



Universidad de  
**San Andrés**

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**Abortion legalization and neoconservative backlash in Argentina: A study  
of the discursive strategies employed by green and blue scarf activists**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes empirical and cultural credibility of arguments employed by activists in favor and against abortion legalization in Argentina. Empirical credibility is associated with facts and data, while cultural credibility is related to shared morals and values. The project focuses on national cultural and historical contextualization of both movements, and on religious influence in contemporary conservative politics in Latin America. Moreover, it studies how both movements employ the same arguments with opposite meanings in order to contradict each other.



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## Acknowledgements

One of the first investigations I came across when I started writing this project was also an undergraduate thesis written by a student who majored in Political Science at Scripps College. The first thing she wrote in this section was that her thesis was not everything she had hoped about. When I read it I found it on one side demotivating, and on the other, pessimistic and ungrateful. The girl wrote about her brother's death and how it had turned her project into a burden rather than a satisfactory piece of work.

Today, I can relate very closely to what she said. I have been through a very difficult mental health process the last two years which has turned the writing of this thesis into an imposition instead of a fulfilling personal achievement.

I want to thank my director Lisa Ubelaker Andrade for her comprehension, and above all, for helping me take this project as seriously as I could. She was the right person for me to work with, and I will always feel indebted to her.

I want to thank my mother who was the first feminist I have ever met, and who had a clandestine abortion herself when she was 16 years old. A pregnancy that was the result of a violent affective relationship in which she got beaten multiple times. I have no words to express the feelings that I have for my mother and how much I admire her. But she knows it very well and it is unnecessary to write it down here, because I show her how much I love her everyday.

I would also like to mention my maternal grandmother Lala who passed away last year. She went to the *Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres* alone in the 1980s, was a syndicalist militant and a working woman. She was also the granddaughter of a priest, and the daughter of a single mother who aborted in her own house and in front of her eyes.

I want to dedicate this thesis to my female professors at Universidad de San Andrés, Silvia Ramírez Gelbes and Eugenia Mitchelstein who were the ones that made me aware of the academic relevance of this movement. I find her careers absolutely inspiring and feel great respect for them.

This thesis would not have been possible without the help of my therapists Micaela Dines and Florencia Ledri. Two feminist professionals that I profoundly admire and who have changed my life forever.

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## **Introduction**

On May 29th, 2018, Ofelia Fernández delivered a discourse that was decisive for her to become the youngest elected legislator in the History of Latin America. She was 18 years old and a student at the Higher School of Commerce ‘Carlos Pellegrini’. In her discourse in defense of abortion liberalization she spoke about sexual diversity, monogamy, and used gender inclusive language. Topics that, although they are very frequently mentioned in political and public spaces nowadays, were not yet part of the public agenda when she spoke at the Senate that day. Ofelia Fernández became a key political voice representing a generation of women that was not very visible in institutional politics back then.

That year the Law on the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy was not approved, it had passed the Chamber of Deputies, but did not advance in the Chamber of Senators. In 2019, a year after the first congressional debate on abortion legalization, Argentina had presidential elections. Cynthia Hotton, a former Congresswoman, was a vice presidential candidate on a list that did not allow people who were in favor of abortion decriminalization. Their strategy was unsuccessful and did not receive a significant percentage of votes. Abortion legalization was a key topic in the public agenda during the elections.

Alberto Fernández, who was elected president in 2019, promised that abortion was going to be legalized during his presidency. In fact, abortion was approved in 2020 with only 50.7% of affirmative votes in the Chamber of Senators (Corti, 2023).

Today abortion is legal on demand in Argentina during the first trimester, but institutional and social obstacles persist for those who need to undergo this practice.

## **Objectives**

This thesis will explore discourses for and against the abortion law that was approved in Argentina in 2020. It will study the discursive factions that emerged as a reaction to autonomous reproductive and sexual policies in Argentina over the last fifteen years in particular. It will analyze the rhetorical interactions between Argentine activists, those who defend the liberalization of reproductive rights, and those who oppose this progress by specifically tracing the framing strategies employed by both groups, and how they are both constructed as dialogic political antagonists. The aim of this project is to understand the cultural strategies that green and blue scarf activists use to create a sense of identification



among constituents; the cultural strategies that they employ in order to create democratically<sup>1</sup> valid frames; as well as the frames or strategies that both movements employ in order to attract potential adherents. Using Framing Analysis, the thesis will illustrate the ways these two groups have built their movements by dialectically overturning their opponent's frames. It will show the strategic intentions behind the activists' frames of choice, and how the movement benefits from these choices. Additionally, this project will analyze the credibility of the frames employed by activists, and how activists strategically employ tools to make their frames appear as believable.

### **Context: the legalization of abortion in Argentina**

Abortion was legalized in Argentina in 2020, after decades of advocacy. Argentinian pro-abortion activism emerged during the last military dictatorship, while terrorist repressions were being executed by the State (Macón, 2021, p. 44). '[This was] a result in large measure of coming into contact with writings and public interventions taking place in Europe and the United States, Argentine second-wave feminists made the legalization of abortion part of the local movement's agenda in the mid-1970s.' (Macón, 2021, p. 44). Argentine pro-abortion activists will be referred to as: 'green scarf activists'. The story about the green scarf and this term will be explained later in this Introduction.

Although abortion is now legal, reaction against the law has not ceased, and those who oppose it remain politically active. They are active at both institutional and noninstitutional levels, and continue resisting the expansion of the aforementioned rights. In this project, these groups, who collectively oppose reproductive and sexual policies advocated by feminist and LGBTQI+ movements will be called neoconservatives. This term is used by Campos Machado and Vaggione (2020) 'with the purpose of understanding the complex religious patterns that characterize neoconservatism in Latin America' (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 7). Namely, this term is used to understand how religiosity affects contemporary conservative ideologies in Latin America.

In many places around the globe, including Latin America, neoconservative groups have created independent political parties, joined existing and powerful ones, and have established alliances with Christian religious groups (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 7). In the United States, for example, the Constitutional Right to Abortion was overturned

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of democracy throughout this project will be understood as a secular democracy. Given that not everybody in Argentina is religious, nor forced to be religious by the State.

in June 2022 (Prasad Philbrick, 2022) after having been a legal guarantee for over 40 years. This event occurred as a consequence of the increasing presence of neoconservative political actors. Further concepts, definitions and hypotheses related to neoconservative political actors will be extended in the First Chapter. One of the frames that will be studied in this thesis is the secularization/judicialization of the arguments employed by these reactionary groups (neoconservatives, specifically). The terms secularization and judicialization are suggested by Biroli and Caminotti (2020). Christian believers are significant influencers on these groups and on the political parties in which they participate. However, religious conservative groups have strategically adopted a secular rights-based language that allows them to democratically discuss topics with non-religious opponents (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 138). Despite the democratization of these arguments, it can be identified that they are often based on religious and/or conservative morals (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 29). García Bossio and Semán (two authors who study the influence of Christianity in Argentine and Brazilian politics) argue that 'moralism [has become] the political fuel of the right' (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15). The ultimate objective of neoconservative actors is to 'maintain the region's patriarchal social order and its capitalist economy' (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 7).

## **Design and Methods**

Here, the design and methods that were employed to conduct this research will be explained, as well as the philosophical interrogations that underlay the motivations for this project. The aim is not to reduce the scope of this research to one particular philosophical stance, but rather to propose some philosophical questions with the aim of offering a path for reflection.

What originally created the motivation for this research was the dichotomy between 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' as concepts. Then, we were particularly interested in the abortion debate in Argentina, first of all, because it was something that had considerable protagonism in the national political agenda between 2018 and 2020, and was, additionally, a politically and socially dividing issue (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 12). Secondly, we consider that it represents a social event that allows us to investigate the dichotomy between 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' more profoundly. Especially, because both proponents and opponents of the abortion law defended their arguments on sustenances that they claim to be 'truthful' and/or 'reliable'.

The definitions on Constructivism that Emanuel Adler suggests in his article titled: *Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics* (1997) proved particularly formative. He studies the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, and argues that they are not necessarily antagonistic, but rather complementary sometimes (Adler, 1997). While reading the literature for the project, moreover, we came across Benford and Snow's definition of empirical credibility (Benford and Snow, 2020, p. 620), which is also related to our curiosity. We will define Benford and Snow's concept of empirical credibility later in the Introduction. Having said this, we want to note that our research is intrinsically founded on ontological and epistemological concerns (Philosophy of Research. Project Planner., 2017).

This thesis is grounded in qualitative research, and based primarily on exhaustive descriptions and interpretations of the abortion debate in Argentina. It pays particular attention to the cultural and historical context of the region's socio-political consequences of debating abortion legalization (Bryman, Lewis-Beck and Liao, 2004, p. 893). In this project, we will attempt to explain the peculiarities of Argentinian reproductive rights activists<sup>2</sup> (for and against liberal abortion), and to compare the country's process of abortion legalization to similar ones in the region, as well as in other Western and Non-Western countries. This will be done by reviewing international literature. The analysis will be focused on Argentina exclusively.

The purpose of a qualitative approach is to conduct research that is founded on scientific subjectivity, and on making explicit the partiality that is intrinsic to all knowledge (Bryman, Lewis-Beck and Liao, 2004, p. 894). Our work will be developed through a feminist and pro-abortion legalization scope, this position will continue to be made explicit in the chapters that follow. All the variables that will be considered are based on cultural and historical meanings and specificities.

Cultural and historical context of abortion legalization and activism will be introduced in the First Chapter. We will talk about Argentina's legacy of State Terrorism during the last dictatorial government, and the influence of the Catholic Church in this regime. Information about contemporary Evangelical political groups will also be provided. Furthermore, we will discuss feminist and neoconservative reasonings, as well as popular interpretations of these ideologies in Argentina, but also in other Latin American countries. Finally, this thesis will employ a theoretical framework that is concerned with meaning constructions within social

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<sup>2</sup> The term autonomous reproductive rights activists or movement will be used to define advocates of autonomous reproductive policies. The term conservative reproductive rights activists or movement will be used to characterize activists who oppose implementation of autonomous reproductive policies.

collectives, and with how these groups of people (collectively) represent and understand reality (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). As qualitative researchers, this is also why we are philosophically interested in studying the complementarity between objectivity and subjectivity (Adler, 1997).

Bachmann and Proust (2020) theorize a type of Post-Colonial Feminist Theory of Communication which operates under a view from the Global South (this term is a categorization to group countries from Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania) (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 67). They emphasize on the cruciality of focusing feminist research on cultural differences, and how they affect women in different ways (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 68). They define women's organizations as 'socio-economic political groups' that are essentially different to each other depending on their contexts (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 68). They cite the Intersectional Feminist Theory, which states that 'people's experiences are defined by an array of interwoven identities such as race, socio-economic status, caste, cultural history, sexuality and religion' (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 69). The aim of the authors is to synthesize why Feminist Communication Theory has to pay attention to differences in contexts and cultures, and this is why theory coming from the Global South will eventually be different in its essence than that coming from Western countries. This is valuable, because it 'avoids universalizing approaches' (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 76), and, therefore, labeling all women together as if their struggles were not unique and worthy of specific attention. This research focus, additionally, enhances visibility of women who are not middle-class, white, and heterosexual (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 69).

In light of this, this thesis pays attention to the cultural and historical background that defines the collective action frames employed by social movements. We will also take into account class inequalities among women who decide to have an abortion, and the negative consequences that clandestine abortions have on poor and economically marginalized women. Furthermore, we will adopt an inclusive focus that does not exclude the diversity of identities that constitute the women's collective. We hope to contribute to intersectional feminist research from the Global South, by providing a Southamerican and Argentinian perspective on reproductive rights movements.

Finally, although we have already made explicit our feminist academic position, we want to investigate our movement's antagonists in a respectful way, and mention it as well. The arguments employed by activists against liberal abortion are strategies used to appeal to a public audience. Thus, we are less interested in evaluating the degree to which they are personally convincing or attractive to our subjective opinions. Rather, we consider that it is

fruitful to analyze how these arguments can resonate within a larger group of people, who do not necessarily share our interpretation. We have interviewed women politicians from our country, that even though they represent our opponents in the debate on abortion, they are female politicians (some of them democratically elected) that demonstrate the rights that all of us women together have achieved, as a political force that is already an indelible part of the institutional political landscape worldwide. They are ultimately representatives of a Southamerican country, whose conceptions of reality are unequivocally different from those of Western women.

### Framing Analysis

Frames, in social movement theory, are shared meanings constructed by members of a social group or collective. These frames are also rhetorical tools that enable social movements to generate mobilization beyond linguistic limits (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). Framing Analysis consists in identifying ‘organization, selection of content, or thematic structure [of a message]’ (Smetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). It can reveal what information is prioritized or avoided, with the aim of manipulating the perceived meaning of the proposition. ‘Framing is selecting ‘some aspects of a perceived reality’ to enhance their salience ‘in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation’’ (Smetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). Namely, it can help us break down meanings behind political discursive strategies and intentions.

This project will analyze transcripts of interviews that we have conducted virtually with four female Argentinian activists, and transcripts of public speeches of those same activists. We will employ an inductive strategy, and we will base our analysis on theory proposed by Benford and Snow (2000). This theory will be detailed in the succeeding pages.

### *Inductive Framing Analysis*

Qualitative research uses an inductive approach (Lichtman, 2014, p. 244), which means, in the case of Framing Analysis, that the frames are not pre-established and researchers analyze the data first, in order to define them (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). Deductive strategies, on the contrary, use predetermined frames and seek to verify or reject their presence in the analyzed dataset (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94).

For example, Smetko and Valkenburg employed a deductive Framing Analysis method in their research titled *Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News* (2000). The authors analyzed the content of press and television news from a range of European media outlets from six different countries in order to gain insight into how issues related to European politics were debated and portrayed. The authors focused on two types of frames: Issue Frames, which refer to the underlying issues that were discussed, and Symbolic Frames, which refer to the images and metaphors used to represent the issues. For each of the frames, the authors identified how frequently they were used, as well as the tone, intensity and directionality of the coverage. The authors then compared and analyzed the framing of European politics in the different countries to see if there are any consistent patterns across media outlets or countries. Frames, according to these authors (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000) are the ways in which the story is presented within the context of other news stories and opinions. Frames can emphasize particular aspects of an issue and suggest how audiences should perceive it. To analyze frames, researchers should identify the topics covered, the type of language used, and the visuals associated with the coverage. They should also examine the context in which the issue is presented, such as the sources used, the ideological implications of the coverage, and the way editorial decisions are taken. By studying these aspects, it is possible to gain an insight into the way the issue is framed and how it might be affecting Public Opinion (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 101).

Since we are conducting qualitative data analysis, we will opt for the inductive method. We will analyze our dataset paying particular attention to the appearance of the frames that will be listed and explained in the First Chapter, using definitions taken from the reviewed literature. Nonetheless, we will be aware of new frames that emerge while conducting the analysis. Frames are determined by ‘conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information’ (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). Frames are concepts that can be identified in messages, and that affect the interpretation of the message. They are used so as to make a particular aspect of the message more salient.

We are interested in finding out how language operates as a political rhetorical tool that can be manipulated using cultural interpretations and interpellations, appealing social collectives, and ultimately convincing them of (or at least, making them sympathetically consider) the veracity of the invoked frames. In light of this, the objectives of using frames are: to establish the rationales behind political arguments, question their veracity and to



propose this analysis as a philosophical reflection to also question the credibility of information in general.

### *Collective action frames*

The term collective action frames refers to the framing processes carried out by the actors of a social movement (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 613). More specifically, it defines the shared meaning and reality construction that is produced and maintained by movement members (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). They are born from the negotiation of shared meaning constructions, and they represent their interpretation of 'the world out there' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). Collective action frames are in charge of '[mobilizing] potential adherents and constituents, [garnering] bystander support, and [demobilizing] antagonists' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). In other words, collective action frames are the cognitive schemas used by individuals to make sense of the social world and the events that occur within it. They are used to interpret and evaluate social phenomena, such as social movements, political campaigns, and other forms of activism. Benford and Snow (2000) explain that collective action frames can be categorized according to whether they emphasize structural change, emphasize defending the *status quo*, or are particularistic and interpretive (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). Furthermore, they suggest that frames are tools of social entrepreneurs, who attempt to influence Public Opinion by broadening attention and altering orientations to their cause (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 624).

Both pro- and anti-abortion activists construct their frames based on their cultural meanings, beliefs, customs and values. Both movements are constructed as dialogic groups that are constantly interacting and negotiating with each other. Naturally, there are also groups of people who are not involved in the debate. Some of these citizens might be attracted by the strategies employed by one group or the other, while those who remain unconvinced or disinterested will stay out of the debate.

### *Frame resonance*

The concept of frame resonance responds to the question: 'Why [do] some framings seem to be effective or resonate while others do not?' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 619). Benford and Snow argue that there are two factors that intervene in the answer to this interrogation: first, the credibility of the employed frame, and, second, its relative salience (Benford and Snow,

2000, p. 619). We will expand the definition of credibility in the upcoming lines. For its part, the relative salience has to do with the means that are used to measure the effectiveness of the proffered frame (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Frame resonance is a concept used to describe a process in which the language and conceptual frames of a social movement are received and developed by potential supporters. It occurs when individuals outside of the social movement are exposed to its key frames and find resonance with them. This resonance then produces an internalization of these frames, and allows the social movement's messages to spread and become more visible or recognizable within a particular context (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 622). This concept emphasizes the importance of frames in creating movement-based identity and mobilizing collective action. In sum, this term is useful to investigate the success or the failure of a frame that is utilized by the members of a social movement.

### *Empirical credibility*

As it was mentioned previously, Benford and Snow (2000) introduce two factors that they view as determining the resonance of a framing strategy: the credibility of the proffered frame, and its relative salience (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 619). Consequently, they divide the concept of credibility into three parts: frame consistency, empirical credibility, and the credibility of the frame articulators or claimsmakers (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 619).

First, they define that a social movement's framing strategy is consistent when its beliefs, claims and actions are not transparently contradictory (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Second, they hypothesize that frames are empirically credible when the claimed evidence is culturally believable, and when there is great evidence that supports those claims (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). However, they highlight that: 'the claimed connection [does not need] to be generally believable, but [...] it must be believable to some segment of prospective or actual adherents' (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Finally, the researchers explain that the last component that affects the credibility of the social movement's frames is the perceived persuasive capacity of the claimsmakers. They cite that, in *Social Psychology of Communication*, it is extensively acknowledged that some speakers are regarded as more trustworthy than others (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). As it has been mentioned before in this Introduction, this concept developed by Benford and Snow is linked to our philosophical concern regarding 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'. While cultural credibility might appeal to the social movement's internal subjectivity, the empirical evidence should be representative



of reality, namely, of ‘the world out there’. In brief, empirical credibility refers to the level of confidence an observer has that the data associated with a particular social movement is correct and factual. An increased level of empirical credibility allows observers to more accurately understand the dynamics of a movement, providing a valuable source of empirical data.

In our research, the empirical credibility hypothesis proposed by Benford and Snow will be tested: ‘the more culturally believable the claimed evidence, and the greater the number of slices of such evidence, the more credible the framing and the broader its appeal’ (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Thus, we have established the following research questions:

1. What cultural strategies do green and blue scarf activists use to create a sense of identification among constituents?
2. What cultural strategies do they employ in order to create democratically valid frames?
3. What frames or strategies do both movements employ in order to attract potential adherents?
4. How empirically credible are both movements’ collective action frames?

#### Dataset compilation

To undertake Framing Analysis, a qualitative dataset was compiled that includes four public addresses and four qualitative in-depth personal interviews with four female Argentinian reproductive rights activists (proponents and opponents of abortion legalization).

Two of the activists interviewed were elected to Congress and the Legislature, and two are reproductive rights activists (for and against liberal abortion) who are politically active within their parties, and who still influence the national political debate on issues regarding the gender agenda. Namely, Andrea D’Atri, Cynthia Hotton, Dina Rezinovsky and Ofelia Fernández. Rezinovsky is a National Congresswoman in the Chamber of Deputies of the Province of Buenos Aires. Fernández is a Representative in the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. In the process of selecting interviewees, we looked for activists who had joined the public discourse, either through formal channels (congressional or institutional debates), through social media, or both. All of them are compromised activists, who have lived the debate on the legalization of abortion as something very

personal and characteristic of their political identity. The gender agenda is a very important part of the political identity of all the interviewees. There were other politicians who participated in the congressional debates, but have only voted, and were not green or blue scarf activists<sup>3</sup>. We have contacted very famous activists who were present during the congressional debates and are still visible in the media. Another reason why these interviewees were selected is because the gender agenda is central to their political identities, but in opposite ways. This is related to our research interest in how pro- and anti-abortion groups are constructed as discursive political antagonists, who build their activist identities by contradicting their countermovement's frames. We were also interested in exclusively interviewing women, because we are studying an issue that affects women and sexual dissidences<sup>4</sup> directly.

It is acknowledged that, although the dataset is limited in quantitative terms, the exhaustive nature of qualitative interviewing, information gathering and analysis will provide us with useful specifications that will allow us and future researchers to create acceptable knowledge of reproductive rights activism in Argentina.

We sought to represent the most different political orientations, and have done so by contacting well-known reproductive rights activists of different parties. Andrea D'Atri is a leftist feminist political leader, who has been a revolutionary activist for over 35 years. She is a member of the workers' party: 'Frente de Izquierda', and founder of 'Pan y Rosas', a leftist Argentinian feminist organization. D'Atri is, moreover, a high-school graduate of the National College of Buenos Aires<sup>5</sup>, she is a Psychologist, University of Buenos Aires alumna, and holds a Master's Degree in Research Methodology, also from the University of Buenos Aires. She is a University professor and a journalist. Cynthia Hotton is an Evangelical leader, who has her own political party named 'Más Valores'. She is an Economist, graduated from the University of Buenos Aires, former Congresswoman, and professional Diplomat who works at the Social Council of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Dina Rezinovsky is another Evangelical leader, who was a youth activist in the former 'PRO' party, now re-established and re-named as 'Juntos por el Cambio'. She holds a position as a National Congresswoman representing 'Juntos por el Cambio' in the Province of Buenos Aires at the

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<sup>3</sup> These terms will be defined later in this Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis we will employ the word woman to represent all sexual identities that have a female reproductive system, we will use this word for clarity purposes, our aim is not to exclude any gender identity.

<sup>5</sup> One of the most prestigious public high schools in the country, it is a part of the University of Buenos Aires.

Chamber of Deputies. Ofelia Fernández was a high school militant and student council president at the Higher School of Commerce 'Carlos Pellegrini'<sup>6</sup>. She was elected to the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires in 2019 at the age of 18, becoming the youngest legislator in Latin America (Infobae, 2019). She is currently in-office at the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, representing the party 'Frente de Todos'. She has emerged as a key voice in political life in Argentina.

These politicians were also chosen because they either participated in the congressional debate on the decriminalization of abortion (in either one of the two instances, 2018 or 2020), or because they had taken part in the public audiences<sup>7</sup> that were held in 2018 when abortion was debated in the National Congress for the first time. These public audiences were organized by the National Congress, but they were not connected to the vote on abortion legalization. Public figures gave speeches during these audiences: Andrea D'Atri and Ofelia Fernández included. Dina Rezinovsky has been a Congresswoman since 2019, so she took part in the second congressional debate when abortion was decriminalized in 2020. Cynthia Hotton was the only one who did not participate in these two debates. But she was on a list as a vice presidential candidate in the 2019 elections, so she had a significant presence in the public debate, both in the political arena and in the media. An interview conducted for the TV Channel 'LN+' in 2019 was used, when she was a VP candidate. During the interview she discusses abortion legalization with the TV host (journalist Luciana Vázquez), because the gender agenda was the central identity of her party. This will be explained later, but the party's objective was to represent anti-abortion voters (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15).

### *Public speeches of activists*

1. Dina Rezinovsky's intervention in Congress in 2020 when the decriminalization of abortion was discussed in the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress. Dina Rezinovsky is a blue scarf activist from the center-right party 'Juntos por el Cambio'. Rezinovsky is currently a National Congresswoman in the Chamber of Deputies of the Province of Buenos Aires.

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<sup>6</sup> The other public high school that is a part of the University of Buenos Aires.

<sup>7</sup> These public audiences were external to the congressional debate. Politicians, scientists, lawyers, doctors, and other public figures intervened in these sessions and exposed their arguments in favor or against legal abortion.

2. Ofelia Fernández's intervention as a high school student leader in the public audiences that were carried out in 2018 when the legalization of abortion was discussed for the first time in the National Congress. Ofelia Fernández is a green scarf activist from the center-left peronist<sup>8</sup> party 'Frente de Todos'. Fernández is currently a Legislator in the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.
3. Andrea D'Atri's intervention as a leftist political leader in the public audiences of 2018. Andrea D'Atri is a green scarf activist from the worker's party 'Frente de Izquierda'.
4. An interview of Cynthia Hotton that was made for the TV Channel 'LN+', because she did not intervene in the public audiences, and was not a Congresswoman during the debates of 2018 and 2020. Cynthia Hotton's interview took place in 2019, during the Argentine presidential elections. She was a vice presidential candidate, and her party's principal campaign strategy was that 'they did not admit peronists, nor green scarves'. Cynthia Hotton is a blue scarf activist from the Christian conservative party 'Más Valores'.

Andrea D'Atri does not currently hold an institutional political position, however, she is a relevant public figure and reproductive rights activist in favor of legal abortion.

