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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Joint action as a practice of memory transmission in a poor urban neighborhood of Santiago, Chile

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Abstract

In Latin America, one of the key tasks of Community and Liberation Psychology has been to recover the memories of marginalized and excluded communities that have experienced multiple pasts marked by political violence. In Chile, researchers have focused on poor urban neighborhoods, where the question of how memories are transmitted in areas where conflicts and violence are still present has been overlooked. In this context, the following article aims to analyze the ways in which memories are transmitted in a neighborhood that has a long organizational history in the struggle against social inequalities; while at the same time being classified as a critical area by the state due to its current levels of violence and social conflict. The researchers led a 3-year case study from an ethnographic perspective, and applied a collaborative methodology that brought together the research team and the members of a territorial organization. The analysis is based on 72 interviews, 5 conversation groups and ethnographic observation. The data was analyzed using discourse analysis. The results revealed that the main form of memory transmission is not based on intergenerational narratives of the past, but rather on joint action; namely,

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dialogical practices among neighborhood residents that generate an ethos; a common way of life.

KEYWORDS
joint action, memory transmission, poor urban neighborhoods

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the field of Community Psychology, especially from a Latin American and liberation-inspired perspective, scholars have discussed the importance of recovering the collective and historical memory of communities (Montero, 2009; Martín-Baró, 2006). As early as the 1980s, Ignacio Martín-Baró (2006) had already pointed out that "the poor majorities" lived in "a permanent psychological present, a here and now without a before or after" (p. 13). In short, they were unable to embark on a project that started "with themselves." In this context, recovering memories would involve learning from past experiences, highlighting the potential that has enabled the community to sustain itself over time and/or generate its own particular identity (Martín-Baró, 2006). Addressing these points is essential to dealing with present conflicts as well as to building the future.

Drawing inspiration from this perspective, studies conducted in the Southern Cone of Latin America has examined the construction of multiple pasts in the aftermath of authoritarian regimes (e.g., Álvarez, 2014b; Cortés, 2016; Fauré, 2018), state terrorism, or armed conflicts in communities regarded as "marginalized and excluded," marked by inequality and social stigmatization (e.g., Del Pino, 2003; Villapolo, 2003). In Chile, poor urban neighborhoods, and particularly those classified as "emblematic" because they have been historically perceived as places with long histories of social organization, have become one of the most researched topics in this field (e.g., Álvarez, 2014a; Garcés & Leiva, 2005; Raposo, 2013) because they emerged as a form of survival (Álvarez, 2014a; Brito & Ganter 2014) and played an active role in the resistance against the military dictatorship (Cortés, 2016). Through mainly oral communications with community residents, the researchers of this study set out to gradually unveil narratives regarding the origins of the neighborhood as well as of the periods of resistance, based on the assumption that they would be used to convey a past that is characterized by struggles and social organization to the newer generations (Álvarez, 2014a). Yet, how are memories of the territory transmitted among neighbors in everyday life?

This question is especially relevant when we consider that these communities have been enduring the ongoing effects of social inequality derived from the implementation of neoliberal policies (Bruey, 2018; Ruiz, 2014), a complex and conflicted relationship with the state (Larenas, Fuster, & Gómez, 2018), and the sustained increase in violence associated with drug trafficking (Parraguez, 2012; Ruiz, 2014). Consequently, most of these territories have been labeled as "critical neighborhoods" by the state (Manzano, 2009); (this notion emerged from public policy efforts to characterize areas of the city affected by high levels of violence and conflict; Parraguez, 2012). In this regard, conflicts and violence are not only part of their past, but also part of their present.

In this context, we pose the following question: how does memory transmission occur in a poor urban neighborhood that is currently labeled as a "critical neighborhood" by the state? To answer this question from a qualitative perspective, we conducted a 3-year case study of a particular neighborhood in Santiago (from March 2016 to March 2019) through an ethnographic approach (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and we also adopted a collaborative methodology (Rappaport, 2007). Data collection involved interviews, conversation groups, and participant observation in several settings where memory transmission would take place.

The case study was based on La Legua, a community that is considered to be "emblematic" due to the history of its foundation. It was identified as an "emblematic" neighborhood due to a housing crisis faced by the residents concerning the work they carried out (Manzano, 2009), and as a result of its resistance against the dictatorship

(Garcés & Leiva 2005). It was classified as a “critical neighborhood” by the state due to its high levels of violence and social conflict (Manzano, 2009), which led to the implementation of state interventions with a strong emphasis on law enforcement (FiSura, 2014; Larenas et al., 2018).

2 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 | Latin American community psychology and memory production

Latin American community psychology emerged in response to the so-called “relevance crisis” of the discipline in the 1970s (Burton, 2004). In that period, researchers began to challenge the adopted epistemological approach, mainly the positivist approach, as well as to question the usefulness and effects of the knowledge produced, with some going so far as to dispute its social relevance (Ibáñez, 1990; Martín-Baró, 2006). Thus, a community psychology that is developed from a Latin American perspective, and that also has a liberation component, should generate a new epistemology based on the poor majorities. It should also define a new aim—the liberation of the marginalized and the excluded—as well as a renewed praxis that defines the psychologist in ethical-political terms (Martín-Baró, 2006).

One of the goals set out by this project is the recovery of community memory (Martín-Baró, 2006), inasmuch as it “can lay the groundwork for the autonomous determination of its own future” (Burton, 2004, p. 107). Communities living in a permanent present are unable to differentiate the past from the future, which “structures a seemingly natural and ahistorical reality that encourages mindless acceptance” (Martín-Baró, 2006, p. 13). Working with a community's meanings of the past would involve making temporal distinctions, which requires historicizing events and actions. In addition, identity production would be facilitated if community members felt that they belonged to it and if the community's resources were restored as they were useful in the past and could become useful again today to generate a process of liberation (Martín-Baró, 2006).

