrate the changes the participants experienced in their understanding and awareness of the two main themes of this study: memory and resistance. The first section is a review of the opening introductory section, where we discussed and analyzed their initial understandings and ideas about memory and resistance. The second section is a compilation of their comments and reflections throughout the workshops.

## **SECTION I**

A preliminary analysis of the participant's understandings of the notion of memory suggests an elaborated conceptualization of how memory has inhabited different aspects of their lives throughout their lifetime. The memories of their disappeared or executed parents or relatives have been changing according to their particular needs, social responsibilities and personal healing desires.

### **Fragmented personal and family memories**

For most of them the lack of personal knowledge about their parents had a profound influence on how they had to deal with their death or disappearance. Most have very few or no personal pictures, objects or mementos of their parents. They feel they did not even know what they were like, who their friends were, what their favorite color was, or what kind of food they liked. In addition, the surviving parent or relatives avoided conversations or memories of them in an attempt to protect the children from the pain; because they believed the children would not understand; or due to their emotional inability to deal with their own pain, the fragility of their own memories, or the consequences of torture or exile. Besides, the political climate of terror, financial insecurity and collective silencing influenced the fragmentation of these memories.

This general atmosphere of silence and fear led the participants to wish they could have just “normal” regular memories of their deceased parents or relatives, “just like other kids who had lost their parents to cancer or who were killed in a car accident”. They wanted desperately to fit with the rest, or to be accepted by their peers. However, some of them experienced discrimination or were even expelled from school since they were seen as political or dangerous because they were children of the disappeared. This situation is defined by them as an “stigmatized identity” that was worst for the children of those emblematic and well-known political leaders, since their children were recognized publicly by their last names.

### **Memory as fantasy and imagination**

The impossibility to adjust to a “normal” family life led them to resort to fantasy and imagination to deal with these abnormalities. One of the participants decided at a very early age to tell his friends or people he just met that his father had died of a heart attack, or that he was working in a far away city and he even resorted to make a hand-made card for father’s day just to avoid giving explanations about his father disappearance. The ambiguity of not knowing whether his father was dead or alive aside from the fear of being discriminated seems to be the cause of the contradictory information he provided to people.

This generalized lack of personal information about their parent or relatives also led other participants as they were growing up to try to get to know them by imagining what their parent or relatives would do, feel or think as they confronted changes, fears and insecurities in their personal development. One participant believes that this way of trying to understand her relatives’ decisions and social and political involvement allowed her to gain a bigger sense of social consciousness about the injustices her relatives were fighting against.

### **Socio-political memories**

For many the fragmentation and lack of memories and personal information about their parents and relatives led them to a personal search through their political work and commitment. In this process they were able to begin filling the gaps in their memories, by incorporating information, interpretations, opinions and memories of friends, neighbors, or other political militants. This *public memory* of who their parents were was also supported and maintained through time by the public discourse about the innocent martyrs and heroes, who were victims of

the dictatorship. This public memory also included national and foreign icon figures such as Fidel Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara, Pablo Neruda, and other Chilean artists and leaders who were killed by the military. As adults they are aware that they needed this public social memory to complement and complete the image of who their parents and relatives were and how and why they chose a social and political cause.

It is in this context that the use of the body acquires special significance given the fact that many of these practices of memory and resistance were performed on the streets or in public places. They included chaining themselves to buildings, using their bodies as human shields to protect people from being arrested or participating in hunger strikes. Their bodies were then used as a living symbol, or a materialization of the body of their disappeared or executed parent or relative. Therefore, their parents and relatives became an icon of the socio political memories of a whole generation embodied in the living bodies of these young people.

### **Memory as social responsibility**

They also feel they have a social responsibility as sons, daughters and relatives to validate and vindicate the social image of their relatives due to the widespread image created by the military that portrayed them as subversives, enemies of the country, and members of an international communist conspiracy. At the time the military also denied the disappearances arguing that these terrorists were irresponsible parents who abandoned the country or who left their families because they had a second family. At a more personal level they feel a deep sense of loyalty to continue the social and political work of their parents, although they agree that this has not been a personal choice, but rather, one that was somehow imposed on them by family, friends, society, and by a sense of moral obligation. This contradiction seems to harbor deep feelings of discomfort and even anger because for many of them this was not a political choice they would have made were their parents and relatives alive. These feelings are also compounded by a sense of being neglected and abandoned by their parents because they chose a political cause over a family life.

