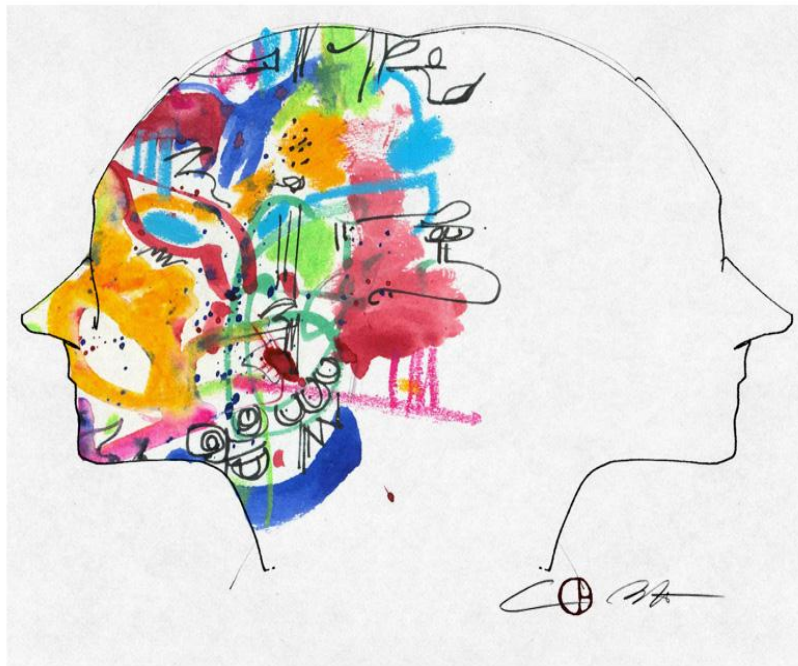# Questioning and Assuming Identities in a Process of Transitional Justice

The Case of Argentina's Found Grandchildren

SVF – 3901 Master thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation

University of Tromsø

Beate Gjerløw

May 2012

Acknowledgements

This MA thesis is the outcome of two years of study at the University of Tromsø, where I was enrolled in the program "*Master of Philosophy in Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation*" at the Center for Peace Studies (CPS). First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my informants. Meeting each one of you made a strong impression on me, and I am honored by the trust and courage you have shown me by sharing your stories. This thesis is my first attempt to make your experiences more widely understood and accounted for in the making of future policy in transitional justice processes.

I cordially thank the lovely staff at the CPS, my co-students and friends. A special mention goes to my friends Maia Maria Reibo Dahl - Long live our peace breakfasts, Ine Marie Lorentzen – for your moral support and endlessly discussing theories on identity with me, and Monica Shokrai – for great editing skills and universal energy across time and space. It was a daunting task to find the right supervisor, but after having searched throughout Norway, I am very sure that I found the best one – Anne Margrethe Sønneland at Diakonhjemmet University College in Oslo. I am deeply grateful for your wise insights and compassionate support. I would like to warmly thank by my mother, Rita Gjerløw, and my father, Yngvar Brynthe, for being there throughout my educational endeavors. In Argentina, I would like to thank those I call 'my argentine family' – Brenda Pinto and Daniel Kestelboim. Furthermore, a special mention goes to the family Goldschmidt for opening up their home to me – David Goldschmidt, thank you so much for accompanying me throughout the process of writing this thesis. For the artistic touch, I thank Per Ivar Thorstad, who has composed the song accompanying this thesis – *Milonga para las madres/ Milonga for the mothers.* I urge you as a reader to listen to this song before proceeding to read the thesis. This thesis' cover page is painted by Greg Betza at Studio 1482 in New York. Thank you for supporting my work by allowing me to have your piece of art as cover page.

Beate Gjerløw

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 May 2012

Explanation and Interpretation of Cover Page

This painting is inspired by the ancient Roman god Janus, who was the god of beginnings and transitions, and also of gates, doors, endings and time. In ancient Rome, the building of Ianus Geminus was supposed to be a good omen. In wartime, the gates of the Janus were opened, and inside, sacrifices were held to forecast the outcome of military deeds. The doors were only closed during peace time, which was a rare event. In time of peace, it was said to close the wars within.

I feel that a symbol of transition, endings and new beginnings shed light upon what Argentina has gone through as a country emerging from dictatorship to democracy; the ending of an era characterized by violence and repression to the beginning of a democracy in search for truth and justice for past violations. On an individual level, this symbol also represents my informants' experiences as they knew the truth about their biological origins; the gates to their past were opened and this marked the end of one period in their life and the start of another. However, the face of Janus has two sides; one is looking backward in time whereas the other side is facing forward. In relation to my thesis, I see this as a symbol of identity construction; the past will to a certain extent influence how you make choices, and who you become in the future, but this is not determining, rather conditioning. In this painting of Janus, there are many colors one the side looking backward, whereas the side facing forward is white. I see this in relation to how my informants have sought to 'color' their past by reconstructing their biological parents' memory, and by so doing; they have sought to fill in the blanks of their origins. Moreover, the side facing forward is white, which I interpret as a symbol of transparency and truth; my informants are now embarking on the future, knowing who their parents were, and they can go on with their lives without repression and lies.

White is the color of peace.

Milonga para las madres

De Per Ivar Thorstad[1]

Cada dia
hija mia
cantabas
cantos de rebeldia

Tu cama vacia
la casa fria
canto
cantos de elegia

Cada dia
sin cansía
cantaré
ya tu lucha es mia

La luz me diste
el dia que te fuiste
"no me llores, mama"

me dijiste

Mis ojos abriste
Vi un mundo tan triste

Entendí
lo que vos comprendiste

Porque cantabas
Porque amabas
luchabas y
Desapareciste

Cada pibe
muerto vive
siempre
La lucha sigue

En el frente
Todos presente
Unidos
en la lucha urgente

Siempre en mi mente
siempre presente
siempre
en lucha con tu gente

Siempre en mi mente
siempre presente
siempre
en lucha con tu gente

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[1]http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYO4c5R
gZZI&feature=share

Milonga for the Mothers

By Per Ivar Thorstad

Every day

My daughter

Sang

Songs of rebellion

Your empty bed

The cold house

I sing

Elegies

Every day

Without rest

I will sing

Your struggle is already mine

You gave me light

The day you left

You said

Do not cry, mama

You opened my eyes

I saw a sad world

I realized

What you already had understood

Why you sang

Why you loved

Why you were fighting

And disappeared

Each dead kid

Lives on

Always

The struggle will continue

On the frontline

Everyone

United

In the urgent fight

Always on my mind

Always present

Always

Fighting alongside your people

Always on my mind

Always present

Always

Fighting alongside your people

List of Abbreviations

BNDG   *Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos* - National Bank for Genetic Data

CONADEP   *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* - National Commission for Disappeared People

CONADI   *Comisión Nacional por el Derecho a la Identidad* - National Commission for the Right to Identity

ERP   *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* – The People's Revolutionary Army

HIJOS   *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio* - The Organization Children for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence

ICCPED   International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

ICCPR   International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR   International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights

INCHR   Inter American Convention on Human Rights

N.N   *Ningún nombre* - No name

UNCRC   United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNCHR   United Nations Commission for Human Rights

PRT   *Partido Revolucionario Trabajador* – Revolutionary Labor Party

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

'Do you know who you are?' This question has resonated through the argentine society since the disclosure of how the last military dictatorship (1976 – 1983) systematically kidnapped babies during what has been called Argentina's dirty war. The regime's system of repression consisted of abduction, detention and torture of political opponents and others[2], who were subsequently tortured in clandestine detention centers and then made to "disappear". In order to implement their ruthless policy, the state created at least 340 secret detention centers throughout Argentina (CONADEP 1984). The kidnapped persons go by the name *desaparecidos* – the disappeared, because in most cases, they have never been seen again. According to CONADEP (1984), women constituted approximately 30% of the victims, and a striking 10% of these women were pregnant at the time of detention. As a result, many children became victims of the dirty war, as these young pregnant women gave birth in brutal detention centers under appalling conditions. Some of these women were later released with their babies, whereas other women were made to 'disappear' and their babies were appropriated either by military families or by innocent civilian families, who were unaware of the destiny of the babies' parents[3]. The term appropriation refers to the illegal act of stealing children and falsifying their identity documents in order to raise them as their own biological children. The upbringing family refers to the family that the found grandchildren grew up in, before knowing the truth about their biological origins[4].

Today, 29 years after Argentina's return to democracy, the legacies of the past atrocities committed by the last military dictatorship are still echoing throughout the country. Through hard work from civil society and state's attempts to make amends for past injustices, 105 of these kidnapped babies, who are now adults in their thirties, have been identified as children of the desaparecidos – the disappeared by the junta (Abuelas 2012). The identified children of desaparecidos go by the name 'found grandchildren', because it was their grandmothers- the Abuelas of Plaza de Mayo, who started to search for them. The identification is a part of dealing with the past human

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[2] These individuals were either abducted from their home, while working, studying or off the street.
[3] In some cases, women were released with their babies after having given birth.
[4] The term adoptive family would be inadequate, because in most cases these children were not adopted, but rather appropriated. I have chosen not to refer to these families as the *appropriators,* because I feel it would be insensitive towards those who still have an affectionate relationship to their upbringing family.

rights violations, and therefore, a part of Argentina's transitional justice process. Various mechanisms of transitional justice processes, such as a truth commission, court trials and economic reparation, have been implemented in Argentina, as in many post-conflict situations throughout the world. Nevertheless, we need more knowledge about how victims of human rights violations experience various measures of transitional justice processes; hence, as a contribution to research on argentine transitional justice processes, the question that this MA thesis seeks to discuss and analyze is:

> *"How do the found grandchildren experience knowing the truth about their biological origins, and how do this influence their identity?*

1.1 Children as Trophies of Argentina's Dirty War

Argentina's disappeared children illustrate the regime's perverse logic; the children of subversives could become subversives as well, therefore they should be taken away from their family, so that their parents' ideology would not be passed on to them (Skaar 2005). The most infamous case of politically motivated child appropriation took place during the Second World War; the Nazis kidnapped several thousands of children from Poland, Yugoslavia and Russia in order to "germanify" them. Arditti (2001:154) explains that the idea was that the child would forget, and to a certain point hate, it's origin's culture, and create a sense of inferiority and thankfulness towards the Nazis for having saved them[5]. In Argentina, General Omar Riveros has testified that the stealing of babies from leftist-oriented parents was systematically planned and executed by the armed forces in order to place them in 'ideologically well-constituted families' (Ismi 2010). These children became war trophies, taken from what the regime considered as 'sick, Marxist, subversive' environments and given to families for a 'Christian upbringing'. There are approximately 500 cases of disappeared children, either kidnapped with their parents, or taken after their birth in one of the clandestine detention centers (Abuelas 2012). Over 400 cases of kidnapped children are still not resolved; therefore, the work for their identification is on-going and very much present in today's Argentina.

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[5] Likewise, among the victims of this worldview were the 'lost children' of Francoism in Spain - babies and young children, who after being removed from their imprisoned mothers, had their names changed so they could be adopted by regime families (Graham 2004).

1.2 The Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. After the introduction chapter, I discuss how I gained access to eligible informants, focusing on the ethical aspects of conducting research in a different cultural context with people who have gone through painful experiences. This study is situated within the realm of transitional justice as my research concerns how people are dealing with responses to state-sponsored human rights violations in Argentina. The discussion of the concepts of transitional justice and identity construction aims to contribute to a profound understanding of how my informants experience getting to know the truth about their biological origins. Relevant literature on adoption will be introduced as there are important parallels between the experiences of adoptees and those of the found grandchildren. However, there are several issues that are particular in the case of my informants, given how they are children of disappeared people and victims of state violence. The fourth chapter outlines Argentina's Dirty War (1976 – 1983) and how the country, as emerging from dictatorship to democratic rule, has implemented transitional justice measures. This will be contextualized by an overview of relevant international legal framework. Chapter five presents and analyzes my findings regarding how the informants have experienced the identification, and the subsequent chapter reflects upon their experiences of the restitution. Both chapters are contextualized by relevant national and international law. Chapter seven sheds light upon how my informants are reconstructing their sense of self and identity; firstly, the chapter seeks to elaborate on how my informants deal with challenges of self-presentation in everyday life. Their identity is questioned by the information about their biological origins, and in some cases, they must assume another legal identity by having to change their name, which contributes to self-presentation challenges. For the purpose of this thesis, I consider the reconstruction of self and identity as linked to the restoring of social relations; focusing on relations between the found grandchildren and both their biological- and upbringing family, as well as their relationship to their own biological children. The eighth chapter discusses how Argentina's transitional justice processes are influencing the found grandchildren's identity and provides an overview of the thesis.

2. Methodology

2.1 Qualitative Research in a Transitional Justice Process

Various mechanisms of transitional justice processes, such as truth commissions, court trials and economic reparation, are implemented in many post-conflict situations throughout the world. The implicit assumption is that these measures favor the victims, in spite of the fact that we have little information of how people affected by political violence experience these mechanisms. We need more knowledge about how victims of political violence experience transitional justice measures. Therefore, one of the purposes of this thesis is to contribute to a more profound understanding of what such processes imply for a society and its individuals through the context-specific study of one particular aspect of a transitional justice process. Hopefully, such empirical research can serve as a point of departure for better informed policy decisions and practice in the future (van der Merwe et al, 2009:4)

The empirical material for this paper was gathered during fieldwork in Argentina from December 2011 to February 2012. The topic for the fieldwork was 'Individual Experiences of the Restitution of Identity' and I focused on how the found grandchildren of Argentina experience getting to know the truth about their biological origins. I applied qualitative method using semi-structured interviews, which is the most common form of doing interviews in qualitative methodology literature (Fog 2004; Weiss 1994; Kvale 1997; Rapley 2007). I chose qualitative methodology, as my purpose was to obtain in-depth information about how my informants experience their life situation. A qualitative research approach is essential in gaining such knowledge, as it offers insight into subjective experiences and understandings (van der Merwe et al, 2009:4)

There are strong academic reasons for choosing this country as the area of research. Argentina is one of the few countries in the world that successfully has prosecuted some of their worst human rights violators and followed different institutional paths to face past repression (Skaar 2005), which makes Argentina of high interest in transitional justice literature. Moreover, my experience as an exchange student in Buenos Aires (2007 – 2008) awoke my interest for the human rights movement.

2.2 Gaining access

This section discusses the research strategies I used to engage in field work with victims of human rights violations. The recruitment of informants was the project's first challenge, and *"the question is whether they will accept being studied, if they will be helpful or rejecting, and if it seems easy to relate to them or not*[6]*"* (Fangen 2004:58). I knew it would be challenging to recruit informants, because human rights issues in Argentina are politicized. Further, to get people to talk about their painful experiences is not an easy task. I found a list of the found grandchildren's names on the Abuelas' webpage (Abuelas 2012), and upon arrival, I wrote a personal message to each of the eligible informants on Facebook, explaining about the project and asking if they would like to participate. In this way, I was open and clear about the purpose of getting in contact and befriending them. The recruitment of informants is ethically more acceptable when the researcher is open about the study from the start, rather than recruiting eligible informants without revealing the purpose (Lamb 2001). Some of the eligible informants did not respond at all, and of the 15 men and 14 women I contacted on Facebook; I interviewed 5 men and 4 women[7]. Additionally, the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo put me in contact with one informant. Further, I used the 'snowball method' in which informants, who I already had interviewed, introduced me to other eligible informants (Fangen 2004:58). It led to recruitment of one informant.

2.3 Field Work - Conducting interviews and beyond

I interviewed informants from Buenos Aires, Cordoba and Rosario, because I wanted to include informants from different geographical places. The interviews were either conducted in the home of my informants, at a café or at the office of the Grandmothers, depending on the wishes of my informants. My informants were either born in captivity or kidnapped with their parents during Argentina's last military dictatorship. The majority has been raised by families who appropriated them illegally, while some were adopted legally. Some of them are now working in different human rights institutions, such as CONADI – National Comission for the Right to Identity, as well as in the offices of the Abuelas de Plaza deMayo, in different regions in

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[6] My translation
[7] Of the 105 found grandchildren; there are 45 men, 51 women, 7 individuals who were not born, and 2 cases, which are being reviewed (Abuelas 2012).

Argentina, to contribute to find the grandchildren who are still missing. I made 11 semi-structured interviews in total, with four women and seven men. The events and experiences shared by the informants are subjective reproductions of how they have interpreted the situation (Thagaard 2009: 87). In semi-structured interviews, the themes are outlined beforehand; yet, the order of the themes is not set (Kvale 1997:39). Thus, the researcher can follow the informants' narrative and simultaneously obtain information about the themes that were previously outlined. Some essential topics were chosen for the interview; including how they were identified and their relationship to both their upbringing- and biological family. Yet, a semi-structured allowed for the discussion of important themes with my informants that I had not thought of on beforehand.