This notion, developed by Martín-Baró (2006), has inspired a significant part of the research conducted in Latin American community psychology (Cueto, Seminario, & Balbuena, 2015; Montero, 2010), as well as many studies in Chile that have mostly examined memories in low-income neighborhoods from the social history, sociology, and critical pedagogy perspectives (e.g., Álvarez, 2014a; Cortés, 2016; Educación y Comunicación [ECO], 2012; Garcés & Leiva, 2005; Gatica, 2013). In addition, this approach has inspired state programs such as “neighborhood stories” (Programa de Recuperación de Barrios “Quiero Mi Barrio” https://quieromibarrio.cl/index.php/publicaciones/historias-de-barrio/), that are led by experts in the field of communities, and even initiatives developed by social organizations within some territories (Fauré, 2018; Grupo Identidad de Memoria Popular, 2017; Varios Autores, 2016). These efforts rest on the assumption that memory creation generates a local identity. Thereby it contributes to regenerating and reactivating the social tissue of the community that had been damaged, not only by the military dictatorship (1973–1990) but also by the consolidation of neoliberal policies during the subsequent democratic period (Bruey, 2018; Ruiz, 2014) as well as by the sustained increase in violence linked to drug trafficking (Parraguez, 2012).

These initiatives have a common goal that is to build memories through narrations that establish a sequence based on heterogeneous and diverse events, thus adding continuity and meaning to the functioning community (Ricoeur, 2000). Furthermore, given that these initiatives suggest that we organize memory through narrations (Bruner, 1991), their predominance in the study of memories is not surprising. However, if we accept Martín-Baró's (2006) view that communities ravaged by inequality, conflicts, and violence experience a permanent present, could narration be a privileged form of memory? How is the community's past transmitted among people who live in a poor urban neighborhood?

Some studies in the field of community psychology (Leon & Montenegro, 1998; Montenegro, Rodríguez, & Pujol, 2014; Montero, 2010) have revealed the important role of social practices, particularly nonlinguistic

practices, for the analysis and study of communities. Considering the problem of memory transmission in poor urban neighborhoods, this emerging research trajectory encourages us to focus on gestures and actions rather than on narratives.

2.2 | Memory transmission: Dialogicality and joint action

If we assume that only that which is part of groups will be remembered (Halbwachs, 1925), it is, therefore, relevant to transmit the occurrences of the past; "a people 'forget' when the generation that owns the past does not transmit it to the next, or when the younger generation rejects what it receives or stops transmitting it, which is ultimately the same (…) a people can never 'forget' what it never received" (Yerushalmi, 1988, p. 18). Thus, the transmission of past events emerges as the preeminent mechanism for constructing memories.

What is known as "memory studies" tend to highlight the will and intentions of those who wish to transmit—"memory entrepreneurs" (Jelin, 2002)—and the strategic actions that they perform to do so publicly (Aguilar, 2008), overlooking the relational process that occurs as part of the transmission.

Inspired by Bajtín (1928), we suggest considering memory transmission as a dialogical action that involves actors, discourses, and materialities. The term "dialogicality" is used to represent the notion that all utterances and/or gestures take place in response to various roles, generating and anticipating other utterances and/or gestures (Bajtín, 1928). In this regard, highlighting the dialogical nature of transmission involves assuming that memory is not a finished process that belongs to some and is conveyed to others (Vázquez, 2001), but rather something that is produced in the very act of transmission. Therefore, our analysis will focus on the relational space and the type of relationship—for example, conflict, support, debate—established among actors, discourses, and materialities when meanings of the past are transmitted. Thus, we will examine the actions, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, that emerge on a relational level.

On the basis of the notions introduced by Shotter (2001) in the field of social psychology, we use the term *joint action* given that key parts of our study take the form of immersion in experience, the preeminence of coordinated operations, and the generation of an ethical framework. Regarding joint action (Shotter, 2001) as a form of dialogical transmission makes it possible to highlight how neighborhood residents together produce meanings of the past on one hand, and on the other hand, it enables us to determine how, through this action, frameworks of reference are developed that show people how to act, thus creating an ethos—a common way of life that makes one feel as though one belongs to an "us."

3 | CASE STUDY: LA LEGUA NEIGHBORHOOD

La Legua is a neighborhood located in the San Joaquín district of Santiago, the capital of Chile. Located near the city center of Santiago (see Figure 1), this neighborhood was established at three historical moments that coincide with its three sectors (see Figure 2): Legua Vieja, which was established in the 1920s as a result of migration from the north of the country after the end of the saltpeter boom; Legua Nueva, renowned for its strong capacity for social organization, which was founded in 1947 as a consequence of the efforts undergone by families who were expelled from illegal land occupations (to refer to irregular settlements that result from the organized efforts of their inhabitants; Sepúlveda, 1998) in Santiago; and Legua Emergencia, whose name references the establishment of temporary social housing between 1949 and 1951 that eventually became permanent (Lin, 2016). Although there are differences among the three areas, they are all characterized by similar levels of material poverty and social marginalization, insufficient urban equipment and public services, as well as the presence of various political, religious, and social organizations (Álvarez, 2014a).

