



# Bridging Theory and Activism: Exploring the Ni Una Menos Movement in Argentina through Political Process theory and Feminist Lens

*“Ni una mujer menos, ni una muerte más”*

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Femicide is a real problem, not only in Argentina, but globally. All over the world women are being killed. We must dare to speak about it, to question why it occurs and to demand change. For yourself, your sister, your mother, your friend. We must all come together to combat this heinous crime. **Ni Una Menos.**

## Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to investigate how social movements such as Ni Una Menos has used political opportunities and mobilisation structures to grow. Moreover, I as a researcher am interested in building an understanding how social movements impact women's empowerment and agency. Femicide, which is defined as the murder of a woman due to her gender, has been a major problem in Argentina for a long time and the high rates of femicide crimes have caused concern and frustration within the population. This study intends to uncover the political opportunities and mobilisation efforts the NUM movement has utilised to combat femicide as well as examine how the Ni Una Menos movement has contributed to the empowerment and agency of women in Argentina. The study does this by drawing from political process theory as well as feminist theory.

The data used for the study was collected through five semi-structured interviews that were conducted in Buenos Aires, Argentina from November 2023 to January 2024. A content analysis is utilised to analyse the data. At the time of the founding of the NUM, the results indicate that the mobilisation strategies utilised have existed in the country long before the founding of NUM. Furthermore, in terms of agency and empowerment, the results show that feminist social power has had a positive effect on these two aspects for women in Argentina. Lastly, this research contributes to a deeper knowledge of femicide in Argentina and offers insights for policy interventions and social change initiatives aimed at preventing femicide.

**Key words:** *Femicide, feminicidio, Ni Una Menos, Argentina, Latin America, feminist social movements, social movements, political process theory, feminism*

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# 1. Introduction

Argentina as a state has been battling the existence of femicide, or in the Latin American context, feminicidio, for a long time (Lagarde 2008). Latin America has long suffered high rates of femicide. In 2022, at least 4,050 women were victims of femicide across the region, according to the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (2024). The highest femicide rates per 100,000 women are in Honduras (six per 100,000 women) and Trinidad and Tobago (5.5). Argentina ranked 16 out of 32 (at one per 100,000), but had the fourth highest absolute numbers, with 232, after Brazil at 1,437, Mexico at 976 and Honduras at 309 (Ibid).

Femicide refers to the “*intentional killing of women or girls because they are female*”, as stated by Diana Russel (2012) during the UN Symposium on Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action Vienna, Austria: November 2012. Femicide is a gender-based crime, often motivated by misogyny, sexism, or the perception of women as inferior to men. Femicide can take various forms, including intimate partner violence, honour killings, dowry-related killings, and other acts of gender-based violence (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014). Femicide is a serious human rights issue that affects women and girls worldwide. It often occurs within the context of broader societal issues such as gender inequality, discrimination, and patriarchal norms that perpetuate violence against women (Ibid).

The term *femicide* gained prominence in feminist discourse to specifically address the targeted killing of women and to highlight the systemic nature of gender-based violence (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2014). The term will be defined in more depth in the **2. Literature Review** of this study. The term emphasises the gendered aspect of these crimes and underscores the need for targeted interventions to prevent and address them. Femicide has been recognized as a distinct crime in various legal frameworks, and efforts to combat it have been incorporated into national and international policies and initiatives (Manjoo 2012). For example, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has defined femicide as the most extreme form of violence against women and has called on states to take effective measures to prevent, investigate, and punish femicides (Inter-American Court of Human Rights - Advisory Opinion OC-17/08).

## 1.1 Background

In 2015, a 14-year-old woman named Chiara Páez was brutally murdered by her then 16-year-old boyfriend over what seems to have been a forced abortion which resulted in her death (Llorente 2020). Chiara was found under the patio of the boyfriend's family house in Rufino, Argentina. A post-mortem showed Chiara Paez's death was the result of beatings to the head, face, and body (Ibid). They also found drug traces in her blood, related to abortion medicine. The boyfriend admitted to the crime and explained that he had help from his mother (Ibid). As a result of this brutal killing, along with numerous other cases of violence against women, a social movement was sparked and galvanised Argentine society to act against gender-based violence (Barber 2024). The result was the *Ni Una Menos* movement. Ni Una Menos, (hereinafter NUM) which means "Not One Less" in English, started out as a grassroots initiative headed by concerned citizens, artists, and feminist activists in Argentina (Ibid).

One of the earliest manifestations of the NUM- movement was a massive protest that took place on June 3, 2015, in Buenos Aires, where thousands of people gathered to express their solidarity and demand action from the government to address the epidemic of gender-based violence (Molyneux et.al 2021: 32). Its main objectives are to demand justice for victims of abuse, fight for legislative changes to defend women's rights, and increase public awareness of femicide. Following its establishment, the NUM movement has developed into a significant social and political force in Argentina, leading large-scale protests, marches, and campaigns to advance gender equality and call for an end to violence against women. Similar movements have also been sparked by it in Latin America and other parts of the world (Medina 2023).

## 1.2 Problem statement, aim and research question

As presented above, femicide is a prevalent social problem in Argentina. In 2012, Argentina created a specific offence of femicide, punishing the crime with life sentences, but numbers have remained high for more than a decade (Barber 2024). Moreover, the Argentinian government has introduced several National Plans to battle the issue, the latest one being the Federal Action Plan against Gender-based Violence (2020-2022). However, with the change of government in November 2023 the course of femicide prevention has change slightly, due

to the new Argentine congress debating controversial reforms of gender laws under the new right-wing president, Javier Milei (Barber 2024). Since Milei took office in December 2023, he has closed the ministry of women and gender, while his government contends that “violence has no gender”. Raquel Vivanco, a feminist activist says that “Javier Milei won with a discourse that denies gender issues,” and “Once again, we will have to build solidarity among women in the absence of the state” (Barber 2024).

Whilst the Ni Una Menos movement in Argentina has received an abundance of attention for its efforts to tackle gender-based violence and femicide, a thorough understanding of the discursive processes surrounding femicide within the movement's environment is still necessary. Little research has been carried out on how the discourse surrounding femicide has changed over time, the narratives and discursive tactics used by the Ni Una Menos movement, and the effects of this discourse on public awareness, legislative responses, and societal attitudes regarding gender equality and femicide prevention (Molyneux et.al 2021). Several themes were identified throughout the research process, and these themes will be analysed to understand how the NUM movement works with femicide prevention/how to combat femicide. To improve our comprehension of the intricate relationship between activism, discourse, and social change in addressing femicide, it draws attention to the information gaps and the need for additional research. Thus, the identified research problem is the nature of discourse surrounding femicide in Argentina and its connection to the Ni Una Menos movement.

The aim of this study is to deepen our knowledge of how social movements such as Ni Una Menos uses political opportunities and mobilisation structures to grow, and to understand how social movements impact women’s empowerment and agency. This study intends to provide guidance for initiatives to combat femicide and advance gender equality in Argentina and abroad by examining the discursive tactics, narratives, and effects of the Ni Una Menos movement.

To achieve the aim of the study, the research questions: ***“How can the political opportunity structures of the NUM movement and the mobilisation efforts made by them to address femicide in Argentina be understood and explained?”*** and ***“How do feminist social movements contribute to the empowerment and agency of women in the Argentinean case?”*** were established to achieve the objectives of the study.

### 1.3 Limitations

Femicide is a research area that is currently on the rise, so there are different perspectives of the phenomenon to embark from. Many previous studies are analysing the impact of gender norms and intimate partner violence (IPV) (Molyneux et.al 2021). Whilst these perspectives are important and meaningful to the study of femicide, my decision not to include it is because it has already been studied in the case of Argentina. Instead, this study will limit itself to analyse how discourse around femicide evolved within the context of the NUM movement, in Argentina. The decision to focus on social movements and its connection to femicide is because Argentina is known as a nation with a strong civil society. The study also limits itself to analysing the case of Argentina, over for example analysing other countries in Latin America or doing a comparative study. This limitation will be further explained in section **4.1.2 Case Selection** in this study.

The author of the thesis would also like to acknowledge that the data available for analysing, particularly data specifically concerning statistics of femicide, whilst being official data, might be biased. This is because there is a known underreporting of cases concerning femicide, not only in Argentina, but also globally. The reason for this is either because the victim is afraid of reporting, or that the police will not accept the reporting. Another acknowledgment is about potential bias. Despite efforts to reduce bias, data analysis and study conclusions may have been impacted by the researcher's prejudices and subjective interpretations. In saying that, I have tried and remained as unbiased and informed as possible during the research stages.

Lastly, whilst this has not been a strong limitation for the study, I would like to acknowledge that due to language barriers (I am not a native Spanish speaker) it might have made it more difficult for me to interact with different communities and obtain information from certain sources, which might have limited the study's inclusivity and the range of viewpoints it included.



## 1.4 Relevance to Global politics

Femicide intersects with global politics in several different ways and in this section of the study, a few examples will be given. First and foremost, femicide as a phenomenon intersects with international law and the human rights regime. Femicide is recognised as a human rights violation, and a form of gender-based violence under international law (Manjoo 2012). Addressing femicide requires political will and action at national and international levels to uphold human rights principles and ensure justice for victims (Ibid). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) highlights the importance and obligation of states to address and prevent femicide. (Ibid).

Gender equality is another way femicide research is relevant to the field of global politics. Femicide is a symptom of pervasive gender inequality that exists in all communities. By doing research and analysis to identify the underlying causes of femicide, governments may create plans to advance gender equality and provide women greater political, social, and economic significance (Manjoo 2012). Another way femicide intersects with global politics is through global (feminist) social movements and international relations. This is exemplified by this study itself. Global feminist movements, which frequently cross-national borders and work together on advocacy campaigns to address gender-based violence, have femicide as a primary concern. Global feminist networks encourage cooperation, share assets, and put pressure on national and international authorities to give femicide prevention and survivor support a highest priority (Molyneux et.al 2021). Furthermore, femicide is a worldwide problem with transnational implications that transcends national boundaries. To combat femicide, international cooperation is crucial, particularly when it comes to issues like human trafficking, the rights of migratory women, and international legal frameworks that protect women from violence (Ibid).

Moreover, femicide research often engage with intersectionality. This is because femicide often intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as classism or racism. The influence of these intersecting identities on vulnerability to violence and access to justice must be considered in political conversations on femicide, emphasising the significance of an inclusive and intersectional approach to policymaking (Molyneux et.al 2021). This leads into

another aspect of global politics that femicide touch upon, namely foreign policy. Foreign policy and diplomacy are another way femicide can intersect with global politics. Diplomatic relations between nations may be strained by femicide, especially in cases where the crime is common, and governments fail to combat it (Manjoo 2012). To hold governments responsible for their inability to stop femicide or enhance their response to gender-based violence, diplomatic pressure, sanctions, or international collaboration may be employed by the international community. To summarise, femicide intersects with global politics through human rights, gender equality, international relations, diplomatic relations, and social movements. Collective efforts at the local, national, and international level as well as political willingness and solidarity across governments, civil society organisations, and other global actors, are necessary to combat femicide (Ibid).

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter gives a background to the NUM movement. It also presents a background to the research problem, with an explanation of the aim of the thesis and establishment of research questions. Limitations will also be introduced in the first chapter along with the relevance of Femicide research to the field of Global Politics. The second chapter introduces relevant previous research and positions this thesis within the research area as well as presents some useful definitions. The third chapter introduces the theoretical framework of political process theory and the concept of Empowerment and Agency as well as the research paradigm. Chapter four introduces the chosen method of content analysis, research design, data collection and case selection. Chapter five is the analysis section of the thesis, and this is the section where the posed research questions will be answered. Chapter six is the conclusion, where major findings will be presented. Lastly, chapter seven is the bibliography and in the end of the thesis the different appendixes can be found.