### **Memory formation as a cognitive process**

At a cognitive level the participants report having a hard time understanding how memories were formed since it is difficult for them to distinguish which memories were their

own and which ones are a composite of the memories, anecdotes and stories of others that they have internalized as their own. This memory process is further complicated by the fact that the memories transmitted to them by family members and friends are mediated by a sense of justification, that is, an attempt to rationalize their parents' and relatives' disappearance or killings. Some of them only have pictures that were taken four or five years before they were killed or disappeared which makes their memory process even harder. Most of them agreed that they do not have memories before the age of eight and only have what they call "*flashes of memories*". But even these flashes or nebulous memories are difficult to classify whether they are their own or somebody else's.

### **Resistance**

This part of the analysis looks at their understanding of the concept of resistance in their lives. All of them agree that to be part of HIJOS, that is to get together, to share memories, to feel accepted and validated by their peers since they all have similar life experiences represents the most important form of resistance in their lives. This form of resistance is understood, as "not feeling alone in the world" because they often feel people do not want to hear them talk about their personal story, not even their closest friends. They also get some sense of power and control by being part of the group and by acting collectively.

At a personal level resistance is understood and experienced as the capacity to develop as a happy person, to have children, to enjoy them, to have friends and family. But most importantly to be happy because "*happiness is part of the present*"

### **Humor as resistance**

Humor, particularly black, sarcastic, humor has also been an important part of their emotional resistance. It has been a resource used to avoid pain and to feel damaged when confronted with so much political violence. This form of black humor has developed into a form of "common language" among the group, that is understood by all of them and that relates to the shared experience they live. However, this particular form of relating was very difficult to understand and assimilate by a member, who grew up in Holland, where laughing about one's own pain is not common. However, it is important for them to clarify that black humor is not part of their lives at every moment. They resort to it when they feel the circumstance requires it

in order to be able to handle a dramatic or painful situation. In those situations humor allows them to regain control and to take some distance to reflect, “it allows you to look from the outside”, therefore black humor is part of their story that becomes useful when confronted with something that is difficult to look at or to speak about.

### **Solidarity as a form of resistance**

Solidarity is also experienced as a form of resistance among themselves. Solidarity for them is understood as the capacity to support each other, to be able to talk, cry and laugh together because they do not often find this type of support from other people. Therefore, one of the main goals of HIJOS as an organization is to provide a space for people who have similar experiences and who feel misunderstood or segregated.

## **SECTION II**

### **Expanding the meaning of memory**

There seems to be a clear sense of progression in their understanding and meaning of the idea of memory since the beginning of the project. This is evidenced by their own reflections about how the use of art has allowed them to increase the understanding and the meaning of memory. Talking, thinking and doing things like the collage on the human figures made with their own hands has allowed them to see and understand memory as something much bigger, ever-changing and fluid.

### **Childhood**

Childhood seems to be for all of them, the place/space from which their memories emerge and where they travel back in their memories when they begin to remember their past. Memory is then, as mentioned by one of them “like a door, that you can open from the present in order to look at the past pain”. Childhood represents that space that was disrupted by the traumatic events in their lives. Therefore, their memories are also divided between the normal happy childhood memories and the painful ones after the disappearance and killings of their parents and relatives.

## **Objects of memory**

Specific objects that trigger explicit childhood memories appear in the narrative of some participants. Objects such as a little green dress with white polka dots represents for a woman the beginning of the end of a happy period in her life and the beginning of the rupture of her family after her relatives were taken prisoners and killed. For this participant, the little dress appears as the loss of her childhood innocence. While for another participant, the memory of his grandfather's glasses brought him back to the time after his father was disappeared, when he lived with his grand parents. A time he describes as "happy" because he (the grandfather) symbolizes "my whole family, my beginnings in politics, and the most important person between the ages of 4 and 14. He represented the father that was gone." Another participant remembers a purple cassette that was recorded by her parents with their voices singing lullabies, and children's songs. This object embodies "a piece of them" and one of the very few memories of her mother before she was killed. A young man recalls his father's \* Mapuche poncho\*, that his father was wearing when he was detained. This object is of great significance for him, since it appears years later in the narration of another political prisoner who saw his father wearing it at a torture center. It is through this narrative that he manages to gather pieces of information in order to know the last days of his father before he disappeared. The poncho also has a lot of cultural meaning for him because it represents the resistance of the Mapuche culture and people, and the consciousness of mother earth.