I used a tape recorder to save the material obtained, and I did not take notes during the interviews, as I considered that writing notes would take the attention away from my informants (Thagaard 2009:102). This way, I was present in the interview situation and I could concentrate on how my informants were expressing themselves.

2.4 Reflexivity and Gender in another Cultural Context

Factors such as gender, age, cultural and socio-economic background, influence the role as a foreign researcher in another cultural context. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) call for 'reflexive empirical research', which refers to awareness of how one produces knowledge. Etherington (2004) pinpoints important questions regarding reflexivity in understanding the process of knowledge production:

> "*How has my personal history led to my interest in this topic (and) how does my gender/social class/ ethnicity and culture influence my positioning in relation to this topic /and my informants?*"

In my case, I perceived my foreign identity as an advantage, as people were positively surprised that someone from the other side of the world showed interest in their situation. Nonetheless, it was a challenge to find the balance between being too sensitive and being too persistent, which is related to culture. According to my experience, to "make things happen" in Argentina, you have to be persistent. As a Norwegian, I am reluctant to being pushy and I seek to be sensitive when it comes to someone's personal space. This concerns the entire investigation process. Although I

had made interview appointments with eligible informants upon arrival to Argentina, some of them did not answer me when I arrived. In these cases, I contacted them a couple of times, however, I soon realized that they could have changed their mind and did not feel informing me.

I consider my gender as an advantage during the fieldwork, both when interviewing women as well as men. Literature on methodology has discussed which significance the researcher's gender may have in the interview situation (Rubin & Rubin 2005:79-89; Ryen 2002:139). When the researcher and informant are of the same gender, it provides a basis for common understanding (Thagaard 2009:106). Though the widely believed conception of a woman being able to identify with another woman is not always the case, I perceived that being a woman contributed to good and in-depth conversations with my female informants. I spent more time with my female informants than I did with my male informants, which was originally not my intention, but the women opened up to me more and we talked as girl friends. So, even if I interviewed more men than women, the information I obtained with my female informants was more detailed. Studies show that women appear to disclose more information than men overall (e.g. Petronio, 2002; Buhrke & Fuqua, 1987; Dolgin & Minowa, 1997), and that women tend to disclose more intimate information face-to-face than men do (e.g. Davidson & Duberman, 1982). Gender differences in self-disclosure may be explained by how men and women are socialized differently; whereas men traditionally are taught to restrain their sharing of emotions (Rubin & Shenker, 1978), women are socialized to be more expressive and open in their communication.

An informant commented that he was more inclined to give me an interview, as a Norwegian student, rather than an Argentine student. This might have to do with the fact that I could be interpreted as more "neutral" than an Argentine student. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, and since I have lived in Argentina and other Spanish-speaking countries, I did not perceive the language as a barrier for communication. Several of my informants are well-educated and have good jobs, and I did not perceive that I was in a more powerful position than they were.

2.5 Ethical Challenges

Qualitative interviews raise ethical challenges, especially when conducting field work on people's painful experiences. Ethical considerations should "permeate the entire process of the research, from conceptualization to dissemination" Sultana (2007:375). De Laine (2000:16) holds that forms of fieldwork, where the researcher "is the thinking, feeling human being who is caring, sharing and genuinely interested in friendship and the needs of others" put people in contact with others in more intimate ways that requires greater sensitivity. The ethical dilemmas of fieldwork seem to have more to do with "overlapping roles, relationships and the interests, expectations, allegiances and loyalties of parties concerned" than it has to do with informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of data (ibid). Yet, such aspects are also of importance. In order to achieve insight into how victims deal with processes of transitional justice, it is essential to study their experiences. This calls for 'very sensitive methodologies' that do not harm the informants (Van der Merwe et al (2009:5), however; the responses as to "how to do things right" are limited (Sønneland 2010:2). Ethical issues on conducting fieldwork related to human rights violations should be put on the agenda, and today's lack of attention to these issues is troubling (Mertus (2009:1). The study of post-conflict justice might consist of fewer challenges than studying actual conflicts; nevertheless, the very existence of transitional justice processes indicates that gross human rights violations have been committed. Despite the increasing interest given to human rights violations in academic spheres, there seems to be a lack of discussion regarding both:

> "*practical and ethical challenges surrounding research into serious abuses where researchers operate under difficult circumstances and deal with vulnerable populations". (Mertus 2009:1).*

The basic principle of doing as little harm as possible should be at the heart of every project design. The Norwegian ethical guidelines' definition of "harm" is broad, including even feelings of discomfort (Forskningsetiske komitéer, 2006). Since discomfort is almost unavoidable in transitional justice field work, it is important to proceed sensitively during the entire investigation process. Research on painful experiences may encourage people to reflect upon what they have suffered. Luckily, studies show that people have benefited from taking part in trauma-related research (Sonis 2009).

Establishing trust relations with my informants was of crucial importance throughout the field work. To establish trust, I told my informants about how my prior experience as an exchange student in Argentina had inspired me to write the thesis. Almost all of my informants had, and still have, access to my Facebook profile, which provided the opportunity to chat with some of my informants before the interview. I perceive that this contributed to 'break the ice', as we would talk about study-related affairs and life in general. The ethical challenges posed by having informants as Facebook friends will be discussed further on.

All of my informants were accustomed to speaking about and reflecting upon their situation. Despite of talking about painful experiences, I felt that my informants wanted to share their perspectives with me. There might be:

> *"two fundamental reasons for success in field work; (1) people love talking about themselves and seldom have the possibilities to do so, and (2) people are flattered when someone takes their opinion seriously"* Powdermaker (1966:216) in Fangen (2004:60)

My strategy was to make my informants feel comfortable with the interview situation. Timing was important regarding to which extent my informants felt ready to share their story. My informant told me that: "If you had written to me three years ago, I would not have been able to go through with the interview". Beforehand, I could not know how my eligible informants felt about giving an interview and if they felt ready or not. I followed my 'gut feeling' and Sonis' advice on how to avoid discomfort when conducting interviews by (1) not addressing victimization experience, for example, not asking if they experienced and/or remember their parents being tortured (2) asking open-ended questions, (3) taking breaks and (4) giving participants time to calm down after the interview (Sonis 2009). In order to provide my informants with information regarding how I have used their quotes, I have sent a copy of each quote to the corresponding informant; both in its original transcribed form in Spanish, as well as translated into English. Thus, I aspire to be transparent about what is being published about their perspectives.

2.5.1 Anonymity in the Era of Facebook

Anonymity is an ethical concept that has been a source of much academic discussion (see Hookway, 2008; Kelly, 2009; Nespor, 2000; Stewart and Williams, 2005; van den Hoonaard, 2003; Walford, 2005; Wiles et al 2006). The Norwegian ethical guidelines emphasize researchers' responsibility to secure the anonymity of research participants, and affirm that *"Anonymity is intended to protect the person's privacy so that information is handled properly and that identifiable information is handled by as few as possible"* (Forskningsetiske komitéer 2012). Anonymity was not important for my informants, but I have signed a contract with the Norwegian Social Science Data Service, obliging me to follow the Norwegian ethical guidelines on aspects such as anonymity. There are challenges regarding anonymity in the era of Facebook (Bruckman et al 2010). Several of my research participants are my friends on Facebook, but I have also eligible informants, who I did not interview, as Facebook friends. My list of friends on Facebook is only visible to me, given anonymity concerns. If I had not befriended my informants on Facebook, they would not have had access to my profile. Their access to my profile contributed to breaking the ice by providing opportunities for getting to know me through pictures, updates and chat. I have not used their publications on Facebook, as this has not been a part of this thesis' methodology.

2.5.2 Data Anonymization

Strategies of anonymizing informants are frequently used in qualitative research projects, but seldom discussed in texts on methodology (Nespor 2000). Replacing informants' name with pseudonyms, the most common anonymizing tools, are generally considered only as techniques for protecting participants (Deyle, Hess, & LeCompte, 1992; Lincoln, 1990; Szklut & Reed, 1991). My intention by giving the informants pseudonyms is to provide protection, and my main concern is that they do not suffer harm or embarrassment as a consequence of my research. I choose to change the names of geographical places, when my informants talk about where they grew up and where they moved when being restituted to their biological family. When my informants talk about people in their upbringing- or biological family, I do not use their name, and in some cases, I have changed the gender of the person in question. However, I have not changed the gender of my informants.

2.6 Strengths and Limitations of Method

The research outcome is based on my informants' subjective understandings, and I consider the obtained material as a picture of the panorama as displayed by my informants in a certain point in time. With time, their perspectives on the discussed issues might change. Further, the research outcome is based on my subjective understanding of the knowledge produced in the interaction between me and my informants. If another researcher carries through a similar project in another point in time, results may be different. The degree to which my qualitative research results can be transferred to other contexts or settings is debatable (Thagaard 2009). I consider that it depends on the kind of information one is trying to transfer. The systematic stealing of children during Argentina's last military dictatorship and the implemented state to identify these persons is an unprecedented situation. There are some parallels between my informants' experiences and adopted individuals regarding how they face the truth about their biological origins and meeting their biological family. There might be similarities regarding how victims of state violations experience state measures to make a mends for past atrocities. Yet, this is highly contextual. I consider that some of the information obtained might be transferable to other settings and contexts; however, there are aspects that are unique for this case study. Achieving   validity   entails obtaining data that are relevant for one's choice of research question (Halvorsen 2002:201), and is also linked to how one interprets the obtained data (Thagaard 2009). This thesis' analysis reflects the most important issues that were discussed during the interviews, and at the core of the analysis is the research question regarding how my informants experience knowing the truth about their biological origins, and how this influence their sense identity. The   population   I   sought   to interview consists of 105 found grandchildren, and *who* I was to interview was dependent on *who* wanted to give me an interview. Fangen (2004:55) says that selection procedures in qualitative research concerns finding good examples that pinpoint your research questions. Regarding representativity: (1) I have interviewed approximately 10% of the population, and I believe that my informants reflect the diversity of the entire population. However, (2) I did not interview involuntary identified persons, as they did not respond to my interview request. I felt it would be ethically questionable to be persistent. What I did do, however, was to talk to my informants about their perspectives on involuntarily identification.

2.7 The Process of Analyzing Data

I divided the interviews into three main parts; (1) how the found grandchildren got to know their biological origins – identification (2) how they experienced the restitution, and (3) how they have experienced their reconstruction of identity. This study was exploratory, and I did not know what I would find. Each individual has a unique story, but I find that the found grandchildren have all gone through three different phases when facing the truth about their biological origins; identification – restitution – reconstruction of identity. I consider the identification and restitution as events limited in time, whereas I view the reconstruction of identity as an ongoing and continuous process in which each person is trying to restore a sense of coherent identity. These three phases are separated in my analysis; yet, they are highly interrelated.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical pillars on which my analysis is based on; the concepts of transitional justice and identity. I relate the context-specific transitional justice measure of identification of the lost grandchildren to the complexities of identity construction, as knowing the truth about biological origins can be considered to have an impact on identity. Relevant literature on adopted individuals' experiences will be introduced, given how there are significant parallels which I find essential to elaborate upon.

3.1 The Concept of Transitional Justice

The development of responses to human rights violations has triggered passion among scholars within disciplines such as law, political science, psychology and sociology. Academic literature within the interdisciplinary field of transitional justice is increasing (Minow 1998; Hayner 2001; Kritz 1995; Teitel 2000). The concept of transitional justice entails:

> *"... the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation"* (United Nations 2012).

The end of the Cold War, the democratic transitions in Latin America, and later the atrocities of the Balkan wars, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, form the background for the increased attention given to transitional justice measures in the 1990's (García-Godos 2008). How can societies deal with their violent legacy in order to promote long-term goals of peace and democratic consolidation? The mechanisms of transitional justice used in different national contexts vary broadly (van Der Merwe et al 2009:2), and transitional justice processes might involve court trials, truth commissions, victims' reparations, reform of abusive institutions and promotion of reconciliation[8]. Political concerns of transitional justice are aimed at several sets of goals, such as marking:

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[8] The concept of reconciliation will not be given attention, as I have found that this concept has negative connotations in Argentina as to not assuming responsibility for past abuses.

> *"the defeat of terror; to set in place safeguards against future collective atrocity; to communicate "never again" will such abominations happen – these are all significant human rights accomplishments that may be set in motion by political means"* (Minow 1998:22)

The ambiguous paradigm of transitional justice should be understood as both reflective of and constructive in the transition from one normative framework to another, presumably from an unjust normative framework to a just one (Teitel 2000). Transitional justice can be considered both a process and an outcome of the different strategies which societies emerging from past atrocities draw upon:

> "*justice in periods of political change is extraordinary and constructivist: It is alternately constituted by, and constitutive of, the transition*". "*the conception of justice that emerges is contextualized and partial: What is deemed just is contingent and informed by prior injustice... As a state undergoes political change, legacies of injustice have a bearing on what is deemed transformative*" (*ibid*)

Teitel (ibid) identifies a transitional identity by claiming that one of the reasons traditional liberal conceptions of the rule of law fail in transitional situations is that the identity of the citizen and the identity of the state in these transitions—as well as the relationship between the two—is under construction.

Human rights violation refer to violation of any of the human rights enshrined in the international law on human rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and a the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC)[9]. For the purpose of this thesis, a 'victim' refers to a person who has been subject to human rights violations. The Commission on Human Rights (1999) confirms that gross human rights violations include crimes such as genocide and enforced disappearance. Enforced disappearance violates fundamental human rights such as the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to liberty and security, the right not to be subjected to torture and cruel treatment, and in the case of murder of the disappeared person – the right to life. Enforced disappearance is defined as a 'crime against humanity' in various international instruments such as

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[9] 'Hard law' refers to treaties or conventions that are legally binding upon state parties, whereas 'soft law' refers to standards that are not legally binding, but may uphold high moral status internationally.

the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICCPED). As established in international law, such as article 24 (2) in the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICCPED), victims of human rights violations have the right to truth:

> *"Each victim has the right to know the truth regarding the circumstances of the enforced disappearance, the progress and results of the investigation and the fate of the disappeared person. Each State Party shall take appropriate measures in this regard[10]".*

Persons, who have been severely traumatized by totalitarian control, can recover through a process of truth-telling, mourning, taking action and fighting back (Herman 1992). By reaching out to help others and help prevent future reoccurrence of violence, the traumatized victims can restore a sense of purpose and reason to live, as such, "empowerment – restoring a sense of identity and communality – might become the building blocks for healing" (Herman 1992)[11]. The need for truth is based on the assumption that it is crucial to know what happened and who were responsible for the misdeeds in order for the society to move on after human rights violations. For instance, truth commissions focus on victims' stories of human rights violations, and contribute to provide evidence about past abuses. Yet, a process to establish the 'truth' might increase divisions and tensions at individual and social levels (Gloppen et al 2001:33). The South African Truth Commission (1998) presents four different kinds of truth are presented; firstly, there is the forensic truth of science and law. Secondly, there is the "personal" or "narrative" truth, which is the truth of experience and individual subjectivities. The third is "social" or "dialogue" truth, which emerges through collective discourse and converging intersubjectivities. Fourthly, there is the "healing" or "restorative" truth, which places truth in a "context" that consciously affirms individual experience. The process of establishing the truth is "worthy of human effort in the continuing struggle against mass atrocities" (Minow 1998:90).

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[10] The "right to truth" principle of the Inter-American Convention of Human Rights was incorporated into the Argentinean Constitution in 1994. By invoking the "right to truth", federal court judges ruled that the families of the disappeared had the right to know what happened to the people who "disappeared" during the military rule (Skaar 2005:166).

[11] In this thesis, 'prevent future victimization' means contributing to that such atrocities never happen again. It is not this thesis' purpose to coincide with Herman and claim that knowing the truth is empowering, as I consider that it can be both further victimizing as well as empowering, depending on context and content.

Truth and justice constitute two essential purposes animating responses to human rights violations; nevertheless, there is another pair of implicit goals or responses to atrocities – vengeance and forgiveness (ibid). Another response differing from vengeance is that of forgiveness. By the act of forgiving, we can avoid self-destructive effects of holding on to grudges and victimhood. Trough forgiveness, the victims and the offender can construct a new relationship and heal the grief of past atrocities. Scarry (1985) writes:

> *"The world of the victim is however not merely shrunk, for intense and perduring pain "unmakes the world." A world unmade means a self and identity unmade, and "healing" this self and identity requires more than "transformation" to attain or regain a modicum of agency (enough agency to recognize and forgive a perpetrator, the agentic cause of your suffering. A world unmade demands rebuilding, reconstruction"*

Yet, is it humanly possible to fully forgive a perpetrator for having committed gross human rights violations, and can we really expect anyone to do so? Forgiveness might entail the relinquishment of the desire for vengeance, nevertheless, in theory; forgiveness cannot replace justice or punishment (Murphy 1988:33). Through the rule of law, the responsibilities for apportioning blame and punishment is shifted from victims to public mechanisms. Minow (1998:147) holds that 'between vengeance and forgiveness lies the path of recollection and affirmation and the path of facing who we are, and what we could become'.