#### *Synchronous virtual in-depth interviews*

For this project, we conducted four virtual, synchronous, semi-structured, qualitative, in-depth interviews in June 2021. They are virtual, because they were internet-based and computer mediated; specifically, we used the Google Meet platform to video call the four interviewees (Andrea D'Atri, Cynthia Hotton, Dina Rezinovsky and Ofelia Fernández) (Mann, 2016, p. 103). The interviews were synchronous, because they were performed in real time. Furthermore, we chose a semi-structured format, so as to have more freedom if clarifications were necessary, but we used an informal guide with open-ended questions, so as not to unintentionally evade important questions that are useful for the investigation (Mann,

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<sup>8</sup> Peronism: 'The Peronist Party (later Justice Party) was created by General Juan [Domingo] Perón in 1943, and was the vehicle for his highly personalist pro-working class policies. He is credited with including the working classes in the benefits of development, and in forming a modern welfare state in Argentina.' (Blofield, 2006, p. 127). Peronist parties have multiplied, changed their name, and shifted between left and right throughout history. Nowadays, given its rearranging dynamics, it is very plural in ideological terms, but is widely regarded as the center-left party. It is currently the most powerful political party, together with 'Juntos por el Cambio'.

2016, p. 91). Finally, our interviews could also be placed in the in-depth category, because our aim was to get a full picture of the interviewees' arguments, while maintaining a neutral position (Mann, 2016, p. 100). The interviews were afterwards transcribed and analyzed.

We have conducted these interviews with the aim of complementing the public speeches, because they allow us to get a hint of the behind-the-scenes<sup>9</sup> of the arguments expressed by the politicians. We sought to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind their framing choices, and to get insights into their political and activist background and context. We had to limit our sample to the interviews that we had access to, but we believe our dataset is sufficient to provide valuable information about the collective action frames of reproductive rights movements (liberal and conservative) in Argentina. However, we have only interviewed politicians from the City and the Province of Buenos Aires, who tend to be less conservative than politicians from other provinces. We take as an assumption that political discourse is not naïve, but is generally orchestrated, and it involves previous preparation and training. Moreover, we also assume that its objective is to defend, in the case of activism, above all, a very rigid political conviction.

Next, we will explain the methods used to conduct the qualitative data analysis, findings in relation to our research questions.

### *Qualitative data analysis*

First, chunks of text with informal comments were coded. The informal comments were used as a guide to organize the arguments of the interviewees. The arguments that activists used in favor or against abortion liberalization were analyzed, with the aim of identifying the frames to which those arguments belonged. The comments (codes) were then collapsed, renamed, and redundancies were removed (Lichtman, 2014, p. 253). Next, categories made up of codes that shared thematic similarities were created. For example, one of the codes created was 'Secular State': this code was used to label arguments in which green scarf activists claim for a non-religious State. This code belongs to the category of National History. The category of National History was created to group codes that are used exclusively by the Argentine green scarf movement. These codes are related to the country's cultural and historical background. Considering that abortion legalization is an issue that is debated internationally, we created this category with the objective of highlighting national meanings. In Argentina, the green

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<sup>9</sup> Which conceptual tools they utilize in order to make some aspects of the discourse appear more salient (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94).

scarf movement establishes a relationship between the Right to Abortion and the proposal for a secular State, because the country suffered a genocidal military regime, of which the Catholic Church (an institution that is also opposed to abortion legalization) was complicit. During the dictatorship, Human Rights were violated by the State in the name of the Catholic God. For this reason, activists claim that the influence of the Catholic Church in public matters is undesirable. The code 'Secular State' belongs to the Secularism frame. However, the category of National History has been found within other frames. For example, it was also found within a frame that we have named Mobilization. The Mobilization frame includes arguments employed by green scarf activists that are related to the marches, protests, street mobilizations, and other plural gatherings and meetings where activists have come together to advocate for Abortion Rights. The Argentine green scarf movement is a national social movement itself. Therefore, everything related to the mass mobilizations that have taken place in the country are considered a part of Argentina's National History. The codes included in the category of National History, within the Mobilization frame, however, were not related to the concept of Secularism. One code that we identified was 'Partisan Politics'. This code belongs to the category of National History and to the Mobilization frame; it was created to sort out arguments related to the interviewees' partisan affiliations. Many mobilizations are organized by political parties, or joined by them. In sum, codes are the smallest classifications, usually representing a specific statement or claim. Categories are the subsequent group (in terms of size): they identify thematic variations within frames. Frames, finally, are the biggest group, they are concepts that contain multiple codes and categories.

In the Second Chapter the main frames utilized by green scarf activists will be presented, as well as the categories and codes included in those frames. In the Third Chapter, the same process will be undertaken, but in relation to the blue scarf movement. The Third Chapter, however, will develop a more critical analysis of the frames employed by blue scarf activists. Given our pro-abortion legalization position that has already been made explicit, it was easier for us to conduct a critical analysis of the credibility of the anti-abortion's collective action frames. In many instances, we suggest ways in which blue scarf activists could improve their discursive strategies, so as to make their discourse more resonant, even to the countermovement audience. Having a defined position in relation to the issue, has allowed us, as researchers, to identify the efficiency of the strategies employed by both movements. Although we sympathize with green scarf activists' arguments, we were able to realize when the movement's discursive strategies were employed weakly. The background research conducted by other authors allowed us to analyze green scarf's collective action



frames from a scientific perspective. This has contributed to conducting a neutral analysis in which we recognize situations in which both blue and green scarf activists make comments that weaken the trustworthiness of their pretexts, or, on the contrary, strengthen their discursive political strategies.

## **Literature Review**

This part of the Introduction reviews the existing literature on International Reproductive Rights Movements and the discursive tools they use. Here, we explain how our research contributes to the existing literature on Reproductive Rights Activism. We will present some of the frames employed by both pro-abortion and anti-abortion legalization activists, according to the authors that will be cited.

### Justification of Women's Right of Access to Safe and Legal Abortion in Nigeria (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014)

The authors in this work give an overview of the legal situation of abortion in Nigeria, from a perspective that considers the autonomy of the woman who decides to abort. They explain why liberalizing abortion is important for the protection of Women's Human Rights (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 190). They also list the causes why it is hard in Nigeria to legalize the practice: mainly because of its colonial legacy laws influenced by the Roman Catholic Church (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 181), powerful politicians who are also religiously biased (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 190), and because of other cultural and/or economic barriers (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 184). Aderibigbe and Olaide make an emphasis on the fact that Nigerian women's Right to Life is being violated when they die from a clandestine abortion practice (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 190). Furthermore, they conceptualize the difference between safe and unsafe abortions. Safe abortions are defined as 'the termination of a pregnancy by trained health care providers using correct, sanitary technique and equipments' (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 178), while unsafe abortions are carried out by individuals who do not necessarily possess the required knowledge, or happen in spaces that do not meet the mandatory medical standards, or sometimes both. This research is relevant to ours, because it addresses the problem of clandestine abortions and its life-threatening consequences in a Non-Western country that faces similar impediments as Argentina when it comes to decriminalizing abortion. Our

research attempts to contribute to fulfilling the objectives of this paper, because of the proximity of the challenges experienced by both countries, because of the anti-colonialist nature of both research focuses, and, finally, because of the thematic and feminist (pro-abortion legalization) character of both studies.

The Reproductive Rights Counteroffensive in Mexico and Central America (Arguedas Ramirez and Morgan, 2017)

In this research, the authors Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan analyze a Catholic anti-abortion documentary film that focuses on the political situation of reproductive rights in Mexico and Central America, with the aim of analyzing and understanding pro-life activism discourse. They stand on a pro-abortion position, and they conducted this research in order to gain better knowledge of the strategies used by their antagonists (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 424). Conservative religious activists in Mexico and Latin America oppose progressive laws related to Gender Equality and Sexual Health (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 432). The authors, although they belong to the countermovement, wrote this investigation, because they consider that it is relevant to gain insights into the ideologies of anti-abortion groups in their region. They also aim to shed light on the evidence of how they reflect their ideology on the language that they employ in the movie. Besides, they seek to highlight the situations that the moviemakers intentionally prioritize or omit<sup>10</sup>, as a persuasive strategy to gain social support for the movement (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 424). The method used in this research is a Critical Analysis of the factual inaccuracy of the claims made in the movie, and of the errors committed (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 425). The authors mention that even though Central America is mostly Catholic, there has been a significant decline of believers in recent years (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 428). Nevertheless, anti-abortion conservative religious activists in Mexico and Central America assume that their Catholic values equal the values of the entire citizenship (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 426). The moviemakers emphasize on the moral decadence of the autonomous reproductive rights movements (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 426). The documentalists also hold that all the international discussions that do not come from the Vatican are considered international pressure (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 432). For example, the Pan American Health Organization's Sexual and

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<sup>10</sup> *Framing effect*: “changes in judgment engendered by subtle alterations in the definition of judgment or choice of problems” (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94).



Reproductive Health programs, the United Nations and Organization for American States' Human Rights and Gender Equality agreements (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 432).

In the film, the producers also make recommendations and present diverse methods that, according to them, can be employed instead of abortion. For example, they talk about Natural Family Planning, which is a heteronormative (this means that it is only available to heterosexual people) and non-scientific method, that was presented as an alternative to In Vitro Fertilization<sup>11</sup>, in the Humane Vitae papal encyclical of 1968 (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 435). This method is argued to resolve infertility problems, but it has not been scientifically verified (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 435). They also show places that they call 'Vital Pregnancy Centers', where anti-abortion activists perform an 'innovative counseling model' that seeks to convince women not to abort (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 427). In the 'Vital Pregnancy Centers', they encounter, among other people, with pregnant children raped by their stepfathers (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 427).

The authors conclude that anti-abortion activists are undemocratic, because they oppose debate and seek to impose their values on the whole population (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 437). Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan argue that a life of faith and a life of citizenship are not the same, and that thinking otherwise is fundamentalism (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 437).

This research gives us relevant information about the relationship between anti-abortion activism and Catholicism in Latin America, and about the ways in which religion influences their discourse. It is also similar to our project, because they study pro-life discourse from the countermovement's perspective. Our study will deepen the analysis of the factual inaccuracies of the pro-life discourse that are mentioned by the authors here. We will analyze this argument in relation to our country and to our dataset.

### Cultural Opportunities and Tactical Choice in the Argentine and Chilean Reproductive Rights Movements (Borland, 2004)

In this paper, Elizabeth Borland studies the attitudinal differences that Argentinian and Chilean autonomous reproductive rights movements have towards the Catholic Church.

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<sup>11</sup> Procedures used to help with fertility or prevent genetic problems and assist with the conception of a child.

These attitudes have to do with the cultural characteristics of each country. She defines the concepts of political opportunity and cultural opportunity. Political opportunity refers to the institutional tools or obstacles that affect a social movement's possibility to advance its goals (Borland, 2004, p. 328). Cultural opportunity, on the other hand, is defined by the cultural conditions that shape social legitimacy, in other words, how likely is a social movement to gain support from the society (Borland, 2004, p. 329). 'Political opportunities may be counterbalanced or even outweighed by cultural opportunities' (Borland, 2004, p. 328). Autonomous reproductive rights movements challenge the Church's values, so the relationship between the Church and the population is relevant for the achievement of the social movement's objectives (Borland, 2004, p. 328). The author studies how these cultural relationships with the Church shape the collective action frames employed by both movements; media and discursive frames are considered a cultural variable (Borland, 2004, p. 329).

The Church in Argentina has a bad reputation for a significant part of the population, because they were accomplices of the terrorist repressions that were undertaken by the military dictatorship during the Dirty War (1976-1983). They absolved the repressors, and they also omitted the crimes (Borland, 2004, p. 330). Nevertheless, it has institutional power, because it has constitutional recognition, and receives government funding (Borland, 2004, p. 330). In Chile, on the contrary, the Church has a stronger popular support, but less institutional power. The Church was the first institution to demand Pinochet's Human Rights abuses during his military administration, and the first Human Rights organizations in the country were formed by Catholics (Borland, 2004, p. 332).

Due to the aforementioned reasons, the collective action frames employed by Argentinian autonomous reproductive rights activists are confrontational and critical of the Catholic Church (Borland, 2004, p. 335). They see this Church as the principal institutional opponent, because it is politically powerful, and they believe that it needs to be criticized (Borland, 2004, p. 336). The activists explicitly mention the relationship between the Church and the government, with the aim of making visible that it is an obstacle for advancing women's Abortion Rights (Borland, 2004, p. 335). On the other hand, Chilean activists also see the Church as their main opponent, but they take a more sympathetic approach, and do not confront the institution directly in their protest strategies (Borland, 2004, p. 336). 'Social movement activists operate in an environment in which the perception of authority is considered carefully (...); the kind of frames chosen depends upon cultural opportunities and activist perceptions of these opportunities' (Borland, 2004, p. 337).

This research is relevant to ours, because it introduces the notion of discursive frames as cultural variables, which is exactly what we are focusing on. It complements our research, also because it reveals how the relationship between the Argentinian population and the Church influences the frames used by autonomous reproductive rights activists, and how likely it is for them to advance their goals given this cultural context. Borland's study also adds value to our work by using the comparative approach with Chile, which is a neighboring country, but with significant cultural distances. The comparative approach offers a rich Non-Western Cultural Analysis of social movements. Our research should finally contribute to this one, because we are also investigating the collective action frames utilized by the Argentinian reproductive rights movements, and how the country's cultural past and History affect the creation and perception of these frames.

#### Abortion and Human Rights for Women in Argentina (Borland and Sutton, 2019)

Borland and Sutton study in this paper how Argentinian pro-abortion activists employ the Human Rights frame in their discourse, how they adapt it to their local context, and the strategic benefits of its use. The authors employ Framing Analysis to analyze how the latest Argentine abortion debates are being framed in public discourse. The authors assert that the abortion debates are being framed as a dichotomy, with moral considerations and issues of Human Rights on one side, and medical considerations on the other. By using Framing Analysis to examine how this debate is happening in the public sphere, the authors study how abortion is framed politically, socially, and culturally. This work is an example of well-employed Framing Analysis, and a demonstration of the relevant outcomes that this method can provide.

The Human Rights discourse has a historical meaning for Argentina, because it is the language that was used to denounce the terrorist political repressions of the last military dictatorship (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 33). This fact turns this framework into a strategic tool for activists to advance their goals (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 29), and to adapt the international concept of Human Rights to their local meanings through a Non-Eurocentric scope (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 33). Furthermore, it enables pro-abortion activists to question their countermovement's position (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 29). Anti-abortion activists are called 'anti-rights' by their opponents, because it is claimed that they were the ones who were allied with the military dictatorship (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 47). Hence, those who support Women's Human Rights are in favor of decriminalizing abortion, and

those who are against abortion are the ‘anti-rights’. During the dictatorship, the Catholic Church was ideologically supportive and complicit in the regime (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 35). Another strategic historical relationship that activists created is the emblem of the movement, the green scarf, which is similar to the white headscarf that was worn by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 42). Finally, the Human Rights frame, given its international nature, stimulates regional and international dialogue regarding reproductive rights (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 41). This research is related to our study, because both works analyze Argentinian activists’ discourse regarding women’s Abortion Rights. This study enriches ours, because it gives an in-depth understanding of the historical link between contemporary and historical claims, and also because it examines how this framing that is usually considered a Western language, is adapted to our Southamerican reality. Our work, moreover, should complement this one, by addressing the strategies employed by anti-abortion activists, and by focusing more deeply on another aspect of the activists’ language, which is the empirical credibility of their arguments. This work also introduces the concept of strategic framing choices, which will be employed extensively throughout this thesis.

Framing Abortion Rights in Argentina's Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres (Borland and Sutton, 2013)

In this study the authors analyze discourse on abortion at the *Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres* in Argentina. The *Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres* are an *autoconvocado* activist gathering that has been taking place every year in different provinces in Argentina since 1986 (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 195). *Autoconvocado* means that it is self-organized, and is independent of political parties and institutions (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 203). The authors’ dataset includes over 20 years of *conclusiones*. The *conclusiones* are documents that are written at the end of the meetings, and published afterwards. These documents include the final conclusions of the theme-based discussions that are carried out during the events (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 195). The researchers conduct a longitudinal analysis that allows them to identify the frames employed by the participants throughout the years. More specifically, they analyze the frames employed when discussing issues of abortion (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 195). They pay special attention to ‘moments when concerns emerged or disappeared and when interest in themes rose or fell’ (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 195). The differential aspect of these *Encuentros* is that abortion is discussed between women from

different social backgrounds, avoiding, in this way, the bias of extending middle class women's concerns to the whole female population (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 196). The reason why Borland and Sutton study the arguments proposed by activists, is because they have the power to affect the reforms implemented at the institutional level (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 197).

The main frames found in the dataset were, first, Public Health, which means that abortion was presented as a health issue that should be addressed by the State. It includes medical statistics, and references to the high rates of maternal mortality that are a consequence of clandestine abortions (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 215). The use of public health language is strategic, because it is also employed by influential international NGOs like the United Nations (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 215).

The second frame identified is Economic and/or Social Justice. This frame emphasizes on the situation of economically marginalized women, and addresses the matter of class inequalities. It is relevant, since clandestine abortions usually have a stronger negative impact on working-class and poor women (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 216).

Another frame that is frequently used in the *conclusiones* is the concept of Choice. This frame claims the State to recognize Women's Autonomy. Namely, the Right to Decide if they want to have an abortion or not. It is founded on Liberal Individualism, which is typical of Western political thought (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217).

A less conventional but yet powerful frame that was often mentioned in the documents is 'Body' (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). This frame is strong because it is a typical feminist language, but is sometimes regarded as unimportant or unessential. This is because it is associated with 'the Right to sexual pleasure' (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). By understanding abortion as something inseparable from the body of the woman, the decision to abort or not depends exclusively on the pregnant woman.

In addition to the frames that we have listed so far, other recurrent arguments were the ones associated with Pragmatism. This has to do with the fact that abortions happen in reality, thus, criminalizing abortion only makes the practice unsafe and deadly, not inexistent (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). The activists argue that, in this sense, people are either in favor or against clandestine abortions, not in favor or against abortion in general (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 218).

The 'Life' frame was also recurrently used by activists. This frame is an appropriation of the countermovement's main argument. The activists claim that women die from

clandestine abortions, so illegal abortion is a violation of Women's Right to Life (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 218).

The last frame identified is the Human Rights frame, which has its roots in the international feminist protest that claims that 'Women's Rights are Human Rights' (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 218). In Argentina, particularly, it also draws a connection with the discourse employed against the terrorism that was executed by the military dictatorship (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 219).

The authors conclude that their findings are descriptive and exploratory (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 226), and that they hope that their systematic study of the *conclusiones* from the Encuentros offer a useful historical analysis (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 230).

This study allows us to have an understanding of the most recurrent frames employed by Argentinian abortion rights activists. It opens the way for our study of the empirical credibility of the movements' frames. Borland and Sutton define here a variety of frames that are useful for us to take into consideration. We will test, specifically, how these frames are employed as cultural discursive strategies that allow the movement's discourse to resonate. Our research studies the same variables, but focuses on other research questions.

Construcción de la protesta feminista en *hashtags*: aproximaciones desde el análisis de redes sociales (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019)

Esquivel Domínguez studies in her work how women construct feminist protests through the use of hashtags on Twitter, with a specific focus on Latin American and International hashtags. Particularly, she wants to understand how women create an online space for denouncing gender violence, and how Social Media allows them to continue and resignify the claims of traditional feminism (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 185). '[Social Media enables] tools for political and strategic women's organization' (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 185). The author states that this study was developed through a feminist scope, and explains how feminist research works: in feminist research, women are the object of study, and women's experiences are utilized as an empirical and theoretical resource. The aim of this approach is to go beyond binary, mechanical and hegemonic limits (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 186). Because of the commercial structure of the internet, it is not considered a public sphere, but it does provide a public space for debate. It contributes to women's expression, because women have historically been excluded from public conversations. Gender norms used to associate femininity with domesticity. In this sense, 'Social Media offers a space where the key actors



are self-organized women, who make use of their experiences as a political act' (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 188).

The author conducts a Digital Ethnography. That is to say, a descriptive study of a digital community (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 188). She uses three other methodological tools: Lurking Research, which implies observing without participating. ARS, short for Aggregate Redox Species Method: a technique that seeks to establish relationships between social entities. The third one is co-word analysis, a Content Analysis method that pays attention to the co-occurrence of pairs of items within a textual corpus (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 188). The hypothesis of the research is that 'the more properties the concepts used for the protests have in common, the more linked they are through these properties, and the more closely they are related' (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 189).

The author analyzes three central themes that are discussed using hashtags on Twitter: violence on women's Reproductive Rights, violence against women's Labor Rights, and Sexual and Homicidal Chauvinist Violence.

For the first theme the two most relevant hashtags used were: #NiUnaMenos and #BlackMonday. In the debates that were created using #NiUnaMenos women reported that legal abortions are necessary, because women's Right to Life is being violated when they die from a clandestine abortion (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 191). #BlackMonday was the hashtag that was used to discuss the international events that were taking place in 2016 during Donald Trump's presidential candidacy.

Regarding violence in the workspace, Esquivel Domínguez analyzed particularly the hashtags #TimesUp and #8M (international). #TimesUp emerged during the 2018 Academy Awards, the hashtag was created to denounce the pay gap between actors and actresses, and the sexual harassment that actresses experience in the film industry (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 191).

The last theme that is highlighted by the author is Sexual and Homicidal Chauvinist violence. The hashtag #MeToo in Mexico served as a tool for women to tell and give detail of their experiences of sexual harassment. It also gave space to make public denunciations of how this violence is reproduced in academic and cultural spaces (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 193).

This analysis reveals new ways of denouncing different types of violence that define the feminist agenda in Digital Media (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 193). Women use their experience as a tool for making public denunciations. This practice also represents a process of discursive and collective action in the public sphere. Social Media feminism is a digital,

social and global movement that creates new imaginaries from feminist reasoning (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 193).

This paper has to do with our research, because it is developed through a feminist standpoint, because it studies discursive strategies employed by the feminist movement online, and because it was written by a Latin American author. Our study should complement this one by analyzing the discursive strategies of feminist politicians regarding Reproductive Rights in Argentina.

### Rights-based Claims Made by UK Anti-abortion Activists (Lowe and Page, 2019)

Lowe and Page study in this paper how anti-abortion activists adopt a secular and rights-based language to express their religious arguments against legal abortion. They argue that both pro-abortion and anti-abortion movements 'are shaped by the tactical turn of the other' (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134). The authors also assert that being against abortion is not just a consequence of the activists' religious beliefs, but also a central element of their religious practice (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 142). Lately, there has been a resurgence in anti-abortion activism across the UK. The authors of this study affirm that almost all of the activists are religiously motivated (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134). Currently, 70% of the population in the UK assure that abortion should be a choice for any reason (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134), and more than half of the population states that they have no religion (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 136). Human Rights Law is being used to expand legal abortion: concepts of Women's Equality, Non-Discrimination, Health, Autonomy, and Liberty are being discussed in favor of decriminalizing this practice. Legalizing abortion is a progressive law reform. The writers argue that the increasing use of the Human Rights frame by pro-abortion groups might have motivated the countermovement to also implement this strategic discourse, in order to strengthen the resistance (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134). Anti-abortion groups have historically centered their discussion around the fetus' Right to Life. The debate about the point at which the fetus receives legal protection has always been central, but the authors assure that this issue remains uncertain (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 135). Anti-abortion activists have recognized that framing their opposition to abortion around religious beliefs was not going to be enough, so they have tactically distanced their arguments from their religious roots. Their objective is to promote their arguments (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 136) and to reach unconvinced and non-religious potential adherents (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 140).



The method that was employed for this study was an Ethnography of abortion debates in UK public spaces. The researchers also conducted informational interviews with activists who gave their consent, and they also analyzed materials that were being distributed at activist sites, such as brochures. Additionally, they attended activist events like the ‘March for Life’ and counter-demonstrations (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 137).

Lowe and Page found that even though anti-abortion activists apply a secular language, their arguments are usually based on religious meanings. ‘The way that they engage and articulate these ideas demonstrates that they are shaped by their religious practice’ (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 138). Most of the arguments were built on the idea that every fetus is a ‘unique’ human being, and that this is ‘scientifically proven’, because they have their own DNA (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 138). The authors claim that this can be understood as if the child was a gift from God, and abortion was contrary to God’s intentions (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 139). Many of the activists tried to obscure their religious motivations, and affirmed that they would be against abortion even if they were not religious (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 142).

The authors conclude that anti-abortion activists, instead of rejecting scientific arguments that could challenge their understanding of abortion, have co-opted these concepts and turned them into strategic discursive tools to gain support. In addition, the researchers analyze how science and religion, two concepts that are usually regarded as opposites, become entwined and are utilized with an activist objective (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 142). Finally, this study also evidences that religion understands that women and men belong to separate spheres, and that genders are complimentary (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 143).

This research gives us a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Christianity and anti-abortion activism. It also suggests that both pro-abortion and anti-abortion movements reshape and interpret their countermovement’s arguments, and employ them strategically. This idea will be discussed frequently in this thesis. The authors stand on a pro-choice position, just like we do, and sought to neutrally analyze the interviewees’ arguments, with the aim of learning their point of view (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 137). Although this research was developed in a Western context, it gives us rich information about international anti-abortion discourse, and about the reciprocal appropriation of discursive strategies between countermovements. Finally, Lowe and Page (2019) also provide us with relevant facts about how anti-abortion activists co-opt scientific principles and use them in their activist language.