\*Mapuche people are one of the biggest and most important indigenous groups of Chile.

## **Places of memory**

For some participants, memory inhabits specific places that are full of meaning and feelings. One participant speaks of the symbolic and real meaning of the bedroom where his father was taken from when he was arrested, which is the same one where his grandfather died, and where he currently lives. For another participant an important memory is the house where he lived with his parents before his father disappeared. The house represents the memories of a "normal childhood", "a happy united family" that is " a memory of happiness". However, this house has another painful meaning; "the break produced by the coup d'etat" which meant the

fragmentation of the family and the disappearance of the father. For him the house symbolizes a combination of feelings is “the symbol of happiness, fear, and sadness.”

For another participant specific places have helped her find a connection with her disappeared father. She chose the Faculty of Education of a local university to study education because it was the same place where his father studied. She chose that place to search for the same physical space that his father walked and enjoyed. This experience has many meanings for her. It means to find a part of herself that had been lost for many years, and it also means a fusion between her own story and her father’s story. She still experiences a sense of belonging, grounding and warmth when she walks through that place, even though she graduated many years ago.

Another participant shares a similar experience of profound connection with her dead father. In her case, as a little girl, she used to accompany her father to paint political murals in different parts of the city. Her connection with her father is a combination of the memories and feelings of these places and her love for painting and art. In fact, this early experience led her to choose art as a career and she became a painter and ceramist.

### **The body as a site of memory**

This section summarizes the participants’ reflections of the body as a site of memory. The information has been gathered from the second interpretive reading compiled from all the workshops and in particular the two workshops where the participants made a collage with a wooden human figure.

Most of them agreed that the act of remembering is a process that involves the whole body and that includes feelings like anger, sadness, happiness; sensations like lightness, and heaviness but also mild bodily pains. Therefore, in order to fully embrace this process one needs to open up to many uncertainties and also possibilities, given that it is not known what will emerge. For one participant the initial bodily pain of working with memories gave way to a sense of “liberation” as if something heavy that had been stored for a long time was lifted. Once these sensations were released she was able to open up to happier memories.

The senses are also involved in the act of remembering and giving meaning to memories. For one participant the collection of pictures that she included in her collage had a great visual

impact, which led her to reflect, and became aware that her memory is constructed of images, sounds and some other aspects of her senses. For another participant, pleasant memories came as the smell of his grandfather's dry-cleaned jacket, and the happy sensations he felt as a child in his presence.

The creation of the collage using a wooden figure and different memory objects seems to have been one of the most enlightening exercises, since it allowed them to explore a human body image where they placed objects, not necessarily making the connection about the meaning involved in this exercise. It was not until the images were ready and analyzed individually and as a group that the new meaning and understandings became more obvious. One of the findings was that act of remembering is an emotional process that involves emotions and cognitions. The first part of the body that is activated seems to be the stomach area, which is where most of them felt "vague sensations, like butterflies" then the brain is activated by transforming these sensations into images or memories that once they are interpreted as positive or negative help to clarify the meaning attached to them. It is not surprising then that the objects most people place at the stomach level represented memories of either painful or sad memories. While those placed on the head of the image were in general more conceptual or cognitive in meaning such as pictures of representatives of political ideologies like Karl Marx, or Fidel Castro. Furthermore, the images people placed at the heart level were in general the ones that represented their loved ones, like children, spouses, friends or their lost parents and relatives.

Additionally, it was quite surprising for the participants to realize that most of them chose the front part of the image to represent their "public memories" that is, those memories that represent their parents, relatives or their socio political memories while they opted for the back of the image to place their own private memories. These private or more personal memories are those of their own lives, they represent their dreams and hopes for the future.

This exercise was identified as the most helpful in allowing them to recognize their own process of understanding how memories are constructed, experienced and lived in their bodies as well as the different meanings one can derive from them. Many of them become conscious that their own lives had been placed on a second place while their political lives had taken a primary public place.