## 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise previous research on femicide. It is important to note that not much research has been done on the notion of femicide so far. A few studies are available, and after reviewing the field, researchers who came before and probably will come after me will begin at roughly the same position. It will therefore be quite simple to identify a research gap, which in this case is the gap between the phenomenon of femicide and the social movements that have emerged in response to it. Perhaps the more difficult part of this literature analysis will be determining the key concepts from earlier research projects and how they apply to and contrast with my own. The definition and conceptualization of femicide will be presented at the outset of the literature review as it is important to review the field since different scholars use different definitions of the phenomenon. In addition, definition of the term has been contested and thus I deem it important to showcase the different understandings that exist within the field.

Next, three themes have been identified in the literature. They are:

1. Lack of data on femicide
2. Lack of visibility and underreporting of femicide through data collection
3. Lack of non-bias data

The literature review will present each theme accordingly and explain how it relates to this study and why this study is relevant. Strengths and weaknesses of existing research and identifying gaps in the literature will occur as well.

### 2.1 Challenges in defining femicide

The next section of this paper will begin by defining the term femicide. One ongoing theme in previous literature about femicide is that there is no agreed upon definition and different scholars are using different terms. Once defined, this section will later set out to conceptualise femicide through different scholars.

#### 2.1.1 Definition of Femicide

As presented above, the availability of data on femicide is rather limited, as is the scientific literature on definitions of femicide as well as variables and factors for defining femicide (Corradi & Stöckl 2014). In summarising this issue, the authors of the European Cooperation

in Science and Technology (COST) Action on Femicide noted that only a few nations—such as Italy, Serbia, Spain, and the United Kingdom—have databases on femicide (Schrötte & Meshkova 2018); as a result, there is still a lack of comparability throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

The term **femicide** was first coined by Diana Russel at the First International Tribunal on Crimes against Women in Brussels in 1976. She defined femicide as: “the misogynist killing of women by men”. In her second co-edited volume titled, *Femicide in Global Perspective*, she redefined femicide in 2001 as "the killing of females by males because they are female" (Ibid: 3). However, since it was coined in 1976 the definition has been contested and there is no commonly used definition. According to Corradi et al. (2016), there have been several developments in the field of femicide study and different methods on how to study the subject have been developed, such as a feminist approach, a sociological approach, a criminological approach, a human rights approach and a decolonial approach (Corradi et al 2016: 979).

According to UN documents, **femicide** is defined as: “*The killing of women due to their gender in a variety of contexts, including intimate partner femicide, honour killings, killings during armed conflict etc. It is also acknowledged that there is a dearth of official reporting and prosecution of this crime*”. (UN General Assembly, 2012: 6–7; UNODC, 2014: 52).

The Vienna Declaration on Femicide describes **femicide** as: “*The term femicide means the killing of women and girls on account of their gender, perpetrated or tolerated by both private and public actors. It covers, inter alia, the murder of a woman as a result of intimate partner violence, the torture and misogynistic slaying of women, the killing of women and girls in the name of so-called honour and other harmful-practice-related killings, the targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict, and cases of femicide connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers and trafficking in women and girls*”.

The Vienna Declaration of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) was the source of the first definition provided by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in 2017. The second definition is statistical in nature, according to EIGE, and restricts femicide to deaths of women due to certain harmful practices and intimate partner femicide (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017). The other developed definition of femicide

for statistical purposes is the following: “*The killing of a woman by an intimate partner and death of a woman as a result of practice that is harmful to women. Intimate partner is understood as former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim*” (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017).

The term **feminicidio**, popular throughout Latin America and coined by Mexican feminist and anthropologist Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos, is rather similar to the western definition of femicide. In the early 1990s, Lagarde (2008) first used the word feminicidio, drawing inspiration from the writings of Russell and Radford (1992). Translated from the English word "femicide," it describes and offers a theoretical framework for the sudden spike in killings and extreme violence against women in Mexico, especially in Ciudad Juarez. She gave feminicidio a more contextualised development and included impunity—that is, the inability of the government to hold offenders accountable—as a crucial component (Ibid).

In terms of strengths and weaknesses of previous literature in relation to definition, the strengths are that there are various scholars who have contributed to the definition. This means that because there is not a single person that has coined the definition, there has been room to contest and redefine the definition. However, at the same time, it can be seen as a weakness that there is no clear definition of the phenomena which can make it difficult to study. Thus, I deem it important for scholars engaging in the field to clearly state which definition they are using while researching the field. With this, the study will use the definition made by Russel in 2001, namely: “the killing of females by males because they are female”.

### 2.1.2 Conceptualisation of Femicide

The next part of this section will discuss the conceptualisation of femicide as a concept.

Following the Conference in 1976, Russell and associates theorised the concept of "femicide" in several articles and works, one of them being *The Politics of Woman Killing* by Radford and Russell. The book was published in 1992 and became the first anthology on the topic. This book will be the starting point of this part of the literature review. In the conclusion of the book, the authors are explaining that the purpose of the book was to define femicide and

identify it as an urgent issue that needs to be dealt with worldwide (Radford & Russell 1992: 351). The authors are identifying several themes in their anthology, showcasing the failure of the state to provide women with protection from femicide through laws and a similar failure by the police to act on reports of femicide. Another important theme is the failure of the mass media to report femicide as a serious crime. The last one is individualisation and victim blaming. Individuation is referring to how femicide is viewed as an incident that happens to a few women, but not women as a larger group and victim blaming are rather self-explanatory (Ibid 351-253). From a conceptual standpoint, the authors are illustrating that femicide encompasses not only the physical act of killing women but also the underlying attitudes, motivations, and societal dynamics that support these violent acts. The authors are also showcasing the many different forms of femicide that exist, such as marital femicide or racist femicide to give an example (Radford & Russell 1992: 7). This will be exemplified in the next paragraph.

In this next section, a few historical examples of femicide will be presented by Radford and Russel (1992) to conceptualise what femicide is. Femicide is a way for men to punish or exercise social control over women. Certain types of femicide, like the European witch craze, was legal (Ibid 34-35). The fact that women made up the great majority of those accused of witch crafting is noteworthy, or maybe not. Another historical example of femicide occurring worldwide is the legal killing of women on the grounds that they were lesbians; in some nations, this problem is still present now (Ibid: 40). Another important aspect the authors are bringing up in their work is the representation of femicide in mass media. Here, they are discussing how the reporting of femicide is either downplayed in its severity or they are using the case of Jack the Ripper (a serial killer that only killed women) and making it into a tourist attraction, instead of discussing the horrendous crime that is femicide (Ibid: 185).

Another scholar that has conceptualised femicide is Corradi et.al in their work from 2016 named *Femicide: A social challenge*. Early on in their work, they illustrate that a problem that femicide as a form of extreme violence is that it often occurs in the private sphere (Corradi et.al 2016). Corradi et.al (2016) explains that traditionally the private sphere, the home, enjoyed some kind of principle of non-intervention, each with its own rules and nobody had the right to interfere. But they also note that in many nations, this form of right to not interfere has vanished because the private sector is no longer a place where violent acts may be profited from; however, in some cultures this kind of violence is still normalised

(Ibid). This normalisation is another reason why femicide in certain countries is still high, and on the rise. The authors are arguing that to keep potential victims safe from their attackers, it is imperative that women and girls be visibly protected, even if this means intervening in the house, family, or honour system (Ibid). One may reword Article 12 of the Human Rights Declaration to add the following: No one shall use his or her family, home, honour, reputation, or privacy as a justification for using violence against any other member of the family, particularly against women or girls. Private violence has become a public and international issue rather than a matter of private concern (Corradi et.al: 969).

## 2.2 Lack of data on femicide

The absence of reliable statistics on femicide is one topic that is covered in depth in the literature field. The data is restricted because different nations count femicide occurrences in different ways. It is difficult, for instance, to compare data on homicide—which includes the killing of women to data on femicide, which specifically counts women (Radford & Russell 1992). The significance of "gathering more nuanced and appropriate information" has been emphasised by Dawson and Carrigan (2020: 2). Furthermore, EIGE conducted a comparative study in 2021 on an international level called "*Measuring femicide in the EU and internationally: an assessment*" where the conclusion reveals that several organisations worldwide have begun to collect and standardise data regarding the killing of women for gender-motivated reasons (EIGE, 2021c). In Corradi and Stöckl work "*Intimate partner homicide in 10 European countries: statistical data and policy developments in cross national perspective*" they claim that enhancing data comparability throughout European nations is crucial. To evaluate the nations' measures to reducing femicide, they advise researching if laws against intimate partner violence and women's advocacy influence intimate partner femicide (Ibid).

Weil et al (2016) explains in their work "*Femicide across Europe*" that to objectively examine femicide in Europe, the EU-funded COST Action "Femicide across Europe" was introduced in 2013. The conclusion they came to in this work is that more countries will have to conduct secondary analyses on the context of intimate partner violence (IPV) including data on the number of women who reported prior intimate partner abuse and the couple's sociodemographic characteristics, to raise awareness and inform prevention strategies (Corradi and Stöckl 2014: 614-615). Parallel to this, the Canadian Femicide Observatory for

Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) proposed indicators of femicide in its 2019 #CallItFemicide campaign (Wiel et al 2016).

In the previous literature mentioned, there are little suggestions on how to improve the quality of data that is available concerning femicide. The scholars are all turning to general recommendations for bettering reporting, documenting, and investigation processes, as well as for training medical and investigative personnel. Walby et al. (2017) offers a recommendation that goes outside of the general stance, they are emphasising the need for the creation of measures for all types of gender-based violence, including femicide, since there is still a lack of a common measurement framework for fundamentals. According to Walby et al. (2017), the main problem with measuring femicide is not so much the legislation itself as it is the way the law creates measurement categories that have the potential to make gender virtually invisible. As a result, information on the act itself, the victim's sex, and the perpetrator's sex is crucial for gathering data on killings, regardless of how the law defines them. To exemplify this, the example of homicide data gathered by the UNODC/International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), which is broken down by the victim's sex and their link to the perpetrator to create a femicide indicator is useful (Ibid). Walby et al. (2017) acknowledge that there are weaknesses in the accuracy of nationally available data on the relationship between perpetrator and victim as well as weaknesses in comparability between countries on counting rules (Ibid: 163).

Driver (2015:15 as cited in Gargiulo 2021) explains that to fill the void in official statistics, civil society organisations have started compiling their own databases of victims of femicide, frequently with the aid of media articles or crowdsourcing methods. In many situations, these new databases are more useful than official government data. For instance, individuals, researchers, and journalists continue to keep the most accurate records of femicide in Mexico, rather than the police or a state or federal institution.

In terms of weaknesses and strengths of previous research, it is quite evident that the weakness is that there is a lack of data on femicide, in general. This is because many nations are combining homicide of women together with data that should be counted as solely femicide. The strength is that many scholars are identifying this issue and calling for the data collection to be more precise so the data can be more reliable. A strength is also that civil



society is coming together and identifying this issue as well and this is visible in the data I have gathered from the NUM-movement.

## 2.3 Lack of visibility and underreporting of femicide through data collection

Another aspect that is widely discussed within the field is the underreporting of femicide and the lack of visibility of femicide that occurs outside the IPV, such as dowry related deaths and honour killings to exemplify (Walklate et. al 2020). Russell (2018) argues that femicide is often underreported due to the patriarchal attitudes both with the public and private spheres. She suggests that societal norms often minimise or even trivialise violence against women (read femicide) leading to a lack of recognition of femicide as a distinct form of violence (Ibid). Wield (2020) adds to this discussion and explains that particularly when it comes to honour killings, the cultural and societal norms impact the reporting of femicide. She argues that there is ingrained stigma and shame associated with violence against women (read femicide) which often prevents families from reporting or seeking help when their women fall victims of this crime (Ibid). Wield continues to explain that the murdering of female partners is routinely downplayed or rendered invisible in faulty data sets, even when the intimate partner is the one who commits the crime (Ibid).

