

# ΣΟΦΙΑ—SOPHIA

## **Identity framework and DNA: Analysis of professional competences of the psychologist**

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## Abstract

This work evaluates the degree of knowledge that psychologists have in two controverted identity situations: Cases of identity restitution vs cases of children conceived through assisted human reproduction technology (AHRT), establishing the DNA and its multiple meanings as the linking axle. Does the psychology career provide proper contents to perform the professional job in the light of the new social and techno-scientific requirements? This research presents an analysis of quantitative data collected from a sample composed by 76 interviews to psychologists of both genres, aged 23 to 70 years; 86% of whom were trained in the same academic plan of the School of Psychology in the Buenos Aires University, Argentina. The conclusions highlight the lack of adjustments between the new social needs and the training received by psychologists, in the particular case of the Republic of Argentina.

**Keywords:** Education sciences, psychology, AHRT DNA, human reproduction, education improvement.

## Introduction

Filiation issues present a vast array of ethical dilemmas that require a rigorous study to solve them. We understand by ethical dilemmas the difficulties that psychologists encounter in their practice when dealing with complex situations: here we will explain the problems of unveiling Professional Secret in the face of a controversial case of child appropriation, as well as the care psychologists must have in relation to Informed Consent when they receive in their practice the case of a child who has been conceived through donated gametes and the parents refer doubts as to whether or not to tell the child its genetic origin, and how to do it. Faced with these dilemmas of clinical practice, we perceive that the discursive interweaving of the legal text, the medical contribution and the field of subjectivity can hardly be reconciled in a unique and happy solution for all the involved subjects.

Our intention, in the present work, is to open the scene so that the subjective and singular space do not be overwhelmed by the techno-scientific advance or by the legalistic pretension since, as [Kletnicki and Alfano \(2013\)](#) put it:

What concerns the field of subjectivity exceeds the capacity of the normative system to regulate it, although not in terms of an incompleteness, which would be filled with the sanction of new laws, but starting from recognizing its insufficiency to legislate on what pertains to the field of the subject. (P.119)

In order to fulfill our objective, to evaluate the degree of knowledge that psychologists have in relation to filiation, we will first rely on the theoretical framework of competencies with the purpose of investigating the adjustment or the mismatch between the professional formation of psychologists and the current social demands. Second, we will support the legal text

introduced by the new Civil and Commercial Code of Argentina; we will think how the category of subject of law, conscious, free and autonomous by definition, must be complemented by the contribution of the notion of divided subject or subject of the unconscious, when it is about dealing with complex problems of human beings: problems linked to desire, procreation and new family constitutions. Finally, we present the analysis of the results obtained from interviews with 76 psychologists who exert their practice in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and, for the most part, have been trained in the UBA.

## Competences: a construct to be defined

At present, there are multiple definitions of the construct competences, as well as their uses in a diversity of both labor and educational contexts; this turns it into a complex, multifaceted and multidimensional concept that admits a multidisciplinary approach since it includes aspects of personality and includes a knowledge, behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate that the professional has the ability to solve situations in their working environment.

In our research we consider competences as the skills, knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to successfully fulfill the activities that make up a labor function according to the norms defined by the productive sector. It is also understood that there is a difference between academic competencies, labor competencies and professional competence ([Charria et al 2011](#); [Larraín and González, 2009](#)).

In this same line and in accordance with the classification made by [Ana Hirsch \(2005\)](#), we group professional competences in four large groups, which include attitudes towards professional ethics, established as follows:

- Cognitive and technical: knowledge, training, preparation; updating, continuous training, management of techniques and instruments of discipline, innovation and improvement.
- Social: duties and obligations with colleagues, communication with colleagues, teamwork, exercise of responsible citizenship.
- Ethics: professional and social responsibility, honesty, respect, acting with subjection to ethical principles, acting based on moral principles and professional values, providing the best service to society.
- Affective-emotional: identifying with the chosen profession, emotional ability.

From this classification it was possible to establish, in the specific field of psychology, the existence of a mismatch between the different contexts of insertion of the psychologist and the competences that they develop in their professional formation ([Charria](#) et al, 2011).

We understand that this mismatch is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the last modification of the curriculum, corresponding to the undergraduate program of Psychology, of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires, dates back to 1985. This outdated curriculum, which equates the academic formation of the cohorts of graduates that go from that year to the present, generates a mismatch between the educational trajectory of the future psychologists and the contemporary social demands that arise from the new dilemma scenarios of professional practice; and on the other hand, that psychologists, once graduated from the University, do not update their knowledge.

The advance of science and its intertwining with the subjective field imposes on psychologists new challenges to be solved. The area of affiliation with its two most dilemmatic expressions, the restitution of identity and the case of children conceived through technologies of assisted human reproduction, is an example of this.

