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# Do People Across the World Want to Remember Positive Ingroup Histories?

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A key assumption in collective memory research is that group members are particularly inclined to preserve history that reinforces the ingroup’s positive identity. Yet, this assumption lacks solid empirical support, as research has rarely measured the identity-protective potential of historical events considered important to remember. Theoretically, this support is essential because group members may engage with history for reasons other than benefiting their ingroup. We complement existing literature by systematically testing the identity-protective tenet using a bottom-up approach. After sampling a broad set of historical events, we assessed the identity-relevant characteristics attributed to the events and examined how these characteristics relate to group members’ willingness to remember them. Across a preregistered study conducted in seven different national contexts ( $N = 2,045$  participants;  $N = 7,665$  ratings of 360 unique events), we found that events viewed as involving the ingroup in an agentic manner were considered important to remember in most countries. At the same time, we observed notable cross-national variation in the willingness to preserve events in which the ingroup caused positive consequences, behaved morally, or experienced threats, with a stronger tendency to remember ingroup-favoring history in less individualistic or less globally connected countries. We discuss how these findings bridge a crucial empirical gap by demonstrating that identity protection likely represents only one component of collective remembrance, whose importance appears to vary considerably across countries.

*Keywords:* collective memory, social identity, identity protection, morality, agency

Humanity often wonders which history will be remembered in the future. Harry S. Truman stated that “the Marshall Plan will go down in history as one of America’s greatest contributions to the peace of the world” (Truman, 1965, p. 113). In his landmark “I have a dream” speech, King (1963) said that the March on Washington “will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in

the history of our nation” (para. 1). But were they right? The current research aims to understand which historical events group members want to remember collectively. Moving beyond existing studies, we present a bottom-up approach that focuses on the characteristics of events considered important to preserve across seven countries from six continents.

Jackson Lu served as action editor.

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Fiona Kazarovytska played a lead role in conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, validation, visualization, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Katrín Árnadóttir played a lead role in investigation and resources and a supporting role in formal analysis and writing—review and editing. Silvana D’Ottone played a lead role in investigation and resources and a supporting role in formal analysis and writing—review and editing. Slieman Halabi played a lead role in investigation and resources. Edward Clarke played a supporting role in resources and writing—review and editing. Suryodaya Sharma played a supporting role in resources and writing—review and editing. Verena Heidrich played a supporting role in writing—review and editing. Roland Imhoff played a lead role in supervision and a supporting role in resources and writing—review and editing.

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## Identity Interests and Collective Remembrance

Members of social groups are not just passive keepers of the past. Instead, collective remembrance is an active process of “inventing, reinventing, and reconstructing” the past (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008, p. 320). This process of (re)forming history is often guided by a specific interest: developing and defending collective identity. Favorable historical memories provide crucial sources of meaning and intergenerational achievement (Paez & Liu, 2011). In their pursuit of a positive self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), group members may therefore use the past to create flattering images of the group. Emphasizing this functional role of historical memory, many researchers have described collective remembrance as a purposeful process, serving the identity interests of a group (J. Assmann, 2008; Bar-Tal, 2014; Halbwachs, 1992; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Manier & Hirst, 2008; Paez et al., 1997).

Evidently, some events are less suitable for fulfilling identity goals than others. Particularly when the past threatens positive collective identity, group members may employ strategies to reconstruct their history in a favorable manner, such as moralizing, rationalizing, and legitimizing the past (Bilewicz, 2016; Leidner et al., 2010; Wohl et al., 2006). One of the most widely used strategies, however, is arguably simple: not dealing with the past. By choosing to emphasize certain aspects of history but downplaying others, groups can selectively highlight their accomplishments while silencing “unwanted histories” (Kazarovytska & Imhoff, 2024; Klar & Bilewicz, 2017). Examples of omitting confrontation with negative pasts include Japan’s limited dealing with its war crimes (Liu & Atsumi, 2008), the Netherlands’ sparse engagement with its colonial crimes (Bijl, 2018), and the constrained discourse on crimes against Indigenous Americans in the United States (Davis-Delano et al., 2021).

## The Need to Study Identity Interests and Collective Remembrance

The assumption that group members are unwilling to collectively remember events that harm their identity interests is one of the most prominent notions in collective memory research. Baumeister and Hastings (1997) argued that group members systematically avoid confronting identity-threatening events to “provide a good foundation for a positive collective self-image” (p. 280). Similarly, Bar-Tal (2014) asserted that collective remembrance is “biased, selective, and distorted” (p. 5.4) in ways that meet group-based needs, such as those for a “positive identity” (p. 5.14). Also, Klar and Bilewicz (2017) proposed that to defend their identity, group members can become motivated “lay censors” (p. 342), silencing noncompliant historical accounts. However, although it is widely assumed that group members selectively preserve history that serves their positive identity, this assumption has rarely been put to empirical test. Despite its theoretical appeal, we argue that it is necessary to examine this idea across different contexts.

First, existing research calls into question the pursuit of solely positive ingroup memory, revealing that group members often remember highly negative events, particularly collective traumas. Such experiences of victimization pose massive threats to the group’s identity, existence, and power (Vollhardt, 2012). Nevertheless, memories of victimization experiences can be adaptive. They help identify danger, promote meaning-making, and provide sources of morality and self-verification—alongside the enormous threats these memories carry

(Hirschberger, 2018; Liu et al., 1999). Similarly, negative experiences of defeat can become a meaningful part of national memories, reaffirming claims of justice and upholding a sense of nationhood even beyond territorial borders (see, e.g., young Argentines memory of the Malvinas War; Muller et al., 2024). These perspectives suggest that collective remembrance can be guided by motives other than the construction of a positive group identity.

Second, several perspectives, albeit less dominant in the literature, challenge an identity-based view on collective remembrance in principle. Licata and Mercy (2015) emphasized that collective memories fulfill not only identity needs but also the epistemic need for understanding the past. Similarly, Liu (2022) reasoned that collective remembrance functions as an anchoring mechanism, making the world comprehensible. Pennebaker and Banasik (1997) further contend that collective memories help explain social changes relevant to the present. However, understanding the world today (e.g., territorial borders, political systems) requires confronting both past glories and negative experiences. Although an identity-oriented view would predict the silencing of such unpleasant aspects of history, the desire to thoroughly understand the past suggests an alternative pattern: a willingness to address history, even at the expense of positive group identity.

Finally, the role of ingroup positivity in collective remembrance has seldom been systematically studied across multiple countries. Yet, Hirst et al. (2018) argue that both history and the way groups remember it are deeply socially embedded, with communities employing specific schemas to interpret their past. For instance, Russia’s self-creation as a defender against vicious forces shapes the country’s remembrance of the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, and World War II, and will likely also guide what history group members consider important to preserve (Hirst et al., 2018). Such master narratives governing remembrance (Hammack, 2011) differ from country to country. Therefore, if we want to understand principles of identity management in remembrance, we must test them across different countries.

## A Bottom-Up Approach

We propose a bottom-up approach that has not yet been used in collective memory research for studying the role of identity-protective interests in collective remembrance. The identity-motivated view allows us to make precise predictions about what history group members may want to preserve in order to maintain a favorable self-perception. However, rather than predicting the events group members seek to remember, we use identity-protective theorizing to predict the characteristics of events that make them seem worth preserving. Thus, we explicate the fundamental functionalist perspective (Halbwachs, 1925/1992) that collective remembrance is less concerned with historical incidents themselves and more concerned with their function.

The first event characteristic that we can expect to be linked to the willingness to collectively remember the past is ingroup involvement (see also Liu et al., 2005). Only if the group has a connection to the past—be it as agent or recipient—can it inform the group’s present-day self-perceptions. The second basic prediction is that group members prefer to remember ingroup history with positive valence. The identity-motivated account posits that history serves a group’s positive self-perception. As such, group members should be inclined to remember positive (rather than negative) history, especially when the ingroup was

involved—a self-serving preference, prevalent also in autobiographical memory (Schacter et al., 2024).

The specific form of this positive involvement entails further characteristics. A key aspect of collective self-definitions is morality. Even more than competence or sociability, morality drives favorable ingroup perceptions, leading to the hypothesis of a “primacy of morality” in social evaluations (Brambilla et al., 2021; Leach et al., 2007). Consequently, we predicted that group members are particularly motivated to preserve history that depicts them in a moral light.

Crucially, a positive collective identity involves not only being part of a moral group but also a distinctive group that makes a specific contribution to the world (Brewer, 1991; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Hence, group members are likely motivated to remember history that emphasizes their agency in the course of events. Indeed, group members tend to overestimate their ingroups’ contribution to broader national or world history (Putnam et al., 2018; Roediger et al., 2019; Zaromb et al., 2018). Arguably, such overestimations may reflect not only cognitive biases but also a desire to see the group have an impact and fulfill a historical mission (Klar & Bilewicz, 2017). However, this desire may be tempered when agency is associated with immoral actions, calling the group’s positive meaning into question. Last, more recent history involving the ingroup may be prioritized, as it is more directly linked to present-day identity aspects (Liu et al., 2009).

In summary, we hypothesized that group members prefer to collectively remember history that involves their ingroup, particularly when it is characterized by high positivity and low negativity (i.e., interaction of involvement and valence). Additionally, we expected that ingroup morality, ingroup agency, and the display of agency in morally praiseworthy actions (i.e., interaction of morality and agency) would be related to higher willingness to remember. Finally, people may be more inclined to remember the recent past in which their ingroup was involved (i.e., interaction of involvement and recency). These features can highlight the ingroup’s positive historical significance. Accordingly, it may be these characteristics that are crucial for participants’ willingness to remember.

By shifting attention to the perceived characteristics of events, we adopt a novel approach to studying willingness to remember. Previous research has typically measured group members’ willingness to engage with selected events, usually involving intergroup violence (e.g., Allpress et al., 2014; Hanke et al., 2013; Kazarovytska & Imhoff, 2024; Sahdra & Ross, 2007), thus constraining our ability to draw broader conclusions about other events. Other research in specific national contexts (e.g., the United States; Schuman & Scott, 1989; Yamashiro & Roediger, 2019), historical contexts (e.g., World War II; Roediger et al., 2019), or across national and historical contexts (Brasil & Cabecinhas, 2017; Liu et al., 2005; Pennebaker et al., 2006) has examined which events group members consider relevant in human history. However, despite covering a wide range of events, these studies allow for only limited empirical conclusions about the shared characteristics of the event group members want to collectively remember.

The question of what group members want to remember cannot be readily answered by what is considered relevant in human history. This is because the latter pertains to knowledge, whereas the former pertains to preference, which can diverge. For example, despite broad consensus on the historical significance of the Nazi past (Papendick et al., 2020), large parts of German society are reluctant to engage with this past (Hagemann & Nathanson, 2015). Similarly, identifying the characteristics of historical events that group members seek to

preserve involves more than merely listing those events, because such listings do not provide an empirical basis for understanding the meaning that group members attribute to the events. Although we can theorize about the meaning of the events, without measuring it among group members, the question of what characterizes the events that group members prefer to preserve remains empirically unresolved.

Measuring the characteristics attributed to events seems particularly critical, as group members may assign vastly different meanings to the same event. For instance, some White Americans may view slavery as a wrongful ingroup past, but others may not (Domby, 2020), whereas Black Americans may see it as a painful legacy of victimization. These different views can result in markedly diverging willingness to remember the same event. Conversely, similar characteristics—such as agency—may be attributed to different events, like promoting minority rights or fighting an oppressive regime, resulting in a converging willingness to remember distinct events. At the event level, these patterns may appear as disputes over which history to remember (Roediger, 2021). Potentially, however, they may not reflect controversy over the type of history to preserve but rather differing views on which history constitutes that type. Thus, if we want to uncover general identity-motivated patterns, we need to make events comparable in their essential meaning across and within different groups. By focusing on their attributed characteristics, we seek to address this issue.