Walklate (2020: 62) explains that this means that the "invisibility of femicide" is a problem that needs more thought. As a result, Walklate et al. highlight the dearth of scientific knowledge production and the dangers associated with data collection, arguing that continued consideration and reflection on approaches to data collection and information production regarding femicide are necessary (Ibid: 65) Other scholarly works identify many causes that contribute to the invisible nature of femicide. For example, Menjívar and Walsh (2017) highlight the state's culpability in institutional violence, femicide, and society at large by highlighting the persistent practices of underreporting and concealing femicide. Another perspective of the underreporting is given by scholar Sánchez (2019). In her work she sets out to investigate the role the media plays in the ongoing invisibility of femicide. She explains that media often tend to focus more on the perpetrator rather than the victim, thereby shifting the focus of the gendered nature of the violence, in other words, the fact that femicide took place (Ibid). Richards et. al (2011) focuses on media coverage about femicide, more

specifically, their study sets out to investigate what sources are used when reporting on femicide, and whether femicide instances are viewed as isolated incidents or as part of a larger social problem of intimate partner violence. In their conclusion they explain that their findings are consistent with previous research, that, in comparison to private sources (friends and family), public sources (law enforcement) were the ones most frequently referenced in news reports about femicide. Furthermore, contrary to what earlier studies have indicated, victim-blaming language is not as common as it formerly seemed (Ibid).

In terms of weaknesses and strengths when it comes to underreporting and lack of visibility most scholars argue that this is a problem for the field) argue that victim-blaming language is not as common as it formerly seemed. This can be viewed as a strength of this section, and something to bear in mind when I investigate the field. Overall, as was mentioned in **Section 2.2 lack of data** and lack of reporting is seen as a weakness in this field as there is reason to be cautious about the available data to ensure that the results are not skewed due to biases. This will be further developed, in **Section 2.4 Lack of non-bias data**.

## 2.4 Lack of non-bias data

One of the major biases discussed in the literature is ethnic and cultural bias. Maria Gargiulo has research this in her work *“Using quantitative data to study femicide: challenges and opportunities”* from 2021. She explains that selection bias is not just an issue with statistics on femicide. Large-scale violence studies rarely have access to comprehensive databases that fully capture the events (Ibid). She continues by saying that administrative resources may place restrictions on the amount of data that can be gathered, data collection may be restricted to more accessible metropolitan regions, or data may even be purposefully altered to support a specific political goal. Finally, she explains that selection bias is present in news media accounts, which serve as the foundation for many of the lists of femicide victims maintained by activists, journalists, and civil society organisations (Ibid).

In addition, news reports may be biased towards cities, routinely leave out specific groups of people (such as sex workers or indigenous women), or only feature kinds of homicides because of publisher agendas (Gargiulo 20121). In a similar vein, Cullen et al. (2019) point out that it is impossible to identify victims as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander women due to the lack of reliable ethnicity data in the current data sets. Similarly to this argumentation,

Shier and Shor (2016) highlight how different ways exist for femicide to be pathologized and/or culturalized based on whether the perpetrator is perceived as being from the "East" or the "West." The authors point out that while these theories reproduce the prejudices of both a traditional, patriarchal Eastern world and a contemporary, liberal Western civilization, they also conceal the dynamics of gender norms, sexism, misogyny, and other forms of gender-related violence (Ibid).

Another bias that Walklate et al. (2020) brings up, is the application of counting processes to individualise femicide. As per the criticism directed towards the depoliticization and oversimplification of counting, most data sets concentrate solely on sexual aspects and fail to encompass the gender-related dynamics of femicide. The authors place a strong emphasis on gender—that is, an individual's gender identity—and "gender critical" study of the femicide case count. (Ibid) Alternatively, the authors support "thick counts" that do not personalise the offence. Failure to collect statistics on sexuality may indicate that misogyny is not recognised as a significant factor in the deaths of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals. This is because the authors believe that it is easier to hide marginalised groups of women, such as LGBT women and aboriginal women or even elderly women (Ibid).

To sum up, information that is biased and highlights femicide and its root causes can contribute to greater public awareness of the problem. It draws attention to how serious femicide is and how urgent action is required, inspiring people and communities to take up the cause. When advocating for legislative measures intended to stop femicide and assist victims, biased information may be employed. By highlighting gaps in laws, law enforcement procedures, or support services, the information might nevertheless help achieve positive policy outcomes even when it may give priority to viewpoints or agendas. A weakness is that biased information is portraying something that is untrue or misleading, resulting in the spread of misinformation.

## 2.5 Conclusion of the literature review

As have been presented in the above section of this chapter, previous research has been done on the topic of femicide, however this study, with its unique aim and research questions is contributing to filling a gap in the research of femicide, particularly when it comes to social movements and how discourse is connected to this. In terms of the themes that has been

identified in the previous literature, the study has already decided which definition of femicide I am using moving forward. In terms of lack of data, my intended material for my study is primary sources and I deem them sufficient to achieve the goals of this thesis. Since this study does not deal with statistics of femicide or the lack of reporting, whilst troublesome, this will not impact the results of this study. However I deemed it important to include all these aspects in the Literature review to navigate the research gaps in the field and to situate my own research within that gap. Conducting the Literature review in this way also enabled me to find scholars that pinpointed me in the direction of femicide research and social movements. Lastly, in terms of bias, I am very aware of my own bias as well as the material that is available concerning femicide. Thus, I will ensure that the data remains as unbiased as possible, utilising several sources and not cherry-picking sources that are beneficial for the study with the sole purpose of making a point.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This research adopts a cross-disciplinary approach, incorporating theories from the domains of feminist studies and social movement, due to the multiple subjects covered in it (femicide/sexual violence and social movement) in relation to the overarching research questions. The aim of this study is to investigate how the NUM movement impacts public discourse around femicide in Argentina. This chapter will present and discuss the theoretical approach used to analyse the collected data to achieve the objectives and has two main purposes. First, to present the selected theories, which in this study is a built-up framework from Friedman's framework (2017) when it comes to feminist social movements in Latin America as well as political process theory which is a commonly used theory when researching social movements. The second objective is to introduce the research paradigm. By using this approach, a comprehensive analysis of femicide in Argentina within the context of the NUM movement exploring its social, political, cultural, and economic dimensions will occur. This will later guide the analysis of this study.

*Political process theory* (hereinafter referred to as PPT) is often referred to as the fundamental theory of social movements and how they organise—that is, how they strive for change. The theory was created by Douglas McAdam in the 1970s in reaction civil rights movements. Before the theory was developed, social scientists labelled members of social movements as deviants rather than political players because they believed that they were irrational before this idea was developed. PPT provides an explanation of the circumstances and behaviours that enable a social movement to successfully accomplish its objectives (McAdam 1970). This theory holds that before a movement can accomplish its goals, there must be political prospects for change. When this has been established, the movement's goal is to alter the current political system and procedures (Ibid).

The established research question that is framed by the PPT theoretical framework is: “***How can the political opportunity structures of the NUM movement and the mobilisation efforts made by them to address femicide in Argentina be understood and explained?***”. By posing this question, the analysis will highlight the ways in which the NUM movement was unique from earlier campaigns to end femicide in Argentina. It will also examine the extent to which

NUM's success can be understood in relation to earlier campaigns in terms of political opportunities, framing processes, and collective action.

From the theory, three key concepts were identified. These will be introduced below and an explanation on how these concepts related to the research question will be given.

### ***Political opportunities***

Political opportunities are deemed as the most crucial component of PPT as, in accordance with the theory, a social movement cannot succeed without them (McAdam 1970).

Vulnerabilities in the current political system give rise to political possibilities, or chances for intervention and change within it. A crisis of legitimacy, in which the public no longer accepts the social and economic conditions that the system promotes or upholds, is the primary cause of vulnerabilities in the system. The expansion of political enfranchisement to previously marginalised groups (such as women), growing diversity in political organisations and the electorate, and the relaxation of oppressive laws that prevented people from calling for change could all be contributing factors to opportunities (Ibid). For the sake of Argentina and the NUM movement, a major political opportunity was the change of Government. Under Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's administration (2007–2015), the NUM movement gained strength, and it persisted under Mauricio Macri's administration (2015–2019). The efforts made to combat femicide during both administrations were notable for the adoption of laws and the execution of programmes meant to uphold the rights of women. The chance to push for more robust policies to combat femicide and violence against women was presented by the shift in government leadership (NiUnaMenos 2017).

Furthermore, when conducting research using PPT, examining variables including the public opinion or media exposure are some examples of what this entails (McAdam 1970). The NUM campaign saw a surge in popular support and media attention after a few high-profile femicide cases and large-scale mobilisations (Barber 2024). The public's perception of gender-based violence in Argentina has changed because of media coverage, which also aided increased awareness of the problem. Because of their greater visibility, activists were able to intensify their demands and rally support for the campaign (Ibid). In addition, NUM became a larger part of a global wave of social movements and feminist action that supported women's rights. Many activists in Argentina collaborated with feminist groups elsewhere and took part in transnational advocacy networks as result of the movement receiving

international attention and support. The goals of the NUM movement were aided by resources, exposure, and support from this global solidarity (NiUnaMenos 2017). To understand the political opportunities that existed behind the emergence of the NUM movement, a deep dive into the political opportunities that existed during this time needs to take place to how the opportunities potentially relate to the success of the social movement.

### ***Mobilising structures***

PPT highlights how crucial it is to examine the systems and procedures social movements use to gather support, form coalitions, and take part in coordinated action- also called mobilising structures (Polletta 1999). This aspect of the theory refers to already existing organisations (political or others) that already exist in civil society and that are working to achieve change. These organisations serve as mobilising structures for a social movement by providing communication and social network to the emerging social movement (Ibid). It also highlights the importance of analysing the structure through which social movements mobilise resources, build alliances and engage in collective action (Ibid). To analyse this aspect, one can look at how social movements like NUM organise, when it comes to both membership recruitment but also how the social movement network with other advocacy groups and political parties. Understanding the inner workings of social movements may require qualitative techniques, like interviewing (Polletta 1999). For the sake of understanding the mobilising structures, I have interviewed five activists who all have been active within the organisation.

### ***Framing processes***

Leaders within an organisation use framing techniques to help the group or movement explain current issues in a clear and compelling way, explain why change is needed, what changes are wanted, and explain how to get there (McAdam 1970). A social movement needs ideological buy-in from the public, political establishment members, and movement participants to take advantage of political possibilities and effect change. Framing processes help achieve this. "Conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" is how McAdam (1970) define framing. However, the most significant contributor of the notion of frame in social movement analysis is Goffman's work from 1974. Goffman defined frames as "schemata of interpretation" that allow people "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events in both their immediate environment and the larger world (Goffman 1974: 21 as

cited in Benford & Snow 2000). There are different forms of framing or frames such as issue framing, cultural framing, media framing, temporal framing, and attribution framing (Ibid).