White Scarves and Green Scarves. The Affective Temporality of #QueSeaLey [#MakeItLaw] as Fourth-Wave Feminism (Macón, 2021)

In this chapter, Cecilia Macón seeks to explain the physical ('affective') connection that exists between Argentinian 'Fourth-Wave Feminism' (pro abortion legalization activists) (Macón, 2021, p. 42), and the History of State Terrorism of the last military dictatorship. The author also studies how this physical encounter is intermediated and complemented by activism on Social Media. Macón speaks of the movement that was organized on social networks using the hashtag #QueSeaLey [#MakeItLaw] (Macón, 2021, p. 41). She argues that the relationship with the past drives public action (Macón, 2021, p. 49).

The writer focuses on the street protests that took place in 2018, when abortion legalization was first discussed in the Chambers of the Argentine National Congress (Macón, 2021, p. 41). This project's dataset consists of images that circulated under the hashtag #QueSeaLey during 2018 (Macón, 2021, p. 46). Macón defines three concepts that she employs throughout the research: affects, emotions and affective agency. Affects represent the encounter between bodies, they are unstructured and pre-lingual. Emotions are the expression of those affects, they are codified and influenced by culture. Affective agency, finally, refers to the 'affective ties that are associated with practices typical of a social collective' (Macón, 2021, p. 43).

Pro-abortion activism in Argentina is partly founded on the legacy of State Terrorism that was executed by the State during the dictatorship. First of all, because the pro-legalization movement emerged during this period, boosted by 'Second-Wave Feminists' (Macón, 2021, p. 43). Secondly, because during that time pro-abortion activists were targets of repression (Macón, 2021, p. 44). And also because the government had a maternalistic discourse: abortion and contraceptives were totally banned (Macón, 2021, p. 45). During the dictatorship, the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* movement appeared as well. They are women whose children disappeared during the military regime. For the aforesaid reasons, that period represents an inflection point in women's militancy (Macón, 2021, p. 45).

The relationship between the protests carried out during 2018 and Argentina's History is not just a rhetorical strategy, it appeals to emotions, and transforms discourse into a 'choice of action in the streets' (Macón, 2021, p. 56). Historical activists who are survivors of the dictatorship joined the protests and younger activists took selfies with them. Pictures of the historical activists marching (such as Nelly Minyersky and Nora Cortiñas) also circulated on Social Media (Macón, 2021, p. 48). An intergenerational affective bond was generated which

links ‘current feminist activism with the struggle against, and resistance to, State Terrorism’ (Macón, 2021, p. 42). Pictures of activists from the post-dictatorship period circulated on social networks as well, for example, of feminist activist María Elena Oddone with a banner that reads ‘No to maternity, yes to pleasure’ (Macón, 2021, p. 47). This is how online and offline activism happen simultaneously and in a complimentary manner. A slogan that was replicated in 2018 was ‘Legal Abortion, Democracy’s Debt’. Macón states: ‘the kinds of images shared across social networks not only reinforced the slogan and its implications but also illustrated that it was this affective contact with the movement’s living past that made a path for its effective rebellion’ (Macón, 2021, p. 46). The State is understood to be complicit in the ‘dominion over women’s bodies’ (Macón, 2021, p. 49). Moreover, it is relevant to highlight that this kind of activism is ‘able to generate action through intertwining demands and bringing the past into the present in terms of a potent activism oriented toward the future’ (Macón, 2021, p. 56). It is on this articulation of past, present and future that the author makes the biggest emphasis, and on how this strategy is materialized into action in street protests. She defined the movement as ‘a community performatively created through an affective order and integrated through temporal contact’ (Macón, 2021, p. 51).

Furthermore, the author focuses on the fact that these interactions on Social Media construct what she calls ‘Digital Public History’ (Macón, 2021, p. 47). Digital History creates archives that are mobile, accessible and capable of being shared. This implies a topological transformation of archives. The digital technologies connect online activism with offline activism, creating an expanded community that enables new approaches to the past and is also transcultural, among other reasons, because it allows people to instantly collaborate in the creation of the archives (Macón, 2021, p. 55). The author concludes that ‘the tense affects (...) are those that grant performativity and embodiment to the public digital archive’ (Macón, 2021, p. 55).

This study gives us relevant information about the relationship between the pro-abortion legalization movement that achieved its goal, and the historical activism that founded and accompanied the contemporary movement. It also gives us an extensive understanding of ‘Fourth-Wave Feminist’ movement and its relationship with State Terrorism, as well as the relationship between the ‘Fourth-’ and the ‘Second-Wave’. Moreover, it provides us with a historical perspective of key moments in women’s activism, and with the rhetorical strategies that, complemented with affects and Social Media, drive collective action into street protests. *Vice versa*, this study explores how the link with the past is reflected in the images that circulated in 2018 on Social Media, and the protest banners that

evidenced this connection. Our work should add value to this one, because we study ‘Fourth-Wave’ pro-abortion legalization activism, and its opposition. In our work, we also pay specific attention to the link with Argentina’s History of Human Rights and Women’s activism. We study how the aforesaid relationship turns arguments in favor of legal abortion into culturally credible claims.

## **Key concepts**

Four concepts will now be introduced: activism, blue scarf, green scarf and neoconservatism. These concepts are necessary for a clear understanding of the succeeding chapters. The meaning of activism will be explained, because this analysis is based on activists’ arguments. The specific terms used in Argentina for pro-abortion and anti-abortion activism will be defined, as well as the History of these terms. Finally, the concept of neoconservatism will be described. This concept represents the political groups that have emerged in the region as a reaction to the gender agenda that is advocated by feminist and LGBTQI+ movements.

### Activism

The term activism is used to conceptualize intentional, vigorous, and energetic action undertaken by a group of people with the aim of achieving a social or political goal. Hence, activists are the persons who develop the work strategies, move people into action, and give collective dimension to a particular issue. Activism is project oriented, as well as ideologically and theoretically inspired. It is characterized by being controversial and disruptive too. It usually involves confrontation to the countermovement, and it can be noisy, uncomfortable and messy (Combs and Penfield, 2012, p. 461).

### Green scarf

The terms green scarf activism, or green scarf activists will be employed to refer to the Argentinian activists that are in favor of the legalization of abortion. The activist movement is part of the campaign titled: ‘*Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal Seguro y Gratuito*’ [‘National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion’], which was founded in 2005, and is one of the feminist organizations with the longest trajectory in Argentine History, and also one of the most plural (Macón, 2021, p. 44). The green scarf is

the emblem of the movement that was created in 2003 by Marta Alanis: founder of Catholics for the Right to Decide in Argentina, while getting ready for an *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres* (Schmidt, 2022). The green scarf was inspired by the white scarves worn by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (Macón, 2021, p. 45). The *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* is an Argentinian women's movement that emerged during the military dictatorship that took place between 1976 and 1983. During this period, the government executed terrorist repression on people who opposed the regime either ideologically and/or politically. The *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* are women whose children 'disappeared' during this period, and started a social movement, with the aim of exposing the events and publicly denouncing State Terrorism. The *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* '[wore] white headscarves made of cloth used for children's diapers' (Schmidt, 2020) as a symbol that represents maternity, which is resignified by pro-abortion legalization activists.

Alanis thought about the color green, because it represents nature, growth and life. The countermovement: those who are against abortion legalization, made the concept of 'life' the foundational argument of their movement. They call themselves 'pro-life'. Alanis considered that the color green could help the movement reconquer the value of 'life' that they also defend. It was used for the first time at the *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres* in Rosario in 2003. The symbol has spread throughout the region, reaching even the United States in June 2022 when the right to abortion was overturned by the Supreme Court. The color green has become the color of Abortion Rights, and it represents a symbol of unity for women across borders (Schmidt, 2022). Below, pictures of the green scarf and of the white headscarves are shown. On the green scarf, underneath the campaign's title, reads: 'Sex education to decide, contraceptives so as not to abort, legal abortion so as not to die'.



The green scarf<sup>12</sup>:



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**San Andrés**

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<sup>12</sup> Image sourced from:

<https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/La-Campana-Nacional-por-el-Derecho-al-Aborto-dio-a-conocer-el-nuevo-proyecto>

The white headscarves worn by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*<sup>13</sup>:



### Blue scarf

The terms blue scarf activism or blue scarf activists will be employed to refer to the Argentinian activists who are against the legalization of abortion. This movement is named '*Salvemos las 2 Vidas*' ['Let's Save Both Lives'] and is a neoconservative reaction to the green scarf movement. They have appropriated their countermovement's emblem and created a similar one, but of a different color, and with the logo of their campaign. Both scarves are also a demonstration of how these two movements dialogically build their identities by appropriating and resignifying their antagonists' strategies. The name '*Salvemos las 2 Vidas*', moreover, is also a strategic turn of the green scarf movement's argument that their objective is to save the life of the pregnant woman. Blue scarf activists claim that if abortion is illegal two lives are saved: the mother's life, and the life of the fetus. This argument is central in the abortion debate. Both movements use the 'life' frame and they both sustain their activism on this concept. As mentioned formerly, the reason why Argentinian pro-abortion activists used the color green for their emblem, was because it represents life, nature and growth. This was

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<sup>13</sup> Image sourced from:

<https://www.mendovoz.com/actualidad/nacionales/2020/3/24/la-historia-del-panuelo-blanco-82142.html>

a strategy that pro-abortion activists employed in order to make visible that they also value human life. The only difference is that they claim that the life/autonomy of the pregnant woman is more valuable than the life of the fetus during the first trimester (Farrell, 2022, p. 10). They argue that women's lives are lost and that women's right to life is being violated if abortion is illegal. This argument is rooted in the fact that even when abortion is criminalized, women still have abortions, but under unhealthy conditions (REDAAS, 2020). Many of the women that perform 'clandestine abortions'<sup>14</sup> die during or after the practice. History has demonstrated that the criminalization of abortion has not prevented abortions from happening in many countries (Argentina, for instance). Having said this, it can be argued that it is inaccurate to claim that two lives are saved. However, it is still a powerful and convincing argument for those who believe that life starts at the moment of conception, or to those who believe that life is an absolute value that cannot be weighed up with any other value. The belief that life begins at the moment of conception is a Christian creed, and it is also recognized by the Argentine National Constitution. The constitutional recognition of this belief was one of the principal legal obstacles for abortion legalization in the country. People who believe that life begins at the moment of conception, and whose morals oppose 'unnatural termination of human life', will never agree on liberalizing a practice that gives a person the right to decide over the course of another human's life. This claim creates a conflict with pro-abortion advocates, because, according to green scarf activists, a human who is mature and able to make decisions cannot be compared to a fetus that is less than three months old (Farrell, 2022, p. 10). This is the reason why pro-abortion activists claim that the fetus could be considered a part of the woman's body. Thus, it is the right of the woman to decide if she wants to give birth to it or not. The line of thought of those who oppose 'artificial termination of life' is coincident with the historical movements that advocated against legal contraception (Carabajal, 2010). They were worried about artificial (or scientific/technological) regulation of reproduction. Liberalization of abortion could be understood as a similar situation. These are the reasons why both movements are powerful and have significant reach in Latin American populations. On one side, the anti-abortion movement constructs itself as a morally outstanding social movement that holds a praiseworthy position towards human life. On the other side, the pro-abortion movement creates an identity that is progressive, contemporary, pragmatic and feminist<sup>15</sup>, that seeks to expand women's

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<sup>14</sup> Namely, illegal and dangerous abortions.

<sup>15</sup> Feminist is understood as social groups defending the rights of women, as well as the rights of dissident sexual identities.



Autonomy Rights, and creates a conception of human life that makes a distinction between women and fetuses as diverse variants within the same category. Moreover, it takes an approach that is not based on the morality of Christianity. This characteristic might create a sense of identification among those who do not hold religious convictions, and/or who consider that greater liberty is valuable. Especially, in the case of women's liberty, given that we have been systematically oppressed throughout the course of History.

The blue scarf<sup>16</sup>:



### Neoconservatism

Neoconservatism is a term used to define the group of people who are opposed to the political agenda that seeks to expand autonomous sexual and reproductive rights. Obviously, this term has its limitations, but it is a useful way to characterize those who have a conservative ideology towards issues regarding gender, sexual rights and reproductive autonomy. These groups are made up of coalitions between religious and nonreligious actors who share similar ideologies. The most influential religious actors within these groups in Latin America are

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<sup>16</sup> Image sourced from:  
<https://www.perfil.com/noticias/politica/aborto-panuelos-celestes-marcharon-dia-del-nino-por-nacer.p.html>

Christians, specifically, Catholics and Evangelicals, who have adopted a unified political identity based on ‘the defense of religious freedom and Christian sexual morality’ (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 6). Neoconservative actors politicize subjectivity through legal channels, with the aim of perpetuating the acceptance of ‘a sexual morality grounded in the heterosexual family and legitimized by its reproductive potential’ (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 7). They rationalize politics through a ‘strong regulatory (sexual) morality’ (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 7). Furthermore, they are keen on protecting and guaranteeing the morals that they believe are desirable for society.

Religious institutions are adopting a rights-based language to participate in politics, as a means to adapt to the logics of democracy (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 27). Through this technique, they become involved in political parties. Corrales (2020) argues that: ‘We used to think that the most important defense of LGBT issues consisted of maintaining separation of church and state, but it seems that the real threat is coming with the lack of separation between church and [political] parties’ (Corrales, 2020, p. 14).

In Argentina, Evangelicals have formed their own parties, and have also joined existing and powerful ones, usually right-wing parties, because ‘[their] values were not intrinsic to the right until the left (...) made the gender agenda their own (and central)’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 6). First of all, right-wing parties ‘especially are attracted to evangelical groups because it solves a historical problem for them: lack of ties with popular sectors’ (Corrales, 2020, p. 15). Corrales (2020) suggests that this is because ‘Evangelical churches (...) are cross-sectional: they have enormous reach across different layers of society’ (Corrales, 2020, p. 13). In Argentina, particularly, the incorporation of Evangelicals to right-wing parties was linked to the Abortion Law and the Integrative Sex Education bill that were proposed in Congress; both of them were ‘rejected [by Evangelicals] for its link to what [they] call ‘gender ideology’<sup>17</sup>. [The drafts on the Termination of Pregnancy and Comprehensive Sex Education bills] unleashed contrary reactions that surpassed in numbers and antagonism those seen during the legalization of divorce or same-sex marriage processes’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 12).

During the presidential elections of 2019 in Argentina, Gómez Centurión, a former military officer, and Hotton, created an alliance and formed a party named ‘Frente NOS’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 14). The gender agenda was their central strategy, with the aim of winning votes of people who opposed this agenda, and votes of people who were

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Gender ideology’ is the term that neoconservative groups use to label the conceptions of gender identity and reproductive autonomy that feminist and LGBTQI+ groups advocate for.

against abortion legalization. This strategy, however, was unsuccessful. They could not even attract evangelical voters (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15). Also, during the elections of 2019, the center-right party ‘Juntos por el Cambio’ incorporated Dina Rezinovsky to their lists as a National Congresswoman representing the Province of Buenos Aires. This alliance offered a new political identity to evangelical politicians: they were ‘negotiating differences within the party and believing that the political project [was going to] defend a pro-life position’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 13).

In this project, the term neoconservative is used to denominate the representatives of the political agenda that generates conflict with the claims of LGBTQI+ movements and feminism. These groups are a reaction to advocates of Women’s and LGBTQI+ people’s Rights. They have been insisting over the last two decades that those who defend a pro-feminist and/or pro-LGBTQI+ agenda support something that they<sup>18</sup> have named ‘gender ideology’, which, according to them: ‘[is] threatening children, marriage, the natural order, and national values’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 1). Heteronormative familism is a conception of the family structure that assumes that the parents are heterosexual, and that the objective of sexual intercourse should be reproduction. This notion is a key value of neoconservative actors who claim that ‘Human Rights, feminist, and LGBTQ activists are ‘neocolonial’<sup>19</sup> actors, [who advocate] ideas that the majority of citizens do not share’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3). ‘Many conservative groups argue that the LGBT agenda is condemnable because it is an international campaign conspiring against national customs’ (Corrales, 2020, p. 16). Having said this, the argument advocated by Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan (2017) is clear: the authors claim that a characteristic of these groups is that they are moral fundamentalists who generalize their conceptions of family, reproduction and sexuality, and pretend to extend them to the entire citizenry (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 426). Neoconservative actors can be associated with blue scarf activists, based on the literature cited above.

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<sup>18</sup> Neoconservatives.

<sup>19</sup> The authors use the term ‘neocolonial’, because this is the term that neoconservatives employ to characterize feminist and LGBTQI+ advocates. They name them ‘neocolonial’ actors, because they claim that they seek to ‘colonize’ society with their ‘ideas’.

## **Thesis structure**

Next, the structure of the project will be presented. This thesis will be organized as follows:

In the First Chapter we introduce concepts related to our investigation. In the Second and Third Chapters we discuss the credibility of green and blue scarf activists' collective action frames. In the Fourth Chapter we review the research questions and reflect about them in relation to the discussion about the credibility of both movements' collective action frames. Lastly, we have listed the complete bibliography that was used for this project.



## **First Chapter: Cultural contextualization of green and blue scarves' collective action frames**

This Chapter will introduce the debate over abortion, and debates that have centered abortion. Furthermore, it will introduce the most recurrent frames utilized by both green and blue scarf movements, according to the literature that was reviewed in the Introduction. These concepts developed by other researchers will be used as a guide to conduct our research.

For pro-abortion activists the most recurrent frames are: autonomy, Human Rights, women's right to life, public health, the concept of 'body', and pragmatism.

Anti-abortion activists' most common frames are: the fetus' right to life, the conceptualization of the 'unborn child' and of 'human life', as well as scientific and technological references, like DNA and ultrasounds, the concept of 'gender ideology', motherhood, familism, moralism, and the right to religious freedom.

All the frames listed above will be formally detailed and discussed in the following pages.

In Argentina, both movements also use references to the social collective memory associated with the last military dictatorship. According to Borland and Sutton (2019) pro-abortion activists claim that legal abortion is 'democracy's debt', while, as argued by Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira (2011), anti-abortion activists associate pro-abortion activists with terrorists.

This chapter will conceptualize the collective action frames of both movements in the context of the debate over legal abortion. Furthermore, it will delve into the cultural contexts and interpretations of the language used by activists, and the role that Social Media plays as a space for political debate. Moreover, this Chapter will discuss how conservative sectors react to the implementation of policies advocated by feminist and LGBTQI+ groups, and the rhetorical interchange that happens between both groups (feminists and neoconservatives). The Christian influence in the neoconservative sectors will be considered, as well as their mechanisms of intervention, and their relationship with the Argentinian state. Both pro-abortion and anti-abortion movements are historical and international, but we will focus our research on activism in Argentina in the 21st Century, while considering historical roots, similarities with other non-Western and Latin American movements, and the influence of their counterparts in Europe and in the U. S. In addition, we, as researchers, would like to ratify that we take an anti-colonialist, feminist and pro-legalization position (Bryman,



Lewis-Beck and Liao, 2004, p. 894). We seek to contribute to Southamerican feminist research, and to show respect for women's autonomy, mental and physical integrity.

### **Pro-abortion collective action frames, international dialogue, cultural meanings and Social Media activism**

‘Internationally, activism in favor of the legalization of abortion began in the 1960s and saw key victories at the turn of the following decade in Europe and in the U. S.’ (Macón, 2021, p. 43). These policies were implemented in Latin America in the 21st century. Until today, ‘the region’s standard-bearers are Argentina, Uruguay, and, more recently, Colombia’ (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 4).

As argued by Macón (2021): activism in favor of the legalization of abortion (referred to henceforth as pro-abortion activism) is associated with feminist movements and feminist thought. Argentinian second-wave feminists put abortion in the national agenda in the mid 1970s, partly, as a consequence of having read and heard feminist work from other European and American feminists (Macón, 2021, p. 44).

One of the movement’s main preoccupation is the existence of clandestine abortions that put women’s health at risk and have deadly consequences. The movement, moreover, is founded on the activists’ devotion to defending Women’s Right to Choose. The Right to Choose is based on the notion that abortion can be a morally valid choice, and that it is a question of personal liberty. The Right to Abortion is also about de-regulation of women's bodies: the argument that pregnancy should be a choice, and that the act of termination should be de-stigmatized, and valued as a completely legitimate options for women. It is relevant to introduce the objectives of the pro-abortion legalization movement, because, as explained in the Introduction, all social movements act with the aim of achieving a social or political goal (Combs and Penfield, 2012, p. 461). In this project, we are studying how the movement’s collective action frames influence the achievement of the desired goals.

Green scarf activism’s goal is to make abortion Legal, Safe and Free in Argentina. Protecting women’s lives and ending clandestine abortions that put their lives at risk are some of the motivations that encourage activists to advocate for legal abortion. In this sense, their principal objective is to make abortion a legal practice, so that women do not need to have illegal and unsafe abortions. Safe abortions are defined as ‘the termination of a pregnancy by trained health care providers using correct, sanitary technique and equipment’ (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 178). Unsafe abortions, contrarily, are carried out by individuals who do

not necessarily possess the required knowledge, or are performed in an environment that does not meet the minimum medical standards, or both (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 178).

One of the main arguments of pro-abortion activism is Autonomy. This concept is founded on liberal individualism, which is typical of Western political thought (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). Another framework frequently employed by pro-abortion activists is the Human Rights frame. Concepts of women's equality, non-discrimination, health, autonomy and liberty are articulated using this language (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134). Activists argue that women's right to life is being violated when they die from a clandestine abortion. This frame is an appropriation of the countermovement's main argument: the fetus' right to life (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 218). Public Health is another argument that is often employed by activists. It is based on medical statistics that evidence the high maternal mortality rates that are a consequence of clandestine abortions (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 215). Pro-abortion activism is conscious of class inequalities and economic differences among women, and they recognize that clandestine abortions have a worse impact on poor and economically marginalized women (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 216).

Another powerful frame that pro-abortion activists use is the concept of 'Body'. Activists recognize that decisions over women's bodies should be taken exclusively by the owners of the body. This claim is recurrent in feminist language, but is sometimes regarded as irrelevant, because it is associated with 'the Right to sexual pleasure' (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217).

Green scarf activists also use the concept of Pragmatism. Pro-abortion advocates claim that abortions happen in real life, and that criminalizing the practice only increases maternal mortality rates, it does not decrease the number of abortions (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). Since we are studying social movements' language, it is relevant to highlight that, as argued by Lowe and Page (2019) both pro-abortion and anti-abortion arguments 'are shaped by the tactical turn of the other' (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134).

The Human Rights frame is a significant international discursive tool that 'facilitates alliances with national and international human rights organizations' (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 41). It is also associated with the international feminist slogan: 'Women's Rights are Human Rights', which 'was increasingly deployed in the global arena during the 1990s and is still being invoked in prominent activist spaces in different locales...' (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 27).

The concept of Public Health is also a discursive strategy that is employed by feminist and pro-abortion movements internationally. Influential international organizations like the



United Nations also refer to this concept when defending liberal abortion (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 215).

### Social Media activism

Now, Social Media activism will be discussed, because it is one of the platforms through which activists express their collective action frames. Nowadays, activism is not only undertaken in the streets and represented on mass media, but it is also produced on Social Media. For this reason, it is important to discuss this contemporary activist practice before continuing our project. Pro-abortion legalization activism is highly visible on Social Media. In fact, digital social networks were some of the tools that enabled pro-abortion legalization activists to reach a broader public in Argentina. Achieving their goal thereby in 2020.

It is relevant to pay attention to the way in which socio-digital networks enable ‘tools for political and strategic women’s organization’ (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 185). Given social media’s commercial structure, it is not considered a public sphere, but it does provide a public space for debate. It contributes to women’s expression, because they have historically been excluded from public conversations. It is not considered a public sphere because an internet connection is needed, and access to the internet is demographically unequal (Albrieu, 2020). This is due to income and infrastructure related reasons.

‘Social media offers a space where the key actors are self-organized women, who make use of their experiences as a political act’ (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 188). This opportunity is particularly significant for pro-abortion activists, since they are also active on Social Media, and use that space to claim for their reproductive autonomy. Esquivel Domínguez (2019) found that in the debates that were created using the hashtag #NiUnaMenos, women reported that legal abortions are necessary, because women’s Right to Life is being violated when they die from a clandestine abortion (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 191). #NiUnaMenos is an Argentinian feminist movement that militates against gender violence and chauvinist homicides [*femicidios*]. Social media feminist activism is a digital, social and global movement that creates new imaginaries from feminist reasoning (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 193). Macón (2021) supports this argument in her study: ‘the digital world reconfigures the way in which our contact with the past is constituted, in particular that which is transcultural, among other reasons because available technology permits any person to instantly collaborate in its construction.’ (Macón, 2021, p. 55).

## Context of the Argentine Feminist and Pro-Abortion movement

In Argentina, pro-abortion activism has its particular cultural and historical background. Since there are arguments in favor of abortion that are employed internationally, there are some particular ones that have their own national meaning and are characteristic of the Argentinian movement. The arguments mentioned above are international ones employed by pro-abortion legalization movements in other countries. The arguments that will be introduced now are the ones that are exclusive to the national movement.