## **Expanding the meaning of resistance**

This section explores the participants' development of the concept of resistance from the initial workshop and throughout the study. The initial examination of the concept of resistance was restricted to ideas related to developing friendships, trust, feeling and expressing love, forming a family, having children, enjoying live, using black humor and different forms of solidarity. However, throughout the research process these ideas began to expand and new ones emerged.

Emotional resistance was identified as an important form of survival and coping with the ongoing impotence they experienced growing up. They identified two forms of resistance: one that is more confrontational, and involves the body; and another that is more contained, more personal that involves controlling emotions and that aims at protecting oneself from emotional pain. Moreover, one participant adds another aspect to the different forms of resistance, for him resistance is related to a more spiritual, or mystical dimension, which means being able to control your own energy, without hurting others, but also without allowing others to hurt you. Consequently, spirituality is for him a form of resistance.

## **The body as a site of resistance**

Through the exploration of the body the participants realized that there were many postures and gesture that they developed as children and that represented a form of resistance. These gestures showed them in positions that symbolize, fear, insecurity, and desperation, or the need to hide into themselves as a form of protection. Other body figures represented somebody protecting somebody else with their bodies, or with a gun.

For others resistance was characterized symbolically as a flower with big petals that represents life, growth, change, and hope. Other people chose to represent the lives or work of other people who resisted with their bodies. For one participant resistance was embodied in the image of the women of the Association of Relatives of the Politically Executed. These women defy the police in public protests with their bodies covered with a Chilean flag. Furthermore, the death of Sebastian Acevedo stands as a symbol of strength. On November 11, 1983, Sebastian Acevedo, a fifty-year-old worker and member of the Chilean Communist Party, sprayed his clothes with gasoline, shouting that his disappeared children should be freed, or at least taken to trial. He then, set himself on fire and died eight hours later. He destroyed his own body in an act

of despair and love. His martyrdom not only shocked the Chilean public but also forced the authorities to release his daughter and son. His death prompted the organization of a group called El Movimiento contra la Tortura Sebastián Acevedo (The Sebastián Acevedo Movement against Torture). The actions of this group also used the body as their main symbol of resistance. Members chained themselves to structures, blocked traffic with their bodies, and engaged in hunger strikes. This example of resistance set by Sebastian Acevedo and the Movement that ensued, is without doubt perceived by the participants as a sublime form of opposition, the ultimate form of protest, that inspired them and others to use their bodies as a site of resistance.

In general, they agreed that the workshops allowed them to expand their views on what resistance is and means for each one of them. This reflection made them realized that different forms of resistance have been present in their lives since a very early age even though they were not aware at the time. They concluded then that resistance can be both physical and emotional and it is greatly influenced by the collective as well as their own need to protect themselves.

### **Preliminary Conclusions**

The first step of the data gathering process was undertaken over a period of two month (August-September 2005) and consisted of six workshops of four hours each. The development of the research study clearly reflects a change in the way the participants initially conceptualized memory and resistance. Their understanding of the meaning of both memory and resistance was primarily constrained to the fragmentation of their lives after their parents' and relatives' disappearances and killings. This abrupt life change is marked by sad, painful, scary memories of silence and the unknown. Particularly relevant is the attitude of their surviving parent, relatives and friends who, in most cases, opted for avoiding the topic and continuing with life. This lack of information about what was happening as well as who their parents were had a profound influence on the participants. Yet, they resorted to creative ways to fill these gaps in their life story. Imagination was for some a vehicle to avoid talking about the fact that their parents were disappeared. They invented stories about where or who they were. Others used their imagination to envision how they were like at their age, what their feelings and thought might have been and what led them to social and political work. By creating this imaginary narrative they encountered injustice, poverty and human rights abuses. This search for information about their parents and relatives carried through their teen-age years and into adulthood and propelled

them into their own political work. However, once they found themselves doing political work, that is, denouncing their parents' disappearances and demanding justice, they realized that this task also involved the vindication of their parents' action in the public scene. This enormous social responsibility trapped them into a process of justifying someone they did not know. Therefore, they constructed a public memory of them based on the little information they had and what they had gathered from their surviving parents, relatives, friends and acquaintances.

They filled the gaps with the traditional icons and symbols that were part of the public discourse of those people opposing the dictatorship. In sum, their initial conception about memory and resistance seems to have been constructed based on cognitive ideas, personal and collective experiences, defensive and protective mechanisms and as a result of the lack of information, silence, sadness and fear that that was a strong part of their process of growing up.

