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Social Representations in Action and Construction  
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"Social Representations, Collective Memory and Socially  
Shared Emotions: narrative and experimental approaches"

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# **Collective Memory for the World Cup 2006 in Germany:** *How People Construct Perceptions of Sharedness and Shared Relevance*

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# Research Perspective

- Existing approaches to collective memory often focus, e.g.,
  - on the actual or objective sharedness of individual memories within a group or community (e.g., Schuman & Scott, 1989)
  - on structural or political influences on collective memory (e.g., Lebow, Karbsteiner & Fugo, 2006; Olick, 1999)
- However, from a psychological perspective the subjective perception of sharing memories with others and experience of shared relevance of these memories are critical (e.g., Hirst & Manier, 2002; Manier & Hirst, in press).



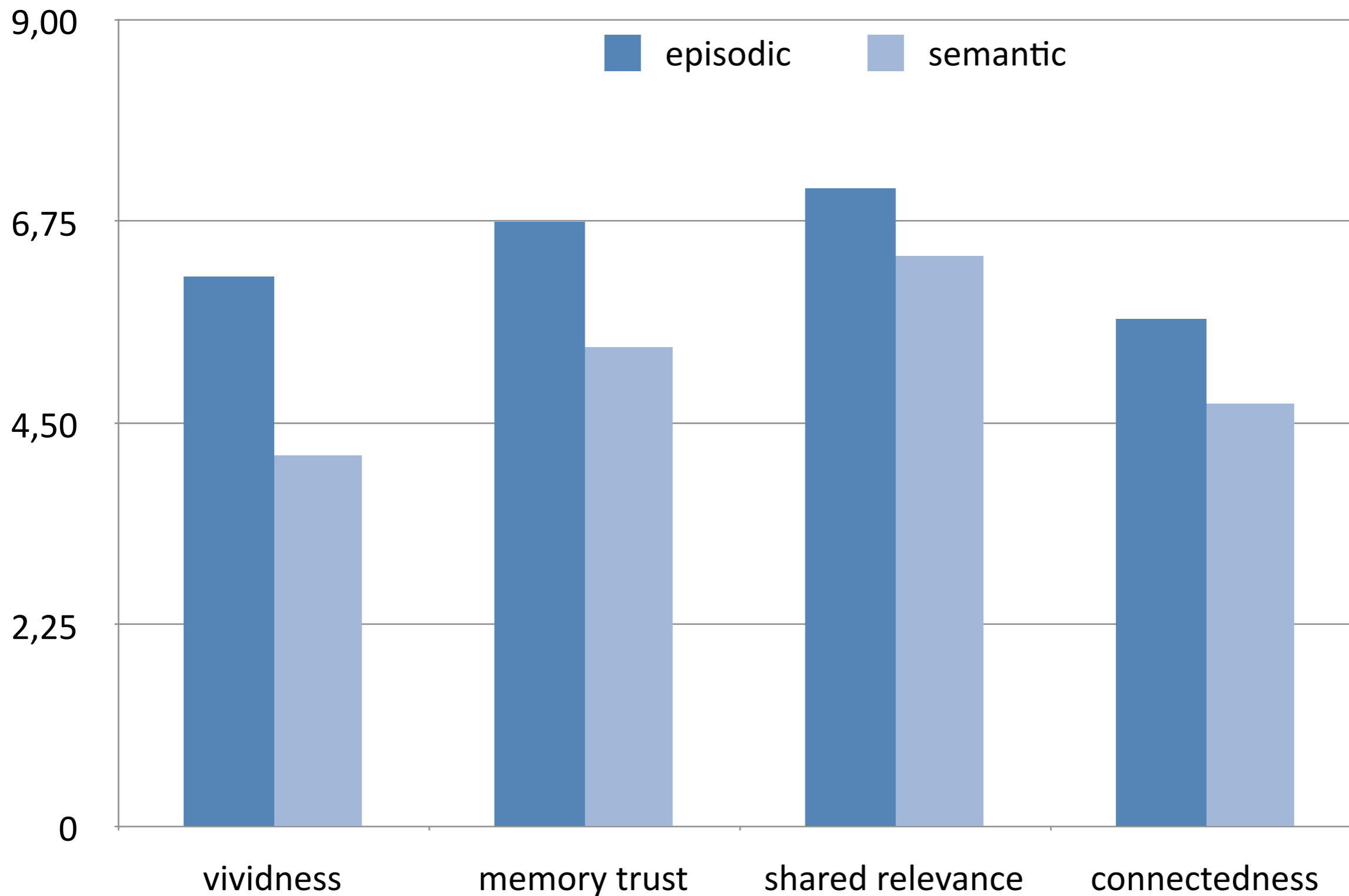
# Shared Reality Theory

- According to shared reality theory (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), social sharing serves important functions for the individual such as
  - rendering experiences valid
  - reducing uncertainty
  - creating a sense of interpersonal connectedness.
- The present research investigated factors affecting subjective perceptions of sharedness and shared relevance and explored possible functions served by these experiences of sharing.