3.2 Operationalizing Identity

Jenkins (1996) seeks to put the concept of social identity for sociological use in:

> *"Its proper place at the heart of our thinking about the relationship between our concrete models of individual behavior, on the one hand, and our necessarily more abstract concepts of the collective, on the other".*

This section discusses Jenkins' interpretation of identity as "internal – external dialectic of identification", as well as Giddens' and Bourdieu's theoretical ideas. Nevertheless, Brubaker and Cooper (2001) question the very utility of identity; therefore, their concepts will introduce alternative terms. These theories both contrast and complement each other in the task of showing the complexities of identity construction.

3.2.1 Social Identity as a Process

Following in the footsteps of thinkers such as Marx, Weber, Parsons, Berger, Luckman, Bourdieu and Giddens, Jenkins (1996) asks the following questions;

> *"How can we fruitfully bring into the same analytical space the active lives and consciousnesses of individuals, the abstract impersonality of the institutional order, and the ebb and flow of historical time?*

Jenkins (1996:171) argues for an understanding of "identity as internal-external dialectic of identification", which is an issue that belongs in the context of the structure/agency debate. He considers selfhood to be thoroughly socially constructed:

> "*in the processes of primary and subsequent socialization, and in the ongoing processes of social interaction within which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives...individual identity – embodied in selfhood – is not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people". (Jenkins 1996:20)*

This view stems from American pragmatism via Cooley (1962, 1964) and Mead (1934), whose work emerged from an understanding of 'self' as an ongoing and in simultaneous synthesis of internal self-definition and external definitions of oneself offered by others. In sum, Jenkins (1996) explains the internal-external dialectic of identification as the processes whereby all identities – individual and collective – are constituted and considers how "identity can only be understood as process - as 'being' or 'becoming'".

3.2.2 The Self as a Reflexive Project

Giddens aims to transcend the structure/agency dualism by presenting the relationship between them as the duality of structure, in which individuals reflexively produce and reproduce their social life (Giddens 1979:57) Social structures should be thought of both as a medium for action, as well as the result or product of action. Agency and structures presuppose and require one another as:

> "*Analyzing the structuration of social systems mean studying the modes such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction". (Giddens 1984:25)*

We are managing within historically specific structures, reproducing and changing them through our intended and unintended consequences of action (Giddens 1979). The structures' content consist in rules and resources, and by drawing upon these structures, individuals are enabled to engage in social practice (ibid). He affirms that self-identity presumes reflexive awareness, that is, the ability to reflect over his or her own identity and actions and he explains how:

> *"a person with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater of lesser degree, communicate to other people"* (Giddens 1991:52)

Giddens views the self as a reflexive project, for which the knowledgeable actor is responsible – "We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (Giddens 1991:75). Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual; it is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography:

> "*a person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor – important though this is – in the reaction of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going".* (Giddens 1991:54)

Today we are facing an unprecedented context in which we constantly must make choices regarding *who* we want to be and how we want to live our lives, as "the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self" (Giddens 1991:32). He constructs a social theory that aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding all social practice.

Ontological security is fundamental for the development of self-identity, and the security is based on early basic trust relations between infant and care-taker (Giddens 1991). The trust invested by the child in its caretakers provides a 'protective cocoon' against threats in the surrounding settings of action and interaction. This protection gives the individual hope and courage in spite of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might encounter (Giddens 1991:39-40). There are moments in which individuals are faced with decisions that are particularly consequential for their future lives:

> *"fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were, at a crossroad in his existence; or where a person learns of information with fateful consequences"* (Giddens 1991:113)

Such moments can include the decision to get married – or separated, or hearing the result of a medical test. He further elaborates that:

> *"they are moments when individuals must launch out into something new, knowing that a decision made, or a specific course of action followed, has an irreversible quality, or at least that it will be difficult thereafter to revert the old paths"* (Giddens 1991:114)

The person's biography must continuously incorporate events which take place in the external world, and place them into the ongoing story about the self. Giddens refers to the words of Charles Taylor: "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become and of where we are going" (Taylor 1989).

3.2.3 Habitus

Rather than using identity as an analytical tool, Bourdieu (1977, 1990) presents habitus as the central concept, which constitutes the essence of his social theory for transcending the structure/agency debate. By building his theory on habitus, rather than identity, Bourdieu seeks to counter the manner in which sociological theory tends to give too much attention to what occurs at the cognitive level. The difference between his concept of habitus and that of identity is based on whether the individual is conscious of, or not, how the socio-cultural strata in which he or she belongs, influence the manner in which the person perceives, thinks and interact in the social environment. For instance, a working class habitus refers to a way of acting and thinking that the individual is not conscious of, whereas a working class identity refers to what the individual to a certain extent is conscious of, through conscious choice or acknowledgement of belonging to a certain group (Prieur 2004). So, what does the concept of habitus entail? Bourdieu provides various definitions of the concept of habitus in his writings, but these do not reflect an inconsistency; it rather shed light on different aspects of the phenomena (Prieur 2004: 39).

Habitus is:

> *"a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of operations necessary in order to obtain them"* (Bourdieu,1990:53)

Social conditions shape our identity and behavior, and through our interaction with others, our social practice reproduces these conditions. The habitus is "structuring", in the sense that our skills and dispositions entrenched in habitus operate to *enable* our participation in social situations. Bourdieu (1993) asserts that "the habitus – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product". This means that our actions and ways of being are not primarily based on reflection and thorough calculation, but rather a pre reflexive and almost instinctive understanding of how we must act. Habitus operates so that our actions and ways of being are to a certain extent predictable and continuous throughout the course of our lives. The habitus develops according to the social sphere in which the person lives. Bourdieu terms this sphere the "field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). A field is a sphere of action that puts certain limits on those who act within it, according to their status within the field. Status is indicated by the resources, or capital, the individual possess. Further, the accumulation of various forms of capital is related to accumulation of power; power and status increase simultaneously with capital accumulation. Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural capital. For the purpose of this thesis, solely the concept of social capital will be given attention. Bourdieu views social capital as:

> *" …the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group. This provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them"(Bourdieu 1986).*

Our habitus cannot be straightforwardly changed through mere reflection or thought and we cannot from one day to another decide to "become someone else", because we would collide with the facticity made up by our habitus. Individuals are considerably influenced by the environment and structures in which they live (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 136). Habitus reflects the durable, but not unchangeable in the human being. Conditions for change, rather than reproduction, are made when habitus encounter objective structures radically different from those under which it was originally shaped (Swartz 1997:113) Reflexivity emerges from moments of crisis, from mismatches between habitus and field which reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions of the "game" (Bourdieu 1977:169). Our habitus is constantly developing in the course of how our life conditions change (Bourdieu 1999). Nevertheless, the choices we make, how we attend to the present and anticipate the future, is conducted in light of previous experience. McNay (1999: 113) considers that the value of Bourdieu's work is that it shows the difficulty of change as:

> *"it provides a corrective to certain theories of reflexive transformation which overestimate the extent to which individuals living in post-traditional order are able to reshape identity"*

Habitus is one principle of production of practices among others, but more frequently in play than any other (Bourdieu 1990:108), considering that tradition, reproduction and continuity are more prominent features of social practice rather than change, renewal and mobility.

3.3 Challenging the Concept of Identity

Brubaker and Cooper (2001) criticize the theoretical burden of the concept 'identity' is supposed to do, and rather propose the concepts of identification[12], self-understanding, social location, commonality, connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl to do the work. These scholars assert how:

> *"one might be called upon to identify oneself – to characterize oneself, to locate oneself vis-á-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category – in any number of different contexts". (ibid)*

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[12] Derived from the verb 'to identify', 'identification' is an active and processual term, which invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying.

In modern settings, occasions for identification are abundant in both situations of everyday life and formal contexts, and the way in which one identifies one-self – and how one is identified by others, depends on situation and context. They differentiate between self-identification and the identification and categorization of oneself by others, as the self-identification takes place in dialectic interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge. They elaborate that "there is another key type of external identification that has no counter-part in the domain of self-identification: the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions". The modern state has become a central agent of identification and categorization as:

> "*the state monopolizes, or seeks to monopolize, not only legitimate physical force but also symbolic force, as Bourdieu puts it. This includes the power to name, to identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who".*
> (Brubaker and Cooper 2001)

These scholars remind us that modes of identification and categorization are placed at the core of what defines "governmentality" in a modern state. They draw upon a second complementary approach to identity, namely that of self-understanding and social location, which designates what might be called ``situated subjectivity'' - one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act (ibid). "Commonality'' denotes the sharing of some common attribute, and "connectedness' refers to the relational ties that link people. Categorical commonality and relational connectedness need to be supplemented by a third element, what Max Weber called a *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*, a feeling of belonging together (Brubaker and Cooper 2001:20).

3.4 Self-Presentation and Roles in Everyday Life

People have different roles depending on the social context, and we often operate with several roles simultaneously:

> *"Roles, then, are the basic units of socialization. It is through roles that tasks in society are allocated and arrangements made to enforce their performance."* (Goffman, 2007: 35).

Goffman (2007) considers social life a kind of multi-staged drama in which each person performs various roles in different social situations. Each of these roles might have contradicting qualities and attitudes. The role-segregation depends on audience-segregation, that is; we choose the most appropriate role for demanding that two contradicting roles cooperate. Through social media such as Facebook, we are inviting different sets of "audience" to our "performance of self":

> *"by bringing many different types of people to the same "place", electronic media have fostered a blurring of many formerly distinct social roles. Electronic media affect us, not primarily through their content, but by changing the "situational geography" of social life"* (Meyrowitz 1985:6)

The digital worlds increase the likelihood of collapses of separate social networks, requiring participants to decide how to manage their own performance and the interactions between different sets of audience (Boyd 2008:3). How do we manage to combine the different roles we have for each set of audience in a coherent presentation of self? Beltran (2009:25) holds that:

> *'Creating selfpresentations' is how Tufekci (2008) defined personal homepages and profiles on social networking sites. [...] Nowadays, managing and maintaining our Facebook profiles is the same as managing and maintaining our selfpresentation in society.*

Kokswijk (2007) considers how we put on masks as we perform each role in both the real- and virtual world. He questions whether these masks can disclose who we really are, and implies that each role to certain extent disclose private and personal traits of the person's identity. Meyrowitz (1985) provides an example of a situation in which two social settings coincide; two rooms are separated by a wall: in the first room, there is 40 degrees, and in the other there is 4 degrees. By removing the wall, the temperature will adapt to somewhere in between. This is the background for the theory of the "*Middle region"*. Meyrowitz (ibid) holds that we adjust our behavior according to audience, and if two different sets of audience come to our performance, we assume a role and present ourselves in a way that satisfies both groups. Each role discloses different aspects of our identity, and what we decide to emphasize, depends on our audience. Strauss (1997: 11) holds that we present ourselves to others and see ourselves "in the mirror of their judgements".

3.5 An Overview of Adoption Literature

There are several parallels regarding adoptee's and the found grandchildren's experiences of knowing the truth about their biological origins. Yet, it is essential to differentiate between adoption and appropriation; an adoption is a legitimate and legal act, if the biological parents give their child up for adoption and thereby renounce further relations with the child. The parents of the disappeared children never renounced their project as parents, and did not give their child up for adoption. Their upbringing family, whether they were involved in the military regime or not, in most cases knew about the origins of the children, and often falsified their birth certificate and registered them as their own biological children. This is why the term adoption is not adequate in the case of the appropriated children in Argentina. The term 'appropriation' refers to the illegal act of stealing children and falsifying their identity documents in order to raise them as their own biological children[13]. In most cases, the upbringing families knew about these babies' origins and purposively avoided contacting their biological family.

In the case of adoption, traumatism can be triggered by questions about origins (Teubal 2003:243), and separation from birth parents is the root of many of the psychological issues that persist into adulthood for adoptees (Curtis and Pearson 2010). Adopted persons often feel their birth parents rejected them (Leon 2002, Silverstein and Kaplan (1982). Adopted individuals who search for their biological origins may feel anxious, guilty, or disloyal with regards to their adoptive parents, and may even delay the search as a result (Feast and Smith, 1995; Pacheco and Eme, 1993). Research claim that adopted persons often are motivated by life cycle transitions and a desire for information about why they were adopted and their medical history (Campbell et al., 1991; Cubito and Brandon, 2000; Kennard, 1991; March, 1995; Pacheco and Eme, 1993; Sachdev, 1992; Sobol and Cardiff, 1983). For many, it is an opportunity to find out about their genealogical history and establish a sense of identity later in life – to fill in the gaps in their sense of self (Campbell et al., 1991; March, 1995; Muller and Perry, 2001a; Sobol and Cardiff, 1983).

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[13] Nonetheless, there is a difference between those who were appropriated by military personnel, and those who were given to Christian communities, which later placed them in 'appropriate', most often, civilian families.

3.6 Summary

Transitional justice can be considered both a process and an outcome of the different strategies which societies emerging from past atrocities draw upon. Transitional justice processes might involve court trials, truth commissions, victims' reparations, reform of abusive institutions and promotion of reconciliation. One of the reasons traditional liberal conceptions of the rule of law fail in transitional situations is that the identity of the citizen and the identity of the state in these transitions—as well as the relationship between the two—is under construction (Teitel 2000). There is an implicit assumption that transitional justice mechanisms favor the victims, nevertheless, we have little knowledge about *how* people affected by political violence experience such mechanisms. Sociological theories on identity contribute to understand how information about biological origins can be considered to have an impact on my informants' sense of self and identity. The concept of social identity for sociological use should be put:

> *"in its proper place at the heart of our thinking about the relationship between our concrete models of individual behavior, on the one hand, and our necessarily more abstract concepts of the collective, on the other".*

Jenkins (1996:20) considers the self as an ongoing and simultaneous synthesis of internal self-definition and the external definitions of oneself offered by others, which provides "the basic model of the internal – external dialectic of identification as the processes whereby all identities – individual and collective – are constituted." Jenkins considers how "identity can only be understood as process - as 'being' or 'becoming'". Goffman (2007) considers social life a kind of multi-staged drama in which each person performs various roles in different social situations. Each of these roles might have contradicting qualities and attitudes. The role-segregation depends on audience-segregation, that is; we choose the most appropriate role for demanding that two contradicting roles cooperate. Through social media such as Facebook, we are inviting different sets of "audience" to our "performance of self":

> *"by bringing many different types of people to the same "place", electronic media have fostered a blurring of many formerly distinct social roles. Electronic media affect us, not primarily through their content, but by changing the "situational geography" of social life"* (Meyrowitz 1985:6)

In modernity, the individual is thought to more freely shape who he or she wants to be, hence how Giddens asserts (1991) that ""we are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves". However, Bourdieu holds forth that tradition, reproduction and continuity are more prominent features of social practice rather than change, renewal and mobility. It cannot be straightforwardly changed through mere reflection or thought, and according to Bourdieu, we cannot from one day to another decide to "become someone else", because we would collide with the facticity made up by our habitus. Yet, the "habitus is one principle of production of practices among others, but more frequently in play than any other" (Bourdieu 1990:108). This leaves room for reflexive awareness; that is the ability to reflect over their own identity and actions. Both Bourdieu and Giddens assert that social structures and agency presuppose one another; however, they emphasize it differently. Brubaker and Cooper critique the concept of identity by proposing alternative complementary terms, such as identification, situated subjectivity, categorical commonality and relational connectedness, as well as zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl. They consider how "self-identification takes place in dialectic interplay with external identification", and remind us that modes of identification and categorization are placed at the core of what defines "governmentality" in a modern state. They present "situated subjectivity": which is one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how on the basis of the first two, one is prepared to act. Brubaker and Copper (2000) also put forth that categorical commonality and relational connectedness need to be supplemented by a third element, what Max Weber called a zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl, a feeling of belonging together.

Adoption literature has been discussed as there are several parallels regarding adoptee's and the found grandchildren's experiences of knowing the truth about their biological origins. The term 'appropriation' refers to the illegal act of stealing children and falsifying their identity documents in order to raise them as their own biological children, while adoption is a legitimate and legal act if the biological parents give their child up for adoption and thereby renounce further relations with the child. Knowing the truth about their origins is an opportunity to find out about their genealogical history and establish a sense of identity later in life – to fill in the gaps in their sense of self (Campbell et al., 1991; March, 1995; Muller and Perry, 2001a; Sobol and Cardiff, 1983).

4. The Repression and Processes of Transitional Justice in Argentina

In the aftermath of Argentina's dirty war, the country has embarked on various institutional paths to face past repression. This section discusses how the Argentine state has assumed its responsibility to clarify enforced disappearances and kidnapping of children. This set of transitional justice measures refers to both the national and international legal framework, the advances made in investigation and genetics as well as other state and civil society mechanisms that have contributed to their identifications as children of disappeared parents.