In the process of understanding memory through the different artistic workshops, the participants were able to understand that memories are sophisticated cognitive processes and that the content even though related to the traumatic event can evoke different feelings and sensations. Likewise, objects or places provide an immense range of possibilities to bring to mind memories that can complement and expand the ones they are already aware of. Another important aspect of this process of expanding their knowledge about memory was to realize that there are parallel processes like using imagination to fill in the gaps in memory that can be useful and healing as well.

In addition, the participants realized that many of the memories they thought to be their own memories, were in fact creations of the political ideal of whom their parents and relatives were. They had constructed this notion of memory to be represented in the public discourse as part of their social commitment of vindicating their image. However, they found that by doing so they had neglected their own memories of who they are as young people and these memories have been relegated them to a second place. This was a major insight for many of them that led them to reframe their own lives and identities not just as "children or relatives of the disappeared or executed" but as normal young people.

## **Memory and Gender**

Gender issues were a strong component of the way people understand and make meaning of memory and resistance. In general women centered their memories on every-day life images,

family, children and images that represent birth, re-birth and transformation. Women seem to be more emotionally ready to explore issues, reframe them and transform them. They were also able to express their emotions and feelings within the group. Men instead, were more controlled and reserved expressing their feelings. Their understanding of memory and resistance, at least at the beginning was more cognitive and structured. They often focused their views and opinions on political and social general issues. Even though there seems to be a slight difference in the way men and women understand, interpret and process their experiences, both men and women seem to have the same desire to have lots of children in order to bring them up the way they would have liked to be brought up.

### **Use of the body as a site of memory and resistance**

The long and exhaustive process of analyzing, and re-defining the concepts of memory and resistance and particularly the use of the body as a site of memory and resistance led to an interesting and somewhat uncharted field of exploration for the participants. Although some of them seem to have a clearer idea of why they have used their bodies in practices of memory and resistance, it seems that there was not an apparent consensus in the group. The initial motivation to participate in politics was to denounce the killings and disappearances of their relatives, and to demand justice. Therefore, remembering and placing their parents in the public scene through pictures pinned to their hearts was the most obvious tactic to accomplish this task. Other practices they have carried out over the years include hunger strikes, using their bodies as human shields to confront the police or to block the traffic as forms of protest. However, a deeper analysis shows that their motivation is also linked to a deep loyalty to their parents and relatives and a sense of responsibility to continue the social and political work initiated by them. Still, a further reading demonstrates that when confronted with injustice and impunity they feel an obligation to use their bodies as a mechanism of protest and confrontation. As one of them describes “the body becomes a fundamental part of memory, since to some degree we are the reflection of our parents, fathers, mothers in some cases, it’s like they are present in that action.” Thus, their own bodies become a materialization of the disappeared and executed bodies of their parents and relatives. This act of re-positioning their bodies as an extension of their parents’ in the public scene is consistent with their personal loyalty to their parents and relatives and with the participants political commitment to validate the public political image of their relatives.

They believed these actions were “the only form of expressing their feelings of impotence and rage, while seeking justice and public recognition.” However, these actions proved to be healing for some of them since they gained some sense of control, but more than that, they were acting in a manner that was consistent with what their parents would have done and had done under similar social and political circumstances.

In conclusion, reflecting about these practices of memory and resistance have had a profound meaning for the participants since the beginning of the research process. This newly found personal source of insight has transformed and expand their initial understanding and has opened a door for future awareness and healing. Likewise, this new understanding of the role of memory and resistance in their individual lives and as part of the collective has made them reflect on the need to revision and reframe memory and their uses in order to promote new spaces for peace-building processes, particularly among people of their generation and younger. Participants suggest the use of similar workshops as a way to involve people in the transition peace processes that can develop from the exploration of people’s understanding and meanings of memory and resistance. They realized that the meaning that is often used in the political arena is constructed using icon, symbols and ideologies that might only serve as a way of remembering passed events, but that do not allow for further processing of these concepts or the involvement of personal or other kinds of memories.