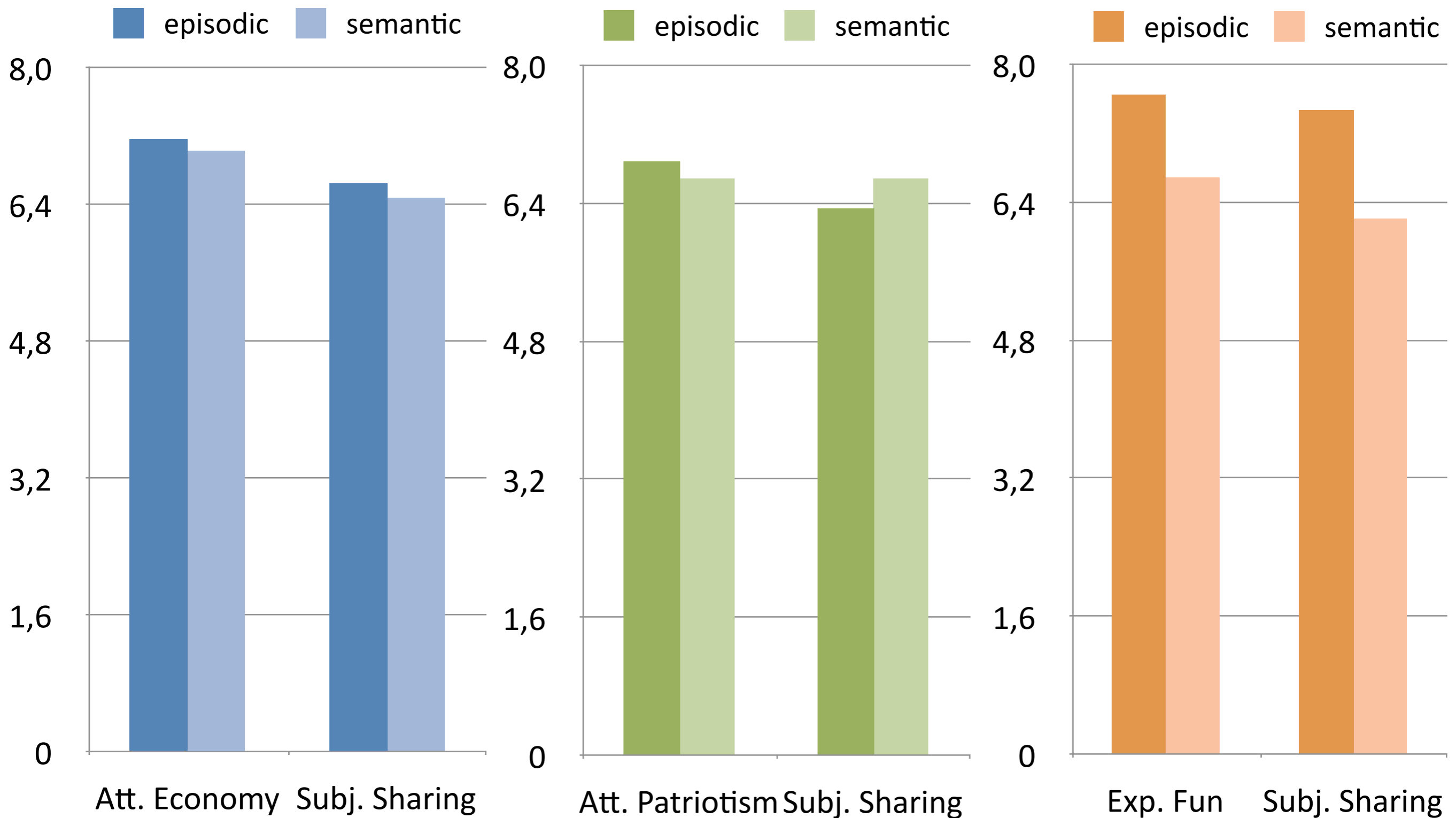
# Experiment 1 - Design

- 78 participants [mean age 21.5; 77% female]
- recalled up to 12 details about the Football World Cup 2006 in Germany
- one-factorial design: memory (*semantic vs. episodic*)
- measures: *trust in personal memory, personal involvement, shared relevance, feelings of connectedness, manipulation checks*