## Present Research

We systematically tested the prominent assumption that the willingness to collectively remember historical events is related to the capacity of these events to highlight a positive group identity. Thus, following Gergen’s (1978) call for theory development, we examined the empirical substance of a theoretical idea that is “taken for granted” (p. 1346). As such, our findings can be generative for collective memory research in two ways: If we consistently observe a pattern congruent with identity-motivated reasoning, our results provide empirical support for a well-known, yet rarely tested, theoretical tenet. If, however, our results show limited or cross-contextually inconsistent support for identity protection, they critically challenge existing theorizing and advocate for a more nuanced understanding of collective remembrance as an identity-motivated project.

Following identity-motivated theorizing, we derived a set of hypotheses concerning various identity-relevant characteristics (Table 1). We tested these hypotheses across seven national samples, several of which are underrepresented in collective memory research. We used a two-step procedure. In a prestudy, we asked participants from each country (total  $N = 1,050$ ) to name events they consider important for their national and world history. Striving for a representative stimulus sample (Brunswick, 1955), in a second step, we presented the 80 most frequently mentioned events (total  $N = 360$  unique events across countries) to another sample from each country (total  $N = 2,045$ ). Using a stimuli-within-block design (Westfall et al., 2014), participants then rated a subsample of these events according to the characteristics described above (total  $N = 7,665$  ratings). These ratings were entered as predictors of the willingness to remember in the main study. Since we observed notable cross-contextual variation, we complemented our preregistered analyses by exploring interactions with country-level variables and top-down influences that might help situate the observed variation.

**Table 1**  
Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Prediction
H1	Perceived <i>ingroup involvement</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.
H2	Perceived <i>positivity</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of positivity and involvement).
H3	Perceived <i>negativity</i> is negatively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of negativity and involvement).
H4	Perceived <i>ingroup morality</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.
H5	Perceived <i>ingroup agency</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.
H6	The relationship between ingroup agency and the willingness to collectively remember is tempered by low ingroup morality (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of agency and morality).
H7	<i>Recency</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of recency and involvement).

*Note.* Some of these hypotheses deviate in their formulation from the hypotheses that we initially preregistered. First, H2, H3, and H7 were originally formulated as *main effect hypotheses* without explicitly considering the interaction with ingroup involvement. However, we recognized that including ingroup involvement provides a more critical test of identity-motivated reasoning than only examining the associations of valence and recency with the willingness to collectively remember. Notably, the current, reformulated hypotheses were *not* consistently empirically supported. Second, regarding H3, we initially preregistered that negativity would *positively* correlate with the willingness to collectively remember (i.e., the opposite of the current hypothesis). The reasoning behind this hypothesis was that negative events can help groups determine their position in the world (Liu et al., 1999). Yet, in writing this article, we realized that this rationale does not logically align with our identity-protective (i.e., identity-positive) theorizing, but rather with research on collective trauma, suggesting precisely an interest in remembering ingroup threat as an element of collective self-definition (e.g., Hirschberger, 2018). Since our conclusions do not critically rely on the significance of single hypotheses, but rather on a broader pattern of results, we decided to revise this hypothesis to be more consistent with our main theoretical reasoning. However, we return to the point of self-verification and collective trauma in our general discussion. A detailed summary of these deviations from the preregistrations is also provided in additional online material A (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

### Present Research Contexts

We recruited participants from seven countries across six continents. We began our research in the United States, a country marked by colonial settlement, intergroup transgression like the genocide of Indigenous Americans or the transatlantic slave trade, and major conflicts such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. As Yamashiro and Roediger (2019) note, U.S. collective memory is influenced by the narrative of exceptionalism—a belief in the unique mission to promote liberty and democracy. At the same time, the United States faces declining support for democracy (Claassen & Magalhães, 2023) and growing political polarization, which is also evident in intensive debates over memory, critical race theory, and historical injustice (Benjamin et al., 2020). The tensions between identity-affirming narratives and contested historical representations

make the United States an intriguing context for examining identity-protective remembrance desires.

Australia and Germany are known for a more self-critical approach to history. Key events in Australia's history include British colonization and the establishment of the Commonwealth. The colonization had detrimental consequences for Indigenous populations, including mass violence and the forced removal of children, known as the Stolen Generations. Recent political efforts now strive for land restitution and apologies, emphasizing multiculturalism as a central aspect of the country's identity (but see Barta, 2008, on the silencing of the genocide). Germany's recent past is shaped by World War II, the Holocaust, and reunification. After prolonged silence, the Nazi crimes today take center stage in German memory politics (A. Assmann, 2003), with public repentance forming a main aspect of national identity (but see Jikeli, 2020, on the lack of in-depth engagement with the past). This strong emphasis on historical responsibility, though largely focused on the Holocaust in Germany (Rothberg, 2022), raises the question of whether countries such as Australia and Germany may show a more self-critical collective remembrance pattern.

While the United States, Australia, and Germany are large powers with salient transgression histories, Iceland is a small state largely underrepresented in collective memory research. Historical milestones include the development of a fishing-based economy, the 2008 financial crisis, and natural disasters like volcanic eruptions. Politically, Iceland experienced long periods of foreign rule, culminating in its independence in 1944. Independence brought not only self-governance but also modernization (Hermannsson, 2005), contributing to Iceland's status as an economically successful country. Notably, the independence struggle is nationally represented as everlasting, with the striving for sovereignty deeply embedded in the national self-image (Bergmann, 2014). This makes Iceland a compelling context for studying identity-relevant collective memory desires (Hálfðanarson, 2000).

All countries included thus far belong to the global West. Expanding this focus, we examined collective remembrance desires in a non-Western country known for its diversity: India. The Indian context is marked by a history of wars, oppressive institutions such as the caste system, colonization, and postindependence modernization. Since independence, India has undergone economic liberalization and political changes, shaping a national identity that increasingly focuses on becoming a powerful global voice (Singh, 2014). However, as a country of vast cultural and religious diversity, national self-understanding is debated through various interpretations of the past, such as the "unity in diversity," emphasizing India's history of pluralism, or "majoritarianism along religious lines," highlighting community conflicts (Balagopalan, 2009; Gottlob, 2007; Ray & Singh, 2015). These divergent historical reconstructions raise the question of what remembrance patterns prevail in this context.

Each country included has undergone major sociopolitical change. Chile's recent transition from democracy to dictatorship and back represents a particularly profound sociopolitical transformation. Key events in Chile's history include Spanish colonization, independence struggles, and the 1973 coup that led to a military dictatorship marked by widespread human rights abuses. After the return to democracy, Chile achieved substantial economic growth and sociopolitical progress. However, debates over social justice and historical representations keep shaping political discourse and national identity (Garretón, 2019). Although official narratives emphasize economic success and democratic stability, they are deeply contested by alternative accounts centered on historical trauma, memory of dictatorship,

Indigenous rights, and persistent social inequality (Badilla & Aguilera, 2021). This ongoing negotiation of the country's history and identity makes Chile a striking context for studying collective remembrance desires.

Finally, we examined willingness to remember in Kenya—a country that has been described as standing “at a crossroads in the reconstruction of its historical memory” (Coombes et al., 2014, p. 1). Kenya's recent history is marked by independence in 1963, the development of multiparty democracy, and regional conflicts. Although Kenya is considered a stable country in the region, it continues to face ethnic tensions, transnational terrorism, and youth unemployment. These issues have led to massive protests in 2024 (Kamau, 2021; Kiprono, 2024). Given these challenges, political narratives often cast a vision of an optimistic future, pleading with people not to look at the past (Shanguhya, 2022; Wandibba, 2023). The crossroads of collective remembrance thus involve navigating between calls to forget colonial or ethnic conflicts and efforts to build inclusive collective narratives that acknowledge the past (Nyamweno, 2024). In light of this ongoing juncture, testing whether the idea that collective remembrance protects group identity applies in Kenya offers a critical test of this theory.

### Transparency and Openness

We report all studies run within this project and how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions (if any), all manipulations, and all measures in the studies, and we follow Journal Article Reporting Standards (Appelbaum et al., 2018). Data, analysis codes, research materials, and additional online material are available on our Open Science Framework (OSF) project page accessible at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/> (Kazarovytska et al., 2025). Preregistrations are available for all national contexts: United States (<https://osf.io/nfp86/>), Australia (<https://osf.io/ru3h2/>), Germany (<https://osf.io/a5cj2/>), Iceland (<https://osf.io/rt5b3/>), India (<https://osf.io/n2wgk/>), Chile (<https://osf.io/ub329/>), and Kenya (<https://osf.io/x5tjp/>). We used ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2025) to assist with text revision and language editing. All contents were reviewed and verified by the authors. The project received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Psychological Institute at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

## Method

### Prestudy: Stimulus Generation

In all countries, we first generated a large sample of historical events. The methodological setup was identical in all seven national contexts. We recruited  $N = 150$  participants from each country (total  $N = 1,050$  across countries; see Table 2 for details on sample characteristics) and asked them to name up to 10 events from their country's history and up to 10 events from world history they consider important, with a minimum requirement of five events per category. Consistent with Liu et al. (2005, 2009), we chose a time frame of 1,000 years to prevent an overrepresentation of religious figures.<sup>1</sup> The questions read as follows:

Please imagine you were going to give a lecture on the history of [country]. Which 5–10 most important events in [country's] history would you choose for it? Please limit yourself to events that do not go back more than 1000 years.

Now imagine that you were going to give a lecture on world history. Which 5–10 most important events in world history would you choose for it? Please, again, limit yourself to events that do not go back more than 1000 years.

Striving for a broad, representative stimulus sample (Brunswick, 1955), we then selected the 40 most frequently named national events and the 40 most frequently named world events in each country, eliminating any duplicates. The first 10 events in each category are listed in Table 3. A full overview of all events (total  $N = 360$  unique historical events across different countries) is provided on our OSF project page. The final set of 80 events per country (i.e., 40 events from national history and 40 events from world history) was then used as the stimulus material in the main study.

## Main Study

### Participants

Following the stimulus generation, we asked new samples of participants from each country to rate a selection of the events generated in the prestudy on the specified characteristics (see Table 1). As preregistered, in all countries, we excluded participants who indicated that they clicked at random or who failed one or more of the attention checks (e.g., “please tick five”). Further, as preregistered, we kept ratings only from participants who had at least a basic knowledge of the event in question in order to avoid random noise. Specifically, if participants indicated that they had never heard of an event (i.e., participants did not know about a historical event presented to them) or had heard of an event but were unsure about what happened during the event, we excluded their responses for that event from the analysis. For an overview of the sample characteristics in the main study, see Table 2.

### Considerations on Statistical Power

In the main study, participants from each country rated five randomly sampled events from the full set of 80 events per country. Thus, we employed a stimuli-within-block design (Westfall et al., 2014) wherein each participant is randomly assigned to a subsample of the full stimulus sample. This approach allowed us to maintain reasonable completion times while still including a large set of individual stimuli. The latter is essential to avoid biased estimates (Fiedler, 2011) and enable generalization of results (Brunswick, 1955). The statistical power in a stimuli-within-block design, which is an extension of the stimuli-within-conditions design, depends on both the number of participants and stimuli. Specifically, based on simulations for the stimuli-within-conditions design by Westfall et al. (2014), our sample (about 300 participants) and stimuli number (80 stimuli) provided about 80% power to detect small to medium effect sizes of Cohen's  $d = 0.30$ – $0.40$ , roughly corresponding to standardized regression coefficients of about  $0.15$ – $0.20$  in models with one predictor (Ruscio, 2008). However, since simulations necessarily require making assumptions about variance components, which can be complicated for mixed models (as used in this

<sup>1</sup> The only exception to this procedure occurred in Iceland, where we extended the historical period of relevance from 1,000 to 1,200 years. This extension was made to include some particularly important national events in Iceland, such as the founding of Alþingi, one of the world's oldest surviving parliaments, in 930.

