UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIATED MEMORIES OF THE BASQUE CONFLICT: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS AND POSITIONING STRATEGIES TOWARDS THEIR COLLECTIVE PAST

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Abstract:

A decade after the definitive cease-fire of the Basque separatist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the collective memory about the Basque armed conflict is still a disputed discursive terrain. Meanwhile, the first generation that has no direct memories on the violence(s) of the recent past is reaching adulthood, and thus, worries about which types of discourses and knowledge these young adults have about their collective past are growing. This thesis combines a discursive analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with 42 young people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s with a bibliographic analysis of their different discursive contexts, as well as participatory observation. Its aim is to explore the perceptions that members of the so-called *Generation Z* have about the conflict itself, as well as the social relationships involved in it, including their own position as interlocutors in the construction of collective memory. By conceptualizing the construction of collective memory as a broad social dialogue, the lack of involvement of young people is interpreted in terms of their social position and agency, as young people do not feel legitimated enough to engage in the discussion about the armed past. This thesis presents an inquiry into the reasons for this perception, and identifies some of the gaps in the discursive repertoire available to the young participants: these are, among others, the predominance of a macro-narrative that equates the concept of *conflict* with the physical manifestations of violence; the presence of an extended social view that perceives a diversity of narratives and experiences as a risk to social consensus; and, in more general terms, a hierarchy of experiences that positions young people's involvement as indirect or secondary in relation to the conflict. Finally, some of the psycholinguistic strategies that the youngsters employ in order to interact with their several discursive contexts are identified and analyzed. The summarizing argument poses that even without a formal policy of memory transmission, young people actually do actively engage in the debate on the Basque conflict by negotiating their own agency as valid interlocutors.

I must have been about ten years old.

The news opened with a communiqué;
There were three people, an axe, a snake.
and orders to remain silent in the living room.

I went to the bedroom, sat down on the bed.
A parent came first
and then called the other.

Each of them standing on each side.
and what I remember is this:
the image of the three of us in the mirror of the closet.

We've known this all our lives,
and how could I not decode it?

And here we are or
you have nothing to worry about.

But I thought I'd touched
in them too a fear
they didn't want to enter in me.

Itziar Ugarte Irizar, 'The communiqué'[1]
Gu gabe ere (Even without us), 2021

[1] Translation of the author of the thesis.

What does the one who remains silent say
when he remains silent?

M. Laboa / B. Atxaga, 'Our Words'
(Gernika Zuzenean, 2000)

Foreword: two personal memories on the path to this research

As a teenager, large panels were placed at the three road entrances to reach our village in sight of those who were coming. It said: "Municipality without death penalty", and below: "No to ETA". It was 2008: only one year was left for ETA to stop attacking, and three until its definitive truce. We were at the very end of an armed conflict that had begun half a century before, but at that moment, for most of the population, the conflict we had always known was as present as ever, and at the same time it was as absent as ever.

As a teenager who was just acquiring political consciousness, I was aware of the tense social atmosphere at the time: the last ceasefire had ended a year and a half before, and since then I had seen the adults around me raising their hands to their heads more often than usual. 2008 was the year in which a local city councilor of our province, Isaias Carrasco, was murdered, as well as the year in which major explosions took place at the campus of the University of Navarre and the headquarters of the Basque public television outlet EiTB. In our immediate context, it was also the year a bag exploded in the glittering building of a well-known local construction company; in December, the local businessman Inaxio Uria was shot dead.

At the same time, those were the years of other traumatic events that would shape the experience and conception of the conflict of those of us youngsters who had grown up in quite *abertzale*[2], but not particularly militant circles: the outlawing of political parties and youth organizations linked to the *abertzale* left[3], followed by extensive raids and detentions by the Police, which we often perceived as indiscriminate. Out of the 321 Basques who were arrested for political reasons in 2008, almost a half were young people between the ages of 15 and 29 (GazteAukera, 2009), including people of our similar age whom we knew personally. The images of the tortured Igor Portu and Mattin Sarasola that were published in January of that year were a warning sign of what might happen to all the detainees, along with the other images of tortured people that we had seen before

[2] *Abertzale* translates from Basque literally as *patriotic* and refers to the nationalist ideology or parties which campaign for a relatively high degree of autonomy for the Basque Country, albeit not all people who identify as *abertzale* are necessarily independentists. These sectors are usually referred to by the mainstream media as *nationalist*. However, I consider that this designation is a highly ideologically charged semantic choice, as it highlights only the nationalism of one community, while the nationalism inherent to most established parties in the Spanish political system remains invisibilized. Therefore, I will prioritize the term *abertzale* in order to refer to those parties or ideologies that hold on to a Basque-national framework, and *constitutionalist* parties when speaking about those who refer to a Spanish-national framework.

[3] The *abertzale left* is the leftist or progressive current of the above mentioned political ideologogies. It encompasses a whole range of political parties and social movements which in the past were often accused of being linked to ETA, sharing its aims and functioning as its political and social wing. Since the end of the armed conflict, the *abertzale* left has explicitly distanced itself from that view and is nowadays represented in the regional and Spanish parliaments by the political party EH Bildu.

and throughout our childhood. It was widely believed that arrests usually took place on Monday nights, so dozens of young people would spend those nights out of home. The rest of us would usually become informed by radio or by SMS on the next morning.

And yet we lived in a relative normality. We would sing singles of Beyoncé and Green Day with a similar enthusiasm as to any protest song from the Francoist era; at the school entrance we would comment on the results of the talent show we had seen on television the night before; and during our summer we would do language exchanges with overseas families, during which we would end up introducing ourselves as *Spanish*, because we were too lazy to engage in long explanations about national identity and didn't want to be seen as political geeks. The impact of our political context was invisible to us in our daily lives, or so we tried it to make it, until at some point an incident broke our routine and made us come out of our fog: running into a checkpoint of the military police, a call for a demonstration, or a TV coverage about an explosion somewhere close.

Therefore, the panels at the town entrances made me feel uncomfortable in a way I wasn't exactly able to identify. Every time I read that we were a "municipality without death penalty", I wondered who had taken the authority to make such a hyperbolic statement in my name. The death penalty was a legal punishment used by the United States' administration, which we in Europe associated with the electric chair, and which was in any case unthinkable here. What ETA was doing might be terrible, but it was something else. I felt that this transfer of concepts was a strategy to hinder rational discussion of the complex conflict that surrounded us in everyday life.

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A second memory, about a decade later. Ever since they know that I am researching on the topic of the memory of the Basque conflict, people around me have begun to share their private experiences with me on their own initiative. One of them is a close friend whom I have known since our early childhood, who I will here arbitrarily call Enara. While we are having an after dinner drink at the Herriko taberna[4], she narrates a childhood memory: her mother's family, who owned a small business in the 1990s, received a letter from ETA, demanding the family to pay what was usually and euphemistically called the *revolution tax*. Enara, speaking from the position of her seven-year-old self, recalls the older relatives sitting in her living room, debating who would take the money to the place indicated by the ETA mediator, until her mother offered herself. Enara remembers it as one of the most vivid memories of her childhood: "For a moment, I thought that I might not see my mother gain".

Considering that we had known each other long before that moment, I asked her why she had never spoken about that story. She shrugged her shoulders: "I didn't think it was important".

The conversation with Enara makes me worry about what can be said and what cannot in our present day context about the Basque armed conflict, and it makes me fear that the area of the unsayable is gaining territory. Just as Enara, almost any adult raised in the Basque Country could narrate a number of experiences that have left clear traces in their life, but the least decide to share them outside of their closest circle; and even within it, they hardly would. Most of us merely feel part of the chorus in a greater conflict that has more legitimate protagonists, and although we would have a dozen stories to tell, most of

[4] Local bar linked to the *abertzale* left, literaly translated as 'the bar of the people / of the country'.

them would be considered too trivial to be included in, let's say, a doctoral thesis; at most, we would relegate them to a humble prologue, as a personal and therefore always questionable addition.

History is made out of stories, wrote Manuel de Pedrolo; and, coming form a journalistic culture that looks at the microscopic aspects of reality, I agree with him. This thesis aims to value the usefulness of those many small stories. Not only that: it also aims to stress their necessity. Because without them, the spectrum of narratives about our collective past would become increasingly monochromatic.

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1. INTRODUCTION: 'THE FIRST POST-CONFLICT GENERATION'?

This thesis aims to analyze the discourses that young people in the Basque Country construct about the political violences of the past, as well as their positioning towards them. Over a decade has passed since Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the armed group dubbed as "Europe's last insurgency" (Whitfield, 2015, p. 2) declared its ultimate ceasefire in October 2011, a move that would be followed, seven years later, by its dissolution as an organization. According to the Spanish Interior Ministry, ETA and its "related groups" (Ministerio del Interior, 2018) might be responsible for the deaths of 853 people during its armed history between 1968 and 2011.

ETA's disarming brought "a new political era" (A. Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2022, p. 2) to the collective experiences of Basque society. The traditional coordinates that provided a strong basis for (self-)categorization and identification have become blurred within tendencies and discourses of a more global fashion, and this has prompted many political and social actors to redefine the issues that lie on the basis of the historical problem that has been called *the Basque conflict*. Without the interference of the armed element, questions such as the territoriality of the Basque Country or the survival of local languages are now being approached from a variety of perspectives, partly interwoven with ideologies that are present around the globe, such as ecologism or feminism (Larrinaga Renteria et al., 2020). Although it is yet to be analyzed how a metaphorical framework relating the Covid-19 to a war (Castro Seixas, 2021; Crespo-Fernández, 2021) and a subsequent heroization of state institutions (McCormick, 2020) have influenced our perception of state-framed references or the image of national and cultural minorities, it can be argued that the years between 2020 and 2022 have created an even larger perceived distance from the previous decade; concepts and forms related to the past, and, within it, to the Basque conflict, seem more remote than ever from the concerns of Basque citizens.

However, the fact that the armed conflict has apparently left such few traces in such a short time in our lives should make us at least suspicious: why do we speak so little about the political conflict and the violent campaign that shook our country for almost 60 years? Which are the reasons that induce broad social groups to silence? And, above all, which are the discourses and lessons that the new generations are receiving, and which are we denying them through that silence?

This doctoral thesis presents a discursive approach to the perceptions that young people socialized after the end of ETA's armed activity have about the violent past, and their engagement in the construction of collective memory. My study population comprises members of the so-called *Generation Z*, that is, people born in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, who were reaching adulthood during the years this research has taken place (2018-2023). On a global level, *zoomers* are characterized by being native users of highly developed digital technologies, which allows them to be part of several identity networks at the same time. This enables a greater fluctuation of identities, though also, as Amezaga Albizu (2009, p. 44) points out, a greater cultural homogenization. On a local level and regarding my field of research, they are the first generation of young adults who hold no direct memories on most of ETA's armed history: assuming that its last attack happened in 2009, most of its activity took place before the participants of this study were born, or when they were too young to create personal memories.

Therefore, the knowledge they have about the historical conflict is necessarily mediated, and the narratives they build in order to reconstruct the past and position themselves in accordance to it are interdiscursive. However, having grown up in a highly disputed discursive context, the narratives they have received are often full of voids or contradictory among themselves. Up to the moment of writing this thesis, no consensual narrative about the history of the Basque Country has been established, nor is there any didactic unit that addresses the topic explicitly and separately in most schools. The memory of the Basque conflict is an especially disputed issue in the political arena and the media; in fact, a retrospective de-legitimizing campaign of political interlocutors is taking place, up to the point of questioning whether the Basque conflict even deserves to be designated as a *conflict*.

These contradictions cause taboo and prevent many expressions in other social spheres, also in the most private ones. Many parents do not know how to speak with their children about events that may be too painful or too complex; and, in general terms, no culture of healthy discussion has been developed in Basque society. On the contrary, avoiding controversial topics in the name of *peace* has become the norm.

This is why the Basque case is a situation that brings "extraordinary difficulties to the memory of a violent past", as Eser and Peters put it (2016, p. 22). This is even more so for the youngsters who are constructing their political views and identities in the middle of a "formative period" that Astrid Erll (2017, p. 47) locates between the ages of 17 and 25. Comprehending the discourses and meaning-making processes that the youngsters are building now is crucial in order to understand the symbolic and discursive development of the Basque conflict.

However, not having a planned policy of transmission does not mean that the youngsters are not building any kind of memory. They may be approaching the conflict in a different manner from their elders, as their context is also quite different. It may be tempting to label this generation as the *first post-conflict generation* in the Basque Country; yet, by doing so, we would equate *the conflict* with ETA's violence, forgetting about the political and historic issues that lie on its ground, as well as its cognitive, symbolic and identitary dimensions. It is true that ETA's 2011 ceasefire brought an unquestionable turning point to the development of the conflict, and thus the experiences of those who were children at that time are different enough from the experiences of older generations to be analyzed. However, a number of issues that youngsters nowadays continue to experience are directly or indirectly linked to the Basque political and armed conflict. Among others, debates about the degree of administrative autonomy of the region are still going on, although with a lower intensity; the terminology linked to *self-determination* has been substituted by the concept of the *right to decide* (Alvarez Ortiz, 2020), aiming to address broader social groups. On the other hand, material realities that are direct consequences of the armed conflict can still be observed, such as the unclear future of over 150 Basque citizens who continue to be in prison accused of belonging to ETA, or the conflicts derived from the presence of the Civil Guard[5]. A decade after the end of ETA's attacks,

[5] This military police has historically had special powers in the Basque Country, under the argument of the *terrorist threat* that was assumed in the region. Together with the Spanish National Police, it is the armed institution that has detained most Basque citizens in the last decades for reasons related to the conflict, and

civil guards generally continue to live in military headquarters, and their relationship with the local population is either troubled or absent. The most iconic symbol of this problem is the Alsasua case[6] in Navarre (Agirrezabal Moreno & Intxusta Pagola, 2018). The political taint acquired by the case and the fact that it coincided with ETA's disarming process enhanced the feeling among large parts of Basque society that "terrorism can exist without terrorists" (Sagardoy-Leuza, 2020, p. 13).

This conception of the changing materiality of the conflict leads me to think that we have moved on to a rather symbolic phase of the Basque conflict. The military dispute has almost entirely been substituted by a discursive conflict, in which the truths about the past and the power relations involving it have become the focus. Young people have been socialized into this disputed context, and thus they have collected many types of cultural knowledge in the form of beliefs, emotions and norms of conduct. Nonetheless, the *battle about the narrative* leaves little space for discursive diversity, especially for those voices who allegedly have not experienced the conflict. Youths are therefore excluded to a marginal position of that new *battlefield*, stuck in a silence that is often wrongly interpreted as a lack of interest.

With this thesis, I wish to explore the symbolic, cognitive and relational processes that lie behind those attitudes. By employing Discourse Analysis and, more specifically, its Discursive-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017) as a theoretical-methodological basis, I aim to analyze the conceptualizations that young adults in the Basque Country build about the armed past, as well as the main discursive and cognitive strategies employed in order to position themselves in relation to it. Through the analysis of oral data collected in in-depth interviews as well as through complementary observation, I will situate the main definitions and conceptual frameworks constructed by the participants in their broader social and historical context, in order to examine how these youngsters engage in the construction of memory, that is, how they perceive and employ their discursive agency when building and sharing their narratives about the past. Hence, the approach proposed here necessarily addresses the construction of collective identities, as this is one of the main tools to position themselves as subjects within a certain discursive field. The cognitive-constructivist character of this approach conceives the construction of memory as an active process of meaning-making and learning, focusing on the agency and positioning of subjects. Or, in Larrinaga and Amurrio's terms (2022, p. 26), it assumes that socialization is not "a unidirectional influence but (…) a matter of options, autonomy and creativity".

The concern about the memory of the Basque conflict has been addressed so far from a variety of disciplines, such as Criminology and Transitional Justice (Bengoetxea, 2019; Heath-Kelly & Fernández de Mosteyrín, 2021), History (Majuelo Gil, 2020a; Mees, 2022), Sociology (A. Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2022; Larrinaga Renteria et al., 2020; Zubiaga, 2011), Political and Administration Sciences (Castells & Rivera, 2021;

at least 1.792 cases of torture and ill-treatment have been documented during the periods of incommunication after the detentions (Etxeberria et al., 2017).

[6] The *Altsasu* or *Alsasua case* refers to the trial against eight youngsters aged 20 to 25 who were arrested in October 2016 because of a fight with civil guards at a local bar. The prosecutor asked for prison sentences of up to 62 years for each of them, accusing them of terrorism. The judgement arrived three years later: they were not convicted for terrorism, but they were sentenced to 2 to 13 years in prison.

Rodríguez Fouz, 2021), Ethics and Philosophy (Sáez de la Fuente Aldama et al., 2020; Uson Gonzalez et al., 2017), Media Analysis (Murua, 2014), Anthropology (Zulaika, 2006; Zulaika & Murua, 2017), Literature (Martínez, 2018; Olaziregi, 2019) and Gender Studies (Galardi Fernandez de Agirre, 2021; García González, 2019). This thesis proposes a discourse-analytical approach that combines social, cognitive and linguistic perspectives in order to examine the situated meaning-making processes of concrete individuals in a broader context of political conflict.

Through this approach, I hope to clear some aspects of the mechanisms that underlie the social perceptions and identification processes of the concrete subjects that are being studied. Although it is questionable whether the results can be extrapolated to the overall population comprised by all their peers –which would imply the problematic choice of homogenizing all *young Basques* in one single category–, I defend that it is precisely the specificity and depth of this analytical approach that makes a contribution to the field, as well as providing a solid ground on which to base future paths of research.

The novelty of this study is two-fold. On one hand, the social problem in question (the construction of the memory of the Basque conflict) has seldom been addressed from the viewpoint of the youngsters. Rather than viewing them as an object of study, I consider them creators of valid discourses, whose activity is fundamental in the transformation of social and symbolic processes. At the same time, this thesis also aims to contribute to the field of Discourse Studies by proving to which extent complex social problems such as the construction of collective memories and the relationship towards the past can be understood through the analysis of language use.

This dissertation is structured in five main chapters[7]. Following this introduction, I will state the questions and aims that have guided my research, as well as some clarifications regarding the terminology employed and the stance of the author. Chapter 3 summarizes the academic literature on which I have grounded my research. This theoretical framework is based on three pillars: first, I explore the most relevant concepts and theories related to Collective Memory; secondly, I link them with concepts from Discourse Studies that focus on the narrative character of memory; and third, I provide a brief overview of the academic literature on the socialization of youth in contexts of conflict and especially on the generation that I am studying. In chapter 4 I will detail the methodological steps followed, arguing why I have prioritized Discourse Analysis as a method and providing a justification of the research design. The main results of the study are presented in chapter 5. Since I have conducted a discursive and therefore qualitative analysis, the transcription of oral data and evidences collected are presented hand in hand with their interpretation, structured according to the research questions explicited in chapter 2. Thus, the analysis also is organized in four parts or subsections: chapter 5.1. deals with the macro-narratives that the participants construct about the Basque conflict, and chapter 5.2. provides a map of the discursive repertoire they perceive in their social contexts, whereas chapters 5.3. and 5.4. deal with the construction of collective identities within discourse, positioning strategies and other discursive means employed by the youngsters in order to face their collective past. The sixth and last chapter of this thesis

[7] Please note that this is a summarized version of the original thesis. Some chapters have been re-organized and merged for the purpose of economizing.

will resume and discuss the main findings of my research, acknowledging its limits and visibilizing possible pathways for the future, followed by a detailed bibliography.

"We never look at just one thing", wrote John Berger (2000, p. 14 [1972]): "We are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves". Hence, concerns about the memories that young people are building necessarily conduct us to inquiring which is the self-image and the place in which they position themselves within that broad social discussion which is the construction of memory. This thesis proposes an approach towards the understanding of a concrete aspect of a complex social problem: the symbolic and cultural development of conflicts and the collective identities interwoven in it.

2. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

2.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of research of this thesis are the discourses that members of the newer generations in the Basque Country build about the history of the local armed and political conflict. It assumes that the Basque Country is in a phase of transition since 2011, as the end of ETA's violence marked a major turning point in the lived experiences of most Basque citizens. Thus, we are now in a decisive moment in which to look back and establish the discourses for the collective future: the discursive map that is being built in the current years will greatly influence the views and interpretations of future societies about the violent period between 1968 and 2011.

In this context, the processes of perception, meaning-making and reconstruction of young people are crucial. On one hand, being a generation that has almost no personal memories on the armed period, a cognitive and emotional distance towards it can be presupposed from them, unlike from older generations. On the other hand, the fact that their political socialization has taken place concretely during this transition-phase of the Basque conflict adds some particular features to their construction of collective identities, and identifying them can be useful in order to understand the possible positions or practices they may take up in the future.

Many concerns about the memory of the Basque conflict have been raised in recent years, fostered among others by a number of anniversaries of historical events and attacks realized by ETA in the past. The media has also begun to move its focus onto young people, presenting the names of victims and dates of historical events they do or do not know as informative curiosities (Nieto et al., 2021; Radio Bilbao, 2021). These approaches, however, generally see the transference of knowledge about the past from the viewpoint of historians or pedagogues. To date, no thorough qualitative research that examines the discursive processes of meaning-making and re-interpretation of the past has been conducted with young people themselves, with the exception of a few quantitative studies based on survey questionnaires.

Hence, this thesis aims to identify how the attitudes of young people towards their collective and conflictive past, as well as towards the several discursive contexts involved, are expressed through language.

To this end, I have distinguished four aims, which I will formulate through four research questions:

1. Which are the macro-narratives constructed by the youngsters about their concept of the *Basque conflict* and the actors involved in it?
2. Through which channels are they exposed to discourses about the conflict, and how do they construct meanings based on them?
3. How do the speakers position themselves towards the narrated events, and how do they express that positioning through discourse?
4. Which psycholinguistic strategies do they employ in order to approach the discursive area surrounding the Basque conflict?

With the first question, I wish to bring to light the propositional content of their discourses about the Basque conflict, that is, which are the events, actors and dates that are mostly recalled, and how they are organized and classified narratively.

Through the second question, I aim to examine how they perceive their discursive context, i.e. which sources of information they are aware of, and how they re-organize the meanings interpreted from them.

With the third question, my intention is to identify their discursive positioning, that is, how they situate themselves as subjects within their several discursive contexts in regard to the armed conflict as a topic.

And with the last question, I intend to examine some of the psycholinguistic strategies employed in order to cohere the diverse mental models about the past with their contemporary positions and discourses.

The starting hypothesis assumes a lack of discursive resources: when I drafted the first proposals for this thesis back in 2017, ETA's final disarmament act was yet to be carried out, and its activity was therefore considered not to be completely over by a great part of society and the media. The knowledge and attitudes of young people were not on the agenda, but the debate about the need for didactic content that would specifically thematize the period between 1968 and 2011 was already under way in educational institutions (Goikoetxea, 2019). Having noticed that the subject was also avoided in the social context, I became concerned about the limits of the discursive repertoire available to the new generations, which ultimately motivated this research.

2.2. THE POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER: SOME CLARIFICATIONS ON THE TERMINOLOGY EMPLOYED

While tracing the object of study, the researcher becomes inevitably confronted with an obvious hurdle: up to date, there is no agreed-upon formulation to designate the political violence of the last half-century. Any terminological choice is assumed to be associated with a certain ideological attitude, insofar it implies a choice of a certain interpretative framework. Unlike other contexts such as the Northern Irish, where the term *Troubles* has become a consensual designation of the conflict, in the Basque Country we have collected a broad designating repertoire in the last decades. Some authors have prioritized denominations of a rather generalizing character for the purpose of granting a broad view on the issue, such as “the Basque problem” (Aguilar, 2003; Whitfield, 2015; Zulaika & Murua, 2017); “the Basque case” (Bengoetxea, 2019), or “the Basque question” (Molina, 2010). Other definitions have focused on the violent expressions of that conflict and highlighted its features or causes, naming it “Basque terrorism” (López Romo, 2021), or, earlier, “*abertzale* terrorism” (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2005, p. 90); approaches which, in any case, frame the conflict as an undesirable element and place it within the agency of Basque people.

For the purpose of this study, I will prioritize the term *Basque conflict*. On one hand, because that has also been the choice of a number of authors affiliated to the faculty in which this thesis has been developed (Arana Arrieta et al., 2016; Ramírez de la Piscina Martínez et al., 2016), as well as the term employed by the newspaper *Berria* (O. Urain, 2022), which is considered a major reference in the Basque-speaking area. On the other

hand, I do so in order to situate the problem under study in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, additionally to Memory Studies; thus acknowledging the variety of historical, political, symbolic and ethical aspects that influence its multi-dimensional and complex character.

Hence, I part from an approach based on Johan Galtung's Conflict Theory (2013), which does not oppose the concepts of *conflict* and *peace*, but argues that conflict is a constant feature of societies, which may or may not have violent expressions. Similarly, the concept *violence* is attached to several levels of materiality and expression. According to Galtung, violence may be *direct*, when its consequences are physical or evident; but it may also be *cultural*, referring to the ideological, cultural and linguistic expressions that legitimize the former; or it can be *structural*, that is, related to the inequalities that result from the social and political order. The escalation in any of these areas can lead to the use or threat of physical violence (Lederach, 1998).

Violence would therefore be one possible way of dealing with conflicts, but not the only one; whereas peace is not conceived as the absence of violence, but as a transformation of the conflict towards non-violent expressions (Galtung, 1996). Both Galtung and Lederach view peacemaking as a process that involves social role dynamics and cognitive processes, additionally to mere diplomacy or the signature of peace accords. The discursive aspect becomes especially relevant in these processes, because the transformation of interpretative schemata and imaginaries created by the conflict requires "creativity" (Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p. 98), in the sense of transforming the manners of viewing and interpreting the relations among social groups. This "leads us to examine the framework of the subjective", according to Lederach (1998, p. 54); that is, "the perceptions accumulated generation after generation and the fear and hatred deeply rooted". This process also implies a will for openness and understanding on all sides, which Lederach defines as "paradoxical curiosity" or "a permanent respect for complexity that refuses to succumb to the pressures of obligatory dual categories of truth" (2007, p. 71)".

It has been widely studied what conflicts do with people; I would like to shed some light on what people do with conflicts. Thus, the approach proposed here frames the object of study –the discourses of younger generations– within a perspective that encompasses the relevant historical, political and social developments of the Basque conflict, and, especially, within a "social history" (Majuelo Gil, 2020b, p. 318) marked by the development of modes of thought and reasoning of people. In fact, as Zulaika has proved (1990), setting forth any historical review of a conflict without taking note of the interpretations and meaning-making processes that take place within society would lead to a very limited view, because it would leave aside the idiosyncratic narratives that society itself builds about the actors and events involved in the conflict, as well as the "ritual roles" (Zulaika, 1991, p. 228) attached to them. The fact that both are socially agreed-upon constructs does not undermine their relevance; it is precisely the utility they acquire within a certain community and the truthfulness attributed by it which turns them into powerful discourses. "Political violence has always had philosophical legitimation", argues Ruiz Olabuénaga (1985, p. 29). Furthermore, the question as to whether the content of the legitimizing discourse corresponds with the "real causality" (Ibid.) of the violence is not necessarily a determining factor of its symbolic power.

Hence, the importance of observing the symbolic development of the conflict is more than justified. The many types of violences occurred during the Basque conflict wouldn't either be comprehensible without taking into account the interpretations that the social groups did about them in each historical period. Individual attitudes are guided by thoughts, and these can lead to actions and decisions with physical consequences (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 89); thus, knowing the cognitive and emotional aspects that lie behind any political movement is necessary in order to understand its development.

The change within the interpretative schemata used by many Basques to asses ETA's activity can only be understood in these terms. First, there was a change in the framework constructed and reinforced through many concepts that were widely used outside of the Basque Country, such as *independence*, *self-determination*, etc. Second, a very generalized repression against ETA hit many social actors who were not directly involved in the armed conflict, and the fatigue of these kinds of sufferings led many people to seek alternative solutions. Third, the cognitive and positioning processes of many citizens cannot be analyzed without acknowledging the impact of the widespread conception of *terrorism* globalized after 2001.

The Basque conflict is an interesting case of how the different material and symbolic dimensions of violence are intertwined, not least because of the "virtual" character of its resolution process (Whitfield, 2014, p. 241). The absence of a consensual or official *final point* leaves it up –even more– to particular interpretations to decide when did the conflict move from a very violent expression towards a phase of lower intensity, and leaves the several possible definitions of *peace* open.

Webel and Galtung distinguish two models of peace: *negative peace* refers to the conception of peace as the disappearance of violence, whereas its *positive* variant requires some kind of cooperation of the agents involved (Webel & Galtung, 2007, p. 31). Conflicts such as those in Northern Ireland have shown that a model promoted solely "from above" (Ife, 2007, p. 171), that is, involving only the highest social spheres in the peace process does not resolve certain tensions in society's everyday life. Thus, the participation of all actors is relevant, starting from the groups that disarm up to ordinary citizens: "What needs to be uncovered goes far beyond an objective appraisal of harms done (…). There needs to be an understanding of who did what, for what reasons, with what intentions" (Santa-Barbara, 2007, p. 176).

Some of the victim encounters that have taken place in the context of the Basque conflict confirm the usefulness of this approach. They generally assume that the personal and social aspects of reconciliation must be addressed separately; the act of forgiving would therefore belong to the former, while the construction of guarantees of non-repetition would be linked to the latter. "Reconciliation does not require enemies to become friends, but to respect one another, and to accept each other as members of the same society" (Uriarte, 2012, p. 24). Plurality of voices is therefore crucial, for without it there is no knowledge of the Other. "All accounts must have the same degree of visibility, the same social rejection, and the same effort to be clarified", claimed Karmen Galdeano, one of the invited victims/speakers at those encounters (Galdeano, 2012, pp. 54–55): "We are aware that we will probably not be able to write a single truth, but we believe that we can build the basis of our coexistence between each and all of them".

2.3. DISCLAIMER: APPROACHING THE BASQUE CONFLICT AS A DISCURSIVE AREA

Although the violence occurred in the context of the Basque conflict is a recurrent topic in this thesis, the aim of this research is not to account for it or to demand accountability, neither by proposing an exercise revisionism of practices realized in its context nor by discussing their legitimacy. Instead, it seeks to deepen in the complexity of the problem of the symbolic and identitary aspects of meaning-making processes about a shared past. My aim is to understand part of the contemporary development of the historical conflict from a discursive perspective. Hence, for the purpose of this study, I propose to approach the *Basque conflict* as a discursive area, that is, as a symbolic space that allows certain expressions and attitudes, which is constructed on the memory of discourses previously expressed, and, at the same time, has the power to influence the cognitive structures of the subjects that are involved in it. More precisely, I will focus on the efforts made by these subjects in order to (re-)shape that space. Or, in other words: building the memory of the Basque conflict means participating in a *social discussion* that implies the whole society. By analyzing the voices involved in that metaphorical discussion and the social relations between them, we may shed some light on the norms and rules that prevail in that space.

As a consequence, I take up a critical stance towards the perspective implied by the conception of the construction of memory as a *battle about the narrative.* As I will argue throughout the thesis, expecting a single-voiced narrative to predominate in the construction of collective memories would lead us to remain caught in the confrontational schemata inherent to the conflict. Although cultural memory seeks hegemony, social memory is always multi-voiced; denying that fact and accepting the possibility or desirability of a single narrative would be a clear act of power. Thus, it would be more appropriate to speak about *narratives*, in plural. Feminist critiques formulated with regards to the writing of history have shown that visibilizing a single type of violence often leads to the invisibilization of *other* violences (Reverter, 2022). Following those approaches, thus, it would be more coherent to prioritize the use of plural nouns, by speaking of *violences*, *memories* and *narratives*.

3. STATE OF THE ART

The theoretical basis on which this research is grounded proposes an interdisciplinary approach by combining concepts from three areas of knowledge. First, I propose Memory Studies as a general framework. Secondly, I resort to cognitive-constructive concepts and approaches from Discourse Studies in order to understand how the reconstructive character of collective memory is materialized through language. And third, I will briefly examine the academic literature on the roles of youth in the social development after political and armed conflicts.

3.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON THE COLLECTIVE CHARACTER OF MEMORY

This research is to be framed within approaches that focus on the social or collective aspect of memory. When members of a generation who have no direct memories about a conflict recall past events, they are inevitably building on some kind of collective memory, among others because they construct their mental models and narratives about the conflict or the actors involved in it through the help of external discourses. It is a socially and symbolically constructed and mediated memory.

Although the first concerns about the constructive and symbolic character of memory and other cultural meaning-making processes reached sociological theories by the early 20th century (Erll, 2017, p. 18), Maurice Halbwachs' theory on Collective Memory is considered to be one of the main predecessors of this sociocognitive turn. He introduced the concept of *social frameworks of memory*, which are to be understood metaphorically as "the instruments used by the collective memory in order to re-construct an image of the past in tune with the dominant thinking of society in each time[8]" (Halbwachs, 2004b, p. 19). According to Halbwachs, memory is always a socially mediated process of (re)construction of meaning, which is learned by the individual through socialization, that is, by locating their views and thoughts in a broader context of "collective time and space, and within a collective history" (Halbwachs, 2004a, p. 61).

> "We can speak about collective memory when we recall an event that used to occupy a place in the life of our group, and when we remember it now from the point of view of that group." (Ibid. 2004a, p. 36)

These ideas would be the predecessors of the "cognitive turn" (Hart, 2015, p. 322) that would also reach linguistics. This approach is characterized by its focus on the active role that speakers / individuals adopt when "coding and activating" meanings within a social context (Echterhoff & Kopietz, 2018, p. 113) while engaging in any kind of communicative event. As such, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued for the need of a sociology of language in order to understand the sociology of knowledge: "Knowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 84).

[8] Some of the references provided here are quotes of versions of the original work that have been translated [mostly into Spanish, as is the case with Halbwachs' works], but at the same time, they have been translated again by the author of this thesis in order to fit this summary. Therefore, the resulting English quote may differ slightly from the text one would find in the official English version of the book.

Following Halbwachs' steps, Pierre Nora distinguished between "lived memory", which he related to ritual practices in the everyday life of social groups, and "history", namely, the regulated and mediated reconstruction of that memory, realized *a posteriori*; "the intellectual operation that turns [live history] intelligible" (Nora, 1984, p. XVIII). Nora's *lieux de mémoire* are any object, space, ritual or symbol that has the function of re-activating the memory of past events, or "remains" of that lived past, which is "half official and half institutional, half affective and sentimental; places of consensus that do not express a militant power of persuasion nor a passionate participation, but which still represent some vestige of a symbolic life" (Ibid., XXV).

Many authors have since then questioned this clear distinction between memory and history (Lowenthal, 1998; Macdonald, 2013), arguing that the unique and universal History which attributes to itself being the carrier of objective truths is also a narrative construction which depends on a series of linguistic, hierarchizing and organizing strategies. Critical perspectives have pointed at the fact that the official history tended to visibilize especially the stories of the victors, and to invisibilize those of the victims (Benjamin, 1980).

Macdonald approaches this problem from a pragmatic perspective, arguing that a clear-cutting distinction implies a debate on the veracity of a plurality of accounts:

> "[This question] cannot be answered in general terms and requires clarification of what is meant by 'truth' (…) The more important issue is the specific contexts, motives and frameworks of production of the various accounts and their forms of veracity. Also significant (…) is how the terms themselves are variously defined and deployed in their use, and the evaluations that they are given." (Macdonald, 2013, pp. 13–14)

Many historians have since defended the need of writing a *social history* that would do justice to the lived experiences of ordinary citizens. "The social memory, like the individual memory, is selective", argued Peter Burke (1997, p. 46); thus, "we need to identify the principles of selection and to note how they vary from place to place or from one group to another and how they change over time. Memories are malleable, and we need to understand how they are shaped and by whom, as well as the limits to this malleability".

Burke addresses the question of the possible *uses* of the past, an issue also approached by Aleida and Jan Assmann in their Theory of Cultural Memory. According to these authors, two main uses of the past can be distinguished: a *communicative memory*, based on everyday relations of communication (J. Assmann, 1988, p. 10) and a *cultural memory*, built by the objectivized culture that collects meanings about the collective past in the long term (Ibid., 11). Both function as a symbolic basis of the self-definition of the group, but their difference relies on the temporal horizon of the events they adopt as references, in terms of the lifetime of the generation that remembers.

The Theory of Cultural Memory aims at explaining the link between memory, culture and group identity. Cultural Memory, insofar it represents and nourishes the self-image of the group, also implies a normative view about the group's system of values and rules. This is why it is inherent to cultural memory to seek hegemony, because basic questions about the existence and the cohesion of the group are "negotiated" (Erll, 2017:115) in that field.

This conceptualization of memory has become dominant in Cultural Studies, and as such, most social and semiotic approaches understand collective memory as a discursive construction that is closely linked to collective identity and the self-image of the group, as well as to the consciousness of its continuity. According to Erll (2017), this process is culturally shaped and can adopt different materialities depending on the context:

> "Memories are not objective representations of past perceptions, let alone of a past reality. They are subjective and selective reconstructions that depend on the situation in which they are reconstructed. To remember is an operation of putting together (*re-membering*) available data, which takes place in the present. Versions about the past change with each act of remembering, similarly to the changing present. (…) Thus, individual and collective memories are never a reflection of the past, but they are signs of the present needs and interests of those who remember" (Erll, 2017, pp. 6–7)

In short, collective memory is to be understood metaphorically, as it refers to a system of representations. Individual memories can impossibly become part of the memory of the group without the mediation of a symbolic process. Furthermore, the memory of the group is not equal to the sum of individual memories, nor a collection of them: "It is a reconstructed story that establishes the framework for individual memories, so that the individual can recognize himself or his experiences in it" (A. Assmann, 2020, p. 17).

3.2. THE USES OF MEMORY

3.2.1. The construction of identities

This *re-membering* function of memory operates in a double way: it implies a process of choosing, organizing and displaying the most relevant data about the past; and at the same time it has a cohesive effect for the group that evokes past experiences, because it provides answers to questions linked to its identity, such as 'Who are we?' or 'Where do we come from?'. "In the moment the group remembers its past, it feels that it continues to be the same, and it adopts conscience of its identity through time" (Halbwachs, 2004a, p. 87). The interpretation of each individual member would be a point of view within this net, but the discourses that are built as a result are "are more than the aggregation of individual subjectivities" (Olick et al., 2011, p. 227): they are a shared system of symbols.

Jan Assmann defines collective identity as "the image a group builds about itself, with which the members of the group identify" (J. Assmann, 1992, p. 132). Erll points out that it would be more precise to speak about collective *identities*, since many social groups cohabit and individuals are part of more than one of them, therefore becoming "intersectional points" (Erll, 2017:105) among them.

Collective identities built on a shared memory are characterized by a longer lifespan than the one that encompasses only the lived experiences of the generation that remembers, and they are constructed in relation to an alterity. The selection of events and features that will be collectively recalled depends to a large extent on the current interests of the group, such as strengthening its internal cohesion or legitimizing its aims and actions. Therefore, we may argue that the object of memory is not the past, but rather the future: it is a "process of looking at the past and building it from the present, which is usually done looking ahead" (Leizaola, 2010, p. 360).

Narratives about the history of the ingroup often take the shape of "foundational myths" (J. Assmann, 2011, p. 63), i.e. accounts of the group's historical continuity and essential features. These narratives are perceived as a crucial part of collective identities (Stone & Hirst, 2014, p. 315); their traces can be identified in the group's institutions, traditions, cultural expressions and individual attitudes, among others (Halbwachs, 2004a, p. 54), as members of the group attach a specific meaning to them. Individuals that have joined the group in later times will not personally remember the events described in those narratives, but they will acquire the necessary codes in order to interpret them through those traces.

This definition- and reproduction process of the ingroup inherently entails a question about alterity. When remembering, the group "emphasizes externally the differences that it plays down internally" (J. Assmann, 1992, p. 26). This idea has also been developed in Discourse Studies: through processes of social categorization, individuals tend to classify the social world into ingroups (or *We*) and outgroups (or *Others*), motivated by a will to highlight a positive image of one's own group (Devine & Schubotz, 2010, p. 9). Van Dijk describes this polarizing scheme as an "ideological square" (1996, p. 21):

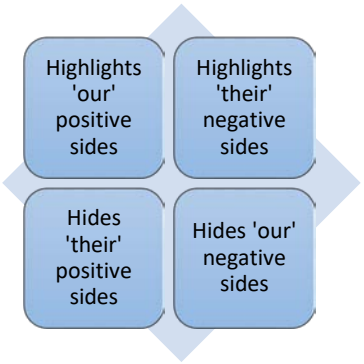

Figure 1: Van Dijk's 'ideological square'.

These discursive structures are common in memory narratives about the group's past or in contexts in which the truth of contesting accounts is disputed; thus, memory often takes the form of a self-justifying narrative structure. In fact, collective memory has been widely used in order to build and strengthen national identities (Leizaola, 2010). Rather than providing a mere chronology of events, these narratives also build causal relations, providing "an explanatory and evaluative framework for understanding how and why events unfold as they do" (Fivush, 2010, p. 89).

It is common for political and social conflicts (whichever the type and level of violence involved) to be followed by memorialistic disputes; that's why memory can also be a divisive tool. "Memory is never unitary, no matter how hard various powers try to make it so", writes Olick (2011, p. 8): "There are always subnarratives, transitional periods, and contests over dominance". This leads him to define nations as "practices" that are continuously materialized. From a memory perspective, a nation is a collective identity that is built through repeated narrativization.

3.2.2. The establishment of frameworks as a means for the interpretation of the social context

Memory provides a cognitive *map* that enables individuals to *navigate* through contemporary sociocultural contexts and infer meaning from symbols of past times. Thus,

Cultural Studies focus on "the processes through which cultural semantics are fixed and newly combined and on the (mass)medial instrumentalities that enable 'second hand' memories" (Erll, 2017, p. 107).

Moreover, knowledge of the past, materialized in narratives or socially constructed *frames*, provides a "background understanding" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) based on which we can infer the necessary information from our social experiences. These frames function as standarized social evaluations, because new information is "placed, perceived, identified and labeled" (Ibid.) in their terms. On the other hand, interpretative frames also have an economizing function (Erll, 2017:79): knowledge about the past is organized in cognitive *Gestalts* (Osmanska-Lipika, 2012, p. 53), as the human mind prioritizes coherent forms rather than fragments (Peterman, 1932, p. 30). Mental frames function similarly, insofar they maintain the essential information about an event in memory, while erasing or transforming the data that is not in line with the "construction of the general image" (Wertsch, 2002, p. 8). Thus, when confronted with a new situation, speakers tend to choose the information that seems most relevant for the frame they are interpreting the situation through.

3.2.3. Mastering trauma of the past

During the western European "memory boom" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 2) of the second half of the twentieth century and especially after the accounts of the crimes during the Holocaust began to reach a wider public opinion, a change of paradigm took place within the sociological approaches to memory. Trauma literature spread to social terms, and *how to deal with the past* became a major topic of discussion among the institutions and nation-states of the time (Habermas, 1986), as well as a concern about the rights of victims.

Up until then, trauma had been defined as a "phobia of memory" (Van der Kolk et al., 1994, p. 585) in which memories of painful pasts remained fixed in the minds of individuals, because they could not be "liquidated" through narrativization (Caruth, 1995, p. 153). Following a clear Freudian perspective, it was considered necessary to "raise" the trauma "onto the level of language and consciousness" (A. Assmann, 2009, p. 37) in order to heal.

As a result, most public acts of commemoration nowadays usually include the expression and recognition of some kind of painful experience of the past. Memory narratives can thus establish "the moral agenda of the present" (Poole, 2008, p. 159), also fulfilling a normative function insofar they dictate which sufferings deserve to be shared and remembered. The representation of past harm is constructed through cultural codes with a clear identity-building function: victims become bodies of memory that symbolize the "moral life" (V. Das, 2008, p. 415) of the group, and thus often play a cohesive or "integrative" (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2017, p. 22) role. Thus, the question regarding which is the collective subject that these acts interpellate becomes more than relevant, as well as which tensions within this group are sought to be eased through these representations.

In this process, it is also important to keep in mind who establishes the discourses about past violations, who is addressed as responsible and whose rights are presented as such (Webel & Galtung, 2007, pp. 167–168), especially in the case of disputed pasts, as this will provide us much information about the power relations behind those acts of

remembrance. According to Aleida Assmann, the monologic character of national memories usually stems from an interest to construct a positive self-image:

> "When facing negative events of the past, there are only three dignified roles for the national collective to assume: that of the victor who has overcome the evil, that of the resistor who has heroically fought the evil and that of the victim who has passively suffered the evil. Everything else lies outside the scope of these memory perspectives and is conveniently forgotten." (A. Assmann, 2009, pp. 40–41)

Thus, public discourses that address past human rights violations often take the shape of "redemptive narratives" (Toolis & Hammack, 2015, p. 55) contextualized in a "semantic of guilt" (J. Assmann, 1999, p. 86). This applies both to post-WWII Europe as well as to several governments on the global arena, which have derived into an "age of apologies" (Zoodsma & Schaafsma, 2021, p. 10), up to the point of becoming "memorylands" (Macdonald, 2013, p. 2) from which future generations can obtain a moral lesson, in line with the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("mastering the past") extended in German memorialistic culture (A. Assmann, 2009, p. 39).

All these approaches assume that a considerable part of the past harm can be compensated through its public verbalization and recognition, while the recognizing power moves into a better light. They also imply that trauma can be passed on from generation to generation, up to the extent that the experiences of previous generations may "shape" those of the next, in what Marianne Hirsch called *Postmemory* (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). Critiques to this approach have argued, however, that these kind of "disconnection" (van Alphen, 2006, p. 487) must rather be analyzed from a relational perspective, because the indexicality that characterizes memory is not taken into account in the definition of the concept.

Similar critiques have been formulated towards the literature of trauma. Although it is widely accepted that the experience of a major harm questions the *narrative self* of the victims and forces them to re-narrativize their experience (Pemberton, 2018), they defend that overcoming trauma is a question of "agency and control" (Green et al., 2020, p. 578) that depends on the possibilities that the discursive context offers, as well as on other social factors that enable the expression of painful experiences.

3.2.4. Forgetting and silencing

Remembering always implies a series of choices: when narrativizing experiences, certain aspects are highlighted and others are left out of the narrative. Therefore, what is silenced may be as relevant as what is said. Fivush (2010, p. 89) argues that both voice and silence are "negotiated, imposed, contested, and provided", and that the agency of each subject to influence those processes depends on the social position they hold in that interaction.

As a general principle, we may assume that the voices of the powerless tend to be invisibilized in the dominant narratives, as their credibility is also questioned and power is closely related to the "production of truth" (Foucault, 1992, p. 140). Voluntary or self-imposed silence may also stem from a search for coherence in the self-image, as the unconscious and taken-for-granted collection of knowledge about the social world that Pierre Bourdieu defined as *doxa* (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 122), creates a "non-political, non-discussable space" (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2015, p. 224) which hinders the expression of

discourses that may challenge the dominant schemes of society. Hirszsowicz et al. (2007, pp. 75–76) propose the term *non-memory* to designate the narratives that are intentionally left out of public memory, "leading to collective amnesia, which emerges as a raison d'etat".

Finally, there is also an approach that views silence as a means for empowerment. According to this, the hegemonic character of many discourses is precisely made explicit through its need not to be expressed. "[W]hen power gives voice, silence is oppressive, but when power gives silence, voice is justification" (Fivush, 2010:94). However, it is also in these voids in which some authors see an opportunity to negotiate and build counter-discourses of memory, that is, to introduce into the debate accounts on the social history of minorities that may challenge "repressive or merely complacent systems of prescriptive memory" (Davis & Starn, 1989:5).

3.3. PUBLIC MEMORY AND COUNTER-MEMORY IN THE BASQUE EXPERIENCE

In the Basque and Spanish context, the term *historical memory* refers to the human right violations produced throughout the 1936-1939 Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship under Francisco Franco's commands. The term suggests the presence of a counter-narrative, opposing *historical memory* to an official, "one and unitary memory" (Leizaola, 2010, p. 353) that was established by the victors of the war, the francoists.

The political transition in the 1970s through which Spain evolved from a dictatorship to a parliamentary monarchy was also based on an "implicit pact of forgetting" (Aguilar, 2003, p. 143), on condition of not thematizing the atrocities of the past. A discourse that framed the war as a tragic "collective madness" (Ibid., 132) was established, according to which all sides were equally guilty for the harm. Bernecker (2009, p. 135) argues that this view of a "national tragedy" causes mental distancing, as well as invisibilizing the systematic violations carried out by Franco's regime. Aleida Assmann (2009, p. 34) specifies that the power relations involved in the conflict were so unequal that the Pact of Forgetting *de facto* had the "one-sided effect of offering a general amnesty to the Francistic functionaries". There was no experience of Transitional Justice "of any sort" until 40 years later (Bengoetxea, 2019, p. 590), and the Pact hindered "any kind of accountability or requests for reparation" (Leizaola, 2007, p. 487) that the victims of the regime could possibly expect. Hence, the social silence in the postwar and post-francoist era must be interpreted, among others, in terms of a disfavourable discursive context.

The "symbolic system of Francoism" (Bernecker, 2009, p. 127) also continued to be present. Apart of the many spaces, rituals and monuments that still materialize and transmit its memory, the "not only physical, but also political, symbolic and social landscape" (Ferrándiz, 2011, p. 527) formed by the mass graves of the thousands of republicans murdered by the francoists also established the discursive-symbolic bases of the regime, which, according to Ferrándiz (2009, p. 86) fulfilled a warning function, insofar they "hindered the creation of narratives that would be socially legitimized, as well as consolidated spaces of mourning".

The victims of Francoism did not have a public voice until the first decade of the 2000s, when several regional parliaments began to publicly ask for the moral reparation and recognition of those executed by the regime. The Spanish Government approved the Law on Historical Memory in 2007, which provided support to the exhumation of mass graves.

This led to a "cathartic moment" (Leizaola, 2007, p. 487) in which a part of the victims "often for the first time, decided to freely speak", interrupting "the official amnesia" and transforming large parts of the public opinion (Ferrándiz, 2011, p. 542). In the following years, several institutions of memory and for the documentation of human right abuses were created throughout the territory.

In the Southern Basque Country[9], this belated memory boom coincided in time with the last phase of another troublesome period, as the first decade of the 2000s also was the last decade of ETA's armed activity. ETA had been established during the dictatorship and had taken up arms in the iconic year 1968, in the midst of youth protests, uprisings and decolonization processes around the globe. However, that context had visibly changed by the early 2000s, especially after the globalization of discourses on terrorism and the *war on terror*. By the time ETA disarmed, public institutions that provided not only recognition to victims, but also economic reparation and voice were established both locally and internationally. Thus, "although being linked to an undesirable situation" (Gatti, 2016, p. 119), the role of the *victim* became a contested social status that moved to the center of most political debates. Similarly, the legitimacy that stems from that position spreads out to the social and political identities represented by the victims.

However, among the discourses on past violations, the 1936-1939 Civil War and the first decades of francoism have become eclipsed by the prominence of the troublesome period centered around ETA's armed activity. We are therefore experimenting a surge in commemorative practices marked by anniversaries of iconic actions that took place in the 80s and 90s, which often are the first opportunity to learn about those events for young people socialized in the period after ETA's disarmament.

3.4. THE TRANSMISSION OF MEMORY

Collective memory is reflected in cultures of remembrance (Erll, 2017:98), that is, in shared symbolic systems that are built within concrete communities. There is no memory that is independent of cultural systems, as every act of remembering is a semiotic process of "*re*-construction" (Huyssen, 1995, p. 2) of the past. Meanings are differently coded into signs in such a manner that members of the same cultural context can interpret them correctly (Lotman, 1993; Posner, 2008).

This is why Wertsch (2002, p. 5) argues that memory is a dynamic and "mediated action" which implies both a material and a cognitive dimension, including the affective, historical, political and cultural (Shahzad, 2011, p. 389) aspects of interpersonal relations and their social context. Oral, written or audio-visual language functions as a medium of memory or "interfaces between the psychic and social levels of collective memory" (Erll, 2017:101), insofar it provides the means to materialize and share meanings and mental models about past events. Mass media that construct public memory build on a "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg, 2003, p. 148) that enables new subjective experiences among individuals who have no other relation to the events that are represented.

[9] I refer to the Southern Basque Country when speaking about the territories that administratively belong to Spain, that is, south of the border; those belonging to the so-called *French* Basque Country will hereafter be referred to as the Northern Basque Country.

The resources that mediate in the construction of these meanings are a reflection of specific socio-cultural contexts (Wertsch, 2002:13), and, at the same time, they shape both the communicative event in which meaning is constructed as well as the perception of the subjects involved. Shahzad highlights this changing character when he designates these media as "technologies of memory" (2011, p. 378).

Narratives are the most common *technologies* or mediums of memory-making, or, the other way around, almost all representations of the past are to some extent narrative constructions, insofar they employ some kind of language or code-system. Narratives are "culturally canonical linguistic forms" (Fivush, 2010, p. 89) that offer a more or less conventionally structured version of events. Apart of re-organizing them in sequences, they also construct relations between separate elements in discourse, and are thus a means of sharing structured meanings in the form of *stories* that other individuals and groups who have not experienced them can understand and eventually relate to.

Age cohorts of the same culture are considered to form "communities of experience" (Devine & Schubotz, 2010, p. 17), and therefore to have similar views and interpretative schemata on certain historical events. When the generations that follow learn about that experience and build an own identification with it, we *assume* that transmission has happened; thus, it is through appropriating the knowledge, values and norms of that social and symbolic system through which new generations become members of the community.

Thus, "second hand memories" (Lowenthal, 1998, p. 287) are inherently interdiscursive or polyphonic (Wertsch, 2002, p. 16), apart of being mediated. This can be linked to Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin in Holquist, 1982, pp. 293–294), which defends that all discourses are oriented towards an interlocutor, and this dialogicity implies an active meaning-making role on all parts involved in the communicative interaction. In order to base one's own memory on the memory of others, it is not enough to hear or understand them; previously built interpretative and evaluative frames must be coincident enough in order to form a "common ground" (Halbwachs, 2004a, p. 34) for the construction of similar meanings.

Collective memory is thus a feature of group cohesion. In close communities in which references of the past are periodically remembered, the attachment to the collective is assumed to be bigger, such as in families. According to Halbwachs (2004), families play a crucial role in the establishment of early socio-cultural frameworks that are emotionally loaded. This often leads to a "cumulative heroization" (Welzer, 2005, p. 11) towards older members of the family, that is, a rearrangement of discourses in which their relatives are presented as "people who always possessed moral integrity, according to today's standards and normative appraisal" (Welzer, 2008, pp. 297–298). Intrafamiliar conceptual and symbolic systems can become powerful frames, up to the point of functioning as a "mnemonic intersection" (Erll, 2011, p. 308) between the public discursive sphere and the private, by filtering external discourses or even resisting them (Wodak, 2006, p. 185).

3.5. Memory and language: on the crossroads between Discourse and Memory Studies

Remembering necessarily implies reproduction, and reproduction implies the use of language systems –in its broadest sense– in order to structure and share thoughts; or, in

the words of Halbwachs (2004b, p. 89), language is “the most collective function of thought”. Despite the variety of disciplines from which scholars approach the study of collective memory, it is striking that most methods focus on discursive or narrative analysis of archives, interviews or mass media (Dutceac Segesten & Wüstenberg, 2016, p. 10). This shows that memory is closely linked to human communication and especially to language.

To remember collectively is to build a discourse: it is not a matter of *retrieving* an object – the memory– from some location in the brain, but rather a matter of constructing it anew through linguistic means. The process of reconstruction is shaped and conditioned by the contemporary context and the position of the individual that remembers; this is why memory –or the discursive expression of it– changes with each act of remembering, while each new renarrativization can also influence the cognitive frames and shared modes of approaching the topic.

Thus, in order to understand the relationship between memory and language, we need an interdisciplinary approach that addresses the three-fold link between cognitive processes, social relations, and language as a mediator. Discourse Analysis and, more concretely, its critical variant, offer some insightful concepts that help us establish these relations.

3.5.1. The social dimension of language

Contemporary Discourse Analysis stems, among others, from the Ethnography of Communication and Cognitive Linguistics. Both disciplines view language not as an independent symbolic system, but as embedded in a social context from which it draws its meanings. They usually comprise studies that focus on concrete subjects, and the concept of the *speech community* acquires relevance, that is, “a system of organized diversity cohered by common norms and aims” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 24). A discourse is thus considered a *speech act*, which conceives language as a primarily social practice with a concrete function (Austin, 1962, p. 99). This approach focuses, among others, on the “linguistic repertoire” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 154) of a community, as well as on the social conventions that influence the interactions.

On the other hand, Cognitive Linguistics sees language as “a repository of world knowledge, a structured collection of meaningful categories that help us deal with new experiences and store information about old ones” (Geeraerts & Cuyckens, 2010, p. 5), assuming that all interactions with the social worlds are mediated by informational structures in the mind, and thus entail a multi-level analysis.

Discourse Analysis incorporated concepts such as *script*, *scheme* or *frames* (Gumperz, 1982, p. 154) to pragmatic linguistics, in order to explain the processes through which speakers interpret information within the boundaries of their context and their cultural influences. According to this view, a *discourse* is not only characterized by its linguistic or grammatical unity, but also by the psychosocial procedures which provide interpretative unity to the *utterance*, the minimum unit of meaning. Utterances are combined to form texts, which are “complete communicative and intentional unities” (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 3) and are, at the same, time, embedded in larger discourses. “When we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text; when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships, that embrace different texts and occasions, we can speak of discourses” (Lemke, 1995, p. 6).

The specific uses of language involve several social constructs and cognitive processes, and the interaction between both is one focus of Discourse Analysis. According to this view, there is a reciprocal "active" influence (Lemke, 1995, p. 20) between discourse and society:

> "[D]iscourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations (…) through the ways in which they represent things and position people." (Wodak & Fairclough, 1997, p. 258)

In fact, the Critical variant of Discourse Analysis (from now on, CDA) analyses the link between the uses of language and social relations of power. It assumes that meanings are constructed by subjects who "as members of socio-cultural groups, are part of complex networks built of relations of power, solidarity, domination and resistance" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 2), and as such, hold certain social positions, as well as being motivated by certain ideologies, word views, intentionalities and objectives.

To CDA, power is related to the ability to establish dominant discourses and influence the development of the communicative interaction, assuming that discourses shape the "knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values" of individuals, and thus, "mind control also means indirect action control" (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 9). The "communicative competence" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 31) that is needed in order to successfully engage in an interaction depends greatly on the knowledge about the communicative norms that apply, as well as about the relations between the interlocutors. This can be interpreted as an asset that is unequally divided in society; according to this view, the ability to establish the dominant discourses and communicative terms would be related to a position of power, in what Bourdieu defined as an "embodied capital, external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a *habitus*" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 283). The hegemonic discourses established in each period and society mark the limits of "what can be said" (Jäger, 2004, p. 378); thus, they may also be seen as a "system of exclusion" (Foucault, 2005, p. 19) that is imposed onto the powerless.

3.5.2. CDA: basic theoretical-methodological concepts

CDA openly addresses the subjective and interpretative character of all communicative acts, and defends that the broader social, historical and cultural contexts must not be forgotten in their analysis. This is the reason why it does not employ or propose a single theory, but rather provides an interpretative framework (Wodak, 2006, p. 181) which allows combinations of several sociological and linguistic theories.

Concretely, it distinguishes three levels of analysis: on one hand, researchers must frame their study within broad *macro* theories that address questions related to social behaviors and structures; these are usually drawn from fields such as Sociology, Anthropology or Cultural Studies. In my case, Halbwachs' theory on Collective Memory has provided this general framework, which has already been detailed. On the other end, *micro* level

theories and concepts that provide the means to analyze concrete uses of language are necessary. In between, middle-range or *meso* theories focus on the cognitive processes that operate as interfaces between society and language and establish categories of analysis (Lemke, 1995, p. 27) that allow us to identify the cultural patterns that guide human and social attitudes as well as the interdiscursive networks in which these processes are embedded.

Regardless of its interdisciplinarity and its theoretical diversity, critical discourse studies share a number of traits, which, according to Wodak and Krzyzanowski (2008:3-4), include an interest for "naturally occurring" language uses and a grounded or empiric approach to real-life social problems; focusing on larger units than isolate sentences, with a clear semiotic or multimodal approach; and a multi-level analysis of the several dimensions that influence the construction of meaning, including its intersdicursive and socio-cognitive implications. Thus, almost any linguistic or symbolic expression of meaning could be an object of Discourse Analysis; however, interactions that crystallize social power relations are usually preferred. Not only semantic and lexical choices, but also narrative structures and the organization of topics are thus studied in order to identify the ideological positions that they express (van Dijk, 1996, p. 19).

Methodologically, the whole intervention or interaction is usually taken as one socially organized text (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 19). Discourse Analysis assumes that all interactions respond to certain social norms, and aims to identify these. Communicative situations, especially dialogues, are seen as a negotiation of the roles of the involved speakers, which is realized through implicit gestures and decisions, such as contextualizing cues (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 21) or markers that denote the attitude or stance (Biber & Finegan, 1989, p. 93) of the speaker. Thus, major focus points are usually the structuration and hierachization of topics, identities constructed by participants within discourse, narrative structures or rhetorical means.

According to the multi-level analysis proposed by Discourse Analysis, I will focus on a number of concrete concepts related to each of those levels.

a) Intratextual relationships

On a micro-textual level, relations between utterances and their co-text are studied, such as lexical relations and the "evaluative polarization" (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 38) which they carry. This is contextualized within a construction of the subject in the dialogue. According to Benveniste's *Théorie de l'énonciation*, subjects construct themselves as such through language in contraposition of an alterity: "*Ego* is who says *Ego. (…)* I do not employ *Me* if not addressing somebody else, my allocution *You*". (Benveniste, 1978, p. 181). All these references, as well as pronouns and periphrases, deictics and some modal and temporal verbs are semantically *empty* elements which only acquire meaning through the subjectivity of the discourse. This view can be linked to the Theory of Social Categorization developed by Harvey Sacks, according to which identity, within communicative situations, is not a "being", but a "doing being" (Sacks, 1985, p. 415), that is, the result of a "constant effort" (Greco & Mondada, 2014, p. 15) of constructing subjectivity through the classification of actors into mental and social categories (Silverman, 1998, p. 79). Thus, identity (and especially collective identity) is seen as "the result of a process of construction of shared cognitive structures instantiated

in language" (Pfleger, 2021b, p. 330). However, authors such as De Fina (2006, p. 355) point out that identity should not be viewed solely as a construct that emerges from the most local textual level; instead, she argues that local expressions of identity should be linked to "shared ideologies and beliefs", since discursive instantiations of identity are in fact a negotiation of those categories.

On the other hand, Positioning Theory provides a number of complementary concepts to the understanding of the construction of identity within discourse. Instead of speaking of static *roles*, this theory stresses that speakers take up *positions* (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 16) by adopting, attaching and negotiating forms of subjectivity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 43). A *discursive position* is thus a metaphorical concept that assumes that any narrative or discursive act *places* the speakers in a specific *space* where the features that construct their current subjectivity are gathered.

Positioning, that is, the discursive and local construction of identity within communicative action, operates in two directions (Hart 2015:22): on one hand, the speakers can build a conceptualization of themselves in the form of an *autobiographic I* or a *social I*; or Others may categorize oneself. "[I]n doing so, people 'produce' one another (and themselves) situationally as 'social beings'" (Bamberg, 1997, p. 336): positioning is the outcome of the ongoing semiotic and discursive process of negotiating those identities "both on the micro-level of conversation and the macro socio-political level".

Positioning is closely linked to the concept of *stance*, which encompasses the lexical and grammatical expressions of opinions, feelings, judgements or commitment of the speaker towards the content of the discourse (Biber & Finegan, 1989, p. 93). On a methodological level, stance can be observed through several types of modalization, such as expressive, affective or appreciative modalization, which points at the feelings, judgements or opinions of the speaker; epistemic modalization, which is related to the degree of certainty or probability, and often signalized by evidentials that embody the "entitlement to 'knowledge' of the speaker" (Hoye, 2008, p. 154); or deontic modalization, which is related to obligation or permissiveness. All these modalities can be expressed throughout a scale of *graduation* and *commitment* (González et al., 2017, p. 76; Martin & White, 2005, p. 197); thus, speakers may show complete commitment towards the content of the discourse, or they may distance themselves from it by reducing the former. Statements made from an individual position imply, by general rule, a greater commitment than those made on behalf of a collective subjectivity (Marín-Arrese, 2011, p. 793).

b) Intertextual and interdiscursive relations

To discourse analysts, all communicative actions are to some extent interdiscursive: "Meanings are not only constructed within texts, but also 'from text to text'" (Lemke, 1995, p. 41). Speakers introduce external voices through quotations, *topoi* or references to shared knowledge (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 153) and they generally do so in the form of patterns of meaning that are socially constructed (Lemke 1995:41). These systems provide a "perceptive background" (Bakhtin, 1979, p. 286) on which the interpretation of discourses is realized.

The *memory* of a text lies precisely within its intertextuality; in this "mnemonic space" (Erll, 2017, p. 64) among different texts is where the shared information needed in order to correctly decode meanings is stored. Foucault proposed a different conceptualization of those shared areas of interpretation with his idea of the *enunciative field*: "There is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them" (Foucault, 1972, p. 99).