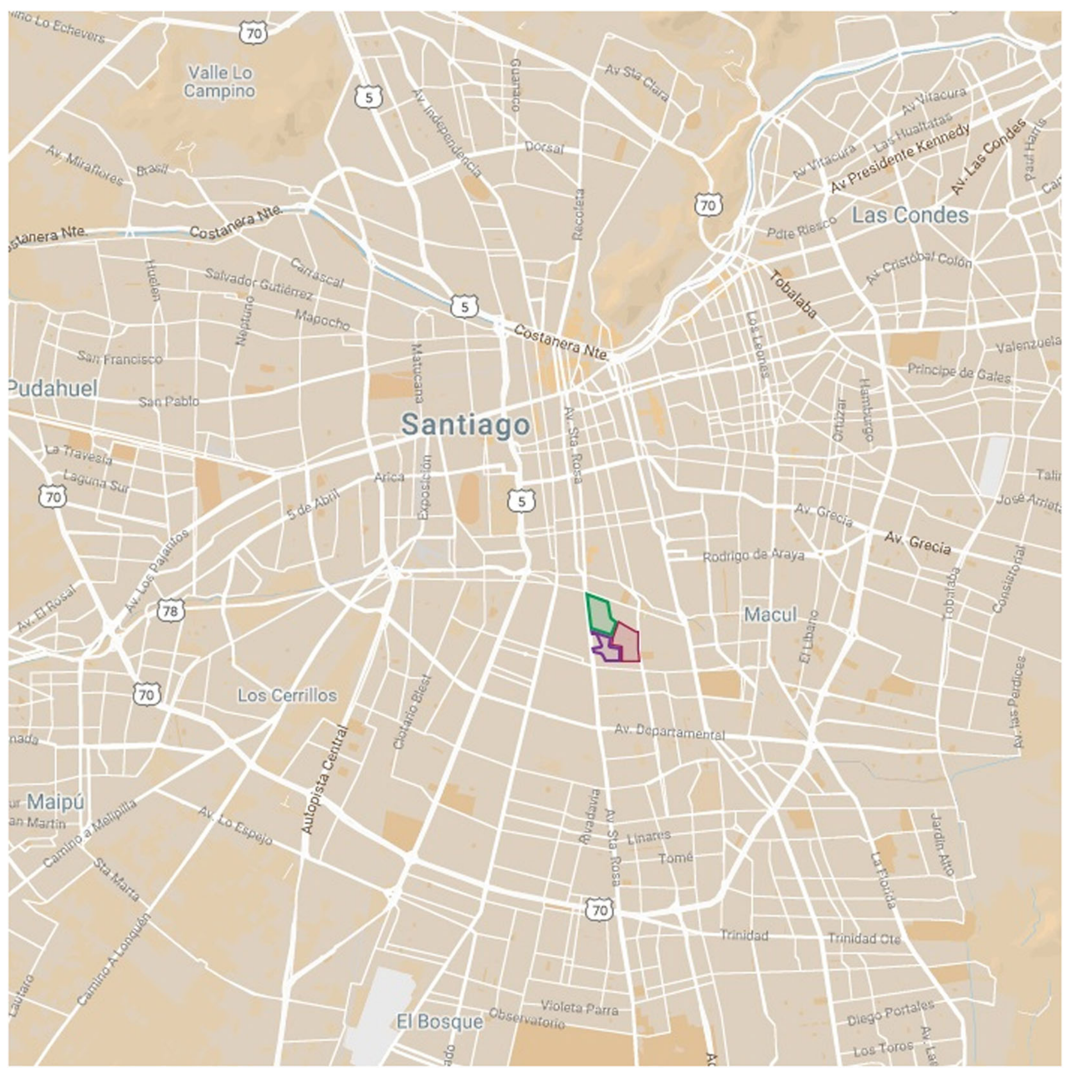

FIGURE 1 Map of La Legua within the Greater Santiago area. *Source:* Google Maps

La Legua is one of Chile's well-known poor urban neighborhoods due to the efforts made by its inhabitants in establishing the neighborhood (Brito & Ganter 2014), and also due to its resistance during the military coup (1973) and the 17-year dictatorship that followed (1973–1990) (Garcés & Leiva, 2005). The state classified it as a “critical neighborhood” in the year 2001 (INDH, 2015) because of the violence associated with drug trafficking and the possession and use of weapons (Unidad de Planes Integrales, 2017), which determined its status as a target of state interventions through law enforcement and security (Larenas et al., 2018). In spite of these measures, the state saw the need to implement the Legua Initiative Plan in 2010, which set a stronger emphasis on social and urban interventions (Arensburg et al., 2016).