4.1 The Repression

Argentine history is marked by recurring cycles of bloody rule (Feitlowitz 1998), however, the conduct of the military junta overthrowing the Peron government in 1976, constituted an unprecedented era of genocide against those considered to be a threat to national security. The dictatorship initiated the Process for National Reorganization, which was considered to be a counterattack on Marxist-Leninism, and their opponents were warned to "make themselves invisible, or they would be made to vanish" (Feitlowitz 1998:32). The junta dissolved the Congress, provincial legislatures, municipal councils, political parties, trade unions, and professional and student associations. The Supreme Court judges were replaced with new judges appointed by the military leaders. The junta tried to eradicate their opponents by installing a terror regime; based on a system of abduction, detention, torture and enforced disappearance (CONADEP 1984). One of the most sinister aspect of their practice was the junta's targeting of the children of leftist parents. As emphasized in the introduction, women constituted approximately 30% of the victims, and 10% of these women were pregnant at the time of detention (ibid). Their babies were then appropriated either by military families or by innocent civilian families who were unaware of the destiny of the babies' parents (Skaar 2005). By the means of total control of mass media, the regime imposed a social silence about what was going on (Kordon and Edelman 2000). As Ernesto Sabáto wrote in Nunca Más (1984):

> *"Surrounding them was an ominous silence. A kidnapper was never arrested, a secret detention center was never individualized, there were never news of punishment of those who committed these crimes. So passed days, weeks, months, years of uncertainty and pain of parents, children, depending on rumors, debating with desperate hopes...the answer was always negative".*

Thousands of testimonies confirm the ruthless tactic of repression implemented by the dictatorship, reporting 8960 individuals who never returned as a result of this state violence (CONADEP 1984). However, there might be as many as 30 000 victims, depending on sources. In the dictatorship period, the Plan Condor united coup-makers throughout Latin America from Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil, having repressive forces operating across country boundaries (Argento 2008:234). The international context of the repression was the Cold War. Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, who was imprisoned and tortured for 14 months in Argentina, has asked the question: *"What was the objective behind the torture and the disappearances? Where did the perpetrators of torture and genocide come from? - It came from the world's so-called leader in democracy, the United States"* (Ismi 2000). It is no secret that the United States trained personnel in the School of the Americas and other military academies (Gill 2004). In the midst of gross human rights violations in June 1976, the US Secretary of State told the Argentine Foreign Minister that they had *"followed events in Argentina closely. We wish the new government well. We wish it will succeed. We will do what we can to help it succeed"* (Osorio and Costar 2007*)*. The Argentine military was forced out of power after the failed battle of the Malvinas/ Falkland Islands against Britain in 1982 (Skaar 2001:11), and the governments to come were to embark on various transitional justice approaches to face the legacy of violence and horror left behind by the military junta.

4.2 Identification as Part of Argentina's Transitional Justice Process

In 1977, in the midst of repression, a group of women started demonstrating for justice and truth about their disappeared loved ones in front of the Casa Rosada – Argentina's official executive mansion. These women were to constitute one of the most well-known human rights organizations in the world – The Grandmothers from Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas 2012). The Grandmothers were constantly pursuing legal redress, but most cases lay dormant in the court for years (Skaar 2001:165). Within the Sub Secretary for Human Rights, the National Commission for the Right to Identity (CONADI) was created in 1992, with the purpose of identifying the children who had been kidnapped during the military dictatorship (Tappatá de Valdez 2005:100). The National Genetic Data Bank (BNDG) was created to store blood samples of

disappeared people's relatives, which has provided a fundamental platform to tracing disappeared children (Barahona de Brito 2001:138). People, who are unsure of their origins, can get a blood test and match their blood with these samples.

After an individual had been identified as a child of disappeared parents, the judiciary sought to reverse his or her adoption papers. Yet, according to law 19,134 in the Civil Code, a full adoption was not reversible. Nonetheless, given how the adoption was illegal and part of the dictatorship's systematic baby stealing plan, the full adoption in case of appropriation was made reversible through the outcome of court decisions (CONADI 2012). National and international jurisdictions reflects the importance given this topic; the Argentine Civil Code was reformed in 1985, the Argentine National Constitution was changed in 1994, adding article 75, which gave international human rights treaties constitutional status (ibid). In 1994, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was incorporated into the Argentine Constitution in 1994 (United Nations 2012), and as a state party to the UNCRC, Argentina has an obligation to fulfill the human rights norms set by the convention. Scholars worldwide draw attention to the UNCRC and calls for its implementation in practice (Alston et al 1992; Fortin 2003; Moower 1997; McDonald 2011). Article 7 of the UNCRC states that:

> *1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and. as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.*
>
> *2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of these rights in accordance with their national law and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless".*

By kidnapping and falsifying children's identity, Argentina's last military dictatorship did not act within the law and violated children's right to identity as spelled out in the UNCRC. Article 8 affirms that:

> *1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.*
>
> *2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.*

In 1993, the UNCHR presented a report regarding the right to restitution, compensation and rehabilitation for victims of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The right to restitution is defined as the right to reestablish the situation that existed prior to the human rights violation (UNCHR Report, Van Boven 1993). The restitution concerns giving back what has been taken away from the child, which entails restituting the child's history and origen (Arditti 2001). The restitution can also be considered a process of recuperation and reconstruction of identity, including getting to know the life of their biological parents and reconstruct the sense of being a member of one's biological family (Teubal 2003). The restitution of kidnapped children should be considered within the legal framework of universal children's rights (Teubal 2003:229). Article 3 in the UNCRC (1994) emphasizes the importance of according to what is in the 'best interests of the child':

> *"1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.*
>
> *2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.*
>
> *3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision".*

Article 12 of the UNCRC emphasizes children's rights to express their feelings and perspectives on matters concerning them:

> *"1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law".*

4.3 Justice and the Retraction thereof

In 1983, the newly elected government, led by President Raúl Alfonsin, initially pursued a pro-human rights policy by establishing the first truth commission of its kind - National Comission on Disappeared Persons (CONADEP), which collected information about human rights violations. In 1984, the commission's first report - *Nunca Más* (Never Again) laid the basis for the commission's set of recommendations to pursue legal action against the responsible. It documented the "disappearance" of 8960 people, and unraveled the existence of 340 clandestine torture centers throughout the country (Nunca Más Report 1984). Alfonsín' government used a presidential decree to undo the existing amnesty law self-imposed by the military before they left power, and ordered prosecution of former military commanders (Garro 1993). In 1985, nine former junta members were prosecuted in a major landmark trial. Pressure from the military led the government to compromise its initial position on human rights policy. In 1986, Alfonsín pushed the *Due Obedience* and *Full Stop* laws through Congress, and soon obtained their approval, which excused military leaders from all charges, including kidnapping, torture and homicide, placing a 60-day limit on penal action against those reported to have participated in human rights violations. Alfonsín left behind seven generals in jail, a displeased military, an angry civil society and a discredited judiciary. Nevertheless, he had actually, more than any other Latin American president, made substantial progress in the field of truth and justice (Skaar 2001:164).

4.4 Forgive and Forget

In 1989, Carlos Menem assumed presidency, and soon issued presidential pardons, releasing from prison both former junta members, who were imprisoned for human rights violations, as well a left-wing guerrilla members, who were serving jail for 'terrorism' (Skaar 2001:164). Under the Menem government, the human rights policy shifted from Alfonsin's "truth and justice"- policy to one of "forgive and forget". Menem's issuing of pardons contributed to escalate tension in civil-military relations, and weakened people's faith in the fragile democratic institutions (ibid). Menem's pardons and his predecessor's issuing of the laws *Punto Final* and *Obediencia Debida* curbed the activity of the judges and all criminal cases against the military was considered a closed affair. Still, one crime was exempted from these laws: crimes

against humanity, including the kidnapping of children (ibid). In 1995, Captain Scilingo's confessions about his personal involvement in the junta's systematic plan of forced disappearances[14] provided a certain truth about the governmental repression that had taken place. The "right to truth" principle of the Inter-American Convention of Human Rights was invoked by federal judges, and incorporated into the Argentinean Constitution in 1994. Federal court judges ruled that the families of the disappeared had the right to know what happened to the people who "disappeared" during the military rule (Skaar 2005:166). The Argentine Supreme Court's recognition of the "right to truth" and the new definition of "disappearance" as an ongoing crime were the two most important advances that emerged from the legal disputes, and they created leeway for investigation of the disappeared. In late 1996, the second important human rights case was initiated as some of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo filed a court case claiming that the kidnapping of the children of the disappeared was a state-sponsored plan. Human rights was back on the political and judicial agenda in the form of two specific court cases: (1) a renewed demand for truth about the final destiny of the disappeared (which are called *juicios para la verdad*), and (2) the kidnapping of the newborn children of the disappeared (the so-called *juicios por la sustracción de menores).* From 1999 and onwards, the so-called "Truth Trials" have been proceeding in different federal chambers of the country (Tappatá de Valdez, 2005: 97). In this new phase of dealing with past repression, the first court case involved both retired and active military personnel in Argentina, who were faced with the demand for truth about the destiny of the detained-disappeared. Formal charges were brought against 7 former senior officers for the disappearances of 194 babies, which constitute the so-called *juicios por la sustracción de menores* (ibid). In 2001, Argentina was hit hard by an economic crisis, which took away the focus on human rights. As Argentina was trying to manage its financial crisis, there were frequent changes of governments and lack of political stability.

4.5 Justice with the Kirchners?

From the beginning of Nestor Kirchner's mandate, the Kirchner couple has portrayed a firm will concerning reparations for the victims of Argentina's diry war. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the military coup, the Argentinean president

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[14] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKaqqcOh01E&feature=related accessed 27th of October 2011

"abolished the decree that prevented the extradition of military servicemen" who had been accused of human rights violations (Tappatá de Valdez, 2005: 109). The Supreme Court declared the past amnesty laws unconstitutional and a wave of prosecutions followed. Christina Kirchner, his wife and successor, has made the topic of justice for past human rights violations one of the major pillars of her political agenda, and has good relations with the Grandmothers of the Plaza the Mayo. In November 2009, the Senate passed a bill which enables the courts to carry out the extraction of blood or any other DNA sample with the aim of identifying the children who were kidnapped during the Argentina's last military dictatorship, which has been one of several controversial issues fronted by Kirchner and the Abuelas. In February 2011, a trial against the dictatorship's systematic stealing of babies was initiated. This long-awaited trial constitutes the first time Argentina's military leaders have faced charges of operating a systematic plan to steal babies from pregnant prisoners (CBC News 2011). By May 2012, one hundred and five of the kidnapped children, now adults in their thirties, have been found and identified (Abuelas 2012).

5. "It was like erasing everything and starting over... As if that is possible" - Findings and Analysis

This chapter will analyze the obtained material about the found grandchildren's experiences of being identified as children of disappeared parents. The subsequent chapters explore the found grandchildren's subjective understandings of three different phases; the (1) identification, (2) restitution and (3) reconstruction of identity. The three stages mark different stages regarding knowing the truth about the biological origins. The first two periods are limited in time; the first chapter elaborates on how my informants experienced the identification, discussing motives and obstacles for starting the search for the truth, as well as the process of identification for those who were identified by the state/abuelas initiative. The chapter on restitution analyzes how my informants deal with the judicial measures which were implemented in the aftermath of their identification. Some were restored to their biological family, while others kept on living with their upbringing family. The restoring of their legal identity by the court system is also part of the restitution period. Today, my informants are experiencing an ongoing phase that I refer to as reconstruction of identity, which refers to how the found grandchildren are rebuilding the sense of who they are ties in the aftermath of knowing the truth about their biological origins.

5.1 Identification

The process of identifying the biological origins of children of disappeared people is an important transitional justice measure regarding how to the last military regime's systematic stealing of political opponents' children in Argentina. Each of my informants has experienced knowing the truth differently. Their experiences depend on a variety of factors such as the age at the time of identification, existing upbringing family relations, and whether they themselves had initiated the search for the truth about their biological origins or not. The main objective of this chapter is to present the found grandchildren's subjective understandings and experiences of their identification as children of disappeared people. For all of my informants, the identification as a child of disappeared persons has been an event in their lives that can be considered as a fateful moment (Giddens 1991). When identified, each person is faced with decisions that are particularly consequential for their future lives: *"Who am I really? "Where do I belong?"* These fateful moments are experienced as transition points which have major implications for each one of the found grandchildren's future conduct and self-identity. I situate this analysis within

a discussion on identity, and seek to elaborate on the extent to which the structures, provided by the implemented transitional justice measures, influence my informants' reconstruction of self and identity. My informants are divided into two groups when analyzing their experiences of the identification; first, one group who have sought to establish the truth about their biological origins, and another group who, to a more or less degree, have agreed upon undergoing an identification process to check their biological origin. The last group is divided into two subgroups; those who were identified by state/abuelas initiative below the age of 18 and above the age of majority. Six of my informants were identified at a young age. Three of them kept on living with their upbringing family and three were restituted to their biological family after the identification. Both the experiences of those who remained with their upbringing family and those who were restituted to their biological family will be discussed and analyzed. The age at the time of identification is a factor that influences how they experienced the aftermath of the identification, because when an individual was identified below the age of 18, the person in question had not legal capacity to decide for him- or herself concerning with *whom* they should live, whereas those above the age of 18 indeed possess this legal capacity. Both at the time of identification and onward, the upbringing family- relations constitute a relevant factor as to whether or not the found grandchildren remained in contact with their upbringing family.
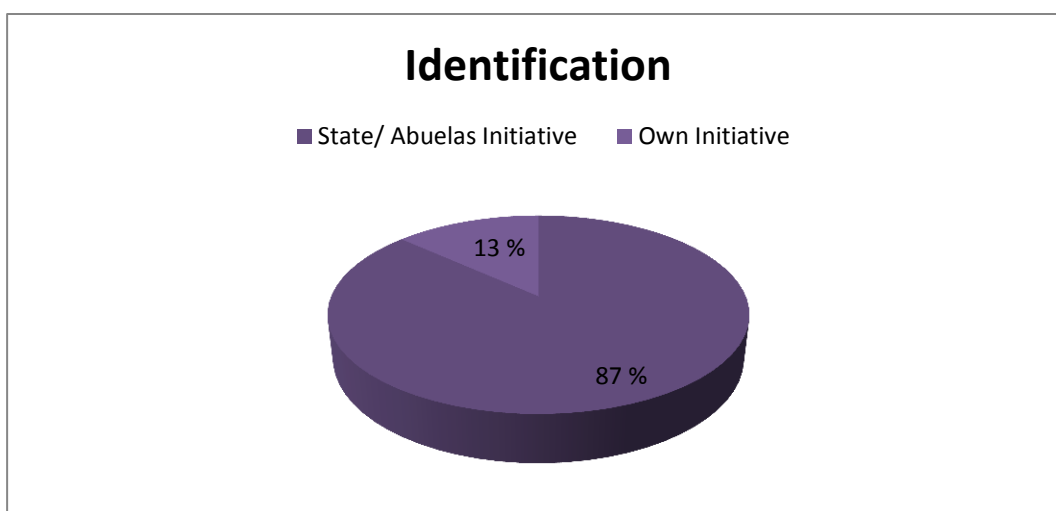

Figure 1 Identification: Percentage of found grandchildren identified through State/ Abuelas initiative (87%) or own initiative (13%) (Abuelas, 2012).

5.1.1 Motives and Obstacles for Searching

This section explores the various motives and obstacles my informants had for searching for the truth about their biological origins. Out of the eleven interviews I conducted, two of them were identified as children of disappeared parents by their own initiative. Of the 105 resolved cases; fourteen individuals sought to be identified as a found grandchild through his or her own initiative (Abuelas 2012)[15].

At the time of identification, Belinda and Emilio were adults. Belinda was told from an early age that she was adopted, but as an adolescent, she did not feel like searching. Emilio was never told that he was adopted, but he started questioning his origins at an early age. He was raised with a single mother. Throughout his adolescence, he started thinking about the lack of physical resemblance between him and his family, which made him consider that maybe he was adopted. These doubts were strengthened after he met people who were activists in HIJOS. Emilio remembers that they told him to: "figure it out, because taking into consideration your age, you might be a child of desaparecidos". Although he had strong doubts about his origins, he was afraid of what he would find. Emilio remembers that during his adolescence and early adulthood, he did not feel like searching, because he was afraid of the new and unknown. Emilio was quite rebellious in this period, doing both drugs and stealing. When he turned 30 years, he finally said to himself: "enough, I have to know who I am". Emilio says that:

> *"It was a process. As I said, I was crazy in my adolescence. My life was going fast; I had children and started working as a 'message boy' on a motorbike. Later I got a more calm job, and then I started the errand. I thought I was a son of desaparecidos. I sat down in the Abuelas' office, and later I went to CONADI."*

The day Emilio found out about his biological origins, he took his son's hand and said: *"come with me to the Abuelas' office, because I can't do it alone"*. Both Belinda and Emilio were feeling afraid of what they would find and guilty for embarking on the path to truth.