Intertextual relations are indicated, among others, by direct, indirect or covert quotations that show "the intention of the speaker to evoke an external utterance or thought" (Reyes, 1996, p. 9), including ironic expressions, negations, presuppositions and implicatures. Other ways of introducing an external voice are the use of *topoi*, defined as "repetitive schemes of argumentation aimed at producing a concrete inference" (Wodak, 2011, p. 173); re-contextualization and *colonization* (Ibid., 169-170); as well as figurative language. Among the latter, I will focus especially on the use of metaphors. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, metaphors structure human thought and thus language: "Metaphors are possible as linguistic expressions precisely because they are metaphors in the conceptual system of the individual" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 38). Thus, metaphors function as *mental models* or "mental representations of an experience" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 14) that enable us to "categorize, group, quantify and argue" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 58) about experiences or complex concepts by reconceptualizing them in terms of other realities. At the same time, the use of metaphors and metonymies establishes relations between concepts that can be very eloquent about the stance of the speaker: "Many parts can stand for the whole. The part we choose conditions which aspect of the whole we focus on" (Ibid., 69).

c) The close communicative context

In anthropological terms, the context of the communicative action is formed by all socio-cultural influences that emanate from "the physical parameters (time and place) of a situation and what happens in it" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 95). This is a crucial element of Discourse Analysis, which understands the context of the situation as going beyond mere co-textual ties. These include all conditions immediately surrounding the discursive act, such as the space and time, the objects that are around, the degree of formality and register, or beliefs and opinions of the participants about each other; actions that are happening in a parallel way or have happened in the past; as well as the focus of attention of the interlocutors (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 98; Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 154). Thus, the close context should not be understood as a static scene, but as a flexible framework that is constantly re-structured during the communicative action, "creating certain expectations about what is coming" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 102). Interactions are generally successful because participants are able to identify the contextualization cues that are necessary to infer implicit "presuppositions in the context" (Gumperz, 1982, p. 131). Bietti (2011, p. 184) argues that this shared knowledge is essential, as it indicates how interlocutors are expected to behave, feel and infer in each communicative situation.

Power relations between interlocutors are also involved in this level of analysis, which translates into their agency or *agentivity*, that is, "the degree of control a subject

experiences in order to construct his or her identity 'with another and towards him" (Pfleger, 2021, p. 331) which is dependent on "the dispute to occupy discursive space" (Ibid.) that usually exists between subjects. Agency depends on the ability speakers have and perceive to establish and influence the development of discursive action, and is often expressed through linguistic means that denote ability or knowledge. In fact, Pfleger (2017, p. 678) illustrates the diversity of contextual relations that are involved in a communicative situation in terms of a physical space through the concept of an Communicative, Relational and Identitary Space (ECRI), which stands for the metaphorical social field in which subjects construct and negotiate their positions and meanings on a shared sociocultural ground.

d) The wider socio-political, historical and cultural context

Power relations are not only reduced to the intra-discursive agency of the subject; all subjects are part of larger groups, and therefore all practices of communication are embedded in broader historical and social relations that are most of the time intersected by power. One of the main focus points of CDA are precisely how the "abuses" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 13) realized from power positions are materialized and/or reinforced through discourse. This includes analyzing "strategies to hide, negate or create conflicts; marginalizing styles through the use of euphemisms or insulting descriptions; [or] discourses that are prohibited to hear or read" (Ibid.). From a memorialistic approach, works focusing on colonialist history and gender perspectives are especially useful in this context (Hirsch & Smith, 2002; Martin, 2003).

Discourse Analysis explicitly points at the influence of the social context on the development of communicative interactions, but up to date there is no single theory that gives an account on the link between society, cognition and language as a whole (Wodak, 2006, p. 181). However, Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach does provide some useful concepts in order to understand the relation.

Neurosciences have proved that memories do not have a fixed place in the brain; in fact, the human brain is not a "repository", but a network of "cognitive structures established in the nervous system" (Erll, 2017, p. 83). Thus, remembering implies activating those structures and patterns each time, similarly to how it entails constructing a *new* narrative on every occasion. Van Dijk (1995, 2003b) relies on cognitive science and argues that discourses have the power to influence the opinions, attitudes, knowledge and intentions of the speakers, that is, their cognitive processes. He introduces a theoretical construct in order to understand this influence: the *mental model*, the symbolic and cognitive interface through which the individual coheres information that comes from the external social world with his or her internal cognitive structures.

Mental models provide structured narratives about concrete situations that people might have experienced or read about (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 14), and are formed by contextual information about previous experiences. Socialization implies a constant updating of those models, as well as the re-"activation of the corresponding stored knowledge" (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 99). Hence, mental models can be linked to the concepts of *schemes* or *frames*, although the latter have a more social and stereotyped character, whereas the personal experience plays a major role in the construction of mental models. "Models typically embody both the (instantiated, applied) knowledge and other beliefs of

social groups as well as the cognitive representations that define individual persons' self-awareness" (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 190).

Thus, discourses can affect differently the mental model or pattern that the interlocutors have previously constructed: they may highlight or hide certain information, or, on a more concrete level, they may lead their attention towards certain aspects of the content through rhetorical means. According to Wodak (2006, p. 183), both discourse production and interpretation are "recursive processes" in which cognitive structures embedded in both episodic and long-time memory are constantly updated, and, at the same time, these schemes are re-constructed, expressed and socialized through discourse, which in turn reinforces certain ideologies or social beliefs. The degree of consciousness by which these procedures happen can vary largely.

Mental models have an important social component. They tend to include socially shared representations and "the typical attitudes or ideologies of the groups and their members about specific communicative events" (Van Dijk, 1997, p. 196). Once those long-term representations are established, they become deeply rooted imaginaries, and one contradictory experience is usually not enough to change them: "Fantasies, projections and imaginations based on folklore and on prejudicial heritage are transferred from generation to generation and obviously stored as mental models and common sense knowledge" (Wodak, 2006, p. 185).

Thus, ideological categorizations of actors, in the form of polarized ingroups and outgroups (Devine & Schubotz, 2010, p. 9), often underlie disputes with a more physical expression, such as wars or violent conflicts. Characterizations and discursive attributions are contextualized in broader strategies of (de-)legitimation. According to Galtung (2003), once the distinction is established in the mind, confrontation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: "When the Other is not only dehumanized, but when it has been accomplished to transform him into an *It* deprived of humanity, the scenery for any direct violence is set. [This] extermination becomes an obligation that is psychologically possible" (Galtung, 2003, p. 17).

Lederach (1998, p. 39) points out that, in societies that experience violent conflicts, it is not unusual for the established powers to instrumentalize these cognitive and discursive strategies in order to enhance internal perceptions of cohesion or to weaken internal critique. In those cases, the representation of the Other and the identity scheme of the conflict become an unquestioned "shared reality" (Echterhoff & Kopietz, 2018, p. 114). Thus, Conflict Theory (Galtung, 1996) argues that in a period of conflict resolution, mental schemes constructed by the conflict need to be addressed in order to re-humanize the Other.

3.5.3. Discourse and memory: the Discursive-Historical Approach

Depending on the concrete field of research, several independent models of analysis have been developed within CDA. One of the most relevant perspectives for Memory Studies is the Discursive-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Ruth Wodak. It draws from the socio-cognitive approach to discourse, and views discourse itself as a form of memory (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 13). Hence, it pays special attention to the sociological

influences and historical antecedents that contextualize discursive events, and interprets the latter accordingly.

DHA analyzes the individual and collective processes of "negotiating the past" (Wodak, 2011, p. 173), especially how social groups behave in the face of traumatic events and how conceptualizations of those events change over time and from generation to generation. It also pays attention to the modes in which knowledge is expressed by linguistic means; how personal attitudes are shown; and which are the linguistic patterns or *topoi* that endure in time (Ibid., 170). The fundamental question underlying this approach is how "democratic and plural societies" (Ibid., 162) deal with difficulties that emerge from pasts that do not fit their current self-image, and the linguistic and symbolic means they employ to do so. One of the most important contributions of this school is the concept of *discursive strategies* developed by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999, pp. 92–93), which, according to Bietti (2011, p. 187), are employed "to manage communicative instantiations of situation models and to make them appropriate for the current communicative interaction". They include, among others, ellipses, restructurations, substitutions, additions or the narration of stories. A detailed classification of strategies and their social macro-functions is provided in the Methodological chapter of this thesis.

3.6. CONFLICTS AND YOUTH

Although CDA searches for evidences in texts and interactions, its starting point and aim is always the understanding of social problems "which face people in their social lives, issues which are taken up within sociology, political science and/or cultural studies. CDA looks at these issues and problems in terms of their semiotic dimensions" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 26). This thesis deals specifically with the problem of the symbolic development of the Basque political and armed conflict into a discursive conflict.

According to Conflict Theory, some expression of cultural violence usually underlies visible or physical violence in the form of conflict identities, that is, "mental and behavioural dualism, frozen into gestalts and structures" (Webel & Galtung, 2007, p. 29). Fischer (2007, p. 188) defines cultural violence as "the justification of direct and structural violence". Studying the continuation of identities and interpretative patterns shaped by the conflict is especially relevant for the purpose of this research, as well as the symbolic and cognitive processes that can transform or deconstruct them. The social group that is being studied, that is, young people born towards the end of the Basque conflict, have been socialized through discursive means into their political context, and their positions and identities towards events of the past have been constructed accordingly. In the words of Galtung (2006, p. 261), dramatic events that one may experience directly or in a mediated way leave "traces" that are "integrated into paradigms inculcated" through their social context.

Young people receive the discourses of many social spheres simultaneously; those in the family, the school, their leisure networks or other social institutions, as well as from mass media. This is why McEvoy-Levy argues that the processes of interpretation, recontextualization and re-narrativization of these generations are crucial in periods following violent conflicts:

> "Peace building occurs in dialogue with the past. Versions of history and inherited tradition that permeate the ecologies of children and youth signaled in art forms, cultural festivals, local storytelling and family chronicles, school

> textbooks an curricula, and political rhetoric often work against conflict resolution. (…) To compete [them] effectively [we] need to know how much and what kind of these discourses and values for war youth have inculcated and how they reproduce or transform them." (McEvoy-Levy, 2006, p. 285)

3.6.1. Environments of political socialization

Reidy et al. (2015) define political socialization as "an individual's learning of social patterns associated with his/her societal positions as mediated through various agencies of society. (…) Political socialization involves learning about social relations, including relational power and group status within a multi-ethnic community". (Reidy et al., 2015, p. 12). This process begins usually in late adolescence and early adulthood, and is mediated by four main actors or contexts. On one hand, family is viewed by these authors as the first learning area of political orientations. According to Stringer et al. (2010, p. 234), in situations in which identity conflicts are very present, the socializing effect of family is usually stronger. On the other hand, *peers* operate as a broader social group in which cultural values and identities are reinforced. Third, socialization through *formal education* and curricula is characterized by its "capacity to instill political beliefs formally through conscious, planned instruction, as well as informally through inadvertent, casual experiences in the school environment" (Reidy et al., 2015).

Schools provide structured discourses in the form of textbooks, often with a normative character, as the comprehension and internalization of the established curriculum is linked to a system of evaluation and approval. Hence, formal education is often the first context in which pupils are confronted with an *official* version of events, which may reinforce or challenge the discourses they have learnt in their rather private social environments.

Last, *the media* are considered by these authors to be the most public access to political knowledge. On one hand, because they report on messages created in political and institutional environments; and on the other hand, because they are one of the main transmissors of social values. Media construct the community, insofar they interpellate a specific collective (and usually national) subject (Amezaga Albizu, 2009, pp. 47–48). From a memory perspective, the correlation between the mediatic agenda and society's "memory agenda" (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014, p. 495) has also been documented.

Two clarifications must be added to Reidy's classification. On one hand, equaling *the media* with traditional mass media (such as press, television or radio) may result in a number of problems nowadays: online social networks function equally as information broadcasters as well as mediators in the socialization among peers; thus, it would be more convenient to analyze them also as an independent, semi-private level of group relations. The fact that the generation under study is the first generation socialized entirely in the time of online social media obliges us to adjust analytical perspectives, as the character of these platforms leads to a "personalized media diet" (Ohme & de Vreese, 2020, p. 4) in which political content is often entangled in "simplified and trivialized" (Jakubowski, 2021, p. 17) forms of entertainment.

On the other hand, I consider it important to introduce another level of socialization between peer groups and broad social discourses, which could be designated as *the neighborhood, the town* or the *immediate social environment.* Especially in the context of the Basque Country, the social atmosphere of the physical spaces of everyday life and

the people and groups that transit them have an important role in the learning process of political meanings (Zulaika, 1990, p. 392).

Lastly, the effect that literature, cinema or other cultural products may have on the construction and transformation of memories should not be underestimated. Because of their clearly narrative character, novels and films are a frequent object of analysis in Memory Studies, as they construct "figures of memory" and "versions of the past" (Erll, 2017, p. 167) that have the ability to influence the mental models of the audience:

> "Literature usually allows its readers both a first- and a second-order observation: [i]t gives us the illusion of glimpsing the past (in an experiential, mythical, or antagonistic way) and is—often at the same time—a major medium of critical reflection upon these very processes of representation. Literature is a medium that simultaneously builds and observes memory." (Erll, 2010, p. 391)

Similarly, in the Basque and Spanish context, narratives about the war (for an exhaustive literary analysis of which see Olaziregi Alustiza, 2009) surfaced before "skulls and skeletons" (Thompson, 2005, p. 81) did: "Insofar it supplies cultural memory, literature constructs our collective memory, and it highlights that our dreams, sufferings and losses have an important place in that memory" (Olaziregi Alustiza & Altuna Lizarraga, 2020, p. 13). At the same time, music can also become a channel of transmission, especially for young people, in whose leisure activities music –charged with historical and cultural meanings– is often highly present. This is especially true for the Basque case, in which music has played an important role in the history of the conflict and specifically in the post-Francoist period (Dávila Balsera & Amezaga Albizu, 2003; J. Larrinaga, 2015, p. 42).

3.6.2. The roles of young people in the history of the Basque conflict

In order to correctly define and understand the group that is being studied, i.e., young Basques born around the millennium change, it is important to first summarize the different roles that young people –as a group– have had during the history of the Basque conflict, as it is generally assumed that the political participation of youth has positive effects in their perception and engagement regarding their contemporary social problems (Senehi & Byrne, 2006, p. 238). Knowing the historical development of Basque youth may be helpful to understand some of their perceptions about their current social position.

Young people had a relative protagonism during the armed conflict. To begin with, the sociologist Ruiz Olabuénaga defines ETA itself, in its beginnings, as "a youth movement of rupture towards older generations" (2005, p. 23), characterized by a "radical questioning" of Francoist institutional politics of the 1950s.

This questioning was widely shared among the local society at the time. Although the 1936 coup d'état had been supported by some traditionalist groups in the Southern Basque Country, the victors of the war did not long for the "legitimation of the people" (Montero, 1998, p. 96), on the contrary: "It became a system of power which searched the control of society, not its approval". As a result of this, not only republican, left-wing and *abertzale* sectors that had lost the war were critical with the regime, but also some Basque nationalist traditionalist groups that had originally supported Franco became resented.

The francoist public institutions established "a monolithic view" of Spain (Ibid., 97), through strict discursive control, prohibiting the public use of both local symbology and the use of local languages such as *euskara* (Basque). The opposition built its communication structures in clandestinity, similarly to a shadow system of symbols, values and a resistant culture of political organization, marked by skepticism towards the Spanish institutionalization processes. "The confrontation, and consequently the repression, did not end in the Basque Country with the post-war period. Without a solution of continuity, a large part of society continues to deny the legitimacy of the established powers, causing a constant friction that reproduces repression and the victims of violence" wrote Ruiz Olabuénaga et al. (1985, p. 51) a decade into the Transition.

In the 1976 Constitutional Referendum for the Validation of the Transition, the two main Basque parties, PNV[10] and HB[11], called for abstention and vote against, respectively. As a result, the Spanish Constitution was supported by a minority of citizens in the Southern Basque territories, with an abstention of more than 50 per cent in Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia and 48.8 per cent and 32.9 per cent respectively in Araba and Navarre. A year later, during the next step of the institutionalization process, the political division among Basques was larger: in the referendum to vote on the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country (also known as the Gernika Statute), PNV asked for a vote in favor, and the *abertzale* left, against. Abstention fell to 40%.

In order to understand this broad skepticism about the democratizing process in Spain, it is essential to observe the patterns of perception and interpretation of the local society. According to Montero, "the democratic State, unlike other States, requires not only legality, but also, and above all, an added value: the legitimacy provided by social subjects and political forces" (Montero, 1998, p. 81). The collective experiences of much of the Basque society during Francoism and the Transition could not lead to this legitimacy, quite the contrary. The numerous social and political conflicts of the time were confronted by the State with an aggressive policy of public order, a repression that hit the Basque Country particularly hard, according to this author: of the 36 deaths caused by the police in Spain in 1974 and 1975, two out of three were Basques. During the seven years leading up to Franco's death, seven states of emergency were declared in the Spanish State, five of them only in parts of the Basque Country. Knowledge of the systematic use of torture and a number of notorious events, such as the March 3rd 1976 riots in Vitoria-Gasteiz[12] or the deaths of young people such as Germán Rodríguez and Joseba Barandiaran[13], fueled the image of a repressive state among the population.

This negative conception of the Other intersected with another political idea already existing in society: the desire for autonomy or independence of the Basque Country. The rejection of the real political processes and the discourse of Spain's democratic deficit (Ibid., 83) reinforced the arguments for independence. ETA presented its decision to

[10] EAJ-PNV, the Basque Nationalist Party, is the conservative, economically liberal and dominant party of the Basque Parliament. It has held the power in the Basque Regional Government ever since its reestablishment after the dictatorship, with exception of the period between 2009 and 2012.
[11] HB or Herri Batasuna (Union of the People) was the political party of the *abertzale* left from the late 70s until the early 2000s.
[12] On March 3rd, 1976, the Police brutally raided a concentration of workers on strike in Vitoria-Gasteiz. As a consequence, five people died and more than 150 were wounded.
[13] Both Rodríguez and Barandiaran were shot by the military police during the conflicts and rallies that took place in the San Fermin festival of 1978 and its aftermath.

engage in a violent conflict in the late 1960s as a response to a repressive system that offered no room for the political demands of the *abertzale* community.

The violence that had taken place during the Civil War had not been addressed by then, and had even been prevented through the Pact of Silence. Moreover, the legal, political, and military elites of the Franco regime "still retained enough political resources" (Aguilar, 2003, p. 131) to prevent any systematic reform or "purge" (Ibid.) of the institutions of the State. Consequently, both ETA and the *abertzale* left denied legitimacy to the Transition, and the new democracy was also regarded as a continuation of Francoism. These two incompatible interpretations of historical events (those who attribute credibility to the democratic transition and those who deny it) have since become the poles of the ideological square on which the Basque conflict rests. In this sense, the armed conflict of recent decades is directly related to Francoism, as it is ultimately discussed whether there was a continuation or cessation of it.

Youth, as a sociological group, have been highly involved in the history of the Basque Country, both as perpetrators of violence and as victims. According to Ruiz Olabuénaga (2005, p. 61), between 30.000 and 35.000 youths –between 6% and 10% of that age population– had been detained at some point in their lives in the early 2000s; another 1.8% had suffered direct threats or physical violence by ETA, and another 3% had suffered other kinds of threats, graffitis or insults. Apart of that, there was a remarkable level of participation of youths in political and social activism, especially in the many youth organizations united under the broad umbrella of the "Basque National Liberation Movement" (Elzo & Arrieta, 2005). These created a long tradition of "self-organization" (A. Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2022, p. 24) which new youngsters nowadays have inherited.

3.6.3. The construction of identities in violent conflicts

These collective experiences are necessarily linked to the political attitudes and engagements of young Basques in the past. In the early 2000s, most of those who took part in *kale borroka*[14] and other unauthorized demonstrations were aged 15 to 19, a political activism that, according to Ruiz Olabuénaga (2005, p. 70), developed in a "subculture of violence". The underlying discourses marked greatly the political identities of the participants, as well as providing a multiple justification of the violence. ETA's actions and related violence employed by non-militants were viewed as the only possible means to respond to an unjust situation –that is, it had a *motivational* and *instrumental* legitimation–. Moreover, becoming a member of an armed organization was considered an altruist sacrifice (a *personal* legitimation); and their actions were presented as being supported by a broad community (a *choral* legitimation). Thus, these practices were embedded in a "social humus formed by a series of attitudes related to everyday coexistence" (Zulaika, 1991, p. 220), which provided a "ritual" and symbolic meaning to ETA's violence.

According to Ruiz Olabuénaga, "*abertzale* violence" (Ibid., 90) was ruled, usual, autonomous and supported by an ideological system, which, although it might seem "simplist and reductionist" to the outside observer, was "internally consistent, flawless and plausible". This author classifies ETA's violence as "political vigilantism" because it aimed to "supplant the legitimacy" of the State, by presenting the violence as the only

[14] The term *kale borroka* used to be applied to street vandalism and violence as a form of political youth activism back in the 1980s and 1990s, in the context of the Basque armed conflict (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2005).

possible instrument to establish a new social order. Thus, the macro-narrative employed in order to justify that violence could be summarized as follows: "The Basque society is a victim of a violence that threatens its collective survival, and that violence can only be prevented and outbalanced through counter-violence" (Ibid., 110).

From an anthropological perspective, Joseba Zulaika's referential work *Violencia vasca: metáfora y sacramento* ('Basque violence: metaphor and sacrament', 1990) invites us to interpret the role of ETA's violence in ritualistic terms. By defining the ritual as "a basic social action that is necessary to grasp and express meaning of the political reality" (Zulaika, 1990, p. 331), he argues that the support that Basque armed groups received during the dictatorship must not be understood so much in causal or utilitary terms, but rather "in the context of the semantic space of culture" (Ibid., 335), that is, as a cognitive-cultural space which enables certain ritual behaviors and is simultaneously shaped by them. According to Zulaika, it is only through this viewpoint that many of ETA's decisions, as well as their relevance, can be understood; each gesture functioned as a metaphor that activated a broader cluster of meanings for the local society.

This legitimizing discourse of the *armed strategy for national liberation* has always had an important mnemonic or historical element. Throughout its history, ETA made numerous references to the 1936 Civil War: its first planned attack was on the 18th of July 1961, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Franco's coup d'état, when it attempted to derail a train full of former francoist soldiers. Also, when ETA disarmed 57 years later, their communiqué referred to the bombing of Gernika (1937), contextualizing their decision to lay down arms within a historical continuum of suffering: "Before the birth of ETA, pain reigned in our country, and pain continues even after ETA has quit the armed struggle. The generations that followed the bombing of Gernika inherited this violence and resent, and it is up to us that future generations receive a very different future"[15]. Thus, ETA presents itself as a natural or inevitable consequence of political circumstances, as part of a wider community that is the victim of a suffering that exists independently from the group. It adopts the mission to change this situation, but this mission has taken quite different forms over time: in previous communiqués, the proposed solution was to intensify the armed conflict, and after 2011, to abandon the armed strategy.

Conflict situations shape "conflict identities" (Yerkes, 2004, p. 933) in which the categories *Us* and *Them* are polarized on the basis of the experienced harm. Thus, ingroup victimization and outgroup de-humanization are represented in order to enhance internal cohesion and "allow certain actions to be considered acceptable that under normal conditions would be unacceptable" (Ibid.).

Violence also fulfilled a clear polarizing function in the history of the Basque conflict, naturalized by the frame of war generalized among broad sectors of the population. This led to a "double accountability" described by Elzo Imaz (1987) as following: "You are either a warrior or a terrorist: either a member of the State Security Forces or a participant of the occupying army" (Elzo Imaz, 1987, p. 39). After flagrant victimizations, community support used to be reactivated on all sides of the conflict. From the 1990s on, whenever ETA would attack a member of a political party, a wave of solidarity would respond in the form of political support for the party (Murua Uria, 2015a, p. 17). Other

[15] *Declaration of ETA to the Basque Country: On The Harm Caused* (2018).

local, moderate parties would also profit from the "antisystem threat" (Montero, 1998, p. 89) embodied by ETA in order to present themselves as guarantors of constitutionality; and, conversely, outlawing and political marginalization would also contribute to the tightening of internal ties among the *abertzale* left.

ETA's permanent ceasefire brought "a new era" (A. Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2022, p. 10) to youth movements socialized in the context of popular and autonomous activism structured around the abertzale left, leading to new expressions of political identities, in a clear trend towards a rather individual understanding of the subject and their agency (Larrinaga Renteria et al., 2020, p. 27).

3.6.4. Features of contemporary youths and their social discursive context: the 'battle about the narrative'

The situation of young Basques in the 2020s is fairly different for a number of reasons. Citizens between the ages of 15 and 24 comprise a group of 292.769 people (Gaindegia, 2020), 9.23% of the whole population of the Basque Country[16]. It is a generation born around the millennium change; unlike their parents, who were born in the end of Francoism or during the Transition, these youngsters have grown up in a context of relative political normalization. Although the situation was still quite troublesome in their early childhood, by the time most of them reached adolescence the tension had eased greatly, mainly because of the factic end of ETA's attacks in 2009 and the re-legalization and re-institutionalization of the *abertzale* left in 2011. As a consequence, most do not have personal memories on the armed stage of the conflict.

On a global level, in terms of memory transmission, this generation is characterized by the mediatic diversity it has at hand: globalization and the internet have greatly broadened the horizons of the referential world, and thus, dynamics of collective memories have become "more dynamic, multiple, shared and contested" (Shahzad, 2011, p. 379) because many different frames influence them simultaneously. Other perspectives argue that online networks are "a manner of obtaining greater discursive control (…) and, thus, of specifying agentivity more conveniently in the construction of one's own identity". (Pfleger, 2021, p. 328).

On a local level, the main feature of the relationship that this generation has towards the Basque conflict is its mainly –and often exclusively– mediated and discursive character: in the face of insufficient personal experiences, they are building a collective memory, based on *second hand memories* (Erll, 2017:107) and third party narratives, which is necessarily interdiscursive.

However, this narrative construction is characterized by a clear dispute: discourses on the armed conflict of the past often combine conflicting versions, giving rise to what has been called the *battle about the narrative* (Aizpeolea, 2018), both in the political and mediatic spheres, as well as in academia. This metaphorical conceptualization conceives the dispute between memorialistic discourses in warlike terms, and implies that there may be only one victor between two hostile views. According to Rodríguez Fouz (2021, p. 2), the dispute is based on two interpretations of the nature of the conflict: on the one hand, there

[16] The whole number refers to the total population living on both sides of the border, which is the geographical area in which this study has taken place.

would be the discourse of the *abertzale* left, which contextualizes the armed conflict in terms of a broader historical and political conflict; on the other hand, there would be the view of the non-*abertzale* or constitutionalist parties and the associations of victims of ETA, which claim an "unmistakable identification" of ETA's illegitimacy, without referring to other victims or to the historical and political context.

In midst of this disputed discursive field, young people are often indirect receivers of conflicting accounts on the past. The discourse depicting the past conflict as a collective psychosis conditioned by irrational violence (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2005, p. 48) clashes with the image of normality reproduced in many families. Moreover, the discourse of the national liberation movement and its warriors, which is maintained in many families, has been completely delegitimized in the face of the hegemonic discourses about radical and, consequently, irrational and illegitimate terrorism. The September 11 attacks in New York and Washington in 2001, and the subsequent *war on terrorism* led to a turning point in the global understanding of organized violence. Since then, sociological studies have concluded that the fear of an attack is more widespread in Western countries (Krause et al., 2022), and security guaranteed from State apparatuses has become a synonym of *peace*, thus operating as a justifying discourse for the security policy agenda of nation-states (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 204).

The *war on terrorism* frame also influenced social perceptions within the Basque Country (Bengoetxea, 2019, p. 589) in a number of ways. On a concrete political-institutional level, a superposition of discursive areas has been observed, such as the case of Spanish ex prime minister José María Aznar, who used to intentionally relate a local conflict –the Basque problem– with the Middle East in order to justify the war in Iraq, turning the discourse of terrorism threat into "a standard argument that needs no further proof, that is a topos, that can be used in any argument" (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 207). Aizpeolea (2018, pp. 101–102) notes that Aznar's party, the conservative PP, as well as other right-wing parties, used to profit electorally from those fierce discourses against Basque and Catalan nationalist movements. This practice would sometimes lead to "the not uncommon situation in which the alleged enemies feed rhetorically into one another's interests, as each side perceives political advantage in the very existence of the other" (Zulaika & Douglass, 2008, p. 29).

In terms of socio-cognitive representations, terrorism has become a *topos* employed to designate any action that is considered to be morally unacceptable, undermining the variety of contexts that may surround the use of violence (Ramsay, 2015, p. 173). By labeling as *terrorism* any violence that does not come from the state, "the very idea of 'insurgency' and the antinomy between 'terrorist/freedom fighter' seem to have become largely obsolete" (Zulaika & Douglass, 2008, p. 28), thus invalidating the discursive basis of a great part of today's older generations. Furthermore, it has opened the path for many State practices that would otherwise be considered human rights violations or abuses (Murua, 2014, p. 137). Whitfield (2015, p. 6) considers the Spanish Political Parties Law an example of this; it came into force in 2002 with the aim of politically marginalizing the *abertzale* left and a number of social organizations linked to it.

All these elements are interwoven in the discursive landscape on which the new youngsters build their narratives about the past: they form a shared background which is

often not made explicit. Hence, I consider it necessary to describe some of the main discourses that are socially extended about the nature and the end of the conflict, in order to be able to correctly interpret the many references that the interviewees of this study have made during their interventions.

3.6.4.1. Narratives about the end of ETA

Nowadays, not only the genesis of the Basque armed conflict is a disputed issue, but also its end. Discourses built in terms of *winners* and *losers of history* result in quite differing narratives depending on the self-image of the interpreting subject and the focus of the narrative. There are four main narratives about ETA's disarming process, and each of them focuses on the agency of one specific actor:

a) Focusing on the Spanish Government and the armed forces: the narrative of military and social defeat

According to this view, the end of ETA's armed activity was a result, on one hand, of its social de-legitimation, and, on the other hand, of policial and judiciary "persecution" (Aizpeolea, 2013, p. 12). This thesis has been supported among a number of ex-responsibles of the Spanish Government and the social-democratic PSOE (Next Educación, 2020): it does not deny that the final decision to lay down arms belonged to ETA, but it emphasizes its military and social weakness (Muro, 2016) rather than its initiative.

This narrative also sets the murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco (1997), a local PP councilor, as a turning point of ETA's social de-legitimation. Aizpeolea (2013) argues that, from that moment on, an attitude against ETA became predominant in the Basque Country, which enabled the political marginalization of the *abertzale* left through the Political Parties Law and an approach to the problem famously described as "Everything is ETA" (Albin, 2021), which ultimately forced the *abertzale* left to request the end of ETA's armed activities. Simultaneously, Aizpeolea praises the repression against ETA members as necessary for its end, especially the Bidart detainments (1992), which led to the "most important crisis of its operative history" (Ibid., 71); he considers the fact that the number of lethal attacks lessened in the following years a proof of this.

b) Focusing on ETA: the narrative of unilateral disarming

A second major narrative focuses on ETA's agency, and views the disarming process as a series of voluntary or strategic steps, rather than as an action forced by military, political and social defeat. According to this thesis, the decision to disarm was the outcome of a dialogue between ETA and the *abertzale* left: they considered that, by disarming, the chances of solving a number of political issues would grow, for example, that prisoners would be gradually freed, and that the *abertzale* left would regain its social support through political legalization (Zabalo & Saratxo, 2015, p. 377). As a consequence, ETA accepted to "take steps towards its disarmament without asking for anything in return" (Ventas, 2017), but the Spanish Government refused to recognize it, nor did it engage in direct talks (Ibarra Güell, 2017, p. 1). In fact, the latter has been accused of hindering the peace process, because it appeared suspicious of the international observers who verified the disarmament (Elejabarrieta Diaz, 2015, p. 160).

Thus, the end of ETA's armed history is presented as an unilateral process of *virtual peacemaking* (Whitfield, 2014, p. 319), and not as a mutually negotiated and recognized peace process. Several authors have pointed out, however, that the unilaterality of the disarmament refers to the lack of interlocutors on the side of the State, but not to the complete individual will of ETA. In fact, "the final decisive blow" that led to ETA's end was "the rebellion of its own social base" (Zulaika & Murua, 2017, p. 4); it was precisely the process of accepting that it had not achieved its military goals which, paradoxically, enabled it to become "a new political entity" (Ibid., 3).

c) Focusing on the Basque civil society: the narrative of a transformation promoted from the grassroots

The third main narrative could be located between the first two, and attributes the agency of the disarmament to civil grassroots organizations in the Basque Country. This narrative assumes ETA's weakness since the 1990s, but locates its deepest crisis between the years 2007 and 2008, which the armed group itself has also illustrated metaphorically in its internal documents: "We need to stick the axe in its heels of clay, not in the armored chest" (Murua Uria, 2015a, p. 20). By evoking the Greek myth of Achilles, ETA highlighted its own smallness in the face of an apparently indestructible Spanish State.

According to this narrative, in the final years of its operational history ETA had still the objective of forcing the State to negotiate, but the initiative to lay down its arms came mainly from civil society; under its pressure or in dialogue with it (Bengoetxea, 2019, p. 587), ETA took the decision to declare a definitive ceasefire. The series of public events representing the disarmament that took place between 2017 and 2018 in the Northern Basque Country, organized by the peace initiative *The Artisans of Peace*, are considered to be turning points (Esnaola Karrera, 2017; Gogora, 2019).

d) Focusing on ETA's victims: denial of the political conflict

To end with, there is a strong narrative that denies the political character of the conflict, which is promoted by well-known associations that represent a part of ETA's victims and right-wing political sectors (Majuelo Gil, 2020a, p. 287). This narrative denies ETA the status of a political –and therefore rational– actor, and builds a framework of *fanatical terrorism*, a vision that closes the door to the possibility of any kind of negotiation. Conversely, all of ETA's victims are portrayed as unequivocally innocent, as it does not address the possible reasons for its armed strategy. Discourses built according to this view will not speak in terms of a Basque *conflict*, but only in terms of *terrorism*.

3.6.4.2. The 'battle of narratives' across communicative spheres

These disputes among narratives about the origin and the end of ETA's violence have a major effect on the current discursive field around the conflict, because they create several taboos and *areas of the unsayable*, especially in the most public discursive spheres.

In the political sphere, the condemnation of violence in all its forms has become a condition for a minimum of political legitimization. This is based on a polarized conception of Basque politics, divided into categories of *the democrats* and *the violent* (Azurmendi, 1997; Torrealdai Nabea, 2021) and materialized in the Pact of Ajuria Enea

(1989)[17] and the Political Parties Law (2002). Up to date, the demand continues to be in force, even retrospectively; various public demonstrations have been condemned or criminalized as praising violence, even without a real threat of violence.

Critical positions towards the universal demand for condemnation of violence argue that, on the one hand, the excessive use of the term *violence* carries the risk of being emptied of meaning, and that its mere rejection does not help to understand and respond to its causes (Olariaga, 2019). On the other hand, by only pointing at certain forms of violence –those caused by the Other–, the actors involved in the conflict may neglect their own historical responsibility. Azurmendi (1997, p. 34) argues that, in contemporary democracies, the condemnation of violence is closely linked to the construction of moral legitimacy of the nation-state.

Many of these discourses that come from the political arena are reflected in the media and often shape their agenda. According to academic research done in the early 2000s, the mainstream media in Spain used to involve in "mediatic antiterrorism" (Idoiaga & Ramírez de la Piscina Martínez, 2002, p. 143) while ETA was still active, usually reproducing the version of the Spanish Government, aligning its editorial lines with it, and promoting negative images of actors portrayed as terrorists. This imaginary was generalized to Basque society in many cases, leading to the stereotype of the "eternally potential Basque terrorist" (Atutxa, 2011, p. 69).

Following the 2011 ceasefire and especially after the process of disarmament between 2017 and 2018, the variety of stories and testimonies reflected by the media broadened, especially in the local press of the Basque Country (Ramírez de la Piscina Martínez et al., 2016, p. 1029). However, there are specific issues that still provoke political debate: for example, how prisoners and their families should be portrayed in public media. Similarly, families who have suffered violence from the State and paramilitary groups have also reported that fewer media spaces are being offered to them (Galdeano, 2012, p. 59).

Similarly, academia has not stayed free of controversy. Those who want to investigate or teach about the Basque armed conflict face two kinds of difficulties. On the one hand, there are material obstacles, since it is rather difficult for researchers to access the archives of the Police and other public institutions (Naiz, 2021), not to mention ETA's internal documents; much is still being kept away because of the risk of further criminalization.

Consequently, few research papers have been published analyzing the phenomenon of violence in the Basque Country in a "global, understandable and reasonable perspective" (Majuelo Gil, 2020a, p. 284), which in turn has hindered the development of other areas of research, such as the history of social movements or the history of specific political forces in the Basque Country.

The second major obstacle concerns the deontic aspect. Most of the dominant discourses on the history of the conflict, including those provided by textbooks, place the victims as "moral witnesses" in the center of the investigation (Sáez de la Fuente Aldama et al., 2020, p. 25), and their view becomes a main reference for the evaluation of the other elements. The category of *victims*, because of their representativity and volume, in all

[17] The Pact of Ajuria Enea was signed in 1988 by most political parties in the Basque Parliament. It condemned ETA's violence and *de facto* isolated the *abertzale* left as a political actor.

cases refers to the victims caused by ETA, and sometimes also to the victims of other actors. Consequently, among the objectives of the school curricula is a detailed moral assessment of the past that promotes solidarity with victims and the rejection of violence (Nafarroako Gobernua, 2016).

In fact, some of the few programmes designed so far for high school pupils have focused on bringing direct victims of the conflict into classrooms as witnesses. Irazuzta et al. examined the effect of these pedagogical policies, and concluded that they fostered an unquestionable discourse presented as "pre-political" and "based on universal values and able to transcend particular political identities and everyday disputes" (Irazuzta et al., 2017, p. 64). They therefore argue that this perspective leads to an emotional and depoliticized perspective, through which the historical conflict is then re-interpreted: "Feelings are seen as arising from a pure, essential reality, without being tied to or mediated by specific power relations and historical processes" (Ibid.).

This issue has led to major political divergences, which have prevented up to the 2020s the adoption of an agreed teaching unit on the history of the Basque conflict in public schools (Velte, 2019a). Consequently, most of the History textbooks used by teenagers today ignore most of the events occurred after the Transition; or, if mentioned, they are usually a peripheral subject.

Higher academic research is also affected by the battle of narratives and the dispute over the role of the victims. This is often expressed through accusations of an excessive subjectivity in the case of researchers who make their position explicit (for a more detailed review, see Murua Uria, 2015b). According to the historian Emilio Majuelo Gil (2020a), there are a number of conflicts that affect historiographic research, such as "a univocal assessment" of past violences regardless of the peculiarities of each historical period. Thus, Majuelo Gil argues that Franco's regime has been displaced as a violator of human rights, and that the focus of research has moved to the last years of the Transition, "setting as an interpretative axis the violations produced by the violent practices of anti-franquist opposition" (Majuelo Gil, 2020a, p. 287).

This dispute over historical legitimacy prevents several discourses from being brought to the surface, so that in the Basque Country at present there is no such thing as *education for peace*, defined according to Galtung's Conflict Theory as

> "(…) a liberalizing process in which people —not as recipients but as knowing subjects— achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality. Hence peace education would be a practice of freedom and not domination — also a conscious act, one of choosing rather than one of being given — an act of cognition rather than mere transfer of information." (Cabezudo & Haavelsrud, 2007, p. 286)

According to this view, education for a democratic transformation after a violent conflict requires the confrontation of multiple narratives and voices, as well as facing and accepting the discourses of the Other, and must provide a place to express real experiences, both in formal education and outside of it. Peace Education must act against the taboo in order to help overcome self-censorship and build a collective vision of non-

violent and transformative development that reflects some collective objective (Ibid., 294).

3.6.4.3. Young people and their contemporary expressions of the conflict

However distant young people nowadays seem from the violent past, the truth is that many expressions or consequences of the conflict are still noticeable in their contemporary context. Almost half a century after a democratic system was established, some of the questions that lie in the heart of the Basque conflict remain unanswered, such as the relationship between the Basque Country and Spain (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2005, p. 17). Young adults are familiar with these disputes, which they have experienced in the form of peaceful grassroots campaigns such as Gure Esku Dago (Alvarez Ortiz, 2020) or through the Catalan conflict between 2014 and 2017.

Similarly, there are other concrete problems which are direct consequences of the armed struggle, such as the question about the presence of the Civil Guard –a conflict materialized in the iconic *Alsasua case*– and the question about the fate of the prisoners, many of whom remain in prison with special penitentiary arrangements designed specifically in the context of the Basque armed conflict, such as the non-application of the European Council Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA[18] (Sare, 2021).

One of the few studies that address the perception of youngsters about these social and political issues showed in 2017 that they felt largely indifferent towards them (Uson Gonzalez et al., 2017, p. 24): among the actions they considered most important to "promote peace and coexistence", the concern about the social reinsertion of prisoners was their last option, although 39% defended the end of dispersion policies. According to this survey, concerns about the consequences of the Basque conflict are very secondary among young people, especially compared to topics such as "gender violence" and "world poverty". Of interest, however, is the data published by the survey on the sources of information of young people: information on the Basque conflict comes mainly from the media (68%) and the family (59%), that is, from very public and very private discursive spheres, while the influence of schools, according to the youngsters' perception, is very small. Most teenagers feel not informed enough.

We might be tempted to interpret this distant relation towards their own political history as disinterest. This problem is addressed by one of the most in-depth reference studies on this subject: according to Larrinaga Renteria et al. (2020), the youngsters' silence with regard to political topics that are considered salient by older generations has more to do with the position that young people occupy in today's society. As the young population is a proportionally smaller group, public policies place it more and more on the sidelines, and on the contrary, "young people seldom see their interests and needs reflected in the dominant political arena of the time, in liberal democratic systems" (Ibid.). From a global perspective, they live in a time in which power is moving from state institutions to large, decentralized markets, and as a result many feel "increasingly disconnected" from them (Ibid., 69).

[18] Council Framework Decision 2008/909/JHA of 27 November 2008 on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to judgments in criminal matters imposing custodial sentences or measures involving deprivation of liberty for the purpose of their enforcement in the European Union.

This qualitative study examines in more detail the relationship between political involvement and the personal and cultural context: according to the authors, the political interest is significantly greater in cases where there has been a greater exchange of historical and political knowledge in the family, especially in young people grown up in *abertzale* environments (Ibid., 28); that is, the family remains the first agent of political socialization, although other influences start to increase during teenage years. The authors perceive a greater influence of formal education than young people recognize, especially during the high-school period. They conclude that disattachment to conventional politics should not be described as "depoliticization", because young people find spaces for their activism outside traditional forms of organization, such as volunteering or the feminist movement (Ibid., 94). In fact, new critiques and interpretations of the recent history in the Basque Country have been introduced by perspectives and movements that were traditionally rather marginal, with the aim of changing social frameworks about the past. An example of this is the motto *This is not our peace* (Bilgune Feminista, 2015) introduced by the local feminist movement in order to visibilize the diversity of violences that took place during the conflict and are still taking place, as well as the exclusion of women during the peace process.

In the current context it is crucial to examine and understand the perceptions and interpretations that young people are realizing about the development of the conflict, not only in terms of the transmission of collective memories, but also with the aim of preventing possible conflicts in the future. A resentment that is not properly addressed can bring the risk of *exploding* again, or new generations may not recognize validity to the social compromises adopted in the past (Quintero Mejía & Vasco Montoya, 2007, p. 100). A questioning of the current status quo based on an idealization of the armed past might bring a "latent" (Dyrstad & Hillesund, 2020, p. 4) support for other types of violence or a deeper feeling of failure, which would harm the identity and "psychological well-being" of the group (Fivush, 2010, p. 96) as well as intergroup relations.

A number of international experiences have shown that a formal peace process is not enough to establish social peace. According to several studies realized in Northern Ireland, a decade after the peace agreements, 15 to 16-year-olds were "disillusioned" (Devine & Schubotz, 2010, pp. 16–17) with the process; group polarization continued to cause problems, and educators felt that they lacked resources to work on controversial topics in the classroom (Stringer et al., 2010, p. 225). Similar findings have been reported among youths in the Balkans, who expressed feelings of "voicelessness and disempowerment" (Yerkes, 2004, p. 929); or in Colombia, where attitudes of indifference and skepticism were identified towards the resolution of the conflict (Wilches Tinjacá & Hernández Pérez, 2016, p. 37), or youngsters faced significant moral conflicts when taking a stance towards the past (Quintero Mejía & Vasco Montoya, 2007, p. 105).

International experiences give us enough reasons to be skeptical about the official endlines of conflicts. All these situations are symptoms of an underlying unresolved conflict, and in the Basque case it would also be a mistake to think that the conflict has been completely overcome only because the most visible part of its many violences has ended. On the contrary, it is necessary to look at its cultural and symbolic aspect, focusing on the perceptions, discourses, and worldviews of social groups and their members, in order to deeply understand its development.

4. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to carry out qualitative analysis useful for understanding the construction of collective memories after violent or traumatic events and the development of identities connected with it. Thus, my starting point was an interdisciplinary theoretical-methodological approach based on the Discursive-Historical Approach developed by Ruth Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017; Wodak & Weiss, 2003), which was already introduced in the previous theoretical chapter.

One of the main questions behind this study is whether it is already possible to talk about the "first post-conflict generation" in the Basque Country during the period it has been carried out (2018-2022). For this purpose, I found it necessary to establish a unifying criterion that would define this presupposed generation. Instead of establishing a specific year of birth or age, I selected an experience: the fact that most members of this generation do not have direct memories of the armed conflict –although with some exceptions–, as this would inevitably make them recipients of a mediated memory, and hence, it would be possible to begin examining the *reconstruction* of collective memory. At the same time, memories of this kind, which are *second-hand* (Erll, 2017, p. 107), are always interdiscursive narrative reconstructions, which makes the methodological use of Discourse Analysis even more relevant.

Arguing that the experiences of the generation under study are fundamentally different from those of previous generations, however, opens up a second debate. If we are addressing *post-conflict* discourses, or discourses from after the violent stage of the conflict, at exactly what moment do we set the end of that stage? With regard to this, I have also found myself forced to establish a theoretical milestone which enables us to argue that the new generations' memory is mainly collective and mediated. That was the reason for taking the end of ETA's armed activity as our point of reference. I did so not because I intend to equate the Basque conflict with ETA's armed activity, but, rather, because I believe that the end of its attacks brought a significant change of scenery to Basque citizens' life experiences, insofar it reduced the violent expression of the conflict. When establishing a specific moment in time, I did not take into account only the dates that were considered to be the *official* end of ETA's activity. Although the ceasefire declaration of October 20th, 2011 and the 2017 disarmament ceremony (Esnaola, 2017) were undoubted turning points, I have taken my participants' life experience as a reference. For those reasons, I set the last planned attack carried out by the armed group on July 30, 2009 (Lopez Adan 2021:801) as the temporal limit of the past violent phase. Setting any of these turning points is a methodological choice because we know that the years around the disarmament of ETA formed a transition to a new political era along with many other significant changes, including the legalization of the *abertzale* left and the appearance of new social movements.

Anyhow, it can be argued that Basque society has not been subjected to a certain form of violence –ETA's violence– since 2009. For that reason, I invited people who had been children in 2009 to participate in the research, taking into account that most of them do not have direct memories of the armed conflict which had taken place during the previous years –or, if they do have some memories, they are very slight–. The oldest interviewee of our research was fourteen years old at the time; the youngest was six.

The aim of this thesis is not to carry out a representative research on the opinions and knowledge of young people in the Basque Country; in order to do that I would have used quantitative methods such as surveys and extensive questionnaires. Instead of that, I designed a qualitative study, based on in-depth analysis of a small sample, and which will serve to understand the psycholinguistic mechanisms used by these young people when constructing discourses about the past. This means that the narratives I was able to observe in my interviews might not be suitable for generalization, but they may be enlightening for understanding part of a broad, diverse discursive field, for instance by shedding some light on the ways in which people use discursive-cognitive resources to interpret their social and political context.

4.1. THE DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH AS A METHOD

My objective in analyzing young people's oral discourses was to visualize the mental models they construct in the present to address the past, for instance through their positioning strategies and discursive construction of identities. This goal has led me to bring together theories from various different disciplines and methodologies at various different levels of discourse, and to take into account the historical and social perspective required by the cognitive-constructivist approach of Discourse Analysis.

In methodological terms, the Discursive-Historical Approach combines Political Science, Semiotics, Cultural Studies, Discourse Analysis and Historical research (Wodak, 2011, p. 164). Reisigl and Wodak (2017, p. 96) mention eight steps that are used "recursively" during the research process:

1. Consultation and activation of previously acquired theoretical knowledge.
2. Obtaining data and contextual information for the research.
3. Selection and processing of data in line with the research objectives, including ethnography and fieldwork (Wodak, 2001, p. 69).
4. (Re)formulation of research questions and hypotheses.
5. Qualitative pilot analysis.
6. Detailed case studies.
7. Interpretation of results and discussion.
8. Applying specific analytical results.

I also followed these steps during the research process, and I will explain them in greater detail in the following lines:

> 1) In the introductory and theoretical chapters I have specified the information related to the historical and social context that is necessary to understand the problem under research. For that purpose, I used documentary analysis –mainly of academic literature and the press– and interviews with expert informants. These have helped me formulating several hypotheses and ideas at the beginning of the research process as well as re-formulating old ones during later phases of the study.
>
> 2-3) The data to be analyzed was obtained during oral interviews and examined mainly using discourse analysis. However, I followed the principle of triangulation in order to complete this analysis, making use of ethnographic

research: I carried out participant observation at several public events, made use of a field notebook throughout the process, and analyzed several related written discourses, in addition to a broad literature review.

4) As a pilot analysis, I conducted a case study with six participants in 2018 in Oñati (Gipuzkoa) during a two-month academic stay. The results were published two years later in an academic article (Velte, 2020).

5) This initial approach led me to adjusting several methodological criteria for my research, refining the hypotheses and defining objectives. I will explain these changes in section *4.2.2. Contacting the participants*.

6) After the experience in Oñati, I went to other towns, cities and schools in the Basque Country to carry out the other 36 interviews that make up the central corpus of this thesis. In the following sections I will explain in greater detail the variables that influenced the participants' profiles, the structure of the interviews, and other considerations.

7) For the interpretation of the results I used the four-level discursive analysis. This combines detailed linguistic analysis, analysis of intertextual and interdiscursive relationships, and analysis of the socio-political context at all times.

8) Based on the identified patterns and gaps, in the final section of this thesis I have put forward several suggestions and reflections that may be useful in terms of involving young people in the construction of memory in the current discursive landscape.

4.2. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The central piece of this research were in-depth interviews carried out with 42 participants and a detailed analysis of the discursive resources identified in those interviews. Because of its cognitivist-constructivist character, Discourse Analysis is the methodological approach that best suited my purposes. One of its basic precepts is that communicative actions inevitably develop under the influence of the contextual political and social relationships. It also holds that language offers useful information about psychosocial procedures, being one of the few *doors* available for accessing and understanding the means of human thought. It assumes that, if the objective is to know what and how young people remember, it is necessary to analyze the discourses they create and their structure, always taking into account the contextual factors that may influence those discourses.

4.2.1. The sample: the participants' age, origin, gender and other variables

I held in-depth interviews, both individually and in groups, with 42 young people born between the years 1996 and 2003. The interviews were carried out between May 2018 and January 2020, while the participants were between 15 and 24 years old. Three quarters of the young people in the sample (76%) were born between 2000 and 2003 (Figure 2), and they were between 16 and 21 years old at the time of the interviews.

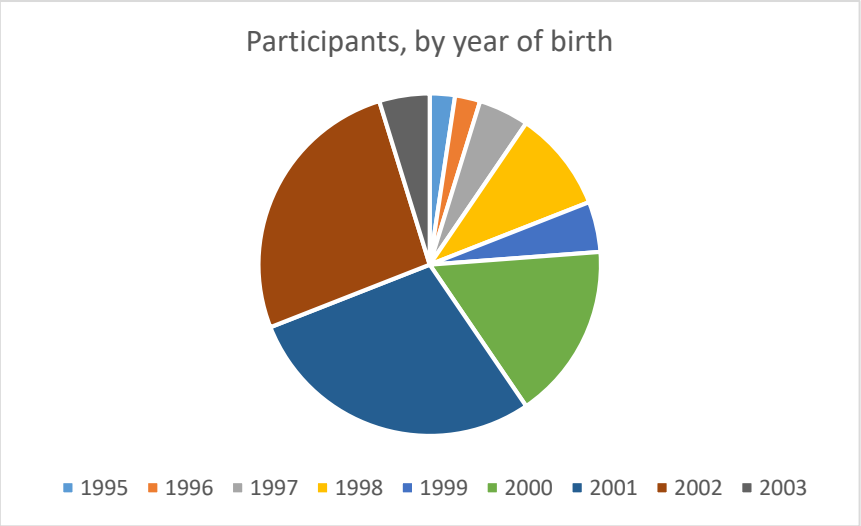

Figure 2: Participants, by year of birth.

As explained in the introduction, the aim of this research is not to build a representative description of young people in the Basque Country; a quantitative research of that kind would draw excessively general and vague conclusions about a diverse and complex collective, and that would have little connection with the specific realities of people's experience. However, aiming to obtain as much as possible from this diversity, I considered it important to maintain a balance in terms of territoriality/origin and gender; and I planned the samples taking these two factors into account. At the beginning of the research process I set an objective of carrying out 40 interviews, taking gender balance into account and, if possible, also including non-binary identities. Finally I interviewed 42 young people, of whom 21 identified as female, and 21 as male.

In terms of geographical origin, I decided to include youngsters not only from the Southern (or *Spanish*) Basque Country, but also from the Northern (or *French*) Basque Country, taking into account the importance and the effect of the armed conflict in those areas. In fact, a specific neighbourhood of Bayonne, Baiona Ttipia, is considered to be the area in which most attacks took place in the recent history of the conflict (Zabalza, 2017, p. 155).

the main criterion was the territorial distribution of the population of the Basque Country. Thus, the percentage of the population of each province was applied to the number of participants selected from each one. This led to the planning of the originally intended 40 interviews as shown in Table 1. As the research progressed, however, an informant suggested contacting two further participants, believing that they could provide useful qualitative data due to their specific experiences. These two additional interviews slightly changed the sample composition, both of them being from Gipuzkoa:

Total population of the Basque Country: 3,140,300 (Gaindegia, 2020)					
Province	Araba	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa	Navarre	Northern Basque Country
Population	328,400	1,148,600	719,300	643,200	300,900
% of total population	10.45	36.57	22.91	20.48	9.58

Participants in the research (planned) (%100 = 40)	4	14	10	8	4
Interviews held in reality, by gender	1 female 3 male	8 female 6 male	7 female 5 male	5 female 3 male	0 female 4 male

Table 1: Interview planning by province.

I sought the advice of Gaindegia, the Basque Country Observatory of Economic and Social Development, when planning the interviews. They advised me to take into account the diversity of social, political and linguistic situations, and to pay attention to the distribution according to political sympathies; the linguistic situation; and the size of towns and cities by population. Being are aware that speakers' origins do not guarantee that these criteria are met in each speaker's specific case, I paid more attention to the in-depth analysis of each case and the socio-cultural and political factors that might affect it. However, I can state that the diversity advised by Gaindegia with regard to the interviewees' towns and cities of origin was guaranteed[19].

4.2.2. Contacting the participants

I used three main channels to contact young people who were willing to participate in the research: formal education centers –schools and faculties–, leisure centers, and the Internet.

Most of the participants under the age of 18 were contacted through their regular schools, with the help of teachers or counsellors at those centers. I was able to conduct individual and group interviews at the following schools:

- Bernat Etxepare Secondary School (Baiona): 4 participants.
- Urbi Secondary School (Basauri, Bizkaia): 4 participants.
- Trueba Secondary School (Barakaldo, Bizkaia): 4 participants.
- Mendizabal Vocational Training Centre (Gasteiz): 5 participants.
- Zuazola-Larraña Secondary School and Elkar Hezi School (Oñati, Gipuzkoa): 6 participants.
- Altsasu Secondary School (Altsasu, Navarre)[20]: 4 participants.

Originally, I had planned to visit only publicly run schools because I wanted to avoid differences in curricula and socio-cultural characteristics at different schools becoming variables. Limitations regarding my own language skills and other options for voluntarily taking part, however, forced me to be more flexible about this criterion. In the case of the Northern Basque Country, for example, all the interviews had to be carried out in a private school because it was the only one functioning entirely in Basque language. Similarly,

[19] A detailed categorization of the places of origin of the participants can be found in the appendix.

[20] As one of the objectives of the research was also to examine the difference between direct experiences and the reconstruction of mediated memories, I considered it important to also ask about points of reference that are particularly significant for the generation under study. In the context of the Basque conflict, the *Altsasu Case* (Agirrezabal Moreno and Inxusta Pagola, 2018) is by far the most traumatic event that this generation has experienced. For that reason, I considered it relevant to hold some of the interviews in the public high school of that municipality. The other schools were chosen rather arbitrarily among the options that fulfilled the criteria.

some of the teenagers who signed up for the research at leisure centers or using the Internet form also came from private schools, as the invitation to participate was open to all.

Later, as the research progressed, I realized that some characteristics of these diverse socio-cultural contexts could be useful sources of information, for instance being from a family with a history of migration or not. In order to address this I cross-referenced the oral data obtained from the interviews with some of the categories that may influence the construction of young people's narratives: in addition to gender and territory of origin, migration history, whether or not the environment is politicized, political identification –classified as *abertzale* / non-*abertzale* / left / right / center / undefined–, and the language selected for the interview were the variables taken into account. I considered the latter to be a variable worthy of consideration, among other things, because the connection between the use of the Basque language and *abertzale* voting habits has been researched (Garmendia, 2015, p. 38). In cases where all these variables had a significant effect on the data analyzed, I made that clear in the analytical section involving the case.

I conducted interviews in five secondary schools, a vocational training center, a university campus –UPV/EHU's Leioa campus– and a leisure center. Most of the university students –9 out of 11– were students at the University of the Basque Country –publicly owned–, and the other two were from the University of Deusto –privately owned–. Most of them were undergraduate students in Social Sciences (Political Sciences, Law, Business and Primary Education) and Health Sciences (Biotechnology). In these cases, too, the first contact was facilitated by lecturers, but after that, interview appointments were made for outside teaching hours, and as agreed with each participant. At secondary schools and vocational centers, on the other hand, the teachers or guidance counsellors arranged appointments for me at each center within the students' school timetable. As most of the participants in these centers were minors, I believed it more appropriate to ask the schools to be involved as intermediaries.

All the participants were unknown to the interviewer. Their voluntary participation was sought, and the first contact was established through an invitation letter via their teachers. The aims of the research and the conditions of participation were defined there, giving information, for instance, about the anonymous treatment of their data, and the commitment to use it for research purposes only.

The amount of information provided to the participants before the interviews changed during the process. In the first sessions, the invitation letter explicitly stated that the aim of the research was to obtain "the opinion of young people between the ages of 15 and 20 about the recent history of the Basque Country - especially about what has been called *the Basque conflict*". I used this model to invite students from Altsasu secondary school, Bernat Etxepare secondary school in Baiona, and three schools in Oñati. During those three sessions, I observed that most of the participants were young people with a great degree of interest in the subject; that they came from politicized environments, and were generally able to form structured discourses showing a high degree of commitment. Most of them were also boys; according to one of the teachers, it was “impossible” to find girls who were willing to talk about this topic. Thus, when I contacted the following participants, I deleted the explicit references to the armed conflict, stating only that it was

a research project about "the opinions and attitudes of young people about the recent history of the Basque Country". The profile of the participants who signed up after that changed significantly: most of them did not come from politicized contexts, and their main motivation was to "help the research project". Female participation also increased significantly.

4.2.3. Ethical aspects: language use and informed consent

In order to condition the content of the interviews as little as possible, the sessions were conducted in the language chosen by each participant. 25 chose to speak mainly in Basque, 15 in Spanish, and two used both languages equally during the same interview. Two of the group discussions took place in Basque and three were in Spanish. For the purpose of this summary, all of them have been translated into English.

Before interviewing minors, I sought letters of informed consent signed by their parents or legal tutors. On the signed statement the following data was specified:

- The characteristics of the research: The title of the thesis, the names of the researcher and the supervisors, mention of the sponsoring organizations, and the expected duration of the research process.
- Regarding the participation of minors: The type of interviews (individual and/or in groups), the voluntary nature of their participation, and the possibility to choose the language they wished to speak in, within the abilities of the interviewer.
- Data treatment and confidentiality: In this section minors and parents were informed about voice recordings in order to facilitate the transcription of the data; they were also informed that no pictures would be taken. The researcher also undertook to treat the data relating to the identity of the participants anonymously, using codes to be able to interpret the most significant data, and not publishing any real names. It was also promised that the data would only be used for research purposes.
- Potential drawbacks: In order to participate in the research, it was specified that pupils would have to be given time during their school hours, and that the interviews would take place at the school itself.
- Potential earnings: The interviewees refused to receive any monetary or other form of payment for taking part in this study. However, as their participation was going to help to create data in order to understand the social context around them, they were offered the opportunity to receive information about the results of the research on completion of the thesis.
- Contact details: Finally, minors and their parents were offered the opportunity to contact the main researcher at any time in order to clarify any questions about the research.

In the case of interviewees of legal age, verbal consent was made during the interview itself, through requests for permission to record their interviews. Their personal data were treated in the same way as the minors’.

4.2.4. The structure of the individual interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, initially using the same script, and then adapting each interview depending on the interviewees' contexts and the topics they raised. Local reference points were also adapted to each interview. The precision of the questions, too, varied from case to case. However, all the interviews were initiated using very openly phrased questions in order to give the interviewees the opportunity to reconstruct their cognitive processes verbally with the greatest possible freedom. Later on, I asked about more specific issues around these narratives.

The initial script included the following sections:

I. Brief introduction: After thanking them for taking part in the study, the interviewees were informed about its objectives and asked about their motivations for participating. The purpose of this section was to make them feel that they were in a safe environment. To that end, I made it clear that I would not evaluate their opinions or assess their knowledge during the interview –that this was no exam– and I asked them to include as much detail as possible in their answers, also expliciting descriptions, emotions and other references that came to their mind.

II. Technical section: In addition to recording the date and place of the interview, I recorded some basic data about the interviewee, which would later on be useful for cross-checking with the detailed discursive analysis and for statistical purposes. This included the year of birth, origin, level of education, political identification, and level of politicization of their social context.

III. Understandings of the concept of conflict: In this section I wanted to bring out the cognitive and narrative processes that young people have about the term *Basque Conflict* and about the period between 1958 and 2018. For this purpose I mainly used three types of questions:

- "What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the words *Basque conflict*?". I started all the interviews asking this question, with the aim of obtaining answers that would not be overly rationalized or modalized before going deeper into the topic. First of all, I wanted to observe the cognitive processes of young people when speaking about the conflict in a more direct way, being aware that the conversation itself –and its atmosphere, the trust built up towards the interviewer or otherwise, the discomfort caused by the questions, etc. – can also, and usually does, cause changes to take place in the discourse. So, through this first question, in addition to hearing about basic associations on the subject, the objective was to communicate to the participants the interviewer's attitude and the openness of the situation before raising more specific questions which might cause uncertainty. For this purpose, and keeping in mind the participants' ages, I avoided academic terminology and prioritized an informal tone, using the general term *thing*, for example.
- "How would you explain the Basque conflict to a foreigner?". This second question aimed to elicit discursive reconstructions of the history of the conflict and macro-narratives about it. The interviewees were thus asked for more complete, modal answers, requesting they specify as much information as possible. To that purpose, I made use of the figure of a hypothetical foreigner

so that the participants could also make explicit factors that they would expect the interviewer to know about, or which they would have passed over considering them to be shared knowledge.

- "Who was the conflict between, how did it start?". I rarely had to ask these questions because they are essentially reformulations of the previous one: an invitation to reconstruct the history of the conflict discursively. Only the interviewees who had difficulties or doubts about the foreigner's question were asked these, hoping in that way to make the question clearer. Later, in the answers, I paid special attention to the categorization of the actors that could be identified in the answers, and to the characteristics they were ascribed, as well as to the narrative organization of history.

IV. Personal position: In this section I wanted to analyze the relation the speakers have or have had with the conflict: their main sources of information, direct and mediated memories, their positioning and moral assessment. I raised questions, amongst others, about their sources of information, personal identification, moral assessment, and specific features of the conflict, such as the events and actors they considered to be most important.

V. The end of the conflict and the arrival of peace. In this last planned section I wanted to obtain oral data in order to investigate discourses and conceptualizations about the end of the conflict and the arrival of peace. Therefore, the questions included in this section referred to past peace initiatives and aimed to obtaining narrative reconstructions of ETA's disarmament.

VI. *Others*: Finally, I offered them the opportunity to mention any topic that had not been brought up during the interview, as well as the chance to rephrase one of the initial questions. As expected, the participants adapted their narratives during the course of their interviews.

Many of these topics were introduced based on the interviewer's subjective perception of the communicative situation: in general, I chose the events that I considered to be the most widely known or best remembered events throughout society. Since most of the events happened before the interviewees were born, or before they had the ability to remember them, I expected that they would have little knowledge of them, and the awareness of this would make them feel embarrassed or go silent. For that reason I prioritized starting this section with open questions, and validating the answers given there through positive feedback. I later confirmed my hypotheses: when asked about events they do not know about, most of the interviewees seemed very nervous and uncomfortable. In some cases, the interviewer had to ask the interviewee once again to trust her, thus resetting the codes of the interview itself: "Don't worry, these events are from before you were born, and it's normal not to know about them".

4.2.5. Group interviews and exercises

In order to contrast the data collected in individual interviews, I saw the need to organize some group sessions as well in order to examine the speakers' positioning more clearly. In these group interviews or focus groups, discourse is built on continuous interaction, and it is a useful method for examining the "reconstruction, communication, negotiation and synchronization" (Bietti, 2011, p. 188) of frames or patterns of interpretation about the past.

It should be emphasized that these interviews, even though they were carried out in an informal style, are not everyday interactions taking part in a natural context. Focus groups meet for a specific purpose: obtaining data about a specific topic in line with the requirements of a moderator, who guides the conversation (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 164). Although moderators take on the most discrete role possible, they do condition the interaction, and are, therefore, an interference to be taken into account during discursive analysis.