A unique framing process that the NUM movement utilised was the centring of the stories and experiences of femicide victims through media framing (Activist 2 2024). Victim-centric framing is a technique used by activists and supporters to draw attention to the effects of gender-based violence on communities and individuals while also humanising the problem. The movement aims to increase awareness, refute victim-blaming narratives, and galvanise support for structural change by concentrating on the individual stories of victims (Goffman 1974 as cited in Benford & Snow 2000). Another frame the movement utilised revolves around the demands for justice and accountability for femicide perpetrators. Femicide is portrayed by activists as a systematic issue stemming from institutional shortcomings, impunity, and patriarchal attitudes. They demand stronger law enforcement, legal reforms, and increased accountability for offenders and collaborating authorities. This way of looking at it highlights how institutional reform is necessary to deal with the underlying causes of gender-based violence (Ibid).

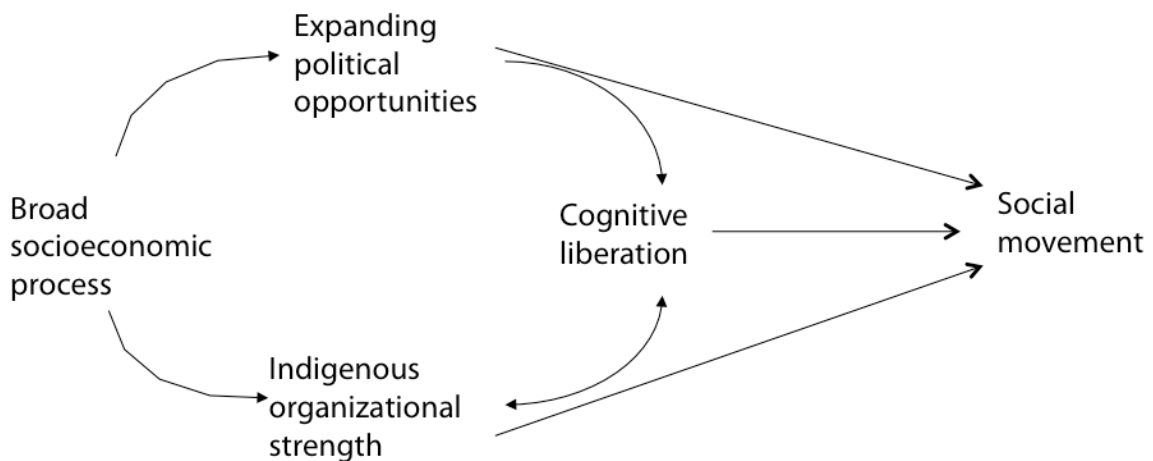


Figure 1: Political process model for social movement emergence (McAdam, 1970)



### ***Feminist theory and feminist social movements***

Feminist social movement scholars like Verta Taylor (2000) among others have brought a lively empirical rigour to the field in ways that have provided an important critique of the gendered assumptions underpinning most previous research on social movement (Maddisson & Shaw ch 19: 413) explaining that a feminist approach to social movements must be more engaged. According to Kitzinger (2000 as cited in Turley & Fisher 2018: 128), the feminist movement is a social movement that *"challenges the patriarchal and societal systems that serve to oppress women, to advocate for social justice and issues that affect women around the world."* Friedman (2017) is another scholar who has contributed to my theoretical framework of understanding women's movements in Latin America. According to Friedman and Ewig (2023), there are three kinds of movements of women in this region. These are: feminist movements, women's movements and movements in which women play a significant role. The first kind aim to end gendered power relations and women's subordination by questioning traditional roles for men and women. These movements have been termed movements for women's *"strategic gender interests"* in Latin America, in accordance with an early scholarly description (Moly-neux 1985 as cited in Basu 2017:267). The second concentrates on a variety of topics, such as the preservation of an authoritarian system, the defence of human rights, and even conservative demands. Movements for *"practical gender interests"* are made up of and directed by working-class and impoverished women who frequently organise to enable them to carry out their tasks without overtly challenging gender norms (ibid). The third category comprises movements, including those advocating for respect for indigenous and Afro-Latino peoples, where women are the main protagonists, but they are also frequently led by men (Basu 2017:267)

Feminist movements, which aim to remove female subordination and gender relations of power by questioning established roles for men and women, are the most significant for the study of NUM, according to Friedman's (2017) theoretical framework (as stated in Basu 2017). Through its campaign against harassment, abuse, and discrimination against women and girls in Argentina (NiUnaMenos 2017), NUM appears to be challenging gender stereotypes. Thus, utilising this notion that feminist social movement challenges the societal norms about female subordination is deemed highly relevant as part of the theoretical for this study because it will add to the analytical discussion about the mobilising processes and political opportunities about the NUM movement and its relation to femicide in Argentina.

### ***Empowerment***

Within the literature of feminist social movements, the component of empowerment is widely discussed and thus relevant to add to the theoretical framework to analyse the NUM movement. Empowerment can mean many things, and the first one Taylor (1998) discusses in her work about feminist research in social movement is the *voice*. Taylor explains that: “Empirical feminist research seeks to validate, give voice to, and understand the experiences of women and men who have been marginalized or ignored in traditional research” (1998:9). She goes on to explain that providing women with the opportunity, means, and encouragement to voice their needs, wants, and opinions is a key component of empowerment. Women's voices are amplified and their agency over their own lives and decisions is guaranteed by feminist movements (Ibid:10).

Next Taylor (1998) brings up the concept of *education* and awareness as a form of empowerment. She explains that education is often the first step of empowerment since without knowledge, the women would not realise their full capabilities (Ibid). Thus, this is a vital step in understanding female empowerment. Therefore, feminist movements strive to educate women about their rights as well as the systems of oppression that have a grave impact on them, directly and indirectly. Taylor (1998) explains that by enlightening women about the systems of oppressions, such as the patriarchal systems, and women’s role as subordinated, women are better equipped to challenge these concepts and advocate for real change.

*Economic empowerment* is another aspect that Taylor (1998) is highlighting as an important empowerment for women. She explains that it is crucial for women’s autonomy and independence to be economically empowered and feel it. In addition, Taylor (1998) explains that feminist social movements advocate equal access to resources such as employment and financial services. To do this, one must address the systemic barriers that disproportionately women, such as lack of affordable childcare and gender pay gap (Ibid).

Lastly, Taylor (1998) explains that *political participation*, such as political activism and advocacy is an important step for empowerment for women. This is probably the most transferable concept to feminist social movements. In this kind of environment, women are often encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and engage in grassroots organising to advocate and advance women’s rights (Ibid).

### *Agency*

Women's agency in relation to feminist social movements is highly relevant according to Taylor (1998). She explains that agency in these circumstances occurs under different areas. The most common one when talking about social movements and agency is the notion of *collective action* (Ibid). This notion refers to when agency is exercised collectively through protests, marches, and advocacy campaigns. Furthermore, women may demand change and hold decision-makers accountable for tackling gender inequity by utilising the concept of collective action. Next, *self-determination* is an important aspect of agency (Taylor 1998). Women in the feminist movement can establish their own objectives, goals, and tactics with the aid of agency. As active participants in the movement, women actively shape its priorities and direction based on their own needs and experiences, instead of being passive beneficiaries of advocacy (Ibid).

Agency in feminist movements can also be witnessed in the *leadership opportunities* that exists (Taylor 1998). The goal of feminist movements is to provide environments where women can hold positions of leadership and decision-making authority. This covers leadership in political arenas, academic institutions, advocacy groups, and grassroots organisations. Feminist movements give women the chance to take the lead, enabling them to represent their communities and effect real change (Ibid). Finally, inclusive and diverse participatory *decision-making processes* that prioritise inclusivity can help to promote agency within feminist social movements. To ensure that decisions represent the interests and priorities of a wide spectrum of people, women are encouraged to participate in conversations, debates, and planning processes by lending their voices and perspectives (Ibid).

## 3.1 Research paradigm

In this next section of the paper, a brief explanation of the ontological and epistemological understandings will be given. The research paradigm takes its building blocks from the constructivist understanding. According to constructivism, the world, and our understanding of it are products of social construction (Checkel 1998). The nature of reality and the nature of knowledge—also known as ontology and epistemology in academic parlance—are

discussed in this perspective. Commonly, when studying gender-based violence, in this thesis, identified as *femicide*, researchers view the reality as socially constructed. The phrase "socially constructed" describes the idea that a wide range of elements of human existence, such as ideas, identities, behaviours, and institutions, are formed and preserved through interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding within a certain culture or community (Ibid). These constructs are shaped by historical, cultural, political, and economic influences rather than being innate or naturally occurring. Furthermore, it is common to recognise within this field of study that power structures exist, particularly patriarchal structures, that shape and perpetuate gender-based violence (Ibid). Researchers may recognise the value of subjective experiences and different truths within this paradigm, highlighting the necessity of comprehending the lived experiences of women impacted by femicide. In addition, they might challenge established methods of producing knowledge and work to give voice to underrepresented groups (Ibid).

## 4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, grounded in content analysis and case study design to examine the discursive construction of femicide in Argentina within the context of the NUM. A qualitative method is the most suitable approach, in my opinion, to address the main research issue since it "helps people to understand the world, their society, and its institutions" (Tracy 2012:5). Furthermore, qualitative research "provides knowledge that targets societal issues, questions, or problems," it might be claimed that it is the recommended methodology in this regard (Given 2008).

The case study design is a qualitative research method used to investigate complex phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin 2014). One qualitative research technique for examining complex phenomena in real-world settings is the case study design (Yin 2014). The aim of this study is to investigate the complexities, dynamics, and contextual elements shaping the discourse surrounding femicide, especially regarding the NUM movement. Thus, a case study design is deemed fitting to achieve this purpose. Additionally, this approach will aid in offering an extensive overview and comprehension of the phenomenon being studied within the real-life contexts as Yin explains (Ibid). With a case study, it is shown that Argentina is one of the countries in Latin America where femicide is most prevalent, but it also has one of the strongest civil society responses. (Pomeraniec 2015).

The empirical data that is analysed in this study is semi-structured interviews from NUM activists in Buenos Aires. A few manifestos from the NUM movement will also be utilised to expand the analysis (and to bring in a second opinion on some of the topics discussed in the analysis) but might not be analysed due to an extensive amount of data from the interviews. Thematic coding will be employed to analyse the data. The analysis will centre on ideological themes that are prevalent in the discourse around femicide. Determining dominant discourses, tracking changes over time, and evaluating the influence of discourse on public opinion and social change initiatives are all necessary steps in the interpretation of the results.

## 4.1. Case Selection

In this section of the study, the case selection of Argentina and the NUM movement will be explained. In reaction to the rising incidence of femicide and gender-based violence in Argentina, the Ni Una Menos movement was born in 2015. Therefore, this is a case of a social movement that tackles gender-based violence. It is worth noting that Argentina has a long history of feminist activism, with women's rights group advocating for gender equality and reproductive rights such as the 'Mothers of Plaza de Mayo' which is a renowned human rights movement formed by mothers whose children were forcibly taken away from their homes during Argentina's military dictatorship, which lasted from 1976 to 1983 (NiUnaMenos 2017). Thus, it did not come as a surprise that the NUM movement started in Argentina. Considering this notion, Argentina having a strong civil society that engages with the political agenda, the choice to investigate Argentina over for example Chile which is another country that the NUM-movement gained momentum in. was quite easy. This will be elaborated further in the sections below.

So, what is Argentina a case of? It can be explained as a case of several things. Argentina can be explained as a critical case because it is a case that holds significant importance in a field, this case, femicide. A critical case can act as catalysts for change or reform because they frequently have the capacity to upend pre-existing beliefs, ideologies, or power systems. Understanding underlying problems, dynamics, or tensions in a system or society can be gained by examining crucial cases. Argentina is a crucial case study that illustrates how mass mobilisation and grassroots activity may raise awareness of important social concerns and spur larger-scale change. In addition, the NUM-movement in Argentina can be perceived as a crucial case for femicide research; past, present, and future.

