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Conversational Roles, Generational Differences and the Emergence of Historical and Personal Memories Surrounding WWII during Familial Discussions

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ABSTRACT

We examined whether and how conversational roles shape the extent to which details and recollections surrounding World War II (WWII) emerge in family conversations. Each family was tasked with collaboratively discussing four topics surrounding WWII specific to Belgium. We then conducted both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The former compared the collaborative recall with each family member's individual recall; the latter focused on the conversational roles and dynamics within each family. While the results suggest that familial discussions lead to more "old" (from the individual recollection) recollections than "new" recollections, about 40% new recollections did emerge; however, with fewer personal details surrounding the discussed recollections. Although, the extent to which more details and new recollections emerged during the conversations across families depended on the conversational roles adopted by each discussant. Our results are discussed in terms of the importance of conversational roles in understanding when and how memories may emerge within a conversation and, in turn, transmit across generations.

People often talk to each other about the historical past. When these conversations occur across generations, they can serve as a means of preserving historical memories beyond the lifetime of those who experienced the event. These intergenerational conversations can involve not just *historical knowledge*, but also *personal memories* of events that took place at a historical moment. Such personal memories are worth considering when discussing how people remember the historical past because the memories can provide resonance and nuance to a historical event that a purely "historical" account, such as those found in textbooks, might not. A mother might tell her daughter that the Dresden bombing lasted three days, a "historical memory," but she may also tell her how she hid in a cellar during the bombing, a "personal memory." Knowing that her mother lived through the bombing by hiding in a cellar could make the bombing much more meaningful to the daughter than simply knowing that the bombing occurred or reading a novel or seeing a movie about the bombing (see, e.g., Svob & Brown, 2012). Personal memories, such as hiding in the cellar, are likely to be conveyed mainly through conversational interactions, what Assmann (2011) referred to as communicative memories.

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In this paper, we investigate how family members from different generations talk to each other about historical events, particularly the oldest generation's personal experiences of the event. It builds on Stone et al. (2014), which examined what family members of different generations know about the oldest generation's experience of War World II (WWII), but it now investigates how these families talk about the war to each other. The term "personal events" refer to events that the oldest generation – the generation that lived through WWII – encountered. The "personal events" recalled by the second and third generation refer to these first-generation experiences. In this study, recollections that emerge in recorded family conversations about WWII will be quantified into idea units. We then examine how these idea units are distributed among the different generations, the different conversational roles different generations might take within the course of the discussion, and the relation of the conversational dynamics we observed here to the memories collected in Stone et al.

In examining families' conversations about the historical past, we are entering relatively uncharted territory. In taking this step, we are following those who observed that remembering is often an act of communication and what people remember, what Marsh (2007) called *retelling*, is to a substantial degree, a function of both communicative dynamics and the social dynamics between speaker and listener (see Edwards & Middleton, 1987; Hirst & Echterhoff, 2012; Marsh, 2007; Tversky & Marsh, 2000). When retelling a memory to others, for instance, individuals will often tune their recollection of the past to conform to what they view as the audience's knowledge, attitudes and expectations (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986; Echterhoff et al., 2009; Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

There are, of course, studies of individuals remembering the historical past. They have chiefly asked individuals to list what they view as the "most important historical events" during a specified time period (e.g., Liu et al., 2009; Schuman & Scott, 1989). This research does not consider memory for personal events relevant to the historical event. Moreover, it is not interested in how families talk about these events. Generalizing what is found for individual recollections of the historical past to collective recounting may be difficult. The dynamics of conversational remembering differ substantially from those dynamics involved when an individual is remembering (see, e.g., Weldon & Bellinger, 1997). The extant research suggests that at times, conversations can facilitate recall; at others times, reduce it (Rajaram, 2011). In some instances, one conversational participant can cue or otherwise facilitate the recall of other participants, thereby shaping what is recalled in the conversation and aiding in the overall effectiveness of the recounting effort (see, e.g., Harris et al., 2011). However, despite such intergroup assistance, jointly recounted memories rarely include everything conversational participants are capable of remembering (Basden et al., 1997, 2000; Weldon & Bellinger, 1997; see, Hirst & Echterhoff, 2012; Rajaram & Pereira-Pasarin, 2010 for review).

As for intergenerational remembering, the well-established generational cohort effects for historical memories do not speak to how families might talk to each other across generations about historical events or, in particular, personal events that figured in a historically important context (Corning & Schuman, 2015). There is a limited literature on the intergenerational transmission of personal memories, but it is not concerned about the historical context in which the referred-to event occurred (Fivush, 2008). Other research has elicited personal memories and shown when these recollections make reference to historical events (Brown & Lee, 2010; Svob & Brown, 2012). A few studies have explicitly probed for intergenerational memories of personal events from historically important periods. However, outside what might be the exceptional case of the Holocaust (e.g., Welzer, 2005), these studies have mainly asked individuals from different generations to recall what they know about a historical event and then tracked the degree to which personal details emerge – *personal* in our broad sense of involving either the recollection of direct personal experiences during a historical moment or the recollection of the personal experiences of an older generation by a younger generation. Personal events clearly emerge in the recounting of those who lived through the event (Muller et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2014). Moreover, they can be transmitted across at least one generation (Stone et al., 2014; Svob et al., 2016), especially if the memories involve events that serve as transitions from one phase of the rememberer's life to another or, alternatively, large societal transitions (Brown et al., 2016; Gu et al., 2017, 2020). Moreover, the memories become distorted as they are transmitted (Coman et al., 2012;

Hirst & Echterhoff, 2012; Welzer, 2005). None of this work specifically asks or examines how families might talk about the personal, historically relevant events. The present study addresses this gap in the literature. In doing so, the results of the present study will provide evidence of how and why historical and, especially, personal memories emerge in family conversations and, and in doing so, provide the potential to be transmitted to the next generation, a possibility that might shape the youngest generations' social identity (Meyler et al., Revise and resubmit) and well-being (Fivush et al., 2011). For us, successful intergenerational "transmission" of a memory, then, involves both the verbalization of memories (addressed here) as well as their formation into a lasting memory in others (not addressed in the current study).

Conversational roles and conversational dynamics

What do conversations look like when members from different generations get together to talk about history? When do personal memories arise in a conversation? Who conveys them? Clearly, as discourse theorists have stressed, situational, societal, political, and cultural factors could all contribute (Van Dijk, 2006). Here we focus on conversational roles and the dynamics of how these roles change among the discussants.

We were interested in the roles participants adopt in a conversation and how these roles might affect what different generations recollect in the course of the conversation (Hirst et al., 1997). By *role*, we mean the marked tendency of a participant in a conversation to interact with others in a defined way – more specifically, to offer certain types of utterances. One can divide any discourse into idea units (to be defined more precisely below, but see, Hirst et al., 1997; Stone et al., 2014). These idea units can then be classified and the role of an individual can be determined on the basis of this classification. Hirst et al. (1997) offered a possible taxonomy for conversational roles. It was particularly designed to explore the joint construction of a memory. Although surely incomplete, it identifies three conversational roles: narrator, mentor, and monitor.

Narrators provide the primary structural narrative idea unit that captures the content of an event. We define a narrator in terms of the proportion of idea units they offer that drive a story's narrative surrounding an event. In the case of the present study, these narrative units would chiefly be about a historical event. The event could simply be historical in nature, for example, "The Germans invaded Belgium 10 May 1940." It could also be personal in nature, for example, "On May 10th, I was at home when suddenly we heard a noise in the street." It is quite possible that narrative units could make no reference to either a historical event or a personal event of historical relevance; however, inasmuch as we asked participants in the current study to talk about specific topics surrounding WWII, such narrative units would be "off topic."