Initially, my intention was to conduct an individual interview with each participant, and then involve them in group discussions or collective exercises with their peers. I wanted to observe how positioning and attitudes that had emerged during the first session changed or became firmer in the context of the second session. In the end, due to schedule problems, personal decisions or logistical reasons, some participants only took part in a single session. To be exact, 14 students took part in two sessions, an individual interview and a group interview; 10 only participated in group interviews, because at two schools I was only able to hold a group session; and the remaining 18 only had individual interviews. However, I do not believe that my original goal was left unfulfilled because of those differences; in fact, I was able to make comparisons with 14 of the participants, and with the rest I obtained oral data valuable in order to analyze other dynamics.

In total, therefore, I conducted five group interviews. All of them lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, and between four and six teenagers took part in each one. In line with my planning, they were distributed geographically between Vitoria-Gasteiz (Araba), Basauri (Bizkaia), Altsasu (Navarre), Oñati (Gipuzkoa) and Baiona (Northern Basque Country).

The content of these collective sessions was significantly more open and variable than that of the individual sessions. Instead of looking for answers to established questions, I set up a number of practical exercises in order to encourage interaction and discussion between the young people, and hoping that this would make it possible to reduce the interviewer's intervention. The aim was to obtain the most natural discursive practice possible between them, taking into account the *artificiality* of the situation. I used the following exercises to encourage dialogue between them about the history of the conflict:

a) Creating a time line. The teenagers were asked to draw a time line between 1958 and 2018 on an A3-sized card, taking into account the first and final dates of ETA's activity, and to position the historical events they consider important on it. They constructed a single line collectively and cooperatively. This exercise encouraged the young people to recall specific events as a group, and to negotiate and agree on those events' relative importance and order. This data is the result of mutual interaction; the young people did not use a phone or the Internet to complete this time line. From the researcher's point of view, the goal was not so much to measure whether they were able to place the events correctly in time, but, rather, to make visible the events of importance in the young people's memory, and to set up a process of reasoning or negotiation about their importance. During that process we were also able to observe several significant facts about what Astrid Erll calls "time consciousness" (*Zeitbewusstsein*) (2017, p. 112), that is, the

influence of emotional distance from specific historical events or periods on the narrative reorganization of discourses and perceptions about the past.

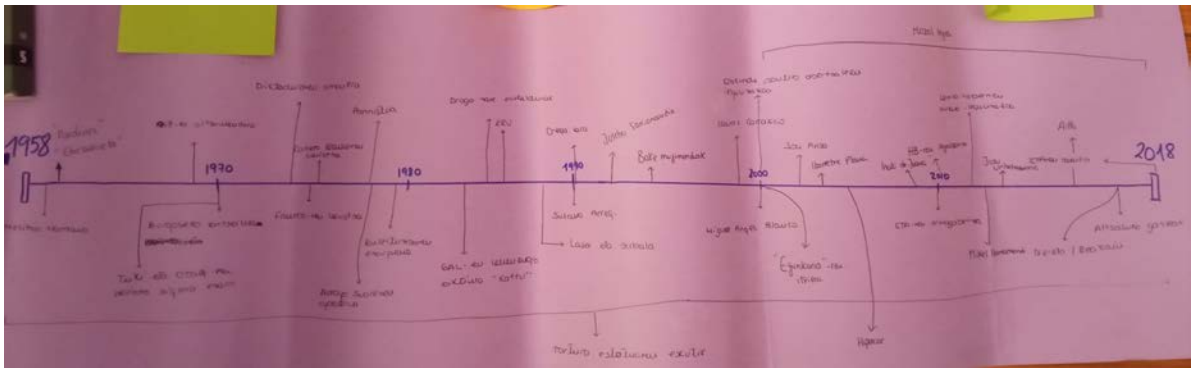

Figure 3: The time line exercise, after being completed.

b) The art work exercise. This task was divided into two parts. During the first, I showed the participants a press article (Naiz.eus, 2018) that included a picture of Koldobika Jauregi's painting *Aizkora eta Arbola* ('The Axe and the Tree'), which was published on the cover of the newspaper *Gara* on April 9th, 2017; the day after the verification of ETA's disarmament. The picture shows an axe that grows upwards and turns into a tree.

Figure 4: 'Aizkora eta Arbola' (Koldobika Jauregi)

The participants were asked to comment on this picture in the first part of the exercise. Then, they were encouraged to mentally and verbally design their own piece of art: "How would you represent the Basque conflict in an art work?". In the first two sessions, this exercise turned out to be more productive than initially expected, and as a result I reused it in all the group interviews. As I was also able to observe in other parts of the research, visual language is a powerful tool among young people, and creativity is an important feature of childhood. It is not surprising, therefore, that discussion about a picture should lead to young people getting more involved than more theoretical questions do.

c) Commenting on current affairs. In a similar way to the previous exercise, I offered the young people contemporary publications and references, asking them to read them and talk about them among themselves. They were mostly short pieces: a news item about a current event, a slogan with political content, a specific cultural product… The purpose of these exercises was to encourage discussion on the specific problematic issues addressed by these materials –homages, the use of humor, idealization...–, and to observe the rhetorical and linguistic strategies used by the participants in this interaction. As I was also able to observe in individual interviews, local events usually obtain a prominent place in the discourses that young people construct about the history of the conflict, so events which took place in their area, too, were subjects of debate.

d) The 'Map of suffering'. After the discussion session organized by the Basque Youth Council (EGK) and the Social Forum to promote the Peace process in Bilbao in May, 2018 (see below, chapter *4.3. Ethnographic Research*), I included the methodology used there called the 'Map of Suffering' in my research. In this exercise, the aim was to identify four types of rights violations caused by armed conflicts: *The right to life, Physical-psychic integrity, Civil and political rights* and *Economic consequences*. Then the participants were asked to locate the concepts, names and facts that came to mind. In our case, as the purpose of the exercise was not only to identify types of suffering but also the specific actors who are mostly remembered, I considered it worth including the figures that young people associate with those types of suffering. For that reason, I added a fifth section to our map of suffering, named *Victims*. Subsequently this section has been the one that has provided the greatest number of references.

   The first part of this exercise is individual: participants place their references next to other participants' references. There is, therefore, no initial negotiation –as in the time line exercise–, but an exchange of views does take place later. We carried out this exercise with a group of six young people previously interviewed individually, and we observed that when locating their references they stuck to the thought patterns and narratives they had already constructed. The final result, however, the complete map, was not the sum of what everyone had said, but, rather, a more diverse picture: as a result of the discussion and hearing about the others' references, they incorporated items which they had not previously mentioned. This opens up the following hypothesis: a discursive exercise of memory, when carried out together with other participants who are considered to be equals, may strengthen personal positions, but at the same time it may also encourage empathy.

4.2.6. Data categorization and analysis

As agreed with the participants, the oral data obtained during the interviews was recorded. I did not take pictures because I wanted to avoid more invasive methods of image recording. Although I was aware that without audio-visual recording there was a risk of losing the non-verbal aspects of the discursive event –proxemics and kinesics–, I prioritized methods that would help the participants to feel confident, using only the interviewer's audio recorder and manual notes, believing that a video camera might intimidate the speakers. Because of that, I noted down the gestures and body postures that I considered to be significant in the development of the communicative action.

When transcribing the spoken data recorded, I did not use strict phonetic transcription because I was focusing on content and meaning systems beyond morphemic and grammatical structures. However, I did keep paraverbal expressions –"mmm...", "eh..." –, self-corrections and switches between language that played a role in the construction of the discourse. The latter, although completely natural and with speakers often unaware of them, play an expressive role in communication, and are related to the effect speakers want to achieve, or the way in which they want to be understood (Gumperz, 1982, p. 61)..

Lastly, I used Nvivo qualitative research software (released in March 2020) to categorize the transcribed oral data. Before starting codifying, I added the speakers' characteristics to their documents in line with the criteria defined in chapter *4.2.1. The Sample: The participants' age, origin, gender and other variables*, creating *cases* that could then be cross-referenced with the content of the interviews. Then, the most significant fragments identified in the transcripts were classified into *codes* or categories in line with the objectives of the research. Some of these categories are connected to the items I had wanted to observe from the beginning of the research, for example, *personal identification* and *sources of information*. Others, however, were included as the interviews were carried out and when I saw that they were topics that had become of great relevance in young people's discourses; for example, the Altsasu and Catalonia questions or the Basque language. A detailed list of categories can be found in the Appendix.

Later on, when reproducing the concrete excerpts examined and chosen for their representativity, I have used pseudonyms; in order to grant anonymity to the speakers, I have employed invented names, together with real ages and municipalities of residence. Hence, when the source of a quote is codified as "Irene-19-Donostia", *Irene* should be understood to be a pseudonym for facilitating identification; *19* is the speaker's age; and *Donostia* is her place of residence.

Even so, I consider it important to view the participants of the research as real people and not mere suppliers of data: they each have their own complex context, and the discourses created must be interpreted within that context. For that reason, in order to build a certain orientative profile, I here list all the participants, identified by the pseudonyms I have given to them and taking into account the indirect variables mentioned above, according to the data provided by the participants. With regard to the variable of political identification, only identifications that were given explicitly by them were taken into account, in order to avoid over-interpretation; when they gave vague definitions, I included them on the following table with direct quotations.

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Town**	**Gender**	**Politicized environment**	**Migration history**	**Current studies**	**Political identification**	**Main language**
Nora	21	Getxo	N	Yes	No	University degree	Left-wing "EH Bildu / Unidas Podemos"	Both to the same degree
Paulo	19	Urnieta	M	Yes	No	University degree	"Anarcho-Capitalist" Not Abertzale	Spanish
Laura	21	Donostia	N	Yes	No	University degree	Left-wing Not Abertzale "Unidas Podemos"	Both to the same degree

Ekhi	21	Lekeitio	M	No	No	University degree	"In the center"	Basque
Joseba	20	Bilbao	M	No	No	University degree	Undefined "Fed up"	Basque
Jokin	21	Vitoria-Gasteiz	M	Yes	No	Vocational training	Abertzale "Towards the right"	Spanish
Gari	20	Getxo	M	Yes	No	University degree	Left-wing Basque patriot "Member of Ernai" (*Abertzale* and left-wing youth collective)	Basque
Ane	21	Mutriku	N	No	No	University degree	Undefined / does not know	Basque
Alex	18	Barakaldo	M	No	No	Baccalaureate	"Neutral" Not Abertzale	Spanish
Lander	20	Vitoria-Gasteiz	M	Yes	No	Vocational training	Abertzale	Spanish
Eider	19	Altsasu	N	Yes	No	Vocational training	Abertzale Left-wing	Spanish
Ibai	20	Donostia	M	Yes	Yes (born in Madrid)	University degree	Non-abertzale "towards the left"	Spanish
Irene	19	Donostia	N	No	No	University degree	Undefined / does not know	Basque
Ana	19	Vitoria-Gasteiz	N	No	No	Vocational training	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Udane	18	Markina-Xemein	N	No	No	University degree	Undefined / does not know	Basque
Nagore	17	Oñati	N	No	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing "In doubt"	Basque
Maite	17	Oñati	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined: "Towards the left, but I don't like labels"	Basque
Ekaitz	16	Altsasu	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Non-abertzale	Basque
Unai	16	Anhauze	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Abertzale	Basque
Sebas	17	Barakaldo	M	No	Yes (Bolivian by birth; arrived at age 15)	Baccalaureate	Non-abertzale	Spanish
Elena	17	Barakaldo	N	No	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Malika	17	Barakaldo	N	Yes	Yes (Saharan by birth, arrived at age 10)	Baccalaureate	Left, "socialist-communist" Non-abertzale	Spanish
Dani	18	Bilbao	M	No	No	Baccalaureate	Abertzale, conservative "Close to EAJ"	Basque
Ilargi	16	Etxarri Aranatz	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Abertzale	Basque
Galder	18	Vitoria-Gasteiz	M	No	No	Vocational training	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Lur	16	Hendaia	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Abertzale	Basque
Enaitz	17	Oñati	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing	Basque
Fernando	17	Oñati	M	No	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Abertzale	Basque

Idoia	17	Oñati	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Abertzale "Not left-wing"	Basque
Eli	15	Altsasu	N	No	No	Secondary school	Abertzale Left-leaning	Basque
Imanol	15	Arbizu	M	No	No	Secondary school	Undefined	Basque
Joana	16	Arrasate	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Basque
Edurne	17	Basauri	N	No	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Erika	17	Basauri	N	No	Yes (born in Romania)	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Xan	15	Hendaia	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-leaning Abertzale	Basque
Gorka	15	Hendaia	M	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Abertzale	Basque
Eñaut	15	Oñati	M	No	No	Secondary school	"Mostly left-leaning"	Basque
Endika	17	Tafalla	M	No	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing, "perhaps Bildu"	Basque
Haizea	17	Tafalla	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Basque
Maddi	17	Tafalla	N	Yes	No	Baccalaureate	Left-wing Abertzale "Member of Ernai"	Basque
Jaione	16	Basauri	N	No	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Spanish
Gabriele	16	Basauri	N	No	No	Baccalaureate	Undefined / does not know	Spanish

Table 2: Participants' detailed profiles

4.2.7. Levels of discourse analysis

After collecting and classifying the data, I used discourse analysis to analyze the most significant excerpts; specifically, Critical Discourse Analysis. This approach goes beyond simple textual analysis in that it mainly understands discourse as a contextualized communicative act, and because it focuses on the interpretive or cognitive nature of the relationship between text sequences rather than on the grammatical relationship (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 3). This calls for a multi-layered analysis. For one thing, a text's meaning can only be constructed when there is proper understanding of the different contexts that affect it; for another, the linguistic forms that support these meanings must be identified within the text as they are the evidence which our method requires.

In this case, I resorted specifically to the Discourse-Historical Approach, which is linked to the theoretical-methodological principles put forward by Van Dijk (1997), when interpreting the meanings. One of the features that both approaches share is viewing the specific content of the text and the context in which the communicative action takes place as different levels of the same analysis.

1. In the analysis of the text itself I differentiated two levels with regard to the content: firstly, the main topics and their organization, which Van Dijk calls "macrostructure" (1996); secondly, the rhetorical and linguistic resources ("microstructure") used in the specific textual sequences.

a. At the micro-linguistic level, I examined at the following items:

- Lexical choices: The selection of words, especially those with a significant semantic or evaluative meaning, and those that function as intertextual elements. By analyzing the lexical selection, we focus on the prevalent content in the discourses and the associations between them. According to Calsamiglia and Tuson (2012:84), one of the main influences of the cultural context can be perceived at the lexical level: the choice of words can often represent membership of a group. For example, when young people who have never been members of ETA use the term 'organization' to talk about the armed group, or when they call the prisoners 'members', they are clearly constructing a collective identity through discourse, and positioning themselves within it. Lexical selection also plays an important role in the categorization of actors.
- The morphosyntactic level:
  - Deixis: When items in discourse (people, spaces, times, etc.) are signaled in terms of their relationship with the speakers' positions, they become a tool for defining the context of the event (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 47), for instance the construction of identities within and in relation to that context.
  - Conjunctions and topic organization: When analyzing the main narratives about the conflict, I focused in particular on the use of subordinate clauses and causal and consequential conjunctions. Their role is to organize information and determine the relationships between items within the discourse.
  - Syntax: I examined this, too, when the arrangement of the sentences and their structure was organized in a way that was significant for the results of the communicative action. In those cases I am referring to *thematization* (Ibid.).
- Modalization: Modalization was used to analyze uses of language that signal the speakers' subjectivity and their proximity or distance to the content of the statements (*involvement*). These are interpreted in terms of *attitude/stance* and *graduation*. In other words, speakers can express affective, judgmental or appreciative attitudes to greater or lesser degrees (Martin & White, 2005, p. 135)in addition to their epistemic position. Modalizing markers include modal verbs and adverbs ("It may be so"); deictics; the use of transitivity ("He killed" *vs.* "He died"); explicit quotation of sources ("I've been told", "My mother always says..."); expressions strong in tone and lexical choices with high semantic relevance; statements of certainty and doubt; information assumed as shared and specifically stating personal opinions (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 41).
- Polyphony examines the diversity of voices within a text and the relationship between them, such as quotes, use of *topoi* or other examples of interdiscursivity. In directly or indirectly reported speech, participants do not only modalize their position in relation to the content: quotations are also rhetorical tools to construct dramatizations or hypotheses that reinforce their view (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 153). Quotations can be overt, indirect or hidden, and they refer to external items through denial, intertextual links, the use of irony and presuppositions, among others, all of which are based on a discourse taken for granted or considered truthful (Reyes, 1996, p. 47).
- Resources of reasoning: rhetorical questions, figurative language, interpellations, references to common sense or shared information, *topoi* and structures that

promote the construction of ingroup or collective identities. These can show speakers' worldviews, the cognitive patterns they have constructed about specific conflicts or issues and the position they establish for themselves within them.

- ❖ Non-verbal linguistic resources: emphatic intonations, prosody, vocalizations – lengthenings, filling sounds, laughter, onomatopoeia...–, proxemics –how participants distribute space within communicative actions–, etc.

b. At the macrolinguistic level, on the other hand, we mostly used the following concepts:

- ❖ Narratives: The sequential arrangement of events offering a structured explanation of the past, not only with regard to time, and above all in order to strengthen a position (Erll, 2017, p. 85; Fivush, 2010, p. 89).
- ❖ Mental models: The mental models that participants in a communicative action have in advance about the action itself, the actors involved, the content and context of the action, and which they use as the basis for interpreting new information and constructing meanings (van Dijk 1997:189-90).
- ❖ Discursive strategies: repetitive reasoning schemes that perform the function of strengthening specific positions or theses, encouraging making specific inferences (Wodak, 2011, p. 173). Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999, pp. 92–93) differentiate between four social macro-functions and four main corresponding strategies, a model later further developed by Wodak (2011):

Social macro-functions	**Discursive strategies**	**Examples**
The construction of a social status quo within the discourse	Constructive strategies	Categorization of actors, construction of identities (*Us-Them* groups)
Justification or restoration of the discursive status quo	Perpetuation and justification strategies	'Objective' moral reasons Additions (for instance adding emotions) Arguments based on authority and other fallacies Rationalization (instrumental and theoretical) Relativization Positive self-presentation
Transformation of the status quo	Transformation strategies	Reformulations Redefinitions Reorganization Recontextualization and colonization Ellipses Substitutions
Abolition of the status quo	Elimination strategies	Opposition discourses Denial

Table 3: Discursive strategies and their macro-social functions.

2. The context. As the discourses analyzed are located within specific social relationships, taking into account the role they play in that context is as important as examining their content. In this context, too, I have differentiated four levels:

a. *The discourse's close co-text*. This includes other discursive excerpts expressed in the interviews themselves or brought to the same communicative situation and the relationship with them.

b. *Intertextual and interdiscursive relationships*. These might include references to external discourses, quotations and references; in other words, external messages that can influence the construction of that specific discourse.

c. *The specific context of the situation*. The potential influence of the nature of organized conversation, places, moments in time, the speakers' current situations, etc., on the content and evolution of the communicative event, for instance the frames (Goffman, 1974) or cognitive patterns that the speakers have constructed about the situation. In the case of this research, for example, this the interviewees' prior information about the interview's objectives had a significant effect (see *4.2.2. Contacting the Participants*), as well as, in some cases, the image that the interviewees had formed about the interviewer. Coming from a university and being slightly older than them, they assumed her to have more knowledge than them, and, in some cases, because of having an interest in this specific issue, to be *abertzale*. As a result, many interviewees tended to omit large sequences of information because they considered it to be shared or already known. And, in some cases, the discourse itself was modalized to match the knowledge and attitudes attributed to the interviewer, or to represent a specific position in front of her. The interviewer often had to pretend not to know in order to overcome this. All these features related to the close context of the interview were recorded in the field notebook.

This level of analysis became pivotal to the research as the mental models and interpretive patterns constructed about the communicative situation –stemming from the participants' presuppositions and inferences based on them– conditioned its development considerably. To explain these mechanisms I took into account the principles of sociocognitive theory, and observed that the speakers referred to already constructed patterns when constructing new discourses. I will examine these mechanisms in greater depth in the last chapter of this thesis, *5.4.6. The role of mental models within memory discourses: re-organization and completion*.

d. The discursive event's historical, political and cultural context, which enables appropriate interpretation of the content of the discourse. Interlocutors tend to contribute discourses, beliefs and opinions based on external reality –or a perceived reality– to the conversation, and they shape the communicative exchange in line with them (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 157).

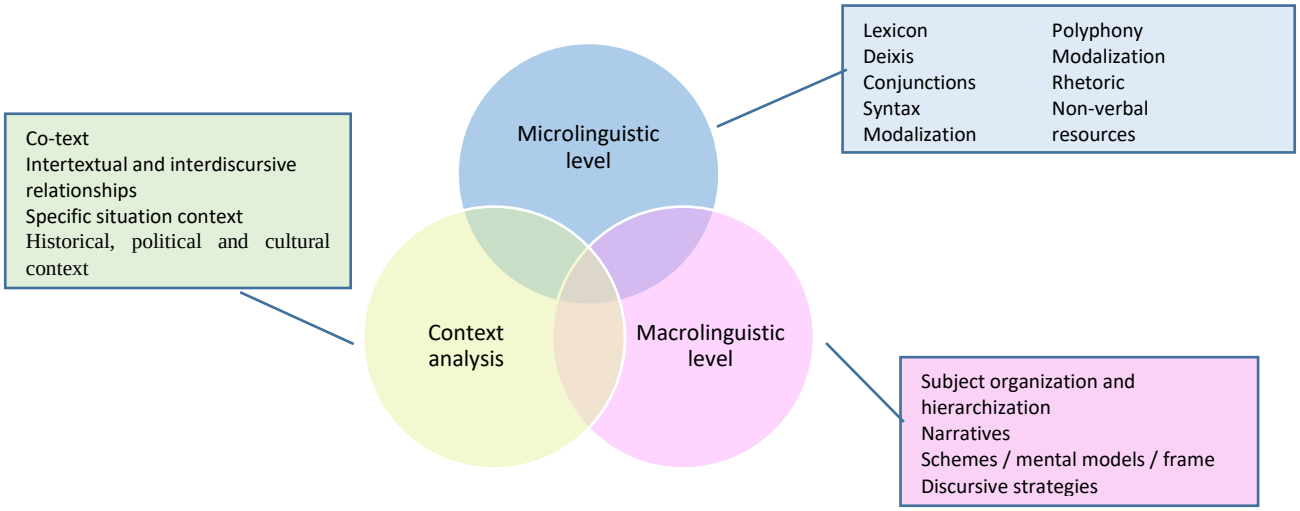

Figure 5: Levels of textual analysis.

Although I considered all these items throughout the analysis, I focused on specific aspects in each section of the research, according to the research question of each section. This means that each analytical chapter has its own specific analytical tools.

In the first section –particularly in chapter *5.1 Defining the Basque conflict: main conceptions and frames about the conflict in individual narratives*–, I focused on lexical choices, content organization, symbolic language and the construction of schematic interpretive frames or patterns; in short, the items that enable the construction of macro-narratives and their relationship with the wider context are prevalent. In that chapter I also analyzed the narratives that young people construct about specific aspects of the conflict. When researching discourses about past violence, prisoners or the peace process, I paid special attention to linguistic features involved in the categorization of actors, reasoning and rhetorical resources –metaphors, for example– and items that assist organization within the narrative –conjunctions and thematization–.

In chapter *5.2 The discursive map of young Basques' sources of memory*, the analysis focused mainly on interdiscursivity. Considering that most of the discourses constructed by the participants were mediated, in this section I tried to identify other discourses that may have influenced their construction. This means that polyphony, intertextual and interdiscursive relationships and speakers' specific contexts became particularly relevant.

In the third analytical chapter –*5.3. Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies*–, I focused mainly on structures that denote the speakers' positioning or *stance* as defined by Biber and Finegan (1989, p. 93). These include modalization, deixis, rhetoric, certain paraverbal elements and interdiscursivity (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 94–100). These all form part of analysis of the construction of identity through discourse.

Finally, the last analytical chapter, *5.4. Psycholinguistic strategies employed to deal with taboo and voids of knowledge*, focuses mainly on discursive and rhetorical strategies, highlighting the active aspect of memory-making.

This selection was not fixed. In several sections I was able to identify features also examined in other sections, and in those cases, whenever they played a significant role in the construction of specific narratives, I also took them into account during my analysis. However, I did find it necessary to establish some main points of focus for the main research questions in each category:

Research section	**Research question(s)**	**Observed items**
Defining the Basque conflict: the main conceptualizations and frames about the conflict in individual narratives	Which are the macro-narratives constructed by the youngsters about their concept of the *Basque conflict* and the actors involved in it?	Lexicon Thematic organization Frames Figurative language (tropes and metaphors) Detailed and comprehensive context Actor categorization Lexicon Deixis Reasoning and rhetorical resources (metaphors) Thematization and conjunctions
Sources of information	Through which channels are they exposed to discourses about the conflict, and how do they construct meanings based on them?	Polyphony Interdiscursivity Speakers' close and broad contexts Modalization Rhetoric
Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies	How do the speakers position themselves towards the narrated events, and who do they express that positioning through discourse?	Modalization Actor categorization Deixis Rhetoric Paraverbal items Interdiscursivity
Psycholinguistic strategies used to manage taboos and voids of knowledge	Which psycholinguistic strategies do they employ in order to approach the discursive area surrounding the Basque conflict?	Modalization Figurative language (metaphorization, metonymy, irony) Actor categorization

Table 4: Discursive resources observed in line with research sections and questions.

4.3. ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Although the basis for this research is the discursive analysis of the oral data obtained during the interviews, during the process I was able to obtain several items of ethnographic data which I though significant for the correct interpretation of the subject under examination, and which I therefore took into account during the research. I obtained

data through participant observation, recording evidence observed during the research in a field notebook.

Ethnography or participant observation is a series of social and qualitative research methods derived from anthropology, and its main characteristic is the researcher's role as an observer:

> "Ethnographers take part in an open or hidden way, for a time, in people's daily life, observing what takes place, listening to what is said, asking questions. In fact, they can make use of any available data in order to offer some explanation for the core issue addressed by the research" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994, p. 15)

Ethnography does not start by applying of various theoretical constructs or universal laws. On the contrary, these authors argue that detailed observation of reality must necessarily be based on the social world and the way the participants interpret it, and from that observation, conclusions about the group's behavior are drawn. In fact, "human actions are carried out based on or influenced by social meanings: intentions, motives, attitudes, beliefs" (Ibid., 21).

Ethnography combines various sources of information and research methods. The most frequently used are formal and informal interviews, and recording all significant observed/heard data as a basis for later interpretation. Applied to communication, one of ethnography's main contributions is pointing out that discourses are built on specific, situated contexts, and therefore their interpretation must be carried out in the terms of those situations, taking into account the variability of both the situation and its interpretation.

The objective of this work is to describe the social phenomenon under study as precisely as possible, and this means that the researcher must acquire full knowledge of the specific social group's cultural codes by integrating with the group. When researchers adopt a spectator position to describe their own social groups this is called autoethnography (Blanco, 2012, p. 172). For that to be carried out, the observer must adopt an "internal othering" position (Rheindorf & Wodak, 2017, p. 24).

In this case, as a local researcher, I shared several cultural codes with the social group under research. However, there was an age gap of six to twelve years between the interviewer and the interviewees, and we did detect a significant difference in the interpretation of several shared references to the past.

In addition to the interactions observed in situations that were not specifically created for research purposes, I conducted formal and informal interviews on the subject with selected specific informants. And, finally, I examined various texts used or written by the members of the generation which is the object of the current research, believing that they, too, would help to clarify matters. This data is not the main focus of our research, but it is useful for contrast with some features observed during the interviews.

4.3.1. Field notebook: The researcher's notes

The field notebook is a document that includes summaries and personal comments on all the research carried out during two consecutive years of data collection (from February

2018 to January 2020), and in the months following the administrative and social restrictions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, from October 2021 to February 2022.

In total, they comprise notes of over 3,000 words, including significant data left unrecorded during the visits to each town and school: for instance, the conversations that took place before and after the formal interviews, both with students and teachers; current topics; the researcher's own interpretations based on gestures beyond verbal language; and the use of voice or prosody. These partly led to later hypotheses which were verified or refuted during discursive analysis of the oral data obtained.

As for the reproduction of these data in this dissertation, I have used different fonts to distinguish between the excerpts taken out of the formal interviews with the young people and passages from the field notebook. We set the former in Times New Roman size 10 italics, centred, giving the speakers' pseudonyms, ages and places of residence; these passages are numbered to the left of the page, highlighting the evidence mentioned in the detailed discursive analysis. The passages contained in the field notebook, on the other hand, are set without italics and aligned to the right, with the speaker's name and post stated, and without numbering. Thus,

> *This is how the oral data obtained in the formal interviews with the participants of the generation under research will be shown. The underlined passages are those that provide significant evidence for our discursive analysis, which will be referred to in the following developed analysis.*
>
> Speaker-Age-Origin

> And this is how the data obtained from the contextual information during the period of the research will be presented, mostly reproduced from the notes extracted from the field notebook.
>
> Speaker's name, post and interview reference

4.3.2. Interviews with specific informants

In addition to analyzing the discourses of the young people themselves, I held interviews with several specific informants that have been useful for obtaining contextual data. These people were selected because they have worked with young people in the context of the Basque conflict or in the field of Memory Studies / memory construction, in the hope that their specific experiences could provide useful perspectives for understanding the problem.

Specifically, I turned to the following experts and professionals for contextual information:

a) Former representatives of youth organizations. In order to learn about the relationship that young people have had with the Basque conflict as a generation, it was not enough for me to examine the academic literature because it often included broad sociological interpretations without paying attention to the details. To complete that information, I considered it necessary to learn directly about the experiences of young people who had been involved in political activism during the most violent periods of the Basque conflict,

for instance by analyzing memory initiatives that have been led by young people since the 2000s. To that end, I sought out the following profiles:

> I. A former member of the youth organization Segi, interviewed in Donostia in February, 2018. This interviewee held positions of responsibility in Segi during the 2010s, while it was illegal. At the time of the interview, he was a member of the leadership of Sortu. He spoke to us about the criminalization suffered by young people at that time, and how that has hindered memory transmission.
>
> II. Elvira Vidales, former peace and coexistence technician of Euskadiko Gazteriaren Kontseilua (the Basque Youth Council – EGK), interviewed in Donostia in September, 2019. At the time of the interview, she was a lecturer at the University of Deusto. EGK started working on the "culture of peace" in 2000 under her guidance.
>
> III. Ane Zaldua, the current spokesperson for Ernai, interviewed in Pamplona in December, 2021. She was interviewed informally about the transmission of memory and counter-memory within *abertzale* groups. She explained that, among other things, the low average age of the members and the high turnover make the transmission of memory difficult.

b) Ex-prisoners and parents

In an informal context, several people who had heard about my research shared their experiences in connection with memory and transmission of the conflict. I highlighted two of them in my field notebook. They are both former prisoners and parents – specifically fathers–, and had children between 13 and 22 years old at the time of the interviews. The first has a position of responsibilities in Sortu, and is a well-known political figure; he had been arrested and imprisoned for being a member of Batasuna's National Committee[21]. The second interviewee had been a member of ETA in the 1970s and early 1980s, but at present he has no connection to the *abertzale* left or any other political party. Both cases seemed relevant in the analysis of the difficulty of transmitting one's own experience. They have been explained in the subchapter regarding family transmission.

c) Interviews with teachers: Although the family is the first environment for political socialization, that the influence of formal education is also considerable. Therefore, as we are addressing the public construction of memory, it seemed interesting to see how transmission was dealt with in the classrooms; not only in the students' perceptions, but also by addressing the teachers' experience. Interactions of this kind started spontaneously in most of the schools selected for formal interviews during breaks between them: many teachers took the initiative to share their experiences. I did not record those interviews, but did write down the most significant content in the field notebook. They are included in the section about education in the chapter titled *5.2. The discursive map of young Basques' sources of memory.*

[21] Batasuna was the poltical party of the *abertzale* left between 2001 and 2003, until it declared illegal and its representants were imprisoned.

d) Historian Emilio Majuelo Gil, interviewed in Pamplona in October 2021. In the process of documenting the development of memory studies, I saw that it was important to analyze the evolution of the culture of memory in relation to past political and armed conflicts in the Basque Country. To that end, I used bibliographic references from several historians who have studied the case closely, and I also had the opportunity to meet with one of them and exchange ideas both face-to-face and through mail. There, among other things, we analyzed the evolution of the concern about memory in the context of the Southern Basque Country, and he explained the difficulties involved in drawing up a historiography of the Basque armed conflict. This data, with the relevant references, is explained in greater detail in the theoretical chapter.

4.3.3. Participant observation at public events

During the research process I attended four public events related to young people and memory of the Basque conflict; I did so as a spectator, moderator or speaker, and used all four events to conduct participatory observation. To select events I prioritized the fact that they had been set up on the initiative of young people or that young people were involved in their organization.

I. Forum *Youth and memory: Talking about coexistence* (Bilbao, May, 2018)

On May 10, 2018, the Basque Youth Council and the Social Forum to promote the Peace process organized an encounter for young people to talk about the Basque conflict held at Bilborock, in Bilbao. About fifteen people came, most of them in answer to EGK's announcement of the event, and most of them did not know each other.

A member of the Social Forum gave the presentation and informed those present of the purpose of the meeting: drawing up a *map of suffering*. The purpose of the meeting was to visibilize all the types of suffering that had resulted from the Basque conflict that young people could identify, representing "a panorama that is both detailed and wide-reaching".[22] To do this, each participant was offered as many *post-it* notes as they wanted, and asked to write down types or examples of suffering they could think of. In some cases, to encourage participation, discussion leaders had to use the following questions:

- *When you look back, what comes to your mind?*
- *Suffering takes on different appearances, it is easy to identify your own, but have you identified those of others?*
- *There have been many painful situations in different countries: which are the most striking?*
- *Do you think there is still suffering going on? Of what type?*

During the second part of the exercise, each participant read and explained their notes aloud to the group members, and put them on a large sheet of paper divided into four sections:

1) Violations of the right to life.
2) Sufferings related to economic consequences.

[22] Source: organizers' internal records.

3) Violations of civil and political rights.
4) Damage to the physical-psychic wellbeing.

Finally they were asked to summarize each group's content and share it with the wider group, emphasizing that there was no need for consensus among the options presented. "All the suffering that has taken place is the result of the same conflict, whether it is considered to be a violation of human rights or not. Therefore, we must take everyone into account in order to build inclusive memory"[23].

The ultimate goal of the exercise was to produce material for the Social Forum and EGK to work with. In addition performing as discussion leader, I also took on the role of observer, and obtained several pieces of data that may be significant for the research; the most significant are explained in chapter *5.3 Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies*.

II. Roundtable *Cultivating coexistence, weaving commitment: Learning from the initiatives set up by the young people in times of crisis*. Donostia, May 22, 2021.

I attended this seminar organized by the Social Forum as an observer using the organizers' streaming service. Young spokespeople from various associations – Darkum, GazteAgora, the Red Cross and the Basque Youth Council– spoke about the challenges of coexistence today. Cued by the title of the event, I had expected that they would talk about coexistence after the Basque armed conflict, but, to my surprise, the speakers did not mention the issue once during the event. This data was then interpreted as significant in order to know about the concerns of today's youth and the position that the armed history of the Basque Country has for them.

III. Panel discussion *It has been very hard: How to remember, how to re-tell the Basque conflict*. Pamplona, October 23, 2021.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of ETA's ceasefire, the cultural organization Laba organized a panel discussion about accounts of the conflict in Pamplona. Historian Emilio Majuelo was invited to speak, together with Emilio Lopez Adan, a former member of ETA and documenter of its history; Maider Galardi Fernández de Agirre, then a PhD student researching the memory of the conflict from a gender perspective; and myself. Around 50 spectators attended, and the newspaper *Berria* published a video of it (BerriaTB, 2021). The meeting was useful for deducing several facts about different perspectives and positionings, as the influence of direct and indirect experiences after the events on the construction of discourses became evident.

IV. 'Armed conflict and youth: from transmission to commitment' discussion. Pamplona, December 27, 2021.

The round table organized by Ernai, an *abertzale* left-wing youth organization, was a good opportunity for participatory observation in December, 2021. Our

[23] Ibid.

interlocutor was a member of Ernai, and most of the audience were also members of that group. In addition to their being members of the generation that is the object of our research, we had the opportunity to exchange ideas with young people who identify with a specific political sector –the *abertzale* left– and hear some of their discourses, focusing in particular on structures related to the construction of collective identities.

4.4. ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN MATERIAL: TEXTBOOKS

The impossibility of bringing the subject of the Basque conflict into the classroom soon became clear in the students' discourses, and was confirmed in my conversations with the teachers, being further strengthened by the awareness of the political impossibility of creating a consensual didactic unit around it. On the other hand, pedagogical discourses from formal education are one of the pillars of the official construction of memory, and those are the narratives available to all teenagers. Therefore, as a means of triangulation, I found it necessary to also take into account the discourses that are present in the textbooks used in formal education.

Specifically, I analyzed the following materials:

a) The didactic unit *Herenegun!,* designed by the Basque Government (4 notebooks, version published in 2018).

b) The didactic program of the Navarre Government "Schools with memory, working for peace and coexistence" (one booklet).

c) The *Eki* project booklets used at the Basque-speaking Ikastola network schools in 4th grade of Secondary School, in the subjects of Basque Language and Social Sciences (6 notebooks).

The first two are public materials, and can be accessed online. I acquired the last one from its publisher, Elkar. The partial results of this textual study were published in an academic article (Velte, 2019a) and at a conference (Velte, 2019b).

5. RESULTS

According to the four research questions formulated at the beginning of the research process, I have observed four main types of constructions in the oral discourses created by the young participants of this study. This chapter is structured accordingly. First, I analyze the macro-narratives, that is, the main conceptualizations, associations and interpretative frames that the youngsters build about the conflict itself and the actors and events involved in it. In the second section, I will provide an overview of the different discursive contexts on which the participants rely. Third, I will explain how they position themselves towards this *discursive map*, i.e. what kind of discursive relationship they construct towards the several discourses in their social contexts. And fourth, I will explore some of the psycholinguistic mechanisms and strategies they employ in order to overcome the difficulties they find when engaging in the social construction of memory.

The evidence that supports my analysis is here mainly presented in the form of chosen discursive excerpts belonging to the oral narratives created by the youngsters during our interviews. I have highlighted those that show a pattern, but also those that are rather minoritary, especially when they are illustrative of a type of discourse that could be otherwise overseen.

5.1. DEFINING THE BASQUE CONFLICT: MAIN CONCEPTIONS AND FRAMES ABOUT THE CONFLICT IN INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES

As a starting point, I will identify and analyze some of the macro-narratives in which young Basques frame the past conflict. These narratives are understood as "cluster concepts" (Dascal, 2003, p. 153) that allow us to structure social knowledge and experiences according to mental schemata constructed beforehand, as well as infering the necessary information in order to fill cognitive gaps. These frames also often guide the interpretation and evaluation of events (Goffman, 1974, p. 21), because they imply a process of choosing, prioritizing and organizing certain aspects of the information.

Interpretative frames have an important social component, as members of a shared cultural or epistemic community tend to organize information in similar patterns according to the discursive and interpretative rules that are dominant in their community (Van Dijk 2005:17). They provide *lessons* about the permissible limits of discursive action, as well as a "common ground" (Van Dijk 2003:86) on which speakers can base their interaction.

In Discourse Analysis, they are linked to the macro-structural level of analysis, that is, with the organization of the main topics within discourse. Macro-structures provide "a first, overall, idea of what a discourse or corpus of texts is all about, and [control] many other aspects of discourse and its analysis" (Van Dijk 2001:102). These structures are also used to construct representations of texts in memory: "What people remember of a text is not so much its meaning, as rather the subjective model they build about the event the text is about." (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 4). So, if we wish to know what young people know or remember about the past armed conflict, we must necessarily inquire into the macro-narratives into which they organize their knowledge.

For this purpose, I will analyze the responses provided by my young participants to two questions aimed precisely at the construction of general frames about the past conflict.

All of them were asked at the beginning of their interview the following questions: "What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear 'the Basque conflict'?", and "How would you explain the conflict to a stranger?". The first question is intended to provoke less elaborated and thought-through answers that reflect the mental models that the adolescents had constructed beforehand, in the form of *keywords* or central concepts. An informal formulation of words was chosen in order to *break the ice* and make them understand that they were in a confidential context in which any kind of spontaneous answer would be valued. The latter, on the other hand, was aimed at provoking more explicit and structured accounts of the past conflict: using the figure of a hypothetical stranger, I intended to change the putative addressee (White, 2020, p. 2) of these oral discourses, in order to avoid that the youngsters left too much information implicit because they considered it to be shared and therefore known information for the interviewer.

Based on these answers, it can be observed that the adolescents frame the conflict according to at least four main axes: the dichotomy between its *violent* and *political* characters, its temporality, the ideologies involved in it, and its spatiality. I have also observed a resemantization of the concept '*conflict'*, which I address at the end of this section.

5.1.1. The violent conflict and the political conflict

The key word most often mentioned by the youngsters is, by far, *ETA*: the armed organization is clearly a central concept for them when reconstructing the conflict in broad narrative terms, followed by geographical, political and institutional references related to collective identities –such as *Spain, the Basque Country, the state, the nation*, or *independence*– as well as concepts related to the violent imaginary surrounding the conflict –*violence, repression, war, assassinations* and *suffering*, among others–. ETA is mainly characterized by its violent activity, and the other actors that the youngsters relate to the topic are also primarily involved in some kind of violence, such as the Civil Guard (military police) and paramilitary groups of the past like GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación). This, as well as the characterization of the victims, leads to a narrative in which the Basque conflict is primarily conceptualized as a violent conflict, disregarding its political and ideological components.

5.1.1.1. The characterization of actors: descriptions about ETA

There is a general discourse among the participants of this study that presents ETA as responsible for the violence that took place in the past. The actions that are attributed to it are primarily condensed in the concepts "assassinations", "placing explosives / bombs" and "attacks". This narrative derives from a broader frame related to the global conception of *terrorism*:

> *Well, in principle [the Basque conflict is] a conflict between a group of terrorists, which is ETA, who has a conflict mainly with the State of Spain, because it seeks independence of the Basque Country. And so they took a path that they thought was consistent, that they would achieve it through violence or through armed force, but… well, that's the conflict, or what I believe it is – it was.*
>
> Paulo-23-Urnieta

This speaker builds an ideological square, polarizing ETA's and the Spanish State's goal, although only the former's is explicited (Basque independence). ETA is presented as the actor causing the problem, as it is their intention and their actions which are at the center of the conflict. Linguistically, this is expressed through markers that present ETA as an agentive actor in the conflict: active verbs such as *has (a conflict), seeks, took (a path)* and *thought* all portray ETA as the main active subject in this narrative.

At the same time, this actor is defined as a "group of terrorists", employing a semantically charged expression that operates as a de-legitimizing device (Shanahan, 2010, p. 174). ETA's actions are summarized through "violence" and "armed force", focusing on the violent character of the actor. This negative presentation situates ETA as a problematic outgroup (E. Das et al., 2009, p. 458). The speaker linguistically distances himself from them by indirectly quoting and questioning their position ("a path that they thought was consistent", lines 3-4).

This discourse, which equates ETA's violence –and, by metonymy, its existence– with the conflict, reflects one of the dominant narratives about the conflict. A complex problem that involves several social groups and expressions of violence is therefore reduced to one single actor.

Still, however dominant, this discourse is not unchallenged. Although "terrorist group" (11 mentions) is the definition most used by the participants of this study, it is closely followed by "armed organization" (8 mentions). These two formulations represent two opposed interpretative frameworks about the same actor. The former is a demonizing or criminalizing form: the substantive *group* denies any political aspect of the group, and the adjective *terrorist* reduces its character to an essential feature (Velte, 2016a, p. 512): its capacity of induce fear through the use of violence. Academic literature on terrorism has long been discussing its uses in the face of a lack of consensus on its definition (Shanahan, 2010, p. 176), and it is generally agreed that the term is widely used as a categorizing and de-legitimizing device (Ramsay, 2015, p. 1), which should most often be interpreted in terms of the social relationships and the position of the subject that employs the term.

On the other end of this evaluative device are legitimizing terms such as "armed organization". Moreover, this formulation is part of a concrete ideological terminology shared by a part of the Basques, as ETA called itself *Erakundea*, "the organization", throughout its history (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, 2010). This terminological choice remarks the organizativeness of the group, comparing itself to an institution similar to an army. Therefore, it builds on the image of a collective subject that acts with a legitimate aim and a logical structure, as opposed to the frame of the terrorist group that acts indiscriminately and without a rational motivation.

In the interviews conducted for this research, I have identified a dispute between these two frames, as the use of each terminology can be linked to the ideological position adopted by the speakers: those who were most understanding or sympathetical towards ETA and its actions generally defined it as an *armed organization*. References to its ideological motivations and political aims were also more present in these discourses. On the other hand, participants that employed the term *terrorist group* rather remarked ETA's armed and violent acts.

How would you define it?
ETA? Well, as a terrorist group.
Why?
For example, a professor, well, here at the university they placed a bomb, right? And, for example, [the name of the professor], who is supervising my Bachelor thesis, he was also threatened, and his daughters as well. I don't know, well, for me that is – I find it logical, for example, in Francos' times, I don't know, to confront him, but to do it to journalists or teachers, or politicians of the PSOE – or PP, I don't care – that's another thing.

Laura-21-Donostia

I thing that the conflict, in the past, began with ETA, when the organization was created, and then, I don't know when, in 59 or so? And then afterwards here in the North[ern Basque Country] with Iparretarrak[24], I think that was the beginning. (…) But in the South it was because of Francoism, and because Basque language was marginalized or oppressed for a long time during Franco's times, and in order to give again a space to Basque language. To Basque language and culture in general, I think.

Unai-16-Anhauze

In these two examples, both speakers offer conflicting presentations about the same actor: Laura highlights the violent activities of ETA (lines 4 and 6), presenting them as the causes of suffering of the victims she knows personally (lines 5 and 6); the proximity allegation operates in this case as an evidential (González et al., 2017, p. 3) that reinforces Laura's discourse. According to Ifantidou (1994, p. 14), evidentials have two main functions: to point out the source of knowledge, and to express the speaker's degree of certainty about the content of their discourse. Laura's choice of the term *terrorist group* (line 2) is therefore consistent with the characterization she is building from her ideological position.

On the other hand, Unai defines ETA as an *organization*, and builds a positive representation of it: he presents ETA as an actor who defends the ingroup (Basques) and its heritage (Basque language) against the attack of an antagonist in an adverse circumstance (Francoism).

However, these specific forms that represent the two conflicting frameworks *terrorist group* and *armed organization* are not rigid structures. Youngsters have also introduced hybrid definitions when referring to ETA, such as *armed group* (7 mentions), *terrorist organization* (5 mentions), and, to a lesser extent, *youth group* (2 mentions), *military group* (one mention) and *conflictive group* (one mention). All these designations reflect the different degrees of politicization that can be attached to the same actor, as well as an effort to combine several interpretive frameworks at hand.

After francoist times a terrorist organization was created, and its aim was to achieve independence. But in my opinion they achieved exactly the opposite.
In what sense?
Well, nowadays, if a foreigner or a Spaniard hears 'independence', the first thing they think about is ETA, so… that's not it. In my opinion, if ETA hadn't used violence, the percentage of independence supporters would be more or less like in Catalonia.

Imanol-15-Arbizu

[24] Iparretarrak (IK) was an armed group active in the Northern Basque Country. Most of its members used to support ETA in that territory until they decided to form their own, autonomous organization. It was active from the 70s until the late 90s.

In this case, the semantic choice of the term *terrorist organization* may respond to a strategy of unifying the different and conflicting frameworks available in the speaker's current discursive repertoire. On the one hand, the re-use of the term *organization* reflects the legitimizing attitude Imanol has learned in his social context, characterized by an *abertzale* (or Basque nationalist) tradition; he partly identifies with this by evaluating a higher support for independence as something positive, which we can infer from the reference to the Catalan case and the claim that ETA's violence has undermined this (lines 6-7). On the other hand, the adjective *terrorist* offers a negative representation more consistent with the speaker's personal positioning (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 35); as well as with the dominant discourses on terrorism (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 207). Here we have another example of a characterization of ETA based on their use of violence for their purposes (lines 6 and 7). In short, Imanol actively manages the different frameworks at his disposal in his immediate social context and the public or broader discursive context, and re-organizes them in order to result coherent with his personal attitude.

Rather contradictory seem examples in which the term *terrorist* is used in a context of a positive characterization:

> *In my opinion, families of prisoners are also victims. Because in the end, we now have dispersion, and many have suffered its consequences without being guilty for it. For example, my friend, her dad is in Córdoba. There is the kind of victim that they [ETA] have created, those they have kidnapped and so, and then there are the families of those who have had an attack. And then, the terrorists themselves, being so far away from their families, they can also be victims. In the end, we also suffer that, that thing against us… in the end – I don't know how to explain it. There is this something now against the Basque Country, and on one hand we also suffer those consequences.*
>
> Nagore-17-Oñati

In this excerpt, Nagore builds a clear ingroup with the ETA prisoners. This identification can be seen, among other elements, in their characterization: Nagore illustrates the example of a close person, highlighting a human aspect of their situation, namely the suffering and the distancing from their family. Victimization is a discursive construction aimed at inspiring empathy towards a particular actor (Irazuzta et al., 2017, p. 56). Therefore, we may conclude that Nagore is building on a positive representation of the prisoners and their environment. According to Van Dijk's ideological square (1996, p. 21), subjects tend to present themselves and their ingroup under the most advantageous light as possible, and the usual mechanism for this is to highlight one's positive aspects and downplay the negatives; according to this theory, the use of the term *the terrorists* would, in this particular context, be contradictory with the positive presentation of the ingroup that Nagore is building, a group characterized by its suffering, in which the speaker includes herself using first person plural verbs and pronouns (lines 7 and 9).

The participants of this study have used this kind of constructions several times in similar contexts, that is to say, they have labeled as terrorists actors who are at the same time ideologically supported or discursively legitimized and integrated to the ingroup. Consequently, I have observed that a re-semantization of the term *terrorism* is taking place: young people do not always and necessarily use the term as a criminalizing device, but often as a synonym for the armed character of the actor they wish to describe. In other

words, the use of the term *terrorism* is not only associated to negative presentations, but also to positive ones. Consequently, I may hypothesize that a generalization or naturalization of the term is taking place.

Beyond the concrete terminology, there is a dispute in the global frameworks regarding ETA's role in the conflict: the historical narrative of the resistance movement, brilliantly described by Zulaika (1990), is being challenged by the global discourse about terrorism. Youngsters who have been exposed to both these narratives often build their own narratives through reformulation and transformation strategies that allow them to combine these seemingly contradictory views, resulting in formulations such as "a terrorist group that fought for a free Basque Country" (Idoia-17-Oñati). These constructions are not to be interpreted in terms of a positive of negative characterization of the actor in question, but rather as a means to overcome the discursive contradiction these youngsters encounter when facing narratives about the political and the violent side of the same conflict. A result of this discursive management is *the narrative of the two-faced historical actor*, which could be summarized as follows: "Their aims were right, but their path wasn't".

> *I would define ETA as a terrorist organization. A terrorist organization whose objective was one, but which in the end – its aim would be, well, getting rid of oppression. Or, rather, to somehow seek the freedom of the Basque people. But in reality they didn't to any favor to the Basque people.*
>
> Malika-17-Barakaldo

This speaker offers an ambivalent characterization of ETA: on the one hand, she highlights a positive feature, its political purpose or its desire for liberation (lines 2-3); by doing so, she portrays the organization as a rational player or actor with an understandable motivation. On the other hand, however, she defines it as "terrorist", and evaluates the outcome of its actions as negative for the ingroup. According to this two-faced narrative, ETA is an actor that originally acted with good intentions, holding on to a characterization consistent with the framework of the liberation movement; but whose actual development brought it closer to the frame of the terrorist group.

Several speakers have related this shift in their interpretation to changes in the historical context or to the development of ETA's activity: when talking about the francoist period, the narratives that characterize ETA as a liberation movement are more numerous; whereas when talking about ist activity in recent years, the framework of the terrorist group generally prevails. This two-faced narrative is the result of a discursive elaboration of external narratives provided. It allows young people to reconcile opposing positions, especially in the case of those who empathize with the original political objectives or ideas of ETA, but to whom their armed strategy is both incomprehensible and reprehensible. Moreover, this narrative coincides with a generalized discourse on violence, which regards the use of violence within a democratic system as unacceptable (Azurmendi, 1997, pp. 28–29).

Therefore, being in contact with a variety of discourses about the past seems to enhance the youngsters' discursive engagement, as they actively re-arrange different narratives according to their own context. The opposite happens when adolescents receive too little discursive input. In the case of participants who were not used to speak about politics in their social contexts, the perception that prevails around ETA is one of incomprehension.

These youngsters often have difficulties to build a coherent characterization of the actor and the conflict in itself:

> You have mentioned ETA by yourself. Could you explain what it used to do, or who was part of it?
> *The typical guys that appear on television, who are imprisoned and now some of them are getting out or so. But no, I don't know much about ETA.*
> Do you know what it used to do?
> *I know it was a political group, just like the PP or the PSOE can be, and, well, I don't know exactly why, they changed to kill people, well, that: to kill people just for the sake of it. (…)*
> Which would you say were ETA's motivations? What were they in favour of?
> *What they were for? Dang, well… in favour of violence, of course. When they don't want, I mean, when someone says, "I don't want this" what you say, then they resort to violence.*
> And as a political project?
> *None. What project? Well, maybe to implant anarchy – well, no – yes! It could be anarchy. That everyone acted as if one owned the place.*
>
> Alex-18-Barakaldo

In this excerpt we can observe a complete depoliticization of ETA: the actor is characterized by their violent activity, leaving any political character or rational motivation unrecognized. Consequently, the speaker finds it very difficult to frame ETA's activities in a broader historical and political context, nor can he understand the reasons behind their violent actions. In this narrative, as no other aim is identified, violence becomes an end in itself (line 10). We can observe how Alex is building an *ad hoc* argument: since he cannot associate a political project to ETA's activity, he evaluates the latter as absurd; when the interviewer asks him with a little more insistence, he associates it with a political category that suggests the idea of chaos or irrationality to him: the concept of *anarchy* (line 14), illustrated by the expression "that everyone acted as if one owned the place"[25].

This example illustrates the influence of reductionist narratives that only focus on the visible violence –especially ETA's–: if young people are not able to rationally understand and analyze the motivations of actors involved in historical conflicts, they build narratives based on elements that they perceive as absurd, whose coherence is only based on its incomprehensibility. Thus, the global development of the conflict is also framed as nonsense; and what becomes categorized as absurd does not obtain relevance in the concerns of young people.

As another interviewee puts it, using one of his generation's most shared cultural symbols, "ETA is Voldemort": it represents the evil, but also the unsayable. There is a taboo around this actor, which youngsters perceive an which makes it even more interesting for them, as they notice that there lies much of the information that they miss. Therefore, leaving the causes of the past violence and the motivations behind it out of the discussion might perhaps prevent –as is often argued– youngsters from getting in contact with legitimizing discourses –although there is no guarantee for that–, but they are also a direct invitation to *exit the discussion*, as they do not provide the means to understand a key factor in the historical development. A discourse based on absurdity –however absurd we might evaluate past strategies– is not useful in order to understand and reconstruct the past.

[25] The original idiom used by the speaker in Spanish is: "Como Pedro por su casa".

Furthermore, the emotional distance that mediates the younger generations' interpretations of the past must be taken into account when analyzing their discourses on ETA and the armed conflict. In my data, I have collected very few categorically condemning discourses about the armed organization, although most youngsters do show some degree of distance towards it. On one hand, one may think that the rejection of ETA's violence is nowadays a socially widespread and established discourse, which has been integrated into the socialization of young people and operates as a common discursive basis among them. This is proved by the fact that many of the narratives that they build are implicitly formed on this premise, either by taking it for granted or by answering it. On the other hand, it shows that the de- or legitimization of ETA is not *their battle*, and that other questions are coming to the front for them.

5.1.1.2. Characterizations of the Civil Guard and other policial and vigilantist groups

The *violent conflict* framework also prevails among the discourses about other figures involved in the conflict. After ETA, the most mentioned actor has been the Civil Guard (Guardia Civil), the military police that has been historically deployed in the Basque Country with specific anti-terrorist powers. Of the concepts that the young participants have associated it with, the most repeated have been "controlling" (20%), followed by "francoist" (7.5%), "hatred" (5%) and "intimidation" (5%). Depending on the region of origin of the speakers, their relationship with the Civil Guard and their knowledge of it vary greatly. Those who live on the border between the Spanish Basque Country and the French Basque Country, those who live close to Civil Guard headquarters or those who have concrete knowledge about the Alsasua case, have generally provided more detailed descriptions of the Civil Guard and events that involve it, indicating a greater relationship with this police. Many of whom have described it as "old-fashioned", "fascists" and "hateful", however, have also shown difficulties describing its historical or present roles:

> *Well [laughs]… Well, I mean, the Civil Guard – I mean, the first word that comes to my mind when I hear 'Civil Guard' is hatred. But rather than theoretically, because I have not informed myself much, because that's what you see in reality or in praxis. I don't know, well, the Altsasu case is like the summum of all of this, but also to reach there… I don't believe they are here to serve anyone, but that it is more an act of 'Here we are and we are not going away'.*
> Do you know which is their role in the Basque Country? Why they are here and what for?
> *[Shakes her head].*
>
> Maddi-17-Tafalla

> What is your opinion on the presence of the Civil Guard in the Basque Country? Do you relate them to the conflict?
> *Yes, yes I do – directly. Because, also, we have a headquarter in Algorta, and that – I work at a school in the afternoons, and I have to pass by in front of the headquarters necessarily. I think that there is a clear part of intimidation, like a fear. And a huge presence, I don't now if they're only like that in Algorta, but there are more than needed, and what is their –? I don't know, we already have 'our police', I'd say, and I don't know, I think it's a bit too much.*
>
> Gari-20-Getxo

In these two examples, the speakers are able to narrate accounts of real relationships with the Civil Guard: Maddi describes an emotion produced by it ("hatred", line 2), whereas

Gari reconstructs a situation he experiences in his daily life. In this reconstruction, the Civil Guard is portrayed as an intimidating actor (Gari, lines 5 and 6), and its presence is assessed as excessive (line 6). The degree of concretion of both narratives shows that the two speakers are referring to a well-known topic: Maddi uses a hypothetical direct quote to express her opinion on the Civil Guard (lines 6 and 7); this reconstruction of the voice of the Other functions as a rhetorical resource suggesting a familiarity with the topic. Maddi also offers a number of evidences that reinforce her thesis, such as the mention of the Alsasua case (line 4): there is a large ellipsis about the involvement of the Civil Guard in this case, because Maddi considers it to be shared knowledge, but we can conclude that she considers the Civil Guard responsible for that concrete conflict.

Both speakers are well acquainted with certain aspects of the actor they describe –at least those related to its influence in their lives–, but neither Maddi nor Gari seem to know which is the function of the Civil Guard. The latter begins to formulate the question in line 7: when he asks "What is their –?", he ellipses the word *function*, *task* or some synonym. All in all, none of the speakers include information about the Civil Guard's historical role in their narratives. This shows that the transmission of feelings and emotions is not necessarily related to a transmission of concrete knowledge about events: in the case of the Civil Guard, the data collected in this research shows that a negative assessment or attitude towards it is very widespread, but, at the same time, the activity of this actor is unknown to most young people.

Indeed, very few interviewees have alluded to some specific incident of the past involving the Civil Guard. When those who expressed negative views or attitudes towards it were asked about their reasons, many did not know how to answer, or provided arguments related to their performance as an organization of social order reinforcement, presenting the military police mainly as a useless actor.

We have, however, found an exception in the references to police and vigilantist groups related to the Spanish State: most interviewees have been able to build much clearer and concrete discourses about the historical involvement of the paramilitary group GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación)[26]. Almost half of the interviewees (48%) have mentioned the vigilantist group of the 1980s at some point in the conversation; another 19% stated that they did not know about it, when expressly asked; and during the rest of the interviews the topic was not addressed, neither by the interviewee or by the interviewer.

Young people learn about GAL mainly through two channels: through oral narratives in their family, or through audio-visual means and textbooks at school. Domestic experiences related to the paramilitary group are mainly framed in discourses of victimization among families that have been close to or active in *abertzale* left circles, and in the French Basque Country, where GAL was mainly active attacking political refugees from the southern side of the border.

[26] The GAL (Anti-terrorist Groups of Liberation) were a para-policial underground organization formed in the 1980s amongst others by civil guards, who under the supervision of high representants of the Spanish Government –which was at that time under Felipe González's guidelines– carried out a number of deadly attacks against alleged members of ETA and political refuges (Goenaga et al., 2013).

Although GAL is further away in history and was active during a relatively short period of time (1983-1987), it seems to have a more prominent presence in the discourses of the youngsters that have participated in this study, especially compared to the Civil Guard, which paradoxically is still present in the current state of the conflict. A reason for this could be that GAL is mentioned in well-known films, as well as in textbooks (Velte, 2019a, p. 67). Therefore, young people have access to public and somewhat consensual narratives about GAL. In the case of the Civil Guard, however, as an actor linked to contemporary political and social problems, there is still no shared narrative about its involvement in the Basque conflict. This might explain the difference between the discourses concerning the two actors: although the influence of the GAL is farther and more concentrated in time, youngsters are able to talk about it with greater commitment and detail, because they have a stronger discursive basis at hand.

5.1.1.3. Prominent events in young people's memory discourses

The narrative that fames the Basque conflict as a primarily violent conflict can also be observed in the accounts of events that the participants of this study *remember*. Although they have mentioned on their own initiative a similar number of events associated to ETA and to the police and armed forces (43 and 42, respectively), there is a difference in the character and diversity of those events. The participants have been able to recall more than 20 historical events linked to ETA's activity, 58% of which involved losses of lives. These were often narrated with accurate references to the names of the victims or descriptions of places. On the other hand, merely ten different events related to the armed forces were recalled by the youngsters; these did generally not involve deaths, and included mainly events related to later phases of the conflict, such as the Alsasua case and several raids and detentions, especially those realized against young activists in the context of *human walls* (Iruretagoiena, 2016) and similar activist initiatives popularized in the 2010s. These are events that some of the interviewees or their close relatives and friends remember personally. It can also be said that geographical proximity is an important factor for the prominence of certain memories: more than a third of the stories that the participants considered to be important and mentioned on their own initiative happened in nearby geographical settings.

A plausible explanation for this is that transmission of memories within the family is often reduced to the physical and social environment of the family: many of the stories that are told between generations are about relatives or acquaintances the group knows personally. When youngsters are able to link these stories to a physical or geographical setting they are familiar with, it is more probable that they will remember those stories in detail, and therefore, reproduce them afterwards, rather than stories they perceive to be *far away* –in space and in terms of personal relationships–. This can be observed in the following example:

Have your parents told you about political developments that happened in your childhood?
No, well, a few things… <u>for example</u>, my dad is a doctor, at the hospital in Donostia. And, eh, <u>he was assigned to treat Igor – a boy from Lesaka –</u>
Igor Portu?
Yes. And [he told me] <u>that they had broken two of his ribs</u>, and <u>that</u> <u>they</u> had taken him to [my dad], and things like that.
And did he know him?
Yes, he was from his hometown.

Do you remember when he told you that?
He told me not long ago. Well, because I learned about it through my militancy [activist group]. That, and that in the end [my dad] was telling the people from their hometown how [Portu] was doing.
(…) Which are, in your opinion, the main victims of the conflict? Do you remember any concrete person or case?
Eh… Mattin – Mattin Sarasola, his family – because he is in Jaén.
Which is his case? Can you explain it?
Well, one day Igor and Mattin went to Arrasate or so, and in the end some civil guards took them, and incommunicate them, accusing them of doing the attack on the T-4, Terminal 4, of Madrid. They held them with no communication, they tortured them, eh, they broke Igor's ribs, he went to the hospital and in the meantime – for example, Igor knew that Mattin was being tortured, and in the end that is psychological torture. Then, eh, his, well, they took them to their homes, to register everything, and people in town know that, it's obvious, that they went into their homes while the family was there, and lots of civil guards. And in the end, well, to prison: I think Igor is in Córdoba, and Mattin in Jaén. Well, in Spain, on the other end. In Andalusia, and - and the Spanish Constitution says that they should be as close as possible to home, and in the end it's just the opposite.

Gorka-15-Hendaia

The ill-treatment suffered by Igor Portu and Mattin Sarasola while in police custody was verified by the European Court of Human Rights (Conseil de l'Europe, 2018). Gorka refers to this case by reconstructing the views he identified in his social context, structuring the narrative means according to the relevance he attributes to them. The protagonists are presented only with their names, "Igor and Mattin", showing a proximity and humanity perceived by the speaker, to whom they are two "boys" (line 4) from his parents' hometown, rather than public figures involved in an armed conflict.

During the above reproduced interaction, both the interviewee and the interviewer are assuming some implicit information as shared: when the former asserts that "they had broken two of his ribs" (line 6), he ellipts the subject of this action (the Civil Guard), as well as the context (a detention). He does not provide this contextual information until the second excerpt later in the conversation, when he reconstructs the events in greater detail.

During this reconstruction, Gorka relies entirely on external discourses he has received from his social environment. On the one hand, he introduces the perspective of his father (the doctor): the adverb "for example" (line 3) is an introductory device to an indirect quotation of an external discourse; the conjunction "that" (as used in line 6) is also a marker that signalizes the presence of an indirect quote. By implication, we can infer that the tortures, which Gorka describes in great detail in the second excerpt, are also part of the knowledge acquired through his father, that is, by the physician who attended one of the detainees. Gorka reconstructs the discourse he has received from his social environment with a great degree of commitment, as he barely employs distancing markers of modality; "I think" (in line 26) is the only marker that stresses the epistemic stance of the speaker. The rest of the time, Gorka adopts the dominant narrative of his social context as his own. The phrase "people in town know that, it's obvious" (lines 24-25) functions as an evidential for this social knowledge, as well as constructing a collective subject around this narrative in which the speaker can include himself.