# Experiment 1 - Results



# Experiment 1 - Sharing





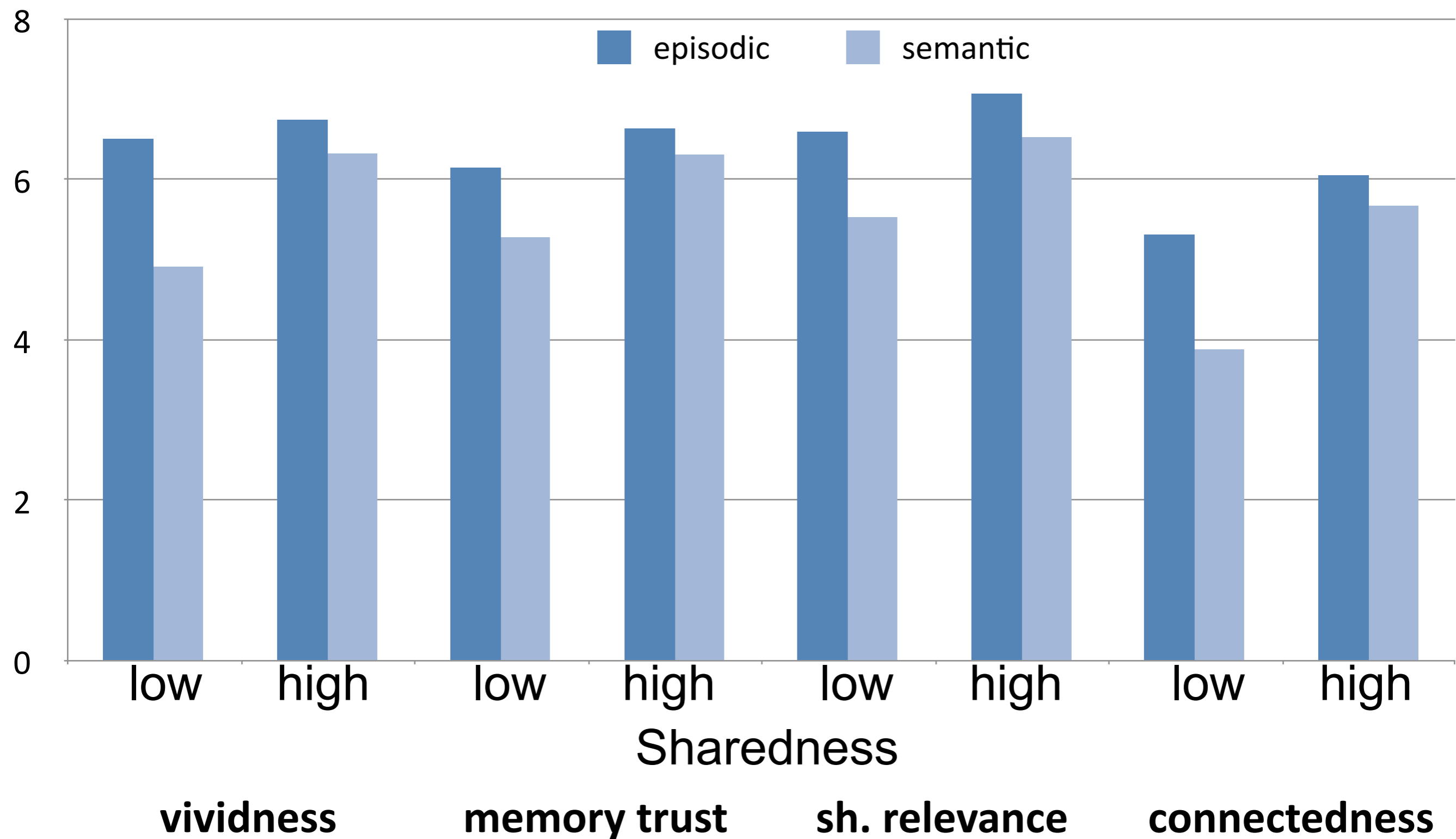
# Experiment 1 - In Sum

- The manipulation of *memory* worked: participants rated their memories as more vivid in the episodic (vs. semantic) condition.
- By simply recalling episodic (vs. semantic) collective memories participants in Experiment 1 gained
  - higher trust in their personal memory
  - stronger feelings of connectedness to Germans
  - and a stronger sense of shared (national) relevance