**Table 2**  
**Sample Characteristics in the Prestudy and Main Study by Country**

Country	United States	Australia	Germany	Iceland	India	Chile	Kenya
Prestudy: Sample characteristics N final	N = 150	N = 150	N = 150	N = 150	N = 150	N = 150	N = 150
Age: M (SD), age range in years	40.28 (12.11), age range: 20–84	35.08 (10.53), age range: 19–64	31.10 (14.12), age range: 18–90	48.02 (15.24), age range: 18–79	40.04 (12.92), age range: 18–79	43.98 (16.77), age range: 18–85	35.18 (13.52), age range: 18–69
Gender: women (w), men (m), gender diverse or not indicated (d)	64% w, 36% m	47% w, 49% m, 4% d	59% w, 39% m, 2% d	57% w, 43% m	46% w, 51% m, 3% d	46% w, 52% m, 2% d	50% w, 50% m
National identification: M (SD)	4.58 (1.62)	4.58 (1.62)	3.00 (1.40)	5.33 (1.64)	6.60 (0.89)	5.48 (1.75)	6.05 (1.67)
Language	English	English	German	Icelandic	English	Spanish	English
Time of data collection	May 2022	May 2023	January 2022	March–May 2023	August 2023	February 2023	February 2023
Recruitment	Prolific	Prolific	Social media, snowball sampling, university mailing lists	Social media, snowball sampling, university mailing lists	Toluna	Netquest	Toluna
Main study: Sample characteristics							
N final (N before exclusion) <sup>a</sup>	N = 311 (N = 350)	N = 311 (N = 350)	N = 335 (N = 350)	N = 226 <sup>b</sup> (N = 284)	N = 202 (N = 350)	N = 326 (N = 350)	N = 344 (N = 350)
N event ratings (basic event knowledge available) <sup>c</sup>	N = 1,293	N = 1,221	N = 1,435	N = 627	N = 794	N = 1,327	N = 1,004
N event ratings (ingroup involved in event) <sup>d</sup>	N = 1,094	N = 905	N = 1,178	N = 511	N = 688	N = 1,085	N = 890
N event ratings (clear end of event) <sup>e</sup>	N = 1,175 (75 of 80 events)	N = 1,144 (76 of 80 events)	N = 1,322 (74 of 80 events)	N = 546 (70 of 80 events)	N = 735 (75 of 80 events)	N = 1,156 (71 of 80 events)	N = 762 (63 of 80 events)
Age: M (SD), age range in years	39.95 (12.36), age range: 18–72	36.18 (13.26), age range: 18–86	32.68 (10.64), age range: 18–73	43.53 (19.87), age range: 19–78	38.46 (13.23), age range: 18–76	44.15 (16.42), age range: 18–85	31.86 (10.09), age range: 18–63
Gender: women (w), men (m), gender diverse or not indicated (d)	51% w, 46% m, 3% d	49% w, 48% m, 3% d	45% w, 52% m, 3% d	63% w, 35% m, 2% d	47% w, 52% m, 1% d	51% w, 48% m, 1% d	50% w, 50% m
National identification: M (SD)	4.19 (1.77)	4.47 (1.60)	3.07 (1.57)	4.77 (1.71)	6.35 (0.98)	5.29 (1.80)	6.14 (1.19)
Language	English	English	German	Icelandic	English	Spanish	English
Time of data collection	June 2024	June 2024	June 2024	February–April 2024	June 2024	July 2023	August 2023
Recruitment	Prolific	Prolific	Prolific	Social media, snowball sampling, university mailing lists	Toluna	Netquest	Toluna
Cronbach's $\alpha$							
Willingness to remember	.84	.85	.83	.84	.52	.69	.71
Symbolic ingroup threat	.96	.95	.93	.90	.93	.91	.93
Realistic ingroup threat	.95	.93	.91	.91	.92	.88	.88

<sup>a</sup> As preregistered, in all studies, we excluded participants who indicated that they clicked at random or who failed one or more of the attention checks. <sup>b</sup> For the main study, we aimed to recruit N = 350 participants from Iceland. As preregistered, we stopped data collection after the specified time period, reaching a total of N = 284 participants. <sup>c</sup> As preregistered, we kept ratings only from participants who had at least a basic knowledge of the event in question in order to avoid random noise. If participants indicated that they had never heard of an event or had heard of an event but were unsure about what happened during the event, we excluded their responses for that event from analyses. In Iceland, this procedure resulted in the final data including only responses to 79 events, since for one event (event 78: Chinese Cultural Revolution), none of the participants reported sufficient knowledge. <sup>d</sup> Given that results on ingroup morality and ingroup agency are not informative if participants do not consider their ingroup involved, we kept only those ratings where the ingroup was considered involved for the respective analyses. <sup>e</sup> Given that recency effects can only be sensibly tested for events with a clear end date, we kept only those ratings where the event had a clear end date for the respective analyses.

**Table 3**  
*Most Frequently Mentioned 10 Events for National and World History per Country*

Event	United States	Australia	Germany	Iceland	Chile	India	Kenya
National history							
1 American Civil War and Reconstruction Era	First Fleet	Federation of Australia	World War I	Iceland's Independence Movement	Chile's Independence	India's Independence	Kenya's Independence
2 American Revolution	Federation of Australia		World War II	Settlement of Iceland	Return to Democracy	Kargil War	Kenya Becomes a Republic
3 World War II	Gallipoli Landing		Fall of the Berlin Wall	Icelandic Declaration of Independence (1944)	War of the Pacific	Indian Rebellion 1857	Multiparty Politics in Kenya
4 U.S. Declaration of Independence	Gold Rushes		Weimar Republic	Iceland Becomes Christian	New Constitution Referendum (2022)	Salt Satyagraha	Promulgation of the 2010 Constitution
5 9/11	World War I		German Reunification	2008 Financial Crisis	Colonization	Constitution of India	Mau Mau Rebellion
6 World War I	Cook's Landing		Reformation	Disputes Over Fishing Rights ("Cod Wars")	Mapuche Conflict	Jallianwala Bagh Massacre	2007-2008 Post-Election Violence
7 Colonial Settlement in America	Cathy Freeman Wins Olympic Gold		Thirty Years' War	Reformation	Allende's Government	Partition of India	Colonization of Kenya by the British Rule
8 Ratification of the U.S. Constitution	Kevin Rudd Apology		National Socialism	Occupation of Iceland	Chile Wins the Copa América	British Rule in India	Mashujaa Day
9 American Civil Rights Movement	Stolen Generations		Holocaust	During World War II Women's Suffrage in Iceland	Election of Current Government	Indo-China War	Labour Day
10 Vietnam War	World War II		Constitution of St. Paul's Church	First Female President in Iceland	First Peoples	Quit India Movement	Daniel arap Moi Becomes President
World history							
1 Industrial Revolution	9/11		French Revolution	World War II	World War II	Atomic Bombings	World War I
2 Bubonic Plague	Bubonic Plague		Christopher Columbus Reaches America	World War I	World War I	Rise of Adolf Hitler	World War II
3 French Revolution	Industrial Revolution		American Revolution	"Discovery" of America by Europeans	Moon Landing	American Revolution	Transatlantic Slave Trade
4 Western Colonialism	Cold War		9/11	French Revolution	COVID-19	French Revolution	Cold War
5 Cold War	Invention of Internet		Western Colonialism and Slavery	Women's Suffrage	Fall of the Berlin Wall	9/11	Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022
6 Great Depression	Atomic Bombings		Crusades	Western Colonialism	9/11	COVID-19	Atomic Bombings
7 Transatlantic Slave Trade	Moon Landing		Moon Landing	Technological Advancement	Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022	Cold War	Digital Transformation
8 Atomic Bombings	American Revolution		American Civil War	Cold War	Industrial Revolution	American Civil War	Western Colonialism
9 Renaissance	Christopher Columbus Reaches America		Vietnam War	Fall of Berlin Wall	Christopher Columbus Reaches America	Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022	9/11
10 Fall of Berlin Wall	Western Colonialism		Bubonic Plague	Moon Landing	Dictatorship (Chile)	Great Depression	Fall of the Berlin Wall

*Note.* The full names of all events in their original languages (Icelandic, German, Spanish) are provided on the Open Science Framework.

research, where stimuli were treated as a random factor; Judd et al., 2012) due to multiple sources of variance (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998), our power considerations can only be considered approximate.

### Confirmatory Measures

Our main goal was to examine whether identity-favoring characteristics of historical events relate to the willingness to collectively remember these events. To this end, participants rated each randomly selected event according to the characteristics rooted in identity-protective reasoning. We presented the events to each participant in randomized order. The study materials were translated and back-translated from English into German, Icelandic, and Spanish for the research conducted in Germany, Iceland, and Chile, with the final versions available on our OSF project page.

**Ingroup Involvement.** To evaluate the involvement of the ingroup, participants responded to the item: “In [event], the [members of national ingroup] were, from my perspective . . .,” with the response options 1 (*predominantly originators of the events*), 2 (*predominantly recipients of the events, while the causes lay predominantly with other actors*), and 3 (*predominantly uninvolved: neither causing nor affected*). However, many events involve not only different national groups but also distinct social groups within the same nation. For example, the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election involved different social groups in the United States, such as Republicans and Democrats. Therefore, for each event, participants also indicated whether the event primarily involved different social groups within their country (*yes/no*). If so, we asked them to indicate the role that the group they most identify with, rather than the national ingroup as a whole, played in the event.

**Positivity and Negativity.** We measured the perceived positive valence of the historical event in question using two items. The first item evaluated the event itself: “How positive was what happened during [event] from your point of view?” The second item assessed the event’s consequences: “The consequences of [event] were mostly . . .” Responses ranged from 1 (*not positive at all*) to 7 (*very positive*). As preregistered, we analyzed these items separately to capture nuanced differences between the event’s genuine valence and its consequences. The rationale for this nuanced measure was that some events can be seen as negative in themselves, while their consequences can be seen as positive. For example, a war of liberation may be regarded as a negative event (i.e., war), while its consequences (i.e., liberation) are considered positive. Negative valence was measured in a similar way, with “negative” substituted for “positive.” Again, both items were treated as distinct measures.

**Ingroup Morality.** Perceived ingroup morality in the event was assessed with the item: “In [event], [national ingroup members] (or the group I most identify with) behaved, from my perspective . . .” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (*very immorally*) to 7 (*very morally*). Participants were reminded that for predominantly domestic events involving various social groups within their country, they should specify the role of the group with which they most identify. They also had the option to indicate that their national ingroup or the group they most identify with was not involved in the event at all.

**Ingroup Agency.** Perceived agency of the ingroup was measured using two items. The first item captured the ingroup’s power in the event: “In [event], from my point of view, the [members of national ingroup] (or the group I most identify with) had . . .,” with scale anchors ranging from 1 (*no power at all*) to 7 (*very much*

*power*). The second item measured the ingroup’s responsibility: “In your opinion, how great was the responsibility of the [members of national ingroup] (or the group I most identify with) for the course of [event]?” with scale anchors ranging from 1 (*not responsible at all*) to 7 (*completely responsible*). Again, participants were instructed to focus on the group they most identify with and could indicate if their ingroup was involved. As preregistered, the two agency items were analyzed separately to provide nuanced insights into their association with the willingness to remember them.