In Gorka's social context, the detention and torture of Portu and Sarasola is framed in a narrative of unjust victimization, and Gorka's discursive reconstruction includes elements that are coherent with this narrative. The protagonists are portrayed as common youths from their hometown, and all information provided about their activities is that "one day the went to Arrasate" (line 18). This action can hardly be linked to a reason for being detained and suffering torture, so the discursive choice through which this information is prioritized stresses the general narrative of injustice. The direct reference to the Spanish Constitution (lines 28 and 29) has the same rhetorical function: through paraphrasing an official discourse of the outgroup –the Spanish State, embodied in this discourse by its Constitution and presented as responsible for the suffering of the main figures, whom the speaker empathizes with–, Gorka stresses its contradiction.

Finally, it's interesting to observe how Gorka speaks about the transmission of memories in his family in lines 10 to 13. Portu and Sarasola were arrested and tortured in 2008, when the speaker was six years old; therefore, the hospital events that he describes took place around a decade before the actual interaction in which the speaker recalls the events. However, Gorka asserts that the has learned about it "not long ago" (line 11), because his own interest and activism generated a response from his father, that is, the transmission of knowledge was mainly provoked by a search or interest on the youngster's side.

In more general terms, those actions attributed to the armed forces that the participants of this study have mentioned on their own are related to some kind of violence or cohibition that people in their close social context have suffered, mostly detentions, police checkpoints and imprisonment. However, most of these accounts are usually narrated without mentioning proper nouns and presented as anecdotes and framed within naturalization strategies. Although these narratives are mostly based on close sources, the young speakers rarely attribute enough relevance to them.

On the contrary, among the actions that the speakers have attributed to ETA, the most prominent and most often repeated stories are generally events that happened far away from the speaker, both in terms of time and personal relation. Geographical proximity continues to be a decisive factor for the prominence of certain memories, but a more precise discursive analysis shows that most youngsters find it easier to build well-structured and detailed narratives about events they know through public channels of transmission. These are usually actions that imply deaths and that the speakers have not experienced in their personal environment.

A clear example of this are the many reconstructions provided by the youngsters of the 1973 attack against Luis Carrero Blanco, president of the Spanish government in the last years of the dictatorship and Francisco Franco's right hand (Agirre, 1978). This is probably the best-known attack in ETA's history, as well as the one which most social consensus gained at its moment, up to the point of triggering "a collective catharsis" (Ayerbe & Olaziregi, 2016, p. 219) and thus becoming a symbol of memory (Eser & Peters, 2016) and of the culture of resistance during the dictatorship and the post-Franco era.

Indeed, this historical event is still one of the most- and best-remembered stories by young Basques. In the interviews conducted for this research, they have provided many details, such as the fact that Carrero Blanco "always took the same way to go to mass, and they

put a bomb beneath the pavement" (Ekaitz-16-Altsasu) or that his car was propelled into the air. Some participants have chosen a humorous tone and hyperbolic structures in order to reconstruct their narrative, by asserting, for example, that the car "flew" (Ane-21-Mutriku). Those participants who were in the first year of their Bachelor studies mentioned their university entrance exam as a source of knowledge, as the historical event in question is included in the History curriculum; the rest have alluded to shared social knowledge or audio-visual products as their main sources.

You have introduced the assassination of Carrero Blanco before in the conversation. Could you explain what you know about it?
I know only a little, but they wanted to name Carrero Blanco the new dictator after Franco's death. And then, they put a tin bomb [laughs]on his car, and, so, they killed him. It was called "Operation Ogre" – now they have made a documentary.
How has it entered into history: as something good, something sad, as a joke…?
Carrero's happening? Yes, and even today – because, also, I'd say that there is a lot of controversy around ETA. As I said before, we don't talk about that among us, but, on the contrary, anyone can speak about Carrero, and anyone says anything.
And why is that so? Because it is farther away in history or because you agree on it?
I think it's because there is a much bigger agreement on it. So, it's like: who is not going to be against a dictator? More or less. Around me, of course.
Maddi-17-Tafalla

Maddi seems comfortable when talking about the case of Carrero Blanco, because she perceives it as a story that creates a broad social consensus about its terms: that is, she has at her disposal a publicly accepted discourse on which to base her narrative. As a receiver and learner of the social consensus around her, Maddi's comfort can be interpreted through the friendly and humorous tone of her explanation, especially in her amused reaction when she accidentally reformulates the term "sticky bomb" (in original, *bomba lapa*) as "tin bomb" (*bomba lata*). The use of a rhetorical question, in lines 14 and 15, "Who is not going to be against a dictator?" further highlights the perception of social consensus, as well as the reference to an audio-visual product, i.e. an external discourse that serves as an evidence for this.

Interestingly, the documentary film mentioned by Maddi (*Opración Ogro*) was actually released in 1979, almost 40 years before the moment the speaker recalls it. Therefore, the deictic "now" through which she points at it and situates it in a relatively close temporal context must be interpreted in terms of the novelty it has for the speaker. Just as in Gorka's example, we can observe that speakers generally introduce information as new data into their mental models when they actively process it.

On the other hand, this example is illustrative of the importance of consensuated narratives in the transmission and permanence of memories. The topics that gather greater consensus are more prone to be recalled by young people, because the *permitted* discursive area, i.e., the are of the *sayable* around them is also larger. The more discourses they find to support their narratives, and the more diverse these are, the more probable it is that they will function as solid intertextual sources. On the contrary, issues perceived as controversial (e.g. ETA and its activity, according to Maddi) are more prone to become taboos, because young people do not feel that their discursive ground is solid enough to

step into the discussion. This would explain why I have collected detailed narratives on historical events that were remote in time but at the same time very often recalled or mediatic, and, on the contrary, rather uncertain narratives about new and/or yet disputed questions, although, by logic, one would expect the latter to be most talked about, being closer to the speakers' everyday experiences.

5.1.1.4. Categorizing the victims of the conflict

According to the dominant narrative about the Basque conflict, the category of *victims* is also generally associated to some degree of physical suffering. Therefore, narratives that fit best the framework of a conflict characterized mainly by its violence, i.e., narratives about murders and lethal attacks, are more prominent in discourses about the collective past.

Leaving aside those discursive constructions that stress the historical victim-identity of the ingroup and *topoi* such as "everyone was somehow a victim" –which I rather interpret as a means for the construction of collective identities, and therefore analyze in greater detail in the chapter *5.3. Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies*–, the participants of this study have related the mental category *victim* generally to people who have lost their lives in the development of the conflict, and especially those assassinated by ETA. These make up about a third of all mentions about *victims* of the conflict in the oral discourses recorded; if we include their relatives, those who have directly or indirectly suffered ETA's violence make up about half of the mentions I have collected in relation to the concept of *victim*. Fewer speakers have mentioned families of prisoners or civil guards and their families; each group represents about 10% of all mentions. Those who have otherwise suffered violence from the State forces –whom have generally been described as "the repressed", or, for example, people executed during Francoism– make up about 5% of all mentions.

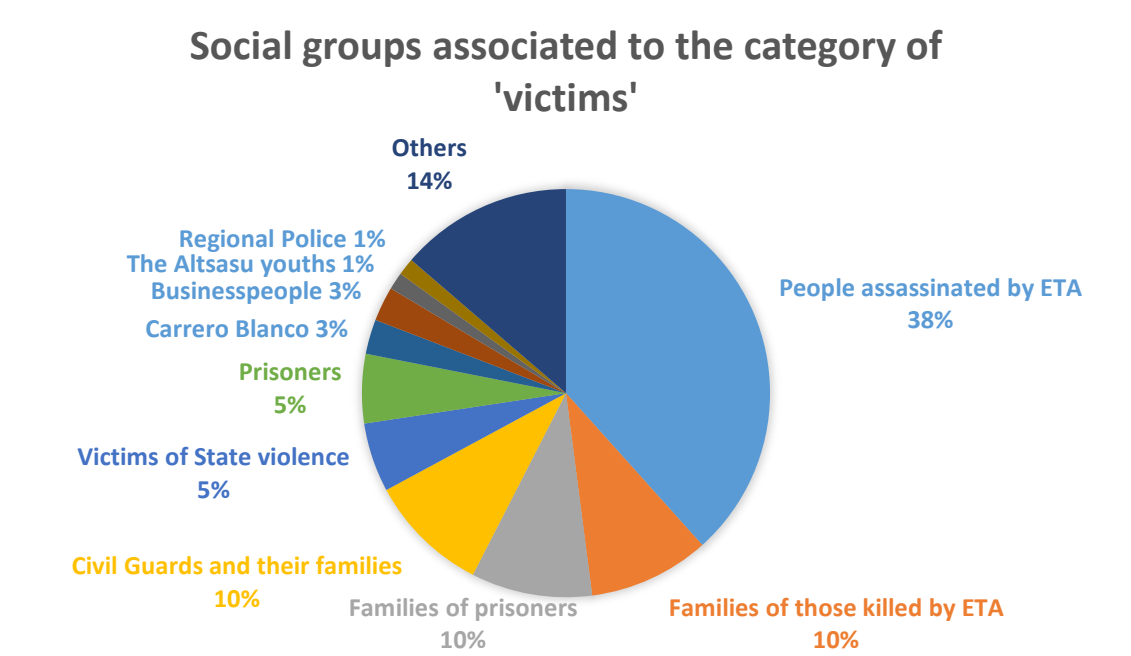

Figure 6: Categorization of the victims, according to the participants.

This conceptualization of victims is consistent with the cognitive framework which is being described: if we define the Basque conflict as a conflict marked primarily by its physical violence –and especially by the violence of ETA–, it is logical to consider those who have suffered this kind of violence as front-line victims. This is a pattern that can clearly be observed in the discursive constructions of the youngsters:

Who would you say have been the main victims of the Basque conflict?
Eh... I don't know, I mean, victims, as such – those who have died or victims like in… those who have suffered?
All of them.
Well, so, those who without wanting it… I mean, not without wanting it, but, eh – those people who died and should not have died, like, those who were not the objective. Their families and… I don't know, that.
Okay. Do you have any concrete case in mind?
Mm... How is she called? Irene, no… the one who died – I mean, who did not die, but she lost her legs.

Haizea-17-Tafalla

People talk a lot about the suffering of all victims, obviously. That it's not just one part, or, well, in this case one part are victims of ETA, but there is also a part, well, related to Franco's regime and so. Because there would also be civil guards or certain groups who could also be more uncontrolled and do whatever they wanted. So, it is a matter of seeing all victims.
Do you agree with that?
Yes, yes, yes. Just like… I think that, no matter who has killed, right? The victim is the victim. I mean, you have suffered just the same way. Just as there might have been people from ETA who have been kidnapped, like this case there was, I don't remember well how it was, this girl that is in Podemos, who has some brothers, Lasa or…
Pili Zabala?
Yes, that's it. They kidnapped them or something, and then they appeared I don't know where and so. Well, obviously, if those guys – I don't know much about the case – didn't do anything, or if they got them out of the way like that just because they were close to a movement, well, obviously I'm against that.

Paulo-19-Urnieta

Both these speakers build a similar picture of their mental model about the category of *victims*: both think primarily about it in terms of losses of lives or woundings, particularly in terms of innocent victimization. Haizea and Paulo come from quite different ideological backgrounds. The former's social context is close to the *abertzale left* and considers itself patriotic; ETA's activity and historical role are generally well seen or legitimized in this context. Paulo's family, on the other hand, suffered violence by the armed group in the past. However, both point at *other* victims they have not known in their personal contexts, but while they do so they choose figures without direct involvement or responsibility in the conflict in order to construct coherent narratives. The deontic modality employed by Haizea in the phrase "people who died and should not have died" (line 6) emphasizes her evaluation of those killings as unjust, but also implies a reference to the existence of certain figures *who should have died*, that is, a possibility that there are cases in which a politically motivated assassination could be justified, and which would not be considered by the speaker as victims.

Paulo also situates ETA's victims in the forefront in this category. By employing a transformation strategy in lines 2 and 3 ("but there is also a part…") he draws attention to the existence of victims on the *other* side. In particular, he introduces the case of Lasa

and Zabala as an illustrative example[27]. The conditional sentence "if [they] didn't do anything" (lines 14 and 15) establishes the quality to be fulfilled in order to include them in the category of *victim*s: the absence of involvement or responsibility in the violent conflict.

Similar discourses have emerged in the collective exercise realized with a group of youngsters from the municipality of Oñati, titled "the Map of Suffering", where participants highlighted those victims who were "imprisoned without being guilty" or "innocent civil people who died", stressing the morally faultless character of the victims and their lack of voluntary implication in the armed and violent conflict.

Based on the data collected, it can be said that the concept of victim is still closely linked to the idea of physical violence and, in particular, to ETA's violent practices. Similar structures have surfaced in most conversations with the youngsters, regardless of the ideological position of the speaker. These are followed by interpretations according to one's position and context, in which the speaker highlights the suffering of figures within their own ideological community, such as –in some cases– prisoners. However, in these cases it can also be observed that the situations that are most frequently mentioned generally involve some degree of physical suffering; in the case of prisoners, for example, they are considered victims mainly because their physical freedom (to move and to live) is being denied or hindered.

5.1.1.5. The political conflict

The division between the *military* or *violent* side of the conflict and the *peaceful* or *political* side seems to be a major interpretative axis on which to rely during the construction of narratives about the past. As I have so far explained, the scheme of the violent conflict prevails, and this can be observed also when paying attention to the most-remembered historical figures: when asked about the people they consider to be protagonists of the conflict, most youngsters have mentioned some name related to the military aspect of it, such as top responsibles of ETA (mainly Jose Miguel Beñaran, *Argala*) or leaders of the Spanish government during the years of GAL (Felipe González and Enrique Rodríguez Galindo), as well as other members of ETA whose cases have become very mediatic, Josu Uribetxebarria (Velte, 2016b) and Iñaki de Juana. All of the proper names collected in this category are male.

The current coordinator the political party of the Basque nationalist left (EH Bildu), Arnaldo Otegi, is one of the few *political* figures the youngsters have mentioned as a protagonist in the conflict. Although they don't always seem sure about his involvement during the armed years –he had indeed been a member of ETA in the 1970s–, he clearly stands for their interpretation of a *political face* of the conflict.

In all these constructions, we can identify the involvement of a polarizing categorizing device (Silverman, 1998), according to which the actors are classified in terms of their *violent* or *political* character. This dichotomous distinction is a generalized discourse in the history of the Basque conflict, and has been widely documented and criticized

[27] Joxan Lasa and Joxi Zabala were two political refugees who were kidnapped and assassinated in 1983 by members of the Civil Guard under the initials of the GAL (Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups). Lasa and Zabala's remains were found two years later in Alicante, but could not be identified until 1995.

(Azurmendi, 1997; Torrealdai Nabea, 2021, p. 54), because it has been used to deny the political character of the violence in the Basque case and de-legitimize certain actors as political interlocutors on the basis of it.

The younger generations appear to have internalized this dichotomous cognitive structure into their patterns of interpretation, as similar conditions arise throughout most interviews conducted for this thesis. Therefore, whenever the political aspect of the conflict is addressed, it is always presented as opposed to or completing its violent expression.

The narratives that point at the political character of the conflict, that is, the cultural and structural factors that enable the appearance of physical violence (Galtung, 2003, p. 7) are rather minoritary. These do not situate the origin of the conflict within ETA's violent activities, but on other factors, such as the cultural oppression of the dictatorship, on the will for independence on the nationalists' side or on concrete political and social projects. In all these structures, violence is presented as a consequence rather than a cause of the original conflict.

If a tourist came to the Basque Country without knowing anything about it, and if they asked you, "What is the Basque conflict?", how would you explain to them?
That's always my problem, that I never really know how to explain it. I don't know, eh, I don't know how to explain it correctly, because nobody has ever offered me a really objective point of view.
Nobody has an objective view.
Ah, but I don't know. Well: in the struggle that the Basque Country has pursued for its independence, or, well, yes, and for the knowledge of Basque language; all the elements that have been against it in the way, and that has created the Basque conflict.

Unai-16-Anhauze

At first, Unai does not feel entitled to give an explanation about the Basque conflict. He attributes this lack of legitimacy to the lack of availability of credible ("objective", line 6) discursive resources. Until the interviewer introduces a reassuring feedback (in line 7), he doesn't seem confident enough to construct his own discourse on the issue. When he does, he elaborates a narrative in which we can distinguish five elements: one subject (the Basque Country), two objectives (independence and knowledge of the local language),an instrument (the struggle), an antagonist (opposite elements) and one consequence (the conflict).

The term *struggle* is a metaphor chosen to describe the use of violence in terms of a strategical aim, implying a conflict between at least two parties. It has a more legitimizing character than the term *terrorism*, as it implies a legitimate or understandable purpose, whereas terrorism implies irrational or indiscriminate pain or threat (Shanahan, 2010, p. 177). This objective is explicited by the speaker: by subjectivating the Basque Country, that is, by turning a geographical reference into the subject of action, the agency is blurred, while the objectives "independence" and "the knowledge of Basque" are presented as the general interest of a broad collectivity. In this particular case, moreover, we might regard this lexical choice as a covert quote (Reyes, 1996, p. 20): the term *struggle* (as employed by Unai in line 8) echoes the term *armed struggle* used by ETA itself (Lopez Adan, 2021b).

Unai introduces into his discourse the presence of an antagonistic force ("all the elements that have been against it in the way", in line 10), and considers the clash of these interests as the cause of the conflict. In this narrative, the violent element of the conflict is blurred or reduced to an instrumental level, because its political purpose is in the foreground. Methods are relegated to the background, and actors are invisibilized.

I have also identified more hybrid narratives that either separate the armed conflict from the underlying cultural and/or ideological conflict, or which frame the past violence in terms of a broader social movement.

> *(…) on one hand, ETA was created to, eh, to confront the actions of the government that were illegitimate. Then, here were problems inside of ETA, because some wanted to politicize and others, I think, wanted to continue with the violence. Well, what is clear to me is that there was a separation: some went on the political path and others rather on the other side. And then, what needs to be said is that the government created 'their ETA' so to say, which was GAL. And in the end, those from GAL, they were butchers: they tried to, let's say, find the same remedy by doing the same actions. I mean, to crack the whip using violence. I would say that ETA has done many good things to, let's say, put the Basque Country – I remember that, next to my hometown, close to Lekeitio, there were some lands of Ispaster [a nearby municipality], and a nuclear plant was going to be built there. And what ETA did was, well, to kill, to assassinate the architect of that plant. And partly that's why they achieved, with the pressure and so, that they didn't build it. Then, for example, there are other things, for example huge killings they have done; like what happened in Barajas, or a couple of car bombs that have been around here.*
>
> Ekhi-21-Lekeitio

In this example, Ekhi speaks about two sorts of historical events in geographical terms. On the one hand, he narrates an event that happened in his close personal environment, that is, the campaign to stop the construction of nuclear power plants in the Basque Country in the 1980s. Indeed, several projects, such as the plant in Lemoiz (Bizkaia) and two other power stations (including the one that was to be built close to Ekhi's hometown in Ea-Ispaster) were paralyzed in 1984 (Ferreira, 2019), 13 years before the speaker was born. However, he is able to offer a structured narrative of the event, to describe in detail a geographical context (the lands of Ispaster, next to Lekeitio), specific actors (ETA and the architect) and a political context (social anti-nuclear pressure). Throughout his narrative, he does not use epistemic modalizers that express doubt, a sign that he feels certain of the content of his discourse. What's more, the evidential "I remember" (line 10) is a reference to a collective memory learned in the social context, as it is impossible for him to remember these events personally. As Lowenthal (1998, p. 286) puts it, "we remember things by recalling the memory of them".

On the other hand, Ekhi talks about the violent activities of ETA, although he does not describe them in detail, but in more general terms: the aspects he assesses as negative are described in lines 15 and 16 through the emphasizing form "huge killings" and the euphemistic "a couple of car bombs". The only concrete evidence he provides for these kind of actions is the 2006 attack on Madrid's Barajas airport, concretely on its parking lot, during which two people died. These events are more in line with the framework of the terrorist group than with the framework of the social or environmental pressure group; to Ekhi, they are not part of the references in his close environment, but they are

nevertheless one of the main components of his mental schemes on ETA, probably influenced by public discourses he has learnt through the media or other contexts.

Therefore, the speaker also relates the conflict primarily to ETA's activity, but he employs several legitimizing strategies in order to construct a positive characterization of it. First, he builds a context of injustice ("actions of the government that were illegitimate", lines 1 and 2), framing ETA's armed activity in a narrative of resistance or reaction. Secondly, he builds a clear ideological square, highlighting the flaws of the outgroup and assessing positively the actions of the ingroup: in this case, Ekhi uses the concept "GAL" (lines 6 to 8), which he describes metaphorically as "butchers", as a metonymy for the whole of the Spanish Government's actions during the history of the conflict. On the other hand, ETA is portrayed in a rather complex manner, and its *two faces* (the violent and the political) are taken into account: on the one hand, the speaker attributes "huge killings" (line 15) to the group, but at the same time presents ETA as acting in accordance to rational motivations and objectives shared by the local population. The 1980s campaign against nuclear power plants, which ETA supported, serves as an illustrative example of the speaker's mental dichotomous structure: for him, the violence used in this context – that is, the murder of the architect of the power plant– is an instrument for a legitimate purpose, and therefore he does not contextualize it in a narrative of terrorism, but instead he recognizes it as a representation of ETA's social or environmentalist side.

5.1.2. The temporality of the conflict

In addition to the discourses that conceive the Basque conflict in terms of its (physical) violent expression, I have also identified an discursive axis related to its temporality, both in terms of the internal development of the historical conflict and in relation to the contemporary context of the speaker. In short, my interviewees have conceptualized the Basque conflict mainly as a two-stage conflict and a conflict of the past; and all these interpretations have an underlying pattern that constructs meaning according to the speaker's particular and contemporary position.

5.1.2.1. The internal time of the conflict: the narrative of two stages

Just as there is a dominant *two-faced actor* narrative about ETA, I have also identified a discursive pattern that structures the history of the conflict into two eras or phases. Most interviewees have situated the border or turning point in the late 1970s, during the Spanish Transition from a dictatorship to a parliamentary monarchy. Before that point, they build a context of repression, during which they evaluate the use of counter-violence as understandable or justified; in other words, they build a narrative of resistance during the first phase of the conflict. After the turning point, however, the terrorism narrative prevails, and the violence of one specific actor (ETA) moves to the forefront in a democratic and therefore assumedly neutral context.

This temporal distinction is often related to the attitudes and evaluations of the speakers, as well as to the degree of comprehensiveness or empathy they might feel towards specific actors involved in the historical conflict. It does, however, echo a socially accepted discourse, which fundamentally opposes the use of violence to democracy (Azurmendi, 1997, pp. 28–29). Therefore, the temporal border can be interpreted as a turning point in the legitimacy of ETA's armed strategy, the moment in which it changed from being seen as *counter-violence* to be considered *the violence*:

Well, what the fascists did in the beginning was, well, to impose their thing, whatever it took; and they usually did that with violence. With violence and with terror. And then what ETA did, in the beginning, was to oppose that; but then a moment arrived when it did not know how to stop or how to end it, and it just kept doing things that weren't necessary, just to continue being there, just to have a presence.
Which moment was that?
Well, for example, when there was a moment of transition, when a democracy was established – although now it is being questioned whether things actually changed much, but from that moment on, there was no need of going on with the armed struggle. It was a moment of peace. (…) Because at the same time there were some revolutionary movements which, well, which made peace in a peaceful way, for example, the Basque Radical Rock [bands]. In my opinion, that was the moment to make a cultural revolution, not an armed one.

Fernando-17-Oñati

Fernando employs temporal markers in order to distinguish between the two stages he considers to be most relevant in the historical development of the conflict: the repeated structure "in the beginning" (lines 1 and 3) refers to Francoism. The adverb "then" (lines 3 and 4) is also employed twice, but with different meanings: in the first sentence, "And then what ETA did"…" it functions as a marker of causality – ETA's actions are here presented as a consequence of the regime's actions. Later on, the temporal reference "but *then* a moment arrived" (line 4), associated with the conjunction "but", clearly points to a change in this context, thus establishing a narrative in which two stages are differentiated in the timeline and the development of the conflict.

From that point on, the speaker evaluates ETA's armed activity as unnecessary (lines 5 and 10). He makes his stance explicit by proposing a different, more useful, strategy, characterized by its "peaceful" (line 13) and "cultural" (line 14) expressions. The deontic modality chosen by the speaker during his argumentation stresses his standpoint. He does, however, introduce an external discourse that partially questions his own thesis: the intercalation "although now it is being questioned whether things actually changed much" in line 9 is an interdiscursive disclaimer that shows that the speaker has been in contact with a variety of narratives. Through referring to this, he widens the distance towards the content of his own discourse, towards which he otherwise shows a great degree of commitment.

In short, *the two-stage narrative* responds to a strategy that youngsters employ in order to manage different and often contradictory conceptual frameworks they have at hand. It enables them to combine the historical narrative that portrays ETA as a resistance movement with the contemporary socially accepted and generalized discourse on violence as an evil to be rejected. In other words: it is a structure that allows them to maintain some of the discourses they have learned in their more private social spheres while at the same time accepting or not questioning discourses they perceive as hegemonic.

5.1.2.2. The time of the conflict in relation to the position of the speaker: the conflict of the past

There is a clear emotional distance towards most events that conform the imaginary about the armed conflict, that can be identified in the discourses of the youngsters by reproducing external narratives through interdiscursivity (Li et al., 2022, p. 9); by means

of (discursive) positioning –which I will analyze deeply in chapter *5.3. Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies*–, or by simply locating events in discourse in temporal frames related to a past time. Most definitions of the conflict itself have indeed been formulated using past tense verbs. These are some of the answers I have collected through the questions "What comes to your mind when you hear / How would you the define 'the Basque conflict?':

> *Eh… the struggle that there has been for the freedom of the Basque Country – the struggle there has been in the last century.*
>
> Gorka-15-Hendaia

> *Time. I don't know, a time that has passed. It has taken time, but also a time that stayed in the past.*
>
> Lur-16-Hendaia

> *The Basque conflict? Let's see, that's a big question. [Laughs]. Whoah… well, I don't know. The history that has been, right? In the end it's our history. Here, there has been a conflict for many years, and, well, now it is being tried to fix*[28] *that conflict a bit, somehow.*
>
> Joseba-20-Bilbo

In all these three excerpts, we can observe a clear distancing on the part of the speaker towards the conflict: for them, it is a problem of the past, or, more specifically, one that "stayed" in the past, as Lur puts it. They don't seem to relate it to their own contemporary reality, at least not on a first moment. Out of the three examples, only Joseba builds a link with his current context, by employing an identification strategy: through the use of first person pronouns and spatial deixis ("our history" and "here", in line 2), he constructs a collective identity around the conflict and presents himself as a member of the group that shares that history.

It is important to identify this perceptive distance in order to understand the relationship that this generation builds towards certain episodes of the past and to analyze correctly the discourses that are indicators of this relationship. All interpretations about the past are realized from the specific context of the individual and the position they hold in it; the resulting narratives are therefore dependent on these social relations.

Thus, it is no surprise that, for many of the interviewees, the starting point to talk about the conflict is to first describe their context, or to link events of the past with elements they can identify in their contemporary environment:

> What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear 'the Basque Conflict'?
> *Well… the first thing [is] this kind of, eh, the footprint that ETA left, I'd say. ETA itself. And the effect that has had on nowadays, that is – I mean – it's not only ETA, [it's] also the mark it has left and, eh – I'd say all the negative and positive values that it has left.*
>
> Gari-20-Getxo

> *What I understand as the Basque Conflict is the conflict that began in 58 or 59 and continued until very recently, or it even continues today. And what I have*

[28] Please note that the sentence structure and the wording is intended to reflect the effects of the original. In this case, the strangeness that might derive from this sentence is similar to the one the original wording produces in Basque: "Egon da hemen gatazka urte askoan, eta bueno, ba orain gatazka hori apur bat saiatzen da konpontzen modu batera".

noticed is that, well – in the beginning I wasn't alive, but, well, here in town it is often heard that Oñati is a 'cradle of ETA members', and in the end patriotism is very extended here, so the influence that I have received has not been very negative. (…) And I think it still is something that has an influence nowadays, because in the end – you see it in the Altsasu case: now there is no terrorism, [but] they have to link it to something. In the end, it still conditions us.

Fernando-17-Oñati

Both these examples are illustrative of how the current standpoint of the speaker functions as a frame for the narrativization of the past. Gari focuses on the footprint / mark metaphor (lines 3 to 5) in order to describe the effects of a past figure on his contemporary context. By doing so, he argues that the most physical events or expressions of the Basque conflict are over, but that he can still identify elements that stem from it in his current context, which he defines as "negative and positive values" (lines 5 and 6). He is therefore framing the conflict in a rather symbolic and attitudinal sphere, which is the form he has experienced it.

On the other hand, the mechanism employed by Fernando (as well as many other youngsters) in order to *bring the conflict* closer to his contemporary context is to mention a specific political conflict that he has known in his lifetime. Together with the Alsasua case (which Fernando brings up in line 7), issues around Catalonia's independence referendum or other local conflicts often become metonymies that represent the essence of the conflict. Therefore, temporal closeness can also be decisive in the prominence of certain frameworks, as contemporary elements offer an interpretative framework according to which speakers can organize their narratives about the past.

As such, Fernando refers to his contemporary context, while at the same time basing his narrative on his personal experience. He distinguishes among different stages of the conflict by setting his own birth as a reference ("in the beginning I wasn't alive", line 3). This example illustrates the centrality of the Self in the constructions about the past, because the starting point of the speakers is usually to make their subjectivity explicit. In Fernando's case, he bases his interpretation on the description he provides of his close social context, and to do so he reproduces an external discourse about his ingroup: the direct quote "cradle of ETA members", which he quotes originally in Spanish as "*cuna de etarras*" (line 4) illustrates the perception of a stereotype constructed around his hometown, Oñati. The language change –from Basque, which he employs to build the rest of the narrative, to Spanish, which he chooses to quote this specific external discourse– refers to this external voice, which is attributed to a Spanish outgroup or external subject that is categorizing the ingroup. Base on these elements, Fernando makes his position explicit: when he asserts "the influence that I have received has not been very negative" (lines 5 and 6), the adjective *negative* refers to the evaluation of the past armed strategy, that is, the speaker states that he has not received discourses that evaluate it negatively from his close social context. Fernando knows that this challenges a major, socially dominant discourse –the one that evaluates violence against the State as negative in all cases–; therefore, the description he provides of his discursive context actually functions as a justifying strategy for his own attitudes.

In fact, in many of the first associations that young people have linked with the concept Basque Conflict, evaluative statements have predominated over rather *informative* or narrative content in the form of definitions or descriptions.

> *'Basque conflict' – the first thing that comes to my mind? Well, a total injustice. Because in the end, only one voice has been heard throughout Spain, and all the local culture here and all its implications have been left aside (…). Everything that I associate to the Basque conflict is actually totally negative, because the Basque people have been devalued in general. I mean, the Basque conflict has only been associated to ETA, just with ETA, the negative implications that ETA has had, but everything it has brought, eh, among other things, are – I mean, apart of negative they have also been positive, because in the end, what they have done is to fight for the rights of the Basques, and for the people here. Okay, they were armed, and there were killings and such, that has tarnished the image, but – well, or that has the Spanish State made us believe, actually. I mean – because my opinion is a bit harsh on all of this.*
> That's fine, I'm not here to judge opinions.
> *Okay. Because my family has experienced that very closely, I mean, my uncle was imprisoned, in the end, because of a trifle.*
>
> Nora-21-Getxo

> *To me, I think the beginning could have had some logic, right? Because in Franco's regime there might have not been some freedoms, or, well, especially political ones, there was none. And, I mean, I can't justify those deaths either, because I think that, in many cases, it is not justifiable to kill the civil guard who is just passing by. And although he has been a torturer, I think that in a civilized society those are not the means to achieve the aims. One thing is defense or so, but I don't think direct crime is the solution. That, at the beginning: and then I think that the movement loses all its credibility when there is a democracy in Spain, which, the better or the worse, well, it does contain democracy. There are some rights that are recognized to Basque society. And a different question is whether the independentist way is more difficult to achieve, but through that way, for sure it seems impossible to me.*
>
> Paulo-19-Urnieta

In these two examples the presence and dominance of the Self is evident: the subjectivity of the discourse is made explicit, and operates as a starting point or framework from which to construct the narratives. Nora, in order to build an understandable narrative and a point of view that needs to be legitimated, first gives an account of her personal and discursive context, that is, she re-constructs discourses and experiences she has learned in her family, and bases her attitude towards the conflict on these experiences. As I will examine in greater detail in chapter 5.4.3., titled *Psycholinguistic strategies employed to manage taboo and voids of knowledge*, behind these concerns to understand one's own position and make it understandable to others there is often a demand for *permission* to introduce discourses that could be socially censored or controversial. Nora makes this request for permission explicit by describing her opinion as excessive or "harsh" (line 12); by inserting that statement, she seeks the interviewer's feedback and continues her speech once she has received approval, incorporating an explanatory element, that is, the experience of one of her relatives that had been close to ETA and suffered imprisonment.

Although Paulo's discourse is very different in content, it is also founded on the explicit subjectivity of the speaker: the repetitive and emphasizing use of first person pronouns and verbs in line 1, as well as the lack of modalizers signalizing doubt or distance, show a great degree of commitment towards the content of his discourse: it is a firm position

of the speaker. Paulo repeatedly speaks in terms of "justification" (lines 3 and 4) and legitimacy ("credibility", line 8); to him, moral evaluation is a central concept when referring to past events, specifically to the violence of ETA, although he does not make an explicit reference to it. He takes the discourse that centers the conflict on ETA's violence for granted, and only refers to the group in line 8 as "the movement".

Consequently, the chronological organization of the conflict according to Paulo's mental models is also based on the construction of a personal position: the question that lies on the ground of this framework would be "Do I perceive the use of violence as being understandable / justifiable or not?", and he structures his discourse about the development of the conflict in accordance to the answer(s) to that question. As such, he spots a possible justification of ETA's violence during Francoism: the "lack of freedom" mentioned in lines 2 and 3. However, he subsequently introduces a transformation strategy, correcting the statement that could have opened a space for the legitimation of violence: "I can't justify those deaths either" (line 3) is a sentence with a clear deontic character. Paulo portrays the civil guards not as armed actors involved in the struggle, but as innocent victims who were merely performing their job. This characterization is an answer to an external discourse, which Paulo introduces through an indirect quotation: the contrasting conjunction "*Although* he has been a torturer" (line 5) refers to an external or social discourse he perceives about the Civil Guard, according to which attacking the military police might be justified because of their involvement in the armed conflict as victimizers. Since he does not share this position, he employs a transformation strategy by offering an opposing characterization of the same actor. After the Transition, he frames ETA's violence in a narrative of absurdity, while still holding on to a mainly evaluative discourse.

In both examples, the need to provide a proper moral assessment is evident. Both Nora and Paulo build their narratives on the same discursive context: both are aware of the social demand for the condemnation of violence, and build a discourse consistent with it, each from their own position; in the case of Nora it acquires a more responsive and justifying character, while that of Paul is rather in line with the dominant discourse.

5.1.2.3. Narratives on the disarmament process

The temporality of the conflict enables several possible narratives, which are often contradictory among themselves. In the interviews carried out for this thesis, there is also an unresolved tension: the young participants generally locate the concept *Basque conflict* in the past, but insofar they also identify connections to their contemporary context, they often have difficulties resolving whether the conflict has actually ended or not.

I first started to interview adolescents in March 2018, almost a year after the first public *mise en scène* of ETA's disarmament process, an event that gathered large crowds on April 8th, 2017, in Bayonne, and two months before ETA's definitive dissolution on May 3rd, 2018. Therefore, most of the interviews were realized during the disarmament process or shortly after it, and most interviewees had some kind of direct memory on it, although most of them were mediated by the perspectives of their relatives and/or reconstructed with the means of media discourses, especially in the case of participants who were not used to speak about politics in their families.

Knowledge about past peace initiatives was strikingly absent in the youngster's narratives, and even the 2017-2018 disarmament process, although being a contemporary issue at that moment, was completely unknown to one out of four. According to the relevance of geographical and ideological proximity, the most detailed accounts of the disarmament were provided by very politicized participants and especially those living in the French Basque Country, where most of the resolution events took place. This is perhaps the most detailed narrative recorded:

Well, first there was the detention of Luhuso, and that. And with Txex and Etxe, and I also know them. They were destroying the weapons in a home in Luhuso, and there they were arrested. And then, later on, there was the disarmament [event] in Baiona.
Were you there?
No, I did't go in the end. But I followed it closely, through the radio and so.
And how do you remember it, how do you feel about it?
I don't know. It's… I find it strange. In truth – I don't know if one can say this – in truth it was like a burial. Or it feels like quite a sad day to me, and, well, anyway. I guess it was necessary.
Why was it a sad day?
I don't know. It looked as if we were a bit – well, leaving the weapons, obviously, but… I don't know, as if we were quitting, we were leaving, like we were giving up. I don't know, the day itself. Then, obviously, it wasn't that.
Like a loss?
Yes. Well, that concrete day. This is how I viewed that day: well, they give away the weapons, and all those speeches. I don't know, I don't think that was meant to be the real message of the day.
In general, how do you see the disarmament? Which are the causes of it?
Well, that the situation was blocked. It had been seven years since ETA laid down its arms, and nothing was moving. And so, well, that: to oficially quit arms, I don't know – probably it was necessary to make things accelerate and move forward. I don't know if it has had a great effect, but…
Do you feel that ETA has been defeated in these years?
Defeated, I don't know; ETA is over. And I don't think there has been a real victory. It has become smaller and smaller, and the amount of prisoners has been growing and growing. And it was not possible to continue like that, I don't think the armed struggle would have been a solution forever. It wasn't possible to continue like that always, and killing people and incarcerating prisoners. (…) But, well, I think, anyway, the end should have been different. Maybe finishing with more achievements and truly, well, what we wanted or – well, at least achieving a part of what we wanted and to say that. I think that would have been the best: to say in that moment, "So, we have achieved what we wanted and we quit, we lay down the arms". I think it has been more like: "No one does anything, we have been in this situation for seven years, what do we do? We leave arms, now please do something yourselves".
Do you think there is a greater possibility of opening a negotiation process now?
I don't know. I don't know if it's because – but I feel that the image of the 'Basque terrorist' that the foreigners have is moving farther away. And, well, in that sense I believe that the disarmament has had good sides.

Unai-16-Anhauze

Unai brings together several voices in this discourse about ETA's disarming process. It is a topic that he perceives emotionally and socially close. However, he first reconstructs the views of his social context in order to build a legitimating base for his own discourse: the nicknames "Txetx" and "Etxe" (line 1) refer to Jean-Noël Etxeberri and Stéphane Etxegarai, members of the civil peace initiative *the Artisans of Peace* (*Bakearen Artisauak / Artisans de la Paix*) that mediated in ETA's end. The fact that Unai refers to

them using solely their nicknames shows a closeness, and the evidential "I also know them" (line 2) functions as an introductory form for the representation of an experience that is actually theirs; by associating himself with the protagonists of the story, the speaker adds credibility and legitimacy to the content of his own narrative.

However, Unai does not stick to the mere reproduction of his social context. He builds an emotionally charged narrative about the disarming process, describing it as a "sad day" (line 9). The metaphor of the *burial* evokes the death of a loved one or a close person; therefore, laying down arms –which in fact were shown in a hole in the forest– symbolizes the end of a time or an attitude that has great meaning for Unai. In spite of that, he is aware of the taboo and the character of the dominant discourses around him; that's why he asks for permission to introduce his narrative through the epistemic and deontic modality of the phrase "I don't know if one can say this" in line 8.

Unai builds on an ideological community that shares ETA and its armed strategy as a symbol, and identifies completely with it, up to the point that he speaks in first person plural forms about the disarmament: in the sentences "we were leaving the weapons", "we were quitting" and "we were giving up" (lines 12 to 14), he positions himself in the place of a collective identity. Thus, there is a clear discursive identification with ETA and the peacemakers: the speaker has not laid down arms physically –and was never personally involved in the armed conflict–, yet he appropriates their actions.

In this excerpt, we can identify another voice that belongs to an implicit subject, which considers ETA's disarmament as positive or necessary. Unai indirectly quotes this discourse when he expresses his disillusion: "I guess it was necessary" (line 10) and "probably it was necessary" (line 22). In both cases, he employs modalizers that show doubt or skepticism, stressing his discursive distance towards the propositional content of the quote, similarly to the epistemic modality contained in the phrase "I don't know if it has had a great effect" in line 23.

Finally, Unai makes his personal stance explicit in line 30: "[T]he end should have been different". He evaluates the disarming process as despairing, because he believes it responds to a capitulation of the ingroup without having achieved its aims. He expresses this thesis by ironically quoting a hypothetical discourse of ETA (lines 33 to 36): by doing so, he portrays ETA as an actor wandering around with no specific purpose or aim.

In sum, Unai builds a narrative of military or strategic defeat. However, he does not attribute the role of the victor to the outgroup: he reformulates the question posed by interviewer by stating "Defeated, I don't know; ETA is over" (line 25). Within this transformation strategy, he corrects a transitive verb (*to defeat*) and introduces instead the adjectivized structure *to be over*: ETA's end is thus presented as a natural consequence of contextual factors (the political blockade, the impossibility to continue in similar circumstances) and the attitude adopted by ETA in front of them; any other subject is ellipsed in this discourse. "Victory" is defined in terms of the interests of the ingroup; since these are not met, the speaker builds a narrative of a one-sided defeat without visibilizing an antagonist or agent.

Unai ends his discourse with a narrative of redemption. The disarmament, which he has originally evaluated negatively and portrayed as a loss, is now positively assessed in

regard to its consequences. Despite the fact that the objectives of the ingroup have not been satisfied, he focuses on the idea that prejudices towards it have softened.

Although the narrative of military defeat has come up in many of the interviews, few participants have openly praised the role of the State forces in their strategy against ETA. Most speaker have rather framed the end of ETA in a general weathering process attributed to time:

> *I think that ETA deflated little by little, maybe because – because the State somehow has endured, it has not wanted to negotiate directly the way to achieve independence for example, or whatever they wanted.*
>
> Paulo-19-Urnieta

Paulo conceptualizes the end of ETA in terms of *negative peace* as defined by Galtung's Conflict Theory (Webel & Galtung, 2007, p. 31): within this narrative, negotiating with the outgroup (ETA) is interpreted as surrendering, and ignoring their demands is considered a victory, which Paulo illustrates using the metaphor "to endure" (line 2). The idea that ETA has "deflated" (line 1) is an ontological metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 58–59), which enables us to perceive a rather complex concept in terms of a physical substance that we can quantify and therefore argue over. By conceptualizing ETA's disarming process as a *deflation*, Paulo equals it to a physical process, for example, with a balloon that loses its air with time or with a crumbled recipient that leaks its content due to gravity. Therefore, a naturalizing narrative based on the laws of physics is constructed, which equates a political process with natural processes that can be found in the physical context.

Another main narrative of the disarming process relates its cause to ETA's agency or to the will of the broader ideological community which, while possibly sharing some of ETA's political goals, does not want to be involved in an armed conflict. This is discursively conceptualized as "opening a new path for us" (Enaitz-17-Oñati), and some participants have described ETA's ceasefire / disarmament as a broadening of the permissible discursive area around the conflict, because after 2011 the topic suddenly became "talkable" (Gari-20-Getxo).

Among those least familiar with ETA's motivations, that is, those who mainly constructed narratives of absurdity about the past conflict, the end of the violence is framed as merely a logical and coherent step:

> Why has ETA laid down arms?
> *Because, I don't know. I think that – actually, it has been a bit like, "Now? But, really, now?". I don't know, I think that they have recognized that they weren't going to do much, and that it made no sense to carry on with the attacks, and so they said: "Well, we don't lose anything by disarming". In fact, I think that they could come back anytime if they wanted to. They could reconstitute. But, I don't know, it didn't make much sense to go on, I think.*
> Don't you think it was a consequence of the pressure made by the Police?
> *Well, that too. I mean, fuck: they have obviously been very persecuted, right? But if they had cared about police repression, they wouldn't have started in the beginning, because it was obvious that they were going to persecute them, and kill them, and torture them, etcetera. That is something they should have known, and who doesn't know is stupid. Basically. I think that they have seen that it made no sense. I mean, if I put myself in the place of an ETA member,*

which would be difficult, I wouldn't have continued either. Fuck it, a long time ago; switch the lights off and let's get out of here.

Malika-17-Barakaldo

Malika builds a narrative of absurdity: since she evaluates ETA's activity in history as absurd, she seeks for reasons that are coherent with that view in order to explain the decision to quit arms. This example is illustrative of the influence that general frameworks and interpretation patterns have on the construction of discourses about specific events: to Malika, the motivations that ETA could have to pursue its armed activity are incomprehensible; therefore, she evaluates those as illogical; and so, the disarmament becomes a logical action that needs no further reasoning.

This framework of the absurd allows Malika to employ a humorous tone and overcome some voids of knowledge that would otherwise hinder the construction of a coherent narrative. She gives herself permission to resort to irony by attributing a hypothetical quote to ETA and laughing at it (lines 1 to 5). Through the choice of this specific discursive genre (Hymes in Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 4), the speaker reduces the severity of the events that are being described; frivolization becomes thus a mean to discursively distance herself.

A minority of participants (two, to be more specific) have suggested that the end of ETA was the product of a bilateral negotiation process; the rest have conceptualized it as a unilateral or naturally happening move, and not all of them have equated it with an end of the whole conflict. On the contrary: among the factors that make the conflict endure in their contemporary context, many have pointed at the political instrumentalization of the past; the unresolved issue on independence or the degree of autonomy of the Basque country; the situation of the prisoners; or institutional remnants of past conflicts. Reflections on symbolic and emotional consequences of the conflict have also arisen throughout the interviews, such as the social presence of nostalgic feelings and prejudices:

Would you say that the conflict is over?
No.
Why not?
Well, above all, because of the hatred – that hostility, because we see the other side as an enemy and because people have not yet accepted that that stage is has ended. I think there is still a lot of that.

Nagore-17-Oñati

(…) in the end, if you continue with prejudices, and if people always turn against you because of that image, in the end it will always continue to be there. In the end, until that image is erased...

Udane-18-Markina-Xemein

This symbolic aspect is a crucial element in the conceptions young people build about the conflict. The members of the generation that is being studied here have not experimented its armed expressions, but, instead, they have experimented the conflict in the form of prejudices, attitudes and emotions, and those experiences also condition the macro-narratives and interpretative frames they construct about the conflict.

One of the clearest examples of this symbolic relationship can be observed when analyzing the positions of the youngsters towards the collective of prisoners. Although

the majority of participants are to some degree familiar with prison policies based on the dispersion of Basque citizens who are serving a sentence related to the armed conflict, most of them do not know any prisoner personally. When I first began carrying out the interviews in March 2018, there were 291 people in prison because of alleged ties to ETA;[29] almost two years later, at the time of the last interviews (January 2020), there were 241. Out of those, one in five had been in prison for more than 20 years[30], that is, longer than the average lifetime of my participants. Only 13% were serving their sentence in a prison in the Basque territories (Etxerat, 2020); the rest were scattered throughout Spain and France, according to the dispersion measures introduced by the Spanish Government in the 1980s and later adopted by its French counterpart (Albin, 2018)[31].

To most youths born in the early 2000s, the prisoners are a distant figure in all terms. The fewest know personally somebody who has been incarcerated, and those who do rarely knew them before entering prison; they have generally met them once they regained their freedom, as acquaintances from their close context (hometown or neighborhood) or, more seldom, as older relatives or friends of relatives. For the rest, prisoners are mainly a symbol they know from pictures and political slogans, but to which they cannot attach a real or human side.

Thus, I have identified two patterns in the discourses that youngsters build about the prisoners, depending on whether that knowledge stems from a personal or a symbolically mediated relationship. When speaking about prisoners they know personally, they tend to highlight their human aspects, such as their suffering, as well as activities that portray them positively or as victims: health problems, sacrifices and solidarity initiatives from their close social networks, their studies or creative projects in prison, etc. On the other hand, when there is no direct experience at hand, the prisoner is usually defined by their crime and reduced to a categorization device constructed according to the categories *assassin* / *not assassin*.

> What's your opinion on the prisoner problem? Would you take people out of prison?
> *Let's see. It depends on what they have done. If they are there because they have killed someone, they should stay in prison just like anyone else. And, just like that sacred Constitution says, as close as possible from their homes. But: if they are there because of their ideology or if they haven't killed anyone, they should get out. (…)*
> Do you know anybody who has been in prison or still is?
> *Well, a man from Arbizu, who is known in town. I know him personally and he is a very good person. He went to some demonstrations and they told him: "If you go to one more…", well, he did, and they put him into jail for I don't know how long.*
> Have you always known him as a prisoner?
> *No, I also knew him before.*
> And do you talk with him about prison?
> *No, not about that. I mean, I know him barely, I haven't really talked to him like that.*
>
> Imanol-15-Arbizu

[29] According to the daily figures published by the newspaper *Gara*.
[30] Data provided by the association of families of prisoners, Etxerat.
[31] These figures have quickly changed in the last few years: by the time of writing this thesis, the percentage of *political* prisoners (i.e. related to the conflict) ha risen to 53% (Etxerat, 2021). The dispersion officially ended in March 2023, while I was writing the last lines of this dissertation.

Imanol builds a characterization according to the crime attributed to the prisoner in question: he associates him to a non-violent activity (going to demonstrations, line 10), and this choice enhances the positive characterization of the actor, who the speaker also describes as a "very good person" (line 10). Although in the final sentence of the excerpt Imanol recognizes that his relationship with the ex-prisoner is not very close, knowing him as a real person helps him to build a more human image about him, whereas when asked about *prisoners* as a more general mental category, he resorts to an evaluative narrative based on the dichotomy *assassin / not assassin*. According to this cognitive scheme, there are two types of prisoners: those who are responsible for severe crimes (*assassins*) and those who are not (*not assassins*, such as those who are imprisoned for "their ideology", in Imanol's words); depending on which category they fit, their situation might be evaluated as more or less justified. Furthermore, aspects of their human character are usually not taken into account, with the exception of health problems. Imanol refers to shared knowledge about the rights of ill prisoners to be freed; this is part of a legal, and therefore, publicly available discourse, and as such, it offers a steady discursive basis which he can safely reconstruct.

There is, in reality, much implicit social knowledge involved in the learning process about prisoners, although the topic is not very often addressed openly. They are unknown figures to the youngsters, but at the same time they know them from banners and graffitis, from references in the media, other cultural expressions in their leisure spaces, and, in some cases, from their school curriculum; these references are usually concentrated on the figure of the writer Joseba Sarrionandia, whose personal story is sometimes addressed in Literature lessons. There is also a social ritual –which is nowadays increasingly controversial– of publicly welcoming prisoners who are freed and return to their hometown. Some participants have described the feeling of strangeness, in the sense of a cognitive and especially emotional distance towards these established practices:

I have been in the bertso eskola[32] for eight years now, and there are two people who have also been in prison because they were accused of, eh, having a direct relation to ETA. And (…) I remember another experience related to this: how one of those came, [name of the ex-prisoner]. He came about, I don't know, eight years ago? He was a friend from our childhood, I mean, he was an adult, right? But he used to go out with us, with our parents, in that group of friends. And when he returned [from prison], [I remember] how we sang verses to him, but, of course: I would sing 'Welcome' , but I didn't know how long he had been in there, or what they had accused him of. And we have learned that with the years. It is usually more like: "He is gone, he is in prison, but we don't know how much – what they are accusing him of, nor anything else". (…) It's an idea, that person who is there on the picture of the Herriko[33]. But there you don't know who they are, what they have done, or anything else. And they are older, they won't come to the youth movements, so that's why – that's what happens to me: welcoming events feel like, cold. And often, as bertsolari, we have to go to sing verses at those welcoming events, and it's always the same verses for everyone because of that: because you don't know the family.

[32] *Bertso eskolak* are "afterschool oral improvisation workshops" (Artetxe Sarasola, 2022, p. 1) present across the Basque Country.

[33] *Herriko Tabernak* are local bars present in many municipalities, traditionally linked to the *abertzale* left. Portrays of local people who are in prison are usually displayed, as well as protest slogans that request their freedom.

Gari-20-Getxo

When I see those [photos] I think that they were in ETA; okay, they killed people, but they killed people because they thought that there was no other way to achieve freedom. And on one hand, when I see those pictures, well, I don't know, eh, mean, I'm don't support killing people, but neither what Spain did to us.

Eñaut-15-Oñati

Both these excerpts illustrate the relevance images have for youngsters who have built a mainly symbolic relationship with figures that are not present in their daily life. Gari does have a personal memory involving an ex-prisoner. The distance he feels toward that figure (metaphorized in line 15 through the source domain related to temperature, "cold") poses to him a contradiction with the social role that is expected from him (to welcome the prisoner warmly): he has difficulties to honor a figure that is unknown to him.

Nonetheless, the emphasis that the speaker himself puts on the need to know about *what the ex-prisoner has done* (an idea repeated in lines 9, 11 and 13), shows that knowledge about the alleged criminology is a crucial fact for the speaker in order to reconstruct an image about a person who has been in prison, who is thus reduced to his time as a prisoner. This de-humanization, that is, viewing the prisoner basically as a criminal, can also be observed in Eñaut's example. He equates being a member ETA (*to be in ETA*, line 1) with the most violent actions of the group, i.e., the killings (lines 1, 2 and 4); this is an example of metonymic thinking. Eñaut is not speaking about a specific prisoner, but he is reproducing a cognitive scheme he has built about the mental category of *prisoners*. In spite of partially constructing a positive characterization of them –by reducing the gravity of their acts through a comparison with the acts of the Other–, he still holds on to a de-humanizing discourse about the prisoners. This shows that purely symbolically mediated relationships, instead of face-to-face, real-life relationships, open the door to hyperbolic interpretations, that is, to possible heroizations or, in most cases, demonizations.

5.1.3. Other variables

On the other hand, there is concern among young people about the construction of memories of the armed conflict and the social groups that may be involved in it. In fact, there is a discursive pattern which relates the interest to speak about the past as something that mainly affects the *abertzale* or Basque nationalist community. As a result of this imaginary, many young people, especially those who have grown up in contexts where it is not usual to speak about politics or in which other ideologies prevail, have expressed a feeling of being excluded from the construction of memory.

Paradoxically, young people who have grown up in families with serious experiences related to the conflict do not feel entitled either to participate in the construction of memory, precisely because of the historical burden of their ideological community. The following example belongs to a public speech pronounced by a young girl whose parents are in prison:

It is our duty to tell our truth. We have shown that we are a nation that does not forget, but we have to show strength in order to develop an attachment to what has happened. (…) The difficulties are great. That hegemonic narrative they have imposed on us has permeated deeply: it is widely available, through social media, Netflix, HBO, the media… and I think that's why those of us who have 'that other part' of the narrative, as long as

we are alive, we must tell it, because otherwise no one else will. It's easier to say than to do: it may be your close childhood friend, and if they have not been taught at home or on the street, the narrative they have received is very far from the reality that I have experienced. They will rather ask me what my relatives in prison have done, than asking me how I am feeling or how the journey to prison went. (…) We need safe spaces to share our experiences with those who are ready to hear our narrative. In the textbooks, we are 'the murderers' – that is a fascist attack on us. They decide who takes the role of the winner, the loser, the murderer and the victim.

Leire, member of Ernai

[Speech pronounced at a public venue in Iruñea/Pamplona in December 2021]

Leire describes her perception of a hostile discursive environment. She feels that the fact that her parents are imprisoned places her in a marginal position in relation to the discussion about the past, in which she has no chances of sharing *her* (personal and collective) experience and make it understood. She feels that the discourses of her community stand in tension with the hegemonic narratives of society, and that she has no way of expressing them without being somehow punished for it. That's why she claims a "safe space" (lines 10 and 11) for her experiences. That discursive hegemony is represented in this excerpt by both written and audio-visual narratives: the dominant discourses on the Internet, media platforms and schoolbooks are quoted in lines 11 and 12. The metaphor "to permeate" in line 4 is illustrative of the power attributed to those discourses to influence people's thoughts.

The speaker feels categorized by these powerful discourses as a criminal or as an instigator of violence (line 12), through the experience of her parents. Leire also identifies the dominance of a criminalizing interpretation of the conflict in terms of its violence. When her friends ask her about the crimes committed by her relatives, she feels a contradiction with her personal experience, which is much more closely related to the painful experiences she has had as a daughter, and which are in this case condensed into the concept of a *journey to prison* (lines 9-10), ellipsing the elements involved in it: Leire assumes that, in that particular forum, it is widely known that prison trips imply suffering on the part of the prisoner's relatives.

We can therefore conclude that political labeling acts as an obstacle for the involvement of young people in the broad social debate on the conflict, but this does not depend on specific ideological tendencies: both *abertzale* and non-*abertzale* youths feel that they are not legitimated to talk about the memory of the conflict, and all of them struggle to make their voices heard in the current discursive context. The perceptions and manifestations of this lack of legitimacy will be further elaborated in the third analytical subsection, *5.3. Discursive constructions of identity and positioning strategies*.

On the other hand, I have identified a narrative that constructs the concept of the Basque conflict in geographical terms, rather than in ideological terms or in terms of its physical expressions. This narrative structures the conflict as a social problem whose main characteristic is that it took place in the Basque territories, and provides a discursive basis for the topos of *the battle between siblings*:

Here, there has been a conflict for many years, and well, now people are trying to fix that conflict somehow, but people still have a lot of memories about that conflict, because, I don't know – usually we, well, people find it difficult to

leave the past behind, and to keep going on. Because it's natural: if they have done something to your family, it is hard to leave that behind and carry on. In the end, that: we've had a huge mess here, and in the end – in the end, suffering. I mean, on one side or on the other, there has been suffering. I mean, it's not only the Basque Country against Spain, in reality there has been [a conflict] inside of the Basque Country as well, many conflicts between families. And in the end, that means sufferings.

Joseba-20-Bilbo

Joseba conceptualizes the Basque conflict as a "natural" (line 4) and local problem of coexistence. The repeated use of the spatial deictic "here" (in lines 1 and 6) refers to a geographical setting shared by several actors with antagonistic interests: the Basque Country is, in this case, the territory of the conflict, in its most physical meaning. Ideological or political details or aspects of the conflict are here left out of the discourse, and each of the *families* (line 9) metaphorically understood as political families or clans, are assumed to have differing interests, but at the same time sharing a feature: they suffer equally. These types of discourses hide the political nature of the conflict, as well as the particular responsibilities of the involved actors: through the frame of the fight between families, the speaker builds an image of a greater tragedy that takes place beyond the individual level and includes the whole of the population.

5.1.4. Conclusions of the chapter

In this analytical subsection, I have aimed to respond to the first research question posed at the beginning of the thesis: "Which are the main narrative frames that youngsters build about the Basque Conflict?". The objective was to identify some of the dominant mental models or interpretative schemata, in order to analyze in their terms the more specific aspects coming up in the next subsections.

I have identified discursive frames built according to four axes, in order of their prominence: the origin of violence; temporality; political ideology; and territoriality. These are not incompatible: rather, they often intersect. The most repeated pattern has been by far the framework of violent conflict or *terrorism*. The speakers who have built this framework have defined the actors involved primarily in terms of their violent activity or military aspect, classifying the victims according to the physical damage suffered.

The most prominent concept in this framework is, by far, ETA. It has been characterized by the youngsters mainly through actions related to violence, especially those involving the loss of human lives. However, there are at least two conflicting frameworks in the characterization of ETA according to the speaker's ideological position. This tension can be summed up by the terminological dichotomy *terrorist group vs. armed organization*. However, speakers have also introduced hybrid descriptions such as *terrorist organization*. All of these are illustrative of the interaction among various discursive spheres, as well as of a generalization or naturalization of the term *terrorism*, which may be associated with a global trend in discourses on anti-state violence.

This discourse, which considers only –or mainly– the violent aspect of the conflict, is linked to a narrative of incomprehension or absurdity, especially present among young people coming from less politicized environments. If ETA or other actors involved in the past violence cannot be recognized by their political or rational motivations, young people

find it difficult to understand their behavior and place it in a coherent historical context. At this point there is a notable gap in their communicative competence on the subject, probably related to the demonization and the taboo surrounding this actor. Consequently, ETA is a central element for all participants, but at the same time they have difficulty describing it in detail.

Among the other actors that stand out more often in their discourses are also those who are primarily known for their armed activity, such as the Civil Guard and the GAL. The Civil Guard has mainly appear in narratives of young people with personal or close experiences related to it, who have spoken about it in rather emotional terms, while at the same time having difficulties describing the historical role of the military police. As a result, it can be hypothesized that emotions can be transmitted even without the transmission of precise *content* or *informative* knowledge.

Paradoxically, the 1980s vigilantist group GAL had been described more frequently and in more detail by young people, even though it is more distant in time and experience. One possible explanation for this is that audio-visuals and textbooks provide a stronger discursive basis for the youngsters to rely on when constructing their narratives. Furthermore, as the relationship with the Civil Guard is still a sensitive social issue; there is no consensual public discourse about it, which makes it a more *slippery* discursive field. Young people often recognize greater reliability in public discourses than in those of their own household or their immediate social environment; this is particularly evident when they perceive private discourses as colliding with socially accepted views. This should lead us to reflect on the importance of these kinds of mediating materials.

Geographical proximity has emerged as a significant variable for the prominence of the actors and events most remembered or mentioned, especially in the case of knowledge about actions attributed to the armed forces, the transmission of which takes place in the most private circles, while in the case of actions attributed to ETA, the most detailed and reproduced events are often very mediatic events which often took place farther away in time or space.

Consequently, it can be affirmed that the greater the social consensus over a discourse, the more public it is or the more legitimated it is in the main media –such as audiovisuals or education–, the greater the transmission of knowledge will probably be, because the *permitted* discursive area around it is also larger.

In contrast to the framework of the violent conflict, narratives that focus on the political or cultural aspect of the conflict, while at the same time acknowledging the complexity of the political, cultural, and structural layers underlying the visible violence, have appeared as minoritary. When this second frame has appeared, it has always appeared in conjunction with the violent frame, never replacing it. The coexistence of these two frameworks creates a contradiction for young people, and as a solution to it they build ambivalent narratives about ETA and its violence, namely, a *two-faced narrative* about the actor an a *two-staged narrative* about the historical development of the conflict accordingly. Indeed, as far as the temporality of the conflict is concerned, there is clear a discursive pattern, according to which the violence of ETA was more legitimate in Francoism and more delegitimized after the Transition to democracy. This, in turn, coincides with the dominant contemporary discourses about terrorism.

In general, narratives about the past are constructed from the speaker's contemporary position. In this sense, the Basque conflict, for the majority of young people, is primarily a conflict of the past: the identification of the distance reflected by speakers through discourse has been important in order to know the relation that members of this generation are building towards the past, and it is from this distance that I will examine their positioning and discursive constructions of identity at the end of this chapter.

On the other hand, when designing memory policies, it is important to consider the observation that many events which may seem very close or obvious to older generations may be as far away for young people as any other event in history, if they have not experienced them during their lifetime of if they have not been socialized into them. Their experience has been largely limited to the symbolic and emotional remnants rather than the material aspect: they are able to identify emotions and prejudices rather than specific social, legislative or political problems related to the conflict.

The importance of the subjectivity of the person who remembers has also become evident in the narratives that young people build on the past. Moral evaluations have often prevailed over definitions and descriptive or narrative discourses; which leads me to believe that the social demand for the condemnation of violence continues to operate on young people as a minimum moral requirement to engage in the discussion about the subject. Although they have not known the kind of violence they are required to repudiate during their lifetime, most young people directly or indirectly structure their discourse based on this requirement.

The fact that they place the conflict primarily in the past does not mean, however, that they consider the it to be over. This tension is especially noticeable in narratives about ETA's disarmament. In it, the narrative of military defeat and the narrative of a natural consequence of time and tiredness have prevailed, although there is a general lack of knowledge about peace initiatives in the past.

Prisoners are also generally an unknown and symbolic figure for young people. This leads to the generalization of a hyperbolic and dehumanizing mental model of the category of *prisoners*, in which the person is defined by his crime, in terms of *murderer / non-murderer*, and whose more human aspects remain invisible.

A third narrative contextualizes the issue of the memory of the Basque conflict as something that is primarily of interest for the *abertzale* community; political labeling is also often associated with exclusion. It is also significant that young people of various ideological tendencies, including *abertzales*, feel excluded from the process of memory-building.

Finally, there is a narrative that sees the Basque conflict as a conflict mainly defined by its geographical territoriality: the narrative of a conflict between families. This is a rather depoliticized interpretation, because it does not pay attention to the ideological conflicts that lie on its ground.

All these observations refute the discourse of a lack of transmission. Not having a consensual policy of transmission does not mean that nothing is being transmitted. In general, a great perception of the dominant discourses of society can be perceived among young people, and this is reflected in their discourses by either unconsciously reproducing

them or by referring and *answering* to them (in the form of counter-narratives). The communicative repertoire available to young people has a considerable influence on the general frameworks they are building, and at the same time on their interpretations of past events and their personal and collective attitudes towards them. We might therefore consider that the lack of a planned transmission policy fuels precisely the dominance of these hegemonic discourses.

5.2. THE DISCURSIVE MAP OF YOUNG BASQUES' SOURCES OF MEMORY

If we assume that the discourses we build depend on the social positions we hold in different social contexts, it seems logical that both can fluctuate according to the changing context. In Astrid Erll's words (2011, pp. 305–306), each individual is a member of many groups simultaneously, and thus "has at his or her disposal a supply of different, group-specific experiences and thought systems"; in fact, the individuality of his or her memory relies in the "always unique combination of social frameworks".