In this new context, the university faculty is the ideal place to guarantee an integral formation that guarantees not only the learning of the new scientific and technological knowledge, but that also contemplates the understanding and the discussion of subjects related to ethics, values and citizen training. In short, university education must guarantee future psychologists the necessary skills to perform their professional act in accordance with what their title grants them.

In line with [Klappenbach](#) (2000) we consider that in a strict sense, the term *incumbency* means: competence, obligation and charge to do one thing. Therefore,

when talking about the incumbencies of the title of the psychologist or of the degree in psychology, we refer to the capacities that they have developed throughout their university education and, therefore, they are able to carry out certain actions. For this author, the tasks of an academic degree establish the scope and limits of a university formation, demarcating the limited domain of knowledge on which the graduate exercises autonomy.

However, we know that professional competences are related to a specific task and, therefore, are linked to a specific professional activity. They are a consequence of experience and constitute articulated knowledge that a person sets in motion automatically ([Levy-Leboyer](#), 1997).

In the specific field of psychology, we have observed a worldwide trend in which predominates the need to achieve a vocational training based on a competence-based curriculum, compatible with the structural change in the conception of work that impacts on the profession. However, the syllabuses of the psychology career have a disconnection between theory and professional practice as basic lack. Therefore, the training with which they graduate is quite unrelated to the problems and social demands that psychologists have to solve ([Castro](#), 2004: 121). This situation forces us to critically address the concept of competence, in the ambiguity of its polysemy and in the various sociopolitical contexts of its application ([Torres](#), 2011). We understand that it is not a question of implementing foreign models of competences without a revision of contextual demands.

In addition, in the context of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires, there are paradigms ([Erausquin](#), 2006) from which knowledge and skills are legitimized and in which certain areas of professional practice are privileged over others. Therefore, the student's positioning in relation to the psychologist's expected competences does not depend on the individual attitudes or their summation, but rather on an interaction between the hegemonic paradigm proposed in the curricular formation, the contextual demands and the subjective positioning of the students.

Faced with this complex reality, we cannot avoid questioning: does university education offer the required and enough knowledge to exercise professional autonomy within the scope of the filiation scenarios that we are analyzing?

The competences construct requires in the university environment, on the one hand, curricular models that articulate global knowledge, professional knowledge and work experiences, recognizing the needs and problems of reality; and on the other hand, educational projects coherent with the social reality in which

the future psychologists carry out their work with autonomy.

For this, it is necessary to generate methodological, didactic and attitudinal changes that promote participation, cooperation and critical thinking, orienting teaching programs in relation to the labor market and generating, in the future professional, a critical attitude and capacity to respond and act in the face of social change. In this sense, we understand that educational institutions are responsible for the formation of the future professional and, therefore, they must generate proposals that guarantee job placement and good professional performance for the future psychologists.

In view of the above, we believe that the responsibility is not only on the academic side of the undergraduate, but also that psychologists must take care of their continuous training, which is not limited to a university degree, since it requires constant learning, practical experience and a real contact with the social conflicts of their environment.

### **Two possible scenarios for thinking about the dilemmas of affiliation**

Before complicating the subject by addressing the similarities and differences presented by the scenarios of affiliation related to restitution, on the one hand, and with human reproduction mediated by technology, on the other, it is advisable to make some conceptual clarifications to avoid the deviations that usually occur in these fields.

The scenario offered to us by the illegal appropriation of babies and children is very vast since, unfortunately, it has always existed. For this reason, the analysis is delimited to a specific historical and contextual period; on this occasion, the illegally appropriated babies and children during the last Argentina citizen-military dictatorship (1976-1983), who have been able to restore their identities thanks to the unbreakable struggle of human rights organizations and the public policies of the last ten years.

The contribution of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (May's Square grandmothers) to this field is immeasurable, since their achievements are not limited to the national level. In their untiring struggle for the *right to identity*, they drafted a bill that allowed the creation of the National Genetic Data Bank of relatives of missing children (BNDG, or its initials in Spanish), an organization created in 1987 and converted into Law 23,511 whose regulation was sanctioned in 1989. Later, in 2009, the National Congress of Argentina enacted the Law 26,548, which established that the BNDG should guarantee the collection, storage and

analysis of genetic information necessary to clarify the crimes against humanity that took place during the period of the last Argentina military dictatorship. It currently works in the immunology department of Carlos G. Durand Hospital in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Parallel to the enactment of Law 23,511, in 1989, the United Nations Convention created article 8 on the preservation of identity, making the right to identity an inalienable right.

Another pole of the affiliation question can be introduced from the concrete scenario of the new reproductive technologies. Scientific and technological advances present new challenges to be solved within the field of subjectivity, and developments in assisted human reproduction technologies (AHRT) in particular have introduced many novelties. It is well-known that science advances first, and the law legislates behind. Nowadays, scientific advances have made possible the absence of the sexual act to generate offspring and, thus, the AHRT separates biology from genetics, acquiring preeminence the fact of *consenting*.