Furthermore, Argentina has been acknowledged internationally for having high rates of gender-based violence and femicide. These concerning figures gave rise to the Ni Una Menos movement, which emphasises the importance of comprehending the gravity and ramifications of these problems. Significant national and international attention has been paid to the Ni Una Menos movement. It has been a driving force behind femicide and gender-based violence activism, legislation changes, and public awareness raising, which makes it an important case study for scholars studying feminist movements and advocacy initiatives. Beyond Argentina,

the Ni Una Menos campaign has inspired similar movements and initiatives in other nations dealing with comparable issues of gender-based violence.

Was there a prior social movement with a comparable goal that served as the model for the NUM movement? The simple response to that would be both yes and no. Although the movement took cues from other feminist movements and activism, it was also unique in its origins (Argentina) and goals. However, to bring some potential background to the rise of NUM, we had the feminist movement known as *Reclaim the Night* get its start in the 1970s, mostly in response to concerns about violence against women in public places. The movement began in several nations, such as the US, Australia, and the UK, and it is still going strong today in many regions of the globe. The Reclaim the Night movement objectives were to combat violence against women and ensure that public spaces are safe, for women, especially at night.

The well-known "*Me-too*" movement is a social movement that emerged following the NUM movement. The #MeToo campaign, which gained international attention in 2017, raised awareness of sexual harassment, assault, and abuse and facilitated a larger conversation about gender-based violence and injustice. The #MeToo movement's widespread resonance likely had an impact on the timing and significance of the Ni Una Menos movement. The main goal of the movement was to raise awareness of the issue, end the stigma and silence surrounding social violence by encouraging survivors to share their stories and experiences and to demand accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence, regardless of their social or professional status.

Ultimately, the Ni Una Menos movement established its objectives, tactics, and influence within a larger framework of feminist activism and solidarity, both domestically and globally, even if it was not directly inspired by a single antecedent.

## 4.2 Content analysis

The choice of using content analysis to the empirical data was decided because it is a preferred method when it comes to analysing a wide range of textual data, including interview transcripts (Given 2008). The literature explains that content analysis can be carried

out using a qualitative method, most often an inductive one (Ibid). In this study, the recorded interviews in Spanish were first transcribed by a transcription program straight after they took place. This was deemed helpful to identify important aspects of the interviews and identify categories and patterning in the material that would later be interesting for the analysis. When utilising interviews and the data produced by them, clusters or codes that translate into themes are visible (Given 2008). The themes had not been identified prior to the interviews taking place, rather the interview questions were made with the purpose of responding to the overall research question based on the selected theoretical framework for this study. The main categories identified turned out to be closely linked to the theoretical framework and were:

1. Political opportunities
2. Mobilisation
3. Framing processes
4. Empowerment
5. Agency

To learn more about NUM Argentina's history, the type of activism they practise, and other details regarding the movements, I also looked through their social media accounts and the Argentinian website. However, the purpose of this research has not been to undertake a thorough analysis of their social media platforms; rather, it has been utilised as a complement. As a result, a systematic content analysis of each social media platform has not been conducted.

### 4.3 Qualitative research interviews

My primary method of gathering empirical data was semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Given 2008). My goal was to comprehend the social contexts that gave rise to NUM's demands in Argentina. To answer my posed research questions, I needed to understand the NUM movement from an inside perspective. How did civil society impact the movement? What kind of discourse could be identified within the movement? Through conducting in-depth interviewing with activists within the movement, it was possible to find answers on these inquiries which were deemed crucial for the investigation. Given that the researcher can "set the agenda, by prepared questions, however it also leaves room for the respondent's more spontaneous descriptions and narratives," (as cited in Given 2008: 5) I chose to employ semi-



structured interviews. Using this approach allowed me to modify the questions to reflect the movement's real concerns while doing the fieldwork. My interviews were predicated on a semi-structured interview guide. Refer to Appendix C for further information.

#### 4.4 Sample of participants

Between November 2023 and January 2024, I conducted five in-depth, semi-structured interviews in Buenos Aires, Argentina with activists engaged in the NUM movement. Initially I contacted several feminist organisations on social media platforms, such as Instagram. I found the organisations by searching on the Instagram search and it turned out to be very efficient and I found two activists via this way and organised an in-person interview with them. With the three others, I was lucky and had a small network of people in Buenos Aires (a person from the Swedish Embassy helped me to get in contact with one activist who I later interviewed, and another contact pointed me in the direction of some Instagram pages and activists in Buenos Aires) that enabled me to get in contact with different people. The so-called snowball affect happened from there since it turned out the NUM community in Argentina is still very much in contact and soon, I had arranged my five interviews. The interviews were conducted in person, in a public setting and took around 1.5 hours-2 hours for each interview. All the interviews for this investigation were conducted in Spanish and recorded for the content analysis of the material. Some of the materials have been translated from Spanish to English to showcase some standpoints and answers from the activists in this study however I tried to keep it as close as possible to the original to respect the authenticity of the interviewees.

Before we began our interview, everyone I spoke with was made aware of the aim of the research and verbally consented to my using the interview material for my own investigation. All participants were then emailed a consent statement (see **Appendix B**), which they were asked to sign and return to me in digital format for the record. Moreover, I chose not to identify any people in my investigation due to the political climate in Argentina now. As a result, the activists go by the names activist, 1, 2, 3,4 and 5. As previously said, in **Appendix A** all information about date, location, and media utilised for each interview in addition to their function within the movement.

## 4.5 Reflections on the Validity and Objectivity of the Results

In this next section the validity and reliability of the study will be presented. Validity and reliability are essential considerations in research design to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of findings, especially when studying complex social phenomena (Halperin and Heath 2020) such as femicide through the lens of political process theory and feminism. According to Halperin and Heath (2020: 189–190) there are several approaches to addressing the problem of validity, namely, face validity, content validity, and construct validity are the three categories of validity that are most frequently used to describe validity.

This study investigates the political opportunities and mobilisations efforts made by the NUM to combat femicide in Argentina, as well as analysing how social movements like NUM impacts women's empowerment and identity in the Argentinean case using political process theory and feminist theory as an analytical tool, which is then based on the framework's concept of if the NUM was successful or not. This indicates a form of content validity since the concept definition is in accordance with the theoretical framework defines successfulness or not.

Furthermore, it explains that a case study research design offers an in-depth comprehension of a crucial case because theory and evidence match well, offering high internal validity (Halperin and Heath 2020: 237). When good content validity and high internal validity are combined, it is then interpreted that the validity of this study is high.

Subsequently, reliability is said to be difficult to compare because low reliability is typically the result of high validity (Halperin and Heath 2020: 191). On the other hand, dependability is defined by Halperin and Heath (2020: 192) as the degree to which a study may be replicated. I contend that the same outcome would occur if future research used the same theoretical framework and same research question and applied it to a similar data. It is therefore believed to increase this study's repeatability and, hence, its reliability.

## 5. Analysis

In this Analysis the data from the in-depth qualitative interviews with core activists from NUM Argentina will be presented. The analysis will be divided up into subchapter to illustrate the theoretical framework and how it relates to the analysis of the NUM movement. Furthermore, in the end of the analysis a summary of the findings will be given. As was mentioned earlier in this study, due to the political climate in Argentina currently no activist will be named by their real name, hence, any quotes by them will be cited as activist 1,2,3,4, or 5. This chapter will set out to answer the research questions:

1. *"How do Political process theory explain the political opportunities and the mobilisations efforts made by the NUM movement to address femicide in Argentina?"*
2. *"How do feminist social movements contribute to the empowerment and agency of women in the Argentinean case?"*

### 5.1 Political opportunities and Ni Una Menos in Argentina

The first three sub chapters of this analysis will set out to answer the first established research question by utilising the theoretical framework of PPT. As has been established in this study, the NUM movement emerged in Argentina during 2015 because of feminist movements coming together in Buenos Aires, both online and offline. In this section of the study, the theoretical framework consisting of PPT and feminist theory together with the data will be analysed. The political opportunities that existed at the time of the emergence of the NUM movement will be identified and analysed to understand what contributed to the movement's success. The analysed material is from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with five activists in Buenos Aires between November 2023 and January 2024. Political opportunities are considered the most important part of PPT, according to McAdam, because the theory states that a social movement cannot flourish without them. The NUM activists that I interviewed all said that the advanced network of feminist groups in Buenos Aires and around Argentina was the key reason for the mass demonstration that occurred on the 3rd of June 2015.

Activist 1 told me that the *history of feminist movements* in the country, and their previous experience with mobilising was the reason why it was possible to organise and gather such a great number of people on the 3rd of June (400.000 in 240 places around the country). The activist told me that they used social media to spread the date of the march, but also it was largely passed on via WhatsApp and by mouth to mouth. Activist 1 continued by explaining that women in Argentina have been protesting against femicide every 8th of March and 25th of November for years. Therefore, the tweet by Marcela Ojeda (a journalist) where she said: “Actresses, politicians, artists, businesswomen, community organisers ... We’re all women, but we’re not going to raise our voices? They’re killing us.”<sup>1</sup> were not the sole reason why the movement began even though it did have a catalyst effect (Activist 1 2023).

*“It is important to understand that feminism in Argentina did not begin with the Ni Una Menos movement and even though the Tweet by Ojeda helped to organise us, mobilisations structures and feminist movements were already strong in our country”.* (Activist 1 2023).

Another activist (Activist 2) I interviewed explained to me that in 2015, *the political climate* in Argentina was going through a major change which could explain the success of the NUM movement. The climate was moving from Kirchner era who represented the Peronist faction of the Justicialist Party to Mauricio Macri who was a centre-right politician (Activist 2 2024). As a result, Kirchner's left-leaning politics in Argentina gave way to a centre-right one. Kirchner's supporters saw her as a leader who put social fairness, economic growth, and human rights first (Ibid). They acknowledge that she advanced progressive policies and raised the level of living for many Argentinians. Her administration, according to critics, was characterised by economic ineptitude and corruption scandals. They point to things like exorbitant inflation and limitations on press freedom. Macri, on the other side, received praise for being a leader who addressed Argentina's economic problems, encouraged accountability and transparency, and opened the nation to foreign trade (Ibid). These were all vital but challenging actions. His administration's detractors claim that he mismanaged the economy, imposed harsh austerity measures that harmed the weakest members of society, and failed to

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<sup>1</sup> Actrices, políticas, artistas, empresarias, referentes sociales ... mujeres, todas, bah.. no vamos a levantar la voz? NOS ESTAN MATANDO

adequately address social issues. They also highlight his failure to deliver on a few of his campaign promises, like stabilising the economy and lowering inflation (Ibid).

*“Argentina is a country that has gone through many major political changes throughout the years, some for the better, and some for the worse. When the Ni Una Menos movement started, Argentina was in a place of change, from a time of prioritising human rights and social change, this opportunity enabled the movement to gain momentum”* (Activist 2 2024).

Another political opportunity that was present for the Ni Una Menos movement was the *media exposure*. Activist 3 explained to me that the reason why the movement received such media exposure was because of the usage of alarming statistics and victim’s stories to capture the scope of the problem. This drew a lot of media attention in turn because it highlighted the reality of the problem and media outlets wanted to interview the victims which created even more attention and other people speaking out. Additionally, social media played a crucial role in spreading the message of Ni Una Menos (Activist 3 2023). Many activists, including the activists that I interviewed, explained that they used platforms such as Twitter (now known as X) and Instagram to share information and organise protests as well as just raising awareness of the movement. The activists explained that the usage of online platforms was an important opportunity for the success of the movement. Furthermore, activist 3 explained to me that many of Argentina’s celebrities and public figures engaged in the debate and lent their support to the Ni Una Menos movement on their platforms which in turn amplified its message and drew further media attention (Activist 3 2023).