**Recency.** Two independent coders, blind to the hypotheses, determined the recency of the historical events by specifying their end year whenever a clear end date could be assigned (an overview of all recency codings is available on our OSF project page).<sup>2</sup>

**Willingness to Collectively Remember (Outcome).** Our main variable of interest was participants’ willingness to preserve a given event in collective memory. We measured this construct using seven items adapted from Kazarovytska and Imhoff’s (2024) historical closure scale. The scale captures the extent to which participants view engaging in remembrance as socially important and want to maintain an event’s presence in collective consciousness. Items include, for example, “We as a society should not have to deal so much with [event] these days,” and “Society remembers [event] more than I think it should” (both reverse-coded, such that agreement indicates lower willingness to remember). As shown in Kazarovytska and Imhoff’s validation studies, this measure correlates negatively with reparation intentions ( $r = -.41$  to  $-.76$ ) and willingness to visit a museum related to the respective event ( $r = -.41$  to  $-.69$ ) and even predicts participants’ readiness to incur personal costs to avoid confrontation with the event. To further map the aspect of cultural representation and transmission, we added two items that address the intention of passing down memories to future generations: “It is important for our society to deal with [event] in the school curriculum” and “It is important for our society to carry the memory of [event] in films and documentaries.” Participants rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We combined the responses into a composite score of willingness to remember. Table 2 displays the reliabilities for each country.

### Exploratory Measures

In addition to the main characteristics outlined, several other event features may shed light on identity-protective interests in collective remembrance. Specifically, we included symbolic and realistic threats as well as subjective temporal recency as supplemental characteristics for exploratory purposes.

**Symbolic and Realistic Ingroup Threat.** According to the identity-protective perspective, group members may be reluctant to remember history that impairs their positive identity. To substantiate this assumption, we assessed whether the event is perceived as posing a threat to the ingroup’s values or identity (symbolic ingroup threat) or to the ingroup’s power and well-being (realistic ingroup threat; Stephan et al., 1998). Symbolic ingroup threat was measured

<sup>2</sup> We preregistered a method of determining the recency of an event, which was to subtract the event’s end year from the year of data collection. However, this procedure would result in a temporal distance measure, with higher values indicating more distant events. For the sake of simplicity, we decided to use the actual year the event ended as a measure of recency, with higher values indicating greater temporal proximity (see additional online material A at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

with two items, including “The [event] poses a threat to the norms and values of [members of national ingroup] or the group I most identify with.” Realistic ingroup threat was measured with two further items, for example, “The [event] poses a threat to the political and economic power of [members of national ingroup] or the group I most identify with.” Scale anchors ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*).

**Subjective Recency.** Events perceived as more recent may be considered more relevant for understanding current ingroup identity and thus more important to preserve. However, subjective perceptions of recency can differ from objective measures (Wilson & Ross, 2003). Peetz et al. (2010) showed that perceived temporal distance can serve as an identity-protective mechanism, where threatening events are seen as more distant and favorable events are perceived as more recent. To gain a more nuanced understanding of recency effects, we explored whether willingness to collectively remember correlates with subjective recency. We assessed subjective recency with one item adapted from Peetz et al.: “Time can be experienced in different ways. Sometimes a point in the past can feel very far away, and other times an identical point in the past can be experienced as almost like yesterday. Please indicate on the slider attached below how far back in time you perceive [event] to be,” anchored from 1 (*feels very recent*) to 100 (*feels very distant*; reverse-coded).

For exploratory purposes, we further included several additional measures. We asked participants to rate the importance of each event for world history using one item: “In your opinion, how important is [event] for the course of world history?” ranging from 1 (*not important at all*) to 7 (*very important*). To assess personal significance of remembrance, participants responded to two items: “For me personally, it is important to keep the memory of [event] alive” and “Preserving the memory of [event] is very meaningful to me,” anchored from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We measured national identification using three items from the centrality scale by Leach et al. (2008) and included four items from the collective narcissism scale by Golec de Zavala et al. (2009). We further captured perceived collective continuity using three items by Sani et al. (2007) and perpetual ingroup victimhood orientation using three items by Schori-Eyal et al. (2017). All these scales ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Finally, participants rated the perceived presence of each event in politics and media

with one item each: “In your opinion, how much attention does [event] receive in [politics/media] in [country]?” anchored from 1 (*no attention at all*) to 7 (*very much attention*).

## Results

We analyzed our data by means of linear mixed models (LMMs) using the R packages *lme4* (Bates et al., 2015) and *lmerTest* (Kuznetsova et al., 2017). We conducted separate models for each (sub)hypothesis, entering the event characteristics as predictor variables and willingness to collectively remember as the outcome variable. All models treated the events (i.e., stimuli) as a random factor (Judd et al., 2012), specifying random intercepts and random slopes for events. We centered continuous characteristics around their grand means prior to analysis, and we dummy-coded ingroup role, treating “uninvolved” as the reference category. For reasons of parsimony, in models that include interaction terms, we present only the results that are critical for testing our hypotheses. Full models for each country, including also the main effects in interaction analyses, are available in additional online material B through additional online material H (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). To ease decomposition of explained variance, we report  $R^2$  marginal (m) as a measure of variance explained by fixed effects (i.e., variance explained by characteristics) and  $R^2$  conditional (c) as a measure of variance explained by the full model, including fixed effects and random effects (i.e., variance explained by events; Nakagawa et al., 2017).

Given that results on ingroup morality and ingroup agency are not informative if participants do not consider their ingroup involved, we kept only those ratings where the ingroup was considered involved. Similarly, because recency effects can only be meaningfully examined for events with a clearly defined end date, the corresponding analyses were based on ratings of events that met this criterion. The respective  $N$ 's of event ratings per country for each of these subsets are presented in Table 2.

## Correlations

Descriptive statistics for each event are reported in additional online material B through additional online material H (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). We also inspected the multilevel intercorrelations of the characteristics across countries (Table 4). Event positivity was

**Table 4**  
*Multilevel Correlations Across Countries*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Positivity event	—										
2. Positivity consequences	.76***	—									
3. Negativity event	-.67***	-.60***	—								
4. Negativity consequences	-.51***	-.57***	.65***	—							
5. Ingroup morality	.35***	.34***	-.24***	-.20***	—						
6. Ingroup agency: Power	.21***	.19***	-.12***	-.08***	.04*	—					
7. Ingroup agency: Responsibility	.20***	.20***	-.13***	-.08***	.04	.58***	—				
8. Recency	-.10***	-.09***	.11***	.10***	-.02	-.01	-.01	—			
9. Symbolic ingroup threat	-.20***	-.23***	.24***	.23***	-.11***	-.01	.04	.06***	—		
10. Realistic ingroup threat	-.17***	-.21***	.22***	.22***	-.09***	-.01	.03	.06***	.86***	—	
11. Subjective recency	-.03	-.03	.02	.01	-.01	.02	.03	.07***	.08***	.08***	—

*Note.* To integrate all continuous variables, we calculated correlations based on ratings involving the ingroup with a specific end date. The correlations for each country, revealing country-specific nuances, are provided in additional online material B through additional online material D (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

positively correlated with ingroup morality and agency but negatively related to ingroup threat. Event negativity showed the reverse pattern. Recency was negatively associated with positive valence and positively correlated with negative valence, suggesting that more recent events were generally perceived as less favorable. Subjective recency, in turn, was not correlated with any of the other characteristics, except for recency as well as symbolic and realistic ingroup threat. This finding deviates from the assumption that threatening events are shifted away in time (Peetz et al., 2010). However, it aligns with research showing that the present is often perceived as more negative or threatening than the past (Mastroianni & Gilbert, 2023; Yamashiro & Roediger, 2019). For the interpretation of our analyses, the latter results imply that a preference for remembering subjectively more recent history may not be considered as echoing identity-protective reasoning.

**Confirmatory Analyses**

The intraclass correlation coefficients ranged from .11 to .26 across countries and models, suggesting that the inclusion of random effects was appropriate.

**H1: Ingroup Involvement**

We predicted that perceived ingroup involvement would be positively related to willingness to remember. Supporting this hypothesis,

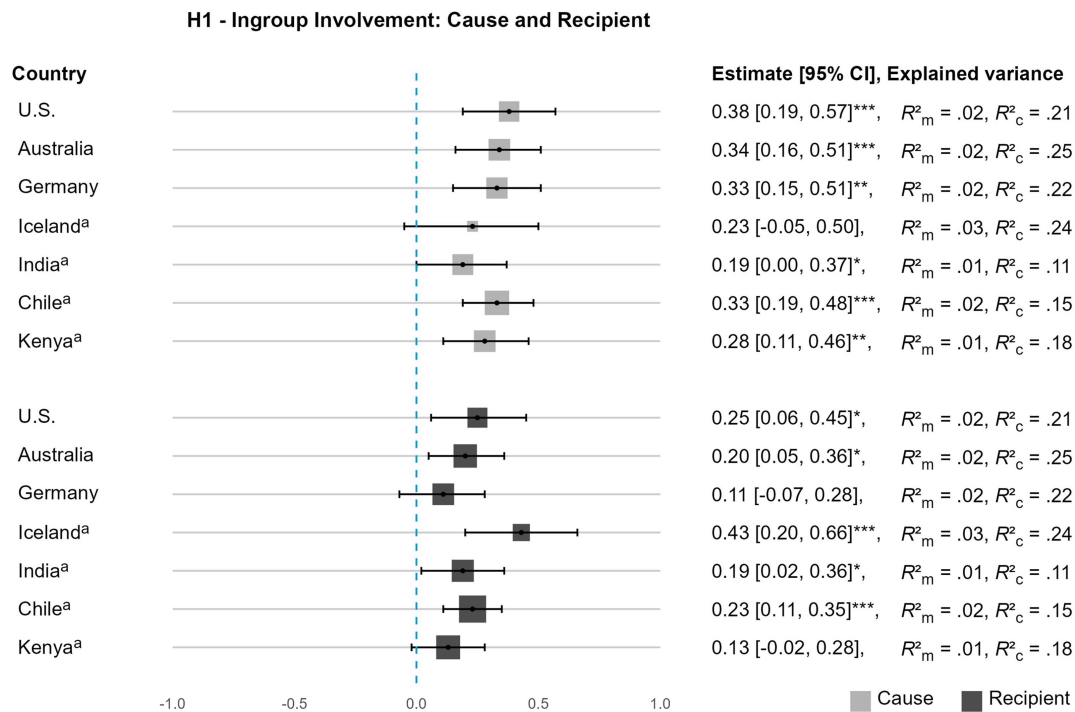
participants across all countries endorsed remembering events in which their ingroup was involved, whether as cause or recipient. Iceland was the only country where participants only preferred remembering events in which their ingroup was the recipient and the causes lay predominantly with other actors. Conversely, participants in Germany and Kenya showed interest only in events where their ingroup was the cause but not a recipient (Figure 1). Overall, these findings still indicate a broadly consistent pattern of participants’ willingness to engage with ingroup-related history, though preferred roles varied by country.

**H2–H3: Interactions Between Event Valence and Ingroup Involvement**

We expected identity interests to manifest in a tendency to remember positive ingroup history and avoid negative events caused or experienced by the ingroup. Deviating from this prediction, participants in the United States, Iceland, India, and Chile endorsed preserving positive events or events with positive consequences, regardless of the ingroup’s role. This suggests a general preference for positive history, beyond identity concerns. In contrast, German participants were generally more willing to remember negative events and those with negative consequences (Figure 2).