Some of the concepts I am working with to understand the process experienced by the participants are literal memory and exemplary memory developed by Tzvetan Todorov (2000). Literal memory refers to the way people experience and understand a traumatic events from a very restricted, rigid manner, focusing on details, and causes, trying to find and prosecute the perpetrators. It also allows for certain continuity between the person one was and the one in the present, as well as the past and present of a social group or a community. In contrast, exemplary memory is potentially liberating since it allows us to use the past with vistas to the present when we manage to learn the lessons from the past, assimilate them in the present and project them into the future. This does not mean to deny or forget the traumatic past, but rather to inscribe it as part of a bigger category, as a model to understand new situations with new agents. This process implies to go through a mourning process to neutralize the pain caused by the memory allowing it to open up to analogies and generalizations in order to get a lesson that will permit to see and understand others. These two concepts are key in helping us understand the

transformation process experienced by the participants while engaging in reconstructing their memory and resistance practices through the artistic workshops.

### **The therapeutic value of the artistic workshops**

The exploration of the two main concepts of this study; memory and resistance through the active participation in artistic workshops, shows that both the physical, and artistic involvement, together with the analysis and emotional debriefing of each workshops unfolded a process of personal reflection and analysis of their own lives in light of their participation in socio political activities. This process clearly shows that the participants were able to move from a “literal memory” to an “exemplary” one, by understanding the rigid behavioral and cognitive patterns they had been involved in over the years. They also understood that their practices of memory and resistance were helpful and much needed at a point in time, however as time goes by they need to search for new meanings particularly in relation to their own lives.

This process has led many of them to further their self-awareness by seeking therapy. They have been referred to free counseling. Others have mentioned that the workshops helped them to clarify their ideas in order to restructure their goals and future work. Yet others have decided to continue their exploration of their parents’ lives as a way to understand their own. In sum, they have all agreed that the workshops had a therapeutic and healing effect on them.

They also commented about the effectiveness of using art as an exploration of concepts and bodily practices. They concluded that this is a very relaxed, inspiring and fun way of allowing oneself to explore issues that otherwise could be painful. As one participant said “it’s like being in pre-school again: play and do things freely in a way that we couldn’t do as children.”

Regarding the use of these artistic workshops as a research methodology, they agreed that it represented a different technique to collect information, which is less intrusive, and extremely participatory. They liked the fact that they were able to share a collective process of knowledge and meaning making, while their personal experiences were also taken into account and validated.

## **Objectives**

A preliminary analysis of the objectives set up for this study suggests that most of them have been accomplished up to this point. A more detailed examination of them will be provided in the dissertation thesis.

## **Methodological issues**

In general I have not encounter serious methodological issues. Perhaps it needs to be mentioned that the recruitment process took longer than expected due to unforeseen national events that affected to some degree the lives of the prospective participants. For instance the death of a well-known political leader. This event also coincided with the fact that the police found some human remains at a former torture center were apparently the fathers of two of the participants had disappeared from. In addition, former political leaders who were responsible for this torture centre were detained and charged for their possible participation in the disappearance and killings of people at this centre. These events had an impact on the participants that I was interviewing at the time and I had to cancelled and rescheduled interviews.

In addition, the transcription of the data gathered in the workshops and the preliminary analysis has also taken an enormous amount of time that I did not anticipate and that has altered the research scheduled that I had planned.

I also had to make some changes to the selection criteria I had designed since I was not aware that the members of HIJOS are not only sons and daughter of people who were disappeared and killed by the dictatorship, but some of their members are nephews, nieces, and grandchildren. Therefore I decided to expand the initial criteria to include them given that they met all the other criteria, they were interested and committed to participate in the research, and they are members of the group.

Finally, the recent (end of March) public government announcement of errors in the identification of 48 human remains found in a local pubic cemetery ten years ago, has caused national turmoil, a generalized sense of mistrust and impotence and profound pain among the relatives of the disappeared, survivors of torture and in general all those people affected by political violence. This generalized sense of impunity, impotence and mistrust in the government also affected temporarily the participants. I contacted all of them to get a general sense of how they had been affected by the news and they reported that they needed to take some

time off, to disconnect themselves from the topic for a while until they can get some sense of clarity and understanding and to deal with their own feelings around it. Therefore we agreed that I would call them to check how they are feeling and to continue the analysis process that was interrupted by this event. The individual interviews were resumed and they are almost finished and I just need to complete the final group interview.