*“One thing I adore about our country is that public figures in Argentina are not afraid to speak up on social issues, rather, it is deemed normal, almost expected for public figures to engage in debates regarding our country and its well-being”*. (Activist 3 2023).

This section has identified three different political opportunities that existed at the time of the NUM rampaging. The first one identified was the history of feminist movements in the country. A strong history of feminist movements meant that the NUM movement was not foreign, and activists knew how to mobilise and structure themselves due to a strong history of previous demonstrations. The second opportunity that was identified was the change of the political climate. This was identified by McAdam (1970) as one of the strongest opportunities that usually worked as the catalyst for many social movements. McAdam explained that it is

because a change in the political climate often result in dissatisfaction (McAdam 1970) and that more people are willing to vocalise their displeasure with the previous government which often results in many people coming together, either online or offline to voice similar opinions and demanding social change (Activist 3 2023). The third opportunity was the media exposure. It is hard to pinpoint exactly why the NUM movement became extremely covered in media, potentially it is an effect of public figures joining the movement and speaking up about femicide, perhaps it is because the large scale of the problem or the fact that many victims were sharing their abuse online under the hashtag #NiUnaMenos. All these reasons presented above resulted in the big media exposure the movement got in 2015 and the years to follow.

## 5.2 Mobilising structures

Polletta (1999) explains that it is vital to understand how existing organisations in civil society might influence social movements that are emerging. This is because the already established organisations serve as mobilising structures for emerging movements by providing social networking opportunities and communications. As was presented in the previous section about political opportunities it is evident that Argentina has a strong history of feminist social movements. Activist 4 explained to me that recruitment was one of her core duties within the organisation. She explained to me that in the peak of the movement, it was very easy to recruit new supporters and supporters that wanted to volunteer their time for the cause of the movement through social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook that through using the hashtags “#NiUnaMenos, #VivasNosQueremos (We Want Us Alive), and #NiUnaMenosPorFemicidio (Not One Less Due to Femicide) were widely shared and helped to raise awareness about the issue of gender-based violence (Activist 4 2024). She also explained to me that creating images and logos that could be used to symbolise the movement was important. She explained that having an image that supporters could share along with their voice created a sense of community, and same with the hashtag (Ibid). Supporters were safe behind the hashtags and common images because it meant that the individual was supported by something grand, and not only in their opinions and feelings. The activist also showed me one of the images she and another person had created that had become one of the main images representing the movement throughout the years. (Ibid). *“Recruiting supporters for the NUM cause in the social media era was like turning on a tap of water; at first, a few drips trickled slowly, and then a powerful flood of water began.*

*Witnessing people from all walks of life—young and elderly, wealthy and poor—uniting to end the murder of our women was overwhelming and incredibly beautiful.* ” (Activist 4 2024).



Figure 2: Illustration of one of the most prominent visual icons of the movement.

Retrieved from <https://www.masoneria-argentina.org.ar/ni-una-menos/> on the 9/4-2024.

Activist 1 which was one of the founders of the NUM movement in Buenos Aires and a permanent activist that partook in the National Encounters of Women yearly (Activist 1 2023). She explained that the mobilising structures for feminist social movements run deep in the country. She also explained that many activists have been participating in feminist social movements before the NUM, which meant they already had a strong social network and great communication opportunities (Ibid). She explained that another political phenomenon that was used as a starting point for the NUM and the mass demonstration that took place on the 3rd of June 2015 was the National Encounters of Women<sup>2</sup> [Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres], which has been held every year since 1985 with more than 65,000 women participating in the last few year's events (Ibid).

*“Ni Una Menos movement came as no surprise for us involved in the feminist activism in Buenos Aires, ever since the National Encounters of Women and the yearly gatherings, there was a sense of frustration and with the increasement of reported femicides in our country, the civil society became more and more enraged as the years passed. The NUM movement was the tipping point of frustration.* ” (Activist 1 2023).

Throughout my interviewing process it was possible to identify the mobilising structures quite easily, one activist said something that led me to the next, and the snowballing effect was very efficient in my interviewing process. The activists all said the same thing, that the

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<sup>2</sup> The National Women's Encounter is an annual event in Argentina that brings together thousands of feminist activists, organisations, and individuals from across the country. It was first established in Buenos Aires in 1986 after a group of Argentine feminist activist participated in the World Conference on Women in Kenya 1985. The next year they brought the movement to Argentina. The Encounter serves as a space for women to discuss and organise around a wide range of issues related to gender equality, women's rights, and social justice.

strong history of previous feminist movements was the reason why it was quite effortless to mobilise NUM. As activist 1 explained, many of the founders of the NUM were active activist in 2015. On top of that, many of them partook in the National Encounters of Women which meant they already had a strong social network amongst each other and good communication. Furthermore, activist 4 that was working with recruiting supporters explained that social media platforms and the community hashtags and images provided supporters with a sense of security, knowing that they were supported by the bigger movement in their opinions and feelings which the activist believed is a reason why so many supporters joined the collective actions, offline and online, despite of course the important cause of the NUM.

### 5.3 Framing processes

McAdam (1970) explains that framing processes, which is a part of the PPT framework often helps to identify framing techniques that the movement utilises to gain new members. Framing strategies are employed by leaders within an organisation to assist the group or movement in articulating present difficulties in a compelling and understandable manner, outlining desired changes, why they are necessary, and how to get there. To capitalise on political opportunities and bring about change, a social movement needs ideological support from the public, members of the political elite, and movement participants. Framing techniques facilitate this. As was presented in the theoretical chapter, there are several different frames one could look at. This will be presented below and an explanation of how the NUM movement used these framing processes to gain momentum and new members to the movement will be offered. One of the more crucial frames for the NUM movement was the media framing so this is where this analysis will begin.

*Media framing* refers to how media plays a crucial role in shaping the public perceptions. In the case of the NUM as has been presented in other areas of this thesis, the media and its widespread and persistence coverage of the movement's growth played a big role in the movements success which in turn helped to raise awareness, mobilise support and even pressure policymakers to address the problem of femicide in Argentina. It was deemed a good strategy of the movement according to activist 4 to take to social media and by utilising the hashtag #NiUnaMenos to make it into an online campaign that could be spread outside of



the borders of Argentina which meant that supporters outside of the country also joined in on the cause of the movement. It also made the movement accessible outside the capital, Buenos Aires, even though it was meant to be the Hub for the movement. Hence, with the risk of repeating myself this framing process will not be further explained than that. Both activist 4 that I interviewed but also activist 1 has expressed the importance of social media and the media exposure the NUM received at the time of its origins.

*“It is difficult to say, without the presence of social media, if the movement (NUM) would have been as effective. Social media really helped to engage the public and I think more people were able to understand the importance of the movement thanks to how it was written about in the media. Therefore, I think in some ways we can be grateful that we live in a time where social media can help to amplify voices, especially in important matters like this one”.* (Activist 4 2024).

*Issue framing* is another part of the framing processes. This part refers to how a social movement, like the NUM movement utilised the frame of gender-based violence as a systemic issue affecting women across Argentina, and globally really. The NUM movement views gender-based violence as a systemic issue with deep roots in social, cultural, and political systems rather than just individual incidents or personal issues. This method of framing inquiries the normalisation of violence against women and emphasises the need for systemic change. By emphasising the global effect of the issue, and its impact on women’s everyday life, the movement seeks to raise awareness to mobilise support for change, within Argentina but also globally. In addition, the term "Ni Una Menos" (Not One Less) operates as a compelling framework, highlighting the group aspect of the movement and the unity amongst women resisting assault. People are encouraged to perceive themselves as a part of a broader social justice and gender equality movement by using this framing.

*“Argentina is not the only country in the world that is deeply affected by femicide, however we might be one of the countries who has a civil society that fights the hardest for civil rights and protection. The movement was very smart in their strategies to illustrate the grander scale of femicide to awaken a movement that would not stop at anything.”* (Activist 2 2024)

In the framework of Goffman's work (1974), *attribution framing* refers to how people understand or assign meaning to events based on the framing that they or others have

provided or depending on the circumstance itself. It is about how people interpret events, behaviours, or acts by giving them reasons or intentions. The concept of attribution framing also pertains to how people see and comprehend social roles. The way that people interpret the actions of those who fill certain roles is shaped by the framing that society norms and expectations provide. For instance, depending on the framing associated with their various jobs, a civilian's actions and those of a police officer may be understood differently. In general, attribution framing emphasises how context, social cues, and cultural norms influence how people understand and give meaning to events, behaviours, and acts in social interactions.

*"I think the NUM movement came at a good time in peoples live. Having a social movement that people could attribute their feelings and experiences to and feeling a collective safety as a woman I think resulted in a strong feminist movement. "* (Activist 3 2023)

*Cultural framing* refers to how social movements operate within the cultural context of a country, in this case, Argentina. Goffman's concept of primary frameworks is consistent with cultural framing, as people understand social interactions using cultural norms and values as their fundamental framework. These fundamental foundations, which are acquired early in life, offer the cultural setting in which social interactions occur.

It is possible to view cultural practices and rituals as deliberate fabrications, in which people display or create cultural symbols and behaviours with the purpose of influencing how others understand reality. For instance, complex rituals and performances that uphold cultural identities and values are frequently created for cultural celebrations and festivals (Goffman 1974). The movement "keys" its discourse and practices to draw attention to the pervasiveness and consequences of gender-based violence in particular cultural contexts. For instance, the NUM movement's protests, marches, and social media campaigns may make use of culturally appropriate language, symbolism, and imagery to connect with the community and highlight how urgent it is to combat gender-based violence. This means understanding how the NUM movement uses cultural norms and symbols to inspire support and unity Argentinean cultural environment. The movement's message is amplified inside Argentine culture and resonates better with supporters' identities and ideals when presented through cultural contexts.

*“A unique feature of this women’s movement was the many catchphrases that were being spread around the movement to unity and deliver the message of the movement. My favorite one was Machismo kills and We are all not here, the murdered ones are missing.” (Activist 5).*

The last frame that we will explore in this analysis is *temporal framing*. According to Erving Goffman's conceptualization, temporal framing describes how people organise and understand social interactions in relation to time. Goffman (1974) investigated the ways in which time affects how social situations are understood, interpreted, and handled. Gender-based violence is portrayed by the Ni Una Menos movement as an ongoing issue with lasting effects on the affected women. The movement highlights the need for systemic change and persistent action by drawing attention to the historical causes of gender inequality as well as the continuous occurrence of violence against women. When I was interviewing activist 5 about the history of femicide and resistance of civil society, the mothers of Plaza de Mayo were brought up many times. The Plaza de Mayo Mothers came to represent persistence and resilience in the face of government persecution. They persisted in demanding the truth, justice, and accountability for the crimes of the dictatorship despite threats, intimidation, and violence from the government.

*“ The brave mothers that just wanted their children back the backbone of our country and our strong resilience for justice. Whilst it is a dark history, it is our history, and it has made us stronger as a population because we will not stop, never, and this was the strength of the NUM movement. We had the whole of Argentina’s past, present and future women to stand up for, so we did, and we will not stop until femicide disappears ” (Activist 5 2023).*

The Ni Una Menos campaign has been able to successfully convey its message, rally followers, and push for legislative changes to address gender-based violence in Argentina by comprehending and skilfully utilising the framing processes mentioned above. According to activist 5, what made the feminist social movement unique compared to previous social movements in Argentina is that the NUM movement managed to involve a huge gathering of men as well. Men from all walks of life joined in the social movement and took the fight for the different women in their life. Activist 5 told me that this was unique for Argentina and she explained that this was proof that the issue, cultural and media framing truly had succeeded.