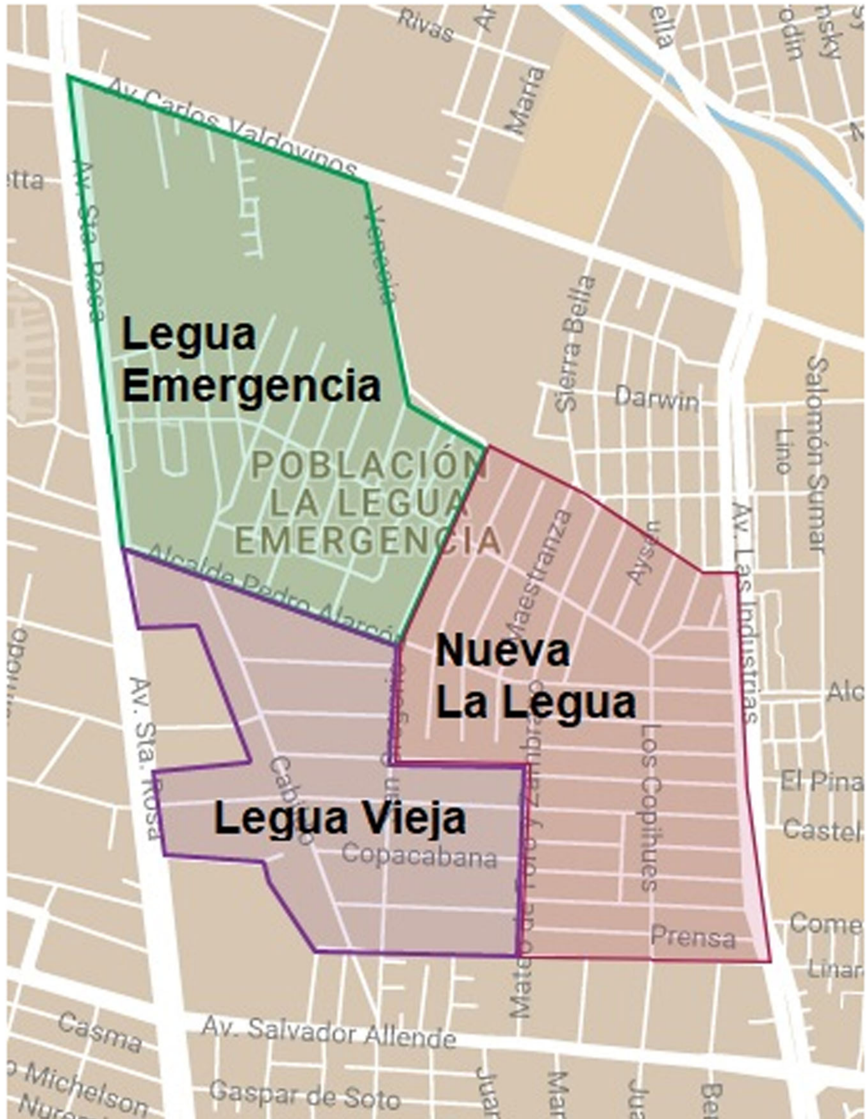

FIGURE 2 Map of the three sectors of La Legua. *Source:* Google Maps

4 | METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

A qualitative social research design was used for this study which was aimed at capturing and reconstructing the meanings of situations and processes from the actors' standpoints, connecting them to the particular historical contexts in which they occur (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009). In terms of strategy, a case study was carried out considering it prompts detailed, comprehensive, systematic and in-depth investigation (Rodríguez, Gil, & García, 1999). An ethnographic approach was adopted (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), which produced interactional data through participant observations, and discursive data as a result of interviews and conversation groups. These techniques were carried out between March 2016 and March 2019.

The research team was made up of researchers and members of a territorial organization who embarked on a collaborative effort (Rappaport, 2007). The team was put together as a result of analysis and reflection on a previous study carried out, where some friction was generated between the academic rationale held by the researchers and the territorial rationale maintained by a part of the social organization (Reyes et al., 2018). The evidence of the tensions that these two different rationales implied—for example, the position of being outsiders by both the researcher in relation to the territory and the members of the social organization with regard to the field of social research—enabled us to adopt a collaborative approach (Rappaport, 2007) that incorporated articulation to work within the community (Reyes et al., 2018). This entailed two basic agreements to promote a healthy work environment for this new research proposal: On the one hand, it was agreed upon that the main criterion for decision-making in the research process would be to protect the relationship that had been built with the residents of the poor urban neighborhood, setting the imperatives of academic rationale to one side. On the other hand, both researchers and members of the organization agreed on generating a constant process of reflection within the team to work through any issues and tensions that could take place during the development of the research project.

To build our sample, the project adopted three inclusion criteria: (a) The participants had to belong to one of the three generational groups (Mannheim, 1928) associated with the neighborhood's relevant socio-historical events—The period of the Unidad Popular and the coup d'état; the end of the military dictatorship and the beginning of the democratic transition period; the Legua Initiative Plan—experienced at approximately 18 years of age. The groups were set up as follows: Generational Group 1 was made up of people aged 18–27, Generational Group 2 consisted of people aged 37–47, and Generational Group 3 were people aged 56–66. According to Pennebaker and Banasik (1997), events occurring during this age range are more persistent and meaningful to people. (b) The participants had to reside in one of the three sectors of the neighborhood (Legua Vieja, Legua Nueva, or Legua Emergencia), given that their origins and trajectories are different. (c) The participants had to either belong or not belong to social organizations, as the neighborhood studied is characterized by its history and a high degree of social organization (Eco, 2012). Following these inclusion criteria, we interviewed 36 people (see Table 1) and we included 56 people that participated in our conversation groups. Therefore the total number of people directly involved during the entire project was 92.

TABLE 1 Number of participants according to inclusion criteria (generational groups and neighborhood sector)

	Generational Group 1	Generational Group 2	Generational Group 3	Total number of participants
Legua Vieja	3	1	3	7
Legua Nueva	6	3	5	14
Legua Emergencia	5	6	4	15
Total number of participants	14	10	12	36

Seventy-two semistructured interviews were carried out with 36 residents (two interviews per participant), which made it possible to understand the world that made sense to the participants in terms of assigning meaning to their actions. (Rodríguez, Gil & García, 1999). The first interview was aimed at investigating the memories of the neighborhood, whereas the second interview focused on what the participant wanted to pass on to other generations.

Five conversation groups were carried out (56 participants in total) because, in addition to bringing together participants who may have had previous proximity—in this case, residents of the same territory—it also allowed the conversation to revolve around “everyday life experiences, in an everyday context” (Benavente, 2007, p. 17). Both

the semistructured interviews and the conversation groups were digitally recorded upon the consent of the participants.

In addition, we conducted participant observations (Guash, 2002) in four meaningful settings linked to the neighborhood's past (Heritage Day; The Commemoration of the September 11th Coup; The 500 Drums Carnival; The "A Mano y Sin Permiso" Carnival, which roughly translates to The Self-made and Unauthorized Carnival). For the observations, we did not only take into account the events themselves, but also the days surrounding them. Three to five members of the research team took part in these observation tasks. In addition, participant observations were conducted at emergent events that took place in the territory, such as fundraising bingos in the benefit of neighborhood residents who had lost their homes due to fire.