As cited previously, Argentinian activism in favor of abortion began during the last military dictatorship. In part, because of the European and American feminist work that had been accessed by Argentine feminists, and also because of the terrorist repressions that were being implemented by the government (Macón, 2021, p. 44). Pro-abortion activists were among the targets of repression (Macón, 2021, p. 45).

During that period, the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* movement emerged. The *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* is a social movement conformed by women whose children ‘disappeared’ as a consequence of terrorist repressions (Macón, 2021, p. 44). The movement’s main goal was to claim for their children to be found alive. In this sense, the broader goal of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* was to publicly denounce the State for the terrorism that was being executed during the dictatorship. This movement is related to the pro-abortion movement, because both are women’s movements that emerged in the same period. Pro-abortion local movements articulate their frames in relation to this historical meaning (to denounce the state against State Terrorism). The emergence of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* movement constituted a key point in women’s militancy (Macón, 2021, p. 45). Furthermore, the green scarf appeared in a moment when the ‘trials for human rights violations had begun to specifically condemn State Terrorism’s sexual violence against women and nonconformist sexualities’ (Macón, 2021, p. 45). During the dictatorship, the government ‘eliminated those categorized as ‘subversive’’ (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 35), including pro-abortion activists and nonconformist sexual identities. Given this context, the Argentinian pro-abortion movement articulates its arguments in a way that pays particular attention to the debt that the democratic State owes to women. This notion of ‘debt’ is founded on the consequences of the negligible manner in which women and nonconformist sexual identities had been treated by the military government. Pro-abortion activists argue that the democratic State owes women a debt, and that is legal abortion. One interviewed activist in Borland and Sutton’s study (2019) claimed specifically that: ‘unsafe abortion is state terrorism’ (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 46).

During the military dictatorship the Catholic Church was complicit and ideologically supportive of the regime: they absolved the repressors, and they omitted the crimes (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 35). This is another cultural factor that creates specific local arguments used by the pro-abortion movement, and that determines the achievement of the movement's goals. Since the Church was complicit in the dictatorship, the institution has had a fraught reputation on the Argentinian population, even among Catholics (Borland, 2004, p. 330). Certainly, this reputation is not extended to all Argentinian citizens, but at least to some segment of the population, especially to pro-abortion activists, because they challenge the values of the Church (Borland, 2004, p. 328). The Church in Argentina has significant institutional power: it has constitutional recognition, and receives government funding (Borland, 2004, p. 330).

It is also relevant to note that, since 2013, the Pope is Argentinian and politically active, he makes his political orientation explicit and his relationships with politicians are public. He has also made public his opposition to the legalization of abortion.

Given that the pro-abortion movement in Argentina demands the State explicitly, and, to some extent, also claims legal abortion to the State directly, the relationship between the State and the Church is noteworthy when studying green scarf activists' collective action frames. Historically, Argentinian pro-abortion activists viewed the Church as the movement's principal institutional opponent (Borland, 2004, p. 336). Although activists nowadays do not view the Church as the only institutional obstacle, they still base some of their arguments on the relationship between the State and the Church. Moreover, they mention this relationship explicitly in protests, in order to make visible that it is an obstacle for advancing Women's Abortion Rights (Borland, 2004, p. 335). This complex reputation of the Church on the population, especially on pro-abortion activists, is evidenced in another scarf that activists have created: an orange scarf, which is a symbol that claims for the separation of the State and the Church. The typical slogan used when mentioning this issue in protest cries is: *'Iglesia y Estado, Asuntos Separados'* ['Church and State, Separate Issues'].

The orange scarf<sup>20</sup>:



Building off of Macón, it is important to explain that pro-abortion advocacy in Argentina is intergenerational. Pro-abortion activists in Argentina use references to the past that are linked to the History of State Terrorism and the dictatorship. The intergenerational bond that exists within the movement is also physical: historical activists who are survivors of repression participate in street protests along with younger activists. The movement is constructed as a resistance to State Terrorism, given the cultural and historical context that has already been explained, and also because they were targets of repression, but the movement prevailed and achieved its goal in 2020. One example of a reference to the past that is used by the contemporary movement is the green scarf that has already been mentioned in the Introduction (Macón, 2021, p. 45). There is also a popular slogan that is used in street protests and on Social Media: 'Legal Abortion, Democracy's Debt' (Macón, 2021, p. 46). This slogan is explained in detail by Borland and Sutton (2019): 'In a country that experienced a dictatorial state that applied a brutal hand to repress, censor, torture, and kill its own citizens, abortion rights activists are now saying that the democratic state needs not only to refrain from illegitimate violence but should also recognize, enable, and guarantee

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<sup>20</sup> Image sourced from:

<https://www.perfil.com/noticias/sociedad/que-significa-el-panuelo-naranja-que-tambien-tomo-las-calle-en-medio-del-debate-por-el-aborto.phtml>

women's human rights, broadly defined. In that sense, the Campaign has asserted that the legalization of abortion is a 'debt of democracy' (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 37).

Social Media operates as an intermediary for both pro-abortion and anti-abortion activism. During the marches of 2018 (when abortion was discussed in the Argentine National Congress for the first time) young activists took selfies with historical activists, like Nelly Minyersky and Nora Cortiñas (a Mother of Plaza de Mayo), and pictures of older activists marching also circulated on social media (Macón, 2021, p. 48). Other pictures of activists from the post-dictatorship period also circulated on social networks, for example, of feminist activist María Elena Oddone with a banner that reads: 'No to maternity, yes to pleasure' (Macón, 2021, p. 47).

Borland and Sutton have argued that the history of State Terrorism allows Argentinian pro-abortion activists to adapt the international language of Human Rights to their local meanings through a non-Western scope. The language of Human Rights was employed to denounce the crimes against humanity that were committed by the military regime (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 33).

### **Context for the Anti-Abortion movement: international movements and local party lines**

Activism against the legalization of abortion (which we will call anti-abortion activism throughout the project) is an international movement founded on the resistance against pro-abortion movements that seek to legalize abortion in different countries. Their main preoccupation is the progress of pro-abortion movements, and their principal objective is to perpetuate the criminalization of abortion. Or, in countries where it is legal, they seek to criminalize it. Anti-abortion activists consider that abortion should be illegal, because they argue that the fetus is a human life, and that practicing an abortion implies killing a person.

There are recurrent frames that they employ in order to defend their position against the liberalization of abortion. In the first place, their principal argument is the Right to Life (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 27). They argue that the fetus is a human being and that its Right to Life has to be recognized. The Right to Life frame is a strategic technique that anti-abortion activists use because this right is recognized in international Human Rights treaties. Lowe and Page (2019) argue that: 'The increasing use of a Human Rights framework by abortion rights advocates may have contributed to anti-abortion groups' efforts to refocus their frames of resistance and utilize rights-based claims aimed at restricting



abortion’ (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 134). In Argentina, particularly, this frame is also strategic because the right to life is recognized in the National Constitution (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 32).

The idea that the fetus is a human being is founded on a cultural construction that illustrates the fetus as an ‘unborn child’ (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 31). The fetus is represented as a child who has not been born yet, because anti-abortion activists believe that life begins at the moment of conception (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 8). They denounce that children’s Rights are being violated when abortions are performed (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 29). Children’s Rights are also recognized in international Human Rights treaties. Thus, they are another strategic frame to appeal to a secular audience.

Activists against the legalization of abortion seek to sustain these arguments on technological and genetic evidence. For example, they affirm that life exists, because the fetus has its own DNA, and because ultrasounds show that the fetus is alive (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 27). However, Lowe and Page claim that the debate about the point at which the fetus receives legal protection remains uncertain (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 135). Biologist Alberto Kornblihtt<sup>21</sup> explains that the term ‘human life’ is not a biological concept, but an abstraction originated in social, juridical and/or religious conventions (Kornblihtt, 2018). Lowe and Page (2019) suggest that: ‘Using scientific authority could be a means through which activists seek to appeal to a secular audience unconvinced by religious reasoning for opposing abortion’ (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 140).

Another frame that anti-abortion activists employ is the concept of ‘gender ideology’, a term created by neoconservative groups. This term seeks to ‘delegitimize a basic foundation of national and international policies since the 1990s: that gender is a [socially] constructed constellation of structures and meanings that create hierarchies and power inequalities’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 2). Other labels that neoconservative groups use to refer to feminist and LGBTQI+ activists are, according to Biroli and Caminotti (2020): ‘neocolonialism’, ‘cultural marxism’, and ‘radical feminism’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3). Anti-abortion activists have a binary anatomical understanding of the concept of gender, therefore, they could be considered homo- and transphobic (Corrales, 2020, p. 14). Their objective is to frame the gender agenda as something unacceptable by employing the term ‘gender ideology’, because this term allows them to argue that it is a belief rather than a

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<sup>21</sup> He participated in the public audiences organized by the Argentine National Congress in 2018, mentioned in the Introduction.

scientific position, and since it is a dogma it does not need to be taught or accepted (Corrales, 2020, p. 15). They claim that influential international organizations like the United Nations are ‘global elites’ that support this ideology (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3) and pressure countries to adopt it (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 432).

Anti-abortion activists also frequently frame motherhood as a heteronormative concept. They tend to call the pregnant women mothers, because they consider that the fetus is a child, without taking into consideration that the pregnant woman might not want to be a mother or might have been raped, for instance. According to Lowe and Page (2019), they express it in a way that assumes that women’s ‘natural inclination’ is motherhood (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 141). Advocates against the liberalization of abortion also prioritize the rights of the family over individual rights (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3). They have a conception of the family structure that is also heteronormative, and ‘defends (...) the procreation function of sexuality’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 8). This is why they believe that all pregnant women are mothers, because they do not agree with the fact that there are people who have sex for pleasurable purposes. By the language and arguments they defend, nor do they seem to recognize that there is people who get raped, and pregnant as a consequence of non-consensual sexual intercourse.

Activists against the decriminalization of abortion tend to have very rigid conservative moral convictions, and believe that these morals must be accepted by all citizens. For example, homophobic interpretations of sexual and/or affective relationships; the belief that sexuality should be practiced exclusively with the aim of procreating; and that life begins at the moment of conception. As suggested by Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan (2017), neoconservative activists usually believe that these values should be shared by the entire population. This is why we have argued in the Introduction that they can be designated as moral fundamentalists, who emphasize on the ‘moral decadence’ of pro-abortion activists (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 426). García Bossio and Semán (2021) explain that moralism has become one of the main flags of neoconservative political parties (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15). These morals are often sympathetic to Christian political actors. Religious advocates often refer to the Right to Religious Freedom, as a way of framing their moral fundamentalism as a liberty rather than an imposition. Biroli and Caminotti (2020) claim that they create a ‘juridification of morality’ (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 8).

In Argentina, Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira (2011) argue that blue scarf activists have adopted framing strategies that appeal to the social memory regarding the last military



dictatorship. They call pro-abortion activists *'fuerzas de las tareas'*, which were the groups in charge of kidnapping, torturing, disappearing and murdering the government's political opponents. They also frame abortion as a *'crimen de lesa humanidad'* which is a term used in Argentina to refer to the torture crimes that were carried out by the military government. Moreover, they claim that if the fetus is a woman it can be characterized as a *'femicidio'* (chauvinist homicide) (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 27). This is an appropriation of a term that is used by feminists in Spanish. These arguments related to the dictatorship period are an appropriation of the strategies created by the green scarf movement. Specifically, those explained in the last section, in which pro-abortion activists denounce State Terrorism in their discourse.

As a framing strategy that intends to present abortion as something unnecessary, the anti-abortion movement also proposes methods that they consider that could be alternative to practicing an abortion. These methods are usually either religious, and/or coincident with their conservative morals. In several Latin American countries, Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan (2017) have found that anti-abortion activists have carried out a project that they name 'Vital Pregnancy Centers', which consists of mobile vans staffed with anti-abortion activists who aim to convince pregnant women not to abort. While visiting these centers, activists encountered, among other people, with pregnant children raped by their stepfathers (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 427). Cynthia Hotton has also proposed alternatives to abortion in Argentina, such as adoption services, through the use of a slogan that states: *'Que la adopción sea la opción'* ['Make adoption be the option'] (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 33).

Anti-abortion activism is propelled by the neoconservative backlash that emerged recently in Latin America as an opposition to feminist and LGBTQI+ advocacy. Nowadays, 'gender is central to the political disputes in Latin America' (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 1). These groups emerged as a political reaction to the growing presence of feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, and it is characterized by the term neoconservative, which adds the prefix neo- to the concept of conservatism, as a way of determining the temporality of the movement. The prefix neo- seeks to represent the conservative sectors that operate in today's democracies, and the dynamics through which they insert themselves into the democratic systems (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3). These groups of neoconservative actors are formed by secular actors and Christian groups (Catholics and Evangelicals), and hold a very 'hard-line posture on issues of sexuality and family affairs' (Corrales, 2020, p. 11).

Neoconservatives promote an anti-gender agenda (Birlo and Caminotti, 2020, p. 7). This means that they oppose policies like legal abortion and same-sex marriage, for example.

Neoconservative groups are conformed by political actors who were already opposed to the progressive policies that have been mentioned previously, but they have recently undertaken an organizational development, by '[implementing a] new organizational strength that allows them to engage politically more successfully than before' (Corrales, 2020, p. 1). This success is in part due to the insertion of Evangelical political actors, which represent the 'most important demographic change in Latin America since the 1970s' (Corrales, 2020, p. 2). They have formed alliances with Catholics in order to create a single political identity that allows them to oppose the achievements of feminists and LGBTQI+ activists more efficiently. In Argentina, both the Abortion Law and the Comprehensive Sex Education bill unleashed massive mobilizations. Evangelicals mobilized so enormously that many people were surprised by the size of their summons. Even Evangelicals themselves were impressed by the mobilizations that 'had broader goals than simply defending religious freedom or religious identity' (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 11). These mobilizations, namely, the blue scarf marches in Argentina, 'gave a voice in the street to a general feeling of opposition to the attempt to legalize abortion' (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 11). This is why Corrales (2020) claims that the incorporation of Evangelicals to Christian political groups is strategic and fundamental, because their presence has complemented and enabled Christian popular mobilizations (Corrales, 2020, p. 2). Although the Catholic Church in Argentina did not enjoy enough popular legitimacy so as 'to intervene with socially recognized authority after the sexual scandals widely reported over the last [seven] years' (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 11). Another reason why it is claimed that the incorporation of Evangelicals into Christian political groups is beneficial in terms of attracting constituents to their social movement, is because '[Evangelicals in Latin America] are present and active across class, race, and religion' (Corrales, 2020, p. 13).

Since they were already opposed to these policies when they were implemented, they are now advocating for the opposition in the 'post-reform stage' with the aim of obstructing citizens' access to these rights (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 12). Neoconservative actors create barriers through different means in order to block or make the execution of the policies extremely difficult (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 12). Some of these barriers that they create are, for example, political parties that let the policy die ('[they] fail to adjust procedures and administrative instruments to new policy requirements'), protests outside hospitals that provide abortion services,

pseudo-conscientious objection (people who ‘do not formally declare an objection (...) but refuse to perform the procedure’), as well as daily verbal interactions that create prejudices and a hostile environment for women and LBGTQI+ people (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 14), or the systematic use of conscientious objection (explicit religious exemptions to not implement the new laws) (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 15). Evangelical politician Cynthia Hotton, when she was working at the National Congress in Argentina, opposed a project that sought to regulate the practice of legal abortions, she argued that ‘the regulation of legal abortion practices has always been a strategy to advance towards absolute abortion legalization, [without taking the Public Opinion into account] and avoiding debate’ (Carbonelli, Filetti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 33).

Christian political actors are dominant members of neoconservative groups. Until the 1990s Christianity used to be associated with the Catholic Church, but in the 2000s Evangelicals became more visible and started to be conceived as powerful representatives of Christianity within religious political groups (Corrales, 2020, p. 11). Christian politicians have joined the public debate through a secular and rights-based language, and are defending the social perpetuation of their morality using democratic tools: they are creating political parties, political coalitions, introducing openly religious members to Congress, and are also employing framing strategies that articulate Christian religious values into the language of International Law. Caminotti, Felitti and Mosqueira (2011) argue that this is because [some] religious institutions have a universalist tendency that seeks to expand their normative beyond the temples (Caminotti, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 38).

### **Hypothesizing rhetorical contradiction, antagonism and negotiation of shared meanings between movements**

As it has already been cited (Lowe and Page, 2019), both pro-abortion and anti-abortion movements construct their identity by refuting the countermovement’s frames and strategies. We will attempt to describe here some of the framings that both movements employ with opposite meanings. In the Second and Third Chapters, these hypotheses will be developed more extensively, and references to the dataset will also be included.

In Argentina, both movements have the same emblem but of different colors and with their corresponding logos and slogans.

An argument that is employed by both movements is the Right to Life. Pro-abortion activists defend women’s Right to Life, because they claim that women’s Right to Life is

being violated when they die in clandestine abortions (Borland and Sutton, 2013). Anti-abortion activists defend the fetus' Right to Life, because they claim that the fetus' Right to Life is being violated when an abortion is performed (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011). The pro-abortion movement's slogan reads: 'Contraceptives so as not to Abort, Sex Education so as to Decide, Legal Abortion so as not to Die'. The anti-abortion movement's slogan is: 'Let's Save Both Lives'. Here, we can see how both movements articulate the value of human life into their identities. On one hand, the pro-abortion movement claims that abortions will happen regardless of their legal status, and that legalizing the procedure would guarantee safety for women who make the decision to abort. On the other hand, the anti-abortion movement assures that if abortion is illegal, abortions will never be performed, and in that case, two lives would be saved: the mother's life, and the life of the fetus.

Pro-abortion activists use the Right to Autonomy frame, and anti-abortion activists employ the antagonistic concept: collective rights. Pro-abortion activists defend women's Autonomy (Borland and Sutton, 2013), while anti-abortion activists claim that family rights are more relevant than individual rights (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020).

In Argentina, green scarf activists claim for abortion legalization to the state directly. They insist that legal abortion is a debt that the State has with women, because of the injustices that happened to women and pro-abortion activists during the dictatorship (Macón, 2021). Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira (2011) argue that blue scarf activists also recall the collective memory associated with the dictatorship period. The authors claim that Argentine 'pro-life' activists compare 'pro-choice' activists to the terrorists that killed and tortured people during the military regime (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011).

Sexual intercourse is also understood differently by both movements. Pro-abortion activists recognize that women have the right to sexual pleasure (Borland and Sutton, 2013). Anti-abortion activists' discourse suggests that sexual intercourse should be limited to its procreative function (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020).

Furthermore, both movements use scientific authority and data in order to defend their positions. Pro-abortion activists base their claim that women die in clandestine abortions by using statistical references on Public Health that reveal maternal mortality rates (Borland and Sutton, 2013). Anti-abortion activists sustain their argument that the fetus is a human being by referencing technological and genetic evidence like ultrasounds and DNA (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011). These frames are related to each other, because both

movements seek to affirm their claims by referring to external and secular authorities that are broadly regarded as trustworthy.

Both green and blue scarf movements utilize the Human Rights framework in their discourse too. Pro-abortion activists defend Women's Human Rights (Borland and Sutton, 2019). On the contrary, anti-abortion activists defend the fetus' Human Rights (Lowe and Page, 2019).

Pro-abortion activists approach maternal mortality and unwanted pregnancies in a pragmatic way: they claim for accessible contraception, integrative sexual education, and abortion on-demand (Borland and Sutton, 2013). Anti-abortion activists propose alternatives to abortion for pregnant women: 'Vital Pregnancy Centers' and/or adoption (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017; Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011). In this sense, the frames are opposite, because one movement suggests to solve the problem by acknowledging that illegal abortion has not successfully stopped women from aborting, it has only obliged them to do it clandestinely and unsafely. Therefore, they seek ways to make it legal and thus professional/healthy. The countermovement, inversely, seeks to find alternatives that could, according to them, prevent abortions from happening.

Religion, finally, is another issue that both movements take into consideration, and also make explicit in their arguments. Green scarf activists in Argentina claim for the separation of the Church and the State, with the aim of proposing a lay State/Constitution, so that the Church's influence does not obstruct abortion legalization anymore (Borland, 2004). Blue scarf activists, oppositely, appeal to their religious freedom to justify their opposition to abortion legalization (García Bossio and Semán, 2021).

## **Second Chapter: Green scarf collective action frames and strategies**

In the following Chapter, the most salient and determined collective action frames employed in the dataset by green scarf activists will be presented. The names that were given to the frames were not used by the interviewees, they are labels that were created according to the concepts that have been developed and discussed throughout this entire project. The frames that will be described and analyzed here are: Intersectionality, Mobilization, Secularism, Chauvinism, Public Health, Pragmatism and Women's Right to Decide.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is a concept that has already been defined in the Introduction. Its objective is to offer a scope for analysis that recognizes the variety of identities that constitute the women's collective. Intersectional feminism argues that factors such as race, socio-economic status, caste, cultural history, sexuality and religion affect women's experiences in different ways (Bachmann and Proust, 2020, p. 69). In this sense, an analysis that generalizes the experiences of women without taking into account their different identities and how they influence their reality would be biased and/or incomplete. It has been identified that the Intersectionality frame was employed in the dataset by Andrea D'Atri and Ofelia Fernández.

During the interview conducted in June of 2021, D'Atri was asked how she got involved in feminist activism. She said that in the beginning she was exclusively interested in issues concerning working class women (she is marxist and trotskyist), but the man who was the leader of her party when she was younger, Emilio Albamonte, a gay man, explained to her that all women suffer discrimination, not only working class women. She quoted Albamonte and she stated: 'Yes, working class women are not only oppressed but also exploited, but women in general are oppressed. That is to say, they do not have the same Rights as men. They live under conditions of discrimination...'. (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). She told us that before this conversation with Albamonte her point of view was 'dogmatic', because she believed that feminism was very 'bourgeois and middle class' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Evidently, when she realized that the plight of working women is affected by both their labor status and their gender, which is to say, that these experiences of discrimination intersect, she decided to become involved in feminist activism. This is an illustration of the Intersectionality frame. Emilio Albamonte explains that all women, no matter their



socio-economic status are oppressed by society in comparison to men, but working class women are also exploited. So, their experiences are shaped by this differential characteristic that is associated with their socio-economic class. She went on to connect this notion to arguments on abortion: ‘One of the things that [Albamonte] discussed with me was the issue of abortion. [He said]: ‘abortion is banned to [...] all women, regardless of their socio-economic class. Well, women who have money can have an abortion in a private clinic, and no one will find out, or they can go abroad... But it is still prohibited.’” (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Here, a difference is established between rich and poor women. Although abortion is banned to all women, poor women are more likely to suffer more serious (unhealthy) consequences. In fact, this is the concept underlined in Intersectionality: that all women suffer discrimination and that none of them have the same Rights as men, but the array of identities that differentiates them must be considered, so as not to generalize their experiences and conduct an elitist and/or reductionist analysis of gender inequality.

This leads to the inclusion of the category of Economic and Class Inequality within the Intersectionality frame. This category was defined in the First Chapter. In Chapter 1 Borland and Sutton were cited (2013), and their arguments were used to point out that clandestine abortions are more dangerous to poor and economically marginalized women in comparison to middle-class or rich women (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 216). In the dataset it has been identified that the category of Economic and Class Inequality was mentioned by Andrea D’Atri. In the public address of 2018 she said: ‘...the immense majority of us women are salaried, and the majority of us women work, also, under precarious conditions. When we think of interrupting a pregnancy, as working women, it is because we know that the boss will leave us on the street with that piece of news, or if we are unemployed, we know that we will not be admitted to any job in that situation. Many people say that women only fulfill themselves through maternity, but if they are business owners, they do not want mothers as employees’ (D’Atri, 2018). In this passage, D’Atri is arguing that a woman might consider interrupting a pregnancy because of her socioeconomic status. Particularly, she is claiming that working class women might decide to interrupt a pregnancy, because they know that they will not be able to get a job otherwise. A job is indispensable for any human who needs to sustain a family. Thus, reporting that motherhood is an obstacle for women’s financial independence, results in a valid argument to justify that a woman might make the decision to terminate her pregnancy, because she does not have the economic possibility to take care of the child. Furthermore, highlighting the category of Class and Economic Inequality is a useful strategy to defend abortion legalization, because activists can demonstrate that women



in need suffer the most serious consequences, and that the State must be active in avoiding maternal health complications and/or deaths.

Another category included in the Intersectionality frame is Gender and Sexual Diversity. This category identifies arguments that green scarf activists employ in order to make visible that they acknowledge that gender and sexual diversity exists, and that sexual intercourse and romantic relationships are not necessarily heterosexual (Corrales, 2020. p. 14). This category also includes arguments that seek to exhibit that LGBTQI+ people suffer the negative consequences of illegal abortions just like cis women. For instance, Ofelia Fernández explicitly said in the public audience of 2018: ‘Poor women and trans men are dying because they are undergoing [illegal abortions]’ (Fernández, 2018). This statement is relevant, because Fernández is denouncing that clandestine abortions do not only affect cis women; and because it allows the audience to include LGBTQI+ persons into the collective of people that are affected by restrictive abortion laws. Fernández also employs the category of Economic and Class Inequality in this quote, because she states that ‘poor women’ die from clandestine abortions.