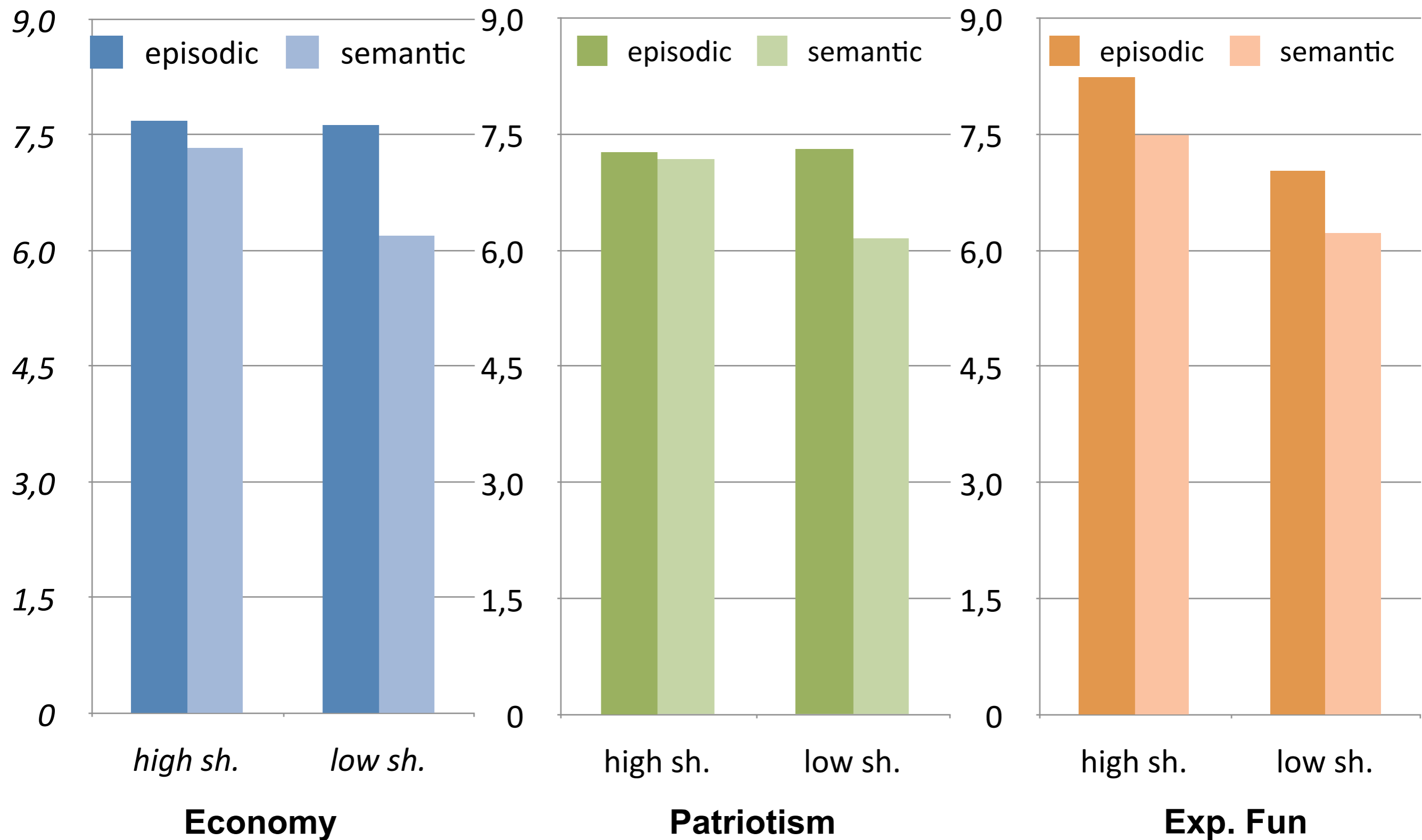
# Experiment 2

- 149 participants [mean age 21.8; 65% female]
- recalled up to 12 details about the Football World Cup 2006 in Germany
- two-factorial design: **memory** (*semantic vs. episodic*) X **sharedness** (*high vs. low sharedness*)
- same measures as in Experiment 1