The will to procreate is a new legal figure established in the new Argentina Civil and Commercial Code, what determines that it is a parent who wants to be it. The voluntary element associated with the free, conscious and autonomous subject of the law determines paternity/maternity from the free and informed consent. For example, in the case of heterologous fertilization, "with the donor there will be only one right to know the origins, but never a *bond of father and son*" ([Herrera](#), 2014: 17).

Two guiding ideas are behind this research, what links these dissimilar scenarios (restitution and AHRT) beyond the affiliation question? Certainly they have several points of contact, but one, that is especially controversial: the differential status that acquires the DNA in each particular case. Does the academic training offer the cognitive and ethical skills necessary to solve the dilemmas presented in these affiliation scenarios?

### **The role of DNA in the restitution of identity**

For *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, the identity of persons is configured with a cultural and social biological load transmitted through the generations that preceded them, and that configure their essential characteristics as persons. Their tireless struggle to recover their grandchildren led them to undertake the search for a specific method to determine the affiliation of a child in the absence of his/her parents; it consists of a specific blood test whose percentage of success is 99.99%. Thus, together with scientists committed to the cause, [Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo](#) (2009) managed to answer the question: "Is there a constituent element of blood that only appears in people of the same family?" (P.30).

[Domínguez](#) (2014) referred to the *grandfathering index* as follows:

Their perseverance made it possible the discovery of the *grandfathering index* in 1983, allowing through genetic markers to establish kinship ties with their grandchildren. The HLA, histocompatibility antigens, the proposal of science to their question, allowed through protein molecules that are responsible for differentiating the own from the alien and that are found in the membranes of all cells, to measure the kinship among individuals. (P.50)

In this scenario, DNA is presented as a point of passage but never of arrival ([Fariña and Gutiérrez](#), 2001). The genetic data bank and the *grandfathering index* is, on the other hand, the Argentina contribution to international human rights standards. This contribution is significant because it is an unprecedented event; only from a DNA sample, it can be determined the affiliation origin of a child even when his/her parents are missing. This is the genetic finding that would allow children to return to their families, ensuring the right to an identity of the same, and sanctioning the affiliation crime that they suffered.

This fact, which we can consider as the Argentina contribution to international human rights, puts into play the identity-identification dialectic. While the right to identity is a consecrated right, putting it into play presents the inherent difficulties of the biological order on the one hand, and the order of the subjective or the singularity on the other. We said that in these cases, DNA works as a trace, as a record of an interrupted history, but it is a point of passage and never of arrival. DNA and genetics function here as a mark of that adulterated affiliation history; but it will then be part of a singular movement to appropriate, and how to make it, of those marks and that history, since the task of restitution is not only a legal normative action, but a subjective elaboration, inaugurating the possibility of restoring that symbolic chain that gave them a name and a place in a generational net ([Levy Daniel, Navés and Pesino](#), 2014). Faced with this reality, we can only wonder: how to approach this task of *subjectivation* in the clinical field? We start from the fact that the subject is never passive in the elaboration of his/her family novel.

The status of DNA in cases of appropriation-restitution of children, as a unique mark of an affiliation crime, has its own characteristics that distinguish it from the approach we will take in cases of assisted human reproduction technologies. Cases where the biological order and the subjective order, the right to identity and the variants of privacy and confidentiality also come into tension, but in a different way.

If in the cases of restitution we maintain that the DNA works in the way of a *significant trace* of an interrupted history, what status does it obtain in AHRT cases?

### **Affiliation in assisted human reproduction technologies**

When science stands in the place of *the God that does not exist*, the places of truth and certainties get complicated. The question of origin has no answer in the field of science; there is no knowledge that science produces in terms of knowledge of origin. But to what origin are we referring? To the one that subtracts us from the animals in order to register us, from language, in the order of the human. The origin as the particular inscription of those signifiers that come from the field of the *Other* and make a dent on the body of the living. It will depend on what signifiers are available and which of them are taken to become *parlêtre* and for that reason the subject is never passive in that elaboration. Origin is also something that is told and that constitutes the net, the fabric of the family novel. The order of the narrative, certainly fictional, is constitutive of the human. And it is perhaps here where we find one of the most controversial points to think of these *neo-parentings* in relation with the subjective constitution of the children to come, born by AHRT.

Science forces our subjectivity in almost every order of the human; perhaps that is why the appeal to ethics is now more necessary than ever. The science on which we are shedding these conjectures is the paradigm of techno-scientific rationality, that is, the heart of modern science. It is a paradigm that establishes the guidelines by defining means, ends and values, in order to reach objectives calculated in the terms dictated by the market ([Lima and Ormart](#), 2015)

The case of children born by AHRT has generated a wide debate around many different issues. One of the most controversial points in the current debate is the anonymous or non-anonymous donation of gametes (egg, spermatozoa), a process known as *heterologous fertilization*; and its incidence on the subjective constitution of the child to come, fantasies about the third - contributor of genetic material - and the dialectic right to identity vs. the right to privacy. It is here that our first disquisitions around the origin acquire full force. We said that science pretends to legislate about origin by anchoring truth to biology; if truth is contained in the germ cell, the origin can be proven. Without going any further, the DNA test sanctions a genetic compatibility, but what does that say about the father?