Monitors assess what narrators recollect by confirming or refuting the content of a narration. For example: "No, it did not happen like that." They fall into the class of what Heritage and Raymond (2005, 2006) referred to as second assessments, in which a second speaker can index independence from the assertions of a first speaker. Of course, the utterance might be followed by an alternative recollection or a recapitulation of the stated recollection. When there is an alternative recollection, we would treat the sequence in which narrating follows monitoring as consisting of two separate idea units. When it is a simple recapitulation, we will not count the narrative restatement as another act of narration. It would simply be incorporated into the monitoring as a single unit. When it offers an alternative narration, then this alternative would count as an act of narrating. As with narrators, the role of monitor is defined in terms of the proportion of utterances of an individual that involve monitoring the narrator. Thus, a person who routinely follows an act of monitoring with an act of narrating would not necessarily be classified as a monitor, in that monitoring comments would not predominate in this instance.

Mentors elicit a story or urge a narrator to expand upon the story. For example: "Could you tell me the story about the butter and the rings?" The mentor role is perhaps the most problematic and ambiguous of the Hirst et al. (1997) triad. Clearly, in offering a narrative idea unit, and especially, in

offering several, a narrator is structuring the conversation and, in fact, telling the others in the conversation what to talk about. He or she is, in essence, stating "Let's talk about X." Similarly, monitoring comments like "No, it did not happen that way" are also directing the conversation to go in a particular direction, that is, in a direction different from the one set up by the previous narration. As we use the term, the act of mentoring is limited. It is not simply a matter of saying something is wrong or telling a specific story. That is, it is not narration or an assessment of something that has proceeded in the conversation (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Rather it involves a direct and explicit instruction or a verbal incentive to address a topic or provide more details on a given topic. It is often framed as a question or probe about a topic.

Conversational roles such as these can, we posit, structure which memories emerge in a conversation (Barnier et al., 2008; Bietti, 2010; Cuc et al., 2006; Hirst et al., 1997; Rajaram & Pereira-Pasarin, 2010): A strong narrator, for instance, might block the recollections of another conversational participant (Rajaram & Pereira-Pasarin, 2010); the presence of a mentor might facilitate conversational remembering; a monitor might inhibit certain recollections. That is, each conversational role may have a facilitating or inhibiting effect.

Moreover, when it comes to intergenerational conversations about history, the role members of different generations might adopt should differ depending on what is being recounted. In the case of our three generations discussing WWII, only the oldest generation (grandparents) lived during the war. The middle (parent) and youngest (grandchild) generation learned about the war indirectly, be it from the oldest generation or otherwise. As a result, generational preferences for the different roles might emerge.

We would, for instance, expect the oldest generation to serve as a narrator, for at least two reasons. First, they might do so in part because they can assert epistemic authority (Goffman, 1967, 1971; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Sidnell, 2012). After all, they are the only generation who actually lived through the war. Second, the oldest generation may serve as narrator because the conversation may offer them a chance for self-disclosure (Bangerter, 2000; Coupland et al., 1991). People often want to tell stories about their lives. A conversation about the war may supply an opening for the oldest generation to talk about their experiences in the war.

Of course, most of this line of reasoning only applies to personal events. It is unclear whether the oldest generation would also take on the role of narrator when the discussion is about historical events not of a personal nature. Indeed, one might expect that those who learned about the war in school might have more insight, perhaps even greater epistemic authority. That is, one might expect the oldest generation to take on the role of narrator for personal memories, but not necessarily for historical memory without personal relevance.

As for monitoring, again, the epistemic authority of the oldest generation may lead them to monitor as well, at least with respect to their personal memories. After all, they have privileged access. There is really no basis on which to contest the oldest generations' epistemic authority in such instances.

Finally, with respect to mentoring, any generation may try to elicit memories from another generation, but which memories they elicit may again depend on their generational affiliation. According to Stone et al. (2014), members of the middle generation have retained a reasonable number of memories about their parents' war experiences during WWII. When they mentor, then, they may elicit personal memories from the oldest generation.

Of course, these predictions assume stable conversational role throughout a conversation. This may not be the case. For instance, the oldest generation may surrender the role of narrator to the middle generation when the latter is familiar with the story. Moreover, almost anyone can monitor, if they have sufficient knowledge. Given Stone et al.'s (2014) finding that the youngest generation knew little about their grandparents' personal experience, we might expect little monitoring from them, at least with respect to personal experience. However, this is not guaranteed.

The predictions above, of course, assume that all families will act in the same way, but this may not be the case. Conversational styles may differ across families.

In addition to examining how conversational role and conversational dynamics shape what emerges in conversations, as noted, we will also focus on the idea units and the recollections (i.e., stories) that emerge during a conversation relative to individual recollections. In doing so, we rely upon data from Stone et al. (2014), that examined individual recollections of WWII by the same participants as in the present study. Will more or fewer idea units emerge in a conversation relative to the individual recollections? Will the same memories emerge in a conversation as in the individual recollections? If new memories are introduced, under what circumstances might that occur? How do conversational roles play a part in introducing new memories? Stone et al. (2014) found that the oldest generation produced more personal memories in the individual recall than historical memories when asked to discuss four topics relevant to Belgium's participation in the war. The middle generation produced an equal number of personal (i.e., the oldest generation's experiences) and historical memories. The youngest generation produced few historical memories and almost no personal memories. Although Assmann (2011) suggested that intergenerational transmission of memory may stretch across three or four generations, including the oldest generation, the work by Stone et al. (2014), as well as the other just-reviewed research, suggest that personal memories may transmit across only two generations (i.e., the oldest and middle generations).

The present study

The primary aim of the present study, then, is to examine, both quantitively and qualitatively, conversational remembering of the historical past. We asked the families Stone et al. (2014) studied to reassemble and collaboratively discuss, as families, the same aspects of WWII. That is, we are interested in when and how historical and personal details surrounding a historical event may emerge within the context of familial conversation and provide the potential for said details to transmit to the next generation. As was the case for Stone et al., we examine in detail the recounting of five families in order to undertake a detailed analysis, one that might be difficult to achieve with a larger sample. Although the conversations we elicit are clearly not naturally occurring conversations, they do provide an approximation of how a family might talk about the historical past when given the opportunity. We transcribed these conversations and conducted quantitative analyses contrasting what family members recollected in their individual recollections (Stone et al., 2014) with what they recount in their collaborative recollections. Also, using the coding scheme of Hirst et al. (1997), coded for the conversational roles family members adopted. Given the sample size and the interdependency among family members, any significant quantitative results need to be approached with caution. As a result, given the range of possible ways conversational roles might be adopted and how they might affect what is recalled, the present study might be viewed as more exploratory rather than confirmatory.

Design

The quantitative portion or our analyses will consist of three, repeated measures ANOVA. In order to examine whether each generation adopts a particular role through the conversation and if these roles influence the content (personal or historical) we will conduct a 3 × 2 × 3 mixed design repeated measures ANOVA with generation (oldest vs middle vs youngest) as a between-subjects factor and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant) and role (narrator vs monitor vs mentor) as within-subjects factors (see, Figure 1). The number of idea units[1] a participant mentioned in the collaborative session will be the dependent variable.