Still, underscoring the identity-motivated account, these general preferences were qualified by ingroup involvement in several countries. Supporting H2a and H3a, German participants were less inclined to

**Figure 1**  
*H1 Findings Across Countries*



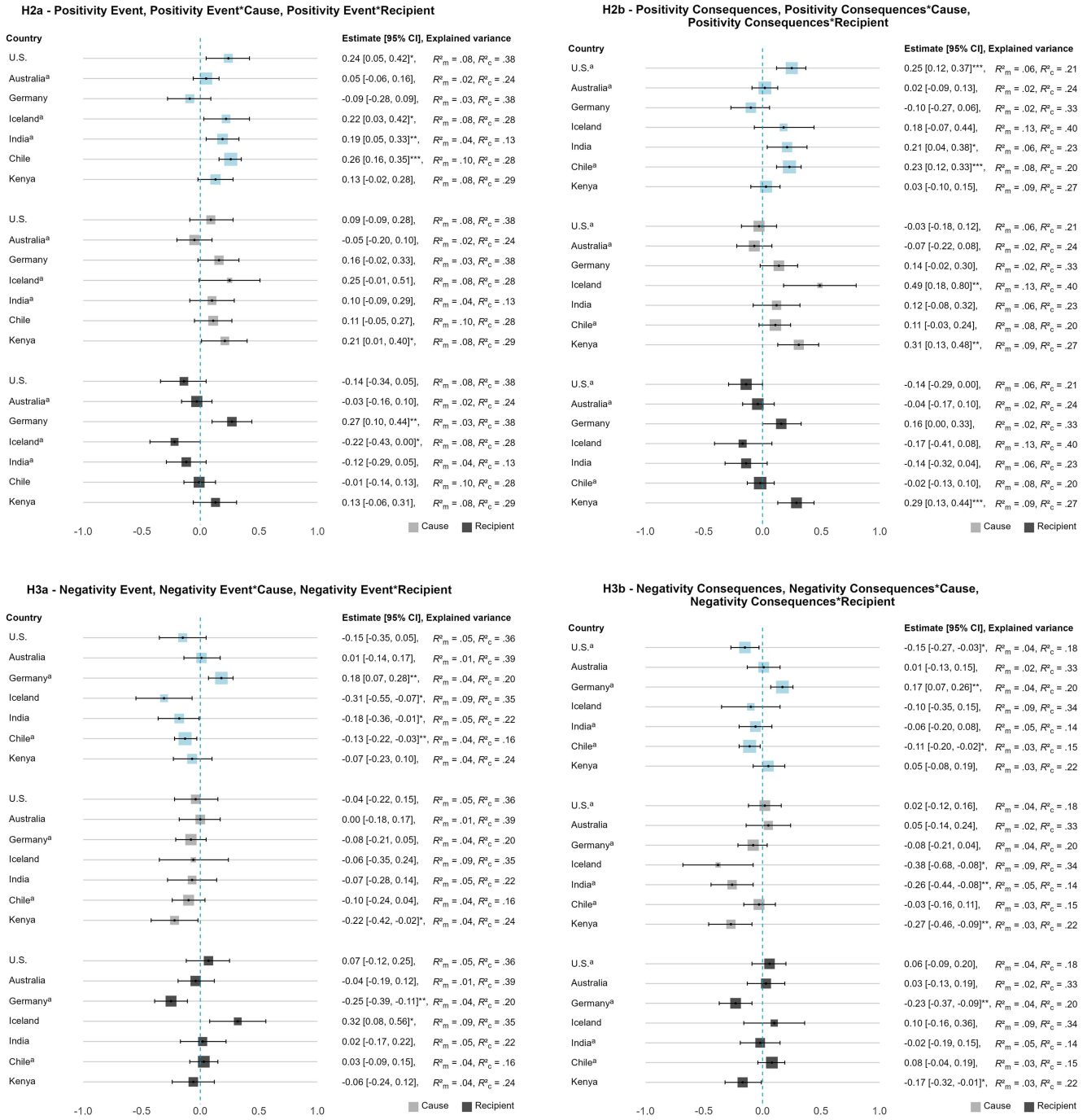
*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. CI = confidence interval. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup> These models failed to converge. Therefore, as preregistered, we report the results of the models including only random intercepts for events.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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**Figure 2**  
H2–H3 Findings Across Countries



*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. The upper plot per hypothesis presents the main effect, whereas the two lower plots display interaction effects with ingroup roles as cause and recipient. CI = confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup> These models failed to converge. Therefore, as preregistered, we report the results of the models including only random intercepts for events.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

remember negative history involving the ingroup as a recipient but favored positive history that impacted their group. Thus, their general openness to negative history was tempered when the ingroup was on the receiving end. Further supporting H2b and H3b, Icelandic and Kenyan

participants favored upholding positive events or events with positive consequences caused by their ingroup, while Icelandic, Indian, and Kenyan participants tended to avoid engagement with negative history caused by the ingroup or history with negative consequences caused

by the ingroup. Similar to Germans, Kenyan participants also endorsed confronting the positive (but not the negative) past in which the ingroup was the recipient. Unexpectedly, and contrary to H2a and H3a, Icelandic participants showed the opposite tendency: They wanted to remember negative events that the ingroup experienced as recipients (for plots of significant interactions, see additional online material D, additional online material E, and additional online material H at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). There were no significant interactions between ingroup role and event valence in the United States, Chile, and Australia. Overall, we thus found support for H2a–H3b in four countries, though the patterns of results were not uniform across countries.

#### ***H4–H6: Ingroup Morality, Ingroup Agency, and Their Interaction***

Supporting H4, participants in the United States, Iceland, India, Chile, and Kenya preferred to remember events in which their ingroup acted morally (Figure 3). Australia and Germany were the only countries that deviated from this pattern, showing no significant link between ingroup morality and willingness to remember. Consistent with H5a and H5b, participants in the United States, Australia, Germany, India, Chile, and Kenya supported remembering events that reflected ingroup agency, whether expressed in power during the event or responsibility for the course of events. Iceland was the only exception, showing no significant relationship between ingroup agency and willingness to remember. This deviation may reflect that historical agency is less decisive for national self-understanding in this smaller country.

Following identity-protective reasoning, we further hypothesized that the willingness to remember ingroup agentic events would decrease when the ingroup acted immorally. Thus, we expected participants to avoid remembering agentic acts with negative moral implications for the ingroup (H6a and H6b). Indeed, participants in India were less willing to remember events in which their ingroup held power but acted immorally (H6a). However, in Germany, Iceland, Chile, and Kenya, ingroup morality did not amplify the relationship between ingroup agency and the willingness to collectively remember (Figure 4). Strikingly, participants in the United States and Australia even showed the opposite pattern: they were more willing to collectively remember instances of ingroup power (and responsibility in Australia) for immoral acts (for plots of significant interactions, see additional online material B, additional online material C, and additional online material F at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

#### ***H7: Recency and the Interaction Between Recency and Ingroup Involvement***

Last, we expected recency to positively correlate with willingness to remember, particularly for events involving the ingroup. As shown in Figure 5, recency was linked to remembrance in the United States, Australia, and Germany, but not in Iceland, India, Chile, or Kenya. However, contrary to H7, recent events involving the ingroup were not more strongly endorsed for collective remembrance in any country.

#### **Exploration: Ingroup Threat and Subjective Recency**

To further investigate identity-related patterns, we explored whether people were less willing to remember events that threatened their group. In line with the identity-protective tendencies found

in the confirmatory analyses, participants in all countries, except Australia and Germany, were less willing to remember events perceived as threatening their group's values and identity (symbolic threat) or its power and well-being (realistic threat; Figure 6).

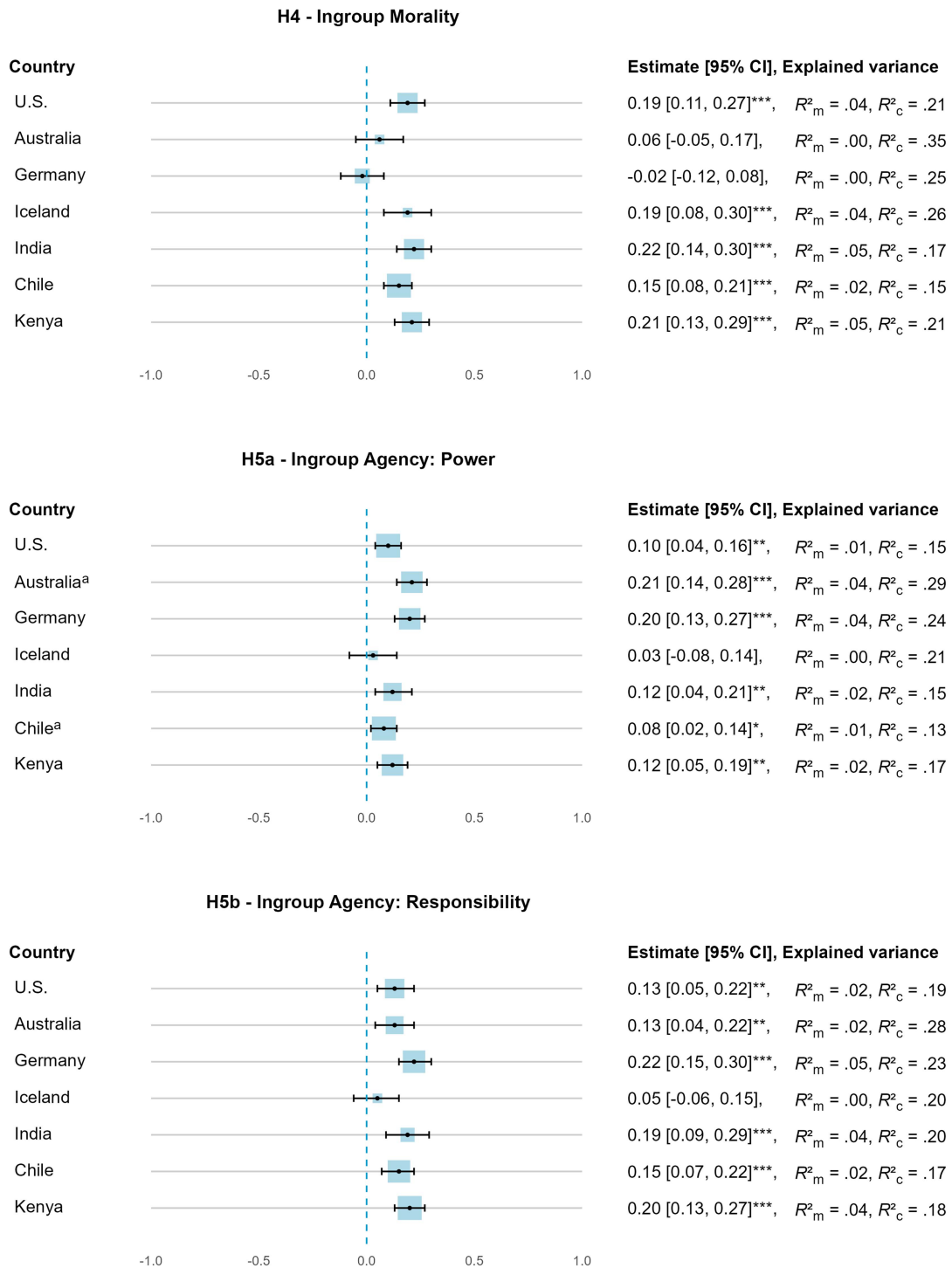
Additionally, participants in all countries endorsed remembering subjectively recent history. However, correlational analyses revealed that this tendency is unlikely to reflect identity protection. Events subjectively perceived as more recent were not seen as favorable to the ingroup but rather as threatening. Thus, although participants were willing to remember events they perceived as more recent, they did not view these events as more favorable to their group (cf. Peetz et al., 2010), leaving the precise meaning of this finding unclear.