## **Mobilization**

Mobilization or Activism is a frame that seeks to conceptualize arguments in favor of abortion liberalization that evidence the social value and effectiveness of collective organization. As explained in the Introduction, activism normally pursues a social or political goal (Combs and Penfield, 2012, p. 461). Arguments that reference mobilization are relevant, because they demonstrate that citizens organize themselves, and that collective organization provides the citizenry with a voice that is able to influence institutional debates. Mobilization is, thus, a way of enjoying the Right to Freedom of Speech, which is essential for a transparent democracy. In the case of the debate on abortion legalization, collective organization was crucial for Argentine green scarf activists to achieve their goal in 2020. Arguments related to mobilization are relevant in this debate, because as it has been previously noted, they represent the voice of the populace. Therefore, a long trajectory of mobilization, or several plural mobilizations, could prove that a segment of the population (significant enough) is keen on achieving a proposed goal or change.

A category that was found within the Mobilization frame is National History. This category has been discussed in the First Chapter. The particular cultural and historical background of the Argentine pro-abortion movement was introduced, which distinguishes the

Argentinian green scarf movement from other pro-abortion legalization movements in other countries. This category includes cultural and historical arguments used by activists that are exclusive to the national movement and to national shared meanings (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614).

The emblem of the movement, for example, the green scarf, is a symbol that is associated with Argentina's cultural history, as it has already been mentioned in this project. Although the green scarf is gaining popularity in different countries and becoming a symbol of Abortion Rights internationally, the relationship that it has with the white scarves worn by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* provides the green scarf with a specific cultural meaning that is exclusive to the Argentinian movement (Schmidt, 2022). Ofelia Fernández mentioned in the interview that it was after the marches of #NiUnaMenos that she bought her first green scarf (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri also commented during the interview that she attended the *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres* of 2003 (Valimbri Acosta, 2022), which was the first event where the green scarf was worn publicly by pro-abortion activists (Schmidt, 2022).

Macón argues in her Chapter titled *White Scarves and Green Scarves. The Affective Temporality of #QueSeaLey [#MakeItLaw] as Fourth-Wave Feminism* (Macón, 2021), that green scarf activists in Argentina use historical references that establish a link between the contemporary fight for abortion legalization and the terrorism that was executed by the State during the last military dictatorship. Although claims<sup>22</sup> about the dictatorship emerged in the dataset, activists made historical references that were not necessarily associated with the dictatorship, but referenced a history of mobilization. For example, Andrea D'Atri mentioned the feminist groups that claimed for abortion legalization in the 1970s, with the aim of celebrating the historical trajectory of the movement and its transcendence in the present (D'Atri, 2018).

The history of the pro-abortion movement in Argentina impacts on its present mobilization strategies, and on the discursive tools that activists use. Both interviewees mentioned that mobilization was a key strategy to achieving abortion legalization. Arguments that highlight the importance of green scarf mobilizations in Argentina were included in the National History category, and were labeled with the '*Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito*' code. D'Atri communicated in her public discourse of 2018: 'The persistent struggle of the women's movement explains why the debate that has been present for so many years has already returned the result of a majority that is in favor of

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<sup>22</sup> These claims are presented later in this chapter and analyzed as a part of the Secularism frame.

the decriminalization and legalization of abortion in Argentina' (D'Atri, 2018). Fernández used this code in the public audience of 2018 as well: 'Those who oppose abortion have to acknowledge that the void left behind from your disinterest was filled by self-management' (Fernández, 2018). Both activists also made references to the significance of street mobilization. D'Atri asserted: 'We know that our rights are debated in Congress, but we are convinced that we conquer them in the street through our fight' (D'Atri, 2018). Fernández held: 'We were always in the streets and every Tuesday we stood in front of the Congress to claim for what belongs to us' (Fernández, 2018).

Another code that has been defined within the category of National History includes political arguments employed by activists. The code named 'Partisan Politics' was used in the dataset with the objective of denouncing governments or political parties that obstructed the process of abortion legalization in the past. 'Partisan Politics' may not be culturally credible to a segment of the population, but the code includes strategic claims that activists use with the aim of achieving political objectives. Even though these arguments could be based on contentious political convictions, rather than being theoretical or supported by empirical evidence, they shape the History of the country, and contribute to cultural contextualization of the green scarf movement. D'Atri made many political references both in the interview and in the address of 2018. In the public audience she spoke about José López Rega (a right-wing peronist politician<sup>23</sup>), who banned contraceptives when he was Minister of Wellbeing in the 1970s (D'Atri, 2018). This denunciation is not directly related to abortion, but it is associated with Argentina's History of Reproductive Rights, and seeks to demonstrate that the peronist party in the 1970s did not guarantee women's Reproductive Rights. D'Atri also claimed in the same public discourse that during the Kirchnerist<sup>24</sup> governments, the Law on Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy was not debated in Congress, because the presidents did not allow the debate (D'Atri, 2018). This claim seeks to highlight that the Kirchnerist party slowed down the process of abortion liberalization.

In the interview, D'Atri told us that the feminist leftist organization: *Pan y Rosas*, of which she is the founder, was born in the wake of the 2001 economic crisis, when many women had lost their jobs. *Pan y Rosas* undertook several meetings, where they discussed unemployment and abortion legalization –among other topics–, and they attended together

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<sup>23</sup> He was Minister of Wellbeing from 1973 to 1975, under the mandate of three presidents, namely: Héctor Cámpora, Raúl Lastiri, Juan Domingo Perón and María Estela Martínez.

<sup>24</sup> *Kirchnerismo* is a word that is used to represent a branch of *peronismo*. Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Néstor's widow) were peronist Argentine presidents. Néstor was president from 2003 until 2007, Cristina was president from 2007 until 2015.

the *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres* of 2003 (where the green scarf was worn in public for the first time) (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). According to D'Atri, many social movements that emerged after the crisis of 2001 were co-opted by the Kirchnerist party during Néstor Kirchner's presidency. For instance, the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, as well as other feminist, Human Rights and labor organizations (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri insisted that Kirchnerist pro-abortion activists believed that abortion was going to be legalized during the presidency of Néstor Kirchner, but it did not happen, and mobilization decreased during those years (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This claim of hers is related to her previous argument, because she assures that mobilization declined, and that abortion legalization was not prioritized by Néstor Kirchner's administration. Furthermore, D'Atri explained that until 2018 there were moments in which *Pan y Rosas* was more or less active in the *Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito* (the Campaign was founded during Néstor's presidency), because Kirchnerist sectors predominated and they were not confrontational of the administration (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri is politically distancing herself and *Pan y Rosas* from Kirchnerism, and also reporting that Kirchnerism did not give enough salience to abortion legalization.

### **Secularism**

Another frame worth extrapolating on is that of Secularism. In the Introduction, it has been argued that the pro-abortion movement is based on principles that are progressive and secular, and that might represent a non-religious sector of society, or a sector of society that believes that public matters should be approached from a secular perspective (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). In the Introduction, following Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan (2017), it was stated that neoconservative groups could be classified as moral fundamentalists, because they assume that their personal understandings of reproduction and sexuality should be believed and/or accepted by the entire citizenry (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2017, p. 426). It was recognized that green scarf activists employed the Secularism frame in the dataset, because they sought to discuss abortion legalization from a non-religious standpoint.

The Secularism frame includes two categories, according to the analysis undertaken in this project, namely: National History, which has been defined earlier in this chapter, and Moral Relativism. Within the category of National History, additionally, there were two codes included: 'Secular State', and 'Partisan Politics'.

The code 'Secular State' is considered a part of the National History category, because the institution of the Catholic Church in Argentina has a controversial image among many Argentine citizens, because it was complicit in the last military dictatorship, as it has been explained formerly in this thesis. This code is a specific Argentinian pro-abortion legalization argument, that is also presented as a rallying cry in many national street protests: 'Church and State, Separate Issues'. This cultural background has already been studied in Chapter 1, as well as its relationship with the dictatorship period. In the First Chapter, the following argument made by Borland (2004) was cited: the author suggests that as a consequence of this historical cultural legacy, Argentinian green scarf activists explicitly critique and confront the Catholic Church in their protest discourse (Borland, 2004, p. 335). Borland also claims that they make direct accusations to the institution, because it receives special legal and public financial privileges (Borland, 2004, p. 330). Contemporary green scarf activists advocate for an Argentine secular State.

Andrea D'Atri mentioned the Catholic Church several times. It was identified that, as argued by Borland (2004), the activist was explicitly critical and confrontational of the institution. In the public audience of 2018, she reported: '[...] Afterwards arrived the genocidal dictatorship that imposed with 'blood and fire' the Catholic values to the Nation, with the complicity of the highest hierarchy of the Catholic Church' (D'Atri, 2018). D'Atri is denouncing here, first of all, the genocide that was carried out by the military coup during the last dictatorship. Secondly, she is using this claim as an argument in favor of abortion decriminalization. As noted in the last Chapter, Argentinian green scarf activists consider that abortion legalization is a debt that the democratic State has with women. Contemporary green scarf activists consider legal abortion to be a 'debt of democracy', because they believe that the State must regret the crimes that were committed during the military government by taking on empirical actions. Activists claim that, in order to acknowledge the genocide, the Argentine State must effectively guarantee Argentine citizens' Human Rights, including abortion, specifically, which is a right that green scarf activists consider to be one of women's Human Rights (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 37). Another passage of the same public discourse in which D'Atri claims for a secular State is the following one: '...there is a Law on Integrative Sex Education in Argentina, that is not implemented at all levels of education, because the Catholic Church pressures the government' (D'Atri, 2018). These two claims correspond to the 'Secular State' code.

Additionally, in the same public speech, D'Atri announced: 'In the 1990s, Menem<sup>25</sup> instituted the day of the 'unborn child' at the request of the Vatican, something that subsequent governments have not removed from the official calendar' (D'Atri, 2018). D'Atri also made a reference to Menem's government in the interview that was conducted in June of 2021. She mentioned the Constitutional Reform of 1994, and argued that former president Carlos Menem gave constitutional recognition to International Treaties, because the Pact of San José of Costa Rica guarantees the Right to Life to a person from the moment of conception (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri denounced through these claims the tools that Menem employed with the aim of obstructing abortion liberalization. Carlos Menem was openly opposed to abortion legalization and important public workers from his government were conservative Opus Dei Catholics (Blofield, 2006, p. 134). These arguments belong to the Secularism frame, because Menem perpetuated abortion criminalization, partly, through political relationships with Catholic institutions, and D'Atri seeks to unmask his intentions explicitly. Finally, she utilizes these historical references with the aim of affirming that the influence of the Catholic Church in Argentina's public issues contributes in blocking the process of abortion legalization. Thus, reaffirming green scarf activists' claim that a Secular State would be more likely to recognize women's fundamental Human Rights. These denunciations of ex-president Menem can be labeled with 'Secular State' and 'Partisan Politics' codes.

In the interview, D'Atri argued that traditionalist Catholics who are anti-abortion activists hold positions that are contradictory, and she explicitly named the institution of the Catholic Church (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri told us about the different positions that the Catholic Church has had in relation to abortion throughout History. In the Middle Age, she explained, the Catholic Church condemned abortions, because they could be used to hide another crime, adultery, that was considered to be more serious. So, during that period, their moral position against the practice of abortion was not founded on the value of human life, that their creed acknowledges from the moment of conception, but on the fact that it enabled women to hide that they had committed adultery (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Andrea D'Atri said that she got this information from pamphlets that were given away by a green scarf activist group called *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir*<sup>26</sup> (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Finally, with the objective of condensing the argument that she was developing about the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church, the interviewee added: 'It is not a question of God's message, but of the

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<sup>25</sup> Carlos Menem was a Peronist president that ruled between 1989 and 1999.

<sup>26</sup> Catholics for the Right to Decide.



relationship with the Church, as a secular institution that is tightly linked to political power... To the mortal political power, let's say, that changes its discourse, according to the necessities of the dominating social classes' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This example was used by D'Atri to demonstrate that the argument that blue scarf Catholics use to defend abortion, which is (according to them<sup>27</sup>) founded on the value that they attribute to every human life (including fetuses), is not based on the values of the Catholic religion, but on the arguments that Catholic institutions defend. The activist was trying to prove that the Catholic Church, as an institution, not as a creed, changes its position towards issues of public interest, according to the political links from which it can benefit. This claim is, thereby, an argument in favor of abortion decriminalization that is based on the code 'Secular State'. D'Atri reports that the influence of the Catholic Church on public issues is not well-intentioned, but rather based on political interests. Therefore, a Secular State could hypothetically eradicate or reduce the dishonest relationships between political institutions and the Catholic Church. Ofelia Fernández did not mention the institution of the Catholic Church in the dataset. This may be related to generational reasons: Fernández was born after the military dictatorship had long been toppled.

The category of Moral Relativism also belongs to the Secularism frame. It was created to analyze arguments in which green scarf activists denounce that blue scarf activists are moral fundamentalists, or arguments in which green scarf activists complain about the morality that blue scarf activists seek to impose on the entire population, without taking into account that not everyone has the same conception of morality. It is relevant to note that although the interviewees did not mention this, in Argentina there is no public obligation to adhere, accept or practice a specific morality, because the Right to Freedom of Worship is guaranteed in the 14th Article of the Argentine National Constitution (Infoleg, 2023). This is why the Moral Relativism category is functional to defend abortion legalization, because in Argentina, citizens have the freedom to choose the morality that they want to accept and/or practice. Relativism can be defined as 'the belief that truth or wrong can only be judged in relation to other things, and that nothing can be true or right in all situations' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The word relativism was employed as an opposite to fundamentalism. The idea was to label arguments in which green scarf activists highlighted moral diversity, or as noted before, arguments in which they denounced that moral diversity is denied in the discourse of anti-abortion activists.

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<sup>27</sup> Blue scarf activists.

D'Atri employed the Moral Relativism category in the public address of 2018, she declared: 'We are not discussing when human life [begins]. (...) [Nor are we discussing] how we would like women to [live] their sexuality or [control] their reproductive capacity, based on our own beliefs' (D'Atri, 2018). During the interview, she also employed this category: 'Being in favor or against abortion, I believe that is something absolutely individual and personal, intimate, and I can be against abortion, I mean, against aborting, if I had to go through that situation, but I could still be in favor of the Right' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). In a part of the interview, she was speaking about the discourse of the Catholic Church in relation to abortion legalization, and she argued explicitly: 'This is imposing a religious dogma, or a determined conception, based on faith, on the entire population, when not all the population has the same religion, nor the same ideas, neither the same view of the same religion' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). It is evident that D'Atri is expressing that she believes that blue scarf activists are biased by their moral convictions, and that she also considers that imposing a specific morality on the entire population is inadmissible. D'Atri emphasizes the difference between someone's personal (or religion-specific) values, and the collective moral: all persons have the freedom to choose their own morals and act according to them, but when it comes to collective necessities, it must be acknowledged that not everyone shares the same views, and that rights need to be balanced, so as to provide citizens with effective policies that respond to their needs.

Ofelia Fernández's discourse also used Moral Relativism but did so under different circumstances. During her 2018 speech, she reported that students do not receive efficient Sex Education, even when there was a Law passed in 2006 that guarantees Integrative Sex Education in public schools. She claimed: 'It seems absolutely irresponsible to me that, even when there is a Law on Sex Education that was passed in 2006, those people still systematically ignore our needs and want to avoid them by imposing on us foreign, moral and clerical needs. In schools, for example, we are not encouraged to ask questions, much less, then, are we given answers' (Fernández, 2018). In the interview, she said: 'It is very frequent that adolescents undergo abortions. [...] I saw that happen around me. [...] I saw the combination of the vulnerability that implies having an abortion, knowing that it is an illegal practice, and that you do not know if it will be performed safely, with a great sense of imposed and forced fault... I saw girls near me [...] suffer, not only the fear of the practice itself, but also the fault [imposed by a] society that judges you, and that condemns you for that decision that you have already taken...' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). In the first passage, Fernández is complaining about the ineffectiveness of Sex Education in public schools. Sex

Education is an essential tool to avoid unwanted pregnancies, especially among young people. Furthermore, Fernández claims that the reason why Sex Education is ineffective in public schools is because ‘they’<sup>28</sup> impose ‘clerical’ and ‘foreign’ morals; they are unwilling to respect the needs of students, and decide not to provide sufficient information, because of their personal moral objections. The Moral Relativism category belongs to the Secularism frame, because, very often, the morality that is practiced and defended by neoconservative groups (in Argentina) is based on Christian values (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 28). Also, it is described as imposing upon a (perhaps) secular or non-Catholic morality.

In the second quote, Fernández speaks about the social harassment that young women suffer when they decide to undergo an abortion. This claim is also related to the Moral Relativism category, because she speaks about ‘imposed fault’. Fernández is arguing that illegal abortions are dangerous, not only because they are potentially deadly, but also because society ‘condemns’ women who decide to abort. These judgments are associated with a negative moral conception about the practice of abortion; women who abort are faulted by people who believe that having an abortion is morally incorrect. These judgments affect women’s mental health negatively, and create a hostile environment. Following the argument that was presented at the beginning of this section, where it was affirmed that the Right to Freedom of Worship is guaranteed in the 14th Article of the Argentine National Constitution, it can be assured that these claims are arguments in favor of abortion legalization. Fernández asserts that abortion is not liberalized, because a segment of the national society (significantly powerful) imposes personal conceptions of morality on pregnant women who decide or need to abort. In sum, this category characterizes claims that prioritize women’s health and freedom of choice, over other people’s personal morals and values.

## **Chauvinism**

The frame Chauvinism, which was not defined previously in this thesis, was identified in the dataset. The concept of chauvinism characterizes attitudes or beliefs that represent women as if they were naturally inferior to men, either mentally or physically (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Within this frame, the category of Gender Violence was defined, which refers to different types of violence that are executed on women: physical, sexual and/or psychological. Gender violence is a problem that affects one in three women worldwide; in

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<sup>28</sup> The law’s opponents.

addition, data suggests that women suffer violence mostly by an intimate partner (UN Women, 2022). In the dataset, both Andrea D'Atri and Ofelia Fernández claim that pregnancy can result as a consequence of gender violence, or sexual abuses, which can inform a woman's decision to undergo an abortion. For example, Andrea D'Atri claimed in the interview: '...pregnancies do not only occur because people decide to get pregnant, or because they do not receive enough information [on reproduction and sexuality], or because the contraceptive method failed, [pregnancies occur] also because women get raped, [women] get raped by their intimate partners as well...' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Ofelia Fernández in the public speech of 2018 argued: 'We have violent relationships that include jealousy, beating and insulting. We also suffer when we walk on the street and 60 year old men tell us, not very kindly, that they want to take us to their house, or when we go out at night and people put drugs in our drinks. [...] Furthermore, sometimes we are also abused inside our own houses.' (Fernández, 2018). Fernández speaks from her personal point of view, and includes herself in the collective that suffers chauvinistic violence. The activists did not reference the 86th Article of the Argentine Penal Code, which guarantees access to legal abortions in cases of rape (Tarricone, 2018). However, the pregnant woman might be a victim of a violent intimate relationship, or of marital rape, for example, and might choose to have an abortion; these two situations are not contemplated in the Argentine Penal Code. Therefore, this claim is still relevant as an argument in favor of abortion liberalization. Esquivel Domínguez (2019) argues in her study that women also use the category of Gender Violence as an argument in favor of abortion decriminalization, because when women die from clandestine abortions, the State is being complicit of chauvinistic homicides (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 191).

As is the case in Ofelia Fernández's arguments above, green scarf activists many times employ the first person: personal experiences or the notion of a collective 'our' – when arguing for abortion rights. Esquivel Domínguez (2019) explains that personal experiences can be used by women as a political tool to claim their rights (Esquivel Domínguez, 2019, p. 188). Considering that women themselves are the ones who suffer the denigrating consequences of chauvinism, personal experiences are often valuable claims that, when shared by fellow militants, become collective demands that are afterwards reused and reproduced by other women. Hence, the category of Women's Personal Experiences was considered within the Chauvinism frame, with the objective of distinguishing arguments in which women invoke situations that they have lived, and use those examples as justifications of choices that they have made, or ideas that they have developed after having been through

those situations. Personal experiences can be isolated and not generalizable. However, individual experiences are sometimes shared by several people, and in those cases, they turn into collective struggles that bring individuals together who intend to solve problems that affect them directly. It was found in the dataset that green scarf activists employed personal experiences as arguments to defend abortion legalization. Ofelia Fernández uses the first person many times when she speaks about abortion and other women's issues. In the public address she stated: 'We are the ones who wait watchfully for the result of the vote, because we are the ones who abort' (Fernández, 2018). She also declared: 'I believe that where there is a statement made in first person there is unfailingly an absence of rights' (Fernández, 2018). Moreover, in the interview with Ofelia Fernández, she was asked how she informed about abortion, and how she constructed her favorable position towards abortion legalization. She responded that, in part, it was through her personal experiences. That is to say, seeing abortions happen around her, and the negative consequences that clandestine practices have on women who abort (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). So, on one hand, she claimed that she understands the issue through empathy. On the other hand, she told us that attending mobilizations, debates, and participating in the *Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres* turned those individual experiences into shared ones, because there were many women coming together with the aim of telling their stories, reporting and making visible the disgraces that happen to many of them (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Her response is considered illustrative of the category that uses women's personal and associative experiences as a discursive tool for denouncing chauvinism. In fact, these collective encounters between women who experience similar misfortunes, demonstrate the plural character of their individual claims. Regarding abortion, specifically, this category is practical to defend a pro-legalization position, because those who have aborted can share their testimonies, and use their experiences as empirical evidence of their claims. Giving their claims an empirical dimension makes them more credible, and other people can relate to their cause and defend it as well.

A code that emerges within the category of Women's Personal Experiences is 'Emotions'. This code is related to devastating emotions that are associated with clandestine abortion experiences. What's more, this category is profoundly connected with the famous international feminist slogan: 'the personal is political' (Hanisch, 2006). Repeatedly, green scarf activists include in their personal testimonies references to harmful feelings that they have had when they underwent an illegal abortion. This code is present in discourse about gender violence as well. Women who have experienced gender violence speak about how they felt and how their mental wellbeing deteriorated. Ofelia Fernández reported in the

audience of 2018 that when abortion is illegal, women are forced to fear, just because they want to enjoy their Right to Freedom of Choice (Fernández, 2018). Fernández said: ‘Those who are luckier and can pay for a safe abortion remain [then] associated with an imposed taboo and a forced trauma –I say it again–, because of breaking a contract they have never signed, because of choosing the life that they want. That should never make us fear, however, we fear many things’ (Fernández, 2018). After that statement, the activist continued speaking about the social stigma that entails having an abortion. Previously in this chapter, when the Moral Relativism category was analyzed, a quote was cited, in which Fernández mentioned the fault that women feel after undergoing an abortion, because society judges them for that decision (Fernández, 2018). In the public address Fernández asserted: ‘Those who invalidate [our] fears and pains are the ones who do not know our world and do not want to know it either, but that world exists’ (Fernández, 2018). Ofelia Fernández also mentioned in the interview the anger that many women feel because of gender inequality. She was telling us how she got involved in feminist activism, and she explained that the first mobilizations she attended were the marches of #NiUnaMenos, when she was fifteen years old. She said: ‘*Ni Una Menos* had a particularity, and it was that we did not even have to inquire too much about what was happening, because, I mean, we were already bearing with, or being moved by cases of *femicidio*, that started gaining visibility, and that were being discussed in other terms, from a different rage, from a different temper’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). #NiUnaMenos, as described earlier in this thesis, was a series of street mobilizations and online protests that were carried out with the aim of denouncing *femicidios* and chauvinistic violence against women. Ofelia Fernández makes explicit that when a group of women are denouncing that other women are being violently killed or injured (either mentally or physically), just because they are women, activists are naturally angry, and that is one of the main reasons why they come together and join protests. This code is just another way of using Women’s Personal Experiences as a justification for abortion liberalization. Bringing up unhealthy emotions felt by women in situations of violence or vulnerability is strategic, first of all, because other women can relate to them, and secondly, because emotions influence people’s mental health. A person’s Right to Health is linked to a human’s wellbeing, and mental health is considered a part thereof.



## Public Health

A concept that was addressed by the interviewees many times was the Public Health frame. In Chapter 1 this frame was conceptualized according to Borland and Sutton's (2013) definition. The authors argued that pro-abortion activists employ this frame by making references to medical statistics that quantify the maternal deaths that are consequences of clandestine abortions (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 215). In the dataset, the presence of this frame has also been identified, but the interviewees did not specifically refer to medical statistics. Both of them highlighted that clandestine abortions (and the deadly consequences that they have on women's health) are an issue of public concern, and that the State must take responsibility for the problem. Considering that the objective of green scarf activism is to pass a law that would guarantee access to legal abortion in Argentina, and that they also seek to make it available at public hospitals, their discourse will always be either implicit- or explicitly related to the concept of Public Health. For this reason, it was predictable that the Public Health frame would emerge among green scarf's collective action frames.

In the public audience of 2018, D'Atri explained that the objective of that year's Congressional debate was to discuss if the Congress was going to derogate Articles 86 and 88 of the Argentine Penal Code, and guarantee access to legal abortion at public hospitals (D'Atri, 2018). Here, she is affirming that the movement's main objective is associated with the concept of Public Health, and that green scarf activism considers that abortion is a matter of public interest and that the State should intervene in order to guarantee women's health. Fernández stated during the interview: 'Concretely, I believe that the State must be present to guarantee health, not to negate realities that exist, and that surround it' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Fernández is also making evident that she believes that clandestine abortions should end, because they are dangerous, and that the State must intervene in order to make this possible.

