

Claudia Lee

Mrs. Stephanie Gonzalez Doo

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“Let Them Appear Alive and Let the Guilty Be Punished”: The Fight of the Madres and Abuelas
of the Plaza de Mayo

Abstract: The Madres and Abuelas of the Plaza de Mayo embrace their role as mothers in order to accomplish their goals of being reunited with their disappeared children, drawing strength from their belief that it is a mother’s duty to protect her children at any cost, and that an individual’s knowledge of their family’s identity is an crucial human right. In 1976 Buenos Aires they formed to protest the disappearances of their children and grandchildren at the hands of a military dictatorship. Over the past nearly 50 years, a multitude of researchers have written about their struggles and triumphs, highlighting the impossible situation in which they found themselves in and their surprising successes in the face of that. Similar to social justice groups around the world, the Madres and Abuelas have employed a variety of techniques to effectively achieve their goals. From marches and other acts of civil disobedience to the creation of a new genetic test, they have revolutionized the world of activism. Their belief in the importance of their work, and the importance of their role of mother, sustains them and allows them to keep fighting for a better Argentina.

I. Introduction

The Madres and Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo are a women-led organization in Argentina dedicated to finding and preserving the memories of their children and grandchildren, people who were “disappeared” during the Argentine Dirty War. From 1976 to 1983, the Argentinian

government was replaced by a right wing military group. During those seven years, nearly 30,000 people were secretly taken by the government, tortured, murdered, and then eliminated from government records. When the families of these people turned up to the police, looking for their relatives, they were told the person they were looking for had “disappeared.” The disappeared, or “desaparecidos,” in Spanish, were mostly young activists protesting the government, but also individuals who had simply been caught in the crossfire. Since 1977, the work of the Madres has redefined identity, motherhood, and social justice in Argentina and in the world as well. This paper sought to find an answer to the question: How do the Madres and Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo work around and within the Argentinian government, using, transcending, and growing the role of mother, in order to find and honor their children and grandchildren? This paper argues that the Madres and Abuelas of the Plaza de Mayo embrace their role as mothers in order to accomplish their goals of being reunited with their disappeared children, drawing strength from their belief that it is a mother’s duty to protect her children at any cost, and that an individual’s knowledge of their family’s identity is an crucial human right.

II. *Literature Review*

When their children, grandchildren, friends, and neighbors started disappearing, a group of mothers began marching around the Plaza de Mayo, a city square in front of the president’s house, the Casa Rosada, and the main cathedral in Buenos Aires, the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Cathedral, protesting the government and demanding their return. Nearly 50 years later, they are still marching. One of the Madres and Abuelas first goals was to tell the world what was happening in Argentina, because the government was controlling the media and preventing information about the disappearances from getting out.

Jerry W. Knudson wrote about this issue in 1997 in “Veil of Silence: The Argentine Press and the Dirty War, 1976-1983.” During the Dirty War, thousands of young activists disappeared. Strangely, few Argentine newspapers reported on this phenomenon. In 1974, a law against journalists writing about information ““altering or eliminating institutional order” (Gillespie, 1986: 163n. 25)” was punishable with up to five years in prison (Knudson 7). Jacobo Timerman, editor of *La Opinión*, one of the few papers that did dare to cross the government, was arrested with no charge and repeatedly tortured. *The Buenos Aires Herald*, an English-language paper, also analyzed the meaning of the disappearances. During the Perón government, the three largest newspapers joined forces with the government to oversee the circulation of printing paper to newspapers. In 1976, the government made it illegal for journalists to report about desaparecidos. The families of the desaparecidos were able to put out advertisements about their relative, but “these free notices seeking information were published only in the Buenos Aires Herald and, before its confiscation, La Opinion,” (Knudson 11). Because of the demonstrations by the Madres, “in 1978 ... the Organization of American States sent its Commission on Human Rights to Argentina for a three-week investigation at the request of the Argentine government,” (Knudson 12).