In the discussions that focus on the protection of the genetic identity, showing the protection of the right to identity, the accent falls inescapably on the truth or falsity of the story about the origin, on the legitimacy or not of the place that has been usurped with the deceit,

and the question of paternity is finally solved in terms of dyads: “false - true”, “legitimate - illegitimate”, in the same way that were proposed the discussions about the place of the father in the appropriation ([Domínguez, 2014, p.51](#))

It will be necessary to see if the current science has the power to extinguish the old axiom *pater semper incertus est, mater sed certissima*, or if it rather remarks that on the origin, in strict truth, nothing can be said.

We then enter into a crucial point: the said and the say about the origin. From the logical formalization established by [Lacan in Seminar 17](#) (1969-1970), the truth is read in the medium-say. Statement and enunciation make up this medium-say, where it is always said more - and also less - of what one wants. The truth is presented by the veiled, under the forms of the enigma that is its paradigm. In subjective terms the origin is an enigma that is constructed, it is constructed in a story, which is another form of the means-say; it is constructed in fiction, another perspective to think the truth. At first Lacan subtracts the origin of the myth to locate it in the structure. The sphinx in myth, in the manner of the oracle, enunciates a truth (or half-say) in terms of enunciation, truth that concerns the subject, truth that makes flesh or event of body. In the structure, this half-say also makes body and filiation. Beyond biological determination, filiation is constructed in a discursive framework, and the new Argentina Civil and Commercial Code is consistent, at least from the legal point of view, with this distinction, granting it the place of father to whom wants to be it -under the legal form of *procreational will* (as it is made explicit in article 561, which integrates the chapter dedicated to the “General rules regarding filiation by techniques of assisted reproduction” in the New Argentina Civil and Commercial Code). That being a father starts from a volitional matter tied to a desire separates the biological from the order of filiation by giving entry to a version of the father who ties the symbolic to the real.

We arrive at a first distinction: although AHRT introduce changes in family structures, modifications that can go on the side of the transformation of the symbolic ([Kletnicki, 2000](#)), we should ask ourselves if there is however something invariant. Can the desire work as the invariant in the subjective constitution? Indeed, Lacan, in his well-known axiom, places the need for a non-anonymous and singular desire for the irreducible transmission ([Lacan, 1993](#)). This relation to desire can be read in its twofold aspect: the desire that precedes me, and the desire for desire that binds that relationship. If in order to become *parlêtre* the human must be lodged by a significant Other, it must also *libidinize* that body from a bath of language, capable of removing it from the thrust of the pure drive of death.

If we locate this operation as the symbolic of filiation is because it allows establishing the different legalities separating places and tying functions. What happens is that often the scientific push –and in AHRT scenarios that’s something that is often perceived - it begins to affect something of the order of the real of the body, or even of biology, that could happen in a crushing of the subjectivity if one does not reflect around the subjective and singular coordinates of that desire in its significant tie.

One of the highlights of the text is the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, which states in its article 16 that “the impact of life sciences on future generations should be duly taken into account, particularly in its genetic constitution” ([Unesco, 2005](#)). Beyond the brevity of the text, it contains, in germ, the substantive of the problems: that is to say, how the genetic manipulation could affect the symbolic development of the human species if the necessary ethical and/or deontological repairs are not taken. Science has become the master and lord of existence; perhaps the fact of reaching the power to destroy themselves and the world has succeeded in making falter the permanent order of existence, making it fragile, illusory. We are alluding, of course, to the ghosts that lurk men, from the path that travels from the atom to the gene, from the atomic fission of the late twentieth century to the current power of genetics and biotechnology. The ghosts of the atom are transfigured to the gene, making this becoming not harmless; that is to say, not without consequences for the symbolic development of the future. The *demiurgical* character of modern science, its transforming power over human nature creates great uncertainties and challenges for the thought and ethical reflection.

Given this recent scenario that science enables, new areas of concern arise for the professional psychologist, are they prepared to face the challenges that scientific-technological advancement demands of them?

## Materials and methods

As part of the research work UBACyT project “The ethical and social competences of undergraduate and graduate psychology students at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires. Descriptive exploratory study based on qualitative and quantitative research,” directed by Dr. Elizabeth B. Ormart, we developed an instrument of data collection in the format of a structured interview with the objective of measuring the degree of knowledge that professional psychologists have in relation to filiation. Likewise, we use the following auxiliary hypothesis: psychologists update their academic training through postgraduate courses in order to stay updated and

successfully complete the activities that make up a job function.