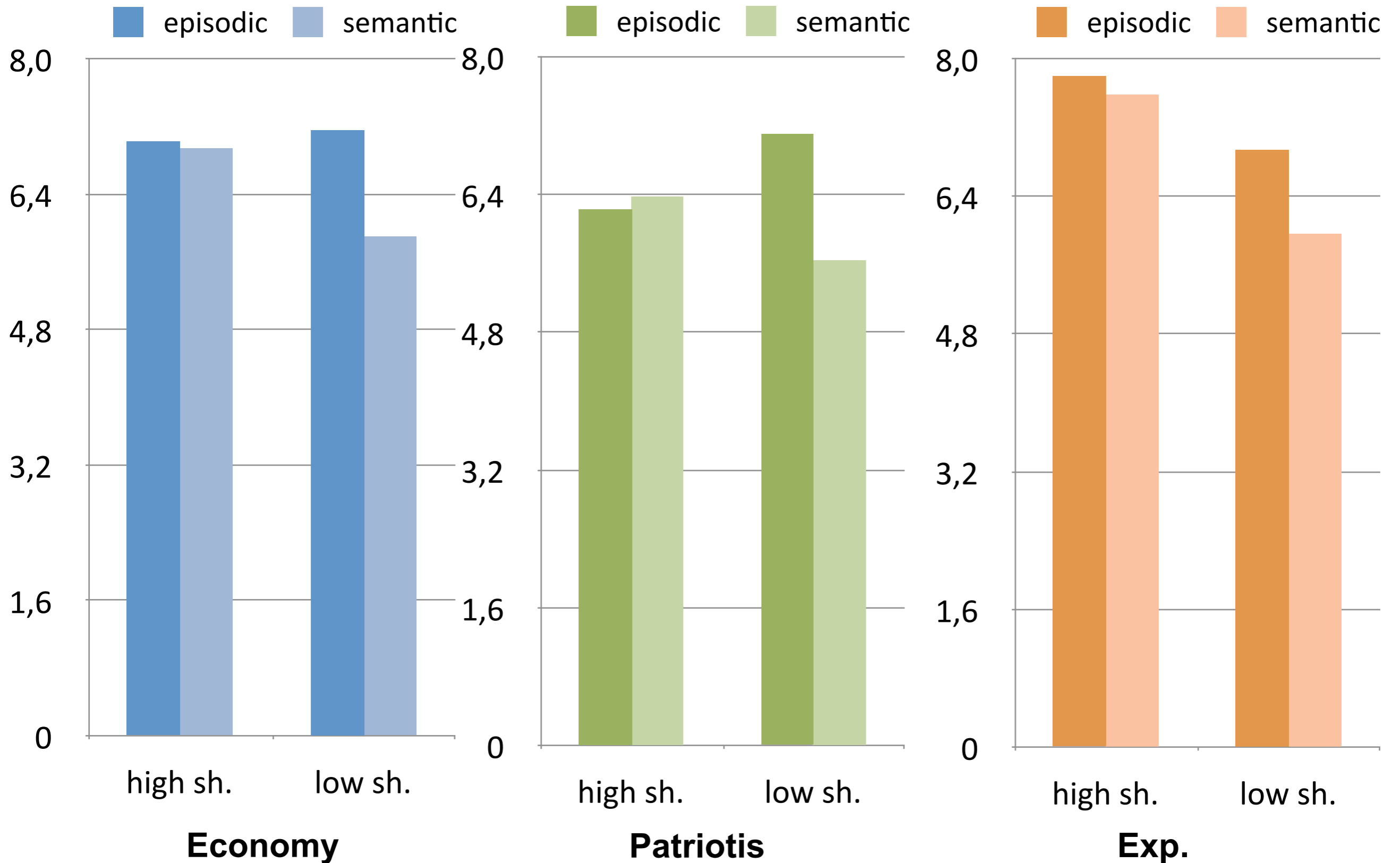
# Experiment 2 - Results



# Experiment 2 - Results



# Experiment 2 – Subj. Sharing



# Objective Sharing

- To access objective sharing we asked participants
  - „How good was the World Cup for Germany’s economy?“
  - „How do you like Germany’s new found patriotism?“
  - „How much fun did you have during the World Cup?“, on 9-point scales.
- We then calculated the frequencies of responses for these items based on the collapsed sample of both experiments and recoded each personal response into the frequency of this response (in percent).
- We use this measure as a proxy for *objective sharing*, with higher values indicating a better **alignment** to the group norm or responses of Germans.

# Differential Correlation

- How is subjective sharedness related to objective sharing?
- Overall moderate to high correlations for all three measures across all conditions (ranging from  $r = .36$  to  $r = .76$ ).
- BUT we found a significant 3-way interaction: the effect of sharedness on the objective / subjective sharing association was moderated by *memory*!