Hence, in order to understand the positioning of youngsters towards their collective past, a middle-range discursive sphere needs to be addressed: the discursive map formed by the diverse narratives they have received from their many social contexts, which mediate between the macro-narratives the youngsters build about the conflict and their personal position. Ultimately, the relationship towards the Basque conflict as a discursive field necessarily implies facing their discursive context, that is, when youngsters engage in the construction of memory they do so by taking a position or stance towards the map of discourses they have received throughout their life in their several social environments. When making meaning about the past, most of them are actually responding to those inputs and established discourses.

In this subsection I will examine the descriptions provided by the youngsters about their close social contexts and the manners in which they engage with them. These comprise their school; their family; their social environment formed by peer groups and other communitary influences. All these, together with more public and media discourses, conform the discursive *repertoire* on which youngsters can rely in their meaning-making processes.

When analyzing these data, we must be aware of the fact that they refer to sources identified in a more or less explicit manner by the participants; thus, we can only speak about the *perception* of the influence of these sources. To measure their real effect on the discursive outcome of the youngsters is a more difficult task to which Discourse Studies can only provide a limited approach. The unconscious influence of external discourses can be observed linguistically, among others, through the interdiscursivity that arises spontaneously in the construction of narratives; through indirect and covert quotations; or through the use of *topoi*; but a comprehensive analysis would require other scientific methods such as participant audience studies (Hirzalla & van Zoonen, 2017, p. 1000; Schrøder, 2018, p. 105). However, these would be tied to specific discursive expressions or media products and would also fall short in providing a sociologic analysis. Especially in the case of the social effect of media discourses, it is difficult to discern what is identified by the receiving individual consciously, and what forms a socially shared "common ground" (van Dijk, 2003b, p. 86) knowledge that is rooted and normalized among members of a social group and therefore often not perceived consciously. To date,

critical examinations of discursive production within the media and the political sphere provide the most detailed analysis of dominant discourses (van Dijk, 1995; Van Dijk, 2008), combined with theoretical approaches that describe their power to influence human thoughts and social attitudes (Jäger, 2004, p. 337).

For the purpose of this summary, I have thus excluded the narratives and meaning-making processes that involved the public media. Although the interviewees have described some cultural and media discourses they can relate to the conflict[34], I have prioritized to focus on their active role as meaning-makers within the social contexts that are more familiar to them and, conversely, more difficult to the researcher to approach. Thus, in the following pages I will examine the accounts of the young participants about their close social environment, in order to understand some of the possible influences that affect their social position in relation to the armed past.

When asked about their main sources of knowledge about the Basque conflict, almost a third of the youngsters' answers mentioned *the family* or some related concept (*home*, *parents*, etc.); a similar percentage of media discourses, as the categories of *media* (TV, newspapers, radio, etc.) and *the Internet* have collected 29% of all answers. In this case, the concept *Internet* refers to the active searches of information done by the youngsters on platforms such as Google or YouTube; since these platforms usually lead them to media web pages and broadcasting platforms of a similar character, I have included them for the sake of this analysis in the category of *the media*, differentiating them from online social media discourses, which are more private contents created by the users themselves. The latter have been grouped into the category of the *Social context*, together with peer group interactions and *the street*. This close context of the youngsters was mentioned as an influential source in 22,8% of the answers. Other minoritary sources identified by the youngsters were spaces of political activism (5,3%) and cultural products such as films, literature or music (5,3%).

These data correspond to a great degree the conclusions of the quantitative study realized by Uson Gonzalez et al. (2017, p. 13) in 2016 with university students. They concluded that youngsters learned about "terrorism and human rights violations" mainly through the media and their families, that is, relying on very public and very private discourses. Formal education appeared only on the fifth place of the most influential sources.

In order to provide a more accurate picture of the situation, however, I have combined these results with data on the origin of our participants and the degree of politicization of their social environment. Results show that the degree of politicization of the social context, especially the habit of talking about politics in small family circles, has a considerable influence on the discursive resources of young generations. For those participants who grew up in politicized environments, family is usually the first context in which they acquire knowledge of the Basque conflict, whereas for young people from non-politicized environments it is the last. Furthermore, those coming from highly politicized environments generally provided a higher number and more detailed accounts of their sources.

[34] These references are addressed in the full version of the thesis.

The less-politicized refer mostly to accounts of friends or meanings observed and internalized in a broader social context, such as street paintings or semi-public discourses expressed in towns and neighborhoods. Education and the media also have a greater influence (or, more specifically, are perceived as such) on these participants. These data suggest that youngsters who find no space to talk about the conflict in their families generally turn to public discourses for information on the subject. However, autonomous search on the Internet is similar in both groups, and often provoked by inputs received from other spheres.

In the following subsections, I shall examine each of these areas in more detail, in order to draw a map of the discursive repertories which young people perceive, in order to later analyze the discursive strategies they employ when facing them.

5.2.1. Formal education

Discussions about the policies of memory transmission often focus on interventions in the regulated educational sphere. School curricula contain powerful discourses for several reasons: on the one hand, they offer a steady cognitive basis to young people who have just begun to socialize politically (Reidy et al., 2015, p. 13); on the other hand, the imperative character of the contents of textbooks includes them in the category of normative discourses. Textbooks usually synthesize complex and multifaceted realities in a schematic and didactic manner, as part of the preparation for an examination which will generally be assessed positively or negatively.

Formal education is a channel of massive access to young people. Thus, it is no wonder that the contents of the school curricula are also often transformed into a disputable field, because they also carry part of the written *truths*. The vocation for hegemony of these discourses may perhaps be most evident in topics such as History or Geography, in which we may easily ask who is the subject of the history that is taught, or where the geographical boundaries that are taken as references are placed. The narratives provided and constructed in formal education about the evolution of historical conflicts are also embedded in and influence the several identity dynamics of society. Hence, Peace Education proposes an approach towards alternatives to violence, but based on the plurality of voices and the visibility of social contrasts that emerge in the classroom:

> "Peace education contents will not start from abstract categories but from people's needs, captured in their own expressions. The traditional concept of content as a summing up of different themes is replaced by the analysis of micro-reality, the selection of problems, connections with the macro and the emerged dialogue among them. So in the learning process students deepen into roots and causes and share ideas on possible solutions in a dynamic exercise of 'crossing borders'." (Cabezudo & Haavelsrud, 2007, p. 288).

In the context and time of this study, there were very few textual contents on the recent history of the Basque armed conflict in formal education. In three of the five schools visited for the purposes of this thesis, teachers showed or described materials which contained some reference to the subject. In Secondary Education (DBH/ESO) they were included in the subjects of Social Sciences and Basque Language and Literature, while in Baccalaureate they were addressed in History, mainly focusing on the end of Francoism. In either case they were almost anecdotal allusions, of no more than two pages' length.

The project *Herenegun*, designed by the Basque Government in 2018 in order to fill that gap, would have been the first teaching unit specifically devoted to the subject. However, parliamentary debates on its content paralyzed its implementation, and during the five years this research has lasted, it has not gone beyond the pilot phase (Radio Bilbao, 2022). Nonetheless, our studies on the subject have shown that textbooks generally reinforced those discourses that were assumed to be in line with the ideological attitudes of their users and their families, fueling positive self-definition (Velte, 2019b) and maintaining the idea of negative peace (Velte, 2019a, p. 71).

In this section, I intend to describe how the youngsters perceive and interpret the interactions and meanings built in their school environment around the topic of the past conflict. Both formally interviewed pupils and teachers who provided information in rather informal encounters have affirmed that the topic of the Basque conflict is not present in the classrooms:

> Have you somehow addressed the topic at school?
> *ETA was mentioned, and also that there was a conflict, but its history properly, no. I mean, someone our age nowadays in Tafalla shouldn't know what ETA is.*
>
> Maddi-17-Tafalla

Maddi employs a metonymic expression in order to describe the lack of transmission in formal education: she considers *ETA* to be the most basic reference shared by the members of her community, the minimum knowledge necessary in order to be a competent interlocutor on the topic. This statement includes an implicature summarized as "*Everybody knows what is ETA*". Thus, the rhetorical effect arises from the hyperbole of Maddi's negation: if the knowledge of young people were up to formal education, not even the most basic would be guaranteed.

Many youngsters link this lack of transmission with taboo, conceptualized through spatial metaphors as "teachers don't go into" (Eli-15-Altsasu) that "swampy ground" (Ekaitz-16-Altsasu). Teachers have spoken more explicitly about the problem:

> Here [at the end of the History textbook] something is mentioned, but we never arrive to that point because we don't have the time. Also, we teachers usually don't know how much we should tell; in the end, in History you can't be objective, and at this age [16-17] they don't have great critical skills yet. If you express an opinion, they stay with that. I might not be the most convenient to speak about the topic, because my father was a syndicalist. The society of [the valley] is quite homogeneous, but you don't always know which are the opinions that pupils hear at home.
>
> Miren, high school teacher

According to this informant, the lack of addressing the subject is related, on the one hand, to educational materials – because of the marginal presence given to the period in question in history books – and, more strikingly, with the doubts and fears of the teachers themselves. They see the variety of possible experiences in the classroom as a risk factor for conflict, rather than as an opportunity of exchange and engaging in a healthy discussion. Teachers also feel that they are not entitled to speak about a topic they consider too subjective, because they consider that their subjectivity displaces them from their role as teachers. Miren is also concerned about the excessive influence she may have on her young students.

These perceptions are consistent with some of the patterns discussed in the first analytical chapter, such as the conceptual understanding of the Basque conflict as painful, taboo, or a topic involving primarily the *abertzale* community. Teachers try to avoid the political labeling linked to it in order to save their credibility and appear as neutral transmitters of knowledge.

Hence, school is generally seen by the youngsters as an elongation of social discursive norms:

Do you feel that there is a taboo about the topic?
Yes. A whole load of it. Really. Especially, I mean, in my school, I can tell you, every time something related to it came up, some news, it was like: "Whoa, we can't talk about that". People used to comment: "Have you seen this and that?", but no, the teachers wouldn't speak. And it was kind of strange. I mean, just as you comment on the news that – the euro was going to be introduced in that moment, right? That the euro is coming and we are going to join the European Community [sic], you'd think you would talk about other stuff also, I mean, linked to the political prisoners and other things, but nobody spoke about that.
Were there other families [who had relatives in prison] at your school?
I think there were, but in the end, I can tell you, no one said anything: the children of the civil guards did not say that they were children of civil guards, and those who had relatives in prison didn't either. So it was like, "We are playing cat and mouse, all of us". Basically. When you grow up you realize and you say "Fuck".

Nora-21-Getxo

Nora builds a narrative of a situation she experienced in her childhood: she had a relative in prison, but her school wasn't a safe place to talk about it. Nora describes as "strange" (line 5) the difference between the discursive rules that prevailed depending on the topic: issues related to the social, economic, and institutional context of the students were common matters of conversation, which are metonymically represented in this excerpt by the *introduction of the euro* (line 7). Expressions of the Basque conflict, although they were part of the real problems of the lives of some pupils, were excluded from this category of *talkable topics*. Nora builds thus a very precise description of the *space of the unsayable*.

When asked about the causes of this taboo, young people often point to three responsibles: parents, educators and the education system, embodied in textbooks and their designers. Similarly to family circles or other close social contexts, diversity of opinions or narrative conflicts are considered dangerous for the social harmony in the classroom. Consequently, there is a general tendency to avoid discussions on topics that may lead to discursive conflicts, while those which produce the greatest consensus are most often addressed. Consensus is directly related to the narratives provided by the curricula, because they build an *official* truth in the school context. Moreover, there is hardly any content on the recent history of the Basque Country; this may also explain why events that occurred earlier in history or involve conflicts in other geographical areas are dealt with more often and deeply:

Have you worked on the topic at school?
No. Very little. But no.
And why do you think that is so?

Because there is always both parts. I mean, also – some, eh, I don' know, some are, like, abertzale; others are not, so they don't want to provoke – I don't know, they don't want to teach that, to put yourself on one side, because the other side would be in conflict. (…) We learn some histories that are those of foreign countries, but I think we should start from learning our own, I mean, our history, and then going outside. I don't know. Because I believe what has happened here has been very important for us. And, I don't know, it has had an effect on families and everything.

And what would you like to be taught? Which aspects of the conflict would you like to know?

I don't know. The beginning, the origin of everything. What caused what, and – and that. And then, how and why ETA and so, the organizations, were created. And what they have done, and why they have done it. I think we should know everything. And which were the actions or laws also suffered by the Basques.

Xan-15-Hendaia

Xan describes several aspects of the taboo in the field of education. On the one hand there is the fear of discursive conflict (lines 4 to 7). On the other hand, he describes the prominence of those contents he considers as focusing on "foreign", external realities (lines 7 and 8). This idea, "*to study Others' history and not ours*", has been repeated in several conversations; youngsters perceive the mutism about knowledge that they consider necessary and desirable as a discredit of the history of their own community. In other words, just as history books operate as instruments of national self-definition, leaving certain historical events out of these narratives can also be interpreted as a denial of the experiences of a certain community. The youngsters feel thus excluded from these narratives in their collective identity.

Xan particularly emphasizes his desire to know the causal relations of historical events between lines 14-16. By doing so, the speaker expresses his desire to go beyond the knowledge of specific facts and to understand the reasons for the practices of the actors involved; and he highlights his particular interest for the history of the victimization of the ingroup. The use of the additive connector "also" in line 17 refers to an implicit discourse, namely the narrative that excludes the experience of suffering of the Basques; when Xan remarks that this information should be added or included in the narrative, he is indirectly describing the current status quo.

Another flaw that young people identify in their discursive environment formed around their school is the centrality of a moral element in the discourses concerning the armed conflict in the Basque Country. In the absence of an in-depth study on the subject, the armed period from the 1960s to 2011 is often framed or referred to in the context of issues relating to international terrorism and other violences, which young people believe offers them a very limited view of the complexity of the conflict:

What is taught at school is very little; in the end, they tell you that in the Basque Country there was terrorism, that there was a terrorist group called 'ETA' and not much more. They don't explain to you why it arose, nor… nor do they tell you, I don't know, which factors enabled the creation of an organism such as ETA, or which has been its development until nowadays. They don't tell you anything, only the most basic things. It's like a taboo topic.

Ibai-20-Donostia

Hm... I mean, I went to a catholic school and all, but that was not directly addressed. Instead they talked about typical things: against war, against

crimes, those kinds of things. Injustices that all of us can see, but directly, the topic of ETA… [Headshaking]. We did make actions for peace at school though.
And what were they like?
In the end it was a catholic school; things like those of 'Joined hands' or 'White hands', I don't remember how it was. But, anyway, at school they would put us together and read something about that "We shall go towards peace, on the path of…", you know? Acting well.

Paulo-19-Urnieta

Some schools seem to have adopted this normative and moral character. In the schools of Ibai and Paulo –both private and religious, unlike most of the other participants of this study, who came mostly from state schools– the Basque conflict is addressed in the field of Ethics, contextualizing it in the frame of terrorism; according to these reports, the conflict is mainly equated with ETA's violence. In fact, the figure of the "White Hands" refers to the social movement that arose to condemn ETA's violence in the late 1990s after the murder of the local PP politician Miguel Ángel Blanco (Gil Grande, 2022).

This experience, although present, seems blurred in Paulo's memory. He perceives that the topic was addressed rather implicitly, not openly thematized: the repeated description "[not] directly" (lines 1 and 3) refers to a mediated access to that discursive area. He interprets those conceptions of the conflict in terms of the religious norms particular to catholic schools, within general actions "for peace" and in line with other moral lessons about a correct or accepted attitude. Thus, the tendency to reinforce narratives that are considered to be politically correct, described by Welzer (2005, p. 2) can also be observed in this case.

Nevertheless, the knowledge that the youngsters would like to acquire goes beyond the moral lessons they actually obtain: as explicited by Ibai –and previously by Xan–, they would like to know the causes and reasons of past events, which are taboo. In this case, it is significant that both speakers –Ibai and Paulo– belong to families that have been victims of ETA's violence; against the stereotype that the Basque conflict is primarily a matter of *abertzale* interest, it is clear that they too want to know the complexities of the conflict.

It is precisely in this normative character that the power of regulated educational content rests. The knowledge and memorialization of discourses established by the curriculum is usually positively evaluated in the traditional school model, so much of the learning process moves between *correct* and *wrong* responses. Textbooks are generally considered to offer the *right* answers: they are therefore consensual discourses, which are regarded as true and valid. That's why they're usually part of official narratives. The problem arises when the contents offered by textbooks and regulated curricula are not in line with the realities experienced by the students, which creates an inner conflict of credibility and often leads to the exclusion of these private narratives that are seen as challenging the social status quo.

Interviewer: Have you learnt about the topic somehow at school?
Edurne: No.
Erika: Not at all.
Gabriele: I don't think so. We have never talked about it. That issue is usually avoided.

Edurne: Yes, that's true.
Jaione: Indeed, it's very taboo. Even in high school. We have had History for many years now, except now during Baccalaureate when I don't have it, but we haven't had…
Edurne: Now, in second grade of Baccalaureate, we will teach Francoism and the Basque nationalisms and such, but we haven't arrived there yet.
Erika: And it's late, because if we don't mention the topic until the second year of Baccalaureate[35], I am realizing that it is a bit… [laughs].
Jaione: Yes.
Gabirele: Yes, yes, indeed.
Interviewer: And when you say that it's avoided, why do you think that is so?
Gabriele: Because we always teach the History of Spain, or something more general, but this concrete topic…
Jaione: [scared gesture] No, no!
Gabriele: Never. It's as if they were afraid of what we could think or that they could make us think somehow… I don't know.
Jaione: Or perhaps, as it is so close here, maybe they don't like to speak about the topic. I don't know. But it is very taboo.

Group interview in Basauri

The participants of this discussion employ a few modalizers signalizing doubt when hypothesizing about the reasons for the taboos surrounding the Basque conflict at school, for example by repeating "I don't know" in lines 21 and 23. Nonetheless, they do build on the hypothesis that openly addressing the armed past may cause thoughts or reasoning that are socially undesirable and contrary to the interest of the education system, which is personified through the emotion *fear* (line 20). It can be concluded by implicature that the speakers consider school to be a space in which the interest to reproduce dominant discourses prevails.

The fear of a political labeling, which could be interpreted from the discursive excerpt of the teacher analyzed previously, has its counterpart in the view of the pupils. A major discursive pattern is embodied in the figure of the teacher who introduces the subject on his or her own initiative, in a context where the conflict is usually not discussed. These teachers are regarded by the students as peculiar or exceptional, and generally attributed similar characteristics: to be *abertzale*, to have some personal experience related to the armed conflict, and being politically active or militant. These teachers, in the opinion of the students, usually look out for opportunities to incorporate conflict-related topics into the curriculum.

In any case, the school performs a double function in the transmission of memory: as a direct provider of knowledge –through its regulated content– and as a center of socialization. Corridor conversations may outbalance the gap of knowledge identified in textbooks and formal lessons. These informal encounters, which operate as spaces of communication, offer young people a place to interact with each other and with teachers, and are thus especially important for students who have few sources of information about the local history outside of school, especially first-generation migrants:

Have you addressed the issue [of the conflict] openly at school?
No, no, it's more through comments and such.
Do you remember any concrete story they've told you at school?

[35] The second year of Baccalaureate is the last of high school in the Spanish education system. Erika is remarking this as a means to highlight its lateness.

Well, yes, I remember an anecdote that a teacher told me during the first grade of ESO [Secondary school], who was my tutor and my Math teacher. She said that, when she was little, of course, they could not show the ikurrina [Basque flag], right? Well, her little brother had an ikurrina made of paper, and they passed through a checkpoint of the civil guard, and he had to swallow his ikurrina; chew it and swallow it, so they wouldn't get detained at the control point of the civil guard. I mean, his parents said to him: "Get rid of it". And the only thing that came to his mind was to eat it. And, well, that: the repression is so strong that someone prefers to hurt his health, right? By swallowing a piece of paper, rather than – because of the fear there is, because of what can happen to you. You can disappear from one moment to the other, simply for carrying a flag, your flag.

Malika-17-Barakaldo

As a Saharawi who arrived in the Basque Country at the age of 10, Malika's relationship with the local history was mainly mediated through her school. In the absence of chronologically structured and consensual narratives on the past armed and political conflict, she has relied on informal interactions in her school in order to build her own narratives about the topic. In this case, the source of her knowledge is a particular teacher; thus, the narrative Malika builds in this excerpt is entirely interdiscursive. "A teacher told me" and "she said" (lines 4 and 5) are introductory forms that point to a quotation; she then turns to indicative verbs showing no other cues of reported speech, thus appropriating her teacher's story. Based on the anecdote she heard from the teacher, the speaker constructs her own overall interpretation of the conflict; she transforms the teacher's particular experience into a metonymy of francoist repression, adding an emotion ("fear", line 13). We can't know whether the tone of the original story narrated by the teacher was in line with that of Malika, or if it was rather an anecdotic tone, but the then-receiver, now-producer of that memory attributes a considerable transcendence to it while updating her mental model about the conflict and elaborating a discourse on it.

Discourses provided by educational settings are not only a fundamental basis for migrants, but also for young people who are not used to talk about politics at home. These may have other sources of information, but they reproduce the narratives that come from them with greater uncertainty and distance. Discourses learnt at school –especially through textbooks or official material– are generally reproduced with a greater degree of certainty, precisely because the source operates as an evidence or authority.

It can therefore be concluded that, for the most depoliticized youths, school becomes one of the most reliable channels of transmission, a fact that is not addressed consciously by them but signalized through their discursive constructions. When the school does not meet these needs of information, these young people feel disconnected or completely estranged from their political environment, as they have difficulties understanding it. This is illustrated by the following example:

Are you politically active?
No, I have never participated. In fact, I have trouble learning stuff about politics, because at school they never teach us about politics, and, so, well, it's difficult for me. (…)
[Talking about the conflict] Well, yes, I think Carrero Blanco is the best known victim.
Where have you learnt about him?
[Laughs] At school. Well, in order to prepare for my university entrance exam, well, [I learnt about] his happening. (…)

Where would you say have you learnt most about the Basque conflict?
At school. Yes, at school. Because, in the end, eh, outside of school I don't see that there is anything attractive, nothing that attracts my attention to read about it. I don't know. At school, well, in order to prepare for the university exam you have to study History, but they don't make it very attractive. I mean, learning it all by heart – in the end we only remember a couple of things. So many things are forgotten then.
And during History lessons, up to which year did you teach? How far does the syllabus go?
Until the Transition.
Until 78?
Yes. Because nowadays it's not – well, because of that: I think politics is not included because History only goes until the Transition. And they only tell you things that happened in history.

Irene-19-Donostia

Irene is a clear example of a young person who perceives or identifies no sources of information about the Basque conflict other than her school; thus, she only refers to those compulsory concepts learnt during classroom hours. Furthermore, during her whole interview she has not introduced a single event, concept or name from the period after 1978, and in this excerpt she provides the explanation for that: 1978 is the year in which the History course syllabus ends. After that, "history" ends and "politics" (line 21) begins, that is, contemporary conflicts. Irene has great difficulties identifying expressions of the Basque conflict in her present-day social environment, and feels dependent on the discursive input from school in order to navigate her political context.

This excerpt illustrates another limitation or difficulty of formal education: the conception of the Basque conflict as an ongoing and contemporary problem sometimes hinders its introduction into school material. This thesis does not argue that the political conflict is over, nor that all its armed and violent expressions are entirely a matter of past times, but it is a fact that most of its chronology is unknown to young people of high school age today, and therefore they need materials of a historiographic character in order to become socialized into it. Paradoxically, the present features of the conflict, i.e. the discursive dispute conceptualized as *the battle of the narratives* and the rigid positions associated with it, prevent them from acquiring the means to do so, both because they hinder historiographic research (Majuelo Gil, 2020a, p. 284) and because they hinder consensus in the design of school materials.

5.2.2. Family

Oral communicative exchanges within families are a typical metaphor of memory transmission, as it is assumed that memory is shared *from generation to generation*. Family contexts are also relevant because of their role in the early socialization of individuals: "[They] usually constitute the first, and often most important, social frameworks for a child. And family life is arguable one of the main sites where sociocultural schemata are acquired" (Erll, 2011, p. 305). Thus, the dominant discourses and patterns within these contexts are considered to operate as "switchboards" (Ibid., 315) between individual or rather private and public memory frameworks, as family narratives can shape the interpretation of new, external inputs. But, at the same time, in this study I have observed that, when family narratives are not strong or reliable enough for the youngsters, it is possible that their main interpretative frameworks are shaped by public

discourses. I have collected a number of examples of this, and I will argue in the following lines that they are a consequence of a striking silence within families.

Half of the interviewees (21 out of 42) reportedly do not usually talk about politics at home, and even among those raised in politicized contexts there is a general belief that the Basque conflict is not a common topic in their family. Conversations on the subject are often provoked by requests and initiatives of younger generations, whose attention is focused by an external event, such as an act of commemoration they have heard of through the media, or when they detect an image or discourse within the public space that attracts their attention. In such cases, young people interpellate older family members for further explanation, but the interviewees do not feel that the transmission initiative starts from their parents. This does not mean, of course, that parents don't try to bring up the topic of the conflict at all, or that they don't make indirect references to it; it shows that youngsters don't consciously perceive this kind of transmission, which they acquire in a rather subtle and naturalized manner.

Among those explicit accounts they can recall from their parents, most are explanations adapted or constructed according to an ideal child audience:

> *So, for example, my dad told me about a friend of his, [who] is from Soraluze, close to Eibar. And, for example, when they were little –he was his friend from school– the civil guards came and began to hit them, just like that, with no reason, hitting children. And lots of things like that. And at some checkpoints they would shoot – shoot, but without a reason, and so. And killing people and so, on demonstrations.*
>
> Xan-15-Hendaia

In these re-narrativizations, it is usual that the protagonists of the narrative are also children. On the one hand, this may facilitate empathy or understanding in the audience, as they themselves are minors. On the other hand, the child within the narrative usually operates as a symbol of innocence, that is, it is presented as an evidence that reinforces the narrative of unjustified victimization of the ingroup. In Xan's account, a group of armed adults hurts and kills underage and, by implicature, innocent victims, building a clear polarized square of actors. Xan places these events in a framework of irrational violence ("without a reason", lines 3 to 5), according to the interpretation he has constructed based on an informative void he identifies in the original narrative his source (the father) provided him, and which did not include a too detailed explanation of the political conflict involving the events.

Simplified and euphemistic discourse seems to be one of the main features of discursive modalization when addressing minors. This strategy could be conceived as part of the attempt to protect children from the most painful aspects of history, but also as part of the construction of the image that the family builds of itself. One of the main functions of family narratives is precisely to strengthen the cohesion of the group; hence they are often metaphorical in nature, insofar they are connected to the values and identities which the group attaches to itself (Halbwachs, 2004b, p. 181). It is therefore common that morality plays a central role in such discourses. My interviewees have also often described the discourses received from their parents as moral imperatives. The youngsters feel that their parents have transmitted to them a clear rejection of past violence –and, in particular, of

the violence caused by ETA– rather than narratives about concrete facts. These discourses may be grouped into *topoi* such as *All violence is evil*, which fall within the sphere of political correctness, but avoid addressing the real contradictions within the conflict.

> *I think it was wrong, definitely. I think that… yes, it was. About ETA and all that, they did tell us that it was a terrorist group, that it was wrong and all of that, but they have not deepened into it, especially my parents. Then, my grandparents used to tell us anecdotes; you know, those stories that are typical of grandparents. But not going very deep into it, I mean, like, politically.*
>
> Irene-19-Donostia

> Do you speak about the topic at home?
> *Yes, seldom, but sometimes, almost always when ETA is mentioned, or "Someone has been arrested". Now it's over but you always see it, like for example, when somebody's parents had to flee and so.*
> And which would you say is the main opinion in your family?
> *Hm, I don't really know. I mean, it's true that I talk about it less now with my parents. Then, what I do know is – my mom is from here, she is Basque, but my dad is from outside, he is French. And so, he does not have the view that a Basque would have about the issue. He came 20 years ago and (…) he was very surprised by the situation. And so, I don't think he supports it; but – at the same time, he is against violence and such, and I think that also includes the conflict or the armed struggle.*
> So, on your dad's side, you have noticed a rather critical attitude towards the armed past.
> *Yes. But, well, at the same time I think he understands nevertheless – that, and to have political demands, but he is not in favour of violence; he is not in favour of the armed struggle, that I know.*
>
> Unai-16-Anhauze

In both these excerpts, Irene and Unai try to describe their parents' attitudes. Both have a clear perception of the moral disapproval transmitted by their parents, and thus, that the political use of violence "was wrong" (Irene, lines 1 and 2) and that the correct attitude was to be "against violence" (Unai, line 11). However, both highlight the need for further information. Irene longs for a more *political* explanation: the dichotomy "*anecdotes / stories" vs. "politics"* constructed by her in lines 4 and 5 refer to superficial or complex manners of treating the same information. She feels that her relatives frame past events in a frivolous or anecdotal tone when they are addressing her.

Unai, on the other hand, has difficulties identifying the attitude of his parents, as he makes explicit in line 6. The emphatic evidential "*that* I know" (line 17) refers to a concrete discursive and cognitive area, suggesting that the area of the unknown is larger to him. He does, however, describe the mechanisms of transmission within his family in great detail. The Basque conflict is not a recurrent topic in that context, and it usually comes up as a consequence of specific events that affect people nearby. As a child who has grown up in the Northern or French Basque Country, Unai relates these events mainly with arrests and clandestinity. The expression "you always see it" (line 3) operates as an evidential, in which *seeing* becomes a metaphor of knowing.

When they look at their parents, the youngsters are aware of the effort to speak about the conflict in the most politically correct and socially acceptable manner as possible. This does not mean, however, that they accept or reproduce their discourses straightaway. The use that Unai does of the term "armed struggle" (line 17) is an example of that: *armed*

struggle is a lexical choice of a legitimating character, which challenges the framework of *violence* (lines 11 and 16) employed by his parents.

Nevertheless, further examples that are reproduced in the original thesis have shown that the emotional aspect of many memory discourses constructed by the youngsters stems from the family, even if its cognitive or informative aspect –that is, the knowledge of specific data– proceeds from other sources. In fact, Welzer (2005, p. 1) argues that those emotional "subtexts" have been disregarded in the study of memory construction: "For too long, the tacit assumption was that one needed only to transmit the right message for the lessons to be assimilated". But in the contexts especially affected by emotions and group loyalties, other mechanisms predominate. This author observed a tendency to soften and ameliorate the narratives about the involvement of family members in past conflicts, which he defined as *cumulative heroization*:

> "Cumulative heroization occurs rapidly and simply. A generalized image of a respected grandmother or grandfather provides a framework in which any point of reference suggested by family stories can be expanded into a "good story." (…) this can result in a stripping away of the problematic implications of the true tale; plots become rearranged to reshape the nuanced, ambivalent, often troubling tales by the eyewitnesses into a morally clear attitude on the part of the protagonists". (Welzer, 2005, p. 11)

Such an effort of placing one's own relatives in a favorable position of history can also be identified within the data collected for this study. The youngsters generally regarded their parents as powerless and distanced individuals who have had no relation to the armed or violent part of the conflict, or they assumed that their parents always had a critical attitude towards it, categorizing them as pacifists. No participant has recalled a situation in which the involvement of their parents or grandparents might have been negatively characterized.

In other words, the youngsters discursively construct the mental category of *parents against violence*, viewing them as a group that strongly condemns violence and talks about the conflict in general terms, but seldom addresses its details or contradictions. This image, on the other hand, often differs from the mental model they have constructed about the Basque conflict itself, which, as already analyzed in the previous subsection, is usually conceptualized as a bloody and violent period. Therefore, as a result of the dissonance between these two cognitive frameworks, many young people interpret that their family members were always bystanders. The logical reconstruction on which this reasoning is based would be: (a) The conflict was mainly characterized by its violence; (b) My parents are against violence; (c) Consequently, they were not involved in the conflict. The biographical and ideological evolution of the parents as individuals is not taken into account in this type of structure.

As a result, many youngsters appear surprised when they learn about the true experiences of their parents:

1 You've told me that you usually don't speak about the topic at home.
2 *Now we do. Because I study Political Science, and so it is talked about.*
3 And have you noticed that, ever since you started to be interested in this topic,
4 your parents tell you more stories?

Yes, clearly. Indeed. And, well, it's a bit: "Wow". I didn't know that my dad and my mom knew a lot about this, and they do; for them, it has been very important. (…) Now I know that they had been, not with ETA, but well, with kale borroka, and so, to me, it is a bit [shocked face], because nowadays they are very different.

And how do they explain that to you?

That it used to be a condition. When they were, I don't know, twenty years old or so, it was a condition. I mean, there was a lot of fear, and if, for example, if your dad was a journalist or a councilor, there was a lot of fear. So a lot of people joined, well, just in case. And if a civil guard died, "Well, that's OK; it doesn't matter".

Laura-21-Donostia

In Laura's family, it is also her interest which enables a transmission of knowledge from her parents: the Basque conflict has only arisen as a topic of conversation after she enrolled in studies of Political Sciences. Her parents' experiences are unknown to her: in front of her, they have appeared critical of the use of anti-state violence, so she finds it difficult to imagine them involved in street activism and vandalism. This perplexity increases the cognitive distance towards the mental framework Laura had previously built about her parents. Thus, in order to reconcile these two schemata, she builds a narrative of forced participation: between lines 11 and 15, she reconstructs the atmosphere of her parents' youth, and contextualizes their involvement in terms of coercion. We can observe a victimization of the parents, or at least an *improved* representation that highlights their innocence: acccording to Laura, her parents took part in *kale borroka* forced by the social environment and the circumstances, because their true values are different.

Two possible sources of this heroization are the euphemistic character of the transmitted content on one hand, and a self-imposed silence about the past on the other. Parents interviewed in informal contexts during the research phase of this thesis have listed a number of difficulties when they try to bring up the subject with their teenage children. The accounts provided by the two fathers who had been in prison in the past were particularly significant. The first used to be a member of ETA in the 1970s, and is nowadays distanced from the organization or any other political activity. As of 2020, he has two daughters aged 20 to 26. When asked about the opportunities to share his personal experience with them, he recognizes that he does not speak about that part of his past, arguing that it is "just what everyone did at the time". He sees no use in telling his story, which he considers a past thing.

The second father, on the other hand, is concerned about the transmission of his experiences. He acknowledges that he has difficulties telling his three teenage children his "version" of history, because it might result too different from the influences and discourses they receive in the public sphere:

> My eldest daughter remembers my arrestment and imprisonment, and she already has a complex of being too politicized among her friends, so she doesn't want to listen to me. And even if I told her, she wouldn't believe me. So I don't.
>
> Koldo, ex prisoner and father of three teenagers

Thus, we can conclude that parents are prone to keep their personal stories private when they feel that their narratives do not fit the normative discourses in society, in order to

avoid confrontation with their children, whom they consider to be receivers of those normative discourses.

It is also usual that the youngsters acquire meanings about the past indirectly, that is, by grasping them casually in conversations not specifically oriented towards the transmission of knowledge:

Unai: In my family, there is actually no pride, no, I know that. And, for example, my dad was in prison, but for a very short time, a couple of months; but I have learnt about that quite late, I never knew about it. I also know that there was an inspection at my grandma's house, and I have learnt about all that just now, about two years ago. And… I found it quite strange, really.
Xan: Yes. I have also, for example, I also learned one and a half or two years ago that my uncle was tortured.
Interviewer: And how did you learn about it? Did you explicitly ask, or did you hear it by chance?
Xan: Talking about it.
Unai: So, one day dad and mom just said it, as if it were nothing. [Laughs] "Oh, really?".
Lur: Yes, it pops up with time. My uncle was also involved in the 80s, and it pops up, I mean, it's not that we ask, or that they tell us: "Eh, do you know what?". No. It's rather like, in a conversation, and, "Oh".
Unai: Yes. Like when you are speaking about the Police and then, "Oh yeah, I remember how they went to our house and all of them, eh –".

Group interview in Bayonne

The four speakers illustrate the perception of a social context in which knowledge about the past are taken for granted and assumed as shared knowledge. They all feel that their access to that knowledge has been rather accidental than planned: the adverb "late", employed by Unai in line 3, and the emphasis he and Xan put on temporal references ("one and a half years ago, two years ago", in lines 5-7) indicate this feeling of having arrived behind time to the discussion. Unai's humorous expression in line 11 implies an ironic implication: what is "nothing" –that is, shared and old information– to the parents, is a great deal for the children, because it is generally new for them. The expressions of surprise through self-quotations (lines 12 and 15) are to be interpreted in this context.

This excerpt, as a whole, is illustrative of another problem affecting the transmission of memory of the Basque conflict: members of the older generations often assume that many events and discourses that are normalized and naturalized by them are also known by the young. But for them it is not always so: although they have been socialized in the familiar context, they have not always been educated in the interpretation of specific knowledge and symbols, and these can therefore constitute an unknown discursive field for them, however obvious they may seem for the older members. At the same time, this taken-for-grantedness of group knowledge implies an obligation: the youngsters feel that, as members of their group, they should know the history of their families, but they often feel embarrassed of openly asking something that is assumed to be known information. Thus, a fear of appearing as ignorant in front of their elders can be identified in their discourses:

(…) so, anyways, my parents have a friend who is in prison. But apart of that, they have not told me what they did when they were young.
Is he or she a friend of the family?
Yes, a very close friend. My dad went to school with his wife.
How long has he been in prison?
Almost 20 [years]. I have never seen him.

And how do you imagine him?
I know that he studies in prison, that he is like a cultured person. I don't know. I feel awkward asking my parents, and I don't know much. In the end, it's like a difficult topic, and I looked up for information by myself about what he did, but I don't know much.

Maite-17-Oñati

The fear of entering *someone else's sphere* is evident. Since she has no access to her parents' experience, Maite prioritizes other sources to understand the relations of her family to a certain expression of the conflict. The statement "I looked up (…) about what he did" (line 10) narrates an active search for information – in the public sphere – in order to be able to form a mental scheme about an actor of her close social environment. Here also the question about what the prisoner "did", that is, which crime is attributed to him, is the main cognitive void identified by the adolescent.

It is also significant that Maite feels embarrassed or "awkward" (line 9) to ask about it in a supposedly familiar or trustworthy context. It is more than evident that she cannot share her parents' experience: the friend in question was imprisoned before she was even born. However, the lack of clarification and transmission on her parents' side about their past creates an area of silence, a taboo, and Maite feels no legitimacy to explore it.

In general terms, we can observe that, when the influence of family frameworks is weak, the meanings and interpretative patterns established by public discourses predominate, and can cause a clear contradiction to many youngsters. This is especially the case of families whose experiences remain in the realm of *the unspeakable*; in the Basque case, this area mainly includes discourses which continue to support or approve of ETA's violence as a strategy or a symbol.

Another pattern I have identified is that the transmission of knowledge within families often skips a generation. In fact, many youngsters report to have received more knowledge from their grandparents than from their parents. These are often materialized in the form of specific stories with a clear narrative structure, and are more prone to stay in their memory because they allow young people to reconstruct specific situations of the past in great detail, in a clear opposition to their parents' accounts, which are much more vague and generalizing.

They have told me rather superficially what happened in my family, but they have never positioned clearly on one side, nor have they said anything very concrete. At least not my parents; my uncle may have.
And what is your impression? Even if they have not told you anything specifically, what do you think of it?
My parents haven't told me whether it was right or wrong; like, it just happened. But my uncle did tell me that, at that time, everyone was sympathetical with it, and that, in that moment, it was like normal, [but] that things have changed now.
When you look back and hear those stories, what do you think? Do you also agree on that?
Yes, I mean, I understand this as something that used to be here. On the other hand, my grandma says that she used to be very scared, and that when her children would tell her: "I'm going I-don't-know-where", perhaps to a demonstration or such, she would answer: "Do whatever you want, but don't join ETA".

Nagore-17-Oñati

Sometimes I ask my grandpa to tell me stories, I like to know where I come from. And yes, there is always, well, all the stories from Franco's times. And, well, at least my family has never been – they have always been peaceful, but they have suffered pressure and such, they have suffered that. But, as I say: they have always been in favor of peace, that's what they have told me, as far as I know they have always supported peace. But, yes: grandpa did tell me how [he suffered] oppression and prison, well, the usual things.

Joseba-20-Bilbo

Both examples show a naturalization of the conflict: by describing the past violence as "in that moment it was normal" (Nagore, line 8) or "the usual things" (Joseba, line 7), the speakers are reproducing discourses of normalization they have learnt in their families. Softening strategies prevail in both excerpts, especially when describing their parents' attitude. Nagore attributes an equidistance to hers, when she summarizes their position as "it was [neither] right nor wrong; it just happened" (lines 6-7). Thus, the conflict appears as a natural development of events alien to the agency of her parents. Joseba also portrays his relatives as morally flawless individuals with no involvement in the conflict other than a victim position; this, however, is also downplayed and relativized, by framing it into the category of "usual things" (line 7). In any case, both Nagore and Joseba have received the details about the past from their grandparents, rather than from their parents. In Joseba's case, this relationship is provoked by his own interest, as he conceptualizes the experience of his relatives as a *path* toward his present situation through the use of the movement metaphor "where I come from" (lines 1-2).

According to Keppler (1994 in Erll, 2011, p. 313), "the unity of family memory rests not so much on the consistency of the stories that are being told, but more on the continuity of the opportunities for and acts of shared remembering". In the case of young people who talk more to their grandparents than to their parents, it is not surprising, therefore, that stories from older ages prevail in their mental patterns. Within the data collected for this study, the interviewees have also provided accounts of numerous experiences of Francoism:

For example, my granddad told me many times that for example they did... well, I don't know the names, but for example, the franquists and so, they had a ring at school because they spoke in Basque, and when they heard someone during recess they gave it to him, and whoever had the ring at the end of the class was punished. And he told me that he was punished many times because he had a completely Basque family. And then also that they [the franquists] shaved the hair off his cousin's head, and also that they gave her some strange oil that gave you diarrhea, and then they took her onto the street to make fun of her, just because she was Basque. So, from that side, those who were Basque or who fought for the Basque language, I think they received what they shouldn't have. But also on the other side many dead people, although they were Spanish, I think they received as well. I think it was both sides, but I can't tell exactly which group.

Idoia-17-Oñati

Idoia constructs her global evaluation or mental model of the Basque conflict based on a story told by her grandfather. She makes her position explicit in the last lines of her speech, which could be summarized as "All sides have suffered in an unjust way". However, the example chosen to illustrate it highlights the historical repression suffered

by the Basques, and thus the victimization of the ingroup. In this case, a single story becomes the metonymy of the whole historical conflict, because it represents it. In Idoia's narrative, the category of the Other —the Spanish, symbolized by the franquists— is linked to the idea of repression, symbolized by the ring and the social mobbing. The description itself offers a negative presentation of the Other, and therefore does not favor identification, whereas the ingroup is portrayed through features that favor empathy towards the described social group: the category *Basque* is characterized as a victim identity. The evidential expression "just because she was Basque" (line 9) suggests that the woman was not guilty of *doing* something, but of *being* something. Idoia constructs the narrative of an unjustified oppression against her relatives, but the collective subject that suffers it goes beyond her family relations: it includes all Basques, insofar their cultural identity becomes the reason for the unjust suffering. This is an idea which has a great power of identification, as national or cultural identities are understood as elements linked almost naturally and embedded very deeply into people's lives, unlike concrete behaviors or activities which can easily change. Through the narrativization of a concrete event, Idoia builds a metaphor of a major mental scheme about the conflict: that of the unjustified repression employed by Spain against the Basques with the aim of annulling their national or cultural identity. Furthermore, this positive self-presentation is enhanced by the main figure introduced by the participant in her narrative: the character that gives voice to the ingroup is a child, a symbol of innocence.

However, with the exception of those youngsters who have a close relationship to their grandparents, the extended family circle is usually perceived as a conflictive context by most of the participants of this study. Although they generally feel that there is a consensus among their parents, the wider family is considered diverse in political attitudes and opinions, and thus, the past is usually avoided as a topic of discussion. Ideological disputes seem to be perceived as dangerous for the group's cohesion, and this can also be observed in peer groups, which I will describe in the next subsection.

5.2.3. Peer groups and close social contexts

After families, peer groups and other social relations linked to leisure activities form the closest social context of young people. I have named this network of relations "the immediate social context", precisely because it encompasses acts of communication among individuals who know each other more or less personally. By doing so, I differentiate this sphere from a broader social context that the individual shares with the whole of society or with members of society whom he does not know personally, and which is linked to very public discourses, *topoi*, shared imaginaries and global frameworks that also influence the construction of meanings; I contextualize this last sphere as the most public sphere of communication.

When I speak of the *immediate* social context, I focus on discursive patterns or attitudes that are specific to the community formed by the personal relationships of young people. These include the following areas of communication:

a) Peer groups: more or less formal groups of friends or age cohorts.

b) The *street*: this metaphorical term refers to the neighborhoods and villages that the youngsters transit through in their daily lives. These include acquaintances and other

informal social networks they may establish in leisure spaces that do not necessarily imply a close personal relationship of friendship.

c) Online social media: this category includes interactions that young people have with other individuals on online social networks (Instagram, Tiktok, etc.) and messaging applications (mainly WhatsApp), and excludes companies or platforms dedicated to the broadcasting of informative content, such as Google or YouTube. It becomes clear through the analysis of the youngsters' accounts that these interactions are an intrinsic element of their personal relations, as they have seldom made any explicit distinction between physical and digital modes of communicating with their peers. Thus, I have prioritized to treat them equally, albeit it is obvious that the internet adds some distinctive features to these communicative actions. However, the specific influence of online communications does not fall within the purpose of this study and remains as a possible analysis for the future.

5.2.4.1. Peers

When asked whether they usually talk about the Basque conflict in intimate groups of friends with people their age, most interviewees have reported that they usually don't. Amongst the reasons provided, one is the fact that they regard it as an issue of the past that affects older generations; that is, they don't consider it relevant for their everyday life. Another explanation often provided by the youngsters refers to the risk of breaking the group apart. Indeed, peer groups and networks constructed during adolescence have a great influence in the political socialization of youths (A. Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2022, p. 5), and group cohesion appears as a crucial factor in their discursive production. Unity of opinions is generally considered to be desirable; youngsters do not wish to question one another. On this basis, we might raise the hypothesis that, like the family, political and social agreements are necessary to maintain the cohesion of the group, so that issues that may be considered conflicting or controversial are often avoided, forming a taboo or *non-mentionable* area.

Do you usually speak about the topic with people around you, people your age?
Well, I do with some, in order to understand things, but generally very little. Then I also think that all of us have different opinions, and I don't –. [Silence].
Is there a fear of hurting your mate?
Yes, or perhaps – I don't know, we don't always have the same opinions. I don't know, I don't want to start a discussion on that, I don't know. It's true that it is seldom mentioned.

Unai-16-Anhauze

And do you sometimes talk about it among yourselves?
We do sometimes, but not too much either. About ETA, I mean, about the conflict, I think that we, the new generations, talk about it less and less.
Why?
I don't know. I mean, we still speak sometimes, but I don't have the feeling of having discussed this and that thoroughly, no.
Do you feel that you all agree, or that it is a controversial issue?
Yes, that's it, it's like a very sensitive topic, so, "Uh-oh".

Maddi-17-Tafalla

To Unai, it is the ideological diversity or conflicting views within the group that prevent dialogue among his friends; he does not want to provoke a discursive dispute, because of the effect this may have on the relations of the group. Maddi employs a phonetic

expression to describe the discomfort caused by the subject: “Uh-oh” (line 8). She refers to a superficial manner of addressing the topic, as opposed to “discuss this and that thoroughly” (line 6). Furthermore, the adjective “a *sensitive* topic” (line 8) is a metaphor that attributes a feature linked to the human capacity to feel to a discursive dimension; thus, the Basque conflict – as a discussion – is avoided for fear of entering a sphere that might be too intimate.

This *intimateness* attributed to the topic transcends most degrees of closeness the youngsters can identify in their various social contexts. In other words: very few people in their environment are close enough to directly ask them about their experiences of the conflict, sometimes not even their parents (as seen in Maite’s example in the previous subsection). This responds to a feeling of illegitimacy on the side of the youngsters: they are never *close enough* to the real experience of the conflict in order to be able to talk about it.

The counterpart of this perception is embodied in the figure of the *politicized friend* that appears in the narratives of nearly a quarter of the participants. This figure refers to a person in their social circle who has a greater knowledge about the conflict, and thus often becomes a source of information for them. The interest of these *expert friends* is usually framed or viewed by the adolescents as a personal passion, that is, as a rarity; or else, they are attributed a greater knowledge –and therefore, legitimacy– because of their family experiences:

> *In my family, concretely, nothing [has happened]. But I do have a friend who is very close nowadays; his dad is a [political] refugee, and he has only been able to come back to live here two years ago. They were from [our neighborhood], and they had to go to live in Iparralde, in Urruña [French Basque Country]. And he was born there. They are three siblings, and I met them during childhood because they were friends of my parents’, and we used to go there, to Urruña, with them; but, of course, their dad could not return, so they lived there. And two years ago, he got the permission and the whole family is back in [the neighborhood].*
>
> Gari-20-Getxo

> *We do have a friend who is, how to say? His parents are of those who speak a lot of Basque, who like Basque language very much and so. And they consider themselves to be completely Basque. But totally Basque, up to the point of going to a demonstration and perhaps carrying the flag, and like really confronting the police, which is a bit like the extreme of the left. And, anyways, he always tells that he goes to demonstrations and hits the policemen, or they supposedly hit him.*
> And when you hear that, what do you think?
> *I always think that demonstrations are a bit nonsense, because in the end no one is going to do anything. Even if you demonstrate, the only thing you are going to achieve is that your protest is seen on television, but as far as I know nothing else is going to happen.*
>
> Alex-18-Barakaldo

Both these excerpts are interdiscursive, that is, the speakers reproduce indirectly their friends’ discourses, and complete them with their own experiences and views. In Gari’s case, this interdiscursivity is not as clearly signalized, because he does not make explicit which information he remembers personally, and which is reconstructed through the accounts of friends and relatives; both kinds of memories merge naturally in his own

narrative. We may suppose that the accounts constructed from the child's point of view in lines 5 to 7 respond to personal memories, and that the descriptive sequences about the legal situation of his friend's family are a reconstruction of external discourses. His friend appears thus as a reliable source, which Gari reproduces without employing any epistemic or attitudinal marker, thus showing a complete commitment (Martin & White, 2005, p. 197) towards the content of the discourse.

Alex, on the other hand, introduces more distance-signalizing markers into the discourse, such as an introductory form to reported speech ("he always tells that", line 6) and an epistemic marker of possibility ("they *supposedly* hit him", lines 6-7). These expressions of distance suggest that the speaker does not make the words of his friend his own. Moreover, when answering the interviewer's second question, he uses a clear destructing strategy, ridiculing the position of his friend, which he describes as "nonsense" (line 9).

In both cases, the speakers associate the figure of the *knowing friend* with specific characteristics, such as having grown up in a highly politicized home; experiencing some evident suffering in the environment that the speakers can directly relate to the conflict; or being close to the *abertzale* left, thus fulfilling a pattern similar to that of the teachers who usually speak about the subject. All this gives this figure a greater degree of legitimacy in order to participate in the debate on the Basque conflict. The reverse of this categorization is the position that the speakers assign to themselves, who, in comparison to their better knowing friend, generally identify as mere observers, and consequently interpret that it is not their role to speak about the conflict, or that they have not as much to tell as their peers.

However, in most of the group interviews conducted for this study, I have been able to observe how power relations between young people can influence the development of the interaction: in four out of five group interviews, one member of the group assumed the role of the *expert*, generally responding first to the questions of the interviewer; taking up most of the speaking time; and thus establishing the status quo that operated as the basis of the interaction. The other members then usually constructed their interventions upon that basis, either by reinforcing it or in response to it; in any case, keeping the framework established by the *expert* interlocutor. In the three discussions in which we have observed these clear dynamics of power, this figure was male; and indeed, the only group in which no expert was clearly distinguished was the only one composed solely of girls. In the fifth group, the leading role was adopted by a girl who came from a highly politicized family and militated in *abertzale* youth movements.

Similarly, there is a clear difference between the stance of those familiar with the topic and those who are new to it, which becomes especially evident in the manners of addressing it when comparing youngsters with a personal history of migration and youngsters born in the Basque Country. The latter believe that the topic is seldom addressed in their social context, while those who migrated to the Basque Country in their infancy perceive a strong social presence of the conflict as a subject of conversation.

In order to illustrate this idea, I will reproduce two versions about the same event. In the first, Sebas, a young boy who arrived from Bolivia to the Basque Country two years prior to the moment of the interview, reconstructs the experience of one of his fellow students, Alex; in the second excerpt, Alex himself narrates the exact same story. Both these

narratives were introduced in the conversation spontaneously on the initiative of the speakers in independent, individual interviews, without any prompting from the interviewer, which makes them even more interesting to be analyzed:

Which were the first informations that arrived to you, how did you begin to learn about the topic?
The first thing that arrived to me was the Carlist War in the concept of the Basque Country. Then, in general and in Spain, it was Franco's regime. And ETA. And I ended with ETA. Because I had – they told me the experience of a fellow who still had some contact and he was in this police operation against ETA's agents.
And how was that case?
He told me that when they were in – I think it was when the 2006 attack happened [referring to the T-4 attack in Madrid-Barajas], and the persecution was really intense. And their family was going out on a road towards I don't remember well where, and the police officers got hold of them and pointed at them with machine guns, as if they were the terrorists themselves! And it was the family of this parents with his siblings. I think that, who has lived through that feels it more intensely, and has not been able to get over it, but it remains there. I think that thorn will always stay there, of what you saw in life, I mean, what you could really see well, because it's not the same if they tell you from outside.

Sebas-17-Barakaldo

Do you remember any concrete attack?
No, but I do remember the typical license plates of the cars: if it said 'Bilbao' they would put you there as if you were a terrorist, even on the road they could go with all the weapons and such. I do remember that, but not much more. (…) They told me that the license plate my car, well, my parents' car, as it was from Bilbao and being around Madrid or so, that all the armies or whatever came. And since they saw that it had a license plate, they told my father that he had to open the trunk to see if he was carrying drugs or I don't know what, whatever. And as they say that I was sitting in the back, at, I don't know, two or three years old, they said: "Go on". But yeah, that was curious.

Alex-18-Barakaldo

The modality employed by both these speakers shows clear differences in their perception and meaning-making of the same event: what Sebas frames as a trauma is a minor curiosity for Alex. Where the former employs emphasizing structures (such as the exclamation in line 13: "As if they were the terrorists themselves!", or the metaphor of the thorn in line 16), the latter constructs his discourse introducing a number of expressions of indifference and epistemic markers of insecurity: "not much more" (line 4), "whatever" (lines 6 and 9), and "I don't know" (lines 8 and 9).

Alex provides generalizing and unclear descriptions: he does not differentiate among the armed forces involved in the conflict, and thus classifies them in the general category "all the armies [or whatever]", in line 6. Many aspects of their activity seem also unknown to him, for example, that the road checkpoints of the Civil Guard usually had the aim of finding elements that could prove a link to ETA, such as guns or documents. Alex completes that void of knowledge by resorting to the mental model he had previously constructed about the concept *police control*, and concludes that in his case they were also looking for drugs.

Sebas, during his reconstruction of Alex's original narrative, adds to the memory an emotion which the original speaker does not: that of insuperable pain or harm, conceptualized by the metaphor of the thorn. Sebas rarely employs distancing modalizers: he only inserts two introductory expressions that signalize that his narrative is actually a quotation at the beginning of this narrative ("they told me" in line 5 and "he told me" in line 9). From then on, he reproduces the content of the external discourse showing a great degree of certainty and commitment towards it.

We may conclude, therefore, that the Basque conflict, as a topic of conversation or a symbolic area, results more prominent to the foreign eye or to those who are not familiar with it. This may indicate a high degree of naturalization of its expressions among the locally raised population, who in turn appear less sensitive or conscious towards its symbolic and discursive presence.

5.2.4.2. *The street*

The neighborhood or the village is also a possible context of political socialization, which, albeit not always the main source of information, is relevant enough to be included in the map of discursive inputs of the youngsters. This hybrid sphere provides them system of meanings that go beyond their intimate circles but are more reduced and locally attached than the completely public arena.

The street operates as a transmitter of memory in two ways. First, it shows that the memories of events occurred to people within their close environment or in physical places that are familiar are more easily remembered by the youngsters:

> *Well, for example, in my town there are people who have been in ETA, and who have been freed very recently; and in the end, well, you learn about it. And one case would be: a guy from the group of friends of my dad was put into jail because of ETA, and he was freed two or three years ago. And he came back to town. In the end, you talk to people, during the homage acts they did for him, and in the end you learn a bit about which kinds of conflicts there have been. (…) I would say that nowadays people don't talk about it very much. I mean, it happens that, for example, if they arrest someone in France, then suddenly the topic pops up, and it gains a bit of attention. But apart of that, I don't think that people in their everyday lives talk about ETA or whatever. I don't think so. Then, it's true that there were some times, during which Segi and such [youth organizations] were active, and nowadays there still are some, how to say, who encourage left-wing youths, but they are not ETA. For example Ernai and similar initiatives, who are groups, but they are not ETA.*
>
> Ekhi-21-Lekeitio

Ekhi describes some of the communicative interactions he perceives in his social environment, which are up to a certain degree public expressions, but which are limited to the area of a specific local community: the welcoming act of a recently released prisoner (lines 1 and 2); discussions prompted by latest news (lines 8 and 9); or the presence of local youth activist groups (lines 12 to 14). All of these refer not to discourses he has received in his family or in his group of friends, but which he has learned about in a broader, but still local social context: the town or *the street*.

These *ambient* discourses are seldom attributed to specific subjects: Ekhi learns by speaking "to people" (line 5). This anonymous collective subject refers to the community

or the population of the town, and is also highlighted through the use of intransitive verbs: the topic "pops up" by itself (line 9) in a context in which it is usually not very present. Thus, learning about the collective past is presented as an almost naturally occurring process of acquiring shared meanings within a social context, in which neither the action of the *transmitting* subject nor that of the *receiving* part is visibilized.

Simultaneously, I have observed that public spaces which the youngsters transit through in their everyday lives also enable the transmission of knowledge. Even though none of the interviewees were able to mention a memorial statue, plaque or any other official *lieu de mémoire* in their environment (Velte, 2020, p. 625), several physical places were mentioned in relation to the conflict, such as in the next example:

1 *Eh… I don't know, I don't know how it was, but I know (…) that they left a*
2 *civil guard without legs. My dad told me. (…) Because we often go jogging*
3 *around that area, and he told me: "So here happened this and that". That they*
4 *went there when he was young and – well, the remains and such.*

Ekaitz-16-Altsasu

Ekaitz presents obvious difficulties in reconstructing the event as a whole, and emphasizes the elements that result most significant to him. As I have explained in the first analytical subsection, the prominence of certain memories or images in the mental models of the youngsters largely depends on the impression or emotion they caused at the moment of first processing the information, and the closeness they may feel towards them. In Ekaitz's case, the depiction of a physical effect of the violence ("a civil guard without legs", line 1-2) is a mental image that greatly impressed him; and the fact that the attack took place in a familiar space ("we often go jogging around that area", lines 2-3) brings the past event closer to the scenery of his everyday life.

Political graffitis that the youngsters usually see in the walls of their hometowns or streets have a similar effect:

1 Where have you learnt most about the Basque conflict?
2 *On TV, and in my hometown. My family does not speak about that, but people*
3 *in town do. I've seen 'Gora ETA'[36] and similar paintings my whole life. At the*
4 *beginning you don't know what it is, and then you inform yourself a bit.*
5 Which are the main arguments you have heard in your town?
6 *Mostly in favor of ETA. But I think it's rather an excessive fanatism, because*
7 *they are not aware of how they would feel if they killed someone from their*
8 *family.*

Imanol-15-Arbizu

Although nowadays there are *official* expressions of memory that remember and condemn ETA's violence in most municipalities across the Basque Country, such as plaques, statues and similar symbols in the places where the attack happened, the participants of this study have not mentioned them; these places or devices of memory don't seem to be relevant or noticeable to them. However, they have spoken about slogans and banners in support of that precise violence. We can assume that these catch their attention precisely because of their *clandestine* or counter-narrative character, as graffitis open up spaces for political dispute (Vogel et al., 2020) by articulating discourses that find otherwise no

[36] 'Gora ETA' is a Basque expression of support for ETA, which could be translated as 'long live ETA'. It used to be a very common slogan used in paintings and political graffitis.

public expression (Waldner & Dobratz, 2013). On the other hand, their form –painted by hand, directly on walls– and the social dispute around them –such as the risk of punishment entailed– locate them in the area of the non-official, and often on that of transgression.

Imanol's account shows a great degree of familiarity towards these expressions, although he does not approve of their content; an attitude he expresses by attributing to the authors and supporters of those graffitis an "excessive fanatism" (line 6). However, he illustrates quite clearly how street paintings and similar discursive forms can often trigger a search for information among youngsters: "… and then you inform yourself a bit" (line 4).

5.2.4.3. Online social media

At the beginning of the research process, I didn't specifically ask the participants about their interactions on social media. However, during the interviews, I realized that for young people, their relationships on digital platforms are almost a natural part of their daily relationships. Therefore, I have included the spontaneous references made by them to this kind of interactions, in order to enrich the map of the discursive context of young people.

Since most interviews were conducted between 2018 and 2019, the social media network most mentioned by young people is by far Instagram, followed by Twitter and Facebook. TikTok, which was the most widely used network by the time of writing this thesis (2022-2023), had not yet spread at the time of the interviews (Iqbal, 2022), so it does not appear in our data.

In general terms, two discursive uses can be identified on social media. On the one hand, the creation of rather public content that users share to their entire network of followers or –in the case of those with open profiles– to the general public; and on the other hand, private interactions and personal contacts with other users, especially through messaging programs such as WhatsApp. Regarding the former, young people interviewed believe that the possibilities of expression are more limited, and thus they avoid sharing explicit positions or content about the past conflict:

> *Now you can't put just anything on social media, like you could for example in France or Germany. In Spain, you can't; we have seen that through the case of rappers like Pablo Hasel. And, as an anecdote, recently Antxo[37] died, and so I uploaded a photo to Instagram, "Goodbye and honor, Antxo", and my sister told me: "Be careful of what you upload to social media". Because, well, you can get arrested. And things like that. You notice that you can't say whatever you want, that there is no freedom of expression.*
>
> Gorka-15-Hendaia

> Do you feel free to talk about the topic nowadays?
> *Eh… to talk, yes, but not to write. For example, if we write our opinion on a social network, we will surely be criticized by everybody, they will call us "Etarra" and such, or "Terrorist".*
>
> Xan-15-Hendaia

[37] The nickname *Antxo* refers to the prisoner and ETA-member Xabier Rey. Rey died in March 2018 in the prison of Puerto-III in Cádiz, Spain, while fulfilling a 26 year long sentence (Sola, 2018).

Even though being a citizen of the Northern or French Basque Country, Gorka refers to the communicative area of the South, when he employs explicitly the geographic and political framework "Spain" (line 2). He frames a current affair – the prosecution of rapper Pablo Hasel because of the content of his songs, which was very controversial in the months previous to these interviews– within a historical context of cultural repression, and thus frames the *space of the unsayable* he perceives in his own social media networks in terms of constitutional rights (line 7, "that there is no freedom of expression"). He illustrates the effect of that normativity through a personal experience of self-censorship learned from a relative: his sister teaches him that he must not openly speak about the Basque conflict or express his personal views about it. The fact that the post published by Gorka on Instagram referred to and honored a deceased member of ETA increases his perception of challenging the social consensus: he learns that his is not a discourse that should be publicly expressed. The threat of social punishment is embodied in Xan's discourse by an anonymous and collective subject referred to as "everybody" (line 3): he perceives that "they" might criminalize those types of discourses.

The discursive norms on social media generally do not promote content that might refer to controversial issues or question the status quo; instead, the interpretation of memories that is made on these platforms – especially Instagram – is "centered on the promotion of positive past content and cueing users to engage in happy remembering" (Annabell, 2022, p. 1545). The most public face of social media is also considered to share the discursive norms of society; therefore, youngsters show a greater restraint when posting on those platforms, and they appear more confident to introduce expressions related to the Basque conflict within rather *private* spheres of digital media, such as WhatsApp messages. However, these interactions are usually limited to the use of humorous *stickers*, *memes* and similar images, that is, resources that aim to add expressiveness or connotation to a different topic of conversation. Speaking in metaphorical terms, these references to the armed past are used as source domains in order to conceptualize other topics that are not necessarily related to it:

Interviewer: Do you talk about these topics when you are among friends?
Erika: Look, it's a bit like that [laughs, gesture of discomfort], but when it comes up, in WhatsApp – I usually do not speak about this topic, neither with my friends nor with my family, but we do have stickers, and they are very much used, well, to make fun about it. People send stickers with people from ETA or – but it is not a current topic – simply for the stickers, that's the only place where I have noticed it.
Jaione: Yes, they use it a bit to be funny.
Interviewer: And what kind of images are they?
Erika: Whatever, there are – nothing, people with their heads covered with masks, or doing something or killing someone or… and then it says 'ETA' in big letters or anything else with the acronym.
Interviewer: And is that usual?
Gabriele: They haven't arrived to me.
Jaione: I haven't received them either, but I have seen them and they go completely unnoticed, I think, in spite of everything. I think that people don't even realize.

Group interview in Basauri

The participants of this discussion appear cautious when speaking about their use of graphic expressions associated with the Basque conflict: Erika's facial gesture must be added to her description "a bit like that" (line 2) in order to understand her discomfort.