In our second quantitative analysis, we were interested in the extent to which different types of narrative idea units (personal vs historical) may emerge in the context of providing them individually vs collaboratively with their family. To this end, we conducted a 3 × 2 × 2 mixed design

repeated measures ANOVA with generation (oldest vs middle vs youngest) as a between-subjects factor and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant) and context (individual vs collaborative) as within-subjects factors. Follow-up *t*-tests were conducted for any main effects with more than two levels as well as for any two-way interaction. For any three-way interactions, additional ANOVAs were conducted followed by *t*-tests where relevant. The number of narrator idea units was the dependent variable.

In our last quantitative analysis, we were interested in the number of old vs new stories that may have emerged between the individual recollection vs the collaborative recollection. To this end, we conducted a 2 × 2 repeated measures ANOVA with origin ("Old" vs "New") and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant) as within-individual factors and total number of recollections mentioned in the collaborative session as the dependent variable.

Our qualitative analyses were focused on the mechanism and conversational dynamics which may help explain how and when the above results emerge as a result of familial conversations surrounding WWII.

Methods

Participants

Stone et al. (2014) recruited five French-speaking Belgian families through university contacts, Belgian patriotic associations, and word of mouth. As extension of this study, the present study includes those same five families. Each family was composed of three generations, including one member in each. Overall, then, we had 15 participants, divided into an "oldest" generation (OG) (M = 84.40 years of age, SD = 3.36, including two females and three males), a "middle" generation (MG) (M = 52.00, SD = 6.71, including three females and two males) and a "youngest" generation (YG) (M = 22.40, SD = 7.44, including three females and two males). Regarding the gender distribution across generation, each family was different, but preliminary analyses suggest that gender differences across generation and family did not influence our results. The only exclusion criteria concerned the oldest generation. They had to been born by 1936 at the latest, in order to have personal memories of WWII. All participants lived in the French-speaking part of Belgium (Wallonia). Only one member in each family was contacted, who then contacted the other two members of his or her family.

Procedure and materials

In Stone et al. (2014), each family member completed the individual recall alone. All the individual recall sessions for each family were completed within seven days. The collaborative session that forms the basis of the present study took place one to two weeks later. Participants were told not to talk about their interviews among themselves during this period (Stone et al., 2014). At the beginning of the collaborative session, we verified that the participants had obeyed these instructions. All sessions were held at either the oldest or the middle generations' homes.

The individual session reported by Stone et al. (2014) was composed of semi-structured interviews. This type of open-ended questionnaire allowed each participant to answer the question and elaborate when possible. The individual interviews included three main sections: (1) memories and knowledge of specific Belgian topics/events of WWII; (2) the source of their memories and knowledge; and (3) questions about social identity and demographics (closed questionnaire) (see Stone et al., 2014 for more details). The topics probed in Stone et al., 2014 were (1) rationing, (2) acts of collaboration, (3) bombings of Belgium, and (4) the "Royal Question" (i.e., immediately following the war, the question arose as to whether the king should abdicate because he had surrendered to the Germans rather than flee to England).

The collaborative session, which is the focus of the present paper, also solicited memories and knowledge of the same Belgian topics/events of WWII. The interviewer reminded the families of the four topics and then suggested starting with the first topic, rationing, and then continue with the other topics in the same order as in the individual recall. Participants were explicitly asked to discuss the different topics together, to discuss their memories and knowledge, and to react as naturally as possible

to each other. Notably, the interviewer did not make any reference to the content of the individual interviews. The interviewer always asked the youngest generation member to start the conversation for each specific topic. Given that he or she was the one with the least knowledge (Stone et al., 2014), it provided them with an opportunity to contribute. The interviewer did not contribute or intervene during the course of the discussion.

The families were given as much time as needed to discuss each topic. The families, on average, spent 40 minutes ($SD = 17.68$) discussing all topics. Each family proceeded to the next topic only when each family member had nothing more to say and that the family confirmed that the discussion was complete when urged to continue by the interviewer. Once each family finished discussing all four topics they were thanked for their time and the interviewer left.

Coding

Conversations were transcribed and then coded. We first coded each transcript into idea units (Bangerter, 2000; Dritschel, 1991; Hirst et al., 1997). An idea unit usually consisted of a single predicate (but not always) and associated subject, object, and spatial and temporal modifiers. In essence, a single idea unit expressed a single point. An idea unit could involve one event, state of the world or actions that occurred at a specific time and place: Examples of events included "Between the 10th and the 12th of May the Germans came to Brussels" and "Political prisoners were sent to Breendonk." Examples of a particular state of the world included "During World War II, no one could be trusted" and "I was hungry during the war." In addition, meta-cognitive statements and queries such as "This is true" and queries such as "Why did the collaborators murder him?," were also coded as idea units. Other idea units which did not involve a memory per se, but commented on or referred to a memory, including statements such as, "I didn't know about that," "Yes, of course," or "Mmh" signaled to the speaker that they were listening. Although analyses of these comments could prove fruitful, we decided not to include them in our analyses, given their ambiguity. Does, for instance, "I don't know" reflect an actual mnemonic state or a defensive remark? (Muller et al., 2015). We will refer to these idea units as non-narrative.

Idea units were classified as historically relevant or personally relevant. For example, "Between the 10th and the 12th of May, I think, the Germans came to Brussels." was coded as historically relevant, and "I was hungry during the war" was coded as personally relevant. For the individual sessions, this same coding had been done by Stone et al. (2014). The idea units have not been checked for (historical or personal) accuracy. As mentioned in the introduction, transmission of memories can generate some distortion. Studying this distortion process was beyond the scope of the present study.

Each idea unit was further coded in terms of the roles each family may have adopted at any given point and time in the conversation. We followed the coding scheme developed by Hirst et al. (2006, 1997). The three roles we coded for – narrator, monitor and mentor – are described in the introduction to this paper. When an individual adopted the role of a narrator they provided the facts or opinions that structured a discussion surrounding an event. For example, "The Germans demolished the house in the countryside of my parents" were two idea units coded as narrator because the speaker was narrating a story. Mentors cued and prompted the narrator. For example, "Once you told me a story about the butter and the black market, what was it again?" It should be noted that this sentence is composed of three idea units, "once you told me a story" is a meta-memory, "the butter and the black market" is a narrator idea unit and the last one, "what was it again?" is a mentor idea unit. This example shows how speech acts can be dynamic and multifunctional. Monitors corrected what narrators and mentors said. For example, "No, it did not happen like that."

Twenty percent of each interview was dual-coded across the four topics, starting at the beginning of each topic. The coders first coded the idea units and agreed on 97% of the coding. The coders met and discussed to resolve discrepancies and develop the coding book for the rest of the corpus. The next step was the coding of the content (personally or historically relevant idea units) and the roles (narrator,

mentor and monitor). Reliability was excellent: we had kappa's of .94 and .93 for content and for conversational roles, respectively. The four authors together resolved any discrepancies between the two coding sessions. The first author coded the remaining corpus.