A category that can also be included in the Public Health frame is Gender and Sexual Diversity. It has been explained previously that LGBTQI+ people also suffer the deadly consequences of illegal abortion. In order to guarantee equal access to abortion care, the State must take gender and sexual diversity into consideration, so as to develop policies that are inclusive and non-discriminatory. It has been cited previously that Ofelia Fernández denounced in the public audience of 2018 that trans men die from clandestine abortions. After saying that, Fernández added: 'What I think is most dangerous is that today the State is complicit in [femicide]' (Fernández, 2018). Fernández is arguing that the State is responsible

for maternal deaths, because the State is the institution that possesses the means to legalize abortion. In this sense, it could be considered that the Public Health frame was employed in this fragment of her speech. The Public Health frame is present in that quote, because Fernández is blaming the State responsible for the deadly consequences that illegal abortion has on cis women and trans men.

## **Pragmatism**

To frame abortion legalization as a pragmatic<sup>29</sup> policy entails acknowledging that abortions happen in reality, and that illegal abortion has not prevented abortions from taking place, it has only forced women to undergo clandestine and unsafe procedures (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217). The pragmatic frame is a key element of green scarf activism. They have contended that: ‘State and society need to come to terms with [abortion]’ (Borland and Sutton, 2013, p. 217), because, otherwise, women will continue performing them illegally and putting their lives at risk. Hence, this frame often includes affirmations about the pragmatic nature of abortion legalization.

A pragmatic approach, thus, proposes that legalization would reduce the probability of health complications and/or death. Pro-abortion activists argue that when abortion is legal, the practice must be performed by a trained professional, following sanitary protocols and using adequate instruments (Aderibigbe and Olaide, 2014, p. 178). In other words, a pragmatic approach recognizes that abortions will happen (either legal- or illegally), *ergo*, legalization would at least promote safety and hygiene. This approach also considers that legalization is not suggested but necessary; reality must be reversed, because Women’s Human Rights to Life and Health are being violated.

The Pragmatism frame is recurrent and is one of the most strategic, because it allows activists to use empirical evidence to sustain their arguments. Activists often cite statistics on the positive outcomes that abortion legalization has achieved in different countries (REDAAS, 2018). This strategy gives activists the chance to base their claims on official and reliable public data. The Pragmatism frame is intrinsically linked to empirical data and evidence. This frame strategically employs empirical data as a tool to defend the veracity of one of the movement’s principal claims: that clandestine abortions exist, and that they harm women. As theorized by Benford and Snow (2000): claims supported by empirical evidence

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<sup>29</sup>Pragmatism is ‘the quality of dealing with a problem in a sensible way that suits the conditions that really exist, rather than following fixed theories, ideas, or rules’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

tend to be more credible (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Pragmatism is, thus, one of the most strategic frames as it is potentially credible. Since this framework is so strong, it was employed several times by the interviewees in the dataset.

One of the questions that were asked to D'Atri in the interview was about the arguments that she used in favor of abortion legalization. She responded that, in the first place, the argument is that: 'penalization does not prevent abortions from happening' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This argument belongs to the Pragmatism frame, because she is affirming that abortions are performed regardless of their legal status. It is important to note that the countermovement is against abortion legalization, because they are convinced that abortion must never happen. Blue scarf activists believe that abortion implies killing another person, because they consider that human life begins at the moment of conception, and that the value of human life is irrevocable.

The strategic advantage of the Pragmatism frame is that it includes arguments that are supported by empirical evidence, and that are not just based on moral principles. In Argentina, abortion was illegal until 2020. However, abortions happened regularly, and many women died or had serious health complications as a consequence (REDAAS, 2018). On the contrary, countries where abortion is legal have been successful in reducing abortion rates in their Nations, as well as in reducing maternal deaths and physical/mental damage (REDAAS, 2018)<sup>30</sup>.

In the interview, D'Atri also claimed that: 'no woman in the History of Humanity has had a kid she did not want to have' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri was explaining that the last decision is always made by the person who is pregnant, no matter what the valid legislation allows them to do or not. It is an individual authority to decide to commit an illicit act or not. Unlawful abortions in Argentina, previous to the legalization of the practice, were not regulated efficiently so as to keep them from happening. In other words, before abortion was legalized in Argentina, many women aborted, regardless. However, the State did not always intervene in these situations. Thus, people were able to have an abortion despite the illegality. D'Atri's argument is associated with the concept of Pragmatism, because she insists that women will have abortions despite the hostile circumstances and the clandestinity. To be specific, she made this statement to support her claim that women will illegally abort if they decide to do so. Therefore, legalizing abortion will allow them to do it safely. It is admissible to affirm that women in Argentina have aborted illegally throughout the course of History,

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<sup>30</sup> It is not the aim of this thesis to fact-check the arguments made by green scarf activists. Therefore, only some illustrative examples of the statistics that are being mentioned have been cited.

and that the State has not always made interventions, because there is empirical evidence that supports these claims (REDAAS, 2018). Despite D'Atri's intention to make a claim associated with Pragmatism, she failed to provide a fact-based claim, and leaned on a hyperbole instead. This exaggeration negatively affects the credibility of her claim. Even though a part of it might be true.

In the public speech of 2018, Ofelia Fernández stated vehemently: 'I would love to speak in a figurative sense, but I have never been so literal: ever since this debate started, it has been [denounced] that clandestine abortions exist and kill' (Fernández, 2018). Fernández also established a relationship between Women's Autonomy (i.e.: their freedom to decide individually to undergo a legal abortion) and the concept of Pragmatism in the interview. The politician argued: 'It is not a discussion about autonomy, itself, but about autonomy as a resolution towards a State that has been incapable of containing everything else' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Ofelia Fernández said that the Right to Autonomy is an argument that must be employed when defending abortion legalization (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). However, she argues that the discussion is not about Women's Autonomy as a concept. Instead, the legislator claims that this argument is useful, not because of its conceptual meaning, but because it is a constitutional plea for Safe, Free and Legal Abortion in Argentina. Fernández is asserting that green scarf activism is not just about guaranteeing women their Right to Autonomy. She considers that the Right to Autonomy is just a way of conceptualizing a solution for an empirical problem that the State has not been able to solve so far: clandestine abortions that kill and harm women. Fernández is framing women's Right to Autonomy as a pragmatic constitutional argument in favor of abortion legalization.

A category found within the Pragmatism frame is Sex Education and Contraception. This category is also present in the movement's slogan: '*Exucación Sexual para Decidir, Anticonceptivos para No Abortar, Aborto Legal para No Morir*'<sup>31</sup>. Green scarf activists insist that they do not consider abortion something desirable or morally correct<sup>32</sup> (Farrell, 2022, p. 2). They seek to legalize abortion, because it has been illegal thus far, but it has always existed, killed, and harmed women, despite the institutional obstacles. Hence, activists consider that guaranteeing Sex Education and Contraception should complement the proposal of abortion legalization. The slogan, similarly to Ofelia Fernández, suggests that autonomy<sup>33</sup> is indivisible from a pragmatic approach to abortion liberalization.

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<sup>31</sup> The slogan has already been translated in previous pages.

<sup>32</sup> This statement made by Farrell (2022) will be explained in the succeeding section.

<sup>33</sup> Namely, the decision: '*...para decidir*'.

Green scarf's suggestion of expanding provision to Sex Education and Contraception aims at reducing the potential number of abortions that could be performed once the Law has been approved. It is considered that this category belongs to the Pragmatism frame, because it is a part of the pragmatic interpretation of abortion legalization that has been thoroughly explained in the precedent lines. Green scarf activists assume that many people engage in sexual intercourse; therefore, improving Sex Education and access to Contraception could contribute to a reduction of unwanted pregnancies, as well as pregnancies of minor women. Andrea D'Atri cited the slogan in her public speech of 2018, and she added: '...that has been the slogan of the women's movement that has been fighting this battle for over a decade' (D'Atri, 2018).

In the interview, D'Atri was asked how she informed herself about abortion. The interviewee responded that she did so mostly by reading, and she mentioned a book that she won in a raffle from the Women's Bookstore in Buenos Aires. D'Atri told us that the book was on the History of Contraception and Abortion in Humanity. The activist said that the book revealed to her that: '...never, throughout the course of History, there has been a Law, religion, or punishment, that has been successful in stopping women from aborting if they wanted to do so' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). The activist considers that the fundamental defense of abortion legalization is that abortions have always happened, even under illegal, secret, or dangerous circumstances (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). D'Atri continued discussing this topic, and she claimed: 'If penalization has not stopped women from aborting<sup>34</sup>, then, O.K., let's rethink [...] What could [be done in order] to avoid abortions?... I think that the [answer is]: Sex Education at all levels, [...] [as well as] free and massive access to contraception...' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Again, the politician was arguing that: since penalization has not succeeded in preventing clandestine abortions, policies linked to Sex Education and Contraception should be evaluated. At the end, D'Atri concluded: 'Of course, if there was Sex Education and free Contraception [available], the abortion rate would reduce significantly. Actually, abortion legalization guarantees that maternal mortality rates due to abortion are reduced to zero' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Ofelia Fernández also spoke about Sex Education and Contraceptives in the dataset. During the interview conducted in 2021, she was arguing that the position held by opponents of abortion legalization is contradictory (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Fernández claimed that their position is based on personal beliefs, and that individual convictions should not be used to discuss Public Policies (Valimbri

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<sup>34</sup> D'Atri is revealing here that one of the green scarf movement's goals is to reduce abortions.

Acosta, 2022). The legislator gave an example, she said: ‘They<sup>35</sup> consider that [women’s autonomy is not as important as the life of the ‘unborn child’], but the reality is that they have never made an effort to make [improvements] in Sex Education, a Law that most of them oppose... [They] boycott the Sex Education bill, [but it] would allow more people to access information that, maybe, could also help them prevent [unwanted] pregnancies, and they would not end up needing an abortion...’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This argument collapsed into a code that was identified within the category of Sex Education and Contraception. The code was labeled: ‘Hypocrisy of Blue Scarf Activists’. Using the Pragmatism frame, both interviewees described blue scarf activists’ discourse as hypocritical (Fernández mentioned the code in the last quote that was highlighted in the previous paragraph). D’Atri said in the interview: ‘If you are against abortion, O.K., then, let’s guarantee access to contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies. But, no. They are also against avoiding unwanted pregnancies.’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This code is rooted in the contradiction of anti-abortion activists’ discourse. In most cases, anti-abortion activists are not only opposed to abortion legalization; they are also opposed to Laws on Integrative Sex Education. This is because they think that these Laws promote what they have termed ‘gender ideology’<sup>36</sup>; this term is used as a way to refuse acknowledgement of sexual and gender diversity, proclaiming it to be an ‘ideological’ imposition instead. Integrative Sex Education Laws that have been put in place in Argentina since the first decade of the 21st century have been based on non-heteronormative principles, rousing opposition (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Green scarf activists claim that conservative positions against Sex Education Laws are hypocritical, because they do not want abortions to happen, but they are also against measures that could prevent pregnancy: e.g. Sex Education.

The category of Empirical Data was considered, because it has been argued that the Pragmatism frame is linked to it. It has been detected in the dataset that green scarf activists made claims that may, indeed, be based on empirical evidence. However, they failed to provide the sources. Moreover, their claims were sometimes too unspecific to be credible. For instance, when D’Atri mentioned the book that she won in the raffle, she affirmed that: ‘...never, throughout the course of History’ prohibitionist measures have been effective in preventing clandestine abortions (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Her argument seemed exaggerated, like another one that has been pointed out already. Fernández also failed to specify the

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<sup>35</sup> Those who oppose abortion legalization.

<sup>36</sup> This term, that we have already introduced in the Introduction, is the concept that neoconservative groups use to label the position of groups that advocate for women’s or LGBTQI+ rights. The aim of this label is to underestimate the veracity of their claims, and frame them as ‘ideological’, or as convictions, rather than scientific or fact-based arguments.



sources of her claims: she assured that Sex Education could prevent unwanted pregnancies (Valimbri Acosta, 2022), but did not explain how or why she knew that. D'Atri confirmed that legal abortion guarantees annulment of abortion-related maternal deaths (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Repeatedly, the leftist politician failed to cite the sources of her affirmations. Even if it is recognized that these arguments may be truthful, and that there might be empirical evidence to support them, the interviewees were not rigorous enough to clarify where the information that they were giving came from. In terms of discursive strategies, these (perhaps unintentional) omissions weaken the credibility of their arguments. The Pragmatism frame can be strategic when employed thoughtfully.

Another category is Human Rights. This category belongs to the Pragmatism frame, because green scarf activists exhibit, while framing abortion legalization as pragmatic, that Women's Human Rights to Health and Life are violated if abortion is illegal. As it has been persistently stated, abortions are performed even in clandestinity. For this reason, the Pragmatism frame includes the category of Human Rights. It is utilized as a tool to denounce that clandestine abortions kill and harm women, mentally and physically. Therefore, illegal abortion violates Women's Human Rights. The category is used in complement with the Pragmatism frame, because green scarf activists provide pragmatic suggestions (legal abortion, among the other ones that have been introduced precedingly, for instance), with the aim of amending the Women's Human Rights violations that occur when abortion is unlawful. An example of the emergence of this category within the Pragmatism frame is Fernández's quote during her discourse of 2018, when she asserted that clandestine abortions kill and harm women (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

The last category included in the Pragmatism frame is Women's Freedom. It has already been stated that interviewees spoke about Women's Freedom as something that is guaranteed to women via abortion legalization, Sex Education, and access to Contraception. Activists speak about autonomy and liberty as consequential benefits of their proposal to liberalize abortion. For example, when Fernández's pragmatic interpretation of women's Right to Autonomy was cited, she was employing the category of Women's Freedom. This category was also enounced by D'Atri when she said that no woman has ever had a kid she did not want to have (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Although, as it has been previously reported, her argument was exaggerated, D'Atri was seeking to emphasize on the notion of autonomy that corresponds to the woman who is pregnant, and on the fact that intimate choices are fundamental to women's autonomy.

## The Right to Decide (Women's Autonomy)

Last but not least, the frame that was called The Right to Decide is also one of the most important frames utilized by green scarf activists. In the legal debate on abortion, there are two rights opposed in the discussion. Namely, a woman's Right to Autonomy, and the respect for the fetus' life (Farrell, 2022, p. 9). When the woman's Right to Autonomy and the respect for the fetus' life enter in conflict, the problem should not be assessed by accepting or rejecting the aforesaid values. Instead, those values should be weighed up comparatively (Farrell, 2022, p. 10). This is the method used to define which one could be attributed a superior hierarchy (always in a given context, ponderation of rights is not generalizable).

In order to define the frame of the Right to Decide, it is important to consider how these two arguments can be understood within a spectrum of permissiveness and prohibition. These two positions will be explained by using the framework proposed by Martín Farrell in an article titled *Does A Constitutional Right to Abortion Exist? (2022)*. Martín Farrell is an Argentine Law Philosopher, who was present during the Public Audiences<sup>37</sup> on abortion legalization that were organized by the National Congress in 2018. Farrell's arguments are relevant to this thesis, because he conceptualizes ideas that are used to argue in favor of a permissive position towards abortion legalization (the one that green scarf activists advocate for). The philosopher has noted that there are two implicit extremist positions on abortion: one that believes that abortion should be banned in all cases, and one that believes that abortion should be allowed in all cases. Between the two extremes are permissive and prohibitionist standpoints (Farrell, 2022, p. 2). The concepts developed by Farrell will be introduced in the following lines, and later they will be discussed in relation to the Literature Review

On one side, the permissive position sustains that abortion should be allowed in most cases. Farrell emphasizes on the fact that abortion, even for those who defend a permissive approach, is usually considered undesirable and morally incorrect. He holds that: if abortion was considered morally good, public measures would be undertaken in order to increase the number of abortions (Farrell, 2022, p. 2). It is crucial to consider this statement, and it is clearly evident in the slogan of the green scarf movement. *Educación Sexual para Decidir, Anticonceptivos para No Abortar, Aborto Legal para No Morir*. Here, the concept of Autonomy is framed as an outcome of Sex Education. The second phrase of the slogan

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<sup>37</sup> Along with Andrea D'Atri and Ofelia Fernández.

(*Anticonceptivos para No Abortar*) explicitly demonstrates that their goal is that abortions do not happen (or at least that they happen less often). In the last phrase of the slogan (*Aborto Legal para No Morir*) they are revealing that they advocate for abortion legalization, because they consider that it could be a solution for maternal deaths that are caused by clandestine abortions. Hence, it can be identified here that the pro-abortion movement considers that abortion is undesirable. However, given the pragmatic nature of their proposal (which has already been introduced in the last section), they consider that liberalizing abortion could be ‘the lesser of two evils’.

Even though a permissive approach towards abortion legalization understands that women’s Right to Autonomy can sometimes be considered of greater relevance than the respect for the fetus’ life, Farrell argues that the Right to Abortion is not a Constitutional Right *per se*, because there are circumstances in which the woman’s Right to Autonomy does not surpass the fetus’ Right to Life (Farrell, 2022, p. 13). The author gives a ridiculous example to explain this situation: if a woman requested an abortion with the aim of winning a bet, the fetus’ Right to Life would be considered more respectable than the mother’s Right to Autonomy (Farrell, 2022, p. 3). Nonetheless, Farrell argues in his article that there are circumstances in which a woman’s Right to Autonomy can be considered of greater importance than the respect for the life of the fetus (Farrell, 2022, p. 10). For example, when the pregnancy puts the woman’s health at risk (either mental or physical). In that case, her life would be severely damaged, so, the respect for the life of the fetus during the first trimester is not considered valuable enough to compensate for the damage that could be caused to the mother (Farrell, 2022, p. 12). Another circumstance could be when the mother’s socio-economic conditions are endangered; again, in this case, the Right to Autonomy of the pregnant woman surpasses the value of respect for the life of the fetus during the first trimester (Farrell, 2022, p. 13). Two other conditions are commonly argued as situations when the mother’s Right to Autonomy can be considered superior to the respect for the life of the fetus. However, those two circumstances are categorized differently than the ones described in the previous lines. One of them is when the woman was raped. In that situation, an abortion is no longer considered morally incorrect (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). The second case is when a woman gets pregnant as a consequence of incest. The social taboo associated with incest is really widespread, as well as the social shame that derives from a pregnancy conceived in those terms (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). Furthermore, a pregnancy resulting from incest could seriously disturb the life plan of the woman (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). Farrell

suggests that these two cases have been highlighted as conditions wherein abortion is permissible because abortion is not considered morally reproachable.

On the other hand, the position held by blue scarf activists, namely, the prohibitionist approach, considers that the respect for human life is absolute, and there is no value that can enter in conflict with it so as to displace it (Farrell, 2022, p. 3). This is the reason why they oppose abortion in most cases.

A concept that emerges frequently in discussions between prohibitionist and permissive parties is that of ‘personhood’. In general, they discuss if the fetus is a person or not, and based on that, they question if that person could be aborted or not. However, Farrell notes that: ‘The discussion about whether the fetus is a person or not cannot be solved through the use of public reason<sup>38</sup>, but it is not relevant to solve it either, in order to solve the constitutional problem that is presented’ (Farrell, 2022, p. 6). In addition, ‘...the value of respect for human life can be defended even without the need to discuss if the fetus is a person or not’ (Farrell, 2022, p. 6). Later in the article, the philosopher claims that: ‘The concept of personhood is not useful to solve the problem of abortion, because it is a normative concept: whoever employs it, decides first which cases of abortion they will tolerate, and then they make the intolerance coincide with the appearance of a person’ (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). The concept of personhood is frequently present in the debate on abortion but human life can be respected regardless of whether the human life is considered a person or not (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). This is relevant to understand both movements’ discourses, because the concept of personhood was present in the dataset. Blue scarf activists sometimes seek to argue that aborting equals killing a person, because ultrasounds can show that there is a fetus, while green scarf activists hold that the fetus is not a person, usually by citing scientific arguments such as the fact that a fetus is unable to survive outside a pregnant person’s womb (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

The frame of the Right to Decide is mentioned in the Literature Review as well. For instance, Aderibigbe and Olaide (2014) discuss arguments that could be used to defend a permissive position on abortion legalization that protects the pregnant person’s Right to Autonomy. Moreover, Lowe and Page (2019) also make explicit that arguments derived from Human Rights Law are used by pro-abortion activists in order to argue in favor of abortion

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<sup>38</sup> ‘Reasons that can be accepted by those who will be obligated by them, that is to say, reasons that are mutually justifiable’ (Farrell, 2022, p. 5). This concept is associated with the principle of reciprocity, which consists of seeking fair terms of cooperation between citizens. Thus, in this case, public reason is understood as an optimal moral base on which citizens that dissent have the possibility to act collectively (Farrell, 2022, p. 5).

legalization, for example, the Right to Autonomy. Borland and Sutton (2013) also found in their study of the *Encuentros Nacionales de Mujeres* that one of the frames that was frequently mentioned by green scarf activists was Women's Autonomy.

Now, the emergence of the frame in the dataset will be analyzed. In the interview with Andrea D'Atri, the politician said that abortion legalization does not force anyone to have one. However, she emphasized: abortion restrictions certainly force women who decide to abort illegally, to undergo a clandestine and unsafe procedure that puts their life at risk (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). It is relevant to highlight this statement, because the interviewee is defending women's Right to Autonomy, by clarifying that it does not affect the liberty of those who decide not to abort. Yet, legalization provides a safe alternative to those who will abort anyways. As it has been exhibited earlier in this section, if the mother's life is at risk, the respect for the fetus' life during the first trimester can be considered less valuable than the woman's Right to Autonomy (Farrell, 2022, p. 12). Later, D'Atri added: 'If you consider that [the fetus] is a [human] life, and you are against aborting; perfect, nobody will question you. It is your life, your pregnancy, your decision. In the same way, it is the life, the pregnancy, and the decision of the woman that decides to abort [indeed]. Therefore, I believe that the [objective] is guaranteeing that those women, who [will] make that choice [regardless], are able to do it without putting their lives at risk, their health, or their fertility... Through practices that are... Well, terribly invasive and dangerous' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Andrea D'Atri is reaffirming that abortion legalization will not affect the liberty of people whose morals reject abortion. These arguments belong to a category that is included in the Autonomy frame: Women's Freedom. The Right to Autonomy is a freedom that is granted to citizens in the 33rd Article of the Argentine National Constitution (Farrell, 2022, p. 9). Particularly, the category of Women's Freedom emphasizes on the fact that a freedom does not create an obligation to a third person. Green scarf activists use this category to demonstrate that if Women's Right to Decide<sup>39</sup> is recognized, the rest of the population would not be forced to do something they do not want to do, or that they do not agree with. Framing abortion legalization as a liberal proposal is a strategic technique of argumentation for green scarf activists. It allows them to argue that people whose moral values disapprove abortion practices would not be influenced by the objective of their project. They would be able to preserve their values, while respecting the decisions of those who have different ideas. It is strategic, because they suggest an instance of mutual respect, in which both parties' freedom

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<sup>39</sup> To have an abortion.

of choice is granted. This strategy creates an advantage for green scarf activists, because it allows them to demonstrate that they do not seek to impose their views (or values) on citizens who disagree. Ofelia Fernández mentions this category in her 2018 public speech. In a part of the discourse she claims enthusiastically: ‘We have decided to conquer our liberty’ (Fernández, 2018). As it has been extensively explained throughout this thesis, green scarf activism’s goal is to provide Safe, Free and Legal Abortion in Argentina. Besides the specific and empirical objective, the movement seeks to create a notion of denied liberty that belongs to the women who are not allowed to have an abortion lawfully. The reason why Fernández enunciated that quote is because she sought to represent this idea of negated liberty, and she also intended to state that, now, women will not negotiate their freedom. Previously in this chapter, a statement made by Fernández was cited: ‘[Women] who are luckier and can pay for a safe abortion remain [then] associated with an imposed taboo and a forced trauma –I say it again–, because of breaking a contract they have never signed<sup>40</sup>, because of choosing the life that they want<sup>41</sup>. That should never make us fear, however, we fear many things’ (Fernández, 2018). Here, the legislator is trying to demonstrate that women are being forced to accept a lifestyle that is guided by values that they do not necessarily share. This claim is important, because it is related to what was said before about the strategy of the category of Women’s Freedom. Fernández is denouncing that women who want (or need) to have an abortion are refused their Right to Autonomy, while those who think that abortion is morally reprehensible are indirectly imposing their personal ideas on the rest of the population. The category of Women’s Freedom is strategic in this statement, because it reveals that the proposal of the green scarf movement does not affect the moral principles of people who consider that respect for human life is absolute. On the contrary, the prohibitionist approach limits, indeed, the freedom of the people who consider that having an abortion is occasionally permissible. At the end of the public speech of 2018 Ofelia Fernández also mentioned the aforementioned category, she stated: ‘...I will not construct a fairer society by talking about myself. I will do it by working for the freedom of others. Because the only thing that is greater than the love for freedom, is the hate to the ones that take it away’ (Fernández, 2018). The legislator is accusing prohibitionists of negating freedom to women who decide to abort.

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<sup>40</sup> ‘A contract that they have never signed’: Fernández is referring to the prohibition to have an abortion legally. The contract that they have never signed is the contract that forces them to accept the prohibition without their consent.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Choosing the life that we want’ represents the liberty to decide to have a legal abortion.