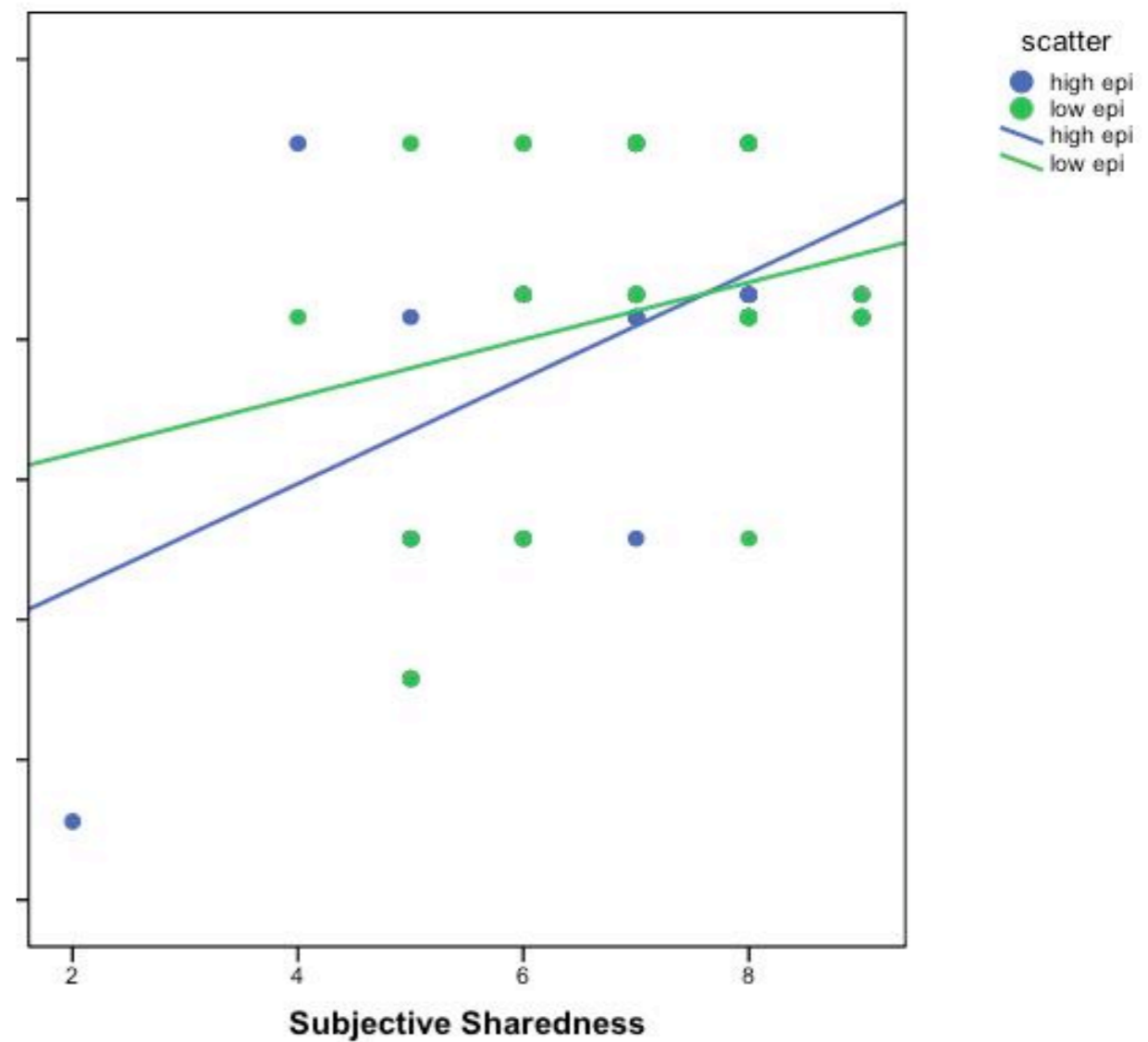