Finally, narrator idea units were further coded into larger units that we labeled as "recollections." These constituted a single narrative about a specific episode. We classified a recollection as "old" or "new" on the basis of the memories collected by Stone et al. (2014). "Old" memories were those recollected during the individual session analyzed by Stone et al. "New" memories did not appear in the protocols collected by Stone et al. The coding of the recollections from Stone et al. (i.e., "old") was identical the present coding of "new" recollections. In classifying a memory as "old" or "new," we did not take into account who initiated the recollections during the collaborative sessions, inasmuch as, in many instances, several family members helped jointly construct each recollection. We coded each recollection as "personal" or "historical." A recollection was only coded as "historical" when it included *only* historical details, that is, no personal details otherwise, we coded it as personal. Two families were dual coded by two different coders for "old" and "new" recollections. The two coders agreed 97% of the time as to what constituted a recollection and 95% of the time about whether a recollection was personal or historical. The coders met and discussed to resolve discrepancies and develop the coding book for the rest of the corpus. If the coders were unable to resolve any disagreements, a discussion among the four authors reconciled them. The first coder then assessed the remaining three families using the exact same, agreed upon, coding procedure. Note, all data for this study, including those from Stone et al. (2014) are available online at the following website: https://osf.io/gmkvh/?view_only=e808b6372f32448caa8fb46fa561bbfe.

Results[2]

Quantitative analyses

Conversational roles and idea units

We first examined idea units overall. The purpose of this analysis is to examine whether generations adopt a particular conversational role and if these roles influence the content (personal or historical) of what is discussed. We conducted a 3 × 2 × 3 mixed design repeated measures ANOVA with generation (oldest vs middle vs youngest) as a between-subjects factor and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant) and role (narrator vs monitor vs mentor) as within-subjects factors (see, Figure 1). The number of idea units a participant mentioned in the collaborative session was the dependent variable. Our results revealed main effects for generation, content, and role and interactions between generation × role, generation × content, content × role, and generation × content × role: $F(2, 12) = 9.00$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .60$, $F(1, 12) = 22.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .65$, $F(1, 12) = 21.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .64$, $F(2, 12) = 5.80$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .49$, $F(2, 12) = 7.70$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .56$, $F(1, 12) = 11.08$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .48$, and $F(2, 12) = 4.55$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .43$, respectively.[3]

Our main effect for generation stems from the fact that the oldest generation ($M = 419.20$, $SD = 212.75$) mentioned more idea units relative to the middle generation ($M = 166.60$, $SD = 126.34$) and the youngest generation ($M = 36.80$, $SD = 42.82$), $t(8) = 2.28$, $d = 1.44$, $p = .05$ and $t(8) = 3.94$, $d = 2.49$, $p = .004$, respectively. No statistically significant difference was found between the middle and youngest generations ($p = .06$). The main effect for content reflects, in part, the fact that the participants mentioned nearly twice as many historical idea units ($M = 137.53$, $SD = 137.73$) in their conversations relative to personal idea units ($M = 70.00$, $SD = 78.07$). The main effect for role is explained by the narrators ($M = 173.93$, $SD = 197.71$) mentioning more idea units relative to mentors ($M = 16.73$, $SD = 22.81$) and monitors ($M = 17.87$, $SD = 23.43$), $t(14) = 3.00$, $d = 1.12$, $p = .01$ and $t(14) = 3.28$, $d = 1.11$, $p = .005$, respectively. There was no statistically significant difference between mentors and monitors ($p = .90$). This result reflects the fact that when individuals adopted the role of

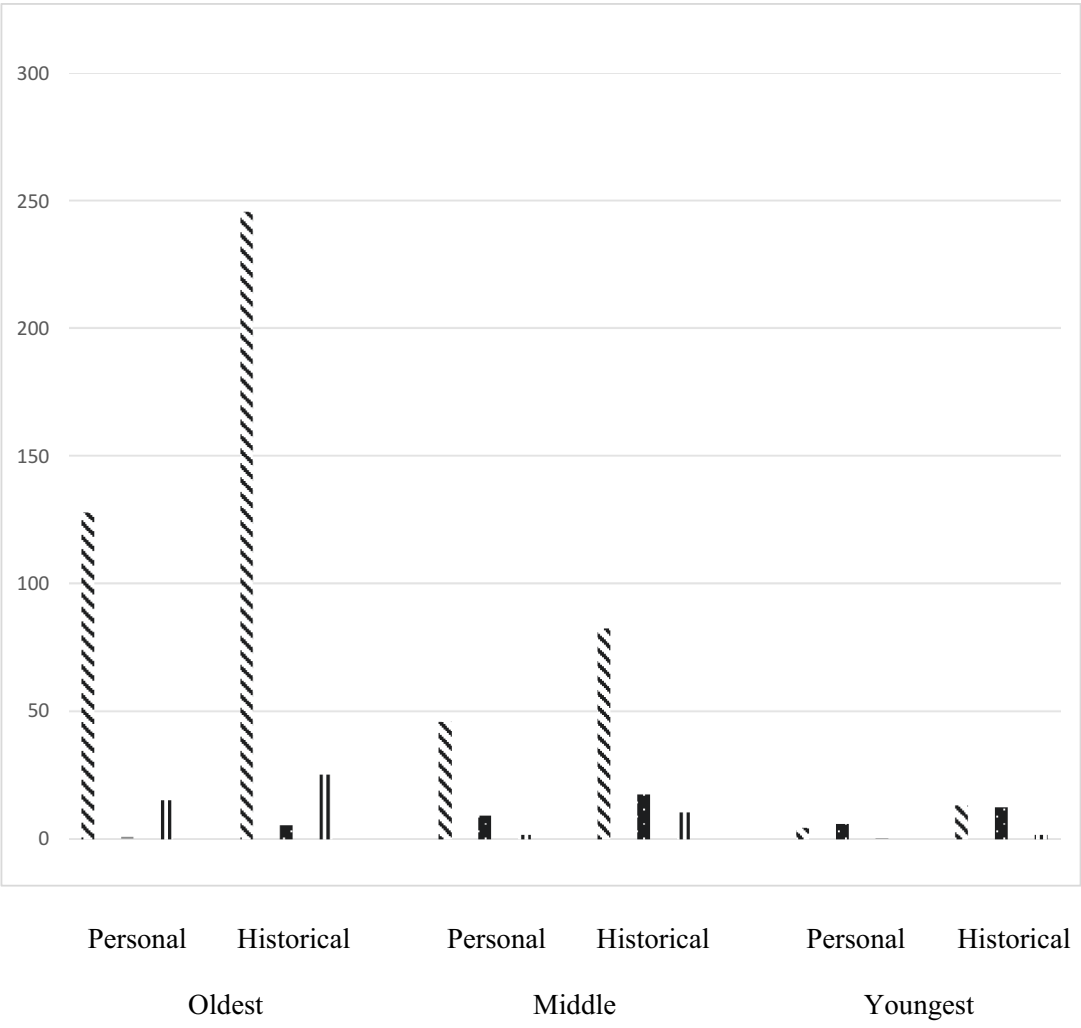

Figure 1. Number of idea units by generation, role and content. *Note*: Diagonal pattern = narrator role; polka dot pattern = mentor role; vertical pattern = monitor role

a narrator, they provided major contributions to any collaborative response to the probes. By and large, when individuals adopted the role of monitor and mentor, their responses were short, compared to the more elaborate responses when adopting the role of narrator.

The interaction between generation and role stems from the fact that the oldest generation (M = 373.40, SD = 207.25) was more likely than the youngest (M =17.20, SD = 11.67), but not significantly more than the middle (M = 128.20, SD = 103.34) to mention idea units as the narrator, $t(8) = 3.84$, d = 2.43, p = .005* and $t(8) = 2.37$, d = 1.50, p = .045*, respectively. That is, when the oldest generation took on the role of narrator, they did so in a more robust fashion, as measured by the number of narrative idea units they provided, than either the middle or younger generations. In addition, the middle generation was more likely to mention idea units as the narrator than the youngest generation, but not significantly more, $t(8) = 2.39$, d = 1.51, p = .044*. Furthermore, the oldest generation (M = 40.00, SD = 27.37) also mentioned more idea units as a monitor than the youngest generation (M =1.60, SD = 1.52), $t(8) = 3.13$, d = 1.98, p = .014*.