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[15] Two cases are still in revision and seven cases refer to pregnancies that did not result in birth, and the following figure 1 includes these nine cases, given how the Abuelas consider them as resolved. Those who have been involuntarily DNA-tested are included in the percentage of individuals identified by the state/abuelas initiative.

Belinda was feeling guilty for maybe hurting her upbringing family in any way, and she did not know whether to tell them or not about her wish to get to know her biological roots. When she finally did, it was like a weight was lifted off her shoulders. One of the internal obstacles for starting the search for the truth about the origins was the question of – 'Why didn't my parents want me?'. She says:

> *I went through a period in which I didn't feel like searching, because I thought that they had given me away for adoption, because they didn't want me. As I grew up, I got to know that there were several circumstances that can make a couple inable to take care of their baby...when I started studying, we had a history professor who talked about the dictatorship. It was in this period that I started to search. I started to see the programs on television about the restitutions. At that point, something kind of "clicked": Why don't I start?".*

Belinda considers how different life circumstances made her postpone the search:

> *"I had my first daughter when I was young, and then I got separated from the father. I wasn't in any condition for starting a search of this kind. In this way, 5 years passed before I finally had the courage to pick up the phone and call the Abuelas organization".*

As part of knowing the truth about her biological origins, the question regarding why her biological parents could not take care of her, was answered – it was not that they did no love her or want her, they did, but the repressive regime took Belinda away from her biological family. The reasons given by Belinda and Emilio to start the search coincide to with existing literature on adoptee's experiences. For adoptees, the search process can be extended for a long period of time (Curtis and Pearson 2010). In my interviews, one of the found grandchildren's most challenging obstacles was their feelings of guilt and fear of hurting their upbringing family, which are also prominent factors in studies on adopted individuals (Feast and Smith, 1995; Pacheco and Eme, 1993). An important difference between adoptees and the appropriated grandchildren is that the latter's upbringing family could be prosecuted and put to jail for illegal adoption, which is an essential factor in understanding their guilt and fear of being identified.

5.2 Experiencing Identification as a Child

This section discusses how the persons, who were identified while still being children, experienced getting to know the truth about their biological origins.

Age at the time of identification

Below 18
44 %

Above 18
56 %
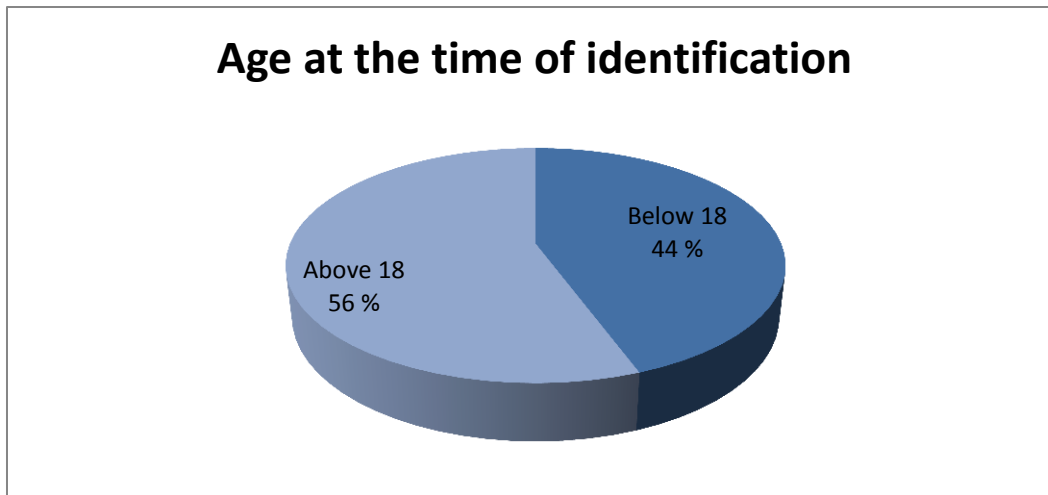
Figur 2 Age at the time of identification (Abuelas 2012)

Veronica was 9 years old at the time of the identification. She knew that she was not her mother's biological child, but she did not know that her adoption was part of the military regime's systematic kidnapping of children. In the early 1980's, the Abuelas received a complaint regarding how she might be a child of desaparecidos:

> *"My grandmother contacted me, but there were no possibilities to make a law suit, because democracy had not arrived yet. They tested my DNA. First, I experienced a time of uncertainty for what had happened".*

Veronica says that, at the time of the identification, the idea that she had robbed from her biological parents made her feel uneasy. The fact that she did not know exactly what had happened caused feelings of uncertainty. Her mother had made a legal adoption, a so-called full adoption. There are two types of adoption in Argentina; a simple adoption and a full adoption. In the simple adoption, the child does not lose his or her bond to the biological family, whereas in the full adoption, the child ends all bonds with the biological family and become the child of the

adoptive family. Her adoption was not reversible, the law said that it could not be annulled, but on the other hand, there was a DNA test claiming that she was another person. The two identities were legal, but it is illegal to have two identities, and for that reason, the state chose to withdraw both, and leave her as N.N – no name. Veronica says that *"then they started with the restitution - restitution, restitution, restitution"*. Julia explains about the circumstances regarding her adoption:

> *"What was going on is that they (the judicial system) did not take into consideration that we had not been abandoned. The full adoption was valid, but it had originated from something that was wrong. For example, today, you can't adopt a child without the consent of the biological family. In this period of time, politically, this was not respected. The judge violated the children's right, and this was wrong. So to me, this adoption can't be considered to be legally valid."*

Roberto remembers well the bad feeling he had in his stomach, when it became clear that he was not his family's biological child. He was eleven years old, and he tells that, before this moment, his life was like a fairytale - he had no idea that he was appropriated. He loved his family, and wanted to stay with them. It took several years before the court decided what to do in the aftermath of his identification as a child of desaparecidos, which implied a long time of uncertainty for Roberto. He did not know what was going to happened to him, where he would live, and what would happen to his upbringing family. Martín was identified as a child of desaparecidos at the age of 16. His upbringing family had never told him anything regarding his biological origins, and Martín was not prepared to receive this kind of information. He never refused to know who his biological parents were, but he needed time to process everything. Martín describes this situation as a very traumatic experience. His greatest concern was his upbringing family. They were arrested, and he was worried for their well-being. Martín wanted them to be fine and released as soon as possible. He started to get to know his biological family little by little, but this was overshadowed by his concern for his upbringing family. Julia was identified at a young age, but kept on living with her upbringing family:

> *"I knew I was adopted and that I had a brother. But they (upbringing family) told me that they (biological family) were bad people and this made me feel afraid. They made me feel guilty for wanting to get to know my biological family. (Her upbringing father said) 'You're ours now, you no longer belong*

to that family'. I was raised like this..it was like a volcano I had to cover, cover, cover. I never spoke to my friends about it. Nobody knew that I was a daughter of disappeared parents.. My childhood and adolescence was very repressive. I could never have a boyfriend. Everything had to be in order, very perfect".

As will be reflected upon further on, Julia's relationship to her upbringing family did not provide her the room and support she needed for establishing contact with her biological family, gather information about her biological parents and thus, figuring out who she really was. This influences how their relationship has evolved has Julia has become an adult, who decides for herself whether or not she wants them to be part of her life.

5.3 Identified through State/Abuelas initiative as an Adult

Three of my informants, Sebastián, Jennifer and Guillermo, were identified after reaching the age of 18 through state/abuelas initiative. Sebastián and Guillermo both knew that they were adopted, but they had not felt like finding out who their biological parents were. Jennifer came to her upbringing family as a child, and due to a misunderstanding, the family thought that she was their lost grandchild, who after several years, finally came home. Suddenly, the person who was their real grandchild knocked on the door, telling Jennifer that she is, in fact, another person than she thought she was. There are several aspects that are similar, as well as contrasting, regarding the experiences of those who were identified as child, and those who were identified as adults. One of the similar aspects is that the information about their biological parents was experienced as a fateful moment that would influence their sense of self and identity. Although Guillermo and Sebastian had not wanted to search for the truth about their biological parents, they both assert that they felt that 'something was missing'. At the time of the identification, Sebastián says that he was afraid and full of anxiety. He had been contacted by the judiciary that stated that he could be a child of disappeared parents, and that he was ordered to take a DNA-test in order to establish his biological origins. Sebastian followed the request as outlined by the judge, and the DNA-test confirmed that he was a child of disappeared parents. At that point, he explains that he did not know how to handle this information; therefore, he sought to mend the pain and

confusion he was feeling by, among other things, recurring to excessive use of alcohol. He tells that in the midst of this process, his worst enemy was himself, not the upbringing family, nor the biological family or the military. Sebastian found it difficult to accept his biological origins, and it would take years before he finally could accept it. Guillermo tells me about what he felt was beautiful with knowing the truth about his origins; he finally knew where he came from, and he could 'see himself' in his biological family. Nonetheless, he also talks about how painful it is to have lost so much time with his biological family. Even though he expresses much love for his upbringing family, he considers the loss of time with his biological family as a permanent damage, and draws attention to how his upbringing family never should have taken him away from his origins.

5.4 Identification as an Implementation or Violation of the Right to Identity?

Brubaker and Cooper (2001) affirm how the modern state has become a central agent of identification and categorization as:

> "*The state monopolizes, or seeks to monopolize, not only legitimate physical force, but also symbolic force, as Bourdieu puts it. This includes the power to name, to identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who*".

As stated by article 7 - 'the states parties to the convention have an obligation to identify the child immediately after birth'. Article 8 of the UNCRC holds that the states parties to the convention should uphold the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, and in cases in which this right has been violated, the state parties should reestablish the child's identity. There have been cases among the found grandchildren in which their identification has happened without the person's consent. I have spoken to my informants about this issue, and this section seeks to elaborate on my informant's perspectives on the matter. However, my informants have not actively opposed this process, and it is likely that those who have opposed the involuntary identification would have a different perspective. The state has an obligation to identify the individuals who were appropriated during the dictatorship and the relatives of the appropriated children have a right to know the truth. On the other hand, a person who could be an appropriated grandchild might not want to know.

There may be a conflict of interests between their biological relatives, who seek to enforce their right to know the truth about their lost grandchildren, the State obligation to clarify their past misdeeds and the person's rights to privacy, the identity the person has constructed throughout his or her life, as well as bodily integrity. First, either the state or the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo get in contact with the individual, who could be one of the appropriated grandchildren, and then, if the person opposes giving a blood test, a judge can order a house search. The police take genetic material from their toothbrush or clothing in order to compare his or her DNA with families who might match. Martín says that:

> *"There are always attempts to make the person, who might have been subject to appropriation, present genetic information, that they bring a piece of underwear or toothbrush, so that they can do a genetic analysis. If it's not a voluntary act, the law states that the court, or police, can enter his or her house to obtain genetic material. This is done in order to do a genetic comparison. It is always done in ways that try not to invade people's privacy. If you ask me, I'm in favor of alternative methods to clarify the situation. It's true, it's a violation of the person's intimacy, but I think that this crime of appropriation of children, enforced disappearance of persons, stealing of children's identity are much more severe cases then knocking on someone's door and asking for a tooth brush or a piece of underwear, if I compare".*

Belinda explains how their identification is:

> *"something that concerns the entire society. It's difficult. If you were raised in an environment that always denied this, you grow up within this reality. The state was responsible for genocide, murder, stealing and suppressing children's identity. It is also the state who has to clarify this. What we always say is that by doing a house search, a weight is lifted off their shoulders, because they don't have to make the first move. Then, whether they accept the information or not, depends on the person. Once you know the truth, you will know what to do. Sometimes they need more time, sometimes less. In addition, a house-search is not done without having quite clear evidence".*

As stated by a person who was involuntarily identified as a found grandchild, the state is not restituting her identity, but rather identifying her. She does not acknowledge the importance of biological traits and holds that by identifying her against her will, the state is committing a second violation of her right to identity (Argento 2008). This will remain a debate; however, my informants feel that what is most important is the state obligation to clarify its past atrocities.

6. Restitution

This chapter discusses my informants' experiences of the restitution. The restitution concerns giving back what has been taken away from the child, which entails restituting the child's history and origen (Arditti 2001). Further, the restitution might be seen as a process of recuperation and reconstruction of identity, including getting to know the life of their biological parents and reconstructing the sense of being a member of one's biological family. In this thesis, I refer to the concept of restitution as the event of being restored to one's biological family, as well as being given legal identity papers based on one's biological origins.

I find it analytically useful to distinguish the experiences of those who were identified as children of disappeared parents as minors and those who were identified as children of disappeared parents as adults, because these factors have an impact on the following restitution. When identified at the age of minor, the children often did not influence with whom or where they were to live. This decision was either negotiated between the upbringing and the biological family or the decision was made by the court system. I divide the experiences of my informants, who were identified as children, into two groups; those who were restituted to their biological family, and those who kept on living with their adoptive family. Moreover, I distinguish the experiences of those who report good relations with their upbringing family at the time of restitution to their biological family, and those who had not, because this influences how they felt about the restitution. Those who were and are being identified as adults, on the other hand, have the legal capacity to decide with whom and where to reside, and do not go through the same process of changing home as some of those who were identified as minors did.

6.1 Experiencing the Restitution as a Child

This section explores how six of my informants, who were identified as minors, experienced the restitution period. Three of them were restituted to their biological family, whereas three of them stayed on with their upbringing family.
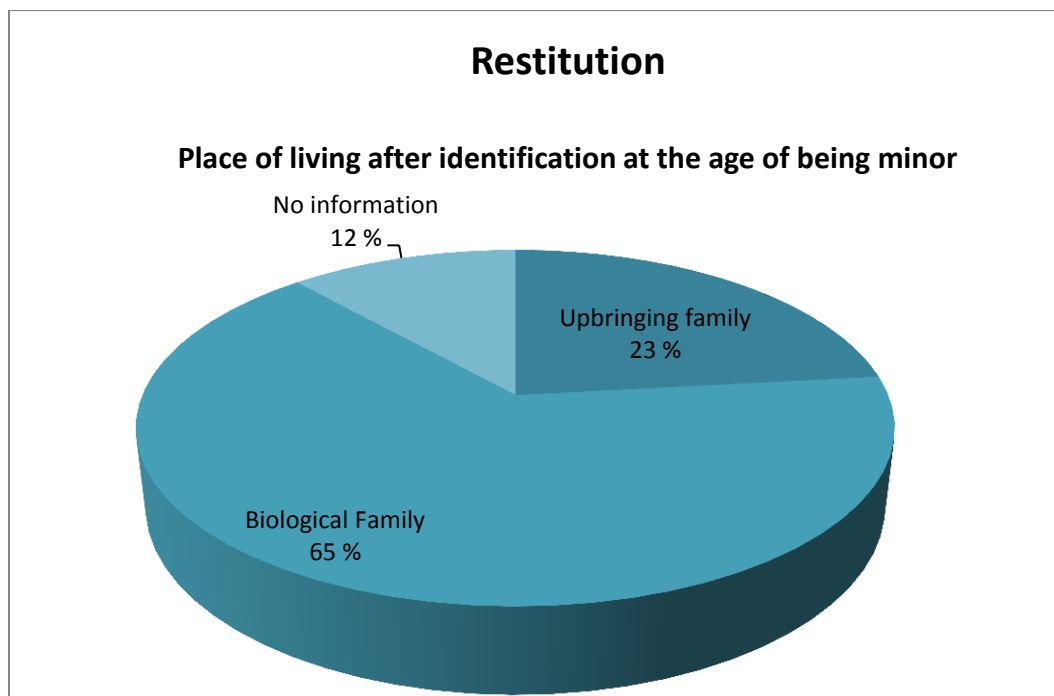
Figure 3. Restitution – the place of living after the identification at the age of being minor *(Abuelas 2012)*

6.1.1 Being Restituted to your Biological Family

Three of my informants were restituted to their biological family; two of them, Veronica and Roberto, had good relations to their upbringing family, and felt that the restitution turned their life upside down in a negative way, whereas Jorge, on the other hand, reported bad relations to his upbringing family, and felt that the restitution to his biological family was a relief. Veronica describes how the restitution was a period in which everything in her life changed, and she could not do anything to influence it:

> *"So, suddenly I went to Mar del Plata, because the police took me, more or less, from my house. It was like erasing everything and start over. As if that is possible, you know.My upbringing family and my biological family were given shared custody".*