The material produced for analysis included interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, and photographs. Textual material was examined using discourse analysis (Íñiguez & Antaki, 1998). This process involved several phases: First, coding the interviews and field notes; second, developing analytic categories; and third, establishing the central focus of analysis essential to the research question. The focus of analysis, following Barrientos, Salinas, Rojas, and Meza (2009), were triangulated at two levels: (a) From the researchers' standpoint, through the joint work conducted using field diaries and (b) from the techniques used, by linking the records produced—interview transcripts, field notes, photographs.

For the research data collection and production, an informed consent process was carried out with the participants that consisted in informing them of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved and the confidentiality of the data collected. The documented photographs were taken in public places while conducting participant observations, therefore, there is no informed consent on them. The only photographs that are used for research dissemination are those in which the people in them cannot be identified. The ethical considerations have all been backed and approved by the Social Sciences Faculty Ethical Committee of the Universidad de Chile.

5 | RESULTS

The following section presents the results of the study in two parts. The first focuses on how a "present in emergency" is generated in which the possibility of memory transmission through narrative is infrequent. The second part addresses joint action as a way of transmitting memory. It is a practice of transmission that requires being immersed in the experience, as well as coordinated action and also the development of an ethical action framework for the present.

5.1 | Storytelling in times of Emergency

In one of the interviews, one of the participants from Legua Vieja pointed out:

> *I look around, I pay attention when I'm walking, I know what the people around me are doing, those who are robbing, walking, those who are making any weird movements, and I tell Sara, "move to the right, walk closer to the wall, come here beside me" because I realize what's going on beside me and behind me, I mean, I'm not blind.*
>
> *(Man, 56–66, LV, NP, I2)*

> *(The labels used in interview quotes and conversation groups are the following: Gender [man; woman]; generational position [18–27; 37–47; 56–66]; Legua Vieja [LV], Legua Nueva [LN], or Legua Emergencia [LE]; participation and nonparticipation in social organizations [P; NP]; interview number or conversation group number [I1; CG1]. As for field notes: Participant observation [PO]; observer's initials [F. J. J.]; date [mm dd, yy]).*

This interview quote reflects a state of alertness and vigilance in public spaces as one of the ways of inhabiting this territory. People in La Legua assume that a life-threatening conflict might emerge at any time. In other words, conflicts or even violent situations are accepted as a part of everyday life.

In this context, people from La Legua do not commonly stop to reflect on the past. People's gaze, words, and actions constitute an attitude focused on the urgent issues and emergencies of the present.

The difficulties that the research team encountered when scheduling meetings with the interviewees illustrate the limited time available to produce narratives of this sort, let alone organize the future. In fact, the exchanges during the interviews illustrated the importance of the present: Even though they mostly dealt with the past—the question was "How would you tell the story of this neighborhood to an outsider?"—the conversation tended to focus on current conflicts and violence.

Despite the preeminence of the present, we found some evidence of the prevalence of the past in the present time. Thus, some fragments of a prior time are introduced to understand, explain, or justify the present.

For instance, when the interviewees discussed the intensity of the permanent fighting among drug trafficking gangs, they make reference to a significant difference to the territory's past: nowadays, those who fight do not necessarily follow the “codes” of coexistence that used to guide neighbors' interactions and that enabled them to live together more peacefully. In this regard, the introduction of drugs into the neighborhood in the 1980s is described as a pivotal event, as it led to a change in relational dynamics.

> *The* choros *[term used in Chile to refer to a person who commits crimes] around here had a sort of code of honor (…) years ago, when they shot at each other, I mean, those who actually fired their guns, at least thought about their neighbors a little, because they (…) would fire two shots into the air so we'd have time to lock our doors. Nowadays, they don't care where they are, they don't care if there are neighbors around them, so that's changed, they have little respect for their neighbors, people now don't always see the neighbors they grew up with empathetically, I mean, maybe I can understand those who chose to do something because their life led them down that path (…) and they were able to escape poverty, but I can't understand how, if I can live with them and respect them as people, they can't respect the other neighbors.*
>
> *(Woman, 37–47, LE, P, I19)*

Yet, in the participants’ narratives, the past is also portrayed as a period connected to the present: the repression and violence experienced during the dictatorship are compared to the permanent police intervention in the neighborhood.

> *Well, repression here in the neighborhood has always been tough. Many people were exiled, others were imprisoned, some lived here, others elsewhere… people who participated in our community cookings or “olla común,” many union members, so there has always been a lot of repressions, to this day, and that has not changed much.*
>
> *(Man, 56–66, LV, P, I2)*

In this case, the narrative illustrates the violent nature of everyday life in the past, which still has certain characteristics that manifest the state's authoritarian treatment of the neighborhood in times of democracy. Therefore, the past is used to sustain and resist the experienced present.

However, we must stress that the interviewees express some confusion when reminiscing. Statements such as “I didn't know I could remember so much” (Woman, 56–66, LN, NP, I5) and “I was left a bit shaken, with mixed feelings” (Man, 18–27, LN, P, I27) reflect the participants’ emotional reactions when narrating the neighborhood's history to another person.

When everyday life is lived in a constant "state of alertness," remembering the past through narrations requires a lot of effort because it involves stopping and paying attention to the past, potentially losing sight of the present (which is marked by emergencies). Therefore, in this context, narratives about the past are not the most usual way of conveying memories.