The interaction between generation and content reveals that, while the middle generation (M = 110.20, SD = 76.45) approached statistical significance, only the oldest (M = 275.80, SD = 140.32) and youngest generations (M = 26.60, SD = 25.32) mentioned more historical units than personal idea units (M = 56.40, SD = 54.95; M = 143.40, SD = 81.01; and M = 10.20, SD = 17.75, respectively), $t(4)$ = −2.86, d = .81, p = .046*, $t(4)$ = −3.48, d = 1.16, p = .025*, and $t(4)$ = −4.12, d = .75, p = .015*, respectively. However, the oldest generation mentioned more historical idea units relative to the youngest, $t(4)$ = 3.91, d = 2.47, p = .004*, but not significantly more than the middle generation $t(4)$ = 2.32, d = 1.47, p = .049*. The middle generation also did not mention statistically more historical idea units relative to the youngest generation as well, $t(4)$ = 2.32, d = 1.47, p = .049*. While visually the oldest generation mentioned more personal idea units (M = 143.40, SD = 81.01) than both the middle (M = 56.40, SD = 54.95) and the youngest generation (M = 10.20, SD = 17.75), we only found a statistically significant difference for the oldest and youngest generations, $t(4)$ = 3.59, d = 2.27, p = .007. All other $p > .05$

Of particular interest for the present concerns is the interaction between generation, content and role. This three-way interaction suggests that there are generational differences in the dissociation suggested by the content × role interaction (see, Figure 1). To examine this three-way interaction, we conducted separate ANOVAs examining the effects of content and role within each generation. For the oldest generation we found main effects for both content, $F(1, 4)$ = 12.09, p = .025, η_p^2 = .75 and role, $F(1, 4)$ = 12.90, p = .023, η_p^2 = .76. Similarly, we find a main effect for both content and role for the middle generation as well, $F(1, 4)$ = 8.19, p = .046, η_p^2 = .67 and $F(1, 4)$ = 8.25, p = .045, η_p^2 = .67, respectively. Interestingly, for the youngest generation, we find a main effect for content, role and an interaction between the two, $F(1, 4)$ = 16.96, p = .015, η_p^2 = .81 and $F(1, 4)$ = 9.83, p = .035, η_p^2 = .71, and $F(1, 4)$ = 37.03, p = .004, η_p^2 = .90 respectively.

The main effect for content indicates that each generation recollected more historical details relative to personal details (see, Figure 1). To examine the main effect for role, planned t-tests were conducted. The results revealed that the oldest generation was more likely to be a narrator (M = 373.40, SD = 207.25) than a mentor (M = 5.80, SD = 3.11) or, approaching significance, a monitor (M = 40.00, SD = 6.26), $t(4)$ = 4.01, d = 1.88, p = .016* and $t(4)$ = 3.59, d = 1.71, p = .023*, respectively. In contrast, they were more likely, though not statistically so, to be a monitor than a mentor, $t(4)$ = −2.80, d = 6.92, p = .049*. Both the middle and youngest generations were more likely, though not statistically significantly so, to be narrators (M = 128.20, SD = 103.34; M = 17.20, SD = 11.67) than monitors, (M = 12.00, SD = 13.60; M = 1.60, SD = 1.52), $t(4)$ = 2.87, d = 1.58, p = .05* and, $t(4)$ = 3.14, d =1.87, p = .035*, respectively. When examining across generations, we see that, not surprisingly, the oldest generation acted as the narrator more often than both the middle (but not significantly so) and youngest generations, $t(8)$ = 2.37, d = 1.50, p = .045* and $t(8)$ = 3.84, d = 2.43, p = .005*, respectively. The oldest generation also acted more as a monitor than the youngest generation as well, $t(8)$ = 3.13, d = 8.43, p = .014*. Last, the middle generation acted as the narrator more often than the youngest generation, but not significantly so, $t(8)$ = 2.39, d = 1.51, p = .044*.

Although there were no other significant differences, Figure 1 shows that the youngest generation provided very little during the collaborative sessions, regardless of the content or the role they played.

Comparing individual and collaborative recollections

Examining narrative idea units. Our analysis of idea units clumped together all the idea units across roles. It showed that different generations take on different conversational roles. But the probes we used specifically lend themselves to responses that took a narrative form. The narrative could involve a personal episode relevant to the probe, or they could be completely historical. With this in mind, we turn to an analysis that only includes narrator idea units. In this analysis, we not only examined differences across generations and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant), but across context, that is, the individual sessions, as reported by Stone et al. (2014), and the collaborative sessions collected for this study. To this end, we conducted a 3 × 2 × 2 mixed design repeated measures ANOVA with generation (oldest vs middle vs youngest) as a between-subjects factor and content

(personally relevant vs historically relevant) and context (individual vs collaborative) as within-subjects factors. The number of narrator idea units was the dependent variable. Our results revealed main effects for generation and context and interactions between content × context and generation × content × context, $F(2, 12) = 7.95$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .88$; $F(1, 12) = 7.97$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .37$; $F(1, 12) = 6.43$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .45$ and $F(2, 12) = 5.36$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .52$, respectively. There were no other significant main or interaction effects (all $F < .49$, all $p > .07$).

The main effect for generation reveals that, across all conditions, the oldest ($M = 611.20$, $SD = 361.01$) and middle generation ($M = 228.20$, $SD = 142.23$) generated more talk (i.e., idea units) than the youngest generation ($M = 55.00$, $SD = 48.65$) $t(8) = 3.41$, $d = 2.16$, $p = .009$ and $t(8) = 2.58$, $d = 1.63$, $p = .03$, respectively. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the oldest and middle generation ($p = .06$). The main effect for context indicates that more narrator idea units were recalled during the collaborative session ($M = 163.33$, $SD = 183.72$) relative to the individual sessions ($M = 124.07$, $SD = 135.01$). That is, collaborating facilitated overt recollections. The interaction between content and context indicates that families, when remembering collaboratively, recalled more historical narrator idea units ($M = 104.07$, $SD = 118.60$, respectively) than personal narrator idea units ($M = 59.27$, $SD = 90.92$), $t(14) = -2.69$, $d = 0.42$, $p = .018$*. Interestingly, they did not recall more historical narrator idea units than personal narrator idea units when recalling individually (historical: $M = 51.47$, $SD = 50.88$; personal: M = 72.60; SD = 90.92, $t(14) = 1.39$, $p = .19$). There were more collaboratively recalled, though not statistically significant, historical narrator idea units than individually recalled historically narrator idea units $t(14) = -2.63$, $d = 0.57$, $p = .020$*.

Of particular interest for the present concern is the interaction between generation, content and context. This three-way interaction suggests that there are generational differences in the dissociation suggested by the content × context interaction (see, Figure 2). Specifically, it would suggest that the content × context interaction is driven mainly by the oldest generation. To examine this three-way interaction, we conducted separate ANOVAs examining the effects of content and context within each generation. Across all generations, we found no main or interaction effects (all $F < 6.38$, all $p > .06$). Despite this, Figure 2 clearly demonstrates a dramatic increase in the amount of historical idea units mentioned by the oldest generation during the familial conversation. Overall, collaborative remembering of public, historical events lead the overt recollection of more historical aspects rather than personal, which appears to be driven by the oldest generation (see, Figure 2).