In the first part of the interview, there were collected descriptive data of the sample (age, sex, country of origin, courses or postgraduate courses that he/she is doing, area of professional practice, recurrent problems of professional practice)<sup>2</sup>. In the second part of the interview, it was inquired: First, the academic training regarding the subject of appropriation/restitution based on the following questions: Did you receive training on appropriation and restitution of children in Argentina? Where?

Second, we examined the academic training of psychologists in relation to the new filiation scenario provided by assisted reproduction technologies with the following question: What would you include in university training to address issues related to technologies of assisted human reproduction?

Based on the answers given by the psychologists, seven categories were extracted as qualitative analysis variables to complement the quantitative analysis: 1) Interdisciplinary work, 2) Training in the legal area, 3) Training in couple and family, 4) Training in new family constitutions and new parenting, 5) Medical training knowledge of AHRT-, 6) Clinical training (cognitive-behavioral/psychoanalysis/etc.), 7) No answer. Finally, the interviewees were presented with two open situations where they had to answer what they would do and why. They are:

### **Situation 1:**

A couple consults for their only child who has a picture of enuresis. At the time of initiation of treatment, in an interview alone with the adults, they inform the therapist that they are infertile, that in fact the child was illegally appropriated and that his true family is looking for him. They clarify that this is the first time they have been made aware of this fact and that they do so for the sake of the child's treatment and relying on the professional discretion of the therapist. What should the therapist do about this and why?

### **Situation 2:**

A couple consults because their child has an attention disorder in school and has been conceived by fertilization with donated gametes. They believe that there may be a relationship between the child's problem and the concealment of the way of conceiving him. There is a disjunction between telling the child he has been conceived with donated genetic material, or not to do it. How do you think it has to be the intervention of the psychologist? From the first situation, five categories were extracted as qualitative variables of analysis and

six qualitative categories for the second, thus grouping the totality of the answers collected.

The qualitative variables for the analysis of the situation 1 are the following:

1. Talk with the adults so that they convey the truth of the appropriation, not raising the professional secret.
  2. Guide adults to communicate, and if they do not do it, raise professional secrecy.
  3. Denounce the case by raising professional secrecy, as you are dealing with a criminal situation
  4. Talk or work with the child to investigate the cause of the symptom - not raising the professional secret. Or work the relationship link around "truth-lie".
  5. Discontinue treatment by referring the case or supervising.
6. Qualitative variables for the analysis of Situation 2:
7. It is suggested to work with the child, either by investigating the reason of the symptom, the problem of attention and its relationships, or, ultimately, telling the truth to the child.
  8. It is suggested to work with parents about fantasies, about the child's conception and his/her fears about it. I work on the reason for the concealment.
  9. Inquire why the parents link the child's problem with the conception's way or its concealment.
  10. Work with parents on the decision to communicate the child's way of conception (or guide the parents to communicate this information to the child).
  11. Clarify with parents the importance of the non-anchored-to-biology origin.
  12. Investigate the place that the child occupies for those parents, leaving in their hands the decision to say it; work on the relationship link.

### **Sample**

The sample consisted of 76 psychologists, both sexes, of whom 86% are graduates of the UBA and the remaining 14% of other institutions in Argentina; their ages range from 23 to 70 years, distributed as follows: 27% of the sample is made up of psychologists whose ages range from 23 to 29; 30% between 30 and 39 years; 20% between 40 and 49 years of age; 11% between 50 and 59 years; and 12% between 60 and 70 years. All of them work in the autonomous city of Buenos Aires.

The age difference between the recent graduates and the distant ones allowed us to evaluate if after the academic formation period, they performed or they are doing graduate studies in order to keep up to date.

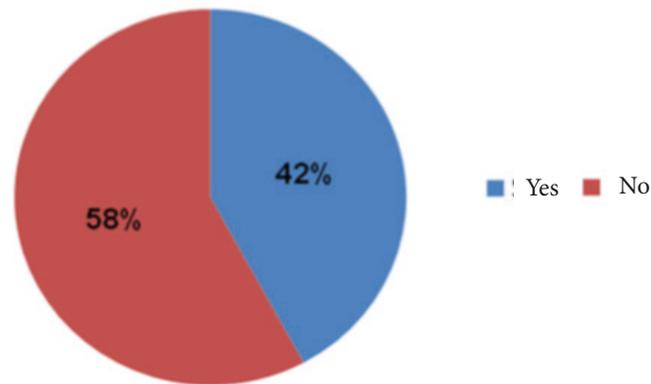
## Results

Only 42% of the sample received information on appropriation/restitution. Of these, 75% received training in the undergraduate program, 10% in graduate studies, and 15% in other training instances.

**Figure 1.** Survey data on education on issues related to appropriation/restitution.

Source: self-made.

Did you receive information on appropriation/restitution?