5.2 | Joint action as memory transmission

5.2.1 | Immersing oneself in the experience: Activities in the neighborhood

Do I tell my daughters about the neighborhood? Rather than tell them, I take them to participate in activities so they can experience it.

(Woman, 37–47, NL, NP, I29)

This quote illustrates an element that is frequently found in the material analyzed. When talking about memory, people highlight their participation in different types of activities, an aspect that we call "immersion in community experiences."

When the conversation groups were asked what part of the neighborhood they would invite an outsider to visit, many narratives featured the participants hosting visitors to the territory during public activities such as the carnivals, the commemoration of the September 11th, 1973 coup, or other spontaneous events that reflect the state of public life in the neighborhood:

[I'd take them to] places where there are activities, I'd take them to a specific activity so they'd know that the people we bump into always treat us well, even if we last saw them two years ago. And… we'd see how organizations sometimes get together for a cause and that can be… meaningful to people.

(Man, 18–27, LN, P, CG1)

These activities also enable the interviewees to protect their own dignity and their relationship with their guests by determining the way in which a person is "exposed" to the neighborhood:

I'd never bring someone on a random day.

(Man, 18–27, LN, P, CG1)

I invited her because I knew the carnival would be on.

(Woman, 18–27, LE, NP, CG2)

"Hosts" prefer having the people close to them participate in specific events, instead of allowing them to experience an ordinary day. They do this because they do not want to put anyone in danger, and they wish to show people an image that is different from the violence that stigmatizes the neighborhood in the eyes of outsiders (see Figure 3):

I invited my cousin once, and I invited her because I knew the carnival was on, but I didn't tell her that there was going to be a carnival or anything, so I said, "Let's go over there, to the intersection." And she said, no, that she was afraid, and I said, "No, listen to the drums, and where does that sound come from?" And I said, "Let's go to the intersection and I'll show you."… So we went there and the carnival was already on, it was moving through the street, and she said to me, "Oh, and they do this here?" and I said, "Yes, every year, they do it here every year." And she said, "Oh, it's so pretty, I'd never seen a carnival like this before."

(Woman, 18–27, LE, NP, CG2)

FIGURE 3 Troupe participating in the "A Mano y Sin Permiso" Carnival, which roughly translates to The self-made and Unauthorized Carnival, December 9, 2017. *Source:* Own work

Thus, immersion in certain activities had an intangible value that the interviewees found difficult to describe, narrate, or justify. The "activities" enable the interviewees to show visitors a way of life that might differentiate La Legua from other territories; the "activities" provide a neighborhood identity, mainly in connection with the initiatives that members of the community organize to support people in need or to entertain the entire neighborhood without relying on any external funding:

> *When I invite a friend, I like to invite them to stay. I think there are some things about the neighborhood that you can't get to know right away. A street, a moment, or a place aren't enough. The way of life that people have here gradually won me over, there is a way of experiencing each other, relating to each other, taking care of each other… I've never experienced that anywhere else.*
>
> *(Man, 37–47, NL, P, CG1)*

Therefore, these activities illustrate the territory's particular way of life, which is experienced through collaboratively organized events. In them, interpersonal bonds and relationships, along with the desire to help others, take precedence over individual interests.

The activities organized differ in terms of complexity and in the type of social actors involved (they range from birthday celebrations to carnivals). However, they are all situations that go beyond conveying a discourse, since they are about experiencing a way of life linked to the specific territory that is cyclically repeated and reproduced despite all the conflicts. Taking an outside person to participate in an "activity" that will immerse him/her in the life of the neighborhood appears to be one of the key ways of conveying the memory of the territory.

5.2.2 | Coordinated action: The September 11th barricades

Over a 3-year period, we observed the activities that neighborhood residents organized to commemorate the September 11th military coup. La Legua is known for having been the only territory in Santiago where there was armed resistance

against the coup, and its inhabitants being harshly repressed by Pinochet's military dictatorship, as well as undergoing hardship due to the 1980s economic crisis (Álvarez, 2014a; Bruey, 2018; Garcés & Leiva, 2005). Each organization sets the tone for this commemorative date through the activities they arrange: the local Communist Party organization gathers around a monument in the Salvador Allende Square to honor the members who were incarcerated and disappeared (Aguilera, 2019), whereas other groups like *Casa de la Cultura* and the *Centro de Interpretación FiSura* organize activities that highlight the active aspects of community members in connection to that memory; either because of their resistance against the military repression or because of community organization in response to poverty during that period. Year after year, the participant observation notes reflected the low turnout at these events, with most of the people in the audience being guests, invited by the organizations or members of these bodies.

However, one phenomenon is spontaneously repeated throughout all observations, the barricades and the interactions that take place around them:

> *I note that the barricades begin to form at around 1 pm. Random people leave furniture out on the street to provide materials that will later be burned. These materials are household refuse, which commonly includes mattresses, broken chairs, and similar items.*
>
> *(PO, VO, September 11, 2017)*

Every year, though the activities organized by social organizations manage to bring together, only a limited number of attendees, at around lunchtime, furniture, boards, mattresses, trash, and debris, in general, are deposited onto the main road or thrown out over yard fences. These objects, without any centralized instructions, end up on heaps of trash in the middle of the road. After sunset, once the organized activities come to an end, and processions begin to take participants out of the neighborhood, simultaneously, the refuse littering the streets starts turning into barricades (see Figure 4):

> *Immediately after nightfall, the pieces of wood and discarded objects on street corners are carried out to the middle of Comandante Riesle Street, with barricades being lit up in most of its intersections. Several people were lighting fires and small groups of neighborhood residents (some 10 or 15 per barricade) gathered around the fire and spent some time chatting.*
>
> *(PO, F. J. J., September 11, 2018)*