The demonstrative pronoun "that" refers to the controversy of the topic, which is only addressed euphemistically, without naming it directly; the adolescents involved in the discussion are aware that they make humor out of a subject that may result sensitive for most people, and thereby break a social consensus. The discursive area created around this group interview does not provide them with a *safe space* to talk openly about the use of humor regarding the Basque conflict and ETA. Hence, expressions of constraint, such as Erika's, function as a request for permission to introduce these elements and thus broaden the permitted discursive field. However, the participants continuously frame the use of stickers and similar resources in a context of normalization. Erika insists that, to her, stickers mean "nothing" (line 10); she downplays their relevance and thus also the act of employing them, through expressions such as "only" or "it is not a current topic" (line 6).

Based on similar descriptions and reflections provided by the participants in other interviews, we can observe that humor functions as a means of gaining access to a denied discursive field. For young people who hold a marginal position within the social discussion about the past, it is a way of normalizing an area which they otherwise perceive as too complex or taboo: through humor, they *bring* the Basque conflict to a discursive context in which they feel a bit more comfortable. However, humor is not exempt from social norms either: the youngsters give permission to themselves to make fun mainly about events and figures around which the social consensus is higher. These are usually contextualized in the years of the dictatorship, such as the attack on the president of Franco's government, Luis Carrero Blanco.

Humor and irony are based on a shared subtexts (Holm, 2017; Reyes, 1996, pp. 50–53). Their comical effects draw from the knowledge that members of the same epistemic community are familiar with and often take for granted, because the effect itself comes from a clash between that social knowledge and the apparent content of the discourse. Therefore, in order to understand these codes, it is necessary to be socialized in that knowledge. During this research, it has been interesting to observe to what extent the codes employed to address the Basque conflict are often ironic, indirect and based on implicit subtexts. This has become especially clear through the perspective of participants with a recent history of migration, because to them, the approach to the knowledge about the history of the Basque conflict has been a more conscious process than for most of their peers, and they have had to make an effort to *decipher* the implications underlying most discourses around them. This is illustrated by Sebas in the upcoming example:

Among your friends, which opinions would you say are predominant?
That the conflict has not ended. For some, the conflict has not ended, or that there was – that there wasn't any conflict either.
How is that?
It was commented through messaging. I didn't really have the opportunity to mention it either, but when I touched the topic with them, they said that there was no conflict. And I can't understand how they can say that there was no conflict, so – but yes, that's what I have heard, that there wasn't any conflict. But if they commented it in the messages… perhaps they were joking. (…) Among friends, among young people, I'd say it is often treated as a joke, because when I arrived and asked, they told me joking that Franco was a hero of Spain, and so I registered that and afterwards I began to know who he really was. But they say it to make a bit of fun. But then, when you touch it seriously, there are people who have a lot of hatred, or people whom I have heard that

15 *their grandparents are supporters of Franco. So, there is still that: there are*
16 *two sides.*

Sebas-17-Barakaldo

The discourses of his friends seem contradictory to Sebas, who is not yet familiar with all the necessary subtexts of the Basque conflict. His narrative is an attempt to logically organize the different political positions he identifies in his close context. Sebas notices a lack of consensus over the existence of the conflict and, consequently, over its end: on one hand, he perceives a community that wants to thematize and problematize the conflict, and on the other, a community who denies its political character. Both these frameworks have been described in greater detail in chapter *3.6.4.1. Narratives about the end of ETA.*

Similarly, Sebas notices that the youngsters around him speak differently, employing distinct codes and registers, when using mobile phones ("messaging", lines 5 and 9) and in face-to-face interactions (described by him in lines 6 and 11 to 13). Having newly arrived in the Basque Country, he perceives the conflict as a recurrent topic of conversation, and thus interprets the discourse of its denial as contradictory. Since he is not familiar with the political and historical influences of this discourse and the tensions underlying it, he concludes that his peers are making fun of his unknowledge (line 9).

This perspective is very useful in order to understand how knowledge about the history of the group is often internalized: the social environment talks about topics that actually produce tension in a humorous code, thus overcoming an invisible boundary of the *unspeakable*. Through the implicit clusters of information included in the humorous expressions, many statements that would otherwise result controversial can be taken for granted and left unpronounced, which causes a clear confusion to the unlearned or unfamiliarized.

On the other hand, the banalization of controversial issues shows a cognitive and emotional distance from them: young people are aware of the disputes that the conflict – which, for them, lies mainly in the past– creates in their environment, but they do not attach such a great degree of emotionality to it. This would explain the difference between private conversations among peers (referred to as "messaging", line 9) and open, audible expressions: they rather allow themselves to make fun in the former, because the emotional distance towards the topic of conversation is assumed as a shared feature of the participants.

5.2.4. Conclusions of the chapter

In this subchapter I have described some of the meaning-making processes that young people construct regarding their diverse discursive context. Family and the media were the most frequently mentioned sources of information, showing awareness of very private and very public discourses around them. However, the exposition to discursive input about the history of the Basque conflict changed greatly depending on the degree of politicization of the youngsters and their close environment; those who usually do not speak about politics or the conflict with their families resort more often to public discourses. On the other hand, in families in which the dominant view on the conflict differs greatly from the dominant discourses in society, young people may actively

oppose public discourses, or else question those from their relatives. In any case, the emotional features of those meaning-making processes usually stem from home.

Regarding formal education, most participants have expressed skepticism towards its power as a transmitter of memory. The armed conflict is a taboo subject in the classrooms: teaching materials on it are insufficient, and most History books and lessons do not go beyond 1978, i.e. most of the period after the Spanish transition to democracy is treated as belonging to *current affairs* and thus not addressed in historiographic terms. Political and administrative difficulties have hindered so far the introduction of new material adapted to the specificities of the conflict. Meanwhile, most of the last 40 years is unknown to those born in the 2000s, some of whom are already entering the work sphere. In fact, some of the participants of this study were ending their Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education at the time of the interviews, showing that already the first generation of teachers is emerging, who have themselves not been socialized into that knowledge.

The consideration of certain knowledge about the past as something that is obvious is problematic, also in domestic contexts: according to the children, many parents do not feel the need to explain what they know about history, because they regard it as shared and general social knowledge. For their children, however, most information about the past conflict is new data. Hence, a frequent mechanism of transmission is to *grasp* meanings indirectly. As a result, youngsters often feel ashamed for not knowing something *they ought to know*, because it is assumed that this obvious and basic information is an inherent part of the cohesion of the group, and as members of it they should be aware of it. Furthermore, in familiar environments where silence reigns on the subject, youngsters feel no legitimacy to ask about it.

Diversity of views on the Basque conflict is seen as a factor that may jeopardize the cohesion of the group and the specific role assumed (e.g. the role of the objective teacher), both in the classroom and the family, as well as among friends. Instead of viewing plurality of opinions as an opportunity for healthy exchange, the subject is avoided in areas where consensus is considered insufficient.

In fact, school plays a double role in the transmission of knowledge. On the one hand, it is a direct provider of discourses, given the obligatory character of textbooks and the scope of its audience. On the other hand, it offers the youngsters a space for socialization and building informal relations among themselves and with the teachers. Several participants have reportedly learned more about the history of the Basque conflict in these informal interactions than through regulated curriculum content. A more detailed discursive analysis has shown, however, that contents of formal education, when present, are reproduced by the youngsters with a greater degree of certainty and commitment. Textbooks offer young people reliable *truths* which in a later examination or evaluation will be judged as a correct answer, and are therefore considered valid. These discourses are an important resource, especially for young people raised in non-politicized environments.

As for the propositional content of these discourses, youngsters perceive that they generally obtain narratives contextualized in moral terms, both in education and at home. In schools which have devoted some work to the subject, it is usually contextualized within the framework of (international) terrorism, ignoring or downplaying local

specificities. Transmission among generations also has a clear evaluative character: young people feel that their parents talk to them about the past mostly in terms of *right* and *wrong*, but without transmitting specific data about the events or behaviors that are being assessed. Instead, parents often build simplified and euphemistic narratives adapted to an ideal underage audience. These may be understood as an effort to protect their children from painful or shameful aspects of their collective past, or to preserve the self-image of the group.

Hence, most youngsters report to have learnt a clear rejection of violence from their families, and generally view their own parents as pacifists. Paradoxically, this image does not correspond to the main mental model they have built on the Basque conflict, which they conceptualize primarily as a violent conflict. The youngsters therefore conclude that their parents are morally impeccable figures who remained distanced or uninvolved during the armed conflict. In this respect, the data collected for this study clearly shows an attempt to place one's own relatives under a positive light of history. During this process, young people often ignore the biographical and ideological trajectories of their parents, and consequently, are often surprised to learn about their parents' past attitudes and involvement when they actually address the topic.

Knowledge about the history of the Basque conflict is often shared within families through accounts of isolated stories or in a superficial or anecdotal tone. This raises two difficulties: on the one hand, it offers a fractionated view of history, leaving the reconstruction and cohesion of meanings up to the receiver (often without providing the necessary means for it); and, on the other, it can lead to the interpretation of a single story as a metonymy of the History as a whole, in an example of *mythopoesis* (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999, pp. 96–111).

The immediate social context represented by the village or the neighborhood also plays a role in the transmission of knowledge and meanings, because these spaces often become catalysts for the re-narrativization of experiences occurred to people of and in the physical environments which the youngsters transit through on a daily basis. Most interviewees seem unaware of the official *lieux de mémoire* in their villages and towns, but other spaces naturally become transmitters of knowledge insofar they activate the discussion about certain events that occurred there in the past.

The *street* is also an area where a large part of their leisure time takes place and where they socialize with their peers. As to the perception of this context, it is interesting to compare the perspectives of those born in the Basque Country with those of participants with a background of migration: for the former, the Basque conflict is not a common topic of conversation in their social context, while the latter regard it as a very present subject. These perceptive differences draw from a naturalization of the many implicit gestures, social attitudes and indirect references pointing at the conflict: for young people socialized since early childhood in the terms of the conflict, they are invisible, and it is often necessary to look at them through the eyes of a foreigner in order to perceive their presence. This leads me to believe that the map of the discursive context of young people is much broader than what they explicitly identify; it also includes a whole range of discourses and imaginaries that are considered to be socially shared knowledge and thus taken for granted.

In order to complete the mapping of the interactions in the close social contexts of the participants, I have analyzed their accounts on the content they share on social media. Among these, a public and a rather private use of the networks can be distinguished. The former is regarded as more restrictive, because they assume that the dominant discursive rules in society also prevail in that sphere. Private interactions among peers, on the contrary, often allow them to address the conflict in terms of comedy. Humor allows them to relocate a sensitive or controversial subject to an area where they feel comfortable, overcoming the taboo. On the other hand, youngsters employ humor in order to displace themselves from a marginal position in the social debate about the past and therefore enhance their legitimacy as interlocutors, for irony requires knowledge of several shared subtexts, and thus allows young people to leave the most controversial elements implicit.

Lastly, I have identified a desire to go beyond merely moral/normative discourses and learn about the causes of the conflict. This is a demand shared by young people independently of their political ideologies. The causes of the past violence are perceived as a discursive field that is difficult to reach, because it is seldom thematized in their social context. It is an area that falls outside of social consensus. Young Basques have a very clear perception of the *area of the unspeakable*, as a product of the discursive disputes that take place in their several discursive contexts. It is a generation that has grown up in midst of a crisis of representation of the Basque conflict, which has been considerably limited due to the *battle of narratives*, and which has created many cognitive voids. Explicit requests for knowledge signalize that the usual evaluative discourses are not sufficient to fill these gaps. Bringing them to the forefront of the discussion and leaving the causes of the conflict out of it is often justified with the will to develop a critical attitude towards violence, but the youngsters, in turn, feel that the means to construct complex and coherent narratives are being denied to them.

According to Sontag (1977, p. 32), understanding and criticism are interrelated active processes. Therefore, understanding memory discourses as part of a communicative repertoire that is available to young people can be helpful in order to visibilize the active aspect involved in their meaning-making processes. Thus, we may consider that the primary purpose of the transmission of memory is not to induce a specific moral evaluation without background knowledge, but to provide the discursive resources for young people in order to be able to build their own position. How positions and identities are constructed within discourse will be examined in the next subsection.

Before moving on to this, however, it is necessary to point at some of the questions identified in this section, as they may open up future lines of research. It would be interesting to know, for instance, whether the character of the school (private or public) has an influence on the contents that are being transmitted, their forms, or the processes of constructing meaning from them; or how the relations of power between young people, and more specifically the gender variable, influence the way of approaching the subject and speaking of it publicly. A comparative study of the processes of re-narrativization of the past among generations would also be highly relevant.

5.3. DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF IDENTITY AND POSITIONING STRATEGIES

In this chapter, I will analyze how members of the social group being studied position themselves towards the history of the Basque conflict. The discursive construction of

identities is closely related to the concept of *positioning*, which Davies and Harré (1990, p. 48), define as "the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants".

This positioning is usually structured according to two axes: the Self in relation to the world; and the Self in relation to Others. Therefore I will distinguish two levels of identification in my analysis. On the one hand, I will examine the linguistic structures that fulfill a relevant role in the construction of personal identification, especially focusing on narratives of personal memories, evaluative constructions and expressions of emotions. Through these observations, I aim to understand positions linked to *the Self in relation to the world*, that is, the linguistic means that the speaker employs in the face of his interlocutors "to make claims that the narrator holds to be true and relevant above and beyond the local conversational situation" (Bamberg, 1997, p. 337).

On the other hand, I aim to identify several collective identities that the youngsters construct in terms of *the Self in relation to Others*. This distinction is based on the description that Halbwachs does of the behavior of collective memory: according to this author, remembering collectively does not mean that the viewpoints of each subject become mixed up (2004a, p. 56); instead, coherent systems of meaning are created through the combination of individual views and experiences and symbols shared inside of the community. This is why Halbwachs argues that, in collective memory, the subject needs to "get out of himself" (Ibid., 61) for a moment and take the place of the groups' point of view in order to be able to *remember* collectively.

Collective identities, on the other hand, provide information about the social position of the youngsters. During discursive constructions, speakers choose which parts of the knowledge stored in their cognitive structures to introduce in discourse and how to structure them, and thus they activate one mental model or another in each situation. These mental models are cognitive frames that help us to interpret and organize new information in coherent structures according to knowledge stored beforehand (Van Dijk 2008:165). At the same time, the choice of a specific mental model is symptomatic of the attitude the speaker has in that specific communicative context (Wodak, 2011, p. 168).

Thus, the second section of this chapter will address the linguistic and cognitive structures that are involved in the constructions of the youngsters' collective identities. On one hand, I will focus on categorizing structures in the form of ingroup-outgroup polarization (Cilia et al., 1999, p. 153; Varela-Rey et al., 2013, p. 12). These categories often take the form of a "labeling" (Graumann & Wintermantel, 2015, p. 161), as certain characteristics are attributed to the whole group, both from outside as well as from inside the group itself (de Fina, 2006, p. 354). I will argue that my participants locate themselves mainly in two collective categories, which can be summarized as "we, the youths" and "we, the Basques". Afterwards, I will examine the constructions of alterity that is opposed to each of those identities, as well as the linguistic means employed to define each of them. And finally I will conclude that the youngsters attribute to themselves a marginal position in the social discussion about the past conflict, and that this is related to the perception of a taboo and a lack of agency. Therefore, I will argue that the silence which is often attributed to them does not come from a lack of interest, as is sometimes interpreted (Larrinaga Renteria et al., 2020, p. 6), but from the taboo they identify in their social

relationships and the position they hold in those social networks. The lack of engagement has more to do with their perceived degree of agency, that is, the low degree of control they have in order to construct their own discourses in an autonomous manner (Pfleger, 2021, p. 331). Thus, their engagement often takes the form of discursive strategies aimed at overcoming those obstacles. I will examine these in the last section of this chapter, using the classification proposed by Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999, pp. 92–93) and completing it with my own findings, namely the relevance of previously constructed mental models and frames when coping with gaps of knowledge about the past.

5.3.1. Individual positioning: personal memories and experiences of the youngsters

The aim of this first subsection is to examine how the interviewees locate themselves, as individuals, in relation to the history of the group, or, to put it in other words, which degree of proximity or identification they perceive towards the concept they have constructed about the Basque conflict. *Discursive distance* refers in this case to the degree of commitment the speakers show towards the propositional content of their discourses, that is, "all those locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to 'engage' with, the other voices and alternative positions" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 94). Discursive distance is closely related to the modality employed by the speaker, that is, the attitude or stance they show towards a specific proposition; the modal content of an utterance has therefore mainly an interpretative character (Papafragou, 2000, p. 68).

When asked whether the conflict has affected them personally, most of the first answers that I have collected have been clear negatives, although many of the speakers have subsequently modalized their answer: "Not me directly" and similar structures have been employed by at least eight speakers, through several different formulations. Whenever the youngsters stated that the conflict did not affect them "directly" (Irene-19-Donostia eta Nora-21-Getxo), "in a direct way" (Maddi-17-Tafalla), "not really directly" (Kepa-20-Bilbo), "right away" (Malika-17-Barakaldo and Eñaut-15-Oñati), "personally" (Maite-17-Oñati) or "in first person" (Ekhi-21-Lekeitio), all of them were basing their discourse on a spatial metaphor in order to describe the perception of two possible modes (*direct* or *indirect*) of relating to the conflict. This metaphorization constructs the image of a *first line* or layer of society that receives the impact of an event and a *second line* or layer which receives a rather softened impact. Therefore, the youngsters construct a clear hierarchy between experiences of the conflict, according to which their own experiences are not as valid or true as those of the groups who have experienced the conflict in a more direct manner, because they have not witnessed it first-hand.

1 *Well, it has not really affected me personally, but it has affected my parents.*
2 *Because they go to visit [the prisoners], and to me, personally… What we have*
3 *mentioned before: the prejudices of foreigners do affect me, but apart of that,*
4 *no.*

Maite-17-Oñati

Maite draws a clear border between herself and her parents: the experience of visiting the prisoners is theirs, not hers; therefore, she concludes that the conflict has mainly affected them. Her own experience (*prejudices*, in line 3) is seen as a less relevant expression, compared to the more direct, first-hand experience of her parents. Through the

conjunction “but” (line 3), Maite downplays her own experience, and frames it as an exception, because “apart of that” (line 2) she does not recognize any other effect of the conflict on her personal life.

A similar construction can be observed in the next example:

1 Do you feel that the Basque conflict has affected you somehow?
2 *Eh… me, personally, not really, I think. Because, well, I have not known all*
3 *those people who have died. And most of those who were in prison have now*
4 *also been freed, and I have not known them as prisoners. I don’t know.*
5 So, you don’t feel as a victim of the conflict?
6 *Not as a victim of the conflict, no. I don’t think it’s because of that conflict –*
7 *well, then I don’t know. So, I don’t know, I don’t think so. But maybe I’m wrong*
8 *– I don’t think much about it. I don’t know. Perhaps.*

Unai-16-Anhauze

Unai associates the effect of the conflict with experimenting its physical consequences or seeing them first-hand: since he has not known any of the deadly victims, he assumes that his is not a real influence. This logic relies on the hierarchization of experiences of suffering, and is nourished by the macro-narrative that conceptualizes the conflict in terms of a violent conflict. According to this, the more severely one has experienced the physical effects of the violence, the truer their account is, and the more legitimized their accounts are as witnesses of the violence. In Unai’s example, since he has no personal relation to the most severe physical consequences of the conflict (the dead), he denies the validity of his experiences, as he doesn’t even consider them to be true experiences.

Furthermore, there is an interesting development in the epistemic attitude of the speaker towards this discourse, which can be seen in Unai’s excerpt. During his first answer, when asked about the effect of the conflict on his life, Unai employs only two epistemic modalizers: “I think” (in line 2) and “I don’t know” (in line 4). When the interviewer reformulates the question, a doubtful attitude predominates in his second answer: he begins by offering a categorical “no” (line 6), showing a complete commitment. Then, he begins to widen the distance toward the content of his discourse, by introducing first the epistemic modaliser “I don’t think so” (line 7), then showing uncertainty (lines 7 and 8) and concluding his utterance with the adverb “perhaps” (line 8), which operates as a modaliser of probability and distances the speaker from the thesis he constructed at the beginning of his discourse (“*I don’t feel as a victim*”), as it questions this thesis. The development in the stance of the speaker can be clearly observed in this example (“no” > “I don’t think so” > “I don’t know” > “Perhaps”), and is, at the same time, illustrative of the effect that the communicative situation itself can have on the production of the discourse. It is more than probable that Unai has never been openly confronted with this question before, and that he is building a discourse about it *ad hoc*.

This *second-line* position in relation to the conflict causes a distancing of the speaker, and has a direct effect on the youngsters’ discursive engagement: they have difficulties identifying the effects of the conflict in their lives, and thus, interpret it as a problem that affects others. In most of the discourses collected for this study, there is always a mention of a figure who has experienced the conflict in a more direct manner; these are usually parents or people who have experienced physical consequences of the conflict. In the case of the interviewees with a background of migration, two have pointed out that they do not

feel as legitimized as their peers born in the Basque Country to speak about the topic, although both arrived to it in very early ages, and therefore have lived throughout their entire conscious lifetime in the same region as the rest.

The character of the discourse changes, however, when the youngsters speak from the perspective of a collective identity. They seem to distinguish between the individual effects of the conflict, which they cannot identify in their personal context, and the collective effects. Therefore, it is easier for them to build a connection between the past and their contemporary context when taking the place of their generation.

> Would you say that the conflict has affected you?
> *[Thinking, silence] To me… I mean, not me directly, because I have not experienced it much, but it has affected my environment, and that – I mean, History influences naturally the next generations.*
> In which sense?
> *I don't know. Well, just going to a demonstration for the prisoners means that something has happened here and that – that conflict has been this conflict. Or to be more involved in politics – that's because the nation is alive or because there is something very close.*
>
> Maddi-17-Tafalla

In this excerpt, Maddi takes the position of a collective subject in order to position herself towards the historical conflict: she identifies that a part of her individual behavior (illustrated through the action of "going to a demonstration", line 6) has its origin in the armed conflict, and locating herself in the role of the group provides her with the discursive ground in order to construct that link. Through the use of deictics, she distinguishes between "that conflict" (line 7), i.e. the conflict of the Others, of the past and which is further away from her; and "this conflict" (line 7), the one she feels closer. The choice of the concrete demonstrative determiners situates the events in a closeness scale according to the speaker's position. Furthermore, the adverb "directly" (line 2) implies, by antonymy, the existence of an *indirect* or mediated relationship. In this case, the social context of the speaker ("my environment", line 3) fulfills a mediating function: it is through the experiences of the people around her that the speaker is able to establish a link between herself and the conflict.

That's why Maddi speaks on behalf of a collectivity (her generation) when she builds the link between both conflicts. The metaphor "the nation is alive" (line 8) is a prosopopeia or personification in which characteristics of a person are attributed to a group. In Maddi's discourse, this collectivity becomes the main subject, substituting the individual speaker.

Taking the position of a collective subject fulfills a number of social functions. On one hand, it reduces the personal commitment towards the content of the utterance (Wodak, 2011, p. 175): in a collective subject composed of many individuals, the agency of the speaker remains blurred or dispersed. On the other hand, speaking in the name of the group allows the speaker to resort to consensual discourses and shared imaginaries constructed about the group, which otherwise would be interpreted as clichés. In fact, collective memory is a system of shared meanings that responds to basic questions about the identity of the group; it is made of stories about the shared past (Erll, 2017, p. 27), which Assmann (2011, p. 59) describes as "foundational myths". The coherence of these stories draws on the context of the collective identities in question, as they do usually not

completely coincide with the specific experiences of the individuals that form the group. Instead, their symbolic meaning inside of the community is strong enough so that individual members of the community attribute to them truthfulness and feel identified with them, however distant they are from their personal experiences.

The relationship that the young Basques participating in this study have built towards the conflict is also mainly of a symbolic character: they do feel a link to the past conflict as a group, but on a personal level they have difficulties identifying its effects on their daily lives. There is a dissociation between the collective and political interpretations they make about the past and their personal narratives of their lived experiences, understanding *dissociation* as the coexistence of "different states of consciousness that allow us to maintain separate – and often contradictory – bodies of knowledge" (Bloom, 2010, p. 200). According to Onega (2012, pp. 85–86), dissociation usually fulfills two functions: on one hand, it is a mechanism of defense aimed at coping with traumatic pasts; and, on the other hand, it allows speakers to include the knowledge of direct witnesses of those traumatic events in the collective conscious.

This is why it is frequent that the youngsters speak about the relation of transmission they have with older generations when being asked about the Basque conflict:

Do you feel that the conflict has affected you?
Hm, I don't know. Not directly-directly, but in the end, if it is a thing of my family, it will have some kind effect on me. I mean, they – if it affects them, in the end it will transmit something to me, in a conscious or unconscious way. But right now I don't know what they have transmitted to me.
Could you more or less describe which part of your character has been affected by it? Your political views, perhaps?
I don't know. I mean – well, since they have been quite pacifistic, it's not like they have put a lot of discipline into my head, like, pf pf pf [gesture of introducing something by force]. (…) I stand more to the viewpoint of here, because I am from here, and so this is what they have fed me and I will defend this. But in the end, in these kinds of things one has to be a bit neutral. I mean, I can understand that, how someone from the deep Spain sees this as terrorism and everything, but someone from here does not see this as terrorism. Well, I don't know: they were some people who went to free the nation. [It's true] that those weren't the best of manners, but well, at that time it just took that form.
Joseba-20-Bilbo

Joseba, similarly to Maddi, takes for granted the existence of a *naturally* occurring transmission of memory through socialization, a learning process that is guaranteed to individuals by simply being members of a group. He is not able to describe what the effect he has received from his relatives consists of, but he affirms that it does exist. Later on, he moderates this assertion by using epistemic modalisers of probability, such as future verb tenses in hypothetical term ("it will have some kind effect on me", line 3); he does not seem to feel completely sure about his thesis, as he cannot provide concrete evidentials for it. As a solution, he draws on a metaphor instead of a concrete description: "(…) this is what they have fed me" (line 11). This is a structural metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 96); by comparing the political learnings received from his parents with the feeding of a child, he conceptualizes the knowledge about the past conflict in terms of a substance that flows into him and helps him nourish and grow. Joseba portrays himself as a passive receiver in this narrative: memories reach him through his social context, and his participation is limited to perceiving and reproducing them ("and I will

defend this" lines 11 and 12). In fact, the justifying discourse he expresses in the last sentences of his discourse ("they were some people who went to free the nation", line 15) is a covert quote that Joseba employs to describe the political learnings he has received through his epistemic context; insofar it is contextualized in a metadiscursive reflection, it is an indirect quote of the dominant narrative within his community.

Joseba's excerpt illustrates an understanding according to which the primary role in the transmission of memory is attributed to older generations: they are seen as the most agentive subjects, because they have collected the knowledge first hand and therefore it is in their hand to transfer it. Thus, the transmission of memory is conceptualized as a unidirectional chain, similarly to the canonic structure of sender-channel-receiver proposed by early Communication theories (Shannon, 1948). However, transmission of memory is not a lineal trajectory in which knowledge is carried in time from one subject to another: instead, memory is a discursive and symbolic construction shaped by elements that are at hand in the particular, contemporary context in which the speaker remembers, and which necessarily imply their active participation. The spectrum of knowledge of young Basques includes a number of beliefs, attitudes and cultural references, and these form the base of their discursive constructions about the conflict, which are always done from the perspective of their current social position and taking this as a main reference. Therefore, whenever they deny the value of this relationship, we might think that this denial fulfills another social function: it illustrates the lack of legitimacy and agency they feel in their social positions toward the conflict.

At the same time, this disidentification also provides information about the discursive context of the youngsters. An example of this is that discourses with a higher degree of commitment are more frequent among participants with a recent personal history of migration, whereas adolescents born in the Basque Country tend to construct distanced accounts of the past. The comparison of the two following excerpts sheds some light on this:

Do you feel that the Basque conflict has affected you personally?
Yes. Yes, it touches you when you listen to those people who were children and still remember. (…) It touches you personally, because you get to know that many people died just for defending their ideals, or in general, you learn about the complexity of the conflict, because it is very complex. I saw that it was very complex when they told me about Franco, about the Civil War, and the same with ETA. So, it is very complex. When you feel that, it's like, wow, everything that happens to people! Becuase you might have lived through something similar, but it does not reach that level. So, yes, it does touch you, and it's like: wow. What happened is like – how can there be so many problems in a history you didn't know about? I didn't know anything about Europe's history in general.

Sebas-17-Barakaldo

Would you say that the conflict has affected you personally?
Hm… no. I mean, personally, perhaps in terms of what to think about it, or so, but in my daily life, no.
You don't feel like a victim?
No, not at all.

Paulo-19-Urnieta

In this two excerpts, there is a great difference in the positioning of the speaker. Sebas is a migrant child, and, although he takes an observer role, he describes a personal and direct effect: to witness the narratives of others' experiences, that is, the access to knowledge – however mediated this might be– makes him feel closer to the conflict, and therefore he feels that it is present in his discursive context. Paulo, who actually has had direct experiences of violence in his reduced family circles, shows distance towards the history of the conflict by framing it in a discourse of naturalization and by stressing that he does not identify himself as a victim. Paulo does not indicate a significant presence of the topic in his environment, or does not attribute relevance to it, whereas Sebas' discourse shows a greater sensibility towards the discursive presence of the conflict. This difference is probably related to the socialization of the speakers: Paulo has grown up among discourses and symbolic references to the conflict, and they result so familiar to him that he doesn't actually recognize them. For Sebas, on the contrary, all information on the topic is new knowledge, and thus he processes it in a much more conscious manner in order to adapt it to his previous mental models. To him, grasping this knowledge is a means to access an epistemic community, because it allows him to take a position in the social discussion about the conflict, even if this is an observer position. Those who already grew up into that position rather tend to normalize and sometimes invisibilize many of the relations and communicative practices built around the conflict.

This distance or disidentification grows when asked if they feel that they are victims of the conflict. Not even those who have experienced violence in their close contexts categorize themselves as such, at least not on a personal level. When the victim identity arises in discourse, it is usually within a collective identity, i.e. on behalf of the family, the generation or, in general terms, the Basque people.

However, following a detailed analysis of the interviews conducted for this research, it can hardly be argued that the participants, even as individuals, don't have any direct experiences of the conflict: they have expressed many references to specific knowledge, opinions, attitudes and emotions, and all of these are part of their relationship to the conflict and their collection of experiences, even if the speakers themselves do not consider this rather symbolic relationship be important enough. This symbolic relationship is expressed through elements that are often referred to, such as issues involving flags, limits on expressions in social media and public spaces, and prejudices, especially when practices associated with certain political positions collide with those of groups from different political and social backgrounds. This is also applied to linguistic practices in some cases:

Do you personally feel that the Basque conflict has affected you?
Well, when they mixed us up with [students from] Escolapios, they would call us "etarras" [members of ETA in a despective tone], and we would call them "fatxas" [fascists]. In the end, there was – I mean, we had no idea, and the only thing that differentiated us was the Basque language. To know Basque or not to know. And so, well: they said that Navarre was Spain, and we told them it wasn't, because we learnt at our Ikastola – I mean, at Ikastola, in primary school, we studied seven provinces [that formed] the Basque Country; and they wouldn't learn any of that. That really differentiated us, and we experienced it as a sort of conflict.
Did you know at that time what the words "etarra" and "fatxa" meant?

12 *No, no. I mean, maybe – the thing is that I believed, when I was small, you*
13 *know? That ETA was a group who knew Basque and who was in favor of*
14 *Basque. But I didn't know anything else.*
15 You have learnt about its armed side afterwards?
16 *Yes.*

Endika-17-Tafalla

Using Van Dijk's (2003b) concepts, the speaker builds a clear ideological square polarizing an outgroup – "they", meaning the pupils from the religious, Spanish-speaking Escolapios school, and an ingroup, meaning the pupils from the Basque-speaking Ikastola school, in which he includes himself. Here, we find some information that is not explicited, because the speaker assumes it as shared information and leaves it out of the discourse following basic cooperation principles (Grice, 1975), according to which speakers only provide the just and necessary information to be understood (Davies, 2000, p. 23). The fact that Ikastolas have an own curriculum, which defines the Basque Country as the whole territory where Basque is spoken, and therefore leads to different political and geographical views compared to students whose curriculum separates the Basque Autonomous Region from Navarre needs therefore to be interpreted.

There is an absolute identification with the ingroup, as shown in the use of first person verbs, and the fact that Joseba is narrating his own experience as an example of discrimination. Within this polarization, the ingroup is usually represented by a positive characterization, whereas the negative sides of the outgroup are remarked (van Dijk, 1997, p. 211). In this case, even though the speaker recognizes that both groups had prejudices for one another –as we can observe in the use of pejorative lexica "etarras" and "fatxas", which are used as metaphors, because none of these youngsters could possibly belong to ETA with their age– the speaker positions himself in the role of somebody who is pointed at because of his education and culture. In fact, as it becomes clear in Joseba's second answer, this experience of linguistic prejudice had been so strong that a youngster who had no relation to the armed part of the conflict, as far as not knowing anything about ETA, related the group merely to his linguistic reality. However, he does not hold onto a scheme of conflict. Instead, he uses a softening discursive strategy by remarking the ignorance of the children: "We had no idea", in which he includes both the ingroup and the outgroup.

If we focus on the emotions that the speakers refer to when talking about the conflict, those that have been expressed most often are sadness, fear, shame and surprise. The latter is often linked to a difficulty to understand meanings:

1 *It is something that's a bit far away for me, but I'm surprised that quite a lot*
2 *of people died, actually. And it's like a life suddenly – it's not like something,*
3 *like a threat or blackmail. That I find quite harsh, and to be able to reach that*
4 *point, that's what surprises me most.*

Ane-21-Mutriku

Ane shows a great degree of cognitive and emotional distance towards the history of her group. She illustrates this distance through a spatial metaphor ("something that's a bit far away for me", in line 1), and she seems to have difficulties to build a coherent narrative about the past: her discourse is based on this incomprehensibility. The expression of

surprise allows her to take the role of the unknowing, and thus to distance herself from the past violence.

Fear, on the contrary, appears associated to concerns about the future –fear to suffer further repression or prejudices–, and not so much to direct memories of the past. The personal memories these speakers own about the past violence are mainly childhood memories, but they are seldom traversed by fear. In fact, I have identified the opposite in a number of cases, i.e. that the speakers locate those events in a context of discursive normalization, as does the same speaker of the previous example in the upcoming excerpt:

You know, now that you said that, it has come to me: when I was small, they put a bomb in Mutriku, like, at the harbor. And, well, I was, I don't know, about 4 or 5 years old, and they called to alert; they said it was at some place at the harbor and that the street would be closed, I don't know from which hour to which hour. And it was only – we were at home and people heard a big noise, and there was no – nobody was wounded or anything, just that, a bit of material damage.
Do you remember any sensations you had at that moment?
No, because what I felt was that it didn't seem strange to people. I mean, back then there used to be bombs in many different places, so it was something – when you are still small, you don't think so much about things, so it was a special day because something had happened, but it was as if it was normal in our environment. And we talked among us: "Oh, yesterday happened something, did you hear the noise?" and such, but it was not very [important] – I mean.

Ane-21-Mutriku

Ane's excerpt shows on one hand that memory discourses usually need an activating element in order to arise within communicative interactions: in this case, the interview itself prompts the speaker to remember an event of her childhood. As I have also pointed out in the first analytical chapter, the prominence of specific memories is influenced by two variables. Firstly and especially in the case of personal memories, by the proximity to the speaker: among the events most remembered by the speakers, those that happened in their near social context –such as their hometown– or involve a close person are more often reconstructed and in greater detail. Ane, by sliding into the position of her childhood Self, remembers mainly elements that altered the daily routine of that child: that the street was closed (line 4) and the unusual noise (line 6). On the other hand, events that fit the mental category of *terrorist attacks* are also recalled in a more frequent and detailed manner, as the youngsters can associate these events more easily with the concept they have built about the violent conflict, which has been described in greater detail at the beginning of this analysis.

In general, most childhood memories, however direct, are a least partly mediated memories, as the elements, impressions and atmospheres perceived by the child almost always need some completing discourse in order to become a coherent narrative. This *complementary* information, which actually often functions as a framework in the terms of which they can interpret primary information, often consists of a clarification provided by an adult or an *a posteriori* discursive elaboration realized by the speakers themselves as they grow up.

This mediated character of childhood memories can be clearly identified in the next example:

1 Do you remember any concrete action or attack done by ETA?
2 *[Silence, thinking] Perhaps – in Burgos, when I was smaller, I remember that*
3 *we were going on vacation and we passed by that street, and I don't remember*
4 *if the building was a Police station or something like that, but it was destroyed.*
5 *And then my mom said: "Look, the ETA people placed a bomb here". And I*
6 *remember seeing everything in ruins and so. That's the closest thing I have.*

Elena-17-Barakaldo

Elena's narrative is coherent with the age in which most people start creating lasting memories (Peterson, 2021): indeed, ETA did an attack against the headquarters of the Civil Guard in Burgos (Spain) on July 29th, 2009. This was the penultimate planned attack by the armed group (Lopez Adan, 2021a, p. 798). The speaker was eight years old at the time, so it is credible that her narrative is based on a personal experience: Elena remembers clearly an image that caused great impression on her (the destroyed building), moreover, an image that is coherent with the frame of terrorism or violent conflict.

However, the same excerpt sows that even this personal memory does include an important interdiscursive element, when the speaker introduces a direct quote of her mother in her narrative (line 5). This clarification provided by the mother is necessary information for her in order to complete her memory, because it is through this external discourse that the former child attaches historical meaning to the images she had perceived.

All accounts of personal memories that have appeared in my data are *a posteriori* narrative elaborations of limited childhood perceptions. Mentions of feelings, sensations, perceptions of a certain social atmosphere and physical objects predominate in them. This observation is coherent with the research carried out by Shapiro and Hudson (1991), in which they proved that visual elements and those which produce great visual impact in childhood have a greater influence on their narratives later on. To put it in other words: Basque youths remember the conflict in terms of isolated images and impressions, and rely on external voices and discourses in order to convert these images into narratives. This is why all their memories are to a greater or lesser extent mediated, and this reinforces the argument that we can already speak about them in terms of a differed epistemic generation.

Many of the memories also include descriptions of the social atmosphere perceived during their childhood. Some recall a surprising normalization (see Ane-21-Mutriku, above), while others remember clearly a taboo in their social context. Especially those participants who had been in contact with physical expressions of the several violences involved in the conflict have described it as being a "private topic" (Ibai-20-Donostia). Nora, the speaker of the following example, recalls the order of her mother not to talk openly about her uncle being in prison, although she did not understand its political dimension:

1 Do you have direct memories of your uncle being in prison?
2 *Yes, and I remember my parents crying, my cousins crying because he was*
3 *there for burning down a fucking container. (…)*
4 And when did he come out?
5 *Three or four years ago, I think.*
6 Hos was it? Could you tell a bit about how his arrival was?

Well, the memory I had of him was from my very early childhood. In the end, he was my uncle and, well – he looked strange to me, I mean, he wasn't like my uncle anymore, he had changed. You could notice him like sadder, different. He had lots of problems to readapt to society; it was difficult for him, I mean, he was afraid of going out on the street, like, he felt strange, that's what my parents told me. He has never told me personally, but talking at home: "Look, your uncle is afraid of going out to the street". (…) I remember that my mom used to tell me not to say anything at school, just in case they would look badly at me. She always used to say: "Don't tell that your uncle is in prison, eh? Especially not why he is there. (…) And I would be like: "Jesus, but… what has he done? He only burned a container, mom, that's not that bad". I couldn't really understand what that implied. So, perhaps the conflict has *had an effect on my life, I don't know.*

Nora-21-Getxo

Nora narrates her memories about the end of the imprisonment of a close relative. Her family operates as an emotional prism through which to look back at the past, because the former child constructs her mental model through the emotionality she grasps in their company. This kind of patterns have been defined as situation models (Bietti, 2011, p. 185), and compile the mental schemata built by the participants of a communicative event about the general situation based on socially learnt knowledge.

In Nora's case, not only her childhood memories are mediated by her parents' discourses, but also later memories related to the return of the uncle from prison. This knowledge is not transmitted through the protagonist of the events himself (the uncle), but through indirect interdiscursivity: Nora learns about her uncle's experience through the narratives of her parents. In spite of this, she appropriates their words, as she reproduces them without any modalisers in lines 10 and 11 ("he had lots of problems to readapt to society; it was difficult for him, I mean, he was afraid of going out on the street, like, he felt strange"), showing a great degree of commitment. She then makes explicit that the statement she just made is actually an indirect quote, and that the original source are her parents (lines 11 to 13).

Nora reconstructs the perception of herself as a child: the social taboo is embodied in the figure of the mother and the discursive norms that she imposes on the child (lines 13 to 16). The child sees only a container on the bottom of the problem, and not other concepts involved in the act of burning it: violence, *kale borroka*, historical conflict, etc. Therefore, in order for that memory to become a coherent narrative, she necessarily has to acquire contextual knowledge that she can add afterwards to her established mental model.

Similarly to Nora's narrative, in most accounts of childhood memories there is a doubling of the subject who perceives the conflict: the speakers necessarily take up the position of another subject who has the ability to remember *directly* because of their historical trajectory (Olick et al., 2011, p. 227), such as their parents or a collective identity.

By *grasping* experiences of others in that manner, they can overcome the distance and disidentification towards the topic, as this allows them to substitute the marginal position they attribute to themselves by a more agentive subjectivity. That's why Nora introduces a self-correcting strategy towards the end of her discourse, when she reflects "perhaps the conflict *has* had an effect on my life" (lines 18 and 19). Based on the development of the interview itself, she opposes a previously expressed discourse (that the conflict has not

affected her personally), but she shows uncertainty and distance towards it: she still has difficulties locating herself on the *front line* of the conflict.

5.3.2. The construction of collective identities in discourse: 'Ingroup-outgroup' structures

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, collective identities are a crucial tool for the youngsters when they are building discourses about the past, both in order to turn childhood impressions into coherent narratives and in order to construct memories that are entirely interdiscursive.

Thus, the aim of this second subsection is to examine the construction of collective identities within the oral discourses generated by the young participants. I wish to understand how members of the new generations in the Basque Country appropriate narratives about the past, in a double sense: on one hand, how they position themselves and which roles they adopt when creating discourses about the past conflict, and, on the other hand, which are the psycholinguistic mechanisms they employ in order to harmonize or reconcile knowledge about the past with the patterns of interpretation and cultural schemata they had built beforehand, especially when there are large informative voids or when discourses about the past are contradictory with dominant discourses in their contemporary context or their own attitudes.

In this case, I do not rely on an understanding of identity solely as a construction of an autobiographic narrative, but also (and especially) as an interactional construction realized within discourse (de Fina, 2015, p. 356). Therefore, I assume that the construction of identity is a concrete and situated process that happens in the moment the discourse is being built through linguistic means, that is, "a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than (…) a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, pp. 585–586). This does not mean that speakers don't possess some kind of self-conscience, one or many rather durable narratives about their Self, but that these can also change in their verbal or discursive expressions when confronted with different contexts. Therefore, situation-dependent linguistic constructions of identity can provide information about how the speakers see themselves in the broader net of social relations.

Since collective memory (also) implies the existence of collective identity (Halbwachs, 2004a, p. 79), it is important for the research aims of this study to first identify the definitions and discursive expressions of those identities. In order to achieve that, I have firstly analyzed linguistic elements that refer to a group identity in their context, as well as other elements that signal the degree of identification and the positioning of the speaker, mainly the categorization of actors, modalisation, relevant lexical and sematic choices, evaluative statements and meaningful uses of metaphors. All of these are part of broader psycholinguistic strategies that speakers employ in order to cohere discourses about the history of the group with their contemporary positions (Wodak, 2011, p. 173). Young Basques also employ a series of adaptation strategies to combine their knowledge about the past with their current social positioning; in the many cases in which they are confronted with large gaps of knowledge, they resort to previously constructed interpretative schemata to build new meanings, using, among others, metaphorization, naturalization and re-organization of the internal elements of the discourse.

In order to analyze narratives about the collective identities in which these youngsters see themselves included in, I have started by identifying the linguistic elements that refer to the existence of such a collective subjectivity. First, I have searched for linguistic forms derived from the first person plural pronoun *we* among the transcripts of the oral discourses generated by the youngsters, and then I have analyzed which is the ingroup or collectivity they refer to. At the same time, I have observed which groups are portrayed in alterity to it, and which are the main characteristics that the speakers attribute to these outgroups. Furthermore, whenever I have not been able to identify a clear ingroup-outgroup binomial, I have employed the term *antagonist* (Pfleger, 2021, p. 331) in order to designate the forces that the speakers categorize as acting against or in competition with the interests of the ingroup.

In general terms, there are two main groups of identification that the youngsters build, based on two axes: the *generation axis* and the *nation axis*.

5.3.2.1. The generational ingroup

The first of the two main ideological squares (van Dijk, 2003a, p. 58) constructed by the youngsters can be summarized as having the *generation* as a cohesive element for the ingroup. This is opposed to an outgroup that is represented not only by the older generations, but also by the education system, and, to a lesser extent, by the media, that is, previously pronounced and established discourses.

According to this narrative, the main difference between both groups is epistemic: one of the most repeated narratives that provides unity to the ingroup is "We have not lived the conflict". Through this discourse, the youngsters construct an identity based on a denial, based on a perceived lack of experience. This is a striking starting point, because we would expect most discourses about one's identity to be constructed in positive terms: that is, we would rather expect the youngsters to speak about "who we *are*" rather than "who or what are we *not*".

This identity that is constructed in negative terms fulfills a number of social functions and provides some relevant information about the positioning of these youngsters towards the history of the Basque conflict, understanding this as a discursive-epistemic area. On one hand, claiming not to know allows them to position themselves as second line figures; this reduces possible responsibilities in relation to the past and points at the older generations as first line figures that carry all of the responsibility. In this kind of discourses, the younger generation is portrayed as being dependent on the knowledge transmitted by the older generations:

> *The differences [between me and my parents]? Well, starting from the point that I have not experienced it in such a direct way – that means that I don't have so much knowledge about the situation in that moment. In the end, I only know what I have been told, and that's it; and I can merely limit myself to reproducing what they have told me. And to think critically about it, but I don't have enough knowledge because I have not lived through it. And, in the end, as they have wanted to hide part of that story from us… there are many voids.*
>
> Nora-21-Getxo

Similarly to what happens in discourses about their personal identification, when the youngsters speak from collective positions we can also observe the repeated idea of a

"direct" (line 2) and an indirect effect that the conflict can have on subjects. According to this, it is the older generations who have personally collected the knowledge about the conflict, and it is in their hand to transfer it to the coming generations; thus, adults function as a screen or gatekeepers in this discourse. Nora presents her generation as a non-agentive subject: the repeated use of the adverbial structure "in the end" (lines 3 and 6) refers to the perception of an essentially unchangeable reality, thus building on a narrative of the unavoidable (Wodak, 2011, p. 186). The verbal choice of this excerpt is also meaningful: Nora uses affirmative verbs when speaking about the adults ("what they have told me", in line 5, and "they have wanted to hide", in line 7), whereas her own actions are almost exclusively reconstructed through negative and passive verb forms ("I have not experienced it", in line 2; or "I don't have so much / enough knowledge" in lines 2-3 and 5-6) or downplayed through modalisation ("I *only* know what I have been told, and *that's it*; and I can *merely limit myself* to", in lines 3 to 5).

Nora relates knowledge about the past to the ability to speak about it: since the former has been denied to her, she is incapable for the latter (lines 3 to 5). Therefore, knowledge is directly linked to the perception of one's own legitimacy to participate in the discursive exchange. This idea can clearly be observed in the next example:

ETA's disarmament and dissolution took place very recently. Did you follow it a bit?
Yes, we were at home with the family when they communicated it. And our parents said that it would be a historical moment. And we were in fact sitting on the sofa, watching, when they said they would do the declaration. And… it was fine.
And which impression did it do to you? When you listen to your parents say that it's a historical moment, do people your age also feel that it's historical?
Well, sort of, yes, because in the end there has been a conflict for a long time here. In the end, we have not experienced it so – so much on our skin, I mean, it's not the same for them to hear those news, that [ETA] is quitting, as it is for us. Because I was quite small. But yes, actually, it was historical, wasn't it? (…) They carry a greater pain in their body. I mean, I can speak about the victims, but I don't have it on my skin. I mean, if they had killed my brother or so, the feeling would be different.

Joseba-20-Bilbo

In this excerpt, Joseba adopts an observer role in the face of a historical event: ETA's disarmament communiqué. First, he evaluates it from the prism of his parents' perspective, reproducing their voice through an indirect quote in line 4. He employs metaphors related to corporality in order to describe the differences between the type of relationship both groups have with the past: his parents carry the conflict "on their skin" (lines 10 and 14) and "in their body" (line 13), that is, they have suffered its blast on the *front line*. The *body* is a metonymy of lifetime, and to experiment something (in this case, pain) in one's own life or body is interpreted as having a true experience. Since the speaker cannot identify that kind of effect in his own life, he comes to the conclusion that his is an indirect or second-line relationship; thus, not as real or valid as his parents', and this reduces his legitimacy to speak about the topic.

That lack of legitimacy is also constructed in discourse through strategies that show distancing towards the content of the utterance: indirectly quoted speech (in lines 3 and 4), relativizing intercalations ("sort of", in line 9) and modalizers of possibility ("I can

speak about", in line 13) all build on a distanced position of the speaker; they are softening strategies that reduce his commitment. The connector of contrast used in the sentence "I can speak about the victims, *but* I don't have it on my skin", in lines 13 and 14, introduces a disclaimer, in the sense of resting meaning to the first assertion. Disclaimers respond to linguistic strategies of alignment aimed at rendering "potentially problematic actions" (Overstreet & Yule, 2001, p. 48) as meaningful and cohere them with the identity the speaker is constructing within discourse. Joseba's assertion "I *can* speak about the victims, but I don't have it on my skin" fulfills therefore a deontic function which is tied to the permissibility and obligations of the speaker and which can be summarized as "It is not my role to speak about the conflict". The term *victim* operates in this case as a metonymy of the most painful aspects of the conflict.

In this kind of structures, members of the older generations are generally conceptualized as *owning* the knowledge, whereas youths are self-categorized as unknowing or learners/observers. Information and knowledge are metaphorized in terms of a property or a valuable asset: the youngsters claim them from their elders, and accuse them of not wanting to share them. In this polarization of subjects, the youngsters employ two types of strategies in order to characterize the outgroup: on one hand, some speakers accuse it of hiding information and wanting to manipulate it in favor of their own interests. In these cases, the identity rupture towards older generations is greater, as can be seen in Nora's example above, in which she rebuilds a direct confrontation with the older generations. On the other hand, in those cases in which the rupture is not as clear, justifying strategies that seek an explanation for the attitude of their parents are more frequent. In these last types of narratives, adults are characterized as a group that keeps its knowledge because of fear, trauma, external circumstances (outlawings and criminalization) or because they want to protect the youth.

Expressions such as "they don't want us to know what they have known (…) so we can go on" (Lur-16-Hendaia) construct a more positive image of the elders, in which they are portrayed as victims, characterized by a metaphorical *wound* that prevents them from *moving out* of their area, that is, the *territory* of the past conflict. "Going on" is, in this case, a conceptualization of the agency attributed to younger generations, who can, as opposed to their parents, move away from the painful past towards a future that is free of this pain. The historical development of the conflict is therefore conceived in terms of a displacement and formulated through spatial metaphors. The rupture between generations implies this displacement or movement.

A rather minoritary but relevant discourse portrays the youngsters as experts or knowing as opposed to their parents, because this distance places them in a position where they can make more just judgements about the past.

Interviewer: What differentiates you guys most from the older generations in regard to this topic?
Imanol: Perhaps that we have not experienced it. For us, it's something that is over. I don't know.
Ilargi: Yes, and we don't have their psychological sequels. Lots of them are quite tired, or have had psychologically bad sequels, and some are not doing really well in their heads. And I also thing that, since we have not lived through it, we don't have as much pain as they do. That's what I think: that they are, above all, hurt. (…)

Ekaitz: Perhaps we have not lived through that time, and that's why we have a bit more – maybe that's why we have a more critical attitude, maybe because it has not touched us.

Group interview in Altsasu

When you compare yourself to your parents' generation, which differences do you see?
I think that we speak with the knowledge of whom has learnt. It is something that we have not lived through, and that has affected our way of seeing things: both in terms of seeing the positive in a better light, and the negative in a worse light.

Fernando-17-Oñati

Both speakers assume that direct experience conditions and biases the interpretations about the past. In the first excerpt, the expression employed by Ilargi "not doing well in their head" (lines 6 and 7) refers to mental illness or irrationality: therefore, it is associated with a lack of reliability to make rational judgements on the past. This reference to madness evokes a social imaginary distanced from human rationality (Barjola, 2018, p. 167), through which the outgroup –the parents' generation– is characterized as a wounded animal incapable of getting out of the painful territory.

In Fernando's excerpt, the verb "to see" (lines 4 and 5) also fulfills a metaphorical function: the speaker takes an observer role, yet not in terms of a passive viewer who looks up to the protagonists expecting to learn from them, but rather as an omniscient judge. Or, turning back to a spatial metaphor: he attributes to himself the broad view of somebody who planes to a wider distance from the above mentioned *territory* and therefore is able to perceive the territory as a whole, as opposed to the local, partial and reduced scope of the parents' view.

5.3.2.2. The national ingroup

In the second main categorizing structure, the polarizing square is not deployed between the youngsters and their elders. Instead, the former locate themselves in the same social group as their parents, in a collective identity defined by its historical and cultural continuity. Whichever their lifetime experiences are, both parents and children share a collective identity as *Basques*, as opposed to an outgroup category which is usually referred to as "Spain", "the Spanish", and, to a lesser extent, "France" and "the French", depending on the geographical setting of the speaker.

At the same time, a second polarizing structure is deployed within the identification group *the Basques*, among those who consider themselves *not abertzale* and those who do, and the attitude towards ETA's past armed strategy often functions either as a unifying symbol or as an element of rupture between those categories. These structures are schematizations of the main narratives identified in my data, but they are by no means incompatible; on the contrary, speakers frequently construct several ideological squares within the same discourse, or change their position in them according to the communicative situation and the frameworks employed in it.

Most narratives built on the national or Basque identity take Francoism as a starting point and context for the development of the Basque conflict. Speakers will usually identify with a broader cultural and historic consciousness which they feel link them to past

members of the group; according to this understanding, young people are one more chain link in the shared experiences of the group that is also formed by their parents and prior generations. Three main elements are mostly presented as being cohesive of the group: the historical victimization of the ingroup; the continuity of ideals and objectives; and the symbolic value of the armed past, both as a unifying element as well as a fracturing element.

a) The historical victimization of the ingroup

According to one of the narratives, the main experience that coheres the Basques as an ingroup are the violations suffered by an outgroup. This victimization has generally two types of expressions: a historical expression, materialized in the cultural oppression during the Francoist dictatorship; and a more contemporary expression, in the form of political and cultural prejudices about Basques. The interviewees of this study have usually experienced neither of both, but this does not prevent them from identifying with those experiences.

> *Well, apart of independence, it's not only – I don't understand independence as separating from Spain only, it's also separating – me, for example, I don't share the cultural values that a Spaniard has. And so I think that should be stressed from the beginning: okay, why don't I want to be part of Spain? Because I don't share values, I don't have anything to do with someone from Madrid. So, it's also to stress that, that they should give us autonomy and value our culture. Because in the end, we have remained not being able to be ourselves, and it's part of our identity, and therefore it has been imposed on us. And that should be explained: that we have our identity and we have the right to have it, and because of a dickhead or a group of dickheads we have lost it. And you can tell, because now I am talking in Spanish; and it is easier for me to speak Spanish because they prohibited my parents to speak Basque. And if they had not prohibited them that, it would be different now.*
>
> Nora-21-Getxo

Nora establishes a causal relation between the linguistic repression suffered by her family during Francoism –represented by the figure of her parents in line 12– and her contemporary linguistic reality. She builds this relation through the use of causal connectors ("because", in lines 11 and 12), changes in verb tenses and temporal deixis: the adverb "now" (lines 11 and 14) stresses that the interpretation about the past is being realized from the current standpoint of the speaker, and past events are defined in relation to it. Thus, the damage inflicted by the outgroup (Franco's Spain, defined in this case through pejorative lexica in line 10) becomes the cause of one of the speaker's contemporary social issues (the linguistic problem).

Nora reconstructs the essence of the Basque conflict as a conflict of cultural identities. In her narrative, the pronoun *we* refers to Basques as a cultural group. This group appears victimized, because it has been forbidden to express its culture freely; an argument that is stressed by the oxymoron "we have remained not being able to be ourselves" in line 7.

On the contrary, we can observe a graduation within the outgroup: on the one hand are the citizens of Spain, embodied metonymically by "someone form Madrid" in lines 5 and 6. The speaker argues that their characteristics are fundamentally different from and incompatible with those of the ingroup. On the other hand, there is a more reduced group that holds the concrete responsibility of the damage inflicted to the ingroup: the franquists

who exerced the past repression and whom Nora describes as “a dickhead” (referring to Franco himself) or “a group of dickheads”. A possible solution to this conflict is visualized by Nora as reducing the damage by enhancing the ingroups’ autonomy. She makes this position explicit through the use of deontic modality in lines 6 and 7.

Most narratives that refer to historical continuity of the group follow a similar pattern: the speaker narrates a specific story that illustrates or reinforces the frame they are constructing, and applies the features that can be inferred from it to the interpretation of the whole history of conflict, through a discursive process that van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999, p. 110) named *mythopoesis*.

Another main discourse that links the historical character of the conflict with contemporary political issues focuses on the symbolic and cultural aspect of the conflict. Most participants have at some point spoken about prejudices that exist against the Basques as a group, both in terms of personal experiences as well as –and especially– in terms of a continued discrimination against their group identity:

Galder: My question is: why do they fear us, perhaps. Why?
Lander: But who is afraid of you?
Galder: The Spanish are afraid of us, for some reason.
Jokin: And they loathe us.
Lander: The Spanish laugh at our face. That’s how I see it.
Eider: Yes.
Galder: But they’re doing it because of something.
Interviewer: Do you think it is fear?
Jokin: In some cases it is.
Ana: [Loathing]
Galder: [I think it is, it’s fear].
Eider: I think it’s disgust. Fear? But they laugh in our face!
Lander: I think it’s none of both. [It’s…]
Jokin: Even hatred.
Ana: An acquaintance of mine, while in Cádiz on the beach, he had a tattoo on this back, I think it was – I can’t remember what it was, I’m not sure if it was a Basque flag or something like that. And they beat him up, just like that, because he was walking on the street with a tattoo. I mean, you can go just as you want. And they beat him up.
Eider: And then we are ‘the bad guys’ [gesture of quotation marks]. That, supposedly, eh – they beat him up and everything. Because then, the issue with the Spanish flag the other day in Catalonia… but they only show that. They don’t see the other side. Yes. For example, they say that in the past, when you went outside with license plates from Vitoria[-Gasteiz], Navarre… that the cars could – ugh! They could appear in a really bad state. And why? They used to come with license plates from, say, Murcia, and no one would touch them. But no one talks about that.
Jokin: They did a study: they left a car in Madrid and it was scratched. They left one here with an Osborne bull and a Spanish flag in its back seats, and nothing happened to it. The car was in Rentería, and the one that went to Madrid, that car ended up completely destroyed: its mirrors broken, the front windshield broken, the back one as well, the wheels punched and completely scratched.
Eider: But that does not come out. It’s always the rest of us who are bad ones. The ‘etarras’...

Group interview in Vitoria-Gasteiz

In this group discussion, the speakers cooperate to build a negative characterization of the outgroup and the victimization of the ingroup. During this negotiating sequence about the

hypothetical motivations of the outgroup, they build a *status quo* within the dialogue in lines 1 through 14. The questions and answers they pose to each other function as an integrative strategy through which participants interact with the aim of establishing a shared truth. The redefinitions offered by the speakers are only apparent reformulations of previously expressed theses, because each contribution (whether it is fear, disgust, or hatred what the outgroup feels) fulfils the same function: to reinforce the negative characterization of the Other.

When Lander, in line 13, is about to introduce a destructive strategy that could compromise the consensus hitherto built within their dialogue, Ana changes strategies and introduces the narrative of a story that confirms the *truth* built so far: she provides an example of mythopoesis in which the protagonist –a figure her interlocutors don't know– suffers violence for showing the symbols of his cultural community. It is an extradiegetic experience that Ana brings to the discussion from an area outside of the communicative event: while none of the speakers has experienced it directly, they attribute truthfulness to it, because the story fulfills a representative role in the narrative they are building on the conflict. Thus, the character who in Ana's narrative suffers violence becomes a metaphor for the historical relationship between the Basques and the Spaniards, while the beaters operate in the narrative as symbols of the latter. These conceptions are part of a broad social imaginary that derives from a shared knowledge of the historical context: the speakers rely on the framework or mental scheme of the cultural repression during Francoism in order to interpret these kinds of narratives. This pattern of interpretation is sufficiently rooted in their cultural community, to the extent that the specific anecdote is not questioned and it does not need a real or personal experience in order to be reaffirmed: its truth derives from an updated expression of a shared belief about a historical relationship of oppression.

Eider reinforces the discursive status quo built by her peers with an ironic quote (Reyes, 1996, p. 50) in line 20: "And then we are 'the bad guys'". The irony derives mainly from the thematization of the sentence (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 47), as the structure *temporal deictic + verb + subject + complement* places the emphasis on the copulative and deictic connector "*and then* we"; and also from the contradictory effect between the content of both expressions, that is, the anecdote narrated previously by Ana –which, as we have seen, is a metaphorical account of the victimization of Basques– and Eider's reaction, which ironically designates the victimized group as "the bad guys". Eider shows a distance from the content of the sentence by making it explicit through gestures that she is actually quoting the outgroup or an external voice. There is, thus, a duplication of the speaker, in which one of the voices is ridiculed (Reyes, 1996, p. 56). In this case, the ironical expression also operates as an inclusive device by interpellating the interlocutors of the discussion and tightening the bonds among them, insofar it refers to a shared knowledge they need to infer in order to understand the irony (Ibid., 55).

At this point in the negotiation, the participants have built an almost absolute consensus: the examples they provide all serve to reinforce their shared narrative and can thus be considered strategies of perpetuation of the discursive status quo. These are combined with a number of justification strategies, such as authorization –when Jokin self-categorizes in the role of the expert by referring to an alleged study, an argumentative resource that aims to provide or suggest the existence of a scientific basis of one's own

position, as well as insinuating that the community that shares this belief reaches well beyond the group involved in this concrete dialogue– and references to common sense or shared knowledge. Eider, for example, does not explain what happened "with the Spanish flag the other day in Catalonia" (lines 20 and 21); she considers that to be shared information, not because she knows that her peers are aware of the particular reference, but because the ellipsed information can be elicited through the mental model constructed so far within the dialogue.

In this fragment, both the ingroup and the outgroup are represented by toponymical references: *Errenteria*, *Vitoria* and *Navarre* refer to the Basques, while *Murcia* and *Madrid* refer to the Spanish. Also significant is Eider's allusion to "etarras" (line 35): this expression is an indirect quotation of a discourse that the speaker attributes to the outgroup, and it refers to a demonizing portrait of the ingroup. In linguistic terms, *etarra* is a toponymization of an actor: the armed group ETA becomes a place, and consequently th people attached to it become *etar*, adding the Basque suffix *–ar* used to indicate gentilice. This geographical metaphor assumes that members of this gentilice share a series of opinions and attitudes which have been attached to them by birth or through cultural integration, and which are considered to be a fixed and therefore invariable part of their identity.

Etarra is a term that has historically been used to designate members of ETA and to speak negatively about the *abertzale* community surrounding it (Velte, 2016b, p. 32). In the interviews carried out for this study, I have collected 27 mentions of the term in the discourses of 15 participants. In twelve of them, the speakers made an interdiscursive use, that is, they introduced the term *Etarra* by direct or indirectly alluding to an external voice, taking a considerable distance from it. In the remaining 15 quotations, the term appeared as an element incorporated into their discourse, without distancing modalizers; therefore, it was naturalized more frequently than questioned.

In short, we can argue that the main unifying discourse of the youngsters' collective identity in national terms is based on the historical victimization of the group. The collective experiences of the past and especially the trauma of Francoism arises in the form of discursive frameworks embedded in social memory on which even younger generations rely when interpreting more contemporary expressions of the conflict in their own terms. The prominence of the historical victimization discourse lies not only in its explicit expressions, but also in its indirect appearances. The youngsters often feel that an imaginary hostile to their ingroup is part of the dominant social discourses, and so many of the narratives they build are in reality answers or counter-narratives to those hegemonic discourses.

b) The ideological continuity of the group

The second discursive pattern I have identified within the national identification axis views the cohesion and continuation of the group in terms of its ideological characteristics and political objectives. In this kind of discursive constructions, the perseverance of the group does not (or not only) come from the shared interpretation of a painful experience in the past, but from an attitude the group shares with a view to the future.

This turn towards the future allows the speakers to integrate themselves, as a generation, into the group, as it situates the conflict in their contemporary context.

> Looking back, how would you summarize the opinion that has lasted about ETA?
> *In my close environment I would say – I mean, that what they did was good. In the end, eh, all that they did and battled was to – to defend those political ideas we have nowadays, somehow. So, around me – I mean, in the context that I have had, there is a good opinion about it.*
>
> Endika-17-Tafalla

In this example, the speaker reproduces the discourse that is dominant in his close social group: he appropriates the moral evaluation he has learnt in that context by making use of interdiscursivity, and he also reproduces the argumentative scheme on which it is based. The use of first person pronouns and verbs ("those political ideas we have nowadays", in lines 4 and 5) shows a clear identification with the ingroup. In this construction, the past and present political ideologies are linked, and ETA is categorized as a defender of them. Thus, the activity of the armed group results legitimated in favor of shared and legitimate aims: there is a strategy of justification through objectives. The temporal adverbial construct "in the end" (lines 3 and 4) responds to a naturalization strategy: in the context of a debate about the legitimacy of an actor, it refers to an essential element that lies on the basis of its behavior, which in this case is evaluated positively (arguing that ETA's objective was to defend the ingroup's ideas). This positive side attributed to the actor is highlighted, whereas the remaining aspects –which could possibly challenge that positive characterization– are considered secondary.