In sum, there were similarities to what Stone et al. (2014) found: The youngest generation still recalled substantially less than either the middle or oldest generations, with a difference emerging between the youngest and middle generations for personal content, but less so of a difference for historical content. This finding reinforces the claim made by Stone et al. (2014) that transmission of personal memories of historically important events may be transmitted to a limited extent across multiple generations. One substantial difference, and one that may reflect the conversational dynamics in the collaborative sessions, was that the dominance of the oldest generation in producing personal (relative to historical) recollections disappeared during the collaborative recall session. How the dynamics associated with the collaborative session eased or disrupted the recall of the personal details that emerged in the individual recall will be taken up in the qualitative section below.

Examining "old" vs "new" recollections. We were also interested in whether new recollections emerged in collaborative recall session. We are not, of course, privy to every recollection about the war that the oldest generation knows, and every recollection the middle and youngest generation may have heard the oldest generation tell previously. We can only compare what occurred in the individual session with what occurred in the collaborative session. If anything, there should be a tendency to repeat the same recollections. The question for us here is whether new recollection emerged during the collaborative recall session, and if so, under what circumstances. As noted in the coding session, we are tabulating here the number of recollections appearing in the collaborative recall that were either old or new.

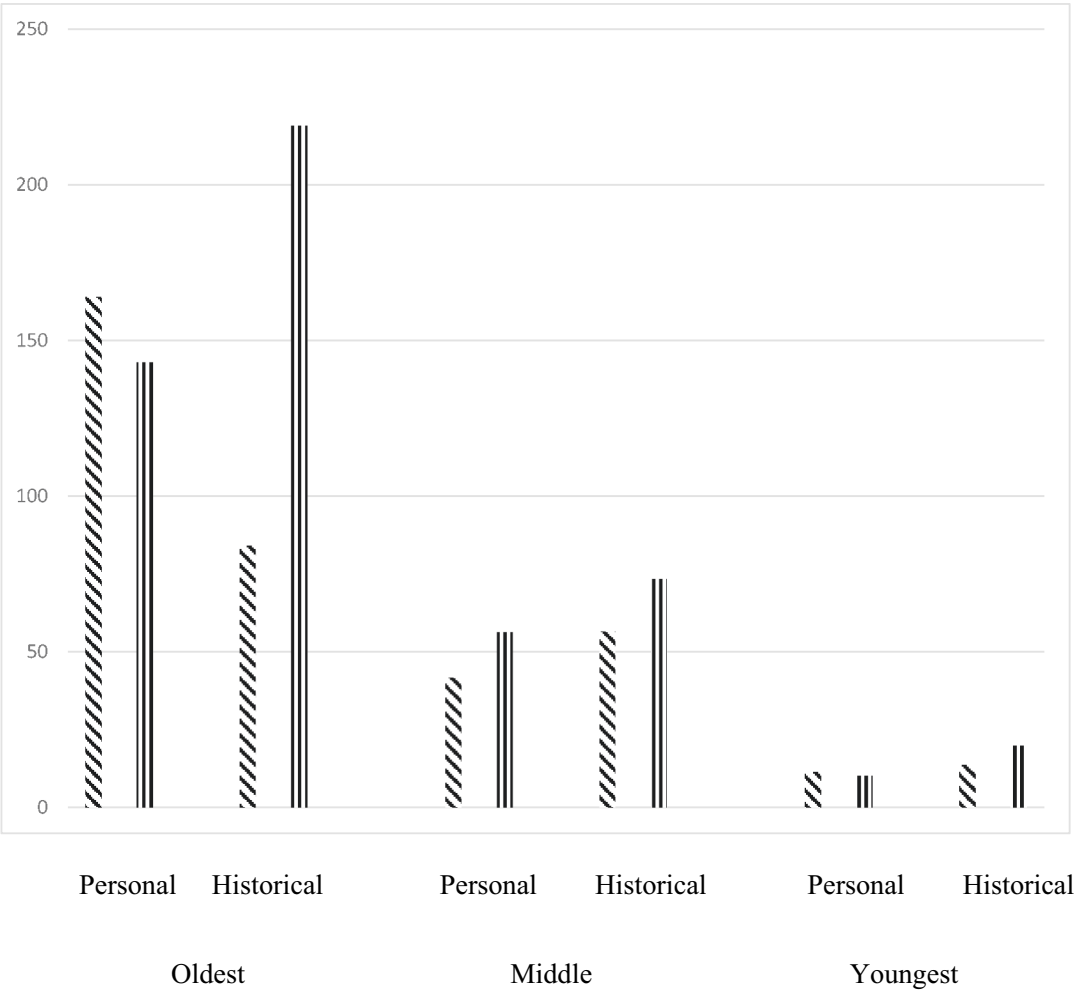

Figure 2. Number of narrator idea units by generation, context and content. *Note*: Diagonal pattern = individual recollective context; vertical pattern = collaborative recollective context

To examine the emergence of new recollections, we conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with origin ("Old" vs "New") and content (personally relevant vs historically relevant) as within-individual factors and total number of recollections mentioned in the collaborative session as the dependent variable. We cannot examine an effect of generation here in that we are examining the recollection that emerged during the collaborative session, not what any individual said within the collaborative session. Our results revealed a main effect for origin, $F(1,4) = 53.44$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .93$.

The main effect for origin reflects the fact that families, on average, repeated old recollections ($M = 17.80$, $SD = 2.42$) in the collaborative sessions more than they introduced new recollections ($M = 11.10$, $SD = 2.20$), though it is worth noting that over 40% of the recollections told in the collaborative session were new. Interestingly, there was no interaction between origin and content. That is, new personal and historical recollections were equally likely to emerge in both the individual and collaborative sessions. How and why new recollections emerged will be taken up in the qualitative section.

Qualitative analysis

A striking result of our quantitative analysis was that the collaborative recall led to the introduction of new recollections and details. Two factors may help explain this result: The role of the mentor and role flexibility. We first examine how these two factors affected the quantity of recalled details (both historical and personal) and then turn to the extent to which it aided in the introduction of new recollections.

Amount of details

In examining the transcripts, it became clear that the mentor played a pertinent role in facilitating the emergence of details surrounding a particular topic (see, Harris et al., 2011, for a similar observation). For example, the following exchange (family 1) about rationing between the oldest generation (OG) and middle generation (MG) demonstrates how a mentor can encourage the narrator to provide more details:

MG: "But [Mentor] at my father's house they were hungry?" (Narrator)

OG: "Oh yes. [Monitor] At your father's house they were hungry." (Monitor)

MG: "Well, you see [to youngest generation] . . . And why were they hungry?" (Mentor – asking question)

OG: "Because his dad would never allow the black market. [Narrator] [. . .] So, your father, his brothers and sisters had to go elsewhere by bike to get some [food] in their bike bag [Narrator], but we could not tell him [that they got some food from the black market]." (Narrator)

MG: "And?" (Mentor – asking question)

OG: "It wasn't your grandfather's thing [the black market]. [Narrator] Well, it was like that. It wasn't his thing. He was a pure intellectual." (Narrator)

In contrast, the next excerpt (family 4) between mother (MG) and grandfather (OG) shows how the absence of mentoring can lead to the loss of personal narrative detail.