FIGURE 4 Neighborhood residents around a barricade, September 11, 2018. *Source:* Own work

The barricades light up the main avenue and its small interior roads. They bring some people together and generate an environment of caution, which indicates that clashes with the police are bound to happen soon, mainly involving young people covering their faces with hoods and scarves. It is inevitable to link this practice with the community members' memory of the protest days during the dictatorship (national protest days were civil manifestations against Pinochet's dictatorship, organized in the 1980s. They involved night-long clashes in poor urban neighborhoods in the outskirts of the cities, marked by police violence) (Bruey, 2018), as they—on a different scale and with other risks—also involved clashes with the police against a backdrop of burning barricades. The adults who now gathered around the fire were likely to be the children who threw stones at the police and the military in the 1980s. However, now the place is silent: there are no slogans, no speeches, no banners, no flyers. When night falls, and young people go out to fight the police, our observation notes do not record the protesters' motivations, but their effects, movements, and sounds:

> *(…) we are in the middle of the "battlefield," there are some clouds of tear gas and it is hard to walk and breathe (…) the hooded kids return to the square, that is, they move to the square and retreat, because the cops also attack, so they push forward and counterattack (…) nearly all of them are adolescents, almost children, mostly male… they are the ones who go out to fight.*
>
> *(PO, VO, September 11, 2017)*

In team meetings, held after each field observation, we constantly struggled to make sense of the contrast between the day and the night of September 11. During the day, the neighborhood is full of organized activities and words that somehow guide the events, but few neighborhood residents participate. In contrast, during the late afternoon and night, coordinated actions are generated that provide the materiality of an activity—the barricades—where slogans are nonexistent. However, a limited degree of political meaning is at times evidenced:

> *A boy who was throwing stones at the police during the night of the 11th said something (…) we accompanied his parents on their search because they were worried that something might have happened to him… when we found him, his mother started scolding him and asked him why he was "fucking around," and he answered he was not "fucking around" but instead he was "fighting the cops."*
>
> *(PO, F. J. J., September 11, 2018)*

These coordinated actions, that resemble a ritual practice and are organized around barricades, reflect a deep-seated mode of action that can be linked to the past and does not require words to be organized or made explicit. These actions illustrate that the barricades and the nights of September 11th constitute another way in which the memories present in the neighborhood are transmitted: coordinated action, yet mediated by the neighborhood residents' gestures or movements—not by their narrations.

5.2.3 | An ethical framework in emergencies: Fires

From the barricades, we move on to another kind of event: Fires. Analyzing interactions that take place amid these dramatic situations show a particular form of coordinated reaction. During this study, a fire broke out in the Legua Emergencia area. The incident triggered a cooperative reaction from the community, and a neighborhood resident along with a member of the research team constructed the following narration of the scene:

> *Suddenly, one February morning, I heard someone desperately knocking at the door. "Fire!!! Fire!!!" Four houses were burning. The fire was taking away everything those four homes had experienced. People crying, shouting, neighbors running around, carrying buckets of water, in an unfair battle against the fire, which*

was advancing nonstop. Thirty people, forty, fifty, sixty neighborhood residents started to form a tireless chain of efforts to put out the flames (…) people from all the surrounding blocks came, their efforts multiplying. Everyone was helping. Thugs, drug dealers, workers, homemakers, friends, relatives, strangers. Some helped from the rooftops, others from the sidewalks… they were fighting against that damned fire that marched onward with no regard for the memories and efforts that shaped those houses, built so gradually over the years. Then the firemen came and they turned into other members of the same community. All of us started to win the battle. The fire had lost.

(PO, JJ, March 1, 2017)

The immediacy of the catastrophe demanded an urgent response. We come back to a situation that requires haste, paying attention to anything that might happen at any time. However, this reaction is not centered on the individual concern, but rather on community cooperation. The community members' response sets into motion a wealth of available knowledge that results in fire mitigation procedures that they are familiar with. The neighborhood residents had started to put out the fire before the fire department's expertise entered the picture. When the firefighters arrived, the neighborhoods acted as though they were any other neighborhood residents. The narrative illustrates a concatenation of individuals—actors who quickly become a coordinated whole by operating from their individual positions. But coordinated action is not limited to just putting out the fire. After the tragedy comes organization, as the following excerpt from our fieldnotes illustrates:

The neighborhood residents meet, talk, and cry together. They all know there is still a lot to do. They get organized to do volunteer work. The neighborhood scouts, every group, every organization, and all the people who are not affiliated to any group help rebuild the houses from scratch, as well as the lives affected, with whatever materials they can find.

(PO, JJ, March 1, 2017)

In this case, those involved in the reconstruction activity do not even consider it necessary to apply for subsidized housing assistance. The neighborhood residents take control by resorting to their own resources, "just what we have." But their connection to construction activities, especially home building, is not new; in fact, it represents a way of addressing urgencies in the past that emerges in the narratives through the same process of joint action. As this man from Legua Nueva observed, the residents are familiar with the solidarity of building their own homes since the beginning of the neighborhood's existence:

My grandmother (…) has always lived here (…) so when they talk about history, it's always the same; the issue of community, neighborhood residents… and there's a connection because they always mention that they built their own houses, the soccer field (…) the first neighborhood council meeting… those were factors that ended up bringing everyone together, you know? They all had to pitch in because a single old man would never be able to pick up adobe bricks and get on the roof, you know? So (…) our elders got organized, they put their houses together (…) that's all they could do (…) when these houses had to be rebuilt, I feel that in a way we revived that… that way of life that our neighborhood had in the past.