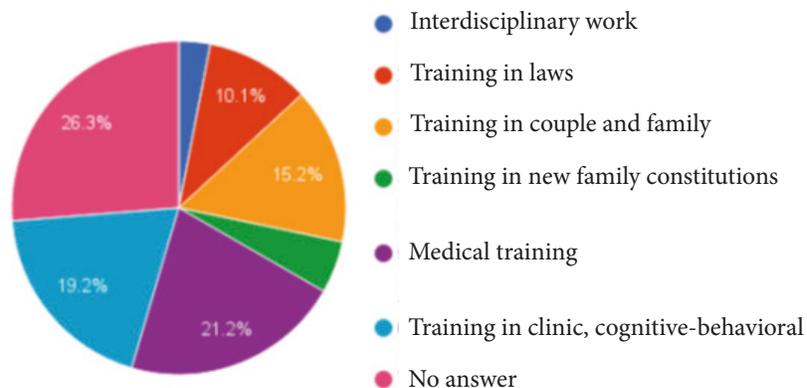


42.4% considered that clinical training was necessary (interdisciplinary work, training in couple and family, in new parenting and clinic that includes psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral, systemic, etc.). 26.30% of respondents did not answer the question, 21.2% considers necessary medical training -knowledge of AHRT- and 10.1%, training in the legal area. Figure 2.

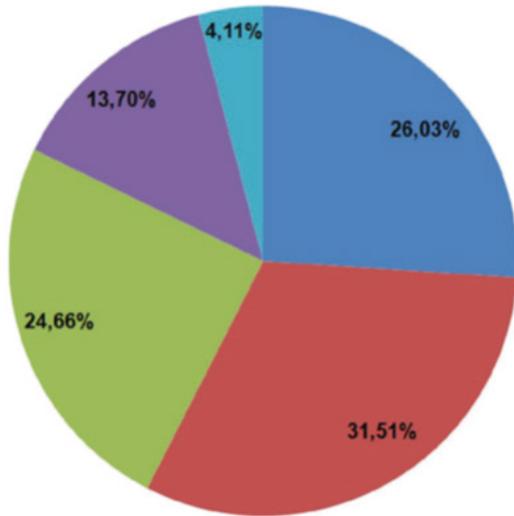
**Figure 2.** Training on assisted human technology

Source: self-made

What would you include in college training to approach the problems related with assisted human reproduction technologies?



**Figure 3. Situation 1: an enuresis case**



1. (26,03 %) It is suggested to talk with the parents so that they convey the truth of the appropriation, not raising the professional secret.

2. (31,51 %) Guide the parents to communicate it, and if they do not do it, raise professional secrecy. (On the same line they suggest: make a try, taking advantage of transference, so that the "parents" be the ones to speak; if this does not happen, report the case.

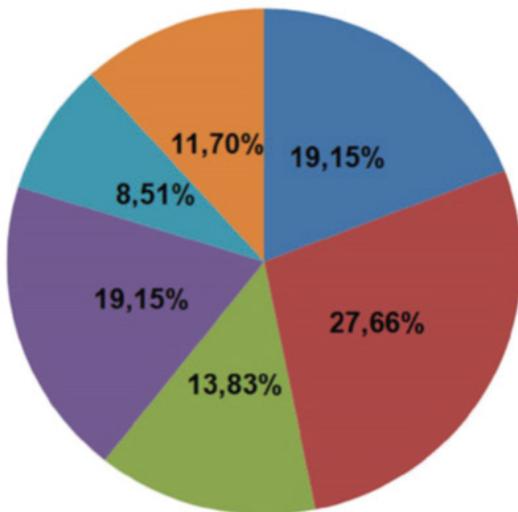
3. (24,66 %) Denounce the case as you are dealing with a criminal situation (via the corresponding organisms: grandmothers, sons/daughters, or using the corresponding legal mechanisms) by raising professional secrecy.

4. (13,70 %) Talk or work with the child to investigate the cause of the symptom, not raising the professional secret, or work the relationship link around "truth-lie".

5. (4,1 %) Discontinue treatment by referring the case or supervising.

Source: self-made

**Figure 4. Situation 2: gametes donation cases**



1. (19,15 %) It is suggested to work with the child, either by investigating the reason of the symptom, the problem of attention and its relationships, or, ultimately, telling the truth to the child.

2. (27,66 %) It is suggested to work with parents about fantasies, about the child's conception (as what has not been said, it is expressed by symptoms) and his/her fears about it. I work on the reason for the concealment.

3. (13,83 %) Inquire why the parents link the child's problem with the conception's way or its concealment.

4. (19,15 %) Work with parents on the decision to communicate the child's way of conception (or guide the parents to communicate this information to the child).

5. (8,51 %) Clarify with parents the importance of the non-anchored-to-biology origin, but the function (father, mother), building of identity.

6. (11,70 %) Investigate the place that the child occupies for those parents, leaving in their hands the decision to say it; work on the relationship link.

Source: self-made

## Discussion of results

Now let's see the qualitative-quantitative analysis of the psychologists' answers to the questions asked and to the two situations presented.