Overall, we found support for some of our hypotheses across several national contexts, but mixed evidence for others. The key results are summarized in Table 5. Together, the results suggest a cross-national gradient, with support for the expected identity-protective tendencies being more pronounced in some contexts and largely absent in others. In Australia, we found limited evidence of an identity-protective account. Participants endorsed remembering ingroup-related history emphasizing power and responsibility, but they did not show further tendencies that aligned with identity-motivated theorizing. On the contrary, participants were even more willing to remember the immoral history their ingroup had agency over. Germany showed a slightly stronger identity-protective pattern, as participants supported remembering ingroup-related and agentic history while also preferring positive over negative events involving the ingroup as a recipient. In the United States, identity-protective patterns were more evident as participants favored remembering ingroup-related events involving ingroup agency and morality but avoided threatening history. However, they still endorsed remembering immoral acts involving agency. Chile showed a similar pattern, except for this last tendency. In Iceland, the pattern also partly aligned with identity-protective expectations: participants favored moral and positive ingroup-caused history and rejected threatening events. Uniquely, they also supported remembering negative events that harmed their ingroup but showed no emphasis on agentic history. Finally, participants in Kenya and India endorsed remembering ingroup-related, agentic, moral, and positive ingroup-caused (only Kenya) history but avoided ingroup-caused negative or threatening events. In India, participants further favored remembering morally positive episodes involving ingroup agency.

#### **Exploration: Considerations on Construct Validity and Robustness Analyses**

Our reasoning assumes that the willingness to collectively remember is conceptually distinct from the historical relevance attributed to the past. To test the validity of this assumption, we assessed the perceived importance of events for world history and the personal significance of preserving their memory. If historical importance fully explained the variance in willingness to remember, it would challenge the idea that these constructs are distinct. If, however, personal importance accounted for substantial variance, it would suggest that willingness to collectively remember reflects individual considerations beyond historical significance. Supporting the latter, historical relevance accounted for only limited variance (unique semipartial  $R^2 = .00-.08$  across countries), whereas personal relevance accounted for a substantial portion (unique semipartial  $R^2 = .17-.46$ ) of the total variance explained by both predictors (marginal  $R^2 = .32-.54$ ; see additional online material I at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/> for details).

**Figure 3**  
H4–H5 Findings Across Countries

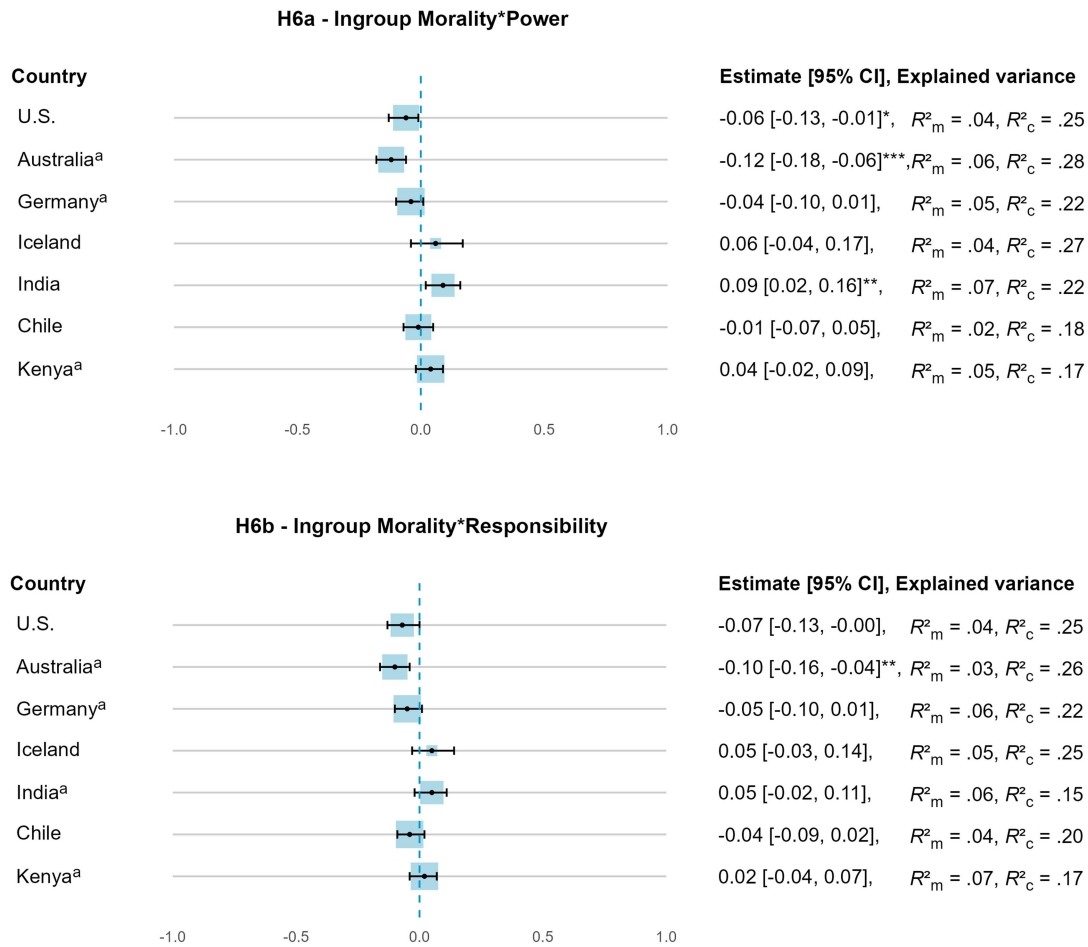


*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. CI = confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup>These models failed to converge. Therefore, as preregistered, we report the results of the models, including only random intercepts for events.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Figure 4**  
H6 Findings Across Countries



*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. CI = confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup> These models failed to converge. Therefore, as preregistered, we report the results of the models, including only random intercepts for events.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

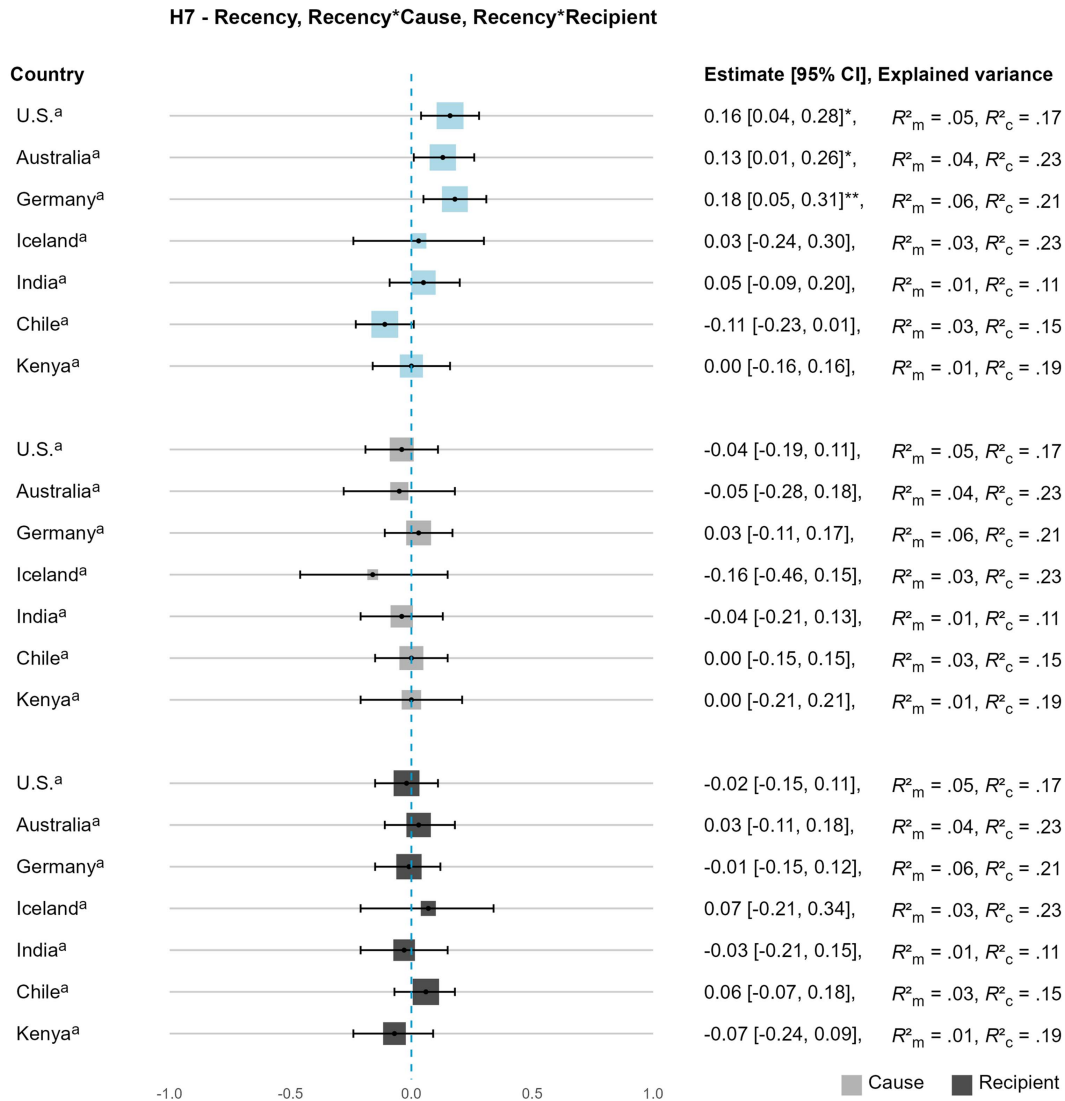
To substantiate our findings, we ran several robustness analyses. First, given the lower reliability of our measure of willingness to remember in non-Western countries, we reanalyzed all hypotheses using a shortened four-item scale that achieved high reliability ( $\alpha > .83$ ) and metric invariance across countries (additional online material J at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). Second, as transmission intentions may be a particularly critical indicator of remembrance desires, we reanalyzed our hypotheses using only the two items addressing this aspect (i.e., dealing with events in schools and films/documentaries; additional online material K at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). Third, as ongoing events (e.g., climate change) may be rated less sensibly on the remembrance scale, we ran analyses excluding these events (additional online material L at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). Last, we ran analyses excluding responses to events tied to Indigenous history in Australia and Nazi history in Germany (i.e., hallmark cases of ingroup harmdoing whose remembrance might be highly normatively prescribed; additional online material C and additional online material D at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

Despite revealing some nuances, none of these analyses changed the general pattern of results and interpretation.