The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo were the perfect group to oppose the government because of how deeply they were steeped in traditional Argentine values, something Andrea Malin analyzed in 1994 in “Mother Who Won’t Disappear,” after the Madres had been working for 17 years. Argentina, a primarily Catholic country, holds Our Lady of Guadalupe, a vision of the Virgin Mary, as the image of the ideal woman and sets motherhood as the ultimate goal for women. Mothers are venerated and idealized, which posed a problem when the very thing that made them mothers (their children) were disappeared. Women are not usually the primary

breadwinners in Argentina, and are delegated the role of care-giver, so when their children, the very people they were caring for, disappeared, it was a natural extension of their role that they would go looking for them to protect them. Malin notes that the government's efforts to crack down on dissidents backfired because "it simultaneously created new opponents, formidable opponents in the mothers' movements. In essence, the state created its worst opponent, because it was an enemy that would never rest," (Malin 23). The mothers began marching in the plaza once it became evident that nothing else could be done, wearing their childrens' photographs around their necks and writing their personal information on their handkerchiefs to prove that their children had indeed existed. In doing so they gained the name "las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo," or the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Because they had no political affiliations and their moral convictions came from the role assigned to them by society of mother, "their resistance was more effective because it was feminine, traditional, and so unexpected," (Malin 24).

Malin's research was furthered by Fernando J. Bosco, who published "The Madres de Plaza de Mayo and Three Decades of Human Rights' Activism: Embeddedness, Emotions, and Social Movements" 12 years later, highlighting the techniques the Madres employ that make use of their role of mother. The Madres use the concept of the role of mother to support their activism because acting as mothers prevents them from being in opposition with the patriarchal, militaristic, Argentine society and government. Although they exist in twenty cities throughout Argentina, each subsection of the Madres refers to themselves as the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo or a version of the name. The name "Madres de la Plaza de Mayo" is powerful because it creates one common story and narrative out of many similar ones, and any woman whose children were disappeared can relate to and become a Madre. Women who visited Buenos Aires searching for their children found out about the movement and went back home as Madres. They could tell

their friends, who could in turn become Madres. There are now two groups, “Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo” and “Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo,” because the original split in 1986. The women in these groups “in the interior of the country did not understand the division (and many remain unclear about it to the present day) because their identities as Madres were independent of formal organizational structures,” (Bosco 352). The similarities of both groups, from name, to a common meeting place of plazas throughout the country, to a common goal, means that the Madres exist as an idea as well as individual women, lengthening the groups’ lifespan.

Far before Malin or Bosco, Marjorie Agosin visited the Madres in 1987 and subsequently wrote “A Visit to the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo,” which was later translated into English by Cola Franzen. This primary source document includes Agosin’s own perspective, and interviews with some of the Madres. The war had ended and the Madres had been looking for their children for ten years. Nine thousand people had been reported as disappeared in that time. The first head of the Madres, Azuzena Villaflor, was disappeared in 1978. Her remains, nine years later, had still not been found (Agosin 7). The first president of Argentina after the dictatorship, Raúl Alfonsín, was dedicated to justice for the disappeared. He wanted everyone who gave orders to disappear people tried before a judge, but the Madres wanted everyone connected with the disappearances to be tried, even if they did not directly give the orders. Because of this, and because their children have not been returned to them, even though the dictatorship ended in 1983, the Madres continue to march in the Plaza de Mayo every Thursday, even in the present day, and there is an open invitation to anyone interested to join them. Two years after the dictatorship ended, “on 2 August 1985 more than 80,000 persons joined a march convened by

the Madres and wound through the center of Buenos Aires, shouting their slogan: ‘Justice and punishment for the guilty,’” (Agosin 9).

Also in 1987, Nancy Saporta Sternbach and Zelia Brizeno traveled to Argentina to interview Hebe de Bonafini, the president of the Madres at the time. Hebe de Bonafini was the president of the Madres in 1987. She had always been dissatisfied with the role that women were supposed to play in Argentine society. “I couldn't understand why men could do certain things and women certain other things,” de Bonafini said (Sternbach 2). Having never attended high school, she was deeply impressed by her sons and their knowledge of politics in their late teens and early twenties, before they disappeared. Remembering back to the beginning of the movement, de Bonafini told Sternbach and Brizeno that the same 13 or 14 women kept seeing each other at the police station (Sternbach 4). De Bonafini repeatedly mentioned the importance of being a woman to her work, but did not agree with the label of feminist, because in Argentina in the 80s, feminism was seen as a movement for womens’ sexual equality, not political or economic equality, and the Madres’ focus was political. Although de Bonafini was uncomfortable with feminism, she nevertheless believed in the importance of women in politics, saying “If we really had power, and I don't mean one woman, but many, many women in all countries, we'd find a way to put an end to war,” (Sternbach 6).