MG: "Yes, [Monitor] but you still had the evacuation, because we . . ." (Narrator)

OG: ". . . the evacuation. Yes. [Monitor] It was terrible also. [Monitor] We were bombarded, that's true." (Narrator)

MG: "Yes, yes. [Monitor] You have been bombed." (Narrator)

OG: "But there were bombings that were obviously very important. [Narrator] The bombing was to prevent, for example, transports of troops. [Narrator] The factories were targeted, [Narrator] especially the stations. [Narrator] For example, the bombing of Ottignies was very important [. . .]." (Narrator)

In the first example, the prompting on the part of the mentor elicited more details from the narrator concerning the topic of rationing at a personal level. In the second example, the narrator ends the discussion about the personally relevant recollection of being bombed and moves on to historically relevant aspects of the topic. The presence of a mentor may have been able to facilitate further discussion around the personal event of being bombed, as he or she did in the first example. Instead, without the presence of a mentor, the oldest generation moves on to historical details.

We also found that role flexibility across the generations influenced the extent to which more or fewer details emerged in the collaborative session. In some instances, the flexibility of roles led to more details; in other instances, it does not. For example, below is an excerpt (family 1) from a collaborative session between granddaughter – the youngest generation (YG) –, father (MG), and grandmother (OG), about the friends of the oldest generation that had been murdered by collaborators:

MG: "[. . .] Finally you had [. . .] in your entourage, Sir B. [Narrator] he had been murdered." (Narrator)

OG: "Murdered in a ditch." (Narrator)

MG: "In a ditch by collaborators." (Narrator)

OG: "Of course." (Monitor)

MG: "It was someone you knew very well?" (Mentor)

OG: "Very, very well." (Monitor)

YG: "Why did collaborators murder him?" (Mentor)

OG: "Because he was president of the court of appeal, [Narrator] the lawyer of the court of appeal. [Narrator] And then I don't know what. [Meta] He was certainly . . . he was definitely part of it . . . [the resistance]." (Narrator)

Here we can see that the oldest generation does not spontaneously begin narrating the story. Rather, by adopting the roles of both the mentor and the narrator, the middle generation helps the details emerge. The ability of the middle generation to switch roles enhances the development of the recollection.

In some instances, however, role flexibility hindered the development of a story. Take for example this exchange (family 2) between granddaughter (YG), mother (MG), and grandfather (OG):

MG: "Well, I don't know much. [Meta] I only know [Meta] that sometimes you hide [Narrator], [. . .] that sometimes there was a lot of noise. [Narrator] But you've never been touched directly [by the bombing]." (Narrator)

YG: [telling something short and inaudible]

MG: "[. . .] Now, I don't know. [Meta]. I know that aunt S. said [Meta] 'When the sirens went, we had to go down, we had to go down.'" (Narrator)

OG: "It's from September 1943 [Narrator] that the big shelling started [Narrator]. Before that there was almost no bombing, it was almost nothing [Narrator]. And then in '43 [Narrator – repetition], it's the Americans [Narrator], in one go . . . they started making a hail of bombs in Germany and elsewhere. [. . .]" (Narrator)

Here we can see that the middle generation is attempting to share the role of narrator with the oldest generation, but the oldest generation cuts the middle generation off, preventing any elaboration of personal details and proceeds to elaborate about the historical aspects of the bombing.

"New" recollections. As with amount of details, the role of the mentor and role flexibility proved critical for when new recollections emerged during the collaborative recall session. For instance, mentors can provide the necessary question(s) or cue to elicit a new recollection. For example, (family 1), here is an interaction between the grandmother (OG) and father (MG):

OG: "[. . .] We had stamps [Narrator]. There were x stamps for the potatoes [Narrator], x stamps for a little bit of sugar [Narrator], to have a little butter [Narrator], a little flour [Narrator]. And we had leaves [Narrator] and then we took off the stamps [Narrator], we had to give them . . ." (Narrator)

MG: "To suppliers? [Mentor – questioning] At the store?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "ah . . . ah yes [Monitor] the store could not sell food without having stamps." (Narrator)

MG: "and the stamps you supplied them to the post office?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "ah, we received x stamps [Narrator]. We received that every month." (Narrator)

MG: "Your parents received this [Narrator]. No?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "no." (Monitor)

MG: "You were married." (Mentor – prompting)

OG: "no, no. I did not get married at 1940. [. . .]" (Monitor)

MG: "Your father?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "My parents, my parents had that. [Narrator] I do not know where it came from. [Meta] The township, no doubt." (Narrator)

MG: "yes, no doubt" (Monitor)

OG: "Probably my mother was going to get it. [Narrator] My father too. [Narrator] But normally in a shop you could have no food, nothing in the food without the stamps." (Narrator)

As you can see, the mentor provided questions in the first instance and a cue in the second instance that allowed two new recollections to emerge. In the absence of such questioning or cuing, new personal recollections appeared to be less frequently told.

In the next example, we see, again, how mentors can facilitate the emergence of a new recollection. Here (family 2) a mother (MG) and grandfather (OG) are discussing a friend of the family who was part of the resistance.

MG: "And the Fraiteur [family name] too. [Narrator] Was the son of Fraiteur also denounced?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "mmm?"

MG: "The son of Fraiteur was also denounced by collaborators [Narrator], I suppose." (Mentor – prompting)

OG: "No. He said." (Monitor)

MG: "Was he resistant?" (Mentor – questioning)

OG: "He had a strange resistance. A huge [resistance]!" (Narrator)

MG: "Yes."

OG: "And he was caught because his bike and friend's bike, of Raskin were left behind [Narrator] and after [the authorities found the bike with the bike's license plate] they [the authorities] found the lineage [the family Fraiteur] [Narrator]. Both [Fraiteur and Raskin] were executed [Narrator]. One was 17 years old and the other 19 years old." (Narrator)[4]

No one in this family recalled this story during the individual recall session.

Similarly, when families exhibited role flexibility across the generations, we observed new recollections during the collaborative recall session. For example (family 4), the following interaction between mother (MG) and grandmother (OG) about their relative who was held as a prisoner of war in a camp in the Ukraine:

MG: "Poppy [Father of OG], he said [Meta] he had a piece of wood at his feet with 4 strings." (Narrator)

OG: "Yes [Monitor], but that was when he was at RAWA [Rava-Ruska] [Narrator]. It was not when he was . . ." (Narrator)

MG: "[xx] at the Russian border. [Narrator] You have to bear it." (Meta-memory)

OG: "Yes [Monitor], but that was the camp, law enforcement camp following his . . ." (Narrator)

MG: "His escape" (Narrator)

OG: "To his escape [Monitor]. There it was, a camp." (Narrator)

MG: "Almost a concentration one." (Narrator)

OG: "Almost Concentration. [Monitor] Yes, it was limit concentration (Monitor) [. . .] He said (Meta) it was the Camp of the water drop. [Narrator] There was only one water inlet . . . for 30,000 men [Narrator] and the only container he had was a sardine box. [Narrator] So it's limited. These are repression camps, yes." (Narrator)

Again, no one in this family recalled this story during the individual recall session.

Discussion

The present study examined the conversational dynamics that may be involved in the transmission of WWII memories across generations. In conducting this study, we had three aims. First, we examined the different conversational roles adopted by each generation during a session in which three generations collaboratively recalled aspects of WWII. Second, we explored whether an intergenerational discussion influenced the amount of details and types of recollections that emerged relative to individual recollections when remembering a historical event (Stone et al., 2014). Third, we investigated how roles adopted by each family member during the discussion could moderate the extent to which details and new recollections emerged during the conversations.