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She remembers how she had to split the week in two with her biological family and upbringing family, which made her feel that nothing was set and calm. They called her by one name when she was with her biological family in Mar del Plata, and another name when she was with her upbringing family in Buenos Aires. Since she was going so much back and forth between these families, she felt that she did not make good relationships, neither to the families nor with friends. Veronica told me how this made her lack a feeling of belonging. This situation lasted for four years, and no one really asked her what she wanted. Finally, when they changed the judge, who had her case, the new judge asked her a question she had not been asked by anyone throughout this whole period: *"what do you want to do?"* At that point, she did not feel like living with either one of the families, because she felt that both families had acted poorly during the restitution. Veronica says that the court trials that they went through regarding her restitution brought out the worse in both families; the upbringing family did not accept the DNA result, and the families started fighting with each other. For Veronica, who had to travel back and forth between both families as a consequence of the restitution and experience how they acted during court trials, she felt that she lost some of her connectedness and *zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* to her upbringing family, as well as she felt that it was difficult to establish this to her biological family. She affirms that "you can't leave behind the affection you have for your upbringing family. What I've found difficult, is to get affectionate with the new family". In Veronica's case, she do not feel close to either her upbringing- or biological family, and she expresses that the day she has her own children, will be the day she finally belongs to someone as a family:

> *"I am now doing a treatment to get pregnant. For some time I have tried to get pregnant, but I have not succeeded. Actually, I feel that I have no family. My family will be the day I have my own children, this will be my family. I really feel that I'm alone in the world."*

When a women seeks to get pregnant, this is related to two psychological reference points; (1) the relation to her mother and father, and the elements of identification and differentiation, as well as (2) the sociocultural elements, such as the role of being a mother and so on (Videla, 1973 in Kordon and Edelman, 2000). The decision of wanting to have children can be related to a reparatory wish towards the parents, and

might also have an effect of reparation towards oneself (Kordon and Edelman 2000). In the case of Veronica, having her own children might feel like repairing her broken bonds of belonging to someone. In sum, Veronica looks back at the period of restitution and says:

> *"In the moment, you just have row, and row, and row forward, because if not, you die. Then, when you finally come to the finish line, you become aware of how difficult it was. At times you run, run, run, and when you stop, everything hurts. When you relax, your whole body hurts. During the years you live it, you can't stop. Really, you say: why did this happen to me?"*

At the age of 23 years, she finally had her ID-document. She decided to move alone to Buenos Aires, and with time, she started to reconstruct the bonds to both families. Roberto was restituted to his biological aunt, and she did not want him to have any more contact with his upbringing family. For him, this was a difficult situation, because he loved them and preferred to keep on living with his upbringing family:

> "*my relationship with my aunt wasn't very good, because I wanted to live with those who had raised me". It's not that I didn't want to get to know my biological roots, but I was opposing ending the relationship I had to my upbringing family. My aunt, for example, wanted me to cut all contact, and I didn't want that*".

My informants had to work through the "awkwardness of fitting into their biological family", which coincide with adoptees' experiences (Browning, 2005; Harris, 1996; Sachdev, 1992). One of the issues that triggered a conflictive relationship with his biological aunt was related to different sets of ideology and values. Roberto tells that:

> *"I had to change city, change high school. In addition, I had different ideologies, religious ones". I had an affectionate relationship to my uncle, but quite conflictive. As a child, I went to a catholic school. My uncle had a catholic family, his mother was very catholic, but after the dictatorship, he didn't want to know anything of the church anymore"*.

Roberto says his aunt wanted him to go to a public school, whereas he wanted to go to a private, catholic school. Roberto says that it was a very nice school, and even though it cost money, he had received a scholarship. His aunt did not approve of the

catholic school, because she had lost her faith in the Catholic Church after seeing how they participated in the regime's oppressive rule. He further explains how:

> *"This was a discussion. I went to the public school, like my aunt wanted. I decided to protest, because I couldn't decide over my own life. I was 16 years old. The situation with my aunt could not continue, and the judge decided to place me with another family".*

Roberto's attitude was not similar to that of his uncle, which contributed to his negative experience of the restitution. In addition, after having complained about the situation with his biological family to the judiciary, they decided to move him again, this time to a substitute family.

6.1.2 Restitution –what is in the child's best interest?

It can be questioned whether or not restitution coincides with making policy decisions that take into consideration the child's best interest. Being restituted to their biological family was, for some of my informants, very difficult and entailed that they had to leave aside the life they had built with their upbringing family, and become 'someone else', namely assume an identity as corresponding to their biological origins. Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms that:

> *1. States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and family relations as recognized by law without unlawful interference.*
>
> *2. Where a child is illegally deprived of some or all of the elements of his or her identity, States Parties shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to re-establishing speedily his or her identity.*

Depending on how one interprets this article, it could apply to the found grandchildren's right to the social constructed identity they have developed with their upbringing family. However, in Argentina, the right to know the biological aspect of their identity has been prioritized, as the found grandchildren's socially constructed identity can be said to be based on the illegal act of appropriation. It might be argued that the concept of identity is vaguely expressed in the UNCRC

(Ronen 2004). As identity is socially constructed, biological traits are only a part of one's identity. The concept of identity, as outlined in article 8 (1) in the UNCRC, only refers to attributes of identity, such as nationality, name and family relations, and not what identity in fact is. Therefore, it can be claimed that article 8 (1) of the UNCRC should be redefined to acknowledge identity as a social construction. Ronen (2004) proposes redefining the child's right to identity as a right to state protection of ties meaningful to the child, thus, emphasizing the child's wish and feelings concerning their ties. Further, this argument should be considered to apply to adults as well. As seen in Roberto's case, his feelings of connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl were very strong with the upbringing family. Reaching the age of 18, Roberto had the legal capacity to decide for himself with whom he wanted to live, and he decided to move back to his upbringing family. Bourdieu (1977:169) holds that reflexivity emerges from moments of crisis, from mismatches between habitus and field which reveal the taken-for-granted assumptions of the "game" and our habitus is constantly developing in the course of how our life conditions change (Bourdieu 1999). Nevertheless, the choices we make, how we attend to the present and anticipate the future, is conducted in light of previous experience. However, Bourdieu acknowledges that 'habitus is one principle of production of practices among others, but more frequently in play than any other' (Bourdieu 1990:108), and this leaves room for reflexive awareness, that is the ability to reflect over his or her own identity and actions. Giddens (1991) argues that in modernity, the individual is thought to more freely shape who he or she wants to be - "we are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves". Bourdieu, however, put more emphasis on how tradition, reproduction and continuity are more prominent features of social practice rather than change, renewal and mobility. Bourdieu affirms that we cannot from one day to another decide to "become someone else", because we would collide with the facticity made up by our habitus. When an individual was restituted to their biological family, it can be argued that their habitus confronted new structures, and although the restitution implied that they would become someone else, it collided with the facticity made up by their habitus. It is clear in the case of the children, who were restituted to their biological family against their will, that the structures provided by judicial measures to a very high extent did not let them freely shape with *whom* and *who* she or he wanted to be. As Veronica says, it took years before a judge

finally asked her what *she* wanted to, and this was experienced as frustrating as they could not influence their own lives. The concept of taking into consideration the 'best interests of the child' is one of the UNCRC's guiding principles and must always be the main concern in decision-making that may affect them. It is crucial to take into consideration how policy-choices will affect the children, and article 12 emphasizes that:

> *"1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law".*

Teitel (2000) states that one of the reasons why traditional liberal conceptions of the rule of law fail in transitional situations is that the identity of the citizen and the identity of the state in these transitions—as well as the relationship between the two—is under construction. Roberto explains that:

> *"The judge who had our case worked with criminals, she wasn't a specialist in minors. She followed the advice given by psychologists, thinking she was doing what was best for us.*

Roberto's comment pinpoints the situation in the 1980's, in which Argentina was slowly transitioning from dictatorship to democracy, and the judicial system did not have clear guidelines as to what to do with the found grandchildren. The judges acted on behalf of advisors who also might have been unaware of what was in their best interests. Arditti (2001) considers that restitution entails giving the child back what was taken away from him or her, by restoring the child to one's place of origin. This might be a double-edged sword, as the restitution of the child to the biological family might involve the child's deprivation of the connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl he or she had with her upbringing family. This will often be perceived as a loss. The counter argument would be that the found grandchildren's feelings towards their upbringing family are based on lies and deceit; however, this does not unmake their connectedness and

zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl. In some cases, the Abuelas and the upbringing family negotiated about where the child in question should live, which in some cases resulted in that the child kept on living with their upbringing family in order to avoid extensive life alterations. Children are individuals, who possess legal capacity to state their opinion, and their perspectives should be taken into considerations when making policy decisions on matters that are consequential for their lives. Article 12 of the UNCRC emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the children's feelings and perspectives on matters concerning them:

> *"1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law".*

Today, as these principles are enshrined both in international and argentine law, they will hopefully be included in the future making of transitional justice policy and practice worldwide.

6.1.3 Staying with the Upbringing Family

In the cases where individuals were identified as children of desaparecidos as minors, approximately 23% of them kept on living with their upbringing families, usually as a result of negotiations between the upbringing- and the biological families (see figure 3). Two of my informants, Martín and Julia, were identified as minors and stayed with their upbringing families. These two cases distinguish themselves from one another in one important aspect; whether or not the upbringing family gave them room and support, or not, to process the truth about their biological origins. This appears to have an impact on whether the individuals in question keep on having close contact to their upbringing family or not as becoming adults. In the aftermath of Martin's identification, the judge who had his case wanted to restitute him to his biological family:

> *"He wanted to restitute me to my biological family in Uruguay, that I should leave my upbringing family, my school, my friends, that I should leave everything and start a new life there. I don't think this would have been the best for me, and my biological family did not want that for me. The Abuelas helped them, saying that this wasn't the best for me. The relationship with my biological family was constructed bit by bit".*

Martín affirms that what has hurt him the most is the fact that his upbringing family has lied to him. That is something that he cannot accept:

> *"During 16 years they hid from me what they knew, which wasn't much, but they falsified my ID-document and inscribed me as their own biological son, and I wasn't".*

Martín tells that it despite all the love his upbringing family gave him, they did not adopt him, they appropriated him. It was difficult for him to go through the period in which his upbringing family was imprisoned, nevertheless, he affirms that justice should prevail and they should be prosecuted for what they have done:

> *"They have to respond judicially for what they have done. The mere fact that they have inscribed us as their own biological children, is a severe crime, it is an appropriation…Crimes have been committed; they made people "disappear", they kidnapped children, gave them another name, and it constitutes a crime that the state should and have the obligation to clarify. Not just for the sake of the person in question, but because the society needs to know what happened so that these things never happens again. There are different opinions regarding how to proceed, but we have the law saying that the state has the obligation to clarify and come to conclusions regarding whether or not we are children of disappeared parents".*

Forgiveness cannot replace justice or punishment (Murphy 1988:33) and through the rule of law, the responsibilities for apportioning blame and punishment is shifted from victims to public mechanisms. Although his upbringing parents' imprisonment was tough, he would not have it any other way:

> *"For me, looking back on how difficult it was for me and my upbringing family that they were imprisoned for almost a year, I think there is always something positive. One gets to know oneself better, know that a family always searched for you, that you have the opportunity to construct relations with your biological family, gather affection, as I say. I think, without a doubt, there is something positive, even though one has to go through difficulties during the process…"*

Brubaker and Copper (2000) address a complementary approach to identity, namely that of self-understanding and social location, which designates what might be called ``situated subjectivity'' - one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act. Martín chose to prioritize the love and affection his upbringing family always gave and give him instead of focusing on his upbringing family's deceit and lies. For several of my informants, it has been hard to face the fact that their upbringing family has lied to them. Nevertheless, the majority of my informants do not want this to ruin their relationship with their upbringing family.

6.2 Dealing with the Restitution as an Adult

After reaching the age of 18, people possess the legal capacity to choose what will happen in the aftermath of their identification, especially regarding with whom they are to live. Three of my informants were identified in their adulthood. Both Sebastián and Jennifer wanted to keep on living with their upbringing family, and in Guillermo's case, his upbringing family passed away before he learned the truth. All three of them took their time to construct relations to their biological family. In comparison to those individuals, who were identified as children and restituted to their biological families against their will, Sebastian, Jennifer and Guillermo have not been forced out of their homes by a court decision as some of those who were identified as minors were. The restitution process is not the same for adults, as it previously was for these children. Today, as adults, the identified grandchildren themselves decide whether or not they wish to construct relations with their biological family. This implies a higher extent of agency regarding their construction of self and identity. However, the restitution of their legal identity; that is, the changing of their name correspondingly to their biological family, is made by the judiciary, whether or not the found grandchildren approve of it. Guillermo opposed to changing his name:

> "I didn't want to change my name. My name was Francisco, and I wanted to keep my name. I even contacted a lawyer, who could help me, so that they would not change my name. But the judge told me that it was not possible, I couldn't bear the name given to me by my upbringing family, because it wasn't legally correct. That was when I realized that he was right, and I started to assume my new identity".

For all of my informants, assuming the name that corresponds to their biological origins has been a challenge. When the truth about an individual's origins is established, in some cases, the state annuls the identity papers they used to have, because they are no longer legal. A person cannot have two legal identities, hence, the individual in question gets his or her former identity papers annulled by the state, and must assume a legal identity as corresponding to the biological family, if not to be left without legal identity papers. However, this is not the case in every occasion. Belinda explains:

> *"No, they never obliged me to change my name. This is also a process – having to change the last name, make another document. How will I be named differently? I didn't understand. I got to know my story; I searched for it, but this step, no".*

Self-identification takes place in dialectic interplay with external identification, but the two need not converge and there is another type of:

> "*External identification that has no counter-part in the domain of self-identification: the formalized, codified, objectified systems of categorization developed by powerful, authoritative institutions".*
> (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:15)

When the argentine state identifies an individual as a child of desaparecidos, and the person, willingly or not, assumes a legal identity corresponding to their biological origins, this does not need to converge with their own self-identification. For my informants, going through the change of name is part of the judicial measures implemented by the Argentine state in order to make a mends for past injustices. When the state annuls a person's legal identity papers with the purpose of make him or her assume a new legal identity as corresponding to their biological origins, the state is withdrawing considerably a person's ability to exert agency over his or her identity. This is often experienced as challenging. However, in adulthood, my informants construct relations with their biological family based on how whether or not they feel like establishing contact, which implies an extent of agency regarding their construction of self and identity.

When an individual is identified as a child of desaparecidos, their biological family most often feel excited to finally have found their family member, and uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents wants to get to know their long lost family member. In the case of the found grandchildren, whether the found grandchildren keep their upbringing family as their primary family depends on a variety of factors, which will be discussed further on. When first meeting her biological father, Jacqueline describes that her biological father hugged her and cried, and she did not know what to make of the situation: "He was so happy, and I was like... I didn't understand". Although one is related biologically, this does not entail instinctive feelings of belonging towards one's biological family as connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl is socially constructed over time[16]. Yet, Emilio felt an instant connection with his biological grandmother, even though he had not seen her since he was 6 months old. He says that it was:

> *"so crazy, because in already in the first hug, it's like you already know the person, because you have been in these arms before. I was 6 months when they took me away."*

Julia explains that it made an impression on her getting to know her biological family:

> "*It made a strong impression getting to know all these people who remembered me. It was an ocean of emotions. The people were saying to me – "aaah, I know you from you were very little, but I never saw you again". It was a lot of information". I was trying to understand who all these people were. After a while, I tried to have more contact, and I opened up bit by bit. It was like putting a puzzle together, where to put each piece?"*

7. Reconstruction of Identity

In this thesis, the reconstruction of identity refers to how the found grandchildren seek to rebuild a sense of who they are in the aftermath of knowing the truth about their biological origins. I consider the reconstruction of self and identity as linked to how my informants manage challenges of self-presentation and the restoring of social relations, especially focusing on relations between the grandchildren, their biological family and the family who appropriated them. This chapter explores six pillars; (1) how they are managing self-presentation and differences in internal self-identification and external identification, (2) how knowing the truth about their biological origins has influenced the relationship to their own children, (3) how they are relating to their upbringing family, *(4)* how they have experienced the process of constructing relationships to their biological family, (5) how they reconstruct the memory of their biological parents, and (6) how participation in human rights activism might contribute to reconstruction of self and identity.

7.1 Presentation of Self and The Synthesis of Internal Self-Identification and External Identification

Jennifer says that one of the most difficult issues for her to deal with is what she calls "the name thing":

> *"The true identity is Ana Guiliani, so I had to go to Cordoba, so they could give me documents with my real name and date of birth….I don't get accustomed to the name thing, actually. With my friends, I feel the same…no one calls me by my new name, because I present myself as Jennifer. Only if there is something formal, like if they call me from the bank, they call me Ana, but my friends call me Jennifer".*

Jennifer had to change all the documents in which her upbringing family's name appeared, and she felt that it was a lot of work. She does not even remember how it was, and says that it is like she has erased it. If Jennifer is called upon to identify herself in formal contexts, she would use the name corresponding to her biological origins, as formal institutions identify her corresponding to her legal identity. Nevertheless, if she is among friends, she goes by the name given to her by the upbringing family.