Women’s participation in politics is the focus of Nora Amalia Femenía and Carlos Ariel Gil’s article “Argentina's Mothers of Plaza de Mayo: The Mourning Process from Junta to Democracy,” published ten years after the Madres first formed, which describes the techniques the Madres used to protest. A primary source document, it was written during a time when the Madres were still insistent in their goal that their children be returned to them. While the Madres still wanted justice for their children and grandchildren, they were less focused on their children

being returned, because of the amount of time that has passed since they disappeared. The lack of information about desaparecidos, and the potential that one could be disappeared for simply comforting the loved one of a desaparecido, led to a nationwide isolation of family members of the disappeared. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo were the first group to collectively demand information about their disappeared children, using the rhetoric that disappearance did not mean death, and that their children should be returned to them (Femenía 6). The Madres decided that they would not believe that their children were dead, and would keep their childrens' memories alive by staging demonstrations and in one instance, writing the names of disappeared persons on paper silhouettes and posting them on walls around Buenos Aires. They continued marching every Thursday, with their slogan, "LET THEM APPEAR ALIVE AND LET THE GUILTY BE PUNISHED...They sang together: 'They took them away alive, we want them back alive,'" (Femenía 15). As the search continued, the Madres began to admit that they might not find their children, but refused to accept that they were dead until they were given detailed reasoning as to why, how, and where. Finding the bodies of desaparecidos has been difficult as well, which contributes to their refusal to accept their childrens' likely death.

At the same time that the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo was formed, a group of women began marching in conjunction with them to find their disappeared grandchildren. Not only were children often disappeared with their parents, but pregnant women who were disappeared would give birth in the concentration camps to which they were taken, and later murdered. Their children were then adopted, sometimes through adoption agencies to couples who had no idea about circumstances surrounding the child's birth, but often by officials in the Argentine government who had given, carried out, or been aware of the orders to murder the child's

parents. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, known in Argentina as “las Abuelas,” have fought for their grandchildren to be returned ever since.

Rita Arditti’s 2002 journal article “The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Struggle against Impunity in Argentina,” highlighted the Abuelas’ actions searching for their grandchildren. In the years after the dictatorship, they pushed to establish a National Genetic Data Bank, which makes it possible for children to be genetically identified, even after their relatives have passed. The Abuelas’ work served to not only enrich the Argentinian government’s quest for justice, but also governments’ and human rights organizations’ works around the world, and they “conceptualized a new human right, the right to identity, by which states must respect the right of a child to her/his identity, including nationality, name, and family relation,” (Arditti 14). The Abuelas’ also continued to fight to bring the guilty kidnappers to justice, which helped them do their main work of finding their grandchildren, but because of the former dictatorship, Argentina has had a culture of impunity, where corrupt actions are not spoken out against or legally challenged, which makes their work even more challenging. Their continued assertion that they are traditional women seeking to find their families opened up a new way for women to engage in politics, separate from men, through a more domestic lens that was nonetheless incredibly powerful.

Ten years before Arditti, in 1992, Victor B. Penchaszadeh published “Abduction of Children of Political Dissidents in Argentina and the Role of Human Genetics in Their Restitution,” detailing the specifics of the genetic test that people who think they might be children of the disappeared can take. The Abuelas’ consulted with a group of scientists to see if they could create a genetic test that would determine if a child was the grandchild of a particular set of grandparents. The scientists devised a way to recreate the genomes of the parents from the

grandparents genes and then tested them against the genomes of the child in question. In order for a child to be reunited with their families, the genetic test must be at least 95% certain (Penchaszadeh 5). In 1987, the Genetic Database in the Immunology Laboratory of the Hospital Durand was constructed to house genetic information for disappeared families. If the test proves that a person is, in fact, the child of a disappeared person, they are reunited with their family. In all cases, the Abuelas' first priority is the welfare of their children, and they consult with doctors and psychologists to figure out how to integrate the children back into their families. There are, however, certain complications that can arise from reunification: in one instance, a genetic test proved a child named Juliana to be the daughter of two specific desaparecidos, but a later one proved it wrong, and "while indeed Juliana may still be the child of a disappeared couple, her true identity is unknown and will probably remain so, since the case is now legally closed," (Penchaszadeh 11). Despite the occasional missteps that have occurred, the general consensus is that returning the grandchildren to their birth families is legal and ethical, and the mental health benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