## 5.4 Feminism and Ni Una Menos

Not One More, or Ni Una Menos, is a powerful catchphrase from a feminist social movement. An attempt will be made to address the second research question in this section of the study. There are three different types of women's movements in Latin America, as Friedman (2017 & 2023). demonstrated, and NUM, as I described in the theory section, is a feminist movement. This next section of the thesis will set out to explain the importance and role of feminist social movements for women, and their agency and how it impacts women's empowerment that engage within social movements. The definitions of both concepts were introduced under the Theoretical chapter.

### *Empowerment*

Empowerment was explained by Taylor (1998) as it can show itself in different ways. To make it easier to analyse I have split it into four categories that will be presented as the analysis forgoes. The first category is *Voice*. In this instance, voice is referring to women's ability to voice their needs, wants and opinions and is deemed a key component of empowerment. Taylor (1998) goes on by explaining that feminist movements ensure that women have agency over their own lives and decisions and that their voices are heard.

Activist 1 talked at length about the importance of increasing the presence of women's voices, particularly in subjects that involve them, such as femicide. This is because giving women the opportunity to voice their needs, they can use this opportunity to highlight what is important to them and empower them to make decisions that will impact them. She said:

*“Not consulting women about femicide would be like hiring a baker to fix your broken toilet. We need to amplify women's experiences about femicide, to tackle femicide effectively!”*  
(Activist 1 2023).

She continued to talk about that one thing that made the NUM movement special compared to other feminist social movements is the voice it gave to its followers, both online but also offline. It was women leading women (mostly) on the Big March on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015 (Activist 1 2023). It was women giving speeches outside of the Pink House (the parliamentary house in Buenos Aires). It was women that were asked questions about femicide, and they were

able to give honest answers. Even though many men participated in the March and the campaign overall, no man spoke exclusively on behalf of women; instead, the power was shared by the group in society that was most deserving of the platform: women who were victims of femicide. The movements' ability to empower women through this channel activist 1 believes have contributed to its success and she says that:

*"Showcasing women's voices and experiences like this made the issue of femicide real for everyone. It could be your mother, your sister, your partner, or your neighbour. Showcasing voices of the abused like this created a lot of empathy amongst the civil society but also a lot of anger. Stop hurting the people we love!"* (Activist 1 2023).

The next category of empowerment women can experience is the one of education. Taylor (1998) explains that usually education in the staircase of empowerment is seen as the first step since without knowledge, women would not be able to realise their full capabilities of empowerment and thus, without that first step, women would not even begin to climb the ladder. Hence, Taylor (1998) explains that this is a vital step in female empowerment and this category should be given immense attention when researching female empowerment. Women who receive education are better able to comprehend the complexities of gender-based violence, their rights, and the social institutions that support it. This knowledge is essential for identifying abusive behaviours, getting assistance, and campaigning for structural adjustments that would stop violence.

Activist 3 explains that education and educating women about their rights was integrated in the movement. She explains that:

*"We made careful to hold workshops about women's rights and provide them with lifelong knowledge while new members of the movement were joining. While we naturally wanted the Ni Una Menos movement to endure, we also understood that things change and evolve along with the movement. Giving the women enduring information and education, however, would have a far greater positive impact on their lives"* (Activist 3 2023).

She continues by saying that having an education enables women to assume leadership positions both inside and outside of their communities. In the setting of "Ni Una Menos,"

educated women are frequently in the front of protest planning, awareness-building, and justice-demanding. This leadership contributes to the movement's growth and unification.

On top of that, activist 3 clarifies that women who have received more education are more qualified to participate in activism and lobbying. They can articulate their requirements clearly, understand legal frameworks, and engage in informed discourse with the public and decision-makers. This empowerment is part of the reason why movements like "Ni Una Menos" are successful (Activist 3 2023).

*"In a world that is not made for women, women need to fight for other women, therefore women with higher levels of education are better able to comprehend and impact the legislative process. They may help make the world a safer place for all women by taking part in policy debates and supporting legislation that shields women from abuse"* (Activist 3 2023).

Economic empowerment is another way social movements can contribute to the empowerment of women. Economic empowerment and educational empowerment are closely interlinked and associated with education and opportunities (Taylor 1998). Initiatives that encourage women's and girls' education, career training, and skill development to improve their employability and job prospects are supported by feminist social movements (Activist 5 2023). Scholarships and mentoring programmes are frequently used in these initiatives to reduce educational inequalities. Strong social safety nets are essential for protecting victims of gender-based violence, as Ni Una Menos highlights (NiUnaMenos 2017). In this context, economic empowerment refers to giving women who need to relocate from abusive circumstances the tools and support they need, like financial aid, job training programmes, and shelters. With the use of these resources, survivors may recover and become financially independent again (Taylor 1998).

Activist 5 (2023) explains that NUM aggressively advocates for policy changes to address the underlying causes of gender-based violence to bring about systemic change. She gives some examples of policies that could support economic empowerment in Argentina, such as laws pertaining to fair pay, job safety, and access to reproductive health care. The movement fosters an atmosphere conducive to women's economic empowerment by promoting structural change. She goes on to explain that the NUM movement's emphasis on group

action and solidarity gives women a forum to assist one another, exchange resources, and create networks. These relationships are essential for women's economic empowerment because they give them access to resources including opportunities, information, and support networks that they might not otherwise have (Activist 5 2023).

*“Many women stay with men that are abusing them because they have no other choice. They might have children they need to provide for, and if they leave the abuser, they are not sure where to go or how to provide for their children. We want to get these women out, but we also need to make sure that we can take care of them and provide them with opportunities to grow their economic empowerment.”* (Activist 5 2023).

Lastly, political participation is acknowledged by Taylor (1998) as another way for women to feel empowered. The NUM movement has played a significant role in increasing public awareness of femicide and gender-based violence. Through large-scale rallies, social media campaigns, and public gatherings, the movement shape’s public opinion and puts pressure on lawmakers to act (NiUnaMenos 2017). Women and their allies are encouraged to get more involved in politics by this kind of activity. According to Activist 2 and 3, the NUM movement is a feminist social movement that sets out to influence policy making on all the different levels of decision making. NUM is an advocate at the local, regional, and federal levels of government. Through the presentation of facts, lobbying of lawmakers, and participation in public hearings, the movement seeks to influence policy. Through their involvement, activists may advance structural changes that enhance the rights and safety of women (Activist 2 2024 and Activist 3 2023).

In conclusion, a key element of the Ni Una Menos movement is political engagement. The movement makes a greater contribution to a culture of political involvement and gender equality by spreading awareness, pushing for legislative change, encouraging women to take up leadership roles, forming coalitions, taking legal action, and promoting civic education. Through these initiatives, women and their allies will have a greater voice in politics and a greater opportunity to stop violence against women.

### ***Agency***

As Taylor (1998) presented in her work there are different kinds of agency that exist in different situations. Taylor (1998) explained that *collection action* is the most common type

of agency when speaking of social movements. The ability for the NUM to mobilise in large masses is a good example of a collective action where many individuals come together with a common goal. Activist 1 (2023) explains that the NUM movement is an excellent illustration of collective action because of its work with forming alliances and collaborations with other human rights and feminist groups. The movement's ability to advocate for structural change and more effectively combat gender-based violence is enhanced by this collaborative approach. Another example of collective action is grassroots organising, in which nearby communities gather to combat issues of gender-based violence. Activists from Ni Una Menos interact with the local population to garner support and develop a more responsive and inclusive social movement (Activist 1 2023).

All things considered, the Ni Una Menos movement's collective action agency has played a significant role in influencing legislation, increasing awareness, and fostering cultural change. Large-scale demonstrations, well-planned campaigns, coalition building, political advocacy, grassroots organising, survivor empowerment, and cultural changes are just a few of the ways the movement shows the strength of group action in promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence (Activist 1 2023).

Another kind of agency is self-determination which Taylor (1998) believes is an important step for women, because it is what the women do for themselves based on what they want and need. By providing women a space to tell their stories and elevating the voices of women, activist 4 explains that NUM encourages empowerment. Women who are empowered have more agency, which enables them to fight for social reforms that promote gender equality and stand up for their rights (Taylor 1998). For women, self-determination is overseeing their own lives, relationships, and personal decisions. The activists explained to me that the NUM movement seeks to create a society in which women are free to choose without facing discrimination, violence, or compulsion. Furthermore, NUM places a strong emphasis on combating and ending gender-based violence (NiUnaMenos 2017). This is in line with the right to self-determination because women's freedom to conduct their life as they see fit is severely curtailed by violence and the fear of violence (Taylor 1998). The movement fights violence and makes the world a safer place where women can express their agency.



In the framework of the Ni Una Menos movement, women's self-determination entails establishing an atmosphere in which they may freely express their autonomy and make decisions without worrying about discrimination or violence. Through its support of reproductive rights, legal and political advocacy, opposition to patriarchal norms, education and economic independence, and community building, Ni Una Menos adds to a larger movement that gives women the power to choose their own paths (Medina 2023).

Leadership opportunities is another way women's agency and feminist social movements can be understood. The goal of many feminist social movements is to provide their members with positions of leadership (Medina 2023). This is also relevant to the NUM movement according to Activist 1. Ni Una Menos is mostly a women-led organisation that provides women with significant leadership opportunities in campaign creation, organising protests, and campaigning. This approach emphasises how important it is that women's voices influence the goals and strategies of the movement (Activist 1 2023). A key component of the movement's success is communication. Female leaders at Ni Una Menos write content, manage social media campaigns, interact with the media, and work in public relations and the media. They can influence public opinion and increase the movement's effect because of their positions. This movement highlights the human consequences of gender-based violence by encouraging women to share their stories and experiences. Leading awareness campaigns allow women to take on roles that shape public discourse and alter cultural norms, proving the power of first-hand experiences in activism (Ibid).

The last category of which women's agency can be understood in relation to feminist social movements such as NUM, is the category of decision-making processes. According to Taylor (1998), for women to engage in political activism is important for them to relate to the political agency that comes with engaging oneself in the political sphere. For the NUM building consensus is important according to both Activist 2 and 3. They explain that reaching an agreement with a variety of stakeholders is frequently a requirement of decision-making. This group includes advocates, local authorities, bereaved families, and general proponents of gender parity. They explain that to maintain strength and unity, the movement seeks to promote consensus on the objectives, tactics, and messaging in their decision-making processes (Activist 2 2024 and 3 2023). Furthermore, they explain that since NUM is a grassroots organisation, decisions are often based on the bottom-up approach meaning that the decisions are often made collectively. Activist 2 (2024) says:

*“It often happens that a local group within the NUM hold meetings and workshop discussing and gathering opinions to later bring it up on larger meetings. We want to see and make individuals feel a part of the decision-making processes and that is why we work in this way.*

..

On the topic, activist 3 explains that since NUM is a decentralised movement, each smaller branch of the movement is free to decide what is best for their own needs and cultural surroundings. Because of this structure's flexibility and adaptability, each group can solve problems in its own area. Each organisation has the freedom to decide what to do regarding protests, lobbying campaigns, and educational initiatives even though they all share the same message (Activist 3 2023).

In general, NUM decision-making is based on the values of inclusivity, cooperation, and flexibility and is motivated by a common goal of eradicating violence against women and advancing gender equality.