People have different roles depending on the social context, and we often operate with several roles simultaneously:

> *"Roles, then, are the basic units of socialization. It is through roles that tasks in society are allocated and arrangements made to enforce their performance."* (Goffman, 2007: 35).

Jennifer felt that it was a challenge to know which name to put on Facebook, as she was afraid that she would not be recognized if she put her new name:

> *"on Facebook, I didn't know how to call myself, so I put both names. Facebook, it seems like a stupidity, but then your friends from high school search for you, no one will recognize me if I put Ana.. people from work, and fellow students from the university, they know me as Jennifer. So, some know me as Jennifer, and others as Ana. They tell me: "What a long name you have on Facebook – why do you have such a name?" I don't know what to put as my name".*

Meyrowitz (1985) holds that we adjust our behavior according to audience, and if two different sets of audience come to our performance, we assume present ourselves in a way that satisfies both groups. Jennifer solves this by presenting herself with the names of both upbringing- and biological family. Today we are facing an unprecedented context in which we constantly must make choices regarding *who* we want to be and how we want to live our lives, as "the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self" (Giddens 1991:32)*.* Beltran (2009:25) holds that:

> *'Creating selfpresentations' is how Tufekci (2008) defined personal homepages and profiles on social networking sites. […] Nowadays, managing and maintaining our Facebook profiles is the same as managing and maintaining our selfpresentation in society.*

Argento (241:2008) comments how the found grandchildren struggle with adapting to their new name as it corresponds to their biological origins, which coincides with my findings. This presents a divide between how they identify themselves (internal self-identification) and how they are identified by the state apparatus (external identification).

7.2 Having a Family and Children of Their Own

The overall process of identification, restitution and reconstruction of identity influences the relationship between the found grandchildren and their own family and biological children. Julia tells about how the process of knowing the truth about her biological origins has influenced and influences her relationship to her husband and children:

> *"Another issue regarding identity, well, a month ago I needed to separate myself from my husband, and now we're together again. This was also part of recognizing my identity. So much things happened, and when we met, I was Christina. We had children when I was Christina. When I started to call myself Julia, many questions came up; Why am I with my husband, is it because he has been so helpful in all of this? I needed to figure it out, so we had some time a part, so that we could see if I wanted to be with him as Julia, and if he wanted to reelect me as Julia. This did us good".*

The process of assuming a new name and establishing relations to her biological family, as well as ending the relationship with her upbringing family, are also changes that influence her husband and children:

> *"Well, one thing is to live all this, and another thing is if you have a family, the crisis doesn't just affect you, but everyone. When you're not alone, but have children shouting around you, it's not easy. At times I feel like crying, you know, or shouting, without thinking. At times, I need my silence, and I talk a walk to the river side in order to have time to process things. Not only continue with the tumult in the house, you know, the noise… When a lot of things happen, and I can't process them internally, I have crisis. I fall and hit bottom, and well, from silence, I resurge".*

My informants say there are several cases in which having one's own children have ignited a desire to know more about his or hers biological parents. Belinda explains that:

> *"Having your own children is for many an eye-opener. Not because of genetic diseases, more because of the physical aspect, it's like a fantasy.. looking at your (upbringing) mom and dad, not resembling any of them….and then suddenly, you see some resemblance (of yourself in your children)".*

Jennifer says that when her girls were born, she started to think about how her mother looked like and whether or not her children resemble her mother. Unfortunately, she does not have any pictures of her. At the time her children were born, Jennifer also

started asking herself about how she was when she was born, and how her mother had experienced the birth. She had not thought about these things before, "because if you don't have children, you just don't think about it. Was my mom similar to them? I started to think about these things". Comparing to adoption literature, studies show that more women than men search for their biological parents and their searching often occurs between the ages of 24 and 35 when they are giving birth or raising children and have need for medical information (March, 1997; Muller and Perry, 2001a; Pacheco and Eme, 1993). Jennifer expresses that now that she has her own children, she thinks about how it would be to lose any of them, and says that if that were to happen, she would search for them all her life. Children of disappeared parents experience anxiety concerning being separated from their own children, and this is especially the case with daughters of disappeared parents (Kordon and Edelman 2000).

7.2.1 Transgenerational Impact

As the found grandchildren have gone through processes of identification, restitution and reconstruction of identity, their own children has also experienced how their parents have gone through these processes of change. Some of them were already born when their parents got to know who their biological parents were, and some has been born after. Several of their children have witnessed their parents' change of name, how they are relating to the family in which they grew up and how they are relating to the biological family. This has an impact on the children as well. In some cases the child's name is being changed, and they are informed that they have a second set of family they have to relate to, if their parents wish. The found grandchildren's children also go through the process of reconstructing the memory of their biological grandparents, by asking their parents about who they were and what happened to them. An aspect of my field work findings concerns how the found grandchildren seek to protect their own children from the challenges they met as facing the truth about their biological origins. Martín is concerned about not causing harm to his children when sharing the story with them:

> "I have told them things little by little. I think what is most difficult for me is trying to avoid causing them harm. This is what makes me most sensible". They have also suffered the loss of their grandparents. I'm not constantly thinking about this, there are days in my life in which I do, but I'm looking ahead".

One of Martin's biggest concerns is to avoid passing his pain onto his children. Emilio feels the same and he does not want his children to live the life he has had lived with doubts about who they are. Kordon and Edelman (2000) provide a transgenerational vision of the social trauma Argentina has suffered, which means several generations are affected by the painful experiences caused by the military regime. Both the parents, as well as the children, of disappeared people, are affected by the violence caused by the military regime. Kordon and Edelman's transgenerational perspective supports my findings regarding how the children of disappeared people are concerned of their own pain being passed onto their children, which adds a third generation. Several of my informants explain how telling their own children about their biological origins, and the background for assuming a new name and identity, was difficult. Julia feels it was very hard telling her children about the truth about her biological origins and that she was going to change her name from Cristina to Julia:

> *"It was one of the most difficult things, because I felt that I had changed my identity, and that this would also change their identity. They would go through the same as I was going through".*

Julia's children had both the last name of her upbringing family and husband, so she had to change not only her name, but also her children's last name. Her children knew their mother as Cristina, and it was something completely new for them that she suddenly would be called Julia. Her children had different reactions; her oldest son was very upset and said that, because of this, he did not love her anymore and that she was changing his mother, whereas her younger daughter took it more as fun. Julia says that her son felt anxious about her decision to change her name, and wanted her to tell his teacher about her change of name, because for him, it generated a lot of anxiety and it was important for him that his teacher knew. This might be seen in light of what Giddens refers to as breaking the *protective cocoon,* because it can challenge the early basic trust relations between infant and care-taker, which has been the basis for the ontological security. It can be claimed that when this protective cocoon is being shaken, it can contribute to their children's feelings of anxiety. In addition, this can be seen in relation to how the found grandchildren felt themselves when they got to know about their biological origins regarding the relationship they had to their upbringing family.

7.3 Managing Upbringing Family – relations

For my informants, knowing the truth about their biological origins influence their relationship to their upbringing family. This section explores how the found grandchildren manage their upbringing family-relations. For the purpose of this analysis, I divide my informants into two groups; one group, who is still in contact with their upbringing family, and another group, who rarely or never is in contact with them. In my sample, 9 of 11 informants express that they were more in contact with their upbringing family than their biological family. The remaining two, who are not in contact with them, give various reasons for ending contact. Jorge has no contact with the upbringing family, because he was neglected and not treated well in his childhood. For him, it was good to erase the past with his upbringing family, and start a new with his biological family. For Julia, ending all contact with the upbringing family and establish relations with her biological family was a part of finding herself again. This reaction might be seen in relation to her repressive childhood:

> *"I had to separate myself from the sense of guilt I was feeling toward my upbringing family. I love them, but I difference them from the biological family. Well, I felt a lot of guilt for having to tell them this…when I decided to tell them, I had to go through the pain of listening to what they were to tell me. I was afraid that they didn't love me as Julia, they loved me as Cristina. That is how it was. From that moment on, I embarked on a process of recognizing who I am, as Julia".*

Talking about her relationship to her father, Julia describes that he did not want her for who she was; if she wanted to assume the name as corresponding to her biological family, and have contact with them, she was no longer a daughter of his. This phrase made a strong impact on her, because she wanted her upbringing family to love her no matter what. When Julia was planning her wedding, she wanted all of her loved ones there:

> "*It was a fight with my upbringing family, because they wanted to control the situation. When we we're getting married, I wanted to invite everyone (both upbringing- and biological family). My upbringing family didn't want my biological family to be there. They wanted to be exclusive. Daniel (her husband) helped me a lot with this, that this should be upheld (inviting both families). It was quite a hard period".*

Julia says that she is no longer in contact with her upbringing family. They only talk if they have to discuss legal issues. My material shows that in cases in which the found grandchildren have decided to keep contact with their upbringing family, they have been given room and support to process the new information about their biological origin. Support from their upbringing family has been very important for my informants. Regarding the found grandchildren's affection, connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl with their upbringing family, Veronica says that:

> *"love is not a thing that can be switched on and off. Relations based on love take time to develop, and it also takes time to stop loving someone. You can't from one day to the next stop loving your parents. Even though they might have acted like Hitler, they cared for you".*

Jennifer is grateful for her upbringing family, and says that they always treated her well and accompanied her in everything: "She was always there for me. Thank God." Although my informants express gratitude towards their upbringing families in most cases, they also shed light on aspects they felt were challenging. In several cases, my informants were told that they were adopted, whereas in other cases, they were not informed and thought that they were their family's biological child. Emilio wishes his upbringing mother had told him the truth:

> *"She could have told me the truth and said: 'I found you in the hospital, and if you'd like, I can help you search'. My biological family was searching for me, and if I had known sooner, I could have gotten to know my grandparents. Unfortunately, I couldn't. My upbringing mother never told me, and she took everything with her to her grave."*

Emilio has forgiven his upbringing family, because despite their mistakes, he is who he is, thanks to them. Truth and justice constitute two essential purposes animating responses to human rights violations; nevertheless, there is another pair of implicit goals or responses to atrocities – vengeance and forgiveness (ibid). Another response differing from vengeance is that of forgiveness. By the act of forgiving, we can avoid self-destructive effects of holding on to grudges and victimhood. Trough forgiveness, the victims and the offender can construct a new relationship and heal the grief of past atrocities.

Scarry (1985) writes:

> *"The world of the victim is however not merely shrunk, for intense and perduring pain "unmakes the world." A world unmade means a self and identity unmade, and "healing" this self and identity requires more than "transformation" to attain or regain a modicum of agency (enough agency to recognize and forgive a perpetrator, the agentic cause of your suffering. A world unmade demands rebuilding, reconstruction"*

Yet, is it humanly possible to fully forgive a perpetrator for having committed gross human rights violations, and can we really expect anyone to do so? Some of my informants say that their upbringing family appropriated them in order to give them a better life. In these cases, the upbringing family might not feel that they have a reason to ask for forgiveness. My informants have indeed reasons to feel anger and resentment towards their upbringing family for appropriating them, however; most of my informants have forgiven their upbringing family and prioritize their love and affection. Nevertheless, forgiving the military leaders for having tortured and "disappeared" their biological parents is quite a different issue, as leaders such as Videla seems to be proud of the junta's misdeeds.

7.4 Constructing Relationships to the Biological Family

In most cases, the found grandchildren cannot have contact with their biological parents; but rather other members of their biological family. My informants are facing challenges as they construct relations to their biological family. These challenges include the importance of being given room to process all the impressions and being given room for being the person one has become as growing up in one's upbringing family. Jennifer says that *"in the beginning, I didn't like that they called me Jennifer, because at that point, I was Cristina, and they had to respect me as Cristina"*. Browning's study (2005) on adoptees who meet their biological family, coincides with my findings, as it show how there were often *"struggles over how to handle gift-giving and special occasions, what to call each other, inheritance, and other obligations"*. Several of my informants say they felt lucky of having gained another family. Jennifer expresses that she has been lucky, and has not suffered. She says that she is happy about having gained more family.

Martin says that:

> *"for me, my family got bigger, and what has been and is good for me, is to have a relationship to both my upbringing Argentine family and my biological Uruguayan family… People who love me on both sides of the Plata River".*

Harris' study (1996) on adopted individuals discusses how adoptees feel they "gained an extended family, information about their medical history, and a sense of being complete". Veronica, on the other hand, has a quite different perspective on the situation:

> *"it's like one doesn't really fit anywhere. You always feel like a 'frog from another water well'. You feel like someone external, because you weren't raised there from being a child. That is, this loss makes it difficult".*

Jennifer says that after she met her biological father, it is not like a father-daughter relationship, but rather more like friendship. She asserts that he is great, but that she luckily never had to call him dad. Jennifer feels that her biological father is present in her life, even though they rarely visit each other, however, she emphasizes that the relationship that she has with her biological family cannot be compared to how close she is with her upbringing family. Martín says that:

> *"I share my time as I can. I travel when I can to Uruguay, and my life is here in Buenos Aires. I would like to spend more time in Uruguay, but what I have accomplished is that I can talk freely about my Uruguayan family here in Buenos Aires, as well about my Argentine family, when I'm in Uruguay. Given how my biological family wanted to get to know me, we could have a great relationship.My upbringing family has supported me in what has been a difficult process for me, by sharing my anxieties and problems.. I've been lucky".*

Existing literature shows that the adoptees usually keep their adoptive family as their primary family, but they also have to work through the awkwardness of fitting into their birth family (Browning, 2005; Harris, 1996; Sachdev, 1992). This coincides with my findings, as 9 of 11 informants claim that they have more contact with their upbringing than their biological family (Curtis and Pearson 2010).

Martín says that:

> *"I recuperated my identity, because I could get to know my biological family. Nonetheless, my identity is not only the name one should have, that our parents chose for us. Identity, our way of being, is something that changes every day. It's not just because of the love my biological parents had for each other, because of genetics. I owe a lot of the person I am to my upbringing family, how they raised me, and in addition, I am molding my own identity".*

He further asserts that you not should be obligated to have a relationship with your biological family, if you do not want to, even though there is a family who wants to get to know you – "If you do not want to have contact, this should be respected". Nonetheless, he adds that it is worth to get to know the biological family, and then later, you can choose whether or not you want to maintain the relations. Thus, Martin pinpoints the found grandchildren' agency concerning to which extent they wish to relate to their biological family. Emilio says that his maternal grandmother asked him to bring her to his upbringing family, so that she could express her gratitude for having kept him alive:

> *"I couldn't believe that they were together. My grandmother asked how much they knew about my origins, and they answered that they found a boy in the hospital, and took him home with them. They said that in this period it was common that they left babies in the Casa Cuna – baby hospital".*

The majority of my informants do not expect their upbringing family and their biological family to have contact. "I don't expect that my Uruguayan – and Argentine family can be friends, or that they can sit together at the same table", Martin says.

7.5 Reconstructing Memory

For all of my informants, finding information about their biological parents has been a part of understanding where they are coming from. Roberto feels that in order to construct your identity, you have to know who your parents were. He explains that one must look:

> *"beyond the notion that childhood shapes your identity, because I have something from my biological parents too. It's an enormous job getting to know how my parents were, talk to people who knew them. It's part of the reconstruction of identity".*

Belinda says that she has been lucky to meet her biological family. She is now searching for information about her biological parents' political activism. Belinda sees herself in her mother and sister, and is surprised that even though she was not raised with her sister, they have grown to be quite a like in several aspects:

> *"I have a few pictures of my biological parents, but not many, because it was a poor family. Everything they (biological parents) had was burnt o ruined. So I have just a few. I look like my mother. I had an older sister as well, but she died before I was restituted. My other sister is very similar to my dad. I have my mother's face, her mouth and eyes. I always say that it was fun to mee my sister for the first time, because we had the same hair do and we put the same make-up on our eyes…It was weird. Music style. Rock. Dance. I'm the same"*

My informants' search for information about their biological parents entails knowing who they were, how they were, how they thought, which projects they had, what they were doing, their political involvement; to which extent and with what group, how they related to others, and what others thought of them. This can be related to what Giddens refers to as incorporating central events into their own narrative and creating *the narrative of the self.* Grotevant (2001) explains that the process of forming an identity in adolescence is anchored in family history, and that adopted individuals may have a tough time identifying who they are. In the case of the found grandchildren, the memory of their parents is being constructed so that they can incorporate the information about their biological origins into their own history. This can be considered as a way to fill in the lack of information and sense of loss of their parents. My informants obtained information about their biological parents by talking to other members of the biological family, as well as friends of their parents, which will be reflected upon in the subsequent section. Some studies show that when adoptees meet their biological family, and connect themselves with their generational line, this might contribute to form a sense of a more cohesive identity (Feast and Smith, 1995; Sachdev, 1992). In many cases, the found grandchildren's parents are disappeared, so they cannot mend the sense of loss with physical contact, nevertheless; it can be argued that by reconstructing their parents' memory, this contributes to creating a more coherent narrative of the self. Each individual's path to reconstructing the memory of their biological parents, also contributes to the collective memory of Argentina's *desaparecidos*.