"Children" of the disappeared, now usually in their thirties and forties, who are reunited with their biological families have their entire worlds changed as the result of one genetic test. In 2016, Lindsay Adams Smith wrote about this test and its repercussions in "Identifying Democracy: Citizenship, DNA, and Identity in Postdictatorship Argentina." The Abuelas held events like movies, concerts, and comedy shows, all to raise awareness about their kidnapped grandchildren, with the message, "if you have doubts, come get tested," (Smith 4). Although genetic testing has the goal of reuniting lost children with their families, not everyone reacted positively, especially because "for each identified Nieto, the search for identity is tied to a criminal case into kidnapping. If a young adult is found to be a child of the Disappeared, the

people that raised him or her are indicted of kidnapping and forced disappearance,” (Smith 14). There are, however, many Nietos (the name they are commonly referred by) who accept their birth identity and become reintegrated with their birth families, and are grateful to the Abuelas’ because of it. The Abuela’s were “the first to place scientific means of human identification, specifically DNA testing, at the center of their movement for justice. Their advocacy was responsible for the creation of the first National Genetic Data Bank in 1987, the Banco Nacional de Datos Genéticos, created and maintained by the Argentine state under law 23511,” (Smith 10). Although many of their grandchildren have not been returned to them, the Abuelas’ have nonetheless made history by establishing the right to identity and continuing to assert that right for their missing grandchildren.

The Abuelas realized that creating this genetic test was of no use to their fight if no one was taking it, and began advertising it via celebrations of identity that Ari Gandsman analyzed in 2009 in ““Do You Know Who You Are?” Radical Existential Doubt and Scientific Certainty in the Search for the Kidnapped Children of the Disappeared in Argentina.” During the 70s and 80s, the Abuelas had difficulties both finding and reunifying the children of desaparecidos with their families, but “by the mid-1990s, custody was no longer an issue because the children in question were legally adults” (Gandsman 3). They began to air advertisements appealing to young Argentinians questioning their parentage, which yielded results almost immediately. The Abuelas also began hosting festivals celebrating “identity,” with competitions concentrated on creating art about the theme of identity (Gandsman 3). The main focus of these events is to raise awareness about the children of the disappeared. To make their plea for their grandchildren register with more Argentinians, the Abuelas often compare the situation of children of desaparecidos with the situation of the Argentine state as a whole: still searching for an identity after a traumatic

experience (Gandsman 19). The Abuelas sow the seeds of doubt in the mind of every Argentinian by directly addressing them in their commercials. By encouraging Argentinians to doubt their identities, the Abuelas further justice in two ways: they alert people to the fact that they should come get tested, and they ask every Argentinian to think how they will help to heal the wounds of the Dirty War.

The Madres and Abuelas are the reason that journalists and later, governments, began to investigate the actions of the dictatorship and eventually were able to realize justice in Argentina. Research by these authors continues that legacy and oftentimes helped dissidents prove their points.

In 2003, Amnesty International released a report titled “ARGENTINA: The Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws and International Law,” spurred on in part by the attention Argentina received from the press. Argentina’s Full Stop and Due Obedience laws were illegal under international law and clashed with human rights expectations. Although they have been repealed, the effects of these laws, and the fact that atrocities committed before the repeal of these laws are considered to still be covered by them, meant that justice had still not been achieved in Argentina. International governments, including those of Spain and Italy, held trials for Argentine officials who disappeared citizens from their own countries. According to the United Nations., “disappearing” someone is a human rights violation. Argentina is part of several human rights treaties, and its Constitution explicitly states that treaties are higher than Argentine law in all cases. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it is a government’s duty to prosecute those who commit human rights violations, including torture and disappearances, even if those affected do not ask for justice. Argentina failed to adequately follow international guidelines, and was in breach of its obligations under numerous treaties. The

Full Stop and Due Obedience laws were in particular against international law because they prevent justice for the victims of the military junta. Argentina had the obligation, to the world and to its citizens, to investigate and prosecute those that carried out and assisted in the carrying out of disappearances.