In relation to the academic training on children's appropriation and restitution in Argentina, responses indicate that 58% of the interviewees did not receive training on child appropriation/restitution in Argentina. This high percentage of interviewees who claim not to have had academic training in adulterated filiation indicates a lack in the development of competences within the university scope. However, because it is an issue that has caught the attention of public policies on human rights in Argentina, the lack of cognitive and ethical skills on the subject is also the responsibility of psychologists. 42% of the sample has done it. Of the latter, only 75% have received training in a college course, 10% in a graduate training and 15% in other training instances.

Regarding the university education required to address issues related to assisted human reproduction technologies, the quantitative results of respondents indicate that 26.3% did not answer the question, 21.2% considered it necessary to include medical training, that is, knowledge on assisted human reproduction technologies, 19.2% suggested (that it was) necessary the inclusion of clinical training -psychoanalysis and cognitive-behavioral techniques-, 15.2% couples and families approaching, and 5.1% new parenting and new family constitutions; 10.1% considered necessary training in the legal area, and 3% interdisciplinary work.

If we take into account that the interviewees' answers to the first two questions, on which we focus our analysis, indicate that 58% of the psychologists interviewed have not received training on identity restitution, even though it is a controversial and contemporary problem of the history of Argentina society; that 27% of respondents did not respond to the question about the academic training necessary to address issues related to assisted human reproduction technologies; and that 42.4% of those interviewed considered it essential to include clinical training, which includes psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral techniques, systemic, couple and family, new parenting and new family constitutions, we can infer a lack of adjustment between social needs and the training of psychologists, which demonstrates deficiencies in their academic training.

The quantitative-qualitative analysis of the situations presented to the interviewees with the objective of investigating the ethical competences from the question, what should the psychologist do in the face of this situation and why? And the cognitive and technical

competencies of professional psychologists around the origin problem are the following:

Situation 1 assumes an ethical-social conflict related with the fact that a therapist is in his/her consulting room with the case of a child who has been appropriated. The dilemma is faced with the choice of whether or not to lift professional secrecy, based on the best interests of the child as a case of appropriation. Should the professional secrecy be raised, the greatest controversies arise around how to do it, how to convey the complaint, to what entity, where and what would be the future consequences for the child.

Situation 2 investigates the filiation problem around the case of children conceived through donated gametes via the use of technologies of assisted human reproduction. The dilemma in this situation revolves around the fantasies and fears about it, how, when and why to provide information about the child's origin; or not to do it.

While in the first case the enuresis symptom is inscribed in what would be a fact of illegal appropriation of a minor, in the second case it will be the attentional disorder that leads these parents to consult about the way of conception. What links these two scenarios? Firstly, both situations address the complex issue of filiation, adulterated in the first case due to the crime of appropriation committed; hidden in the second, product of fears and fantasies of parents facing the possible loss of love of the child upon learning belatedly that he has been conceived through donated gametes.

There is, however, something that distinguishes them radically, the first is a filiation crime with devastating consequences for subjectivity; the second, on the other hand, tries to explore the importance of putting into words the fears and fantasies of the parents, which could also affect the child. It is striking that, observing the results obtained in the 76 interviews, most psychologists believe that concealment and non-concealment tend to be expressed symptomatically in one way or another. Although they do not refer to find or suppose a linear causality between the non-said and the symptomatic expression, they plead for the need to interrogate the case and the singularity of the same. This parallelism of the effects -both cases present a symptomatic expression- should nevertheless be carefully analyzed in the case of clearly differentiated situations regarding the maternal/paternal function and the establishment of the Other of the law ([Gutiérrez, 2001](#)).

The fact that situation 1 is a crime has made it possible a different approach in a large number of the psychologists surveyed. Although 25% of psychologists would denounce the case by raising professional secrecy as a first step (option 3), 31% would first try to

intervene with adults by a transfer model, so that they would be the ones who convey this truth to the child, and if not possible, they would resort to the complaint and the corresponding judicial intervention (option 2), raising then the professional secret, but only as a last alternative. Adding these two variables we infer that 56% of respondents (option 2 + option 3) are a recognition of the devastating consequences that can conceal this information and the ethical consequences of professional action if the case is not denounced. It is, however, striking that 40% of the interviewed psychologists (option 1 + option 4) only propose a therapeutic approach without legal intervention, whereas 4% would interrupt the treatment deriving the case.

Situation 2 presents a degree of difficulty of a different order. Although the problem returns to focus on the filiation axis, now it is not a crime, but a concealment in the conception of the child who has been conceived via donated gametes (without specifying whether they are eggs or sperm). The intention to pose this problem is to investigate the representations of psychologists about the following aspects: a) the fantasies of parents regarding conception; b) the fears that may arise about it; c) the link which they seem to trace between the form of conception and the attentional disorder; d) what does it mean that the non-said can be expressed symptomatically?; e) to investigate the importance of knowledge regarding origin, what knowledge is it about?; f) the right to identity vs. the right to privacy (privacy variant for the Unesco declaration).