Our confirmatory analysis used separate LMMs for each characteristic. To examine their combined explanatory power, we ran models including all characteristics. In most countries, morality and agency remained most important (i.e., significant), with characteristics explaining about one-third to one-half of the variance (additional online material M at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>). An internal random-effects meta-analysis further provided converging evidence of the most robust associations but also revealed significant heterogeneity, underscoring cross-contextual variation (additional online material N at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

Finally, we tested whether individual differences (e.g., in national identification) moderated the links between characteristics and willingness to remember. Interaction analyses partly supported the idea that individuals more invested in preserving a positive ingroup image placed greater emphasis on remembering events that

**Figure 5**  
H7 Findings Across Countries



*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. The upper plot presents the main effect, whereas the two lower plots display interaction effects with ingroup roles as cause and recipient. CI = confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup> These models failed to converge. Therefore, as preregistered, we report the results of the models including only random intercepts for events.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

supported that image (additional online material O at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

### Exploration: Individualism and Global Connectedness in the Willingness to Remember

Overall, we found that collective remembrance desires are self-servingly colored in that some identity-favoring event characteristics were related to the willingness to remember these events in several countries. Yet, we also observed marked cross-contextual variation, with some countries exhibiting a more pronounced

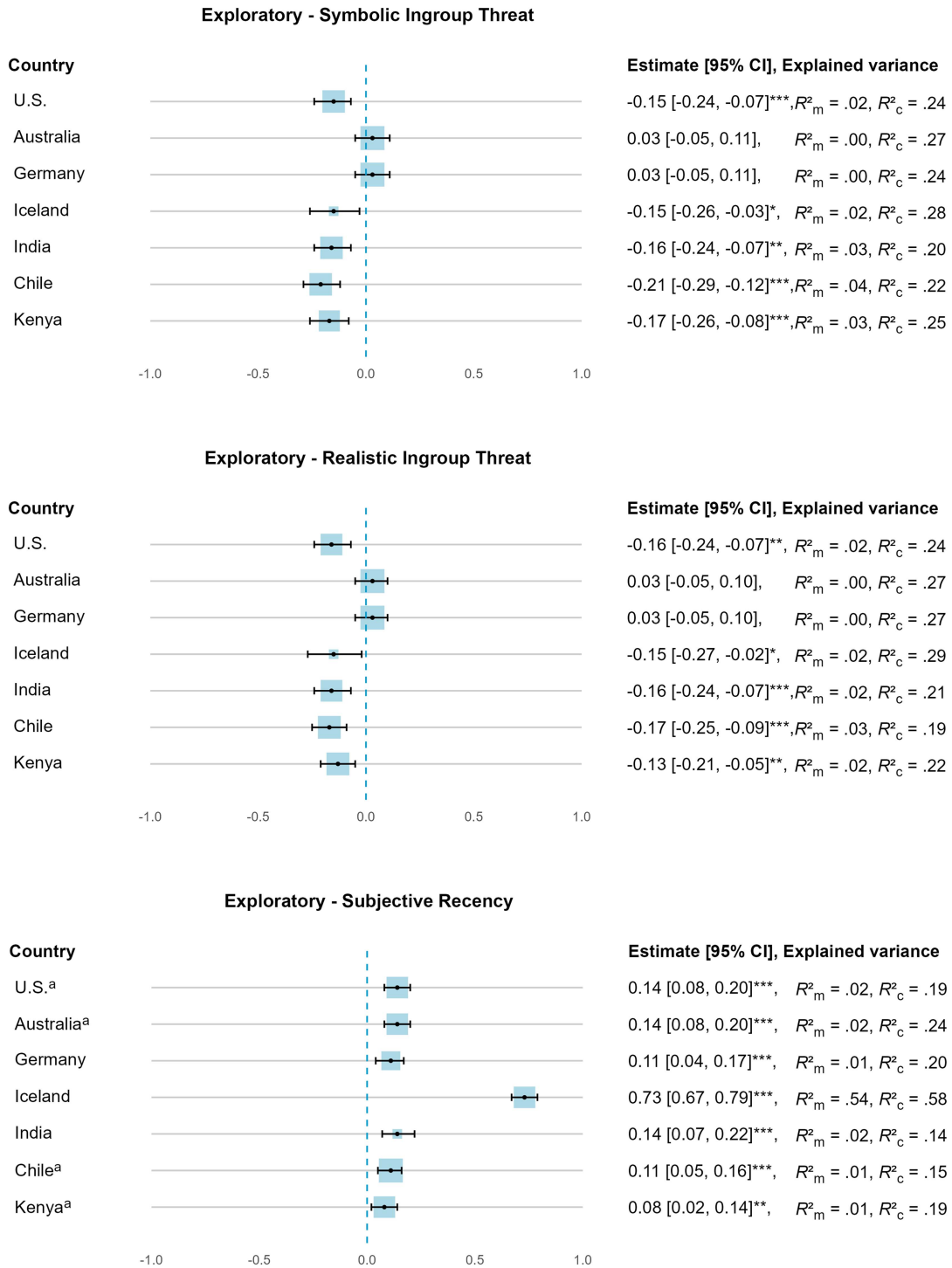
identity-protective pattern (e.g., India) than others (e.g., Australia). This raises the question of whether broader country-level factors may help situate these differences. We explored this in non-pre-registered *post hoc* analyses.

#### Individualism

One major difference between countries that may affect their collective remembrance desires is culture—“a system of symbols (what is represented), beliefs (what is considered true), values (what is considered important), norms (what is considered standard), and practices

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**Figure 6**  
Exploratory Findings Across Countries



*Note.* We report standardized estimates and their 95% CIs from linear mixed models. CI = confidence intervals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

<sup>a</sup>These models failed to converge. Therefore, we report the results of the models including only random intercepts for events.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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**Table 5**  
*Summary of Hypotheses, Explorations, and Key Findings*

Hypothesis	Prediction	Countries in which hypothesis was supported	Countries in which hypothesis was partially supported	Countries in which hypothesis was not supported
H1	Perceived <i>ingroup involvement</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Australia, India, Chile	Germany (only cause), Iceland (only recipient), Kenya (only cause)	United States, Australia, India, Chile
H2	Perceived <i>positivity</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of positivity and involvement).		Germany (only positivity event and recipient), Iceland (only positivity consequences and cause), Kenya (for positivity consequences fully supported, for positivity event only cause)	
H3	Perceived <i>negativity</i> is negatively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of negativity and involvement).		Germany (only recipient), Iceland (only negativity consequences and cause), India (only negativity consequences and cause), Kenya (for negativity consequences supported, for negativity event only cause)	United States, Australia, Chile
H4	Perceived <i>ingroup morality</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya		Australia, Germany
H5	Perceived <i>ingroup agency</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Australia, Germany, India, Chile, Kenya		Iceland
H6	The relationship between ingroup agency and the willingness to collectively remember is tempered by low ingroup morality (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of agency and morality).		India (only power)	United States, Australia, Germany, Iceland, Chile, Kenya
H7	<i>Recency</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember, especially when the ingroup was involved (i.e., <i>interaction</i> of recency and involvement).			United States, Australia, Germany, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya
Exploration	Exploratory assumption	Countries in which exploratory prediction was supported	Countries in which exploratory prediction was partially supported	Countries in which exploratory prediction was not supported
Exploratory	<i>Symbolic ingroup threat</i> is negatively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya		Australia, Germany
Exploratory	<i>Realistic ingroup threat</i> is negatively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya		Australia, Germany
Exploratory	<i>Subjective recency</i> is positively related to the willingness to collectively remember.	United States, Australia, Germany, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya (however, interpretation unclear)		

(what is performed) shared among a collection of interconnected individuals” (Lu et al., 2023, p. 365). As Schwartz et al. (2005) state, “Individuals everywhere rely on culture to sustain their perception of the past” (p. 268). Likewise, Bresc  and Wagoner (2015) argue that culture creates a powerful framework that shapes collective remembrance. We propose that in individualistic cultures, where people experience greater freedom from traditional constraints, people may also feel less attached to ingroup history. Indeed, Schwartz et al. show that individualistic cultures entail a weaker sense of continuity with previous generations. By contrast, in less individualistic cultures, people feel more connected to past generations and their (mis)deeds. Such historical identification may amplify motivation to protect not only the present ingroup’s reputation but also that of past generations (Doosje et al., 1998). Hence, we explored whether identity-protective patterns were stronger in less individualistic countries.

To capture individualism as freedom from traditional social constraints, we used country-level scores from the World Values Survey (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022), which reflect acceptance of nontraditional individual rights (i.e., abortion, divorce, homosexuality; Table 6). Using the metric-invariant short scale, we tested interactions between country-level individualism scores (Level 2 predictors) and event characteristics (Level 1 predictors) in LMMs with random intercepts for events. Indeed, as country-level individualism increased, the link between event characteristics and willingness to remember weakened, with participants in more individualistic countries being less inclined to remember events that were positive and caused by the ingroup (H2a),  $\beta = -.06$ , 95% CI  $[-0.12, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .040$ , had positive consequences caused by the ingroup (H2b),  $\beta = -.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.13, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .021$ , reflected ingroup morality (H4),  $\beta = -.08$ , 95% CI  $[-0.10, -0.05]$ ,  $p < .001$ , and involved the ingroup having power (H6a),  $\beta = -.03$ , 95% CI  $[-0.06, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .002$ , or responsibility over moral outcomes (H6b),  $\beta = -.03$ , 95% CI  $[-0.05, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .017$ . Thus, in countries with weaker ties to traditional constraints (and arguably to the group’s past), people showed less support for remembering ingroup-affirming history. Additional online material P (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>) gives a full overview of the analysis strategy, results, and robustness analyses.

### Global Connectedness

While a moderating role of individualism seems theoretically compelling, it does not fully account for cases like Iceland. Despite its high individualism, Iceland’s remembrance pattern resembled those of less individualistic countries like India and Kenya. As collective memory interests are likely shaped by multiple factors, we considered

a second moderator: a country’s economic, political, and social global connectedness (i.e., globalization). Globally well-integrated countries like Germany and Australia enjoy established international standing and partnerships. Nations like India, in turn, are actively seeking to enhance their global influence and leadership (Narlikar, 2007; Sachdeva, 2022; Singh, 2014). Small states like Iceland, though not pursuing great-power status, also strive for leadership in specific areas (e.g., renewable energy), thereby ensuring their voice is heard internationally (Thorhallsson, 2009). For such countries seeking to strengthen their global position, reputation is a key concern, as it can determine their access to international partnership (Szwajca, 2017). Therefore, people in globally less connected countries may be particularly interested in drawing attention to their country’s past achievements and positive contributions.

To examine the role of global connectedness in willingness to remember, we used the de facto Konjunkturforschungsstelle Globalisation Index (Dreher, 2006; Gygli et al., 2019). This index quantifies a country’s level of global integration across economic, political, and social dimensions (Table 6). Interaction analyses between country-level globalization scores (Level 2 predictors) and event characteristics (Level 1 predictors; LMMs with the metric-invariant short scale and random intercepts for events) revealed that participants from globally connected countries were less inclined to preserve events that were positive and caused by the ingroup (H2a),  $\beta = -.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.13, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .022$ , had positive consequences caused by the ingroup (H2b),  $\beta = -.09$ , 95% CI  $[-0.15, -0.03]$ ,  $p = .002$ , highlighted ingroup morality (H4),  $\beta = -.08$ , 95% CI  $[-0.10, -0.05]$ ,  $p < .001$ , as well as events where the ingroup had power (H6a),  $\beta = -.04$ , 95% CI  $[-0.06, -0.02]$ ,  $p < .001$ , or responsibility (H6b),  $\beta = -.03$ , 95% CI  $[-0.05, -0.01]$ ,  $p = .003$ , over moral outcomes. Conversely, they were more willing to remember negative consequences caused by the ingroup (H3a),  $\beta = .07$ , 95% CI  $[0.01, 0.12]$ ,  $p = .021$ . Overall, people in more globally connected countries thus showed reduced support for remembering identity-affirming aspects of history (for full results and robustness analyses, see additional online material P at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).<sup>3</sup>

### Exploration: Top-Down Influences on Willingness to Remember

Our explorations resonate with the idea that broader cultural and political contexts can shape what types of events people want to remember. Another powerful force in collective remembrance is the top-down influence of authorities such as governments, media, and civil society organizations. These powerful institutions often shape historical narratives, mobilize them for political purposes, or even legally enforce them (Khlevniuk & Noordenbos, 2025; Kirkwood, 2019; Kończal, 2021; Olick, 1999; Prager, 2001). Accordingly, what group members choose to remember may be reflective of the history authorities seek to preserve. Such top-down influences could operate in two ways: First, top-down efforts may guide group members’ willingness to remember more clearly than event characteristics (i.e., the link between event characteristics and the willingness to remember

<sup>3</sup> We also tested the role of alternative indices, such as tightness-looseness, Schwartz’s cultural values, and the Democracy Index. However, individualism and globalization appeared to be the most theoretically compelling factors and aligned most clearly with our results (additional online material P at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

**Table 6**  
*Country-Level Individualism and Global Connectedness Scores*

Order	Individualism (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022)		Global connectedness (Gygli et al., 2019)	
	Country	Score	Country	Score
1	Iceland	119	Germany	86.72
2	Germany	102	Australia	76.56
3	Australia	83	United States	76.36
4	United States	33	Chile	68.95
5	Chile	-8	Iceland	61.49
6	India	-101	India	60.42
7	Kenya	-177	Kenya	48.21

Note. Higher values indicate higher individualism/connectedness.

diminishes once controlling for top-down influences). Second, top-down efforts may make events with certain characteristics more appealing to remember (i.e., the link between characteristics and the willingness to remember becomes stronger for events receiving high top-down attention). We explored both possibilities using two measures of top-down influence: expert ratings of institutional preservation efforts and coding of events' presence in history school curricula.