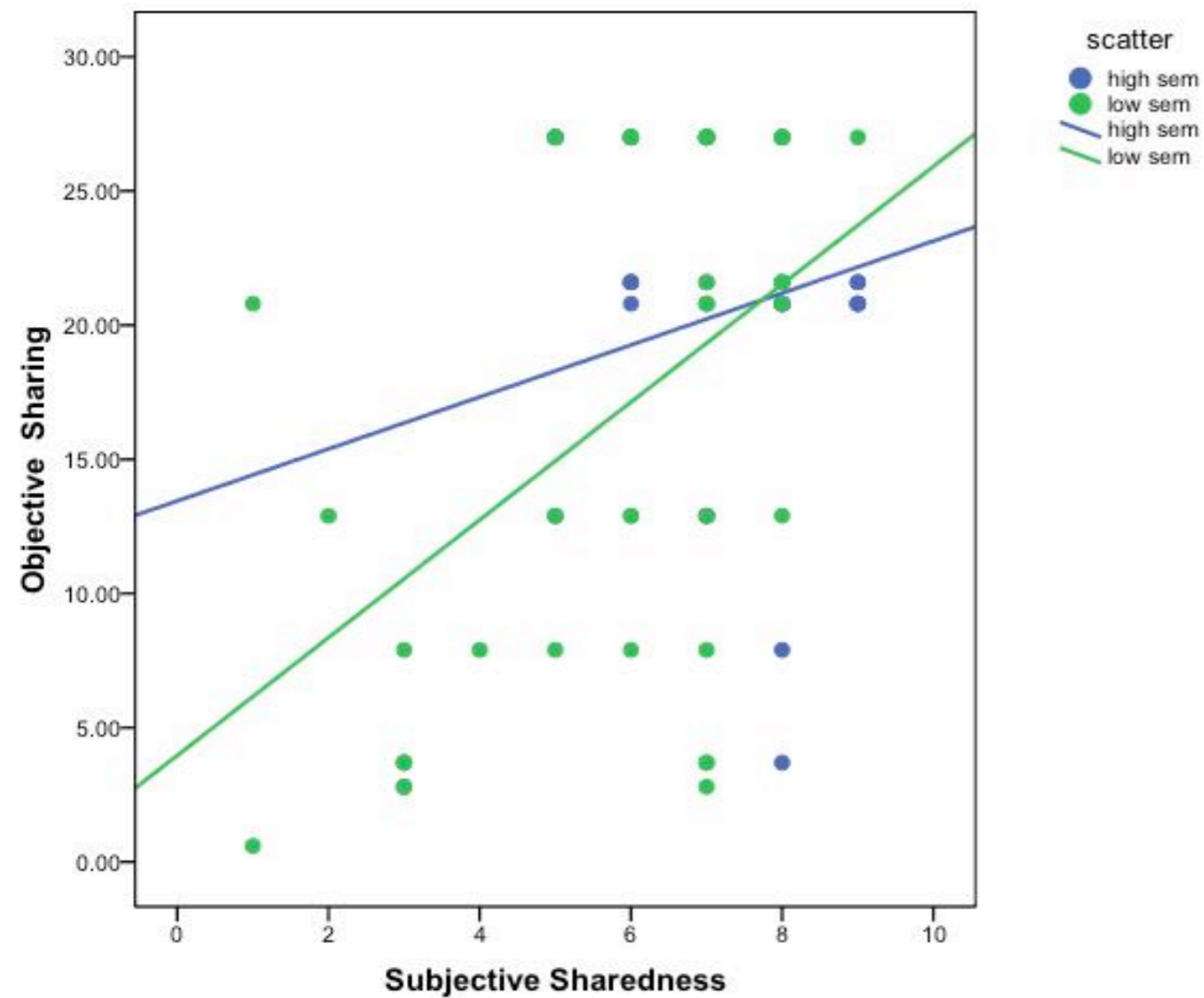
# Differential Correlation