Halbwachs (1925) definition of collective memory is still valid:

> *"the collective memory is the memory of the members of a group who reconstruct the past according to their interests and present reference points. It is the collective memory that ensures the identity, nature and values of a group"* (Halbwachs, 1925 in Kordon and Edelman, 2000)

The collective memory implies the idea of something collectively created and shared, and is concerns "the memory of a lived event, which is shared by a group. The collective memory is constructed from present reference points, from a present necessity" (Kordon and Edelman 2000). Identity can be considered a vehicle for intergenerational transmission (ibid). The chain of filiation, transmitted from generation to generation, is an important chain in a double sense; to the single subject, and to the social and intersubjective body in which the subject is a member (Kaes 2000). My informants share the common experience and challenge of being children of *desaparecidos* and reconstructing the memory of their parents. Martin tells that his biological parents:

> ".. *were Uruguayan, they were married. They met in a Christian association for youth. My dad was the president of a center for studies, and a political activist. The dictatorship began in 1973. Well, my dad was very politically active, he was a leader for his fellow students. The situation in South America, the injustice, the inequality, lack of opportunities for everyone… He, as a leader, was concerned with these things. So, in order to avoid any inconveniences, they came to Argentina…unfortunately, the circumstances lead to their kidnapping".*

Julia talks about her parents and the circumstances around their murder and disappearance:

> "*My mom and dad met at the University, studying architecture together. They started to be politically active in ERP. My dad is shot in 1974, when I was a year old. My mother disappeared in Lanusse, and I was with her in the department. A lady found me, and gave me to the judge Bonz in Lomas de Zamora. This is how we lost the family bonds.*

The information that the found grandchildren obtain from their parents' relatives or friends is their perception of who their parents were, and cannot match how the found grandchildren's parents actually were. In other words, they are creating their memory based on other people's information about their parents.

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Veronica considers that:

> "*It's difficult, because no one knows 100%. You're left with a void. You have pieces of information based on what their friends and relatives tell you. You have to live with this. There is so much missing. With time, you try to puzzle the pieces together – How you were born, who found you. All these things forms a part of your identity. Every problem I've been through as well, if I hadn't been through all he problems, I wouldn't be the person I am today".*

Emilio gathers information about his biological parents by talking with his biological parents' friends about how they were and what they were doing. Searching for information about their biological parents is a challenging process and might entail listening to the testimonies of people who were held in captivity with them. Belinda established contact with Angela, who also was pregnant and kept at the secret detention center at the same time as her mom was about to give birth. Angela told Belinda about:

> "*when she (Belinda's biological mother) came back from the hospital, she was so sad and didn't want to talk to anyone. After the birth, they had taken me away and she didn't see me again. Angela got depressed, because she thought that the same thing would happen to her".*

In this way, Belinda constructs history and feels that information gathering can emotionally exhausting. Whether or not she searches for information, depends on how she is feeling; at times she is more sensitive, and without desire to search, whereas other times she feels stronger and able to do so.

7.6 Reconstructing Identity through Human Rights Activism?

This section seeks to elaborate on how knowing the truth about their biological origins is influencing the found grandchildren's political perspectives, and to which extent this is reflected in their participation in human rights activism. Severely traumatized persons can recover through a process of truth-telling, mourning, taking action and fighting back (Herman 1992). Through reaching out to help others and prevent future victimization, the traumatized victims can restore a sense of purpose and reason to live and he explains that through 'empowerment – restoring a sense of identity and communality – becomes the building blocks for healing. Bourdieu

(1986) distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic, social and cultural capital, and views social capital as:

> " *…the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group. This provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them* "

All of my informants want to contribute to finding more lost grandchildren, and most of them are in some way participating in human rights activism; either by visiting schools and telling their stories, sharing their perspectives with interested scholars, working for the Abuelas and/or state organizations, or from a more artistic point of departure through art and music. Through participation in human rights activism, they become a part of a network of people who share the same interests; namely, contributing to truth, justice and the reoccurrence of human rights violations in the future. It can be argued that by being a part of such a network, their social capital is strengthened. In turn, this can to a certain extent be considered as empowering. Belinda tells that:

> *"I always felt that I was inclined towards socialism. I asked myself why, because my upbringing family and friends had a different discourse. I didn't understand. But after knowing the truth about my origins, I went through a radical change of becoming conscious of politics and wanting to get involved. Now I'm doing human rights activism. Yes, it definitely changed me a lot…. They (the military) wanted to cut by the root everything, but the seeds remained… In some way take what they left, continue their ideas and ways of thinking, gestures of solidarity, think of others and not only in yourself, rather in the whole society.. try to transmit this to your friends and children"*

For Belinda, working with the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo is her way of upholding her parent's values and giving back something for their support. Emilio thinks that:

> *"My upbringing family was very different from my biological family. They didn't like politics, neither do I. Regarding the leftists, I don't share anything. I started thinking about how I could help the Grandmothers with their work. They told me to go to schools and tell my story. This is also a way of doing activism, you know. Once or twice a week I go to schools, because I think that this might contribute to finding more disappeared grandchildren."*

Martín's political perspectives are in some way similar to those of his biological parents, yet, he emphasizes that he is different given how we are living within a different historical context. When he first knew about his biological parents' political activism as a seventeen year old, he was too young to have a political vision:

> *"With time, I started to become more interested in politics. I'm not a politician, but I would like to be.… For the time being, I'm trying to help those who are, in what I call, my 'square-meter', the people I have close. One day I would like to get involved in politics, but I don't think there's one ideal political party. One can be active in a political party without agreeing 100% with all their agenda. Little by little shape the agenda as one thinks is correct".*

Julia never felt like becoming involved in politics:

> *"During my adolescence I felt rejection towards politics, because they (upbringing family) said it was bad and that it could lead to extremes. On the other hand, I feel very connected to my biological parents' values. I feel they are like seeds, and that my biological parents died, giving me their values. This remains like a tattoo, it doesn't go away. Honesty, being faithful, and helping other people. A ton of values that I have as their treasure"*

Julia identifies herself with her parents' socialist ideals of solidarity, however, she does not glorify her biological parents' political activism, and considers how there is both positive and negative aspects of their conduct:

> *" I'm not a political activist, I don't participate in any political party, and this is also reflected in my way of thinking. I take a bit from here and there, something positive in different perspectives, as well as negative. I do not 'marry' one side or the other. I recognize perfectly the positive things of my biological parents, as well as their mistakes, things that I would not have repeated today…My way of dealing with this goes through creativity. Transform this reality of pain and misery in something that gives life".*

Julia is dedicated to music, and draw upon music as an arena for reconstructing the memory of her parents, which becomes an integral part of knowing more about her biological origins and thus, more about who she is. Giddens (1991) affirms that fateful moments are phases when people might seek refuge in pre-established beliefs and familiar modes of activity. At the same time, fateful moments also mark periods of reskilling and empowerment - "In the shaping of her self-identity, she has to sit up and

take notice of new demands as well as new possibilities" (Giddens 1991:143). Where consequential decisions are concerned, individuals are often stimulated to devote the time and energy necessary to" generate increased mastery of the circumstances they confront". Kordon and Edelman (2000) hold that the construction of memory is seen within the realm of art, cinema, cultural production in general and sociological and political essays. After knowing the truth about her biological origins, Julia travelled abroad for several years in order to "generate increased mastery of the circumstances" she was facing. In this way, she sought to liberate herself from the sense of guilt her upbringing family was giving her for trying to establish contact with her biological family. Through the study of music she generated a sense of mastery of the challenges she was facing as embarking on the internal search for who she really was. She has gathered her song writings in a music project which reflects the process of assuming her identity as corresponding to her biological origins:

> "*my name, as it corresponds to my biological family, arose out of the music project. I kept on writing, and one day I was looking at a photo with me and my mom, when I was a baby, holding on by my mother's fingers". In this moment, my mom was looking at me, and I couldn't sign it as Cristina, because I was Julia".*

Julia says that the music project:

> "*opened a new panorama. People who had known my mother came to the art exposition... It was like meeting a whole part of my mother's story... pieces of information I didn't have before".*

Giddens (1991) asserts that consequential decisions can reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which follow.

8. How is the Transitional Justice Process Shaping Identities?

How do Argentina's found grandchildren experience knowing the truth about their biological origins, and how does this influence their identity? Their identification, restitution and reconstruction of identity has been and will continue to be closely linked to Argentina's transitional justice process. We need more knowledge about how victims of political violence experience transitional justice measures; therefore, one of the purposes of this thesis is to contribute to a more profound understanding of what such processes imply for a society and its individuals through the context-specific study of one particular aspect of a transitional justice process.

For all of my informants, getting to know the truth about their biological origins has been experienced as what Giddens (1991) refers to as a fateful moment that would change their lives. Each individual has a unique story, yet, I find that the found grandchildren have all gone through three different phases; identification – restitution – reconstruction of identity. I consider the identification and restitution as events limited in time, whereas I view the reconstruction of identity as an ongoing and continuous process in which each person is trying to restore a sense of coherent identity.

Those who were identified at the age of minor could to little extent influence decisions regarding their lives in the aftermath of the identification. This was very difficult for my informants. After reaching the age of eighteen, some informants moved back to their upbringing family, after having been sent first to their biological family and then to a substitute family. In these cases, connectedness and zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl was very strong with their upbringing family. As children, my informants could not decide with whom or where to live until they reached the age of majority. In these cases, the structures provided by judicial measures considerably prevented them from freely shaping who and with whom they wanted to be. The concept of identity, as outlined in article 8 (1) in the UNCRC, only refers to attributes of identity, such as nationality, name and family relations, and not what identity in fact is. Therefore, it can be claimed that article 8 (1) of the UNCRC should be redefined to acknowledge identity as a social construction, and Ronen (2004) proposes redefining the child's right to identity as a right to state protection of ties meaningful to the child. Thus, emphasizing the

child's wish and feelings concerning their ties. It might be argued that this argument should apply to adults as well. The UNCRC emphasizes that the opinions and perspectives of children should always form part of decisions concerning them, because it concerns their life. Bourdieu (1993) considers how tradition, reproduction and continuity are more prominent features of social practice rather than change, renewal and mobility. Habitus "is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present". Bourdieu (1993) holds that: "the habitus – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product". We cannot from one day to another decide to "become someone else", as we would collide with the facticity made up by our habitus. In some cases, when an individual was restituted to their biological family, it can be argued that their habitus confronted new structures. Those who get to know the truth about their biological origins as adults, on the other hand, choose what to do with this information; whether they maintain contact with their upbringing family and/or construct relations with their biological family.

My informants, who sought information about their biological origins, use and reproduce the structures provided by Argentina's transitional justice process by drawing upon them in order to become identified. We are managing within historically specific structures, reproducing and changing them through our intended and unintended consequences of action (Giddens 1979). All of my informants want to contribute to finding more lost grandchildren, and most of them are in some way participating in human rights activism; either by visiting schools and telling their stories, sharing their perspectives with interested scholars, working for the Abuelas and/or state organizations, or from an artistic point of departure through art and music. Through human rights activism, they become a part of a network of people who share the same interests; namely, the interests of contributing to truth, justice and avoiding reoccurrence of human rights violations in the future. It can be argued that by being a part of such a network, their social capital is strengthened. This can to a certain extent be considered as empowering, as reaching out to help others and contribute to preventing the reoccurrence of atrocities can restore a sense of purpose and reason to live. Herman (1992) discusses how people through 'empowerment – restoring a sense of identity and communality' might build the blocks for healing. Individuals are often stimulated to devote the time and energy necessary to generate increased

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mastery of the circumstances they confront. Brubaker and Copper (2000) address ``situated subjectivity'' - one's sense of who one is, of one's social location, and of how (given the first two) one is prepared to act. Giddens (1991:143) consider how: *"In the shaping of her self-identity, she has to sit up and take notice of new demands as well as new possibilities"*. Giddens (1991) asserts that consequential decisions can reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which follow. The ambiguous paradigm of transitional justice should be understood as both reflective of and constructive in the transition from an unjust normative framework to a just one (Teitel 2000).

There are cases in which an individual is involuntarily identified as a child of disappeared people through questionable methods. In these cases, there might be a conflict of interests between the found grandchildren's' relatives, who seek to enforce their right to know the truth, the State obligation to clarify their past atrocities and the possible appropriated grandchild's rights to privacy, their socially constructed identity, as well as bodily integrity. However, my informants feel that what is most important is the state obligation to clarify its past atrocities.

The found grandchildren's reconstruction of identity is related to what Giddens (1991) refers to as incorporating new information about their biological origins into their own narrative and thereby seeking to create a coherent narrative of the self. The found grandchildren's search for information about their biological parents entails knowing who they were, how they were, how they thought, which projects they had, what they were doing, their political involvement; to which extent and with what group, how they related to others, and what others thought of them. The reconstruction of their biological parent's memory can be considered as the found grandchildren's technique of filling in the blanks of their past. Each individual's path to reconstructing the memory of their biological parents, also contributes to the collective memory of Argentina's desaparecidos. The chain of filiation, transmitted from generation to generation, is an important chain in a double sense; to the single subject, and to the social and intersubjective body in which the subject is a member (Kaes 2000).

Kordon and Edelman (2000) provide a transgenerational vision of the social trauma Argentina has suffered. Identity might be considered a vehicle for intergenerational transmission (ibid). I find that one of the found grandchildren's greatest concerns is to protect their children and avoid that their own pain be passed onto them. Their children have witnessed their parents' change of name, how they are relating to the family in which they grew up and how they are relating to the biological family. In some cases the child's name is being changed, and they are informed that they have a second set of family they have to relate to, which might be considered to influence the children's sense of identity.

The "name thing" is considerably characterized by heavy structures provided by Argentina's transitional justice process. The found grandchildren's construction of identity is not above all conditioned by who they want to be or how they want to live, rather; their construction of identity is conditioned by the state measures which seek to reestablish the identity as corresponding to their biological family. The found grandchildren's socially constructed identity is important and cannot be erased with new information about their biological origins. My informants find it difficult to assume their new legal identity as corresponding to their biological origins. When my informant is called upon to identify herself in formal contexts, she uses the name corresponding to her biological origins, as formal institutions identify her corresponding to her legal identity. Yet, when she is among friends, she goes by her upbringing family's name. Like Goffman (1956, 1992), Meyrowitz (1985) holds that we adjust our behavior and presentation of self in response to audience, and if two different sets of audience come to our performance, we assume present ourselves in a way that satisfies both groups. On Facebook, my informant solves this by presenting herself with the names of both upbringing- and biological family. Today we are facing an unprecedented context in which we constantly must make choices regarding *who* we want to be and how we want to live our lives, as "the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self". In some cases, the upbringing family's name is no longer legally valid as the truth about the found grandchildren's biological origin is established. It is illegal to have two legal identities and their upbringing family committed a crime by inscribed them as their own biological children, when they were not. The Argentine state has in some cases erased these individual's identity papers. This might lead to a situation in which the person must assume his or hers legal

identity as corresponding to the biological origins, when the individual in question might feel more socially connected to the name given by the upbringing family. Thus, assuming a new legal identity that corresponds to their biological origins does not necessarily converge with their own self-identification. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:15) explain that *"self-identification takes place in dialectic interplay with external identification, and the two need not converge"*. Jenkins (1996) considers the internal-external dialectic of identification as "the processes whereby all identities – individual and collective – are constituted".

The found grandchildren's identities are not determined by the structures provided by family relations and the various implemented transitional justice measures, however, their construction of identity can be considered as conditioned by them. My informants do not express feelings of hatred nor revenge for the past; rather above all, they show feelings of love for their children and a heartfelt desire to create a world in which such atrocities never happen again in the future. Minow (1998:147) reminds us that 'between vengeance and forgiveness lies the path of recollection and affirmation and the path of facing who we are, and what we could become'. Reflecting upon how she feels about getting to know the truth about her biological origins, Veronica recognizes that this process has made her the woman she is today:

> "*It all forms part of your identity. Every difficulty I've had is part of my identity. And if it hadn't been for all the difficulties, I wouldn't be the person I am today*".

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. How did you become identified as a child of disappeared parents?
2. How did you feel when you got to know the truth about your biological origins?
3. How have you constructed relations with your biological family?
4. Have you sought information about your biological parents?
5. Has getting to know about your biological parents' political activism influenced your political perspectives?
6. How are you relating to your upbringing family? Do you feel more connected to your upbringing family or biological family?
7. Do you use the name of your biological family or upbringing family?
8. How has the information about your biological origins influenced your relationship to your own family?
9. (If they have children) Have you told your children the truth about your biological origins.(If so) how did your children react?
10. What do you think about involuntarily identification?