In terms of roles, we found that the oldest generation largely adopted the role of narrator. This was not surprising given that they experienced the topics discussed. The middle generation tended to act as the mentor as well as the narrator on occasion. The presence of a mentor and the dynamism on the part of the middle generation can lead to the recall of more details and new recollections (more on this below). The youngest generation rarely adopted any role and figured little in the unfolding conversations. Given their apparent dearth of knowledge surrounding Belgium's role during WWII (Stone et al., 2014), this result is also not surprising. The present results provide additional support of the importance of these roles in understanding how conversations unfold (Hirst et al., 1997).

We also found that, overall, familial conversations increased the number of details that emerged relative to individual recollections. Our results allowed us to examine this increased recall in some detail. This increase in the number of details during the familial conversations appears to largely stem from the oldest generation providing about twice as many historical details in the conversation relative to the individual session. This focus on historical details on the part of the oldest generation also likely explains why families provided more historical details when discussing WWII relative to the individual session whereas there was no difference in the emergence of personal details between the collaborative and individual sessions.

Conversational roles also governed the emergence of new recollections and the elaboration of old recollections. The presence of a mentor provided the opportunity to question and cue the narrator, thereby leading to more details emerging during the collaborative recall session. These results are in line with prior research demonstrating collaborative benefits through the use of cues (Andersson & Rönnberg, 1997; Harris et al., 2011). Families also exhibited role flexibility, particularly the middle generation. In some circumstances, this flexibility facilitated the recall of details. However, in others, it appeared counterproductive, especially for personal details. In order for a mentor to aid in another's recall effectively, the mentoring must be accepted by the audience (i.e., the speaker). As the example we gave illustrates, sometimes the mentoring is simply ignored. If someone is in the middle of telling a story, they might simply insist on proceeding as planned. Such different responses to mentoring may reflect underlying differences in the conversational dynamics across families. That is, families in which family members are provided equal opportunities to contribute to the discussion will probably be more likely to provide more details during a conversation. Families in which the "expert" or the person who experienced the event are provided the opportunity to be a dominant narrator (Cuc et al., 2006),

mentoring the "expert" in such circumstances may not be effective. This may also be moderated by the extent to which the "expert" is also an elderly individual as was the case here. Indeed, it is possible that the oldest generation experienced a sense of generativity and/or transmission of wisdom. However, further research is needed to examine these possibilities.

As to why new recollections emerged, the presence of mentors and role flexibility appeared to elicit the new recollections. That is, the questioning and the cuing on the part of mentors not only prompted the narrator to provide more details, but also reminded them of related, novel recollections related to the original recollection. Similarly, the dynamic nature of a conversation, whereby roles shift across discussants, probably provided novel perspectives and, in turn, different cues to elicit recollections not previously mentioned during the individual session. Alternatively, as this was the second time the participants were discussing this topic, it is possible that participants actively sought to provide new recollections and not regurgitate the recollections they provided during the individual session (Stone et al., 2014). While this is possible, we believe this is unlikely because the old recollections should have been more accessible since they were recently rehearsed, and participants were not encouraged to provide old or new recollections. Rather, we believe the inclusion of such "new" recollections is the result of the conversational dynamics. In addition, it is not clear whether such recollections were actually new to some of the participants or were simply not mentioned in the individual session of Stone et al. (2014). Although it is hard to address this issue definitively, there were occasions in which the middle or youngest generation stated something along the lines of "I never heard that before."

The present results also found that, even when presented with the cuing benefits of narrators and mentors within a conversation, the youngest generation still lacked substantial knowledge both of their grandparent's personal memories and, more generally, historical memories. Thus, despite Assmann's (2011) claim that personal memories transmit across three generations, including the oldest generation, the present study suggests that it may be, in fact, limited to two generations (see, also Cordonnier et al., 2021; Stone et al., 2014). The lack of historical memories surrounding Belgium's role during WWII may speak to the importance of institutional means of transmitting history. Unlike in the US, where children are required to take a general and US history class, a similar course (for Belgium history) does not exist in Belgium.

In general, the middle generation seemed to play a critical role in shaping the collaborative recall, by mentoring and by taking on some of the narration one might normally expect from the oldest generation. An interesting question would be how the conversational interactions and the collaborative recall might differ if the middle generation were removed from the exchange. What happens when the oldest generation talks directly to the youngest generation? Such exchanges no doubt occur in everyday familial interactions, but given the impoverished knowledge of the youngest generation, one wonders if much would be exchanged without the aid of the middle generation.

Limitations and future research

A couple of limitations are worth noting. First, the present study only comprised five families for a total of 15 participants. Thus, the quantitative results of this research should be interpreted cautiously. However, even this small sample allowed for clear patterns of results, which were supplemented by our qualitative analysis. Together, they underscore the importance of conversational roles in understanding how a discussion will unfold. Future research should recruit a larger sample size to further examine the importance of conversational dynamics to facilitate or inhibit the intergenerational transmission of information.

Second, while we used the individual recall session as a baseline comparison (Stone et al., 2014), we did not include any cognitive measures to control for any cognitive decline that may have been present in the oldest generation and, in turn, may have influenced their ability to recall details or recollections during the collaborative recall session. Among our participants, one individual of the oldest generation exhibited slowness and reticence in divulging stories in the collaborative interview; however, there

were no other signs of cognitive impairment or reported cognitive impairment on the part of the other oldest generations and families overall. Future research should include such measures to control for any nuanced differences across families as a result of the oldest generations (in)ability to recall and convey their experiences surrounding historical events.

Third, while the present study does not examine what each generation knows surrounding WWII as a result of the conversation, the present results indicate the possible conversational dynamics that will ultimately lead to the intergenerational transmission of WWII memories and information. Future research should examine this possibility.

Finally, although WWII was a momentous historical event, in terms of the transmission of historical and personal memories, we do not view it as an exceptional case. We fully expect the results to generalize to other historical events. Future research should examine whether this is indeed the case.

Concluding thoughts

Assmann (2011) postulated that collective memories shared through informal conversations, what he refers to as communicative memory, should transmit across three or four generations. However, prior research suggests that this may not be the case (e.g., Stone et al., 2014). The results of the present study underscore this point and suggest that the extent to which historical and personal memories may emerge within a conversation and then potentially transmit across multiple generations appears to depend upon, among other things, the conversational dynamics and the conversational roles adopted by the discussants. Indeed, the presence of a narrator and a (flexible) mentor appears to be critical in eliciting more details and new recollections when collaboratively remembering the historical past. The present results help elucidate the mechanisms that may lead to the intergenerational transmission of historical and personal memories surrounding a historical event.

Notes

1. Analyses examining proportions revealed no meaningful differences from the reported results.
2. Please note, where relevant, the Bonferroni corrections are applied to all multiple comparisons throughout and are demarcated with an *. Regardless, all quantitative analyses should be approached with caution given the small *n*. These results primarily provide the context for our qualitative analyses.
3. In an effort to further streamline our manuscript, the different topics were not included in the analyses as they proved to have little effect on our principal variables of interest (i.e., roles and generation). All analyses with role and generation were not significant (all $p > .09$).
4. Real names were kept because of the public role they took in the Belgian resistance (see, https://www.belgiumwwii.be/au-coeur-de-la-belgique-occupee/la-repression-judiciaire-allemande-en-belgique-occupee.html).

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