There have been a multitude of trials focusing on the Dirty War, starting in the 1980s and continuing all the way into the 21st century, but as time goes on, what those trials address has shifted, something Susanna Kaiser wrote about in 2015 in “Argentina's Trials: New Ways of Writing Memory.” In the early 2010s, the Argentine government held a series of trials about the kidnapping of children of desaparecidos, of whom “as of October 2014, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, the organization of activist women searching for their grandchildren, had recovered 115” (Kaiser 3). Because so many of the events happened so long ago, the witnesses, many of whom are survivors of the camps, had to rely on their memories of what happened, which lawyers for the former government officials often used against them (Kaiser 9). One of the horrifying realizations that came out during the trials was the frequent references by witnesses to the normality that surrounded their lives of torture. Some guards took prisoners to their houses for lunch on the weekend. In 1978, the Argentine victory of the World Cup meant that prisoners were allowed to celebrate on the street in front of their torture center, and “one Father's Day, a torturer visited a prisoner's father and took him a tie on behalf of his daughter” (Kaiser 12). The contrast between the humanity with which the guards would occasionally treat prisoners, and the horrible torture they would hours later force them to endure, created a disorienting and painful reality for victims and their families.

The trials that revealed these truths did not take place until nearly 30 years after the dictatorship had ended, a clear sign that there is still more justice to be had in Argentina. The

work of the press, and of nonprofit organizations both in Argentina and abroad, is to continue searching for those truths. The more research done about the Dirty War, the more justice there will be.

III. Fieldwork Reflection and Plan of Action

I volunteered with the League of Women Voters and joined the League as a student member. Emphasized in this work was the importance of clear communication, organization, and engaging people in a movement via artwork or visually appealing advertisements. Creating Instagram posts for the League was challenging in the beginning, but as I worked with the League more closely and attended more events of theirs, it became more clear how they wanted to interact with the community, and what designs would be most effective and appropriate for their content. Attending a march that they participated in along with the ACLU, the importance of having one clear message was made apparent, along with the importance of being organized, especially when committing activism or advocacy with a large group of people. The Madres, whose work was technically illegal because of the corrupt dictatorship, had to be very secretive and secure when planning their events, and also had to have a very clear message that was direct and effective, because of the danger their work presented.

Katherine Gavzy is a member of the Pasadena branch of the League of Women Voters, and has been since the 1980s. Gavzy spoke about the impact that having older women activists around had on her, and how impressed she was by their dedication. Especially vivid to her was the memory of one former suffragist, Adele Martin, known for her scrupulousness and intelligence, who attended a meeting about local government. “[The speaker] looked out at the room, and he saw her, she was sitting at the back in her wheelchair, and he interrupted himself and said ‘Uh oh, I just saw Adele Martin at the back of this room. I better be sure I got my stuff

right,” Gavzy remembered. The power and importance of older women’s voices is something the Madres and Abuelas have demonstrated repeatedly over the decades since their formation, but it is not unique to their fight. Gavzy touched on the effect that women activists have had on each other since the time of the suffrage movement, highlighting how awareness of other women fighting against injustices leads more women to join that fight, similarly to how rural women began joining the Madres despite not living in Buenos Aires, because they were united around the common goal of finding their children.

Despite the differences between the League of Women Voters and the Madres and Abuelas, the importance of dedication to the cause is prominent in both groups. In both cases, what they are fighting for is not something easily achieved or measured, but rather difficult to accomplish, and perhaps never ending. The Madres and Abuelas seek to recover the disappeared and demand justice for them, while the League of Women Voters is dedicated to “making democracy work,” or ensuring that everyone who wants to vote and is eligible can vote. Because of government barriers and the difficulties in rallying people around politics, it is difficult to tell when these goals can be achieved, but nonetheless the activists and advocates remain devoted to their cause. “The more you do, the more you believe in what you do,” Gavzy said.

IV. Findings/Results

The Madres and Abuelas have employed a variety of techniques in order to achieve justice and be reunited with their families. Initially, the Madres marched around the Plaza de Mayo in order to bring awareness to the disappearances, wearing handkerchiefs embroidered with the names and information of their disappeared children to emphasize that they existed. As the government continued to ignore their pleas, they utilized new tactics, including tracing their silhouettes on paper and posting cutouts of these silhouettes around Buenos Aires to signify the

disappeared. Once the dictatorship was overthrown, the Madres continued to march in the Plaza de Mayo when they felt that the efforts of the new government to try old officials were insufficient. They also supported each other at trials for the officials who carried out orders to disappear their children and continue to support the families of victims of the dictatorship.