## Semantic

high:  $r(32) = .22$  vs. low:  $r(38) = .47^{***}$

## Episodic

high:  $r(35) = .54^{***}$  vs. low:  $r(34) = .26$





# Conclusions

- In two experiments **reactivating** the (social) encoding context lead to higher *trust in participants' memory* and to stronger estimates of the *socially shared relevance* of the event.
- Focusing on high (vs. low) sharedness lead to similar results, but
  - (approaching) memory X sharedness interactions indicate that especially participants in the semantic memory condition profited from this manipulation
- Consistent with shared-reality theory (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) these results indicate that social sharing serves important functions for the individual, such as validating personal experiences and fostering a sense of interpersonal connectedness.

# Future Research

- Is the effect of *episodic memory* (encoding context) restricted to events that were socially encoded in the first place?
- Are the (positive) effects of *episodic memory* and *high sharedness* restricted to positive events?
  - Would Germans, e.g., feel still connected to other Germans when remembering World War II?
- How are these “cues” related to memory accuracy?
  - Research in related areas, e.g., *flashbulb memories*, indicate that they may not be related (e.g., Talerico & Rubin, 2003).



# Thank you very much!

Thanks for help in data collection and administration goes to *Marc Becher, Björn Skorge* and *Philipp Süßenbach* at Bielefeld University!