## 5.5 Summary of results

Section 5 of this thesis consisted of the analysis of the gathered data from the interviews with the NUM activists. The results presented above showcase that in terms of political opportunities, they were existing and strong at the time of NUM origins in 2015. Several political opportunities, such as political instability (due to severe number of femicide cases being reported) and change of government were aligning at the time which enabled the social movement to capitalise on it and expand quickly because of these opportunities. In terms of mobilisations structures, NUM was in some way lucky to have had a strong following of activists that had engaged in previous feminist social movements prior to coming together to start NUM which meant that they already had good knowledge of mobilising and how to communicate effectively within a social movement and outwards, particularly in terms of advertisement and recruitment of new members. Thus, the mobilisations structures can also be understood as strong at the time of NUM origins in 2015. Hence, it can be perceived that the NUM movement in some respects had luck on its side by both having the right political opportunities and involving previous activists with a strong background in social movement mobilisation.

In addition, the results illustrate that it was evident that the movement utilised the media framing in a very effective way. The movement received a lot of attention in media (newspaper articles, interviews and stories were being shared) which helped spread the mission of the movement and it also helped to spread the different slogans and hashtags that were created to help the movement trend on platforms such as Instagram and X. Issue framing was another frame the social movement utilised in an effective way. Speaking to the international width of femicide and making it relatable to the public engaged the civil society in a strong way because the notion of “it could be your sister or mother” truly spoke to the people and made them engage with the hashtags which helped spread and grow the movement further. To summarise, the frames of issue, cultural and media framing was therefore deemed as successful based on the above information.

In terms of empowerment and agency, the results indicates that the movement had a positive impact on both women in Argentina’s ability to empower themselves but also to strengthen their agency. The movement had many workshops to provide women with useful skills, but also important information to share when it comes to femicide and particularly for femicide victims. The movement found the target audience and provided not only information and service in terms of femicide prevention but also strengthen the knowledge about women’s rights in general which had a positive impact on these two aspects of women in Argentina lives. Burt what made the movement unique is that also many men joined in the fight to stand up for the rights of women in their lives. NUM became a social movement that not only women in Argentina stood behind, but also a big number of men joined the feminist social movement which was unique in the Argentinean case. NUM became a feminist social movement for the people of Argentina.

## 6. Conclusion

Focusing on femicide and how the Ni Una Menos movement could be understood in the Argentinean context, the aim of this thesis has been to answer two questions. The first question is about how political opportunity structures of the NUM and the mobilisation efforts made by the movement to address femicide in Argentina can be understood and explained. The second question is about how feminist social movements, like the NUM, contributes to the empowerment and agency of women. To answer these questions the theoretical framework of PPT and Taylor's theoretical inputs of *Empowerment and Agency* was used. In addition, a content analysis of the gathered data from the five semi-structured interviews with the Argentinean core activists from the NUM movement, was conducted.

The thesis set out to investigate what role the NUM played in the Argentinean context, and particularly what political opportunities existed in 2015 and onwards as well as what mobilisation efforts were made by the movement to combat femicide. Moreover, the research aimed to understand how the NUM movement influenced women in terms of their empowerment and agency. I departed from investigating the historical background of femicide in Argentina and what feminist social movement existed before the NUM. At once, I learned that the civil society in Argentina has long history of being involved in issues of injustice, especially regarding women. As a country, Argentina has extensive mobilisation efforts for a prolonged time, with feminism serving as the main guiding principle. NUM was not the nation's first feminist movement, and it certainly will not be the last. As a result, I understood that this research required a cross-disciplinary strategy that combined feminist studies with theories from the field of social movement.

Through the in-depth interviews with core activists from the NUM in Argentina, Buenos Aires as the main method for obtaining the empirical data it was been possible to identify the political opportunities that existed when the NUM movement began in 2015. It became clear that it was a year of political change (due to a shift in political party governing) and turmoil in the country (due to the high number of femicide victims) and as McAdam explained, instability and shift in government is often means a great political opportunity for social movements to utilise to gain momentum.

The activists have all acknowledged that NUM has become a symbol for the fight against femicide in the country and the slogan “Ni Una Menos” is deeply associated with the combat against femicide. Another political opportunity that made a great difference according to the activists is the media exposure the social movement got, both nationally but later also internationally. Another factor the activists identified as unique for Argentina is how celebrities and public figures were not hesitant to engage in the political debate and since they have large platforms of followers, this can be understood as a political opportunity.

It has also been possible to identify the mobilisation efforts the NUM movement utilised. The activists have all agreed that utilising digital platforms enabled the movement to spread to a larger population and even become an internationally inspired feminist social movement. Utilising platforms such as Instagram also resulted in hashtags such as “NiunaMenos” going viral, and logos and pictures were created to make a community. These logos and hashtags have also been identified by the activists as a clever way to mobilise. The activists believed that this was an efficient strategy for recruitment purposes, and it also helped to recruit people from outside the innermost circles of previous social movements and caught individuals that is not commonly involved in social justice movements.

The framing processes of NUM were identified with the help of the interviews. Particularly issue framing and cultural framing. The activists discussed issue framing at length and explained that NUM did an outstanding job utilising the frame of femicide as a systemic issue affecting women across Argentina and that it was up to the social movement and its followers to combat this head on. It was identified as the more persistent frame that the social movement used to get its point across. In terms of cultural framing, it was evident that the phrase “Ni Una Menos” became fighting words for the civil society and the activists that engaged with the social movement. The phrase also illustrates the feelings amongst the population, that the population had enough, and they demanded change. As previously in history, when the population in Argentina wants to achieve social change, they take to the streets in form of mass demonstrations. This was also the case for the NUM movement. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, thousands of people took to the streets in several cities around Argentina and chanted “Ni Una Menos”. The NUM movement is now associated with the fight against femicide and almost a decade later you can still hear and read this phrase being chanted/written when it comes to activism against femicide in Argentina.

The role of political opportunities and mobilisation efforts by the movement indicates that if the political opportunities would have been different at the time of the movement's origins (2015), or the movement would have utilised different mobilisation efforts then the outcome of the movement would have been different. As was explained by the PPT theory, when a social movement has certain opportunities, it makes the movement more successful and based on the strong mobilisation efforts, the NUM movement was indeed successful in Argentina. These findings confirm the theory, thus validating the results that were found and the hypothesis that NUM was indeed a successful feminist social movement. It is worth nothing however if another theory were to be utilised that a different result might have been the outcome. It is also worth noting that the PPT and the political opportunities and mobilisation efforts might have been different in other countries where the NUM movement arose, so these results are solely relevant to the Argentinean context, which was the purpose of the established research questions.

Using Taylor's (1998) scrutiny to understand the role of NUM in agency and empowerment, it was feasible to determine the various ways in which the movement support the advancement of women in Argentina. First, the movement empowered women from both an educational perspective but also economic perspective. According to the activists, the movement had workshops and some themes that were brought up at these workshops were useful information and skills, for example, if a woman had to leave a household of domestic abuse, they gave information how could she do it and where could she go. I perceived that the activists believed that in general the NUM empowered the Argentinean women in several ways, but it is also important to acknowledge for the sake of transparency that all the activists I interviewed are core members of the movement and thus their perception might be a bit skewed by biases from what they have experienced themselves. In saying that, the intention with conducting interviews with them in the first place was to get genuine and unique data based on people that were engaged in the NUM movement, thus this bias has been considered when analysing the data. The findings from this part of the analysis are in line with Taylor's (1998) arguments that a feminist approach to social movements must be more engaged, particularly when engaging with feminist social movements and that it would better help to explain why women tend to move to social movements for activism.

My research demonstrates that PPT can explain the success of the social movement and it is confirming McAdams's theory of what ought to happen to a social movement to gain

momentum. Furthermore, by asking the question about empowerment and agency it highlights the aspect on how feminist social movements can impact their members life in a broader sense, resulting in more and more women joining the movement to combat femicide but also for their individual sake, to empower themselves and strengthen their agency. However, to end femicide it takes more than one social movement and whilst NUM has paved the way for the fight against femicide, many policies in Argentina still need to change to make a lasting societal change.

Right now, in 2024 many policies concerning women's rights are being taken away by the current government and one could say that Argentina is going backwards in their femicide prevention. Whilst this is worrisome, perhaps it would result in new political opportunities having its uprise resulting in a new wave of the NUM. The contribution of NUM lives still, but it might have lost its momentum now almost 10 years after. However, if there are women and girls out there fighting for their right to live their lives without fear of femicide, the research will be valued and hopefully researched more.

One interesting aspect in terms of femicide and social movement would be to look at if/how policy proposals have shifted in Argentina and Latin America since the concept of femicide became a notion of analysis (also in Argentina an established crime) and looking at if there could be any correlation between policy proposals and the success of NUM. For example, to look at the Federal Action Plan against Gender-based Violence (2020-2022) and perhaps comparing it to a previous Action Plan or similar by doing a policy analysis and utilising the What is the problem represented (WPR) approach by Carole Bacchi to understand what are the problems highlighted in the plans and how the government planned to tackle the problems represented in the policy and whether the government managed to tackle the problems or not. It would be of interest to understand if the NUM movement contribute to any real-life policy change in Argentina. My hypothesis based on what I have learnt from doing this research is that certain things did indeed change, but this would be interesting to investigate further.

*“No quiero ser una víctima y quiero ser libre”* (Argentina women during the June 3<sup>rd</sup> March).

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## Appendix A

Interviews:

Name	Role	Date	Country	Media Used
Activist 1	Activist and Co-founder NUM in Argentina	Dec 6 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Argentina	Face to Face
Activist 2	Activist and	Jan 5 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Argentina	Face to Face
Activist 3	Activist and social media coordinator	Dec 17 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Peru	Face to Face
Activist 4	Activist and recruitment strategist	Jan 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2024	Argentina	Face to Face
Activist 5	Activist and	November 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2023	Uruguay	Face to Face

## Appendix B

Statement of consent

Nadja Carlborg 19950914

I authorize the use of the content of the interview given by me to Nadja Carlborg in the master's thesis " Bridging Theory and Activism: Exploring the Ni Una Menos Movement in Argentina through Political Process theory and Feminist Lens" to be defended in the scope of the Master's program 'Political Science: Global Politics, Master's Programme (Two-year)' of the University of Malmö, Sweden, and articles for presentation at conferences and publication in academic journals. I declare that my real name will not be used at work except as authorized by the  below.  I authorize the publication of my real name in the above-mentioned master project and in works related to it.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Buenos Aries, Argentina XX, 2023/2024

## **Appendix C**

Interview guide (English Version)

\*\*This guide was translated to Spanish for all the interviews.

### General introductory questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, including your occupation, place of employment, and involvement with Ni Una Menos?
2. Were there any feminist social movements in Argentina before Ni Una Menos? If yes, what were their principal objectives and struggles?
3. How was Ni Una Menos in Argentina created?
4. Was it impacted by another Latin American transnational social feminist movement?
5. Where did the movement get its acronym "Ni Una Menos"?
6. How would you characterise Argentina's Ni Una Menos? Is it an network, an organisation, a feminist collective, or a feminist women's rights movement?
7. Which have been Ni Una Menos Argentina's main concerns ever since the organisation was founded?
8. How does Ni Una Menos communicate internally / externally?
9. Which are the main communication channels?
10. Which are the main tactics to reach out to activists and civil society?
11. How does the Ni Una Menos movement fit within the larger context of feminist and social justice activism in Argentina?
12. What connections does the movement have with other feminist or social justice movements, both within Argentina and internationally?
13. What efforts are made to include voices from marginalized or underrepresented groups?
14. How does Ni Una Menos approach issues of intersectionality and ensure inclusivity within the movement?
15. How do you engage with the broader community and get people involved in the movement's activities?
16. Could you describe some of the strategies and tactics the movement uses to raise awareness and create change?
17. How does the movement address resistance or pushback from different groups or institutions?

18. What are some of the biggest challenges the movement faces in Buenos Aires?
19. What changes or successes have you seen in the time you've been involved with Ni Una Menos?
20. Can you share a story or experience that you feel illustrates the impact of the movement on individuals or the community?