### **Third Chapter: Blue scarf collective action frames and strategies**

In the following Chapter, the most recurrent and relevant collective action frames employed by blue scarf activists in the dataset will be presented. Similarly to the last Chapter, the names that were given to the frames were not used by the interviewees, they are labels that were created according to the concepts that have been developed and discussed throughout the entire project. The frames that will be studied here are: Moralism, Personhood, Prohibitionism, Neoconservatism and Democratization.

#### **Moralism**

One of the frames identified while analyzing blue scarf activists' discourse was Moralism. It was explained in the previous Chapter that prohibitionist positions towards abortion legalization conceive human life as an absolute value (Farrell, 2022, p. 3). That is to say, when a person's Right to life is involved, every other Right is consequently underweighted by the value of human life. In the case of abortion, prohibitionists attribute the Right to Life to the fetus. Blue scarf activists hold a prohibitionist position towards abortion legalization. Absolutist defenders of the value of human life usually base their arguments against abortion legalization on moral principles. Farrell argues in the article cited in the Second Chapter that 'abortion is -in many cases- something bad, something morally bad' (Farrell, 2022, p. 2). The author claims that an abortion is considered undesirable in most circumstances, even for those who hold a permissive position (Farrell, 2022, p. 2). Thus, the main difference between permissive and prohibitionist positions is that, for the permissive position abortions are sometimes morally admissible (because the Right to Autonomy, or the Right to Life of the mother could be considered of greater importance), while for prohibitionist positions abortions are never morally admissible. This clarification is useful to understand that morality is always involved in the discussion on abortion legalization. Regardless of the side of the debate on which anyone stands.

Considering that blue scarf activists represent the prohibitionist side of the debate, it is accurate to state that their morality regards human life as sacred<sup>42</sup>. Otherwise, they would not have a motivation to consider that the value of human life is absolute. This morality is

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<sup>42</sup> The concept of sacredness was created by reflecting on the definitions found on: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sacred>

casually compatible with that of Christian believers, who decisively oppose abortion liberalization (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 12).

The frame was named Moralism, because in this project it is argued that neoconservative parties (of which it was spoken about in the Introduction) utilize their morality as a political strategy to distance themselves from left-wing parties (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 16). The term was specifically inspired by the following statement: ‘Moreover, while all governments leave dissatisfactions and while the last round of electoral dominance has been that of the left, moralism becomes the political fuel of the right’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 16).

Neoconservative parties seek to attribute themselves an ‘ethical’<sup>43</sup> reputation, in an effort to attract voters dissatisfied by former administrations. Past administrations in Argentina were dominated by left-wing parties, some of them accused of corruption. Thus, right-wing parties enjoy the possibility to separate themselves from the corrupt reputation that could be easily associated with left-wing parties (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 16). García Bossio and Semán (2021) argue that this strategy takes place in a historical context in which the gender agenda has become a fundamental part of the political identity of the left, ‘something that had not happened in such a decisive, clear and homogeneous way’ (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15). Hence, right-wing parties also come to represent voters who oppose the gender agenda advocated by feminist and LGBTQI+ groups. This is particularly attractive to evangelical and other Christian actors, given that Christian believers have historically opposed the social progress advocated by feminist and LGBTQI+ activists, such as same-sex marriage, for instance (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 12). Moreover, right-wing parties have succeeded in attracting evangelical politicians, who identify themselves with the moral values mentioned above, and who also connect right-wing parties with popular sectors. Historically, right-wing parties were not successful among popular voters. However, evangelical actors come to mend this issue, because their religion is cross-sectional; namely, they are present among different socio-economic classes and ethnicities in Latin America (Corrales, 2020, p. 13).

In sum, Moralism was identified as the strategy employed by neoconservative (right-wing) parties, through which they seek to attribute themselves an ‘ethical’ reputation, and to defend values that conceive human life as sacred, and abortion as a murder and/or a

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<sup>43</sup> The term ethical is understood here as an adjective that qualifies something as morally right (Cambridge, 2023).

sin<sup>44</sup>. Despite the obviousness, it is relevant to clarify that conceptions of ‘ethical’ and/or ‘unethical’ are not universal, but subject to diverse cultural (and/or religious) interpretations.

Three categories were included in this frame: Partisan Politics, Christianity, and Fundamentalism. Each one of them will be defined successively. First, the category of Partisan Politics, like the homonymous category defined in the previous Chapter, refers to arguments that are associated with political parties. The second category is Christianity, which includes claims that have to do with the Christian creed. Lastly, the category of Moral Fundamentalism was identified. This category has to do with an argument presented by Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan (2019) that has already been mentioned in the Introduction and First Chapter: ‘to hold a vision of citizenship that can only be based on religious precepts, (...) would be the quintessence of fundamentalism’ (Arguedas Ramírez and Morgan, 2019, p. 437).

In the interview that was made to Cynthia Hotton in 2021, she was asked the reasons why she is so compromised with defending the value of human life. The interviewee responded that she believed that killing a person (a fetus) is ‘sanguinary and cruel’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). She also claimed that being in favor of abortion legalization, which, according to her, means being against the protection of human life, is something that has to do with the dignity of a person (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Hotton implicitly said that supporting abortion decriminalization is an indignity. The term dignity represents a conception of what is considered respectful behavior (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Cruelty, at the same time, is associated with being ‘extremely unkind and causing pain intentionally’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Both of these terms have to do with individual or collective cultural perceptions of good and bad. The interviewee did not provide further reasons why she believes that the value of human life needs to be indisputably defended. Therefore, the analysis provided here claims that these two statements are associated with the frame of Moralism. Because, as explained above, neoconservative political actors seek to represent the ‘ethical’ electoral alternative. Regarding abortion, in particular, their<sup>45</sup> objective is to reproduce this idea of ethics, by showing absolute respect for the fetus’ Right to Life. In a part of the interview, Hotton claimed that permissive positions towards abortion legalization are not based on scientific arguments (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Her principal justification was that science evidences that a fetus is alive. However, the interviewee made the mistake of

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<sup>44</sup> The concept of sinfulness was created by reflecting on the definitions found on:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sinful>

<sup>45</sup> The interviewee’s, for instance.

saying: ‘When a heart is beating, when a person, a human being has DNA... That is what science says. So, what is being debated, is not what science says, what is being debated is where do you morally stand’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). She was trying to affirm that science is on their side because it proves that fetuses are alive. Nonetheless, it has already been extensively explained in this thesis that permissive positions might consider an abortion legal, even while recognizing that the fetus is alive. So, the fact that the fetus is alive does not overthrow the counterposition’s reasoning. It is claimed here that she made a mistake, because the moralist frame is a double-edged strategy. This interpretation will be explained shortly. After Hotton made this statement, she was asked: ‘So, according to you, the question of life is a moral one...’<sup>46</sup> (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Hotton responded: ‘No, life is not a moral question. (...) What happens is that those who are in favor of abortion legalization, do not want to debate science, nor life. In fact, they begin a legal debate, and they debate about the desires of people, and their rights. Why? Because they cannot discuss science, because science evidences that there is life from the moment of conception’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This is the reason why we argue that the Moralism frame is contradictory: because it has the power to attract citizens who share the same (or a similar) morality<sup>47</sup>, but it is not effective in attracting undecided actors. Lowe and Page (2019) claim that blue scarf activists employ legal rhetoric as a means to frame their moral fundamentalism as a legal matter, with the aim of creating a sense of sympathy among people who are not drawn to the blue scarf movement by other strategies, such as moralism (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 138). This is the reason why it is argued that she made a mistake, because, in fact, her position is a moralist one. Nevertheless, the diplomat visibly realized in that moment that a moral basis could be easily rejected by potential adherents to the movement who need empirically-based information in order to consider that the movement’s objectives are credible (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Evidently, when Hotton assumed that she had affirmed the moral nature of her ideology, she unsaid herself quickly and affirmed that the question of respecting life is not a moral one. It could also be suggested that this is the reason why she interrupted the interviewer. The discussion about empirical and scientific information will be continued in the fifth section of this Chapter.

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<sup>46</sup> The interviewee interrupted the interviewer repeatedly, including in this situation.

<sup>47</sup> While right-wing parties have the advantage related to corruption that was explained before, this moralist identity might as well be negative for their political reputation. Mainly because they support one particular way of thinking, that not everyone might share. This issue is mostly related to issues regarding the gender agenda. *Ergo*, neoconservative parties might represent an alternative to corrupt administrations, but they also depend exclusively on voters who share similar conservative moral values, or voters who consider that gender equality is less relevant than fighting corruption.

Regarding the category of Christianity, Rezinovsky announced in the public discourse of 2020: ‘I will not speak from [my religious perspective], although I could perfectly do that, because we live in a free country (...)’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). This quote belongs to the code of ‘Religious Freedom’, specifically, because the activist is defending her Right to invoke her religion as a valid argument to be against the legalization of abortion. This argument coincides with Lowe and Page’s (2019) claim that they frame their moral arguments as legal issues (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 138). In the Introduction, it was cited that evangelical groups in Latin America have constructed a unified political identity which aims to protect religious freedom and Christian sexual morality (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 6). Dina Rezinovsky, particularly, is an evangelical leader within the party ‘Juntos por el Cambio’. In this sense, it can be said that the Congresswoman is basing her position against abortion decriminalization on her Christian beliefs, and is appealing to her Right to Religious Freedom with the objective of employing a legal rhetoric to support her argument. In the interview with Rezinovsky that took place in June of 2021, the Congresswoman said: ‘We all have some sort of influence, based on our faith’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Although the interviewee explained multiple times during the interview that she does not only argue from her religious point of view, she did recognize that her position against abortion legalization has an influence that is associated with her religious beliefs. Nonetheless, Rezinovsky gave other arguments that, according to her, had nothing to do with Christianity. And she explicitly stated that she preferred to discuss in secular terms, because it was difficult otherwise to debate with those who have no faith (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Finally, it could also be claimed that, as noted by Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira (2011): although neoconservative political actors seek to create a secular political discourse, in the case of abortion: by appealing to the fetus’ Right to Life, these arguments are often employed by ‘the local Catholic hierarchy and the most conservative religious groups’ (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 29). Revealing that the Rights that they defend might be motivated by religious ways of thinking.

The category of Moral Fundamentalism emerged in the dataset. In several opportunities Dina Rezinovsky framed her individual morals as the national morality, or as the ‘ethical’ one. For instance, the politician said in her congressional discourse of 2020 that she could provide Christian arguments as justifications against abortion legalization, ‘above all, because our Constitution, like the other Constitutions of the West, are based on Judeo-Christian faith’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). However plausible that statement can be, the Argentine National Constitution acknowledges the Right to Freedom of Worship in the 14th

Article (Infoleg, 2023). In the positive sense, the Argentine citizenry is granted the Right to be religious and to live by religious values (e.g.: oppose abortion). Yet, a negative approach suggests that no one is forced to respect foreign morals, whereas everyone deserves the freedom to moral individuality<sup>48</sup>. Considering that Rezinovsky began by saying: ‘above all’, it could be interpreted as if she suggested that all citizens should respect ‘Judeo-Christian’ values<sup>49</sup>. The Congresswoman concluded by saying: ‘And if God bothers you so much, remove him from the Constitution’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). Implying that Christian values are intrinsic to the National Constitution. She invalidated the Right to Freedom of Worship through that judgment. Although it is stated in the 2nd Article of the National Constitution that ‘the federal government supports the Catholic Apostolic Roman cult’ (Infoleg, 2023), citizens are not required to support it as well. The Right to Religious Freedom could be a citizen’s individual reason to morally reject the practice of abortion. However, this Right cannot be considered a public reason to impede abortion legalization. Therefore, Rezinovsky’s argumentation appears deprived of credibility. In Argentina, a person’s individual religious morals do not constrain the freedom of the rest. Rezinovsky was presenting the Christian morality as the National one. This is the reason why it is claimed here that this part of her discourse falls into the category of Moral Fundamentalism. Public morality is defined by the populace (i.e.: voters), and it is debated in Congress. Hence, assuming that one’s individual moral values are shared by the rest of the country is inaccurate.

Rezinovsky employed the Fundamentalism category again later in the discourse. She said: ‘[I represent] a majority of women that are all around the country’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). Rezinovsky affirmed that the majority of women in Argentina are against the legalization of abortion. However, she did not provide any empirical evidence that supports this claim. At the end of the speech, Rezinovsky concluded: ‘Today, we might be a minority in this Congress, but we are a majority in the country. And this majority will not easily forget what you vote for today’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). Once again, the politician ensures that blue scarf activists represent the majority of Argentina but does not prove it with empirical data. Hence, this argument is not empirically credible.

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<sup>48</sup> Following this line of thought, abortion could be legalized even if there are Argentine Christian citizens who conceive abortion as a sin.

<sup>49</sup> In the sense that everyone must respect the National Constitution. Since she claims that the Constitution is based on those values, Rezinovsky is implying that all citizens are indirectly obliged to accept Christian values.



The last category that was identified within the Moralism frame is Partisan Politics. Given the political nature of the debate on abortion decriminalization, and the multiple strategies that both pro- and anti-abortion activists have adopted in order to attract potential political sympathizers, it was predictable that partisan arguments were going to be present in both movements' discourses. Especially because our interviewees are all politicians who participate in institutional politics and belong to established political parties. This category was included in this frame, because it is considered to be a part of the 'ethical' image that neoconservative political actors seek to create.

Rezinovksy mentioned in 2020 the indigenous blue scarf activists that marched 'for life' in their native provinces. The Congresswoman spoke about these women with the aim of honoring their courage to mobilize, even despite the adversities of the situation of extreme poverty in which they live. After celebrating the compromise of these activists, and of other activists who belong to extremely poor communities, Rezinovsky said: 'Excuse me for the effusive manner in which I say this, but I am frustrated, because I know that Congresspeople are being bribed. I am frustrated, because I know that Congresspeople are being bribed to [change their partisan affiliation]. I am sorry.' (Rezinovsky, 2020). Rezinovsky accused green scarf activists of bribery. However, this accusation cannot be verified. She is also claiming that abortion legalization is a matter of partisan and political interest, not a social one. The Congresswoman repeated this accusation in the interview conducted in 2021. Rezinovsky reported: '[Pro-abortion lobbyists from other countries] come to countries like ours [to invest their money]. I know Congresspeople that have been offered 150.000 US dollars in order to change their vote' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This affirmation is also meaningless and hard to prove empirically. Similar denunciations will be analyzed later in this Chapter.

## **Personhood**

The frame Personhood was defined according to Farrell's claim that this concept (personhood) is not functional to solve the problem of abortion legalization (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). This frame is important to take into account when analyzing blue scarf activists' discourse, because they often seek to represent fetuses as persons, and they support their arguments on this interpretation. In the First Chapter it was explained that the concept of human life is not a biological concept, but a social and/or juridical one (Kornblihtt, 2018). Therefore, its definition depends upon cultural conceptions. The conceptualization of Human Life is considered one of the categories present in the Personhood frame, because blue scarf

activists use the word ‘life’ to refer to human’s lives exclusively. Within the category of Human Life two codes were established: ‘Conception’ and ‘Sacredness of Human Life’<sup>50</sup>. ‘Conception’ includes arguments against abortion legalization in which blue scarf activists affirm that life starts at the moment of conception. The ‘Sacredness of Human Life’ code was created to identify arguments in which blue scarf activists explicitly defend human life as an absolute value.

Blue scarf activists frequently employ a term that they have created: ‘unborn child’ (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 31). Anti-abortion activists use this term as a strategy to frame fetuses as children that are murdered when abortions are performed. Nonetheless, as stated formerly, the concept of personhood is inadequate when discussing abortion legalization, because it can be utilized arbitrarily (Farrell, 2022, p. 11). Anti-abortion activists employ this concept with the aim of claiming that fetuses always<sup>51</sup> have to be granted their Right to Life.

In the interview that was made to Cynthia Hotton for the TV Channel ‘LN+’, the interviewee employed the Personhood frame multiple times. At the beginning of the interview she claimed: ‘I have always been in favor of life, and in favor of both lives’ (Hotton, 2019). This claim was identified within the category of Human Life. As explained in the Introduction, blue scarf activists speak about ‘saving two lives’, because they argue that if abortion is illegal, abortions cannot be performed, *ergo*, two lives are saved: the life of the mother and the life of the fetus. Nevertheless, this proposal is not based on empirical information. Many statistics evidence that abortions are performed clandestinely (REDAAS, 2018). This argument is not potentially credible, because it is based on suppositions that lack empirical support (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Later, Hotton stated: ‘There is life from the moment of conception, and that cannot be denied. (...) [This has been proven] by science’ (Hotton, 2019). This statement belongs to the ‘Conception’ code. Hotton is revealing that she believes that life begins at the moment of conception. Apparently, the politician considers that this argument supports the prohibition of abortion legalization, because it confirms the claim that the fetus is alive. Blue scarf activists believe that the main reason why abortion must not be legal is because fetuses are human beings. However, as explained above, in Argentina abortions can be permitted even while acknowledging the fetus’ vitality. Nonetheless, Hotton’s claim is a powerful strategy addressed to actual or potential

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<sup>50</sup> This code is related to what was explained in the previous section about the sacredness that blue scarf activists attribute to human life.

<sup>51</sup> As noted in the last section, blue scarf activists consider that human life is sacred.

constituents to the movement whose morals consider that human life is sacred (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). People whose morals regard human life as sacred would never morally admit any type of abortion. Hence, the countermovement's arguments are insignificant to them, because they do not negotiate the supremacy of the value of human life. Proving that fetuses are alive through scientific evidence is a strategic way of persuading citizens who morally reject any type of unnatural termination of human life. It gives blue scarf activists the possibility to create culturally believable arguments by citing scientific and secular sources that are widely trusted (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 619).

In the interview conducted with Hotton in 2021, she said: 'Well, I am in favor of life, because there is life from the moment of conception. And I think that, let's say, us, who are in favor of life, we always think that at no point of life (...), anyone can make a decision over someone else's life' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This argument belongs to both the 'Conception' and 'Sacredness of Human Life' codes. Hotton explains in the last quote that they believe that no person has the Right to decide over the life of another 'person' (a fetus). Subsequently, Hotton ensured that the fetus is a human being, because it has its own DNA, and that this is the reason why another person cannot take a decision over its life, because it is 'a different human being' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This argument is related to the one that was highlighted in the last paragraph. The diplomat is strategically supporting her argument with scientific information, so as to make it more credible.

Dina Rezinovsky employed the Personhood frame in the interview conducted in 2021 as well. She was asked the principal arguments that support her position against abortion legalization and she answered: 'First of all, the potentiality of life... We have to defend life, because life is life. [The fetus] is a person, a human being, that will have their story and, despite the tough moment that the woman might be going through, I fervently believe that a child can bring happiness to the world and to the woman who feels bad' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This quote belongs to the 'Sacredness of Human Life' code. Rezinovsky is affirming that the fetus is a person. She is also claiming that fetuses must not be killed because the value of life is absolute ('life is life'). Both Hotton and Rezinovsky also affirmed that fetuses are persons, because ultrasounds can show that they have hearts, for instance (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

## Prohibitionism

The Prohibitionism frame is associated with the definition that has already been exposed in the last Chapter, in which Farrell (2022) argues that people who have a prohibitionist position in relation to abortion legalization consider that the value of human life is absolute (Farrell, 2022, p. 3). Hence, no other Right can be considered to be more relevant than the fetus' Right to Life. They attribute the Right to Life to the fetus that is inside the pregnant person's womb. For this reason, they oppose abortion legalization in almost all situations. Given that blue scarf activists take a prohibitionist approach, it was realized that the interviewees presented several arguments with the aim of justifying the prohibition of abortion. Furthermore, they proposed policy projects that they considered achievable, and could hypothetically replace abortion legalization. Alternatives to Abortion was considered one of the categories that emerged within the Prohibitionism frame. The second category is Women's Health. Blue scarf interviewees asserted many times that abortion is dangerous, and that it has negative consequences on women's physical and mental health. Thus, they consider that legalizing abortion could have a negative impact on women's health. This category might be an appropriation of the countermovement's strategy, because green scarf activists also claim to be compromised with the protection of women's health. In this sense, blue scarf activists create meanings that could potentially suggest that they also care about women's health. It also gives them another argument to justify why abortion should not be legalized.

Cynthia Hotton employed this frame in the interview that was broadcasted in 2019. The TV host, who is in favor of abortion legalization, asked Hotton how she would feel if she lived in a world where everyone was forced to abort (Hotton, 2019). The TV host asked this question, because when abortion is illegal, people who want or need to abort are not legally allowed to do it. The opposite situation would be the one that the host presented: a country where everyone must abort (that is to say, Freedom of Choice is restricted). Hotton responded: 'We are women and we have to learn to be responsible. [The previous discussion to the debate on abortion legalization] has to do with education. I mean, I am married and (...) I do not have 20 kids, I have 3. I learned how to take care of myself.' (Hotton, 2019). This sentence is related to the Prohibitionism frame, because the interviewee argues that, if women learned about reproduction, unwanted pregnancies would not happen. Thus, legalizing abortion would not be necessary. Hotton believes that abortion would be unnecessary if effective measures were undertaken to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Nevertheless, education on reproduction might be available, but a woman could get raped, or the contraceptive

method could fail, and in those cases, aborting could be an option. The diplomat is backing up her position against abortion legalization, by affirming that education has the potential to eradicate unwanted pregnancies. Following that reasoning, it would be irrelevant to consider legalizing abortion, because unwanted pregnancies would not exist. This argument could be credible if Hotton provided empirical evidence that demonstrates that unwanted pregnancies do not occur in countries where abortion is illegal and sex education is widespread and effective. However, Hotton does not cite any empirical data that supports this idea. Hotton mentioned this argument again in the interview of 2021. She said that the State must be present to help women avoid unwanted pregnancies, but abortion can never be an option, because it implies terminating a person's life (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

In the interview that was conducted to Rezinovsky in 2021 she stated: 'My position is against abortion, against, totally, in all of its forms...' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Then, she declared: 'I am telling you what I would do. I mean, if it happened to me. I beg to God it does not happen, but if I were raped and pregnant as a consequence, I would not abort' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Thereafter, she said that she is against abortion legalization, because: 'It is not something that I would do, I do not encourage it, because History has shown me that [abortion] does not solve any problem' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). The Congresswoman was suggesting that she is against abortion liberalization because it contradicts her morals. She justified her position by saying that there are countries where populations are aging, as well as countries where down syndrome is disappearing, because abortion is legal (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). However, she did not provide the sources where she got this information from. Nor did she specify what countries she was speaking about. At the end, Rezinovsky concluded: 'I do not understand [people who decide to abort], because I have a different education, because I am optimistic, because I believe that [aborting] is not a solution. However, I am not allowed to judge the woman who makes the decision [to abort]. Me, [as a governor], I would not endorse it.' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Rezinovsky made clear that the reason why she is against legalizing abortion is because she considers that it is morally incorrect (in her words: 'because I have a different education' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022)). Although she attempted to justify her position by drawing on arguments that are not associated with morality, the arguments were weak. The empirical examples that she gave were inaccurate and unlikely credible, because she made affirmations, but did not provide the sources of the information that she was citing. Being against abortion for moral reasons is valid. Nonetheless, in an effort to dissociate the prohibitionist rationale from its perceived link to moralism, she sought to approach the debate from another angle. Despite the valuable

and strategic nature of that intention, the interviewee has not particularly employed it in the most effective manner. As argued in the former section, moralism is a double-edged strategy, because it is only attractive to citizens who have a defined morality. Rezinovsky's arguments, in this case, would be more culturally credible if she stuck to the moral reasons why she considers that legalizing abortion is wrong. Otherwise, Rezinovsky should be more cautious when making any empirical claim. The passage was considered a part of the Prohibitionism frame, because it can be interpreted as an illustration of her prohibitionist stance.

Regarding the presence of the category of Alternatives to Abortion in the dataset, both activists suggested possibilities that, according to them, could hypothetically eliminate the need to legalize abortion. For instance, in the interview of 2021, Hotton said: 'There are situations that are tough, and I believe that society must be able to respond, so that [unwanted] pregnancies do not occur. So, either through Sex Education, or through an integral contention, [society must prevent that economic problems become] a cause of abortion' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). In the Introduction, Benford and Snow (2000) were cited: they theorized that for arguments to be credible, the frames must be consistent (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 619). That is to say, arguments must not be transparently contradictory (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). In the TV interview of 2019, Hotton was asked if she supported Integral Sex Education; she responded that she did not (Hotton, 2019). The interviewee said that she endorses Sex Education, but not the particular policy that is valid at present. She argued that it is inefficient, because unwanted pregnancies still happen (Hotton, 2019). In fact, Sex Education in Argentina could be inefficient, but there are other variables that influence the eventuality of unwanted pregnancies. For example, as mentioned before: rape and/or failure of the contraceptive method. Hotton's argument seems transparently contradictory, because she is proposing a policy that already exists. Still, she claims that it does not help prevent unwanted pregnancies. According to Hotton, unwanted pregnancies exist because the Sex Education policy is ineffective, not because there might be other variables that alter the outcome. This way of justifying a ban on abortion is incoherent and controversial. However functional the current policy is, Hotton is not proving its ineffectiveness, she is just deliberating that it is ineffective because unwanted pregnancies still exist. Hotton should provide factual information about her accusation, and be aware of other variables that might affect the viability of the project. Otherwise the information appears scarce and defenseless. These arguments were placed in the category of Alternatives to Abortion, because Hotton suggested methods through which the government could help people avoid unwanted pregnancies and abortions thereby.