One of the keys of group continuity is the construction of a shared discourse that legitimizes its aims and interests and makes them understandable (van Dijk, 2003a, p. 45). That's why some young Basques, especially those who identify with or ideologically support ETA's armed strategy, often take a defensive position when they feel that the image they have about the ingroup's past is being questioned; this position reinforces the identification towards the ingroup even more in discourse. This happens, inter alia, when they are confronted with dominant discourses about terrorism:

> *Gorka: I think that a terrorist is, in the end, someone who makes things without an aim. Who kills for the sake of killing, and such.*
> *Lur: I give a very simple meaning to the word 'terrorist'. Eh – what the word means: the one who produces terror. And a terrorist, well, it is up to each of us to decide who is and who's not. To me, as I mentioned yesterday, to me it is very clear that, in my childhood, terrorists were the Spanish National Police and the Civil Guard. They caused terror in me, a terrible fear. From the moment on in which they produce fear, such a huge fear, to me they are terrorists. And, in my opinion, who is a terrorist and who is not is up to each of us. Each one must decide if it causes them terror or not.*
> *Unai: I feel that it's really dangerous to mix us up with, for example, those who are terrorists nowadays or so, with those crazy people, who have been at the Paris attacks or, eh – and who kill anyone, hundreds of innocent people and such. And that they think that we Basques are also like that: I think that's very dangerous for us. That would be the most harmful thing for us, if everybody thought that.*
>
> Group interview in Bayonne

In this communicative situation, four 15 and 16 year old adolescents –although only three voices appear in this excerpt– are negotiating over an implicit subtext: the discourse that portrays the Basques as terrorists. As this narrative demonizes the ingroup, the speakers employ several strategies in order to challenge it, the most evident of which is the metalinguistic discussion: by reformulating the term *terrorist*, they intend to challenge the consensus over a fundamental element of the established social *truth*. Gorka provides the first re-definition, and associates the term with negative features commonly attributed to outgroups: a lack of political or rational motivations and the use of indiscriminate violence, linked to a lack of moral legitimation (Shanahan, 2010, pp. 175–176). As mentioned beforehand, the adverbial structure "in the end" (line 1) evokes an essentialist view that the nominalization of the adjective "terrorist" reinforces: in this narrative, a person *is a terrorist* (nominalization) instead of doing *terrorist actions* (adjectivization). Therefore, the actor is reduced to a static and unchangeable identity, instead of highlighting a behavior that involves an active and conscious –and therefore changeable– participation.

Lur, on the other hand, takes distance from the term *terrorist* by making explicit that he employs it as a quote (line 3); thus, the speaker shows that he does not share the conventional use of the term. He employs two transformation strategies to question it: on one hand, the re-definition he offers in lines 3 and 4 operates as a strategy of rationalization, through which he self-categorizes as connoisseur of objective data that legitimate his position. He does not mention a specific source, but we can infer from the metalinguistic sentence "what the word means" (lines 3 and 4) that he is alluding to a normative or universal definition of the term; as such, it functions as an argument of authorization. When the term is associated to an emotion (*fear*, emphasized through repetition in lines 4, 7, 8 and 10), the actors who *have* or feel this emotion become legitimate definers of it. The speaker positions himself within them: through the striking repetition of the first person singular pronoun *I* and its derivatives (lines 5 to 10), the speaker remarks his subjectivity, not as a distancing epistemic modaliser, but as a means to categorize himself as an authorized source: if defining terrorism depends on personal experiences or interpretations, his own opinion is completely legitimate and valid.

On the other hand, he narrates one of his childhood experiences as an illustrative and evidential proof of his thesis. In lines 5 to 9, he builds on a victim-narrator that is symbolized by the frightened, innocent child. This construction portrays the Spanish police forces negatively as an outgroup and as the originator of the damage suffered by the innocent protagonist.

In the last intervention of the fragment, Unai introduces a new external actor as an antagonist: the public opinion. He employs first person plural forms (lines 11, 14 and 15) and therefore builds a collectivity he clearly identifies with as *We, the Basques*, and which also includes ETA; whereas the outgroup is divided into two subcategories. On one hand, there are *the other terrorists*, the islamist groups he clearly differentiates from the ingroup. He employs a temporal deictic in order to draw a border between *them* and the ingroup. The adverb "nowadays" in line 12 constructs an essential difference between the existence of groups considered to be *already established* and those who are *new* or have arisen *nowadays*: the latter are symbolized or embodied by the authors of the attacks that happened in Paris in November 2015, two and a half years before this interview was

recorded. Unai provides a demonizing portray of them: the metaphor of madness ("those crazy people", line 12) alludes to an irrational behavior, and therefore to an activity with no political motivation. This presentation is reinforced through the co-text, because the statement made by Gorka in lines 1 and 2 functions as a status quo in the conversation: "A terrorist is, in the end, someone who makes things without an aim. Who kills for the sake of killing". These other groups are therefore evaluated as illegitimate, whereas Unai identifies with and attributes legitimacy to the *established* or *usual* armed groups. Interestingly, he employs the same arguments and imaginaries that are usually employed against his own ingroup in order to attach the terrorism frame to other groups.

On the other hand, Unai introduces a second antagonist by alluding to the broader public opinion, which he points at through the pronouns "they" in line 14 and "everybody" in line 16. This antagonist is portrayed as an external judge, whose opinion on the ingroup is valued or considered to have great implications, in terms of possibly being "dangerous" (line 11) or "harmful" (line 15).

c) Symbols related to the armed past as cohesive elements

In conflicts that involve a high degree of violence, social identities tend to polarize, because the harm inflicted by the *other* becomes one of the main variables in terms of which the conflict itself is understood. Once the frame of war is established, most or all members of the group feel part of the armed conflict, even if they personally do not take up arms (Armoudian, 2015, p. 376). Changing that imaginary is often more difficult than to tend the armed conflict itself. In the Basque Country of the 2020s, ETA and other armed groups of the past continue to operate as a shared symbol within a specific ideological community, and they provide cohesion to this community insofar they represent a narrative of past resistance and therefore interpellate the community through that narrative. Some of the elements described by Zulaika almost 30 years ago (Zulaika, 1990, p. 369) have been transmitted to the next generations, and have also arisen in the interviews carried out for this study:

1 Would you say that the Basque conflict is over?
2 *[Silence] Maybe not, because – well, in principle, it is over. But yet there are*
3 *– it is also true that some ideas are still lasting inside of some people. I think*
4 *that some people might still want to maintain it. Perhaps not as it was, but they*
5 *would like there to be like an organization, or a group that is strong and that*
6 *tries to struggle to make it better, or at least to reduce that power that Spain*
7 *has on us.*

Ane-21-Mutriku

In this excerpt, ETA is portrayed as a defender of the interests of the ingroup. It is never mentioned explicitly, but through euphemisms such as "an organization" or "a group" (line 5). Ane equals the term *conflict* with ETA's armed activity: in the statement "some people might still want to maintain it" (line 4), she does not make the object explicit; it is to be interpreted that she is responding to the point of the question, and therefore is speaking about the conflict, although she soon focuses on ETA's role in the view of her social context. She argues that there is a community that wishes to keep "an organization" which will reduce the outgroup's power on the ingroup, and therefore builds a narrative of resistance. The term *organization* can also be interpreted as an interdiscursive element, as far as it is a legitimizing term widely used in ETA's history.

In this construction, there is an idealization or nostalgic view of the past: the community around Ane misses the protection that ETA used to represent to them. The speaker reflects this feeling in her discourse. Her position changes throughout the excerpt: she begins using third person pronouns and verbs, when she talks about other people who are nostalgic (lines 3 to 6), but then, towards the end of her intervention, she includes herself within that collective subject, when she refers to "the power that Spain has on *us*" (lines 6-7).

This narrative of resistance has appeared more frequently than expected, proving to be a major mental scheme among the participants:

> *Lur: We'll see – it is still a long time until then, but I'd say that in 25 or 30 years, we will look back – I mean, 30 years after ETA's 2011 ceasefire, and in 2040, in my opinion there will be huge progress within Basque society.*
> *Unai: Obviously, but before that there has been the other thing as well. I really think that ETA brought something. To begin with, in Iparralde, in the past, people completely ignored the Basques. (…) ETA showed that we were there. We also had that in the past, in spite of all the victims. It was there to bring us out to the world, well, to show that the Basques were there and that they could do something. And it's obvious that the armed struggle was not a solution to really achieve something, but in my opinion it was necessary to arrive to the situation in which we are nowadays, eh, it has been necessary to have that previously, in order to begin the negotiations we do have nowadays, and to show: we are there and you have seen what we are capable of; it's not what we really want. We have done that because you did, otherwise we wouldn't have done anything. We have been forced to do that, we have been forced to fight with weapons, and nowadays we want an acceptance, to say that we are not terrorists, that we are a nation that has always been oppressed and which has been forced to fight.*
>
> Group interview in Bayonne

The participants of this discussion are negotiating an evaluation of ETA's ceasefire. Lur introduces his opinion through an epistemic modaliser ("I'd say", line 1), moderately reducing his level of discursive commitment: he argues that the end of ETA's violent activity was beneficial for the ingroup's interests. We need to take into account that both Lur and Unai grew up in the *abertzale* community of the northern or French Basque Country, in which the collective experience of the conflict has slightly differed from the South[38], and where ETA's historical role is not as generally demonized as on the southern side of the border. Thus, when Lur evaluates the ceasefire positively, we is aware that he could be questioning a historical consensus built within his community; the use of epistemic modality and showing a degree of distance towards his own thesis allows him to introduce a possible controversial opinion into a dialogue in which his interlocutors might not agree on.

Indeed, Unai apparently first supports his fellow's thesis ("obviously", line 4) but immediately introduces a disclaimer ("but before that there has been the other thing as well") transforming the discursive status quo established by Lur. In his new narrative, ETA is categorized as a defender of the ingroup. Spatial metaphors such as "to bring us

[38] First, ETA was not as active –in terms of attacks– as in the Spanish state, partly because Ipar Euskal Herria had its own armed branch called Iparretarrak (IK); secondly, many members of ETA fled to the northern Basque Country as refugees in the 70s and the 80s; and third, many of GAL's attacks against these refugees took place there. All these factors clearly shaped the collective experiences of the local population.

out to the world" in lines 7-8 and "we are there" (line 13) allude to a hidden or invisibilized character of the ingroup. In this discourse, the agency of the Basques is enhanced under the influence of ETA.

Therefore, the references to an apparent agreement with Lur's thesis rather serve as a courtesy mechanism in order to avoid a direct confrontation between interlocutors, as Unai's opinion differs greatly: to him, ETA's violence "was necessary" (line 10), in a clear deontic context. Therefore, a justification of ETA's activity becomes dominant in his discourse. Its violence is not explicitly addressed; instead, Unai points at it through the deictic "that" (line) or through terminology that has a more positive connotation ("fight", lines 16 and 18). He deploys a clear polarizing square completely identifying with the armed group, up to the extent of speaking about ETA in first person ("we have been forced to fight with weapons", lines 15 and 16). It is obvious that Unai, who was born in 2002, can't possibly have been part of ETA in any way, nor could he be actively involved in the armed conflict. Yet he does feel part of the social community surrounding ETA, in the terms of a national identity symbolically built around the armed past.

As such, it is of Unai's interest to legitimize a behavior he indirectly considers his own. A competition between several discourses can be identified in his intervention: on one hand, Unai tries to keep the shared discursive base built by Lur, as well as his own moral principles, which, in general terms, oppose the use of violence as a legitimate tool, as he makes explicit in other fragments of the interview and here indirectly refers to by stating "it's obvious that the armed struggle was not a solution to really achieve something" in lines 9 and 10. On the other hand, he longs to legitimize the past actions of the ingroup even though they might be contradictory with the former. In order to build a coherent narrative that integrates both, he uses a justifying strategy in which the violence of the ingroup is presented as a consequence forced by the outgroup (lines 14 to 18) against the will of the first. Thus, the responsibility of this violence is attributed to the second.

We can also identify the presence of a third, inexplicit discourse: the social narrative that portrays the Basques as terrorists. Unai indirectly refers to it when he denies it (lines 16-17), and transforms it through a reformulation, by building a more positive characterization of the ingroup.

In Unai's narrative, direct victims of the conflict are portrayed as collateral consequences (their reference is attenuated through the connector of contrast "in spite of" in line 7), whereas he Basques are victimized as an originally well-intentioned subject who is obliged to use violence by external circumstances. This is made explicit through the reformulation or correction strategy introduced by Unai in his narrative of resilience: "We are a nation that has always been oppressed and which has been forced to fight" (lines 17 and 18).

These historical meaning attached to ETA has also arisen in some of the narratives that evaluate the past violence in negative terms:

How would you describe ETA?
Well, eh, perhaps, as a Basque, or as – at some point you might feel proud: "Wow, how strong we are". But in the end it was almost rather like – rather against us than in favor.

Ekaitz-16-Altsasu

When asked to describe ETA, Ekaitz offers straightaway an evaluation from the position of a collective identity: he constructs an ingroup formed by *us, the Basques*, and portrays ETA as a symbol of the strength of that collectivity. Then, he introduces a self-correcting transformation strategy in order to amend that discourse: he evaluates ETA's actions negatively, and by doing so he adopts his current standpoint. This kind of narratives, summarized as *The objective was good; the way was not*, are also part of a series of strategies to cohere distinct cognitive frames on the same actor or event, and may provide the ground for discourses of a nostalgic character that are based on the idealization of a past one has personally not experienced.

In fact, evaluations of the past based on hypothetic future scenarios are frequently employed discursive constructions among the young participants of this study. One variation of this scheme hypothesizes with a parallel development of history, and assumes a worse contemporary outcome than the actual state of affairs. The past becomes thus intrinsically justified:

It's just that – sometimes, I mean, of course, I do think about it, logically. But sometimes I might indeed think: if what happened didn't happen, perhaps my situation would be worse right now. Perhaps my parents – because our nation here would possibly be so oppressed, that my life would be even worse. I sometimes think: if what happened didn't happen, if ETA hadn't been there, perhaps my life would have been much worse.

How?

Well, maybe, if I went outside from here I would have an even worse feeling about myself. Because, maybe, like – alright, this might sound badly, but if a black person goes right now to Madrid, they might suffer racism. Well, maybe I would also suffer from something like that, because in the end an oppressed nation is not well seen in another country.

So you think that thanks to the armed struggle the Basque nation has gained legitimacy?

I mean, what I think is – alright, we are not liberated, but some chains might have been broken thanks to that. (…) When I speak about this, people might go like [shocked gesture]. In my opinion, ETA's goal in the end was to free the Basque Country from others and, eh, to liberate it from some others. I mean, that is my opinion. I mean, I believe they did actions that for the people might be, like, quite harsh. But, for example, I do think that the Basque Country was not in a very good moment at that time. So, well, maybe ETA was there so that people would begin to fight and to realize where we are and which – which moment the Basque Country was in. So, I think that perhaps it is possible to justify some actions.

Joana-16-Arrasate

The speaker of this discursive fragment employs several strategies in order to legitimize her opinion. First, she authorizes herself by self-categorizing as a rational subject: "I do think about it, logically" (line 1). Secondly, she builds on hypothetic structures of cause and effect, as explained above; this is stressed by the striking repetition of adverbs of possibility and other modalizers of probability, such as "perhaps" (lines 2, 3, 6 and 23), "maybe" (lines 8, 10 and 21), "possibly" (line 4) and modal verbs such as "might" (lines 10, 15, 16 and 19) or other structures indicating cause and effect (lines 2 to 6). All these are to be interpreted in a context of discursive dispute: Joana is well aware of the controversial effect her opinion can cause among the normative discourses in her social context, and she introduces a number of modalizers that reduce her commitment towards

the actual macro-narrative of her discourse, namely that ETA's actions were positive for the Basque people.

However, this thesis is never made completely explicit in Joana's intervention: pronouncing it in those terms would more than probably gain her some kind of judgement or reproval, as the confrontation with the socially dominant discourses would be too direct. Instead, she resorts to the use of metaphors in order to build a frame of national liberation: the image of the *chains* (lines 15 and 16), applied to the ingroup, creates the mental image of an imprisoned collective subject, and the action of breaking them evokes a view in which the violence is framed as a gesture of liberation.

These indirect or figurative expressions allow Joana to introduce a discourse in the discussion that would otherwise be considered inappropriate or too challenging for the established social status quo. She is aware of this when she self-categorizes as a discordant voice which stands in opposition to a larger collectivity, which she refers to as "people" (line 16): the outgroup is therefore conceptualized as a large, generalized and anonymous collective subject that stands for the discursive hegemony and therefore holds a great degree of power. Joana mimics the scandalized reaction she expects from this massive outgroup through gestures; she is challenging political correctness. This is why the many epistemic modalizers, as well as the hypothetical structures present in her discourse need to be interpreted as softening strategies or requests for permission to introduce a politically incorrect opinion into the discussion. The highlighted subjectivity of the speaker (in expressions such as "I think" in lines 2, 5, 15, 20 and 23; "I believe", in line 19; or "my opinion" in lines 17 and 19), on the other hand, fulfill an authorizing role: Joana is defending her opinion consciously against the dominant opinion. Therefore, the linguistic structures that stress the speaker's subjectivity only apparently show a distancing; in reality, they build on the authority that stems from the position of the discordant voice consciously adopted by the speaker.

d) The rupture with the armed past as an element of collective identity

The discourses analyzed so far generally conceptualize the participation of Basque armed groups –especially ETA– in the armed conflict as a symbol that positively holds the community together. On the contrary, I have also identified discourses that *remember* that element in a negative way. In those narratives, speakers generally show a great degree of distance towards the actors in question, and they discursively build separated collective identities from them. In these types of constructions, the speakers generally refer to ETA as a third person or subject, and generally attribute negative features to it:

For example, if a tourist came, someone who doesn't know anything about the history of the Basque Country, how would you explain to them?
Whoa. I don't really know. Because, well, actually, I don't know too much about history either. But I don't know, in the end they always relate us with ETA. So, I don't know, I would explain that. I don't know, in the end it's also about making them see that we also have different people here, I mean, that you can't put us all in one single place. I would just explain, well, I don't know, I mean, there are people who know much more than I do, but well, if they asked me, I don't know what I would say, to tell you the truth.

Udane -18- Markina-Xemein

This interviewee detaches herself from ETA in the face of an external view. She interdiscursively rebuilds an external categorization on the ingroup, and denies it through a destructive strategy, using an ontological metaphor: "you can't put us all in one single place" (line 7) refers to this external labeling by conceptualizing it in terms of a recipient or delimitated space in which the labeled groups can be placed.

Udane did not define herself politically at the beginning of the interview, and she shows clear difficulties to speak about politics. She emphasizes her perceived lack of knowledge by repeating "I don't know" (lines 3, 5, 7 and 9) and by expressing that she does not feel legitimized to talk publicly –to a stranger– about the conflict, as "there are people who know much more" and therefore have greater legitimacy. In fact, an assumed ignorance is the first concept she describes when asked for a definition of the conflict. From the few actual statements involving the conflict, we can infer that she feels unfairly linked to ETA in the view of others.

On a more distanced position are those narratives that represent ETA as a shared symbol of the ingroup, but also as detrimental for its interests. This kind of discourse keeps relying on the national identification of the group, as Spain generally continues to embody the outgroup, but ETA is presented as an antagonist apart from the ingroup, because it is argued that it has historically served as an excuse for the outgroup to inflict damage on the ingroup.

1 *I mean, I can't say that ETA's actions have not been vital at some moments in*
2 *history, but ETA's armed struggle has been a struggle that does not fit the*
3 *modes of managing the conflict that we have nowadays in the 21st century.*
4 *[There is] also the armed struggle of the State, which still continues. But I think*
5 *that ETA's disarming and – well, the disappearing of ETA has been a great*
6 *step for us; not so much for the State, but for us it is. Because in the end it was*
7 *a way of – ETA was for many years a way of covering up the sewers of the*
8 *State, and now a moment has arrived in which all those sewers might be*
9 *uncovered, [all it did] to achieve what it really wanted.*

Enaitz-17-Oñati

This speaker also refers to an external discourse, namely to the narrative that assumes ETA's actions as necessary, which the speaker probably perceives in his social context. The double negation in line 1 ("I can't say that ETA's actions have not been vital") is an answer to that implicit quote (Reyes, 1996, p. 45). However, the speaker remarks a temporal reference ("at some moments in history"), and so avoids absolute evaluations. The connector of contrast "but" in line 2 introduces a disclaimer, which invalidates the former statement. In it, the speaker separates his group / his generation from ETA through temporal deixis ("it does not fit the modes… we have nowadays", lines 2-3). The main feature attributed to the latter is its anachronism, that is, remoteness from the contemporary situation of the speaker.

Enaitz evaluates ETA's dissolution as positive for the ingroup's interests: not because of the direct harm it has inflicted on the group, but because it used to operate as a tool of the outgroup (the State), by offering an excuse to "cover up the sewers" of it (line 7). The metaphor of the sewage system is a set phrase that is socially shared and relatively widely used to refer to State corruption (Roures i Llop, 2017); within this example it operates thus as an interdiscursive element.

Similar examples show that disidentification to local armed groups does not necessarily imply the identification with an opposite actor or group of actors: many youngsters conceive as antagonists all parts that were involved in the past armed conflict. Some construct a national identity that excludes ETA and similar groups and their violence; they see themselves, as a generation, as a victim of many different actors and types of violence, especially cultural prejudices and discrimination.

However, there are also discourses that portray ETA as a clear outgroup opposed to the ingroups interests and as harmful for it:

> *Galder: When they relate us with ETA, they already – they particularize us. (…) I think that, those who have really been scaring us – scaring the Spanish, that we are ETA and those folks, have been the fascists.*
> *Eider: It's them.*
> *Jokin: It's a method of control. The Rivera guy and the rest talking about the 'great Basque coupon'[39] and other stuff they don't know about; they don't know and they don't understand, and yet they use it as a weapon against us, because we have a different economic agreement. (…) [I also see] how ETA has tarnished the name of the Basques. (…) I see that it has tarnished everything and that everything could really have been done in a more pacific way. I see that they have stained history, so to say. I know that history is what it is, but…*
> *Interviewer: [To the rest] Do you agree?*
> *Galder: Yes.*
> *Jokin: I also think that they have provided an excuse to fuck us, literally. So that Spain could fuck us.*
>
> Group interview in Vitoria-Gasteiz

Galder builds the discursive status quo in this group interview, but Jokin appropriates most of the development of the argument. The former relies on a Spanish identity that is not made explicit, but that can be inferred from the content of his narrative: when he complains that the Basques become "particularized" (line 1), we can infer a wish to be included in the greater collective subjectivity without being pointed at. However, Jokin provides a more complex categorization of actors, as he does not merely organize the social relations among actors in a polarizing square. Instead, the harm produced on the ingroup appears graduated, as well as the level of responsibility of each actor: on one hand, "the Spanish" (mentioned in line 2, referring to ordinary Spaniards excluding the Basques) are portrayed as an actor who might have prejudices about the ingroup; however, their *fault* is exonerated because they are victims who suffer manipulation from political parties that act according to specific interests. These parties are represented metonymically by the then-spokesman of Ciudadanos, Albert Rivera (to whom Jokin refers in line 5). These parties are characterized as actual offenders, a mental scheme Jokin makes explicit through the emphasizing term "to fuck us" (lines 15 and 16).

ETA, on the other hand, is accused of providing a discursive basis ("an excuse", line 15) for that damage. Galder is the first participant to distance himself from that actor: the sentence "that we are ETA and those folks" (line 3) contains a rather despective description, as well as an implicit negation of the quoted content. Subsequently, Jokin

[39] Original expression: "*El cuponazo vasco*". This interdiscourse refers to the Basque Economic Agreement, which guarantees a greater degree of economic autonomy to the Basque Autonomous Community and stems from some of its historical rights. This is often criticized by Spanish right-wing parties, which conceptualize it as a privilege or, in this case, "a great coupon" with no other justification.

describes ETA's actions negatively through metaphors of uncleanliness (lines 9 and 11), and he suggests that it has had a general effect, as it has "tarnished *everything*". Therefore, ETA is presented as one of the main culprit of the damage suffered by the ingroup. Furthermore, describing it through the metaphor of the weapon (in line 7) evokes a frame of war; in this narrative, ETA becomes a tool to hurt the ingroup. However, the modalization employed in this fragment is quite striking: the more detailed Jokin's account about ETA becomes, the more emphasizing his lexical choices become (lines 9 to 16), showing a greater degree of commitment towards the discursive content; thus, a clearly negative attitude towards ETA can be inferred from his narrative.

To sum up, the fact that ETA and its armed activity still operate as symbolic elements that provide cohesion to a historical ingroup does not mean that all youngsters accept or support them completely or automatically. In fact, there is also a strong discourse among the younger generations that conceives ETA as an antagonist for their group. This relation of antagonism stems not so much from the influence that ETA's actions might have had on the speakers –who in fact struggle to identify that influence in their lives–, but rather on the responsibility of an indirect victimization which they suffer in the name of ETA and which is often associated with the symbolic aspect of the past armed conflict that has endured until the contemporary era, such as prejudices against Basque people.

5.4. PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO DEAL WITH TABOO AND VOIDS OF KNOWLEDGE

One of the main concerns that motivates this research is the taboo that may be arising within the Basque local society with regard to the history of its conflict and, in particular, the use of political violence in the past. Taboo has traditionally been defined as the repressive or "self-controlling" influence of the dominant rules and values within a social group on its most public spheres of communication (A. Assmann, 2020, p. 82); its power consists on the apparent universality and unquestionability of the *truth* on which it is founded. The taboo is the area of the unsayable: a space where private discourses that clash with socially shared values and rules run the risk of being publicly punished. The literature of trauma has often associated the *afterwards* silence and lack of discursive engagement with the memory of past pain (Auxéméry, 2021; Kirmayer, 1996). In the Basque Country there is also widely assumed that re-narrating certain aspects of the past might reactivate the suffering or transmit it to the future generation.

However, after asking members of that generation, I am more prone to believe that, in their case, taboo or silence does not come so much from a fear of past pain, but rather from not wanting to touch a socially discredited subject, and especially from a self-perceived ignorance and shame. This idea has often been stressed by the participants interviewed for this study, and Lur explains it most plainly in the following fragment:

> When you speak to people of your age, do you feel that there is a fear to pick up the topic, or is there more freedom to talk?
> *There is fear, but, above all, a lack of knowledge. That is: there is fear to maybe open your mouth and say something wrong, because they don't know what they are talking about. Nowadays, we, the young people, know very little. My personal situation might be better, because in my family we have spoken about the issue, and because I have done some research by myself. But generally speaking, we know very little about the Basque conflict.*
>
> Lur-16-Hendaia

As Lur emphasizes, what hinders him from speaking about the Basque conflict is primarily not knowing, that is, not owning enough concepts or discursive tools in order to participate in the discussion about the past without shattering its norms. The metalinguistic structure "to say something wrong" refers in this case to a lack of discursive competence (Calsamiglia & Tusón, 2012, p. 31; Gumperz, 1982, p. 24): in order to take part in the broad social *discussion* that implies the construction of collective memory, youths need to be familiar with the internal communicative norms of that collective interaction, in order to be perceived as relevant and legitimate interlocutors.

As a consequence, we can state that the perceived lack of knowledge makes the youngsters feel less legitimized to talk about the Basque conflict, i.e. to engage in the social discussion. The narratives "*We have not experienced / lived through it*" and "*Therefore, we don't know*" function as mantras that condition the social position of these youngsters, which at the same time hinder or discourage them from expressing their knowledge and attitudes openly through discourse. In order to overcome this impediment, they employ a series of psycholinguistic mechanisms that enable them to combine their social position –that of the unknowing subject that ought to remain silent– and their will for communication, and therefore enhance their legitimacy. I will describe these devices in greater detail in the following pages.

5.4.1. The salience of moral evaluation and other requests for permission

One of the most noticeable findings of my data is that many youngsters, even when being asked for sheer descriptions of events or actors, tend to primarily offer moral evaluations as an answer, often by substituting the requested descriptions or narrativizations or by prioritizing the former over these. This was surprising, as I would have rather expected – taking into account the age and the semi-formal context of the interview– that they would generally construct uncommitted narratives rather than involve in evaluatively charged and explicitly subjective declarations. However, the latter has been the norm, as is illustrated by the next example:

How would you describe, in general terms, ETA's activity?
In these years or before?
Since it started.
I think that what they did in the beginning was good, I mean – well, yes, it was good. But then they did some actions that were not – I don't know, if you want – I don't know, if the aim was to stop Francoism and all of that, innocent victims should not have been killed. I don't know, for example, like in Hipercor. In my opinion, that should not have been done. I don't know, if we want to achieve something – I don't know, I am against violence, but for example if I put myself in their place, in the mind of ETA, when they have done that – I don't know, at the beginning they did quite well, like some direct things, but then they went to, I don't know. They did not go the directness, they went on to kill some businesspeople, and that is not very direct towards the Spanish State.
Xan-15-Hendaia

Although the interviewer has asked him to provide a description about ETA's actions, which could have perfectly been constructed in a rather neutral tone, Xan starts his response with a personal evaluation of it; even without being asked for it, he makes explicit that, to him, ETA's violence was "good" (line 4) during Francoism, but then it

lost its original legitimacy. He stresses some of the facts that serve as a basis for this temporal construction, and builds on a *two-stage narrative* about the history of the conflict. In the first stage, as already explicited in past chapters, ETA is portrayed as an anti-francoist resistance movement, whose victims are "direct" (line 11), that is, related to the State apparatus, and therefore are seen as coherent with its legitimate aims ("to stop Francoism", line 6). The use of violence during the second stage is evaluated negatively; Xan introduces the figure of "innocent victims", symbolized by the Hipercor attack[40] in 1987 in lines 6 and 7, in order to illustrate his mental model about the power relations during that phase.

The interaction of several social positions can be observed within this discourse. On one hand, the speaker constructs an ingroup through the use of first person plural forms: in the optative sentence "if we want to achieve something" (lines 8 and 9), he positions himself within a group that shares some specific political goals. Since the object of discussion is the usefulness of ETA's actions, it can be inferred through contextual information that this ingroup at least shares some objectives with ETA, and that, therefore, the speaker perceives a certain degree of identification towards the armed group in his personal environment. However, his personal attitude or stance he is expressing in this concrete communicative situation –that he is "against violence", line 9 – is contradictory with an overall justification of ETA's armed activity. Therefore, the speaker distances himself from the armed group by self-portraying as a pacifist and speaking about ETA in third person. This may as well respond to a perceived pressure to perform a correct attitude in a communicative situation involving a stranger (the interviewer), so a semi-public discursive context. In fact, we can identify the influence of a perceived socially dominant discourse, which provokes a negotiation sequence of the speaker *with himself* at the beginning of his excerpt. In line 4, shortly after making explicit that he approves of ETA's activity, Xan introduces a self-correction or elaboration; he begins to formulate a justification of his own thesis ("I mean"), but does not conclude his clarification; instead, he interrupts his argument and reaffirms his position: "Well, yes, it *was* good". He constructs his discourse by anticipating an external answer or reaction his previously expressed opinion might produce, showing the presence of an interiorized interdiscourse.

Modalization plays an important role in this excerpt: through deontic modality, the speaker makes his evaluative attitude explicit ("*that* should not have been done", in line 8), whereas the use of epistemic modality functions as a request for permission or legitimation. There is a striking prominence of the verb "I don't know", which is repeated in almost every sentence of his discourse (lines 5 to 12): by stressing his unknowledge, the speaker categorizes himself as inexpert, as according to his perceived social position. Xan does not seem to feel sure – not about the content of his discourse, but rather about its possible reception and effect on his social context.

[40] The Hipercor attack refers to the bombing of a supermarket that ETA did in 1987 in Barcelona. It is considered its deadliest attack on civilians, 21 of whom lost their lives and another 45 were severely wounded.

Many of the youths have indeed been careful not to directly challenge the dominant discourses within their ideological communities, as in the case of the next group interview:

Unai: (…) and then there's also that we didn't get an objective point of view, and that those who told us most were participants or protagonists of that story. So, with that, only with the things they have told us, it is impossible to have an objective point of view, because each will tell their experience.
Lur: Yes, and that 's it: we have never – at least not in my case- I have never had the opportunity to speak to someone who has been a victim of the organization ETA or so, or with someone who has experienced that more closely, right? I don't know, with someone on the pro-Spanish side, with the children of a policeman… a chance to talk to them, and that would also be interesting.
Unai: Yes.
Lur: I mean, we always – I'm going to drop this, right? Victims are those on both sides, but the victims I truly know are only from one side. I don't know personally any victim of ETA or I don't know whom, I have never talked to them. And it is also about that, isn't it? In one way or the other, when we write down or tell our story we necessarily tell it unilaterally, because there is no knowledge of the other.

Group interview in Bayonne

The youngsters involved in this interaction construct a collective identity in terms of *young* and *abertzale*. This identity is built as an epistemic community in relation to the history of the conflict: the lack of knowledge or, more precisely, to own only a partial or biased knowledge provides them generational unity in terms of a shared experience. Both Unai and Lur justify their position with rationalization strategies: according to them, they are inevitably situated in one of the poles of the conflict because they have only learned about one version or story of the history of the conflict in their social context. Within this conceptualization, the adolescents' agency is reduced to its minimum: they conceive political ideology as being dependent on the knowledge received through communitary transmission and one's own social position.

The interjection employed by Lur in line 12, "I'm going to drop this, right?", reaffirms the existence of that epistemic-ideologic community. This interpellation functions as a request for permission to introduce information that could lead to controversy among the dominant views of the group. The fact that he is showing interest towards the outgroup softens the ideological square that is part of the dominant scheme of the ingroup regarding its collective identity. Lur is aware of this, and therefore *asks* his peers *for permission* to introduce his opinion. The verb "to drop" [41] fulfills a metaphorical function: it operates as an introductory verb to a sentence, the content of which is conceptualized in terms of a heavy object that may have an impact.

5.4.2. Idealization

The marginal social position that the youngsters take up within the broad social *debate* on the history of the conflict and the lack of legitimacy and agency they perceive as being derived from that position often induce them to underestimate their own role. Young Basques do not feel protagonists of their history: they consider older generations to be the

[41] This is the most accurate translation of the original "Botako dut, ez?" that I have been able to find. The literal translation would be: "I will *throw* this", referring to a statement the speaker is about to make. In Basque language, it is quite common to use this metaphor.

main and most agentive figures. In addition to a detachment from their contemporary political context (Larrinaga Renteria et al., 2020, p. 41), this may lead in some cases to nostalgic or idealizing discourses that question the current political *status quo*. In these types of discourses, the youngsters search through the past for more interesting times or greater degrees of agency of the ingroup.

> *It's just that – I think that it's mainly – and what happened to me is that, when you begin to learn what has happened, but when you don't have the training, and it's often what grandparents, the family, parents – people around you tell you, that you think, like, "Whoa, they have done so much and we have done so little". And people around me begin to say: "Yes, my dad used to block the roads, and to burn – to set the wheels on fire". And, of course, there is the super-borroka[42], saying "So I want to be like him". So there is this kind of idealization, because we don't want to be – I don't know how to put it – the generation of failure, so to say.*
>
> Ilargi-16-Etxarri Aranatz

Ilargi speaks on behalf of her generation, signalizing the consciousness of a clear collective identity: "the generation of failure" (lines 8 and 9) is a semantically and emotionally loaded designation, in which the failure refers to a unachieved goal. We know from the co-text of this excerpt that the speaker openly identifies with the abertzale left, and thus, the goal might most probably be related to independence or some close concept. Ilargi sees her generation as a the final link in a chain of generations that share a historical continuity and a political goal. The activities related to *kale borroka* that is attributed to previous generations (lines 5 to 7) are presented as admirable or desirable to the youth, as they portray their parents as more agentive subjects. By comparing her own experiences to that mental model, Ilargi concludes that her generation's actions are not as noticeable.

Although many participants have described the perception of nostalgia or idealization of the past in their social context, most speakers who personally construct these discourses or show personal commitment to them share similar political ideologies: all of them have explicitly identified with the *abertzale* left, and most participate in some form of political activism, especially youth movements or in *gaztetxes*[43]. Two patterns predominate among these idealizing discourses: on one hand, the past is conceptualized as a freer field, because the ingroup's agency is assumed to be greater in the past; on the other hand, it is a widely shared belief among young Basques that their generation is more passive than their elders.

> Which have been the reasons for ETA's disarmament in your view?
> *I think the original aim changed a lot to what happened afterwards, especially because of the power that the Government had. And in the end, well, time has changed and the youth nowadays are not the youth from yesterday. The will to, I don't know, the will to fight that young people nowadays have – in the past there used to be – or maybe the pain they received was more direct. Or now it is direct, but we don't notice as much, because there are problems too, but I think that people nowadays, especially the young, don't have the fury it*

[42] The speaker is referring to the type of street activism called *kale borroka*, which has been already explained. To be a "super-borroka" could be interpreted as a "super street fighter".

[43] The term *gaztetxe* literally translates as *youth house* and usually refers to squatted and/or autonomously organized social centers in which mostly (but not exclusively) young people congregate for a number of practices involving political, cultural and social activism.

takes to fight. I don't know. (…) right know everything is very – I mean, I don't know how it used to be, but what I see now is that there is no clear aim, that people don't fight for the same – or that they don't want to fight.
And why do you think is that so?
It could be fear. I do believe that the Altsasu case has produced fear among my generation. And, I don't know, a passive attitude, I mean, people don't have – now everything is disposed differently.

Haizea-17-Tafalla

Haizea's discourse entails a relatively large amount of shared knowledge, and it is necessary to resort to the context of the interview in order to infer it: the "original aim" referred to in line 2 is Basque independence, according to the co-text of the interview expressed by the speaker herself. The temporal construction "what happened afterwards", on the other hand, refers to the actual development of ETA's armed activity. The use of temporal deixis points at the difference between the content of both statement; hence, it separates the original theoretical goal and the real development of events. It also frames the disarming process in a narrative of military defeat (line 3), as well as in a context of decadence of the ingroup's agency: the repeated use of temporal deixis –the concepts "then / the past" and "now" are opposed at least three times– represents the great distance and disidentification mediating between her generation and the generations before her.

These types of discourses allow us to conclude that a macro-narrative about one's own position is becoming established within certain ideological communities, which could be summarized as following: "In the past, we used to have a greater power (agency) to influence the situation; now we have lost that strength". This narrative is based on an idealization of the past, but it is also coherent with the self-image of the youngsters, that is, with a social position characterized by a lack of experience and therefore of knowledge.

5.4.3. The (re)construction of foundational myths

Another strategy frequently employed in order to handle discursive contradictions and voids of knowledge about the past is to resort to foundational myths about the ingroup. These myths consist of stories that the ingroup tells to itself (Erll, 2017, p. 112), and which answer to questions regarding its fundamental features: "Who are we?", "Where do we come from?", and "Where are we going?". Insofar they are repeatedly being told, these stories become pillars of the group's identity, and therefore often take up the shape of clichés or *topoi*. These mental models have a clear ideological role, because they imply a choice of the features of the group that are going to be visibilized and remembered, and those which are going to be left out of the discourse.

The *topos* most frequently repeated in the data collected for this study is a generalizing evaluation of past harm, summarized as "During the conflict, the nation / people[44] suffered most". Transforming the collective subject of the *nation* into a victim is one of the most *comfortable* strategies to face the complexities and contradictions of the past, because the community that is interpellated through it is broad enough so that the speakers can include themselves in it, while simultaneously avoiding to point at any specific

[44] In Basque, the term *herria* stands for both concepts, which is the original term employed in this context.

victimizer. This discourse coincides with a globally extended macro-narrative that states that "all wars are horrible" (Wodak, 2011, p. 175).

In fact, some of the narratives I have described in the subchapter *The historical victimization of the ingroup* are so prominent that it can be observed how the youngsters are actually including these narratives into the collection of foundational myths of their collective identities; more specifically, the narrative of a Basque citizen who leaves his region and suffers violence (verbal or physical). This story is repeated so often and in so many different forms, that we can hypothesize that it is becoming part of the founding imaginary on which many youngsters build their discourses about the conflict and their role in it, that is, a foundational myth. The fact that these stories simultaneously rely on a historical subtext related to the oppression suffered by the ingroup during Franco's dictatorship shows how past collective experiences can shape present interpretations. For young Basques, the experiences of francoism continue to be a trauma that can be identified through discourse: it keeps *coming up* in the form of pre-established mental models that guide the interpretation of many *new* experiences and conflicts. This is reinforced by the theoretical or mythological character of those narratives: the interviewees did not need to have personal experiences similar to the story that was being told in order to consider it truthful; they considered it to be *common-ground* shared knowledge.

However, this social subtext quite directly clashes with a dominant discourse about the Basques, and concretely ETA, being the instigators of contemporary violence. The youngsters are well aware of this discursive dispute, and therefore, a second foundational myth, linked to the previous, arises from this contradiction. When talking about the past violence and especially the violence employed by the ingroup, youngsters present the wrong-doings of the ingroup as being forced by circumstances or by third parties. This is a common mechanism in order to avoid one's own responsibilities or, in the case of next generations, confronting the ingroup with claims of responsibilities (Wodak, 2011). But, as we have observed in the Basque case, it is also a strategy to cope with contradictory but similarly powerful discourses. This construction often results from a response formulated with external narratives in mind, that is, it is built as a counter-narrative against the hegemonic discourse that portrays Basques as instigators of violence.

> So if we focus on the armed conflict in the past 50 years, let's imagine that a tourist comes, one who doesn't know anything about the Basque Country. What would you explain to him?
> *I would explain to him that it has not only been on our part, and that what we did was because we suffered a lot of repression during Francoism, and because we couldn't stand it anymore. And then, they also did the conflict, with GAL and Batallón Vasco-Español[45] – they also did it. And ETA's aim – the aim was independence, the aim was not to kill people.*
>
> Gorka-15-Hendaia

Interdiscursivity becomes clearly relevant in this excerpt, as Gorka begins his definition with a destructive strategy: instead of explaining what the Basque conflict *is*, he explains what it is *not*. This unusual structuration of his response suggests the presence of an implicit quote, that the speaker does not make explicit because he considers it to be shared

[45] Batallón Vasco Español (BVE) was a para-policial organization active from 1975 to 1981. Some of its members later on joined the GAL, previously described.

knowledge: the discourse that blames the Basques –hence, the speaker's ingroup– for the origin of the conflict. Gorka starts his definition by responding to that discourse and destructing it; thus, he is building on a counter-narrative.

He shows an absolute identification towards armed groups that were involved in the past violence, as he speaks about the ingroup's past using first person plural forms: when stressing "on our part" (line 4) and "what we did was because we suffered a lot / we couldn't stand it anymore" (lines 4 to 6), he includes himself within that collective subject, although he is talking about events that happened before he was born. He speaks about ETA in third person, but from the internal coherence of the text we can infer that that actor is also situated within the ingroup, since Gorka employs the same justification strategy for its actions as for the ingroup, namely separating the original will and the actual behavior. This separation enables him to argue that the harm inflicted by the outgroup was not voluntary, but induced by the outgroup's actions or the context. Therefore, he can still construct a positive image of the ingroup as a victim of circumstances (Wodak, 2011, p. 175), by situating the violence in terms of resistance or survival.

Towards the end of his excerpt, he responds again to the external discourse that portrays ETA and the Basques as murderers, making it more explicit this time: "the aim was not to kill people" (line 8). According to Reyes (1996, p. 45), every negation entails an implicit quote: precisely, the thesis that is being denied. Therefore, the interdiscursivity of many identity discourses can be found in their responsive character.

5.4.4. Naturalization and the use of euphemisms

Among the data collected for this study, I have identified a striking difficulty on the part of the youngsters to speak about the violence itself. Out of 42 interviewees, only 21 have directly employed the terms *violence* or *force*[46] and they have done so in a total of 51 mentions. Of these, 45% referred to the violence of an outgroup; in 31% no specific subject was identified, as the term was employed in the context of generalizing descriptions such as "an atmosphere of violence" or "to be against violence"; and 24% attached the mentioned violence to some kind of intradiscursive ingroup. The other half of the participants did not even employ the terms *violence* or *force* once when speaking about the history of the conflict. We can assume this self-censorship as an additional symptom of the taboo they perceive in their social context.

On the contrary, I have identified a number of euphemisms employed to designate violence indirectly. "What happened", "That" or "The thing" are some common expressions to point at the most violent aspects of the conflict. The use of euphemisms amplifies, on one hand, the distance of the speaker towards the object in question, and, at the same time, it is included in a broader naturalizing narrative. Through the use of static concepts such as *(those/the) times, the situation*, which are very frequent when talking about the violent conflict, as well as the use of intransitive verbs such as *it/what happened* or *occurred*, the subjects of those actions are invisibilized. Therefore, the responsibility of the actions in question is also blurred and the situation becomes naturalized. Similarly, the very often repeated deictic "*that*" –pointing at the violence and substituting it – alludes

[46] In Basque, *biolentzia* and *indarkeria*.

to a widely shared reference: everybody knows what *That* is in the context of the Basque conflict, namely, ETA's violence.

Indeed, this naturalization is part of a series of mechanisms that allow speakers to locate a complex past in the history of their own group: it happened, and now it has passed. To think about a static situation inherent to a past time enables them to assume that it is not linked to contemporary generations, and therefore, it creates a differentiation of responsibilities among them and their elders.

> *Well, it's true that we have not lived through the tough years, because I think that, when I was young, I mean, small, ETA used to kill, but they weren't such usual crimes as in the last years, so we didn't experience it in such an intense way. We knew there was a conflict, but it was not something in our everyday life. (…) At university we did have testimonies of both a girl whose father was killed, not by someone from ETA, but by some civil guards or something… They didn't kill him, but they did some tortures or whatever to him, and in the end he ended up dying. And the other one, his father was an executive of Telefónica if I remember correctly, and they found him dead in Ulia I think, somewhere in the mountain, and, well, anyway: he told us how he had lived through it and all of that.*
>
> Paulo-19-Urnieta

A naturalization of the past can be observed in this excerpt through the modalization employed by the speaker. Paulo reconstructs an atmosphere of normality about his childhood years: through the disclaimer "but they weren't such usual crimes" (lines 2-3), he downgrades the effect of ETA's attacks on his life. Paradoxically, Paulo's family history brings him closer to the experience of physical violence than most of his peers: he did have a relative who was threatened by ETA, and his family did suffer several physical attacks. This information is explicited by him at another point in the interview:

> Is there any anecdote they might have told you at home, that has stayed in your memory?
> *No, nothing that has happened to them… well, yes, in the case of my uncle and so, well, once a guy from [the neighbouring village] burned down my grandma's home door. Well, and the issue of the revolutionary tax and whatever; which they asked by grandma for, but she wouldn't pay. She had a store and whatever, they asked her but, no, no.*
> And that's what happened? They burned her door?
> *Not because of that, but because of my uncle, 'cause he put a guy into jail. Well, he accused him so that they would jail him. And because of that. But, I mean, there has never been anything directly severe in my family.*
>
> Paulo-19-Urnieta

Paulo's family did suffer direct violence, as he makes explicit by himself. However, he does not recognize severity to his own family history, and he does not identify as a victim. On the contrary, the constructs a naturalizing narrative of normalization, showing indifference through the use of modality of appreciation: filler words/phrases such as "whatever" (line 7 or the first excerpt; lines 6 and 7 of the second) and "or something" (line 6 of the first excerpt) remark the distance of the speaker towards the content of the discourse; he is showing that the accuracy of his narrative does not concern him too much, and that, in any case, he is describing others' experiences, not his own.

Furthermore, the verbs he employs to speak about the victims do not either signal a subject agent: one of the figures within his narrative "ended up dying" after being tortured

(lines 7-8 of the first excerpt). Although the originator of this violence (the civil guards) and the action itself (torture) are made explicit in the discourse, they are not associated to a transitive structure; instead, the agency of the action is blurred, presenting the dead himself as the subject. A second figure was "found dead" (line 9); here too is the agency associated to a third party through the use of a transitive verb, and not to the subject that has caused the death, nor the one who has suffered it.

Naturalization prevents from arguing over the causes and originators of the violence; it creates a "pre-political" (Irazuzta et al., 2017, p. 64) discursive area, which is perceived as intransitable and unchangeable from contemporary times. This discursive strategy may be applied to entire periods of time or specific actors; for example, it is common that the polarizing ideological square is naturalized by highlighting essential features of the outgroup. On the other hand, I have also identified discourses in which assumptions about the ingroup's nature also function as a justifying basis for the ingroup's attitudes:

> Have you heard about any claims of torture realized by the Police? Do you remember any concrete case?
> *Well, so, in the end, it's supposed that – [nervous laugh] it's just that – the thing is, I don't know, the thing is: I don't know if we are like that, but we always tend to, I mean, to keep silent. I mean, I don't know, it's like – that's how we are, it's always been like that. Perhaps something bad has happened, [but] you lower your head and keep quiet. That's it, it's not like people say so much: 'This is the victim'. I don't know, from home we have always [learned to keep] silence. I mean, because I know for example that my grandma's – I don't know if it was the cousin of my grandma's sister, well, to a cousin, they entered into an area of [the family's hometown] in Durangaldea, I don't know, the mythical known 'moors' of Franco came and they killed her parents, her mom, and to the child – that's what they tell – she doesn't have two fingers or so, because as a baby she just put her hand on the face of her father and then they shot him, and so she doesn't have these two fingers [points at his own]. And that is her story. And that girl, that woman, she never mentioned it: she erased it and that was it. And quietly. And people have also suffered that, not telling their family; in the end, it has been silenced, no one talked about it and that was it. I guess it was some kind of defense.*
>
> Joseba-20-Bilbo

Joseba shows great difficulties answering the question of the interviewer: after hesitating for a relatively long time; he employs a number of consecutive connectors, deictics, introductory verbs and proxemic elements that show his nervousity in lines 2 and 3 before starting his actual response, which, in fact, does not directly address the original question about his knowledge on torture. Instead, he offers a cultural and essentialist description of the ingroup: "That's how we are" (lines 5-6). One possible explanation for this is that, being aware of his communicative difficulties involving the object of the question, the speaker searches for an explanation of that very difficulty; therefore, his whole answer is a justifying explanation of his own lack of communicative competence. Since he cannot talk about torture, he describes a social phenomenon he can associate to it: the lack of transmission and the social silence he perceives around the topic, thus locating the causes of his difficulty in that narrative. The repeated use of the adverb "always" (lines 6 and 8) refers to a historical and assumedly unchangeable feature of the ingroup. Therefore, the macro-narrative "*That's how we are: silent*" becomes a naturalizing foundational myth about the ingroup. The example of the violence suffered by his distant relatives during the 1936-1939 Civil War reinforces his thesis, although it distances him even more from

the original question; it operates as an example of *mythopoesis* or stories that function as illustrative or representative of broader historical developments.

5.4.5. The use of metaphors as a concretion and participation strategy

Finally, I will focus on the use of figurative language, as many of my participants have spoken about past conflicts in a metaphorical way. The past is often a complex collection of intersected data, emotions and other types of knowledge, especially when it is disputed or taboo, as in the Basque case. Metaphors enable us to organize information in more simple, socially shared frames, enhancing our capacity to understand and communicate complex concepts (Turner & Fauconnier, 1995, p. 12). On the other hand, they also provide a great amount of information about the positioning of the speakers, as they often express through figurative language the contents and statements they cannot –or feel they cannot– express explicitly. Therefore, metaphors can also be analyzed as a means to overcome a perceived lack of legitimation. These are the types of metaphors that have arisen more often in this study:

5.4.5.1. The past conflict as a discursive territory

Spatial metaphors are the most striking figures employed by the participants. They conceptualize the Basque conflict or their relation to it in spatial or geographical terms, and are mostly expressed through the use of verbs indicating movement or displacement and spatial deictics, such as when the youngsters have expressed that their peers "won't go into that topic" (Idoia-17-Oñati) and that they "let it pass" (Eli-15-Altsasu); that the topic of the Basque conflict is something that is "far away" for them (Ane-21-Mutriku); or that they "weren't there" (Unai-16-Anhauze). Furthermore, "being inside of the topic" (Ilargi-16-Etxarri Aranatz) is assumed as synonymous for being politically active, that is, having a close relationship with the political conflict.

> Do you feel that the Basque conflict has affected you personally somehow?
> *Hmm... I don't think so. I don't know. I believe that, eh, what happened remains a bit too far away for me. Because just when we were born, ETA was already leaving a bit, and I think that's why I haven't received directly their influence. But I suppose that, well, my parents and my grandparents did receive that more directly.*
>
> Irene-19-Donostia

Irene employs a distancing strategy, because she cannot identify a "direct" –that is, first hand– influence of the conflict in her life, but she does in the life of earlier generations in her family. She makes this distance explicit by describing the conflict as being "too far away" from her (line 3), and building on the idea of a *direct* and *non-direct* influence of the conflict, which ultimately is a metaphorical conceptualization of possible manners of relating to the conflict: young people put themselves in a *second-line* or further position, in which they receive second-hand knowledge and experiences, after these have crossed the first impact line occupied by their parents and grandparents.

> *Well, the thing is... I haven't really spoken to anyone a lot about this topic. For example, there are people, I mean, who understand more, or who know more about this. But it escapes to me. In the end, it's supposed that you have learnt this, and for example here at the Faculty there is one who goes to my class, and (s)he knows a lot about this topic, but I am more... well, on the other side, I don't know.*
>
> Udane-18-Markina-Xemein

In this case, Udane uses two spatial metaphors in order to build her position within this discourse. On one hand, the verb "it escapes to me" (line 3) illustrates the movement of an object: the Basque conflict, or the past, is conceptualized as an object that is unreachable or inaccessible for the speaker: it is difficult for her to appropriate (in the sense of understanding) it. Ultimately, Udane is reflecting on her discursive agency, that is, her capacity of engaging in the communicative interaction about this topic. Udane categorizes herself as an unknowing subject, as compared to her better-knowing-friend, and she verbally draws a border between them both, positioning herself "on the other side" (line 5). She is talking about the *topic* of the conflict, that is, the discursive area involving it: that area is a territory that is not accessible to her. On one side of the border are those who do have the knowledge about the topic, and on the other side are those who do not know, and therefore, do not talk about it.

These kind of conceptualizations are based on a broader, widely used structural metaphor that sees *history as a journey* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:120-129). The source domain *journey* illustrates a displacement, with a direction and an aim. If we conceive the target domain *History* as a route, we can understand each period of past time as a parcel of territory through which subjects transit while they are realizing their "historic journey". The same metaphor was employed by Lowenthal (1998), who titled his referential book after L.P. Hartley's quote "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there". In this kind of conceptualizations, the Basque conflict would be one of these past territories, which is too far away for our participants or which they are not allowed to transit through.

This conceptualization is on the basis of most spatial metaphors that we have identified in our data, but it is especially explicit in the next example:

1 Why do you think doesn't your family talk about this?
2 *Well, I suppose because it's not very present. And then, when the topic comes*
3 *up, I have a younger brother: we wouldn't really know how to carry that*
4 *conversation. I mean, it would be like an adults' topic. So, no. I think that's why*
5 *it is.*
6 It's perceived as a painful or sensitive topic.
7 *Sensitive, and then it may also be that we don't have so much knowledge as to*
8 *go into that topic of conversation.*

Elena-17-Barakaldo

In this example, we can find a clear use of geographical and movement metaphors: "the topic", that is, the past conflict, is not "present" (that is, *here*, in the speaker's territory); it "comes up" (that is, it is somewhere hidden or put away from her); young people don't know how to "carry" it (with them, in their journey); and they don't "go into" that area that belongs to their elders. Ultimately, the discursive area around the Basque conflict is conceptualized as being too unknown, too heavy or too prohibited for the younger generations who have not experienced it directly. Elena herself argues that this position is what hinders her participation in the debate.

1 Do you feel that the Basque conflict has affected you?
2 *I don't know. Eh... I think, I was born with the Basque conflict, together with*
3 *it. Across history. And that what I have to do, me and those of my generation,*
4 *is to carry on with the conflict, until we achieve the aim.*

Gorka-15-Hendaia

In this example, the speaker employs a slightly different variant of the metaphor *History as a journey*. The conceptualization that lies on the basis of Gorka's discourse is similar to the previous examples, but the use changes: for him, the political conflict is not an intransitable, closed place, but rather a *stream* or territory that crosses through history. The speaker considers that he was born *into* a political situation, in a similar way in which one is born in a country, without choosing it. Therefore, he interprets that he belongs to an ingroup and acquires a role in accordance to the aims of that ingroup. In the end, he employs a metaphor of movement, and illustrates that role or position using deontic modalisers ("what [we] have to do is to carry on", line 3); so, in this case, the political aim of the group would be the finish line or objective of this metaphoric stream.

It is also interesting to observe *when* does Gorka use this movement metaphor: after being asked about possible effects of the conflict in his everyday life, he begins his discourse with a series of epistemic modalisers and paraverbal expressions of doubt ("I don't know" and "eh", in line 2), which show that he is having difficulties answering the original question: he is not able to describe a concrete effect of the conflict in his personal life. Instead of that, he draws on a metaphor that illustrates a more general effect on a collective identity; and, by including himself in this collective identity, he positions himself as a protagonist of the story or the conflict. So he is enhancing his agency, by moving from the edge or *second line* into the center. Thus, in this case, the metaphor of the journey does not only function by condensing information in more intelligible terms, but it also operates as a mental model or interpretative scheme that helps him position himself in a way that he is characterized as a more relevant actor in the conflict.

5.4.5.2. The past as a closed book or a finished phase

A second metaphor identified in the discourses of these young participants conceives the Basque conflict in terms of a physically delimited or outworn object. The most usual metaphor refers to a closed book, and can be observed in expressions such as "turning the page" (Jaione-16-Basauri and Paulo-19-Urnieta) and to "need to write a new page" (Lur-16-Hendaia). Rather than a mere ontological metaphor, however, it can be argued that the image of the closed object functions as a structural metaphor, insofar it highlights a temporal change and therefore a change in the social reality. In fact, any delimitation of time is a metaphorical conceptualization in itself, as the speakers draw the boundary by themselves through language. Therefore, any discourse that delimitates the past relies on a structural metaphor:

1 Yesterday's news: ETA's dissolution. Did you talk about it at home?
2 *No.*
3 When you think about that, what do you feel? What does it mean to you?
4 *Well, what I told you before: at least something has, like, ended, and now*
5 *another process or another phase can begin, in which we can achieve the*
6 *objective. Because we have seen that with that [ETA's violence] we have not*
7 *moved forward. So it was kind of necessary by now.*

Nagore-17-Oñati

Nagore evaluates a specific historical event –ETA's declaration of disintegration– from her contemporary position: the fact that "something has ended" (line 4) is an euphemism that refers to the phase of ETA's armed activity. The temporary deixis indicated by the adverb "now" in line 5 refers to *the time of the speaker* in a double sense: to her physical-chronological lifetime, and, at the same time, to the phase in the history of the conflict in

which she can gain agency, because it is not the same to presence a historical time and to be able to have an influence on it. Nagore points a this enhancement in her agency through the use of transitive verbs and first-person active subjects (lines 5 and 6). *Now, on this side* of the turning point, the speaker feels legitimated to participate politically, to *carry on* with the trajectory; unlike before, as she does not feel legitimated to *enter* the times of the past. This metaphorization signals a partial rupture with that *territory* of the past, and shows a self-conception of the speaker as an autonomous subject from the violent actors of the past.

5.4.5.3. The metaphor of the trial

Another prominent metaphor employed by the youngsters is that of a contemporary collective trial. The youngsters that employ this figure feel unfairly judged because of the violence occurred during the history of the Basque conflict, and they express this feeling in several ways. The most usual narrative that illustrates it is the *topos* (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 21) of the Basque citizen that suffers some harm from people outside of the Basque Country (especially in Spain); when this harm takes the form of prejudices or stereotypes, it operates as a trial metaphor.

Besides of that, there are also more explicit metaphorizations that represent the youth scpecifically as a generation that is being judged, for example:

1 *Gabriele: Eh... I don't know, that is part of our history, but we haven't either*
2 *– I mean, we are the generation after that, they don't have to judge us for what*
3 *happened, but – we are not part of, well, I don't know how to explain it.*
4 *Edurne: Similarly to when the children of a criminal are not treated as if they*
5 *had done the crime, we are like that child who was born after everything that*
6 *happened.*
7 *Gabriele: Exactly [laughs].*

Group interview in Basauri

In this case, an explicit metaphorization of the trial can be observed: by positioning themselves in the role of the children of a criminal, the speakers portray themselves as innocent minors, while attributing the responsibility of the conflict (the "crime" mentioned in line 5) entirely to the generations before them. The pronoun "we" refers in this case to the youngsters.

It is clear that the violence is an uncomfortable aspect of the past to them: the speakers address it through euphemisms, for example, the use of the deictic "that" (line 1) and the intransitive verb "[what] happened" (lines 2-3 and 6). Therefore, the verbal figure they construct results coherent with their position: by portraying the previous generation as guilty, the responsibility of the conflict is attributed to an outgroup. The speakers employ the *topos* of the *Grace of late birth* or "Gnade der späten Geburt" (der Spiegel, 1986) in order to distance themselves from that discursive field.

5.4.5.4. The Basque conflict as a war

In the last place, there is a metaphor that conceptualizes the Basque conflict in terms of a war. This type of structure enhances the importance and scope of historical events and offers an interpretative frame in order to justify uses of violence or behaviors that would

otherwise result rather unjustifiable. In that framework, individual responsibilities are blurred within a broader collective subject.

The presence of this metaphor can be observed mainly through the use of terminology linked to wars, such as "fight", "defense" or, directly, "war", but also when youngsters have employed linguistic structures that illustrate the face-to-face confrontation of nations or very broad collectivities. These kinds of structures delimitate wide ingroups and outgroups which interpellate most of their members, just as a war interpellates all members of a nation or a community. Therefore, war metaphors can have an cohesive effect, insofar they are employed within strategies of legitimizing past actions of the ingroup.

> *Well, I don't know, [the conflict] started, well, what do you want me to say? The Carlist wars and everything? Well, there were the usual wars. But then Franco came in, and, well, after that, after Franco's dictatorship, there was quite a lot of oppression here, with language and everything; and people did not agree on that. And then some military groups were created, which wanted to change that, and then it began, well, like a war: Spain against us and we against them. And, well, an armed war. And then, the thing is that we supposedly entered a time of democracy, and the conflictive groups from here did not participate in that democracy, and then it became, phew! To go against democracy with weapons. So by then it was a huge mess. But then again, you have to take into account what Spain's democracy is like, because that is another issue.*
>
> Joseba-20-Bilbo

With his reference to the 19th century Carlist wars and other "usual wars" (line 2), Joseba builds a framework in which to interpret the content of his discourse in warlike terms. He constructs a broad ingroup that encompasses all Basques; this collective subject is built through spatial deixis ("here", line 4) and *ad populum* generalizations such as "people did not agree" (lines 4-5). Joseba explicitly identifies with it, through the use of first person plural pronouns: in the statement "Spain against us and we against them" (lines 6-7), he schematically represents the face-to-face confrontation between those two large groups, and concludes his construction with an explicit metaphor: the Basque conflict was, in his view, "an armed war" (line 7) in its beginnings.

This example is one of the few that visibilize the plurality of armed groups that were active in the history of the Basque conflict; most other speakers have only mentioned the existence of ETA within noticeable actors. Joseba presents these groups as a natural consequence of the outgroup's violence, and portrays them as defenders of the ingroup. Insofar they are perceived as related to the ingroup, he does not mention their violence explicitly, but instead employs euphemisms such as "some military groups" (line 5).

In the last sequence of his discourse we can observe a more complex construction of subjects, when Joseba speaks about the post-dictatorship context. By then he does not employ war metaphors, and the ingroup is blurred: the confrontation stops being between *Us* and *Them* and begins to take place between *some conflictive groups* and *democracy*. This second scheme brings a change to the legitimation of the actors involved in the conflict: although he perceives them as being close, he speaks in third person about the groups labeled as "conflictive", which, at the same time, categorizes them as originators of the violence. On the other hand, the designation of the State as "[the] democracy"

entails a great degree of legitimation, as this actor is represented as hegemonic, while the former –the troublesome groups– are perceived as exceptions.

However, here is a dialogue between several discourses within Joseba's narrative. This is signalized by the ironic quote stressed through the adverb "supposedly" (line 8). Thus, we may interpret that the positive characterization described above operates in the context of this ironic quote, that is: that "to go against democracy with weapons" (line 9-10) is not a statement the speaker appropriates completely. In fact, Joseba takes a major distance towards that positive presentation of Spanish democracy. He questions it by introducing a disclaimer and an indirect rhetorical question in lines 10 and 11: "But then again, you have to take into account what Spain's democracy is like". Therefore, these lines must be read in terms of a personal positioning strategy towards an external discourse.

The metaphor of war coincides with the macro-narrative that conceptualizes the Basque conflict mainly as a violent conflict, which I have described in greater detail in chapter *5.1.1. The violent conflict and the political conflict*. The youngsters have often an ambivalent relation to this aspect of the conflict. On one hand, the concept of the war can have an integrating effect, but at the same time, perceiving the conflict as a major violent confrontation or a war distances them in terms of personal identification: they do not see their personal experiences reflected in an issue of such dimensions. Paradoxically, they are aware that many of their own experiences can only be understood in the light of the past conflict.