(Man, 18–27, NL, P, CG1)

This man narrates the construction work of their own houses, as well as the material needs that the fire mobilized. The fire also activated the community members' initiative, and the will to participate as a way to express solidarity or help others cope with the tragedy:

FIGURE 5 Bingo organized to help families affected by the fire. *Source:* Own work

> *"Let's organize a bingo!" say the neighborhood residents, and in 2 weeks they have everything ready: The prizes, the bingo cards, the tables and the chairs. It's all ready to receive over two hundred people who are inspired by their solidarity. The families who are hit by the fire prepare hot dogs,* empanadas, *and skewered meat, they bring beer and soft drinks…singers and artists perform on the stage that was donated by a community member who provided the lights and sound equipment. So we all spend time together. We celebrate everything and after the tragedy comes the joy of being together. There emerges the humor and the irony that supports life. "Just my luck" is the response to any setback.*
>
> *(PO, JJ, March 1, 2017)*

There is a connection to memory that does not depend on explicit narrative processes. This connection to memory can be observed in both the knowledge applied to rebuild the houses ravaged by the fire, as well as in the events organized to raise money for the neighbors affected by the fire. These situations reveal the significant presence of joint action practices, and also the development of a framework of a shared understanding (see Figure 5).

The fire clearly unveiled the existence of an ethical code based on acknowledging and caring for others that have at least two dimensions. First, the common effort resulting from coordinated action establishes the priority of a community response to a catastrophe suffered by one of its members, regardless of the institutional aid that may be requested. Second, this approach references the memory of the neighborhood, adapting to the available materials, knowledge, and help. Here, rather than a discourse establishing an identity-based mode of operation that spurs individuals into action, it is participation in a joint response to an emergency that lays the groundwork for reminiscence.

The ethical framework developed is not novel. On the contrary, it dates back to a past that is brought into the present as a result of an emergency.

Grandparents… when they talk about the neighborhood in the past, right, they talk about experiences rather than about things, you know? Because there were very few things, very little resources, and all they had were their neighbors.

(Man, 18–27, LE, P, CG1)

In summary, it could be argued that the prevailing mode of memory transmission in the territory is through the practice of joint action. This is insofar as acting together with others not only leads to grasping knowledge, but also to a way of being and behaving that has existed and continues to exist as part of the territory. Being immersed in experience, the coordinated actions, as well as the ethical framework developed in the course of action all demonstrate that joint action is the predominant practice of memory transmission.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

The dialogical form of memory transmission in La Legua is not a legacy that is passed on from one group of people to another, nor is it a narrative account of the origins of the territory, or of its resistance during the dictatorship. This study reveals that it is a joint action, namely, it is an action that is carried out along with another person, and this action enables the understanding of the ways of life that have made up this neighborhood. In this sense, legacy is built upon the efforts that involve adults, older people, young people, and children, regardless of their affiliation to community groups. As this action is implemented, an ethos is gradually generated; a common way of life that makes it possible for people to feel that they are part of a way of being in the world. It is a form of memory transmission that enables one to stay focused on the present, which is full of emergencies, whereas at the same time understanding it and operating in it by bringing the territory's pasts to the present.

One of the ways that the neighborhood residents transmit the territory's past to others is by inviting guests to specific neighborhood activities so as to have them immerse themselves in the experience. It allows the residents of the neighborhood to share intangible and underestimated values that are difficult to articulate in narrative form.

The barricades put up to commemorate the September 11th coup reflect the community members' joint action, which is ritualized but apparently spontaneous. It brings together several generations of neighborhood residents who all adopt a single form of action. The specificity of coordinated action lies in the fact that it produces a situation that "involves all those who take part in it," but also in that "its organization cannot be traced back to the intentions of any particular individuals; it is as if it had a 'given' nature" (Shotter, 2001, p. 66). There is a connection between this event and the protest days against the military dictatorship in the 1980s. This made it possible for the community to coordinate joint actions to push back against the dictatorship (Bruey, 2018).

Lastly, the fire incident triggered the community to immediately respond. This catastrophe elicited a clear reaction, which not only led to the residents' immersion in the experience and in joint action but also led to the development of an ethical framework—acknowledging and caring for others—that generates immediate actions. It should be noted that these actions are carried out by the community members themselves, without any help from the local authorities. This ethical framework makes reference to the neighborhood's foundation. In other words, its capacity for a community organization in response to precarious conditions, along with the state's non-responsiveness, have led to collaborative forms of organization that has focused on autonomous problem-solving strategies.

In this sense, the aim is to comprehend and take action, from a community-based approach, in territories in which violence is part of the past and present. Therefore, it is essential to continue working and researching dimensions that are not evident, as other research in community studies has revealed (Leon & Montenegro, 1998; Montenegro et al. 2014; Montero, 2010)—in this case, focusing on gestures and nonlinguistic actions.

Additionally, working in territories that have the abovementioned characteristics requires researchers to be open to changing work methods. We consider that not only the collaborative work efforts but also the articulation

between the academic rationale and the territorial rationale have been fundamental in this study project. They have been central in putting comprehension and the acknowledgment of diverse ways of life ahead of interfering with them. However, this also implies limitations to the work carried out, such as being partial to the territorial organization with which stronger ties have been developed. Each territorial organization has a particular way of understanding and engaging in local dynamics.

As noted at the beginning of the article, Martín-Baró (2006) emphasizes the importance of recovering the memory of the lower-class majorities as a way of generating liberation processes. The findings of this study project pose interesting questions in reference to the urgency of liberation that has been steadily expressed in Latin American community psychology, namely, is it possible to live a life in a state of emergency without being alienated? Do these lives have nothing worth passing on to new generations? Rather than intervene or even categorize these communities, these questions suggest the importance of understanding them.

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