The Abuelas, whose focus shifted from justice for the disappeared to the reunion of children of the disappeared with their families, consulted with scientists to create a genetic test that can determine the parentage of a person based on their genes and their grandparents. Perhaps their most significant achievement is the establishment of a gene bank in Argentina in which the genetic information for Abuelas and other relatives of the disappeared is stored, so that people who think they might be children of the disappeared can continue taking the genetic tests, even once the Abuelas have passed away. They also advertise for this test via television advertisements and festivals that celebrate “identity.” The purpose of these festivals is to raise awareness about children of the disappeared to encourage them to get tested.

From examining advertisements created by the Abuelas, it became clear that the Abuelas highlight the importance of family and tradition in an individual’s own sense of identity. The advertisements often take place in homes, or with family members around, and emphasize the difficulties that doubts about identity pose to a person’s daily life. In one such advertisement, a woman holding her newborn child at the doctor’s office while accompanied by her mother is asked several questions about family health history by the doctor, and when the woman looks to her “mother” for guidance, she has no answers. It is implied that the new mother is secretly a child of the disappeared, and that because of this, her child will suffer from not knowing about what illness the family is inclined to. One of the oldest and most well-known advertisements by the Abuelas features the image of a man washing his face while a different face stares at him

from the mirror. The advertisement continues “Pedro existe. Mariano no lo sabe. Su abuela aún lo busca,” or “Pedro exists. Mariano doesn’t know. His grandmother is still looking for him.” This ad, which also takes place in a home, illuminates the Abuelas’ idea that without knowledge of their identity, the children of the disappeared are living half-lives, and unaware of who they are. Lastly, each advertisement ends with a version of the phrase “Si tienes duda de tu identidad...comunicate con las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo.” The repetition of this slogan cements the Abuelas as the foremost authority on the children of the disappeared, which will help in their mission to reunite all the children with their families.

It is evident that the Madres and Abuelas have been successful in achieving some of their goals. The military is no longer in power, 135 children of the disappeared have been reunited with their families, and in many places in Buenos Aires and the rest of Argentina, there are memorials to the desaparecidos affirming their existence and dignity. These memorials include both stone plaques that can be found around Argentina with the name, birthdate, and disappearance date of a desaparecido, and the ESMA Museum and Site of Memory, a monument to the desaparecidos located in the ESMA building, a torture center for desaparecidos. Since the 1980s, there have been a multitude of trials in both Argentina and other countries of the officials in the military dictatorship. With the government acknowledging that the disappearances did happen and seemingly working towards justice, the Madres and Abuelas could say that their work is done, but they continue to fight, not satisfied until every single desaparecido is accounted for and each grandchild is reunited with their family. Considering the scale of the Dirty War, with 30,000 people missing and 500 children taken from their families, these goals may never be achieved.

V. Conclusion/Reflections

The Madres and Abuelas use the idea of a traditional Argentine mother, one who sacrifices for her children no matter the cost, to achieve their goals of being reunited with their lost children and grandchildren, and finding justice for all desaparecidos. They embrace their status as mothers to add an emotional dimension to their political pleas, and their demonstrations against the government forever changed Argentine politics, society, and culture. Their persistence in finding their lost grandchildren led to the creation of a genetic test that could identify childrens' parents from their grandparents' genes, and led to the creation of the right to identity, which revolutionized social justice movements around the world. They faced the sexism of the Argentine government, and of the world as a whole, when they were initially treated as "crazy," but their dedication to the idea of motherhood allowed them to find a drive to continue their work.

There are still several unanswered questions that the Madres have, and for that reason, there are still several unanswered questions that this project also has, including the question that started their entire movement: Where are the disappeared?

This paper could have been clearer and more cohesive if it had focused primarily on the Abuelas and used the Madres as context, however, because so much of their work is interconnected, it is difficult to write about the Abuelas without writing about the Madres, and vice versa. Due to the outreach that the Abuelas continue to do to this day, and the multitude of advertisements they have created, along with their involvement in the creation of the genetic test and the establishment of the gene bank, there is simply more to analyze about their work than there is about the Madres' work. The Madres have set their focus on justice for the dead, while the Abuelas are focused primarily on the future for the living.

The reason why the Madres originally began protesting in the Plaza de Mayo is that there was no information about the disappeared and the newspapers were being silenced. Because of the lack of primary sources, it can be challenging to find information that is clear, reliable, or not contradictory to other sources. The inconclusiveness of the evidence available is a reminder of the near impossible task that the Madres and Abuelas faced and continue to face to this day, of finding justice and repairing a nation, while being surrounded by lies, threats, and confusion.

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