For the expert ratings, we recruited  $N = 30$  participants per country (except in Iceland, where snowball sampling yielded  $N = 19$ ), all holding or pursuing a university degree in history and/or education. Participants then rated the attention that each of the 80 country events receives in monuments, school curricula, and films or documentaries, as well as the efforts invested by governmental and powerful nongovernmental institutions in preserving the memory of the events, using a scale from 1 (*no effort/attention at all*) to 7 (*a lot of effort/attention*; ratings were combined into a single score of top-down influences). For curricula coding, we examined national history school curricula from Grade 8 through the highest grade (Grade 12 or 13) and coded for each event whether it was 1 (*included*), 0.5 (*possibly included*; used when the broader topic was mentioned, but the presence of the specific event was unclear), or 0 (*not included*). Details on the rating and coding procedures, as well as correlations with other study variables, are given in additional online material Q (<https://osf.io/3w6ap/>).

To test whether top-down influences outweigh the role of event characteristics (Level 1 predictors) in participants' willingness to remember, we ran control analyses, adding either expert ratings or school coding as Level 2 predictors to the confirmatory analyses. Except in India, where the link between willingness to remember and ingroup involvement became nonsignificant, all significant relationships from the confirmatory analyses remained stable in all countries. Next, we explored cross-level interactions to assess whether top-down influences moderated the link between event characteristics and willingness to remember. Institutional preservation efforts affected only a small subset of remembrance patterns in only a few contexts. Overall, top-down influences thus could not clearly situate the identified cross-country differences in identity-protective remembering (see additional online material D at <https://osf.io/3w6ap/> for details).

## Discussion

Substantial research agrees that interest in upholding a positive group identity guides collective remembrance (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2014; Baumeister & Hastings, 1997; Bilewicz, 2016; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). Yet, whether the choice of the past that group members want to remember is actually linked to the identity-protective potential of that past has not been systematically investigated. Complying with Gergen's (1978) call for generative theory building, we tested the empirical basis of the identity-protective tenet across a broad range of events and seven countries.

We found that identity concerns matter for the willingness to collectively remember history. However, the extent to which they matter varies across countries. Some countries displayed limited identity-protective patterns (i.e., Australia, Germany). Participants showed a preference for remembering history involving the ingroup and portraying the ingroup as agentic, but other characteristics barely mattered. In other countries, we observed stronger identity-favoring tendencies (i.e., United States, Iceland, India, Chile, Kenya). Beyond remembering history involving the ingroup and emphasizing the ingroup's agency (except in Iceland), participants in these countries also preferred to

preserve history that highlights ingroup morality while resisting history that poses a threat to the ingroup. Additionally, in line with identity-protective theorizing, participants in some of those countries also endorsed remembering positive history caused by the ingroup but were reluctant to remember negative events caused by the ingroup (i.e., Iceland, India, Kenya). Taken together, although our results provide an empirical foundation for the role of several identity-relevant characteristics in collective remembrance desires, they also reveal meaningful deviations from and country-specific variation in the identity-protective pattern.

## Theoretical Implications

Research indicates that groups can largely differ in what past they favor remembering. A common explanation for such "memory wars" (Roediger, 2021, p. 1398) is that the same event is interpreted differently, for example, in terms of how positive it is for the ingroup and thus how appealing it is to remember. Our methodological approach, which operates on the level of event characteristics, reveals that different memory interests go beyond different interpretations of events. Instead, group members from different countries fundamentally diverge in their willingness to remember history favorable to the ingroup.

These results have important implications for our understanding of collective remembrance. Our research not only uncovers detailed cross-contextual differences but also offers starting points for understanding these differences within the broader scope of cultural and political variation. Our explorations suggest that participants from countries less concerned with collective reputation displayed a less identity-protective remembrance pattern. We also found that willingness to remember varied with a country's global standing: Participants from politically and economically well-connected countries showed less identity-protective tendencies. Arguably, people from internationally highly established states may feel less need to assert national achievements than those seeking global recognition (Szwajca, 2017). This reasoning also aligns with Hart's (2014) theory of psychological defensiveness, which posits that social inclusion and potency (often reflected in economic security) can mitigate self-defensiveness.

Top-down efforts by governmental and powerful nongovernmental institutions to preserve the memory of events, in turn, affected only a small subset of remembrance patterns in a few specific contexts. These findings suggest that individuals' remembrance preferences may diverge from institutional priorities. In fact, literature shows that people can resist official memory accounts and even develop parallel forms of collective memory (e.g., Olick, 1999; Schwartz et al., 2005).

Despite identifying and situating several contextual differences, there was still variation between and within countries that we could not readily empirically inform. This reflects the need for the inclusion of additional theoretical perspectives. One crucial perspective is that the lack of a clear link between event characteristics and willingness to remember may not be interpreted as an absence of identity-protective motives. Crocker and Wolfe (2001) argue that positive self-perceptions are based on different domains, or contingencies, on which people stake their self-esteem. These contingencies differ between people. Similarly, there may also be differences between countries in the contingencies they hold and within countries in the relevance they place on certain contingencies compared to others. For example, in Kenya, causing negative events and consequences were both related to lower willingness to remember, whereas in

India and Iceland, only causing negative consequences showed this link. This might suggest that long-term consequences are a more identity-relevant contingency in India and Iceland, whereas Kenya's self-understanding may depend on both immediate event valence and outcome valence. Considered through this lens, our findings may be interpreted not mainly as a record of differences in identity-protective motives, but in the contingencies on which social identity protection is built.

Yet, what appears as cross-country variation in identity-protective motives on the surface does not preclude the possibility that most countries still strive for ingroup-positive memory, albeit in a more complex way than initially expected. Taking up the example of morality, although research shows that morality is generally relevant for a positive ingroup (Brambilla et al., 2021; Leach et al., 2007), the understanding of *what is considered moral* differs substantially between societies (Graham et al., 2016). Ironically, a sense of morality can even be achieved through a loop of immorality. For example, Germans can derive distinct identity benefits from confronting their dark past, thereby demonstrating their moral growth (Forchtner, 2014; Kazarovytska et al., 2022; Lienen & Cohrs, 2021). This implies that group members in some countries may not necessarily strive to demonstrate moral consistency by proving that they have always acted morally. Instead, they may seek to show moral growth by overcoming an immoral past (see also Klein & O'Brien, 2017; Obradović & Bowe, 2021). The latter perspective aligns with research on the importance of redemption ("bad things turn good") in life narrations (McAdams et al., 2001). The central implication of this reasoning is that even though the pattern of results in countries like Australia or Germany may *appear* less identity-motivated, it may still resonate with group members' *more complex* identity interests—such as showing moral growth rather than consistency.

Another important implication of the absence of a purely identity-protective pattern is that identity interests may be only one component of collective remembrance desires. Our results also point to explanations largely independent of identity functions. For instance, in several countries (i.e., United States, Iceland, India, Chile), we observed a general preference for remembering positive history, irrespective of ingroup involvement. Rather than suggesting an ingroup-defensive response, this aligns with mood regulation models, suggesting that people seek positive memories as part of mood repair (Josephson et al., 1996). Likewise, in collective memory, people may be motivated to highlight positive aspects of broader human history as a source of optimism or a way of interpreting perceived social decline (Mastroianni & Gilbert, 2023; Sedikides & Wildschut, 2019; Yamashiro & Roediger, 2019).

Our results also speak to the study of collective memories of trauma. Although research suggests that group members tend to remember victimization experiences as part of their self-verification (Hirschberger, 2018; Liu et al., 1999), we observed a preference for remembering negative events experienced only in Iceland, where colonial trauma appears central to national identity (Bergmann, 2017). One explanation is that participants may reinterpret traumatic experiences as heroic acts, emphasizing agency (Meyers, 2011). Alternatively, not all negative experiences may seem worth remembering—some may be tied to transformative events crucial to the group's self-concept, but others may not offer politically meaningful interpretations and thus be forgotten (Hearty & Hearty, 2024). In both cases, our findings highlight the complex and conditional nature of remembering collective trauma.

## Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although we sampled a broad range of events (Brunswick, 1955), they reflect what participants suggested for a history lecture (see Liu et al., 2005, 2009, for a similar approach). Since people may tailor content to different audiences (Echterhoff et al., 2008), future studies should test the robustness of our findings using alternative framings. For instance, upcoming research could ask participants to list events they wish to pass on to future generations.

However, while a participant-based approach avoids researcher-induced selection bias, it remains inherently susceptible to other biases. First, the event space is tied to events present in participants' minds. Truly forgotten events, absent from any representation, cannot be included. Second, and crucially, participants may omit events they prefer not to confront. For example, the Herero and Nama genocide was not mentioned in Germany. As Lienen et al. (2025) note, it remains unclear whether Germans' reduced attention to this crime reflects authentic lack of knowledge in view of low public visibility of the event or identity-protective motives. Future studies could explicitly introduce historically relevant yet less visible events to participants to broaden the event sample. Alternatively, similar to social evaluation studies using fictional alien scenarios to reduce bias from preexisting knowledge (Woitzel & Alves, 2024), upcoming research could construct events that carry certain characteristics to test whether the present findings hold beyond participants' mentions.

Our findings are also limited to the specific characteristics we measured. We focused on characteristics arguably important in social evaluations (Brewer, 1991; Leach et al., 2007) and found evidence for their relevance in certain countries. However, collective remembrance is often more complex, with groups preserving events outside the positive framework, such as defeats (e.g., Muller et al., 2024). Likewise, our findings point to the theoretical relevance of factors other than identity protection in understanding collective remembrance desire. Future research should therefore examine alternative sources of variance, encompassing both more complex identity constructions (e.g., moral growth) and motives beyond identity interests, such as the past's function in shaping the collective emotional climate of a country (e.g., Josephson et al., 1996), its relevance to understanding the present (Licata & Mercy, 2015), or its role in broader narratives of justice and legitimacy. Addressing the latter may further require examining how people perceive larger narratives that connect multiple events (Wertsch, 2008). For example, single events (e.g., defeats) may be viewed negatively, while the overarching narrative (e.g., national rebirth after fall; Koller, 2008) may be seen as meaningful and worth remembering.

Finally, the scope of this research is limited by the specific historical conditions in which it was conducted. Many phenomena studied in (social) psychology fluctuate over time (Gergen, 1973). This may be especially true for collective remembrance. New hallmark events occur continuously (e.g., pandemics, wars). As new events emerge, new narratives and identity needs may come to the fore (Bar-Tal, 2014). For example, a nation may require completely different narratives in times of war than in times of peace (Bilewicz & Liu, 2020). A promising avenue for future research would be to test whether our results can be replicated over time. Particularly, longitudinal studies that regularly reassess the current findings could reveal how major national or international events influence the observed patterns.

## Conclusion

History cannot be invented completely anew, but reality sets limits on the reinterpretation of “unwanted” pasts (Klar & Bilewicz, 2017). Declaring historical episodes that are incompatible with a positive collective identity unimportant to remember can provide a solution to this dilemma. Applying a functionalist bottom-up approach that allowed us to critically revisit identity-protective theorizing in collective remembrance, we found that group members indeed choose to preserve history that portrays their ingroup in a positive light. However, identity motives appear to be only one piece of the puzzle, with marked variation across countries—highlighting the social embeddedness of collective memory phenomena.

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