In the upcoming excerpt, four participants try to define the conflict in terms of *war* and *peace*, as well as to position themselves within that continuum:

Interviewer: All of you were born after the year 2000. What would you say differentiates you most from previous generations?
Unai: That we were not there. We have not directly lived through the armed conflict.
Lur: Yes. In that sense, we have seen little blood.
Interviewer: And how has that affected your opinions or attitudes?
Gorka: Well, I think that, rather than seeing little blood, in the time that has passed until we have become conscious – there we have seen little blood, but in the years after our birth it still used to go on.
Lur: Yes, and there was also a clear will to initiate the peace process. I mean, we were born in the 2000s, in 2002; (…) In the 16-17 years that we have lived, there has been a decade and a half in which people have worked on the peace process. And in the end, that marks you: we have grown up in the context of this will for peace, even if still in that conscience of "si vis pacem para bellum".
Interviewer: Really? Do you think that still is there?
Lur: No. At that time there was, but nowadays – and what I think, right? In the time in which we have grown up, I don't know, it is more assimilated, or at least the Basque society has, that there is a need for peace.
Gorka: What I see is that, rather than a need for peace, there was the need to negotiate.
Lur: Hm. Yes.
Xan: Hm [nods]
Unai: Yes.
Gorka: And that peace was not – well, everybody wanted it, but for example ETA wanted it on some conditions.
Unai: It was not the same peace for everybody.
Lur: No.
Unai: The peace that we, the Basques, wanted – well, it was precisely the peace that the [Spanish and French] States did not want. [They wanted] the Basques

30 *to stop, to quit everything and leave them in peace. But to us, that was not*
31 *peace.*

Group interview in Bayonne

This fragment is a paradigmatic example of the identification- and positioning strategies analyzed in this chapter, as many discursive means can be identified in the collective discussion. On one hand, the lack of an experience appears as the shared feature of the ingroup: the spatial deictic "there" and the reference to experiencing the conflict "directly" introduced by Unai in line 3 evoke a spatially structured metaphorical conception, according to which the conflict is a territory located to a considerable distance from the speaker. The binomial *direct/indirect* constructs a hierarchy among possible experiences of the conflict, and the sentence "to see blood" (lines 5 and 8) also fulfills a metaphorical function: it recreates the image of a *front line* of conflict and is therefore an ontological metaphor, since *seeing* is interpreted as a way of verifying knowledge. *Direct* knowledge refers in this case not only to first-hand information or testimony: it also implies to have a more truthful knowledge about events. The young participants of this interaction attribute more valid discourses to their elders; thus, their own epistemic position is linked to their legitimacy to participate in the discussion.

Lur relies on the temporal and social context in order to draw a line between the two social groups (the youth and the older): according to him, young people have grown up in a culture of peace, whereas the adults come from a culture of war. He resorts to interdiscursivity in order to stress this last idea: the latin proverb *si vis pacem para bellum* operates in line 14 as a self-authorizing strategy, through which Lur categorizes himself as an expert. This position allows him to draw a clear line between the *peace* and *war* categories that sustain his distinction between generations.

This scheme, however, collides with two of the youths' inherent desires: to gain a greater agency or protagonism in the social discussion, and to locate their personal experiences coherently in a conflict-related context. Hence, Gorka employs a transformation strategy in order to amend the discursive consensus constructed so far by his peers (summarized as "We did not live through it"), and introduces a rectifying detail: he distinguishes their early childhood from their "conscious" lifetime (line 8), and locates the former in the territory of the conflict. Ultimately, he employs a self-legitimizing strategy in the face of his lack of personal memories.

Most of the negotiation in this sequence happens between Lur and Gorka, while Xan and Unai take up an observer or supporter role by reinforcing their peers' discourses. The two schemata built by the main speakers can be summarized as follows: Lur constructs a narrative of rupture, according to which they, the youth, have had an essentially different socialization from their elders; thus, the social context of each generation is conceptualized as an independent field or territory. Gorka, on the other hand, constructs a narrative of continuation, positioning himself in the same field as the previous generations.

In fact, both times Gorka takes the word, he does so to question Lur's thesis. In lines 19-20, he reformulates Lur's concept of the *peace*: "Rather than a need for peace, there was the need to negotiate". At this point in the conversation, the interlocutors realize that they have a semantic problem with the interpretation of the concept. To Lur, *peace* means the

disappearance of war or violence, whereas Gorka distinguishes *peace* and *negotiation*. This distinction has an implicit subtext: to Gorka, *peace* seems to be an uncomfortable term, because he perceives it as defined by an outgroup and therefore not responding to the ingroup's interests, insofar it implies the complete end of the ingroup's activity ("to stop, to quit everything and leave them in peace", as Gorka expresses it in lines 29 and 30). On the contrary, *negotiation* would be the condition to reach peace in terms of the ingroup's interests: that is the concept of *peace* that ETA proposes, and which Gorka and Unai appropriate, when they equate the aims of the armed group to the aims of the ingroup (lines 25 and 28).

Finally, Unai's intervention is also interesting in this sequence: he makes the semantic contradiction explicit, by pointing at a variety of modes in which *peace* can be understood. This gesture responds to an integrating strategy that aims to cohere both polarized positions that have emerged in the discussion. In fact, one of the most important principles or rules of the communicative interaction is that of cooperation (Davies, 2000, p. 23): in order to be legitimated within the group, it is crucial that one's own theses can imbricate with those of the interlocutors. When Unai points at the epistemic aspect, he is declaring a *time-out* that suspends the role-dynamics of the discussion.

5.4.6. The role of mental models within memory discourses: re-organization and completion

The coping strategies I have described so far have been strategies aimed at making existent narratives and feelings about the past compatible with the speakers' contemporary context and position. However, all of them apply to some kind of comprehension: independently of the alleged lack of knowledge, the speakers did employ these as a means to cohere contradictory information they *had* at hand.

But when the knowledge about an event or a period of time is truly absent, the mechanisms come into play. To understand them, I have relied on the concept of *mental models*, defined as "mental constructions of what language users consider to be relevant in the social situation" (van Dijk, 1999, p. 26). These models operate as an interface between shared knowledge and personal perceptions, and therefore allow individuals to organize information according to pre-established patterns.

In many of the discourses collected throughout this study, I have observed that the speakers drew on previously built interpretative patterns or schemata in order to complete the information they missed. The result of this process are narratives that are often rather distant from the proved or agreed-on truth, but they do fulfill a cohesive function in regard to the speaker's current position and interests. During my analysis, I have identified four re-organization or completive strategies:

I. Rearrangement through logical association

If I ask you about Carrero Blanco, does it ring a bell?
I think it does. The guy in the car, right? Yes, yes. Well, I don't know much, but… that was in Gernika, right?
What happened?
He had a bomb in the car and he went all the way up.
And who was Carrero Blanco?
I suppose it was someone bad.

Alex-18-Barakaldo

This excerpt refers to the attack against Luis Carrero Blanco, president of Francisco Franco's government during the last years of his dictatorship, who was killed in 1973 by a bomb placed by ETA in his private car, in what is probably the most well known attack of the organization, and the one with most popular support in its history, as it is widely interpreted that Carrero Blanco would have embodied the continuation of Francoism (Agirre, 1978). This shared cultural knowledge resonates in our participant's memory, when he refers to Carrero Blanco as "*the* guy" in "*the* car", remarking the particularity of the case through the use of singular articles. He draws on a shared imaginary when he describes a certain characteristic of the attack: that Carrero Blanco's car was propelled in the air and landed inside of a convent (Lopez Adan, 2021a). The slightly humorous tone of the discourse shows that the speaker feels eased or confident towards the content of the discussion: he does not perceive it as a sensitive topic.

However, although the speaker is able to re-build some aspects of the story in great detail, he expresses a difficulty to identify other elements, such as *who was* the actor in question. This is signalized by a series of modalisers that show uncertainty, such as epistemic verbs ("I think", "I suppose"), and interpellations asking for positive feedback ("right?").

It is in these voids where the speaker draws upon the context in order to fill in the information that he lacks: on one hand, he introduces the idea of *Gernika*. Gernika is a Basque city internationally known because of the bombings it suffered by the Nazi German Luftwaffe and the Italian Aviazone Legionaria under Franco's guidelines in 1937; since then, and especially after Pablo Picasso's painting remembering the massacre, Gernika stands for the suffering of the local population under Francoism. However, it does not have any direct relation to Carrero Blanco's death, which happened in Madrid in 1973, 36 years after Gernika. A plausible reason for the introduction of this element is its symbolic importance in the history of the conflict; we can assume that the speaker does not know *where* Carrero Blanco's attack happened, and therefore associates the story to a geographical setting he can definitely relate to the conflict.

Secondly, he relies on logical reconstruction in order to describe the actor in question. When asked about who Carrero Blanco was, he does not provide information about the actor's characteristics or his role in history, but builds *ad hoc* a coherent narrative, which is based on pre-formed assumptions about *good* and *bad people*. This argumentative scheme could be summarized as follows:

> Premise 1: Good people do not deserve to be attacked, bad people do.
>
> Premise 2: Carrero Blanco was attacked.
>
> Conclusion: Carrero Blanco was *someone bad*.

This final evaluative statement is not the outcome of a thoroughly argued process, but rather of a spontaneously built narrative in the course of the communicative action, nourished by the co-text of the discourse itself. It is also possible that an third implicit premise based on an attitude related to the ingroup's identity and historical context (i.e., "Francosim was mean to us" and "Carrero Blanco was a francoist") may have also influenced this logical reconstruction, but it is not explicited in discourse, and therefore, remains as a hypothesis fully dependent on interpretation.

Do you know why they closed 'Egunkaria'?
I think it happened in 2001. That's because I was born in 2002, so I don't know if it was in 2001 or 2003. Well, so, I guess, er, because of their articles and such, right? Well, because of what they wrote, wasn't it? I guess.

Joana-16-Arrasate

This is a similar example of logical rearrangement. The speaker signalizes uncertainty about the closure of the Basque-speaking newspaper *Euskaldunon Egunkaria*, which was closed in 2003 because of alleged ties to ETA. The newspaper was accused of financing the organization, not for its editorial line, which was never investigated by the police (Torrealdai Nabea, 2021). However, this fact is unknown to the speaker, who on the contrary relies on pre-established schemata about *closing newspapers*, according to which, logically, newspapers are usually closed because of their content. She *activates* a frame of *censorship*, and then applies the contextual information from that frame to the topic that is being discussed in the communicative event.

This is the third example of this type of re-arrangement:

Do you know any prisoner?
Joseba Sarrionandia.
Which is his story?
Eh – he was imprisoned, I don't know if he belonged to ETA or not, I know that he is a writer and a poet, and that he escaped inside of a baffle. During one of Imanol's concerts, I don't know, inside of a baffle. And afterwards he wrote a song for the band Kortatu.

Ekaitz-16-Altsasu

The interviewee narrates the story of Joseba Sarrionandia, a well-known figure in Basque literature, who fled from prison in 1985 (in fact, inside of a baffle during a concert for prisoners), an event broadly remembered by the local society, among others, because of its form (Martinez, 2014) and because of the popular song *Sarri, Sarri*, launched in 1985 by the punk-rock band Kortatu, which, at the same time, is a version of the song *Chatty chatty*, originally sung by the Jamaican band Toots & The Maytals. The lyrics of the song tell the story of Sarrionandia's escape, and are therefore a popular device of transmission of memory, but they were not written by Sarrionandia himself. The authorship is not very publicly known, but is attributed to close friends of the writer.

Ekaitz belongs to the social group that shares this memory and has had access to the device, and therefore knows many aspects of Sarrionandia's story. However, he re-organizes the information differently: in his discourse, he attributes the writing of the song to the protagonist of the story. The reason might be a missing fact –the authorship of the song–, which he compensates by associating the elements he could identify in previously built mental models. The logical reconstruction would be as follows:

Premise 1: Poets write lyrics.

Premise 2: Sarrionandia is a poet.

Premise 3: The song 'Sarri, Sarri' is related to the story of Sarrionandia.

Conclusion: Sarrionandia wrote the lyrics of the song.

This example, as well as Alex's excerpt above, illustrates the influence that popular culture can have in the construction of mental models and meaning-making in the context

of transmission of memory: films and songs that become popular often model the social perception of past events.

II. Rearrangement through addition or elaboration

Which actions or attacks by ETA do you remember?
The one [that happened] at the airport in Madrid.
What happened?
I think two Ecuadorians died, right? And it was in the – where you need to pass through to get onto the plane. I think that – I don't know exactly where it was, but I think two Ecuadorians died, and many [were] wounded.

Sebas-17-Barakaldo

Sebas describes the attack on Madrid's Barajas airport in December 2006. His discourse focuses on the elements of the story he can identify with, especially the nationality of the deadly victims, as the speaker himself is originally from a Latin American country. However, similarly to Alex, he tries to re-build the physical setting of the attack, but lacks this information. The bomb was actually placed in the parking lot, which was entirely evacuated with the exception of two men sleeping in their cars (Lopez Adan, 2021a). The speaker does obviously not know this, and therefore he introduces an element belonging to his pre-established scheme of *airport*: the passenger boarding bridge, adding a new element to the story and distorting part of the original narrative. Furthermore, the fact that he highlights the dead and the wounded is coherent with the framework of a *terrorist attack*, although the description "many wounded" does not strictly correspond to the eleven minor injuries produced by the explosion (Europa Press, 2006); a relatively moderate number, taking into account the effects of similar explosions in public spaces and the people who could have been at risk in a crowded place such as an airport. Within Sebas' discourse, however, the image of a big explosion with many wounded victims seems more coherent with the mental model he has already constructed about a terrorist attack.

According to Erll (2017, p. 14), these types of distortions are fairly common in reconstructions of the past, as the speakers create their new discourse according to their resources, positions and interests of the moment they *remember*. In the case of adolescents who have the least information about the past conflict, it is possible that even fiction becomes one of those sources:

When you have heard your parents talk about ETA, what has been your perception?
Well, I remember once that I went home and I asked them, 'What is ETA', and – because I was told in class that they killed blonde and brunette women. I don't know why. So I said, 'Why did they kill blonde and brunette women?', and [my parents] told me: 'No, no, anyone'. As if they went house to house, or something like that. And that they killed whomever they wanted. I mean, not for being a woman or so, but for any reason.

Alex-18-Barakaldo

Alex refers to a void of knowledge regarding ETA as an organization: he does not know which were their aims or methods, and ignores the political background of the conflict. Instead, he elaborates a narrative of indiscriminate and unplanned violence on the basis of concepts he could associate beforehand with the idea of *ETA*. During this elaboration,

the speaker introduces details that might seem a fictionalized or at least very hyperbolic description of actual events, for example, going "house to house" (line 6), killing indiscriminately: it is known that ETA's *modi operandi* were either previously planned attacks on concrete individuals or bombings in the public sphere (Lopez Adan, 2012).

These *freely introduced* details do, however, play a role in the construction of coherence within this particular discourse: they provide some kind of evidentiality or logic (however far from actual facts) for an action the speaker evaluates as irrational or incomprehensible. This description remarks the perception of ETA as a group of cold-blooded assassins with no political or rational motivation. It functions therefore as a device of negative representation of the outgroup.

III. Rearrangement through substitution

1 *ETA? Well, a party that was created with very good intentions, because they*
2 *were – I mean, they were students, right? In the beginning, it was political,*
3 *against Franco, then they began to become military, and... I don't know. I*
4 *mean, in an objective way? Eh, I don't know, at the beginning [ETA was] a*
5 *student movement, a political one, against Franco or against repression. Then*
6 *they took up arms, and from that moment on, well, little by little they left*
7 *politics and engaged directly in the armed struggle.*

Ekaitz-16-Altsasu

1 *We learnt that ETA had two groups: the armed group and the political group.*
2 *The decision to use violence came because the armed group won inside of ETA.*
3 *Which methods did they use? Well, most probably, in the last years, since they*
4 *didn't get anything using violence, the political ETA probably acquired more*
5 *sense, and therefore [they understood] that it would be better for the group to*
6 *lay down arms and move on towards a rather political or peaceful manner.*

Dani-18-Bilbo

In both these excerpts, the speakers are describing the evolution of one of the main actors involved in the past conflict, the organization ETA. They use the adjectives "military" and "political" as synonyms for *armed* and *unarmed* (or violent and nonviolent) actions. What these speakers ignore is that their narratives are echoes or "disguised quotations" (Reyes, 1996, p. 20) of a terminology used by ETA itself during its history: the organization split in 1970 into *Political-Military ETA* (*ETA pm*) and *Military ETA* (*ETA m*); the former would soon move towards institutional politics, and the latter would continue with its armed strategy until it decided to lay down arms in 2017.

Both our interviewees draw on this intertextual information through re-semantization of terminology. A clear influence of this cultural knowledge resonates in their speech, even though they do not seem to be aware of the actual development of facts: they reproduce terminology from a concrete moment in history and employ it with a new meaning in a new narrative. This could also be considered an example of colonization, linguistically understood as "an 'invasion' of concepts from one discursive sphere into another one" (Wodak, 2011, p. 169). This new distinction between a *military* and a *political* ETA seems to function as a device of categorization of actors: they represent the *evil* and *good* sides of the same actor, in the context of an inner conflict of interests in which eventually the *good side* –the political one– wins.

This representation may be a strategy to cope with contradictory discourses about an actor the speaker (at least partly) identifies with. Ekaitz acknowledges that the ingroup did

wrong in the past, but introduces the idea of a historical development towards peaceful or political methods in what Rheindorf & Wodak call "internal othering" (2017, p. 24). This would therefore function as a legitimation strategy of the ingroup.

The presence of external discourses is usually subtle in the youngsters' narratives; they often reproduce set phrases or discourses they have heard somewhere without being aware of it. However, an analysis that takes into account the historical-discursive context must not forget about these influences.

1 Which actions of ETA do you remember?
2 *I remember the one, eh, I don't know, the train in Madrid… a train they blew*
3 *up with bombs, I don't know, eh? That's what I remember.*

Gari-20-Getxo

This excerpt refers to the March 11, 2004 attacks on several train stations in Madrid. Although they were initially attributed to ETA, this was soon denied, as Al-Qaeda claimed authorship of the attack. The speaker, who was six years old at that time, does not have this information. He can only remember some basic features of the event: an attack with bombs on trains, and a setting (Madrid). The fact that he relates the attack to ETA might have two possible explanations when looking at the context: either he is drawing on an external discourse that was once expressed publicly and has been maintained in social knowledge, or he introduces the actor *ETA* in this story because of a pre-established mental scheme, according to which ETA did similar attacks on civil society. The new narrative, "*ETA bombed the train stations in Madrid*", would therefore be a coherent narrative with his belief systems, even if the content is false. Moreover, similarly to Ekaitz's narrative above, it would also play a role as a device of actor categorization, but this time it would characterize ETA as an outgroup, according to a series of negative characteristics that the speaker already attributes to the group.

IV. Rearrangement through recontextualization: an example of 'invented' memories

Discourses about the past are narratives that are built anew every time and shaped by the current position of the speaker. During that process, the speaker's position might change, situating them in a *new place* of the communicative interaction.

1 Do you have any direct memories [about the conflict], about an attack or such?
2 *Yes, I do. The [attack against the] ETB headquarters. I think we were at school,*
3 *I was in my ikastola*[47] *when we heard what had happened, I think they had*
4 *placed a bomb or something, but we could hear a very loud noise.*
5 Did you hear the explosion?
6 *Yes, we heard it from our school.*

Dani-18-Bilbo

The speaker assures to remember the attack on the Basque public television outlet EiTB personally, and provides an evidence of his testimony ("we heard it", line 6), as well as a detailed description of his position at the time of the event ("I was in my ikastola", line 3) and an emphasizing description of his perception ("a very loud noise", line 4). Nevertheless, the attack Dani is speaking about took place on December 31st, 2008. As it was New Year's Eve, all schools were necessarily closed on that day: therefore, the situation that the speaker describes is physically impossible. However, the setting (the

[47] Basque-speaking school.

school) and the elements (the loud noise, the sound of an explosion) have become part of his perception of the past.

The reason for this might be an *a posteriori* re-construction of events, using different kinds of contextual information available in his mental models: information about the sound of an explosion, about the approximate year of the event (during his childhood) and a logical setting (he must have been at school). The resulting narrative serves firstly as a means for the coherent organization of events –although not accurate with reality– and secondly as a self-presentation strategy possibly refigured in accordance to the present context of situation, as the speaker appears in this interview as somebody who can offer relevant information because he can provide direct memories. In both cases, pre-established context models greatly influence the outcome of the process of meaning making.

5.4.7. Conclusions of the chapter

In this analytical subsection I have analyzed the identification and positioning strategies employed by young Basques in relation to their collective past and especially to its violence. I have observed that, most of them find it difficult to identify the impact of the Basque conflict on their daily lives, and therefore, on a personal level they feel distanced from the problems related to it.

A hierarchization of the spectrum of possible experiences with the conflict can be observed in their discourses: they regard first-hand testimonies, *direct* experiences, and experiences involving greater suffering as more true; and, since most youngsters have not had similar experiences in their personal lives, their general interpretation is that the conflict has not had a considerable impact –or any at all– on them. Behind this denial, however, lies a difficulty to define the influence of the conflict, not its actual absence. Young people realize that there are some traces of the Basque conflict in their lives, but they find it difficult to describe them with precision. To overcome this contradiction, they resort to subject duplication, differentiating an individual and a collective influence of the conflict, and taking the position of a collective identity to describe how the conflict has affected them.

The relationship that young people are building with regard to the Basque conflict is, therefore, of an eminently symbolic nature: they are able to establish links with it when they assume the position of a collective subject, even when they do not identify these influences in their daily personal lives. This idea is reinforced by the study of narratives about childhood memories provided by the speakers. Since they were born in the last years of armed conflict, they personally remember only a few episodes, and those are usually events occurred in their near social context or those which fit the frame of the *terrorist attack*. In any case, they all include an interdiscursive element; that is to say, the limited perceptions of childhood are not enough to become narratives of an experience on their own. Instead, most often they require the additional explanation of an adult, or an *a posteriori* elaboration of the speakers themselves in order to acquire historical meaning. This allows me to argue that the experiences of the generation under study in relation to the Basque conflict are predominantly collective, mediated and polyphonic. In order to *remember*, the youngsters must almost always adopt the position of another

subject: that of the speaker who added meaning to their experience (parents or relatives in general), or that of a wider collective subject.

This collective identity takes the form of two main groups in the oral discourses collected for this study. On the one hand, the interviewees identify as *youths* as opposed to an outgroup formed mainly by their parents and grandparents. I have called this a *generational* identity structure. In this categorization of actors, a distinction is constructed between a *front line* which has directly experienced conflict, and a second line which receives knowledge from the former; the youths position themselves in this second line, expressing a cognitive and emotional distance towards the conflict. Older generations –and, to some extent, schools and the media– are conceptualized as subjects possessing information; it is in their power to transfer knowledge, and young people often accuse them of not doing so, either out of selfish interests or out of powerlessness. Young people, on the other hand, self-categorize in this scheme as passive subjects without direct experience nor agency, taking a marginal position within the social interaction.

This position implies distancing oneself from responsibilities linked to the past violence, but it is also a symptom of a perceived lack of legitimacy, which hinders the youngsters to engage in the broad social debate on the conflict. They often conceptualize the past as a taboo territory that cannot be transitioned: it is a discursive space belonging to the previous generation. They do not feel authorized to enter it, and believe that they do not have enough knowledge to do so. I therefore argue that the mutism on the Basque conflict, so often attributed to young people, comes on one hand from the perception of a social taboo, and on the other hand from the feeling of a lack of communicative competence.

Other metaphorizations that I have observed reinforce this conceptualization, such as the metaphors of judgment: young people feel unjustly judged because of their collective past, and discursively distance themselves from it. The naturalization of past violence also responds to a similar strategy: referring to a state or an element that is inherent to a past period of time opens up a pre-discussable field, and allows those born after that time to distance themselves from any kind of responsibility. This normalization may also be related to the perception of the social environment: for speakers with a recent history of migration, the discursive presence of the Basque conflict is considerable, while those raised in the Basque Country regard the subject as almost imperceptible in their everyday context.

Most of these discursive strategies respond to a –at least partly– generational rupture. However, I have also identified discourses constructed on a historical identification with previous generations. In terms of collective identity, I have labeled these as national identities, since these young people have mainly employed the category *Basques* in order to designate the group. This self-definition, however, does not mean that the young people interviewed are particularly patriotic –some have identified as such, others have not–, or that they do not take on any Spanish identity; it is an identity that is made explicit in historical terms, often driven by the framework of the interaction itself. In other words, when we ask them about the Basque conflict, many of them *activate* a framework based on the experiences of Francoism, so they base their discursive structures on the narrative of a historical victimization of the Basques. In fact, I have detected in many discourses, albeit implicitly, an identification with Spain or with the Spanish geographical and

political frameworks, but the speakers have not offered any elaboration on this. My hypothesis is that the very framework of the topic of dialogue (the Basque conflict) facilitates identification as a Basque citizen, and that Spanish identity does not need to be explicitly expressed because of its hegemonic presence. However, this question may give rise to a later line of research.

In narratives of this second kind, young people have generally appropriated the experiences of their social group. The main narratives that underpin this identity are based on the historical victimization of the ingroup, its ideological features or shared political objectives, as well as symbolic references to the armed past, such as the ideals represented by ETA and its armed strategies. This symbolism, however, leads to a division among those who identify themselves as Basques: for some, the political positions adopted by the ingroup in the past are an element that provides them with a historical connection; others, on the other hand, precisely feel that they are victims of these past behaviors, because they believe that they are judged unjustly in the present.

In narratives structured according to a national identity, strategies of justification of the ingroup's past actions and attitudes predominate: narratives that reinforce the victimization of the Self and the negative presentation of the Other, rationalization and relativization, and the construction of supporting frameworks (i.e. the framework of war) have been the most widely used. On the other hand, the marginal position that the youngsters occupy in the social dispute over the past of the Basque conflict, may, in many cases, give rise to an idealization of the past, which I have identified primarily among the most politicized participants.

In many cases, however, I have observed a clash between the need of the youngsters to justify the past of their group, and the desire to build a discourse consistent with their present opinions and values. Thus, they employ a number of discursive strategies in order to reconcile the latter with the dominant social narratives around them, both with the principal narratives of society (e.g. the widespread rejection of violence) and with the dominant discourses within their middle-scale and smaller social groups, especially when they question the group's past positions. Young people have mainly employed modalizers and positioning strategies that denote a certain distance of the speaker in order to enhance their agency and legitimacy without questioning their social position. Moral evaluation can also fulfil this function: through it, the speaker requests permission to incorporate into his or her social context an opinion that may be controversial, because of its content or because it challenges his or her social position.

The importance of previously constructed cognitive frames and patterns of interpretation becomes obvious in almost all discursive constructions, which I have referred to in this chapter as *mental models* (Van Dijk, 2003b) or *frames* (Goffman, 1974) depending on their rather personal or social character. Most of the interviewees have resorted to context knowledge stored beforehand when building narratives about the past, especially when completing cognitive voids or contradictory discourses. As a result of this process, speakers have often constructed *new* narratives that did not necessarily coincide with the *true* or most consensual version of the events, but which organized the elements within the discourse coherently according to the current interests, attitudes and identities adopted by the speaker. I have identified these processes mainly as transformation strategies (Van

Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999), more precisely rearrangement strategies. Among others, I have identified strategies of rearrangement through logical reconstruction, addition, elaboration and substitution, as well as re-contextualization strategies.

Based on these findings, I can argue that the construction of memory, insofar it is a discursive construct, implies the active participation of the generation that remembers, especially when the relationship that generation has towards their past is affected by taboo, unknowledge or a lack of legitimacy. Thus, I defend that the concept of *discursive strategies,* introduced by Ruth Wodak, is useful in order to understand these processes, because all exercise of memory is shaped by our current position and aims. In a context in which the political and social relations and an atmosphere of taboo prevent participation in the debate on social conflicts, concepts such as the *agency* of the youth become even more relevant, that is, the discursive strategies they employ in order to engage in that debate.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

6.1. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The main interest that has motivated this thesis was to understand the conceptualizations that young people are building about the Basque armed conflict and their engagement in the construction of its memory. More precisely, it expected to identify some of the factors that lie behind their alleged lack of participation. After analyzing their accounts in detail, I have concluded that the origin of this mutism or lack of engagement is not a consequence of the lack of interest on the side of the youngsters, but rather a result of the insufficient discursive repertoire available to them and the marginal social position they attribute to themselves within the network of social relations built around it.

To reach this conclusion, I have used a four-step analysis to answer the four research questions formulated at the beginning of the thesis. First of all, I have identified the main macro-narratives that the young participants of this study have built about the Basque conflict itself, and some of the interpretative frameworks within which they have contextualized them. Next, I have examined how the participants in the investigation perceive their various social and thus discursive contexts, in order to identify the sources of information they consider reliable, legitimate, and/or effective, and the discursive repertoire they perceive to be available to them. Thirdly, I have analyzed how they engage or interact with these social-discursive contexts, with particular attention to discursive positioning processes and the construction of collective identities. And finally, I have brought to light some of the psycholinguistic strategies employed by the youngsters in order to combine discourses containing knowledge, attitudes, and norms learned from the social environment with their contemporary context.

As a general conclusion, I can affirm that the memories that young people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s recall or reconstruct discursively about the history of the Basque armed conflict are almost entirely mediated. Not only because most of the events in the history of ETA's armed activity predate their lifespan or their ability to remember, but also because the events they experienced in childhood require a discursive/narrative elaboration after the event in order to be recalled or re-narrativized in adulthood. During this process of attaching meaning to impressions and images perceived in the past as children, the view of the parents often mediates as an explanatory framework. In other cases, it is the youths themselves who complete their contemporary narrative based on knowledge acquired after the original memory. In any way, in the moment in which the youngsters *remember*, they build a new narrative that combines various discursive inputs and that is adapted to the communicative situation and social context of the moment.

Secondly, the participants have confirmed to us that they perceive a lack of resources to learn about their collective and conflictive history. The fact that the recent Basque conflict is still a disputed issue within society makes them understand that there is no consensual discourse, and they consider the fact that there is hardly any teaching material on it a sign of this. However, through semi-structured, in-depth and sufficiently personalized interviews, it is possible to observe that the absence of a consensual transmission policy does not mean that young people have not received any kind of knowledge: they have been socialized into discursive contexts highly charged of values, emotions and norms of behavior and expression, and through this socialization they have internalized the

meanings and knowledge prevailing in each context. As a result of this high level of discursive mediation, the relationship they have built with the history of the Basque conflict is above all symbolic, and they have experienced its manifestations through prejudices, attitudes and emotions. However, they do not consider all these learnings to be valid knowledge, nor do they recognize them enough validity as instruments to involve in the discussion about the past. Behind this underestimation of one's own knowledge are a number of reasons related to the restrictive nature of the social macro-narratives about the Basque conflict and the social position which the discursive context of young people has assigned to them.

On the one hand, the hegemonic discourses which are now perceived as prevailing in the Basque society have established a strict definition of *violence* that is also reproduced by the youngsters in their discursive constructions. The Basque conflict is thereby conceptualized primarily as a violent conflict, highlighting its bloodiest aspects and invisibilizing its ideological aspects. The new global understandings of the term *terrorism* after 2001 and the extended social delegitimation of the use of anti-state violence in the Basque case oppose by principle the terms *violence* and *politics*, assessing the use of the former as reprehensible *per se* in democratic contexts.

In this framework, the term *violence* is equated with physical violence and, more concretely, with personal damage caused by ETA. I have also identified the presence of this general frame among the narratives of my interviewees; in other words, they think about the Basque conflict mainly in terms of *deaths*. Consequently, those who are considered victims or legitimated voices to provide testimony of the suffering are also almost exclusively people who have suffered personal and physical violence or relatives of deadly victims.

This view, however, raises a number of voids and impediments to the narrative reconstruction and identification by young people. By focusing on a single expression of violence (its most physical aspect), there is a risk of leaving other forms of violence out of the definition; consequently, young people, especially those that come from the most depoliticized contexts, present difficulties in understanding the less visible aspects of the conflict, namely the cultural and symbolic aspects of violence, or its historical roots. This often leads to the construction of a *narrative of absurdity* about the conflict, in which violence is caused for the sake of itself. This responds to a lack of necessary knowledge in order to understand the ideological or political background of the conflict and its historical evolution, and is symptomatic of the disidentification of young people towards their collective history. Thus, the narrative of a purely violent conflict –without an ideological or political component– not only deprives young people of the instruments needed to understand the conflict in its complexity, but also smothers their interest and distances them from the social discussion on the topic; because, if they have no means of organizing historical events in an intelligible context and order, they have greater difficulty in relating the conflict to their contemporary context, turning it less relevant for them.

Nontheless, the political violence of the past is an attractive topic for the youths, not only because they indirectly notice that many contemporary issues of their lifetime are products of the historical development of the conflict; they also interpret that certain

issues, such as the causes and motivations of ETA's violence, are intentionally left out of the debate. It might be argued that being in contact with those kinds of discourses could lead to an idealization or a radicalization among these youngsters, but this study has proved that being in contact with subaltern discourses or narratives that challenge the social status quo –such as those which approve of ETA's violence with or without nuances– does not induce them to accept those discourses without any questioning. On the contrary: those participants who have been exposed to diverse and contradictory discourses about the past violence –because the narratives in their families differ from the content of public discourses, for example– have shown to actively perform cognitive processing work in order to cohere these discourses among themselves and with their contemporary contexts and positions. As a result, they have constructed more complex narratives about past events and the actors involved in them than the *narrative of absurdity* derived from the framework of sheer violence. Put it simply, discursive diversity may encourage critical thought among the youngsters, precisely because it obligues them to manage an apparent incompatibility among differing narratives.

An example of this active processing work is *the narrative of the two-faced actor* built about ETA: this construction provides the opportunity to combine private and social perceptions about the same actor to those speakers who support or agree on the motivational or ideological aspects of ETA's history, while at the same time articulating a critique towards its armed expression. The narrative that distinguishes two stages in the history of the conflict responds to a similar cognitive process: by placing the turning point that changed the character of the conflict within the post-francoist transition, youths are able to combine the historically influential narrative of national liberation with the contemporary framework of terrorism. Thus, they can adapt to the current discursive status quo without denying the historical symbology that provides unity to their social group.

The mental and symbolic dychotomy described almost thirty years ago by Azurmendi (1997) as *the Democrats and the Violent* is a structure that remains on the basis of many contemporary patterns of interpretation. A naturalization of the term *terrorism* can be observed among the discourses of the youngsters, up to the extent of framing almost any act of violence within that frame. The term *conflict*, on the other hand, is experiencing a resemantization: it is becoming more distanced from the specific historical, identitary and political conflicts related to the concept of the *Basque conflict*, and is instead employed increasingly as a synonym for almost any type of social or coexistence *problem*. Thus, political conflict or discussion is seen as undesirable, and not perceived as an opportunity for a respectful and enrichening exchange of views.

Consequently, the history of the Basque conflict is nowadays an uncomfortable discursive sphere. Young people will generally only refer to it in situations of great social consensus, that is, in the context of people who they assume think alike, or relying on publicly legitimized discursive grounds. As the data collected for ths study has shown, at least three factors influence the prominence of memories that are most prone to be narrated frequently and thus become a stable part of the discourses about the past. First, their consistency with previously established narratives: events that are most consistent with the *terrorism* framework are reproduced more frequently and with greater certainty by young people in their oral narratives, such as physical attacks that have resulted in

fatalities. The fact that the actors who have been named as protagonists of the conflict are almost exclusively male and linked to the military side of the conflict can be interpreted in similar terms.

For all interviewees, ETA has proven to be a central concept in the debate on the history of the Basque conflict. They are able to describe the actions of this armed group in greater detail than those attributed to the armed forces, especially those actions which involve the loss of human lives and which have received the greatest attention in the media. Paradoxically, they feel no legitimacy to speak or ask about ETA directly, and it becomes usual to speak about it in euphemistic terms. They only allow themselves to mention ETA through the use of humor. As one of the interviewees described, using a cultural icon of his generation, "ETA is Voldemort" for the currrent youth: a symbol of the evil and the Unsayable.

This taboo also indirectly shapes their conception of the political prisoners, who, at the time of writing this thesis, comprised a group of more than 150 people serving long prison sentences in relation to the past armed conflict. To young people aged 15 to 23, these are mainly symbols, as many were imprisoned before the latter were even born. Among the most physical and lived consequences of the Basque conflict, the issue of prisoners is still one that significantly restricts and undermines the quality of human life. Most young people, however, do not know the prisoners personally, and this cognitive and emotional distance often leads to hyperbolic interpretations, not about the prisoners as real people, but about a mental category of *prisoners*; in some cases in the form of idealization, and in most cases in the form of demonization. Prisoners are assessed on the basis of the offences committed or attributed to them, consistently with the *terrorist* framework. This can also be observed in the discourses of young people who ideologically support prisoners. Thus, we may conclude that, when there is no personal relationship towards the specific actors involved in the conflict, the influence of the discursive *status quo* becomes even more relevant in the construction of the cognitive frameworks about them.

On the other hand, in the case of the historical role of the armed forces within the Basque conflict, young people have been familiarized with them mainly through domestic experiences and narratives. These experiences have often been reproduced in an anecdotal tone and within a normalizing context, without attributing them much relevance. There is also a relatively great difference in the nature of the discourses that young people build about different police organizations involved in the history of of the conflict: paramilitary groups such as the GAL, which remains farther in history and was active for a shorter period of time, were mentioned more frequently and with greater certainty than the Civil Guard, which is still part of the conflict. I have also collected a number of narratives that normalize the latter; in fact, a number of participants were not even able to associate the Civil Guard with the history of the Basque conflict, especially those who have not had a personal relationship with that military police force. One possible cause of this is that the participation of the GAL is sufficiently documented and reproduced in textbooks, audio-visual and legal texts, while the Civil Guard and the problems of coexistence with it – crystallized in the Alsasua case– remain a controversial issue on which there is no consensual discourse. We may, therefore, reply to Lowenthal (1998), that the past may sometimes be a better known territory than the present, especially when it is written down or materialized on resources considered to be reliable. I have observed a similar

phenomenon regarding the several peace initiatives that attempted and eventually led to the disarmament of ETA: the lack of knowledge about them was generalized among the discourses collected, and there was no shared or consensuated discourse about the end of the armed conflict.

To sum up, it becomes evident that the degree of social consensus on specific historical events strongly influences the transmission of knowledge associated with them, not only because memory discourses about it are more frequently reproduced in different discursive spheres – such as the media, family or education), but also because it extends the area of the permissible and relevant discourses around the topic. In other words, young people attribute a greater reliability to the knowledge and narratives contained in a variety of resources within their discursive repertoire than to those which they have only perceived at home or in their private environments. Similarly, issues that are perceived as controversial –in this case, ETA itself and its use of violence– are generally avoided, as youngsters feel that thematizing them would break the social consensus, that is, the *rules* of the disussion established by their environment. Hence, they do not perceive a discursive basis that is stable enough in order to explore a symbolic area regarded as dangerous or threatening.

If we understand the construction of collective memories on past conflicts in terms of a broad debate involving society as a whole, we must also consider the transmission of knowledge in terms of accessibility, that is, of a communicative repertoire available to young people and which they can use according to their needs. Thus, a relevant question would be which discourses are most accessible to them within this repertoire, and which are invisibilized or denied, as this will clearly condition their manners of approaching the discussion.

Furthermore, among the reasons that can account for the disidentification of young people, one of the determining factors is the form and the content of the messages they receive from their discursive context. The violent past of the Basque conflict is generally a sensitive or taboo subject in close social circles, and, parallel to that, there is a political battle over its truths in the institutional sphere and the media. The widespread metaphor of the *battle of the narrative* conceptualizes the discursive dispute about the past in war-like terms, and the use of the singular –as it is always about *the narrative* and not about possible *narratives*– implies that there may only be one discursive victor. It involves therefore a demand for a hegemonic, one-voiced memory. This conceptualization, added to a clear hierachy about the *true* experiences of the conflict, leaves no space for marginal views as those of the youngsters, who cannot identify with the physical effects of the conflict and who do not feel legitimated enough to introduce their own prespective.

Young Basques are at the same time recipients of very private and very public discourses: the most intimate family circle and the media are, in their own words, the main sources of historical learning. The relevance of each of these sources within the discursive landscape of young people depends largely on their degree of politicization: those who usually do not speak about politics with their family depend more on public discourses in order to contruct their own narratives about the past.

In any case, one of the main sources for all the participants is the research initiated by themselves, both on the Internet and by eliciting the transmission of experiences by

posing questions at home. They do not feel, however, an initiative to talk about the past on the part of their parents. On the contrary, they view them as hesitant: many do not know how to address the subject with their children, or provide them only fractional accounts full of euphemisms.

Indeed, one of the usual mechanisms observed in the transmission of family memory is the construction of euphemistic narratives adapted to an ideal or putative underage audience. Parents often tell their children stories that in moral terms of *right* and *wrong*, but without expliciting the facts or attitudes that are being evaluated. These accounts often take the form of isolated anecdotes or curiosities; they often have children as protagonists, and operate as metonymies of the whole historical conflict, in accordance to the self-image of the parents/family or the ingroup. In other words, domestic transmission generally responds to the construction of both collective and personal identities.

As a result, young people are often unaware of most of their parents' and grandparents' lived experiences. Moreover, they report the impression of an accidental access to that knowledge: family members belonging to older generations tend to consider many events occurred during their own lifetime as obvious or well-known information, and therefore do not feel the need of explicitly sharing them with their children. Consequently, younger generations learn about these events or times through indirect references. Sharing the collective memory of the group is seen as one of the conditions for belonging to the group, that is, a community of memory is formed through the ability to interpret and attach meaning to the ingroup's past experiences through similar symbolic resources and processes, which at the same time enables an identification with those experiences even without having been personally involved in them. However, the young participants of this study don't feel completely integrated to this collection of shared knowledge of the family, because many facts that are utterly unknown to them are taken for granted and never explicited. In this respect, a clear generational gap can be identified between the lived experiences of young people and their parents: while for the former the Basque armed conflict –especially from the point of view of ETA's violence–is almost as far away as any other event in history, for the latter it is still a topical issue. Young people feel that they ought to know, as members of the group, what is taken for granted; but the sources they have had at hand during their lifetime are insufficient to fill these voids of knowledge, which causes them a feeling of shame and of arriving late. As a result, some of the participants have reported that they prefer to resort to information available in public discourses rather than addressing the question at home or in intimate circles.

Nevertheless, the influence of the familiar context on individual views of the past should not be underestimated. Despite the fragmentary transmission of specific knowledge, the emotional prism of parents continues to operate as a *screen* for evaluating historical and social realities.

On the other hand, the prominence and relevance of certain events – or *memories*– within mental models and narratives about the past depends on the the importance that is recognized to them in various discursive contexts of young people. Personal and geographical proximity, for example, is a significant variable in family transmission: when looking at the past from a contemporary position, nearby people and spaces provide a familiar framework in which to place historical events. Hence, within families it is

common to narrate the life experiences of close acquaintances, and it is more likely that young people will identify with them and remember them more easily. Similarly, the spaces through which young people transit in their daily lives, that is, their neighbourhoods and towns, often operate as a source of knowledge of the past and the history of the ingroup, insofar they form spaces for the socialization into cultural references and norms. Public space, however, contains more meanings than young people actively perceive; most of the participants of this study were not aware of the official *lieux de mémoire* created or designated by previous generations for the purpose of transmitting historical meanings, which leads to the question as to whether these spaces actually serve as places of memory.

After their household and their immediate social context, formal education is usually the next sphere in which children and adolescents are exposed to public discourses. In the case of the history of the Basque conflict, young people perceive that the subject is taboo in the classrooms, among others, because the education system has failed to address the social and political development of recent decades in historiographic terms: textbooks generally only contain historical periods until the end of Francoism, and contextualize its consequences and posterior events within ethical and moral terms, often in line with the discourses on international terrorism globalized since 2001. Up to the moment of writing this thesis, the local educational institutions had failed to introduce any teaching material that specifically addressed the political violence of the Basque context in its complexity.

This lack of material deprives both students and teachers of discursive support; the latter consider the history of the Basque conflict to be a highly subjective and therefore questionable area. On the other hand, we have not identified a culture of *peace education* in the terms defined by Galtung (Webel & Galtung, 2007), that is, the plurality of experiences and opinions in the classroom is seen as a risk that can compromise consensus or social peace, rather than viewing the school as a forum for safe debate and healthy exchange.

In any case, the school curriculum has a clear influence on the discursive constructions of the youngsters, both because of the contents it contains and because of those it ellipses; often to a greater degree than they themselves acknowledge. On the one hand, their memory agenda depends to a large extent on what they have learned in textbooks as *History*; and on the other, the speakers show great certainty in reproducing these contents narratively, denoting that they attribute to the school curriculum the role of a solid and reliable discursive basis.

Moreover, education plays a dual role in the process of young people's political and social learning: first, it promotes the formal transmission of publicly valued and standardized discourses; and, secondly, it provides space for building relations among young people and with teachers and the educational community. This second kind of transmission is very valuable for adolescents who, in their private contexts, are not accustomed to talking about the Basque conflict, and for those who have just arrived to the Basque Country, because school is often the first sphere in which they acquire references and meanings about the recent history, which may then lead to autonomous searches.

Having said that, it is unusual for the young participants of this study to speak about the subject amongst their peers; they do not perceive it as a topic that is very present around

them. Paradoxically, youths with a personal history of migration have a completely different perception: they believe that the subject is very present, and that gestures and references unknown to them are constantly made by their peers. We can conclude, therefore, that young people raised in the Basque Country have normalized many of the meanings and practices associated with the Basque conflict, which appear invisible to them in their daily lives.

In general terms, young Basques have a clear awareness of the scope of *the unspeakable*: they know which are the controversial topics that are left out of the agenda, and which discourses are considered acceptable. They have reported that narratives that question the framework of terrorism are more inaccessible to them. This, on the other hand, increases curiosity about matters which are left out of the discussion; the desire to understand the causes of the violence has been a general demand which can be identified among youths with widely differing ideological tendencies.

Indeed, defining the Basque conflict solely by its physical violence –and, more particularly, the violence employed by a concrete actor– causes another prejudicial effect: if only those who have suffered the most serious consequences of physical violence are considered as victims or legitimate testimonies of the conflict, the experience of the majority of the population will be regarded as worthless in terms of the construction of the memory of the conflict. If *violence* is conceived only in terms of murder and serious injury, the experiences that do not fit these categories run the risk of being considered irrelevant. Specifically in the case of the younger generations as a whole, this framework makes them understand that their experience is not strictly related to the Basque conflict, and this leads to an attitudinal distancing. "We have not experienced the conflict" becomes the unifying narrative they build as a group. In other words, they are building a collective identity in negative terms regarding the Basque conflict.

However, as I have already argued, it would be inaccurate to say that these youngsters have not experienced the Basque conflict in any way: they do have several types of knowledge, but they do not consider them to be valid in order to appear as legitimate interlocutors in the discussion about the past. This denial must consequently be interpreted in terms of the lack of legitimacy and agency these youngsters perceive through their social context, in relation to their personal and collective positions.

Young people often have difficulties identifying the impact of the Basque conflict on their personal lives, precisely because they associate its effects with a very narrow category, reduced to their concept of *violence*. Consequently, they regard the conflict as a matter affecting *others*, and feel excluded from the construction process of its memory. This is a pattern that is repeated regardless of political ideologies: young people who do not identify as *abertzale* believe that the construction of collective memory on the conflict is a topic that involves primarily the *abertzale* community, but, at the same time, adolescents who are related to prisoners or former members of ETA do not feel either entitled to share their experiences openly, as there is no *safe space* for them within public discourses.

In discursive and metaphorical terms, the Basque conflict is conceptualized by the youths as a *territory of others*. A clear hierarchy can be observed in the classification of experiences: young people often distinguish between an *indirect* and a *direct* influence of the conflict in order to illustrate the different manners through which one can relate to the

conflict. By resorting to spatial metaphorization, these *fortright* and *collateral* ways of experiencing the conflict represent the boundary between a *front line* that receives the impact of the conflict, and a *second line* which acquires knowledge about it after and through the experiences of the former. Older generations are seen as occupying that front line; it is assumed that their first-hand experiences or observations have provided them with truer knowledge, and that they are therefore more legitimated to speak about it. Younger generations, on the other hand, see themselves in the *second* line: theirs is a second-hand knowledge, and thus less legitimate. Subjects on *this* side of the border are not entitled to speak about what they have seen through the eyes of others. The lack of knowledge is thereby directly linked to the lack of legitimation to engage in the discursive interaction.

In other words, some participants have conceptualized the knowledge about the past in terms of a property or an asset that is owned by their parents and grandparents, the education system and, in general, by the older generations who have constructed the dominant discourses in their social context. They have laid the foundations and rules for the broad social debate which is the memory of the Basque conflict. In this context, information is conceptualized as a kind of power, because being socialized in the rules of the debate means also acquiring the instruments to perform competently in that disucursive territory.

This link between the knowledge about the past and the perceived legitimacy within the social debate about it becomes clearest in the reports of migrated participants: to them, gaining acces to the communicative norms and experiences of a new epistemic community is a key to becoming part of the group. In general terms, a similar phenomenon occurs to younger generations regarding the historical conflict: they do not feel to have enough resources – in terms of knowledge about facts and rules of conduct– to transit through the discursive and normative terrain constructed by others.

The prevalence of moral evaluation identified among their discursive constructions responds to this perception, as well as the urge to provide politically correct or acceptable accounts: both are *requests for permission* to enter a discursive arena in which they perceive a high social pressure.

A duplication of the remembering subject has been observed in most discourses as a means to overcome these constradictions and approach the topic. By differentiating the individual and collective influences of the conflict, the youngsters are able to *recall* and appropriate the experiences of the group in relation to the Basque conflict. In other words, the construction of collective identities is an instrument for bringing the speakers closer to a discursive sphere which is otherwise too remote for them: young people feel more interpellated by the conflict through their collective self than through their individuality.

The discursive construction of these collective identities fulfills two additional functions: on the one hand, to soften individual responsibilities or commitments; and, on the other, to reinforce and redefine the symbols and systems of meaning already established within the group. When I state that the relationship of young Basques with the Basque conflict today is eminently of a symbolic nature, I refer to the fact that the group mediates through its conventional meaning-systems, and that young people find their place within the broad historical conflict precisely through the position they occupy within the group.

In this thesis, I have identified two main articulations of group identities, structured around the *generational* and the *national* identification of the youngsters. In the first, the cognitive and experiencial differences are interpreted as relations of power that delimitate the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup, i.e., youngsters position themselves facing their parents and, more generally, previous generations. Within terms of national identification, the symbolic connection with the experiences of their family is generally maintained: children appropriate the experiences of their parents, thereby reducing their disidentification and distance from the subject, and replacing their perceived marginal social position towards it by a more agentive position.

One of the main discursive patterns that provides coherence to this second collective identity is the narrative of the historical victimization of the Basque people. Furthermore, it becomes evident that the collective experiences of Francoism continue to operate as a shared historical subtext for the interpretation of a large number of experiences and situations occurred in later times of the conflict. Many of the prejudices experienced personally by young people in relation to the stereotype of the *Basque terrorist*, for instance, are framed in the terms of this framework of historical repression suffered by the Basques in the past, during Franco's dictatorship. In fact, many of their discourses are constructed assuming these experiences as given or as a response to them.

Within this framework, ETA continues to operate as an important symbolic reference among a relatively broad part of society, even among those who do not explicitly support its actions or manners: it continues to embody the narrative of a resistance movement that opposed a collective victimization in the past, albeit this narrative is challenged by the frame of *terrorism* spread and established afterwards. It would therefore be too simple to say that young people are under the influence of one single discourse. On the contrary, they have the capacity to reconcile several discursive spheres and interpretive frameworks, and to manage the contradictions among them; and to this end they perform active work of interpretation and re-narrativization when they build memory discourses.

Based on concepts previously developed by authors such as Lakoff eta Johnson (1980), Wodak (2011, 2015) and Welzer (2001, 2005), I have laid out throughout this research some of the psycholinguistic mechanisms or strategies employed by the young participants when interacting with the various discourses present in their social contexts. Among these, I have especially focused on the discursive resources used to approach a taboo or uknown past, and thus to increase their own agency as interlocutors or participants in the social debate on that collective past.

On the one hand, I have observed that metaphorization and re-semantization do not only operate as a means of presenting a discursive field which is perceived as unknown or complex in rather intelligible terms, but also as a means of making it more accessible and contributing to the debate. In other words, through the attempt of removing the past conflict from the conceptual systems established by previous generations and reformulating it in their own terms, young people appropriate it and integrate themselves into the discussion. For example, through the use of spatial metaphors, which are often applied to the collective past, they condense a complex political and social problem into the terms of a more familiar concept, but at the same time use these metaphors to become relevant subjects themselves: by conceptualizing the historical development in terms of a

path that moves across physical spaces, they are able to verbally construct images such as “our way”, through which they acquire a greater relevance as subjects within that historical transition.

The use of humor plays a similar role in the data collected for this study. On the one hand, the jokes young people make about the conflict and the ironic expressions they exchange are a clear symptom of the emotional distance they feel towards the political and armed conflict of the past. On the other hand, however, humor may be a mechanism for dealing with a lack of competence and taboo: irony, similar to figurative language, implies the givenness of a number of shared subtexts that need not to be pronounced in order to infer their meaning. This enables young people to self-portray as knowledgeable of the subject, without having to make explicit assertions that may jeopardize social consensus.

Other types of metaphorization identified are related to the delimitation of the group that is being interpellated in the discursive construction of the memory of the Basque conflict. The *topos* of the *tragic war/conflict among relatives* that stands out among other strategies of naturalization, for example, allows the speakers not to point at any concrete responsibilities for past damage, while at the same time addressing the whole of society; young people, because of their family or community ties, would thus be incorporated in this understanding of the conflict. The metaphor of war, on the other hand, operates in two directions: on the one hand, distances young people from their idea of the conflict, because they can hardly associate any experience of their lifetime with their concept of a war or any other conflict of a similar magnitude. But, on the other hand, this metaphor may also serve to incorporate themselves into the broad social sectors that are interpellated by the war, whose collective subject is generally built in national terms.

Other mechanisms employed by the youngsters in order to approach the coral discussion about the past are *requests for authorization* which emphasize one’s own position as inexperienced and thus unlearned, mostly in the form epistemic modalizers and euphemisms. By doing so, young people can introduce perspectives that may dissonate with the established discursive rules without challenging the settled social hierarchies. In other words: they base their credibility precisely on that position of ignorance, as a starting point from which to re-negotiate their agency.

The concept of cumulative heroization described by Welzer (2001) as the effort to situate one’s own family in a favorable positon of history is also evident in the discourses of young Basques regarding their collective past. This heroization or idealization is expressed through the attribution of pacifistic attitudes to their relatives, as according to the current social norms and regardless of their biographical and ideological trajectories. I defend, however, that this mental image of parents and grandparents is directly related to the eminently normative and moral nature of the discourses which young people have received from them. In any case, heroization applies not only to the biological family, but also to the broader social and ideological ingroup. Thus, there is a clear discursive pattern that tends to soften the past of one's own group: if the ingroup caused any damage, it was driven by the outgroup or by the circumstances. The own group is thus generally portrayed as a good-willed actor who acts according to his contextual factors, a pattern especially present within the epistemic community that sees ETA as a shared symbol of past resistance. In this sense, the understanding and categorizations of the conflict

described by Galtung (2003) and Lederach (2007) remain largely in force. According to the narratives of the interviewees, their particular families had never been involved as the causal agent of past damage.

Lastly, I have identified some of the psycholinguistic mechanisms that are activated when knowledge about the past is absent. In particular, I have demonstrated the role of context mental models in the reconstruction of cognitive voids about the past, based on a detailed analysis of the discourses that young people in the Basque Country build on past conflict: whenever they encountered a lack of specific information or data about it, they resorted to previously constructed cognitive schemes in order to fill the gaps. The result was often a narrative incoherent with real events, up to the point of *inventing* memories in some cases, but nevertheless consistent with the positioning of the speakers and their previous learnings. This discovery provides us with an illustrative view on the active and renarratizing aspect of memory, and makes us understand that young people actively engage in the construction of memory even when there is a lack of transmission, using, among other things, the frameworks provided by their contemporary discursive context.

6.2. CONTRIBUTIONS AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis has for the first time investigated the involvement and active participation of the younger generation in the construction of the memory of the Basque conflict through a detailed analysis of their discourses. Throughout the study, it has become evident that young people possess several kinds of knowledge and that they are building their collective memories upon them, though they have been socially categorized as unlearnt and unintersted. These incipient memory discourses will form the basis for some of the future social agreements about the Basque conflict. In order to undertsand the reasoning underlying them, it is crucial to pay attention to the perceptions and attitudes of young people nowadays. Any effort to design memory policies aimed at children and adolescents will be more effective if it incorporates analyses that take into account the particular perspectives of these age groups. Hence, we need to ask ourselves what kind of discursive repertoire we want to offer to these youth: a restrictive view that turns its back on the complexity of the troubled past, or a polyphonic discursive menu that provides them with the tools needed to transform the mental schemes built throughout its history.

Everybody hopes for new generations that will appear critical of past harm, but nobody wants the involvement of their ingroup to be criticized too sharply. *The battle about the narrative* is founded on this discrediting of the Other: by pointing at the damage of the past and attaching to it a single agent –most commonly the outgroup–, it aims to exclude the outgroups as interlocutors from the debate. When we talk about promoting a critical attitude towards the past, however, the concept of *critique* must go beyond morally condemning past practices: it implies that the subject who formulates the critique is able to understand them, to take a position towards them, and to adapt to other expressions that do not involve violence or mental schemes developed during the conflict.

According to Peace Education (Cabezudo & Haavelsrud, 2007), the beginning of a fruitful dialogue is the search for and appreciation of a diversity of voices through the creation of respectful forums that go far beyond formal education. In order to make this possible, it is necessary that as many social actors as possible feel entitled to participate

in the debate, and they need to feel that sharing their experience is socially valued, even those considered most trivial. If we conceive the construction of memory in terms of a discursive field or negotiation that involves the whole of society, an inclusive memory policy must ensure that those who have been exluded from it –in this case , young people– feel invited, and to this end must consider their voices valid.

6.3. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

It is true that, from a global perspective, this thesis looks at a very local question; it proposes a specific approach to a very broad and complex social plroblem. Just as a plurality of voices is essential for the construction of collective memories, studies of various disciplines and levels of analysis must be combined in order to understand the whole symbolic evolution of the Basque conflict. I have proposed an approach from Discourse Analysis, but I am aware that the methodology employed entails several limits parallel to its many benefits. Although a detailed discursive analysis of oral narratives gives us access to some of the cognitive structures of specific participants, language remains one possible form of engaging with the social reality: the attitudes and meanings expressed discursively do not always need to coincide with those that people embody in their daily social interactions.

Hence, this analysis should consider as a limit the *artificiality* of semi-structured and relatively formal interviews and the difficulties of access more naturally occurring linguistic expressions of young people. To overcome this limitation, a deeper ethnographic work should be added, for a longer period of time than I have spent with my participants; and yet there would remain areas that would be quite inaccessible, such as intimate domestic conversations or private interactions on social media. Therefore, through this first approach I have prioritized the analysis of the discourses that young people build when referring to these social relations, which I believe provides us with sufficient information to understand their perceptions and their means for discourse production.

Another limitation of the study is precisely the perceptive nature of these discourses, which has been an obstacle when exploring the influence of the discursive context young people. The real influence that families, education or the media can have in young people's mental patterns may be different from what they consciously perceive and reproduce, and we would need other systems of measurement to verify it. That is why I must state at every moment that I am focusing on discourses based on the *perceptions* and meaning-making processes of young people.

On the other hand, there are some difficulties that have arisen from the selection of the sample. Although I have strived to acknowledge and include much of the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Basque Country, I am aware that I have not reached all sectors. In the Northern Basque Country, for example, it has not been possible to interview monolingual, French-speaking youths, because of the limited linguistic competence of the interviewer. On the other hand, all the participants were somehow integrated into the education system: in the case of minors, they were contacted through their schools; and in the case of those over 18, all were students of university or vocational training. Young people outside the education system, who often belong to the most disadvantaged socio-economic sectors, have not participated in this study, and the fact

that the planning of the sample was made taking into account the socio-economic indexes of the municipalities does not fully cover this gap.

Lastly, with regard to the analysis of collective identities, the prominence of the identification category *Basque* may result surprising. In the context of a referential, cultural and political framework of the Spanish State, it is possible that the framework established by the research itself –by its aim to investigate about the Basque conflict– has prompted the participants to easily identify as Basques, and it is therefore possible that manifestations of Spanish identity –which in no way are incompatible with the former– appear obscured in this thesis. We must bear in mind that this collective identity does not only exist among the youngsters, but is in many ways hegemonic, and perhaps that is why it is not made explicit in the discourses of young people.

6.4. POSSIBLE PATHS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The academic concern raised in this study, namely the interpretations of the Basque society about the armed past and its positions on it, is not exclusive to this particular generation. If the usefulness of the Discourse-Historical Approach for the study of this phenomenon is validated, it may be adopted as a method of research in investigations applied to other generations, for example by interviewing the increasingly aging generations who were personally involved in the armed conflict. This, in the future, may enable diachronic comparative studies on how these discourses change from generation to generation. For, as some of our interviewees have observed, *Generation Z* is no longer the last link in the chain of the transmission of historical meanings: some of these youngsters are already primary school teachers, and thus formally incorporated into the chain.

On the other hand, this study opens the door to studies of specific variables. It would be interesting, for example, to investigate manners of transmission according to the type of school, or to examine the gender gap that can already be identified in the discursive production of these young people, both to identify the character of the figures and activities that have remained in their collective memory, as well as how gender relations intersect with the concept of legitimacy in the discursive construction of memory. These questions have been addressed less than wanted for reasons of extention, but they would clearly be a fertile field for future reserach.

On a more global level, this thesis is a further step towards a deeper interdisciplinarity of Memory Studies. By combining theories from the field of Memory Studies with concepts introduced by Discourse Analysis, it opens the path for further research on the psycholinguistic mechanisms involved in the narrative aspect of remembering, for example, by examining how these mechanisms are carried out in more comparative studies that include other geographical and political contexts.

In short, the main motivation that has guided this research is to extend the question of inclusivity to the discursive construction of memory; that is, how to ensure that all members of a community, regardless of their particular experience, have access to the discussion about their collective past. To this end, I have identified in the Basque case similar difficulties to others that have been described historically and globally: shame, alleged ignorance and social taboo associated with one's own social position are the main obstacles that younger generations perceive, all of which are related to the symbolic,

discursive and relational aspects of the conflict. Making these dimensions visible helps us understand an important aspect of historical meaning-making processes: the psycholinguistic and cultural resources that people themselves employ to *read* and interpret the past.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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8. APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWEES' TOWNS AND CITIES OF ORIGIN

Interviewees' place of residence	**Size**	**Average income**	**Basque language use in social contexts**	***Abertzale* majority**
Abadiño	Small	22,558	17.5%	Yes
Altsasu	Small	19,812	2.8%	Yes
Anhauze	Small	19,851	22.7%	Yes
Arbizu	Small	21,878	61.8%	Yes
Arrasate	Large	23,520	19.5%	Yes
Barakaldo	Large	18,750	1.9%	Yes
Basauri	Large	18,249	3.1%	Yes
Bilbao	Large	22,985	3.4%	Yes
Donostia	Large	27,297	10.2%	Yes
Etxarri Aranatz	Small	21,045	45.8%	Yes
Gasteiz	Large	22,111	3.7%	No
Getxo	Large	30,050	4.9%	Yes
Hendaia	Medium	21,861	0.4%	No
Lekeitio	Small	21,024	57.6%	Yes
Markina-Xemein	Small	21,532	50.2%	Yes
Mutriku	Small	21,693	58.2%	Yes
Oñati	Medium	26,391	46.3%	Yes
Tafalla	Medium	19,895	0.2%	No
Urnieta	Small	21,367	20.4%	Yes

Sources: Gaindegia, Eustat, Statistics Institute of Navarre (Nafarroako Estatistika Institutua), INSEE, UEMA.

APPENDIX 2: 'CODES' OR CATEGORIES EMPLOYED IN ORDER TO CLASSIFY CHOSEN DISCURSIVE FRAGMENTS.

Code	**Sub-codes**	**Explanation / Purpose**
Defining the Basque Conflict	First notions How to explain to a foreigner Narratives about its development	Identifying associations, narratives and thought patterns that are already associated with the concept of the 'Basque conflict'.
Personal identification	Direct memories Experienced by people close to them Positioning and involvement Moral evaluation and emotions Idealization Taboo Reorganization	The participants' relationship with the history of the Basque conflict is examined in these sections. For instance, the construction of identity in connection with the events, and the psycholinguistic resources used to adapt the discourses received to their context.
Sources of information	The most common sources Education Home The media and politics Outdoors and recreation The arts	We tried to identify external discourses that could influence the participants' patterns of thought about the conflict and their perception of them.
Actors involved in the conflict	ETA Spanish government French government Civil Guard Basque political parties and organizations International actors Youth organizations	Mentions of actors who stand out (because of having been repeatedly talked about in the interviews, or because of not having been mentioned at all) and their categorization are examined as they appear in the participants' discourses: actors' general descriptions, the actions and characteristics they are attributed, and speakers' positioning in relation to them.
The events	ETA's actions The armed forces' actions GAL Current events (Altsasu and Catalonia)	The historical events most frequently referenced in the interviews are analysed, as are the narratives about them.
Victims		The actors identified as victims by the interviewees and their positioning with regard to the 'victim' category are examined.
Prisoners and fugitives		In this section, we have obtained narratives and references about prisoners and fugitives: proper names, descriptions, personal memories and indirect experiences.
Peace	Definition of peace Disarmament The end of the conflict Justice Peace initiatives Memory construction	We have collected ideas related to the concept of 'peace', for instance narratives about disarmament and related issues.
Basque language		Given that several speakers specifically mentioned a connection between preconceptions about language and about the conflict, we

	grouped these passages into a separate category.
Re-semanticization and re-contextualization of specific terms	In the early parts of the interviews we were struck, among other things, by the varied uses of the terms 'conflict' and 'terrorism'. We then specifically analysed the recontextualization of these terms.