In this second case the answers were more distributed in the sample. The expected intervention of the psychologists revolved around the exploration of fears and fantasies (28%); also in relation to the imaginary link that these parents find between the way of conceiving, the concealment with respect to the origin, and the attention disorder in the child (14%). It would be necessary to inquire whether it is possible to differentiate if the link is established between the conception way and the symptom; or instead, the symptom as expression of the non-said, that is to say, the result of concealment. In this scenario, a therapeutic work is proposed with the child (19%). The communicational variable is also relevant: working with parents on how to communicate the conception way to the child (19%).

The intention to establish a dialogue between both scenarios is to investigate the cognitive and technical competencies of psychologists around the origins; and that they be able to differentiate a filiation crime from a concealment case, which through desire can also generate negative consequences for the future subjective development. We know that from psychoanalysis, the

origin is an empty place, a place that must be covered in a fictional, singular way and as such will always have subjective effects for the psychic constitution. What are the effects of concealing a child his/her filiation when he or she has been illegally removed from the womb? What effect could it have on children not to tell them they have been conceived through donated gametes? Both scenarios are clearly distinguishable; the mark of a crime within a family generates havoc, which Freud has already conceptualized with the German term *unheimlich*, an ominous or sinister effect, which in turn has many meanings: dark, disquieting, dismal; it supposes that something that was destined to remain hidden or secret has come to light. Following the meaning of the word, it can be glimpsed that *unheimlich* -in the sense of ominous- is related to the familiar -*Heimlich*-, but in turn with the occult.

“The sinister, being familiar, is at the same time that within which one is not oriented, something that promotes uncertainties. In the sinister converge the antithetical senses of secret and familiar.” (Ulloa, 2011: 1)

Although both scenarios are dissimilar, there is a certain similarity that allows us to establish some comparative reference, something of the non-said with respect to the origin can be iatrogenic for the subjectivity of the child, expressing symptomatically. That not-said does not mean to say a truth about the origin, but supposes a fictional or narrative saying that covers symbolically what does not have words. If the children of yesterday were told the stork myth, fictional clipping that does not lessen or diminish the desire to know about the first children's investigations, to the children of tomorrow, in the case that technique has mediated for their conception, it will be necessary to invent other histories that take into account this particularity of its conception, where the germinal data, the cell, is from the beginning covered by a fictional symbolic framework, of desire of those parents towards those children, that carries these data about the origin as a subjective and unique part of their history. And perhaps we can here establish some comparison between this psychoanalytic conception of the subjective mode of constitution and the article 16 of the Unesco declaration “Protection of future generations” which, we remember, warned of *the repercussions life sciences can have on future generations* if certain precautions are not taken into account.

## Conclusions

If, in order to analyze the appropriation-restitution scenario, it becomes necessary to revise the past, AHRT amaze us to future questions; it will be the way to traverse this pendular path which will delineate the current bet.

In the present research we have proposed, on the one hand, to put to work concepts and central notions of the psychoanalytic framework in the light of the contemporary dilemmas, questioning its limits and potentialities so that the work does not become a doctrinal and decontextualized application, but that can be part of a know-how with concrete application. On the other hand, we have used the paradigm that introduces competence-based training to question the existing mismatch between the current curricular model of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Buenos Aires, which is embodied in the current curricula, and the social demands that take place in the field of subjectivity from the new dilemmatic scenarios that filiation conflicts impose on future psychologists.

This lack of adjustment, which arises from the analysis of the results of the interviewees, leads us to ask ourselves, on the one hand, what changes are necessary to guarantee, on the one hand, a comprehensive training that guarantees the learning of the new scientific and technological knowledge and, on the other, that contemplate the training of psychologists who are ethically committed to the reality that surrounds them? And on the other hand, is it possible only with the modification of an academic program to develop the competencies that the labor market demands?

We believe that university education should contribute to the formation of critical judgment and to the construction of methodological tools that allow professionals to deploy the know-how he has acquired in his university career. We also understand that professional practice, which is changing and dynamic, forces a subjective commitment and a unique journey that is not exhausted in the narrow margins of the academic curriculum. This does not mean ignoring the shortcomings that obviously exist in a curriculum with little revision and update of the contents to be taught. On the contrary, we consider that it is the responsibility of the university to provide the integral training of its future professionals, but also that professionals must be responsible for their continuous training, which includes a real contact with the social conflicts of their surroundings. Especially in a country where the state policies of recent years have favored the extension of rights for all citizens, with new laws, which require us to re-think professional practice every time.

## Footers

1 Italics of the authors.

2 A detailed analysis of questions 1 to 14 of the interview can be found in the text of Pena, F and Ormart, E (2014) Las competencias del psicólogo en los albores del ejercicio profesional. In: Memorias VI Congreso Marplatense de Psicología. La Psicología como

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