Dina Rezinovsky employed the aforementioned category in the congressional debate of 2020: ‘From 2018 until now, more than 50 projects have not been debated (...). Projects that supported: the pregnant woman, prevention of vulnerable pregnancies, as well as eradication of poverty. They have not been debated. You are not interested, you only want to offer abortion’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). Here, the Congresswoman is denouncing that Congresspeople who oppose abortion legalization (including her) have presented legal projects proposing alternatives to abortion. Yet, she claims that they were not debated, because the congressional majority is not interested in considering any alternative measures to avoid abortion decriminalization. This part of the discourse belongs to the category of Alternatives to Abortion, because the politician is complaining about the projects that were ignored in Congress. Rezinovsky reports that abortion legalization is being enforced by the presidential political party (Frente de Todos), which constitutes the greatest portion of the Congress. In the interview of 2021, Rezinovsky also used the category of Alternatives to Abortion to justify abortion prohibition. For example, she said that the State should accompany women who are going through a tough situation, they should not offer her the option to abort (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). In the same interview, Rezinovsky was asked how she applied her ‘pro-life’ militancy to her congressional duties. She said that since 2019, she has been presenting multiple projects. She said that she was about to reach 100 of them. Some of those projects were related to adoption, and were addressed to women who decide not to abort; other projects proposed extending access to contraception, etc. The Congresswoman said that about 70 of those projects proposed possible alternatives that gave women options to avoid having an abortion (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

In the interview conducted to Cynthia Hotton in June of 2021, she was saying that there is a lot of misinformation coming from people who support abortion legalization (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). She argued that, for example, no one talks about the serious physical and psychological sequels that abortions leave on women’s bodies (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). This argument belongs to the Women’s Health category. Hotton explains that abortions can hurt women, both mentally and physically. In the interview that was conducted for this project, Dina Rezinovsky spoke about rape, abortion, and mental health (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Rezinovsky noted: ‘An abortion does not solve a rape. The rape has already happened, and you will remember it for the rest of your life. [You will also remember killing your child for the rest of your life], because the baby has 50% of your genes’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Although this claim appears to be very violent, the interviewee implied that if

someone aborts, after being raped, they will still get serious mental health damages, because they have not only been raped, they have also killed their child (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

### **Neoconservatism**

As noted in the Introduction, neoconservatism is the term used in this project to describe contemporary political groups and actors that hold a conservative ideology, and whose values reject abortion decriminalization, as well as claims from the LGBTQI+ agenda (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020). These political groups are influenced by Evangelicals in particular, and by Christians in general (Campos Machado and Vaggione, 2020, p. 6). These groups represent blue scarf activists, and many of them have created political parties that participate in elections (García Bossio and Semán, 2021). Cynthia Hotton's (one of the activists that was interviewed for the project) neoconservative party: 'Frente NOS' sought to represent the evangelical and anti-abortion legalization vote in the presidential elections of 2019 (García Bossio and Semán, 2021, p. 15).

Neoconservatism was identified among the frames that were employed by blue scarf activists in the dataset. Namely, this frame was used by the interviewees when they made explicit their neoconservative position regarding abortion legalization. That is to say, they employed arguments against abortion liberalization that are associated with conservative values. The three categories that were defined in this frame are: Traditionalism, Gender Ideology and Heteronormativity. The category of Traditionalism has to do with the 'belief in following traditional ideas and ways of doing things' (Cambridge, 2023). For instance, this category was established with the aim of highlighting when activists spoke about traditions, and why following them could benefit society. Gender Ideology is the concept that has already been explained thoroughly in this project. The category was created to group statements in which interviewees framed issues concerning the feminist and LGBTQI+ agenda as ideological rather than empirically-based or scientific (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020). The concept of Heteronormativity refers to: the 'suggesting or believing that heterosexual relationships are normal or right and that men and women have naturally different roles' (Cambridge, 2023). In contrast to this belief, feminist and LGBTQI+ advocates intend to raise awareness on sexual diversity, aiming that society will increasingly acknowledge it, and conceive gender as non-binary. Furthermore, advocates of gender and sexual diversity oppose the notion that men and women have naturally diverse roles that are linked to their biological sex. This category identifies when interviewees speak about gender roles, heterosexuality,

and/or motherhood as women's natural inclination (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 141). One last category was defined based on an argument presented by Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, (2020): 'Examples of *noninstitutional micro-level* backlash include micro-resistances by actors who operate in the final stages of the policy implementation process (e.g., doctors, judges, or civil servants). These resistance actions involve brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental hostilities, intentional or unintentional, resulting from prejudices and conservative attitudes toward members of minorities' (Pérez Bentacur and Rocha-Carpiuc, 2020, p. 14). The category was named: Verbal Backlash.

Cynthia Hotton employed the category of Traditionalism in the interview of 2019. She was not speaking about abortion specifically, but her statement is related to the neoconservative ideology, and to that political identity: one of the characteristics of neoconservative political actors is that they reject the feminist and LGBTQI+ agenda. Hotton argued that prioritizing abortion legalization shadows other relevant topics of public interest, such as gender equality in the workplace, and other women's issues (Hotton, 2019). The TV host asked Hotton about the marriage equality Law that was passed in Argentina in 2010. The host asked her about her opinions on the bill, given that marriage equality is linked to gender equality, because not all women are heterosexual, nor cisgender (Hotton, 2019). After an extensive argument in which Hotton explained why she opposed same-sex marriage legalization in 2010, the diplomat remarked: 'I opposed that the union was called marriage. Simply, to differentiate that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. I understand that there can be love between people of the same sex, maybe they are more than two. Well, what I am saying is that there are institutions that can be created out of love. But, I oppose that the union is called marriage, simply, because I believe that the union between a man and a woman should have its own identity. And that is what I supported at that moment.' (Hotton, 2019). Hotton is explaining that she does not condemn homosexual love. However, she does not consider that the legal name for same-sex marriage should be the same as for heterosexual marriage. This statement was considered traditionalist, because Hotton is reluctant to understand that the traditional term for heterosexual marriage can also be used with a contemporary connotation. This argument also falls into the category of Heteronormativity.

The category of Gender Ideology was employed by Hotton in the same interview that was cited above. During the TV program she said that at the OAS (Organization of the American States), where she works, the administration is compromised with issues of gender equality, as well as with other ones of similar nature (Hotton, 2019). The politician explained

that, recently, the directives had summoned employees to an assembly on gender equality. Hotton reported, though, that these meetings were ineffective, because she had not seen any improvement of gender equality at the OAS in the last three years (Hotton, 2019). Later, she also talked about meetings on abortion that she had attended, and explained that in many cases, the information that was handed out was contradictory (Hotton, 2019). Hotton said that, once, she received a brochure on juvenile pregnancies, which, according to her, included multiple definitions of adolescence and childhood. Thus, she claimed that concepts of adolescent and infantile pregnancies were unspecific (Hotton, 2019). The economist ensured that this information was public and that anyone could check it out (Hotton, 2019). It can be identified that Hotton considers that the position of the OAS regarding issues of gender equality is not consistent, nor credible. The conception of the diplomat is associated with an argument that has already been reviewed in this project. Neoconservative groups consider that international organizations such as the UN are ‘global elites’ that support what they call gender ideology (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 3). Through this strategy, blue scarf activists delegitimize the powerful influence that international organizations have on the international debate. Hotton’s statements are related to the concept of Gender Ideology, because she is specifically pointing out the deficiencies of the given information. She is also empirically backing up her claim, by saying that the information is public and that it can be accessed by anyone. Her argument appears to be credible. She consistently supported her belief that the information provided by the OAS is uncertain. Nonetheless, after that discussion, Hotton claimed that international organizations, like the OAS, are pressured by external institutions that support gender ideology and invest in lobbying. Hotton assured that abortion liberalization is endorsed by NGOs, because they are affected by powerful lobbying interests (Hotton, 2019). This accusation turned out to be weak. The host asked Hotton to name the organizations that she was denouncing, and the interviewee did not respond.

The economist employed this category a second time during the TV broadcast. The host commented that women who do not share Hotton’s ideology might feel violated by a State that does not respect their individual liberty to abort, because they consider that the fetus is a part of their bodies (Hotton, 2019). Hotton replied: ‘I will begin with the word that you used: you said that women ‘believe’ that, let’s say, it is a part of their body. It is not a part of their body. That being has a DNA that is different.’ (Hotton, 2019). In this quote, Hotton seeks to contradict the argument that having an abortion is an individual choice, because she sustains that the fetus is a different person, thus, the pregnant person does not have the right to decide over the course of the fetus’ life. She emphasized on the word ‘believe’, with the

aim of invalidating the reasoning of the green scarf movement. Namely, Hotton framed the permissive position as a belief, rather than a valid juridical stance.

A code that was included in the category of Gender Ideology is ‘Cooptation of Feminist Arguments’. This category was created, because it has been identified that in several circumstances, interviewees employed arguments related to gender equality, with the aim of controverting the position of green scarf feminists in relation to abortion liberalization. This appropriation mechanism attributes foreign meanings to feminist frames. For this reason, it was named ‘cooptation’. This argument will be developed more comprehensively with references to the dataset afterwards. The code is a potential strategic approach that aims at framing feminists as hypocritical (blue scarf activists disregard their arguments and label them as contradictory), and it could also be a way of interpellating potential constituents to the movement who are compromised with gender equality, but do not support abortion legalization. It is a strategy addressed at potential constituents, because green scarf activism tends to be linked to feminism. Feminists are improbable adherents to the blue scarf movement. However, this strategy is designed to attract a few political actors who empathize with claims regarding gender equality, but who consider that legal abortion is unethical. These citizens could be persuaded by blue scarves’ collective action frames. For example, Cynthia Hotton said in the interview of 2019 that the issue of abortion divides women (Hotton, 2019). The concept of union between women is a feminist principle. The diplomat appropriated this notion, and claimed that the debate on abortion legalization divided the women’s collective. Feminists, as introduced earlier, were some of the first green scarf activists in Argentina (Macón, 2021, p. 44). Internationally, pro-abortion legalization activism is also linked to feminism. Abortion legalization represents a conquest of women’s freedom in feminist thought. Hotton appropriated the idea of sorority and used it to shame women who support abortion decriminalization, arguing that they were creating a division rather than a union. She also sought to underestimate the relevance of the debate. Since it divides women, it should be avoided, because the outcome is rather adverse to achieving sorority. This statement can be easily contradicted. Although some women oppose abortion liberalization, massive collective union and action undertaken by feminist green scarf activists was one of the most decisive strategies that led to abortion legalization in 2020.

Dina Rezinovsky asserted in the congressional debate: ‘The State has a debt with women, that is true, but it is not [legal] abortion. By no means [the debt is legal] abortion’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). It has been explained previously in this project, that there is a historical connection between green scarf activism in Argentina, and activism against State terrorism



that took place during the dictatorship of 1976 – 1983 (Borland and Sutton, 2019, p. 37). It was noted that a popular green scarf slogan is: ‘Legal Abortion, Democracy’s Debt’. Green scarf activists consider that there must be an empirical difference between the dictatorial and the democratic period when it comes to Women’s Rights. Particularly, because pro-abortion legalization activists were targets of State terrorism, as well as the children of many women<sup>52</sup>. This is the reason why green scarf activists claim that the democratic State owes women legal abortion. Because women and green scarf activists were violated and neglected during the dictatorship period. Rezinovsky resignified the slogan, and said that the State has a different, more ethical and urgent debt<sup>53</sup> (Rezinovsky, 2020). She argued: ‘The debt with women is to accompany them, to not let them live in poverty, that is the debt’ (Rezinovsky, 2020). As reviewed formerly in previous Chapters, blue scarf activists employ the strategy of combining arguments against abortion decriminalization with historical references to the dictatorship period (Carbonelli, Felitti and Mosqueira, 2011, p. 27). However, this strategy is not strong enough. There is a clear and well-known connection between green scarf activism in Argentina, and activism against the humanitarian crimes committed by the military government. Blue scarf activists’ appropriation of this strategy lacks a historical/cultural foundation, and it appears as a mere pretension to just overturn whatever argument that is used in favor of legalizing abortion.

Regarding the category of Heteronormativity, all the arguments identified in the dataset were related to the code that was named ‘Motherhood’. Except for the one that was mentioned above. Cynthia Hotton employed the code ‘Motherhood’ in the interview of 2019, she said: ‘fetuses are inside [our] bodies, because us women have the privilege, and the power...’ (Hotton, 2019). Hotton framed pregnancy as a privilege, without taking into account that there might be women who struggle because they are pregnant. For example, minor women, or women who were victims of rape, among others. This code was also employed by Rezinovsky in the interview that was conducted with her in 2021. The Congresswoman ensured: ‘I believe that one can bet on life. And I know that from experience. Throughout the years, [we have accompanied] women that, at [the beginning], they thought that the baby was going to ruin their life. Afterwards, [the baby] was the light of their eyes, their buddy, their friend’ (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Similarly to Hotton, Rezinovsky is framing motherhood as a grace, and she is ignoring the fact that not all women understand motherhood that way.

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<sup>52</sup> Namely, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo movement.

<sup>53</sup> According to her.



In the TV interview, Hotton implied that women were abused and needed to abort, because they did not know how to take care of themselves in situations of sexual abuse. She argued: ‘What I want to say is that Sex Education needs to work as a prevention of two things: pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases in cases of rape or abuse, and above all, to know how to take care in situations of abuse. We are seeing many cases of rape, and a lot of people say that abortion [is necessary] in cases of rape. What is happening, that girls do not know how to protect themselves from violence? What is happening with men’s education, that they are so violent against women?’ (Hotton, 2019). Here, Hotton is implying that women who are victims of abuse or rape are also responsible of gender violence, because they do not know how to protect themselves. In contrast to the way in which feminism or green scarf activism understand this issue (they consider that women are victims of gender violence, not collaborators), the diplomat frames gender violence as an outcome of inefficient education. This statement can be considered a Verbal Backlash, because her argument is very hostile. Many victims of gender violence find themselves in limit situations in which they are unable to protect themselves, regardless of how educated they are. Hotton’s argument is considered to be very insensitive, given the delicate nature of the issue of gender violence.

### **Democratization**

This frame was based on an argument by Biroli and Caminotti (2020) that was cited in the Introduction. They claim that neoconservative actors seek to neutralize their discourse, so as to not make their ideological convictions evident, particularly, by utilizing secular terms, as well as juridical arguments (Biroli and Caminotti, 2020, p. 8). This strategy seeks to generate a discourse that is democratic, and that is not exclusively based on static ideological or religious morals. It was named Democratization, because the term was thought of as a way to describe a lay approach to democracy. Given that Argentina is not a country with State Religion. This frame is advantageous, because it allows blue scarf activists to debate using terminology that is similar to their opponents’. This frame is likely planned with the aim of reaching an unconvinced audience that might not be persuaded by moral and/or Christian proposals. The three categories that appear in this frame are: first, judicialization of moral arguments. Anti-abortion legalization activists frame their moral positions by appealing to both National and International Laws, and using legal technical language. Secondly, they employ Scientific and Technological Evidence as a tool to make their claims appear as credible (Lowe and Page, 2019, p. 140). Finally, it has been found that interviewees provided

Economic Arguments to suggest that abortion legalization is not viable in Argentina. Specifically, they asserted that abortion legalization is unlikely achievable if the country's economic situation is taken into account. Making abortion available at public hospitals implies governmental investment that, according to the interviewees, is not possible or not a priority in comparison to other social difficulties that the country experiences. As well as the other categories, Economic Arguments based on empirical data are a strategic approach to justifying why abortion must be illegal.

Democratically arguments that are associated with this frame, but do not belong to any of the pre-established categories, include claims about ideological positions, and efforts to neutralize their discourse in terms of political orientation. For example, both interviewees emphasized in repeated situations that they were not arguing against abortion legality from a religious standpoint, nor from a reasoning associated with a rightist political orientation. Coincidentally, both interviewees cited one reference that they consider an inspiration for arguing against abortion decriminalization. The reference was Tabaré Vázquez, a man who was once president of Uruguay, who was socialist and atheist, and who opposed abortion legalization. Cynthia Hotton mentioned this man and explicitly clarified: '[He was] socialist, atheist, and a doctor... [Therefore, his reasoning] has nothing to do with a rightist conception' (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). Dina Rezinovsky also mentioned Uruguay's ex-president in the congressional debate of 2020. She said: 'I will base my negative vote [by citing] the position of [Tabaré Vázquez], Uruguay's ex-president, who passed away last Sunday [...] [He was a] professional doctor, atheist and leftist politician, [and] he vetoed the Abortion Law' (Rezinovsky, 2020). As well as Hotton, the Congresswoman seeks sympathy of citizens who might not have a defined position regarding abortion legalization, and who do not identify as either Christian or right-wing. Both activists are seeking proof that their position is not exclusively based on Christian and/or conservative morals. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to persuade those who do not identify with the aforesaid values. It is culturally credible, because a doctor represents an intellectual authority that is popularly regarded as trustworthy (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 620). Hence, his words are likely respectable.

One of the categories that was salient in the dataset is that of Scientific and Technological Evidence. Interviewees cited scientific and technological references that appeared to support their arguments. However, this strategy was not always employed correctly or functionally. In the TV interview made to Cynthia Hotton, for example, the diplomat explained that science proves that fetuses are alive (Hotton, 2019). She said that

defending the life of the fetus was not a moral position, because science demonstrates that there is life. The weakness of this statement is that, although science proves that fetuses are alive, it is still possible to consider that their lives are less relevant than other Rights in question, in the case of performing a legal abortion. A fetus can be alive, but the life or the autonomy of the mother can be considered more significant. In fact, this is what proponents of abortion legalization believe: that in particular circumstances, the life of the fetus is not the utmost value that should be protected. The category that employs scientific and technological evidence to support arguments of the debate on abortion legalization is strategic. In this case, nevertheless, it is not functional. Even if the scientific evidence that the activist cited is reliable, it does not help her invalidate the counterargument. It is strategic in the sense that it includes secular language into the anti-abortion legalization discourse. As explained before in this project, persons who oppose abortion legalization are mostly religious, and guided by moral principles. Employing secular arguments helps create a discourse that is attractive to non-religious political actors.

Many statements present in the dataset that are associated with the category of Science and Technology use empirical evidence as a means to affirm that fetuses are alive. The evidence that is provided is truthful, but it is not useful for the debate in question. Although it is not strong enough to overthrow the position of the countermovement, it does contribute to creating a consciousness towards the value of human life. This effect might, subsequently, attract potential constituents. Those who sustain that the value of human life is absolute and that it must be protected above all other existing values, will be appealed by the evidence cited by the interviewees. It is not strategic as a debating argument, but it is strategic as a means to generate sympathy among potential adherents to the movement. Since it is taken as a given that actual and potential constituents to this movement are absolutist defenders of the value of human life. Hotton explained, in relation to the previous discussion, that the fetus has a different DNA than its mother (Hotton, 2019). Proving, hence, that the fetus is not the same person as the pregnant person. This quote is particularly relevant, because green scarf activists argue that fetuses can be considered a part of a pregnant person's body. By saying that the fetus has a different DNA, Hotton seems to bring down the argument of the pro-abortion legalization movement. Despite being a serious and credible argument, it is unclear if the fact that both beings have different DNA makes them different persons. This argument is confusing, because it is not relevant if the fetus is a person or not, to decide if abortion should or not be legalized. But as a discursive strategy it seems to impact the

activist's discourse in the desired way. Hotton repeated these two justifications in the interview that was conducted with her in 2021.

Rezinovsky, in the interview, also claimed that science proves that fetuses are alive (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). The Congresswoman explicitly admitted that she tries to create a secular discourse when it comes to debating abortion legalization (Valimbri Acosta, 2022). She said that it is a strategic approach to discuss with people who are not religious (Valimbri Acosta, 2022).

Other claims that were frequently detected in the dataset were related to the category of Economic Arguments. Hotton argued in the discussion with the TV host that poor women die when they perform abortions, because Public Health is deficient (Hotton, 2019). Hotton's objective was to question the functioning of the Argentine Public Health system. If abortion was legal, abortion would still be dangerous to economically marginalized women, because the Health system is not efficient. Nevertheless, this statement was inaccurate. If abortion is legal, the practice would receive greater public investment, which would potentially lead to better and healthier outcomes. Afterwards, the diplomat said that legalizing abortion was also undesirable because it would require public investment. The diplomat assured that the Argentine State does not have the means to finance legal abortions (Hotton, 2019). This affirmation was, although, not supported by any empirical reference.

In the Congressional debate of 2020, Rezinovsky complained about the fact that president Alberto Fernández decided to conduct the congressional debate on abortion legalization during the month of December, the month of the Christian Holidays, which is particularly expensive for Argentine citizens, as well as for the government (Rezinovsky, 2020). Namely, she was despising the fact that the president had chosen a date that was inconvenient, because it entailed an enormous expenditure. Rezinovsky probably made this explicit, so as to have more arguments to support her belief that abortion must not be legalized. Furthermore, Rezinovsky belongs to the party that is the rival of the president's party, and it was also a political strategy to be openly critical of the president's decisions.

## Fourth Chapter: Findings and Conclusions

In this section we will review the analysis that has been anticipated in the previous two chapters. Furthermore, we will reflect on the research questions that were presented in the Introduction. Finally, we will propose some recommendations for future investigations.

Regarding the first question on the cultural strategies that both movements employ in order to create a sense of identification among constituents, we will base the analysis on the frames that are addressed specifically at members of the movement. Like it has been extensively discussed, there are frames that are aimed at people who already identify as a part of the social movement. These frames are the ones that the countermovement usually denies and the ones that are not generally credible. It can be argued that these frames are more likely to be culturally than empirically credible. For example, the frame that we have titled Chauvinism is an example of a very culturally strong frame within the green scarf movement. However, it represents a conception of reality that might not be shared by everyone. The same happens with Intersectionality, Mobilization and Secularism. In contrast to these frames, Public Health, Pragmatism, and Autonomy are not based on cultural preconceptions, and for this reason they might resonate among citizens who do not identify with the green scarf movement.

In the first place, the frame of Chauvinism requires a feminist ideology that not everyone possesses. For example, Cynthia Hotton said in the broadcasted interview that we analyzed, that women suffered gender violence, partly because they were not educated to protect themselves against it. A feminist perspective would not attribute any responsibility to a victim of gender violence. This is why the Chauvinism frame is only resonant among those who already identify as feminists. Secondly, Mobilization is also exclusive to green scarf activists, because they are the ones who participate in the marches. Intersectionality could be considered another frame that is solely addressed at members of the green scarf movement, because, for example, many people do not consider sexual diversity legitimate. Secularism is also exclusive to the movement, because as exposed previously, many neoconservative political actors are in fact Christian and do not conceive religious influence in politics as a problem.

In the case of the blue scarf movement, the frames that they address to constituents are: Moralism, Personhood and Neoconservatism. These three frames are very culturally

strong but, just like the ones mentioned above, are only believable to a segment of the population.

The frame Moralism, for instance, is only resonant among those who share the same conception of morality, and who believe that life is a sacred and inviolable value. Personhood is also only credible to members of the blue scarf movement, because it is created by those who are against abortion legalization. Finally, the frame Neoconservatism is also very narrow in terms of credibility, because it represents a very specific and conservative ideology, sometimes also linked to Christianity, which might not be shared by the entire population.

The second and third questions can be answered with the same response, given that democratic frames could be understood to be designed to attract potential adherents, as it has been mentioned in the Introduction.

In the case of the green scarf movement, these frames are the ones that were introduced in the previous lines, namely: Public Health, Pragmatism and Autonomy. In the case of the blue scarf movement, these most democratically valid frames are: Democratization and Prohibitionism.

The frame of Public Health, which aims to make evident the sanitary crises and the verifiable deadly consequences that illegal abortion entails, is not only addressed to members of the movement. If activists cite statistics that can prove the maternal mortality rates caused by clandestine abortions, other people might be concerned and moved by this issue. Pragmatism works similarly, because it pretends to solve the issue by acknowledging that it is not a hypothetical scenario but something that happens in reality. When green scarf activists use evidence to support their claim that clandestine abortions are an issue of public concern, people who were not previously interested or motivated, might feel empathetic towards this reality. Lastly, Autonomy is also a Constitutional Right that many citizens could be interested in defending.

Both Democratization and Prohibitionism are frames that aim to gain support for the blue scarf movement. As it was stated in the Introduction, the Democratization frame employs a language that seeks to receive broad approval. Prohibitionism, on the other hand, is a valid juridical position that many people might find resonance with. Although it is associated with a moral conception of life, the juridical dimension provides institutional support to the position.

The last question is: How empirically credible are both movements' collective action frames? The answer to this question cannot be determined only through this research, but it might be possible that green scarf claims are more likely to be supported by empirical



evidence than blue scarf collective action frames. However, blue scarf collective action frames are equally strong in cultural credibility. This might be the reason why abortion was legalized, but with such a small advantage.

Future research could study neoconservative backlash in the United States for example, and the case of the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. Furthermore, another interesting topic to investigate is the emergence of libertarian activism in Argentina, and its relationship to abortion legalization.



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## Notes

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