



# How to Read Academic Articles

GOVT 1101: Politics of Reproduction

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# What's in an article\*?


- **Abstract**
  - Brief summary of the whole article
- **Introduction**
  - Introduces the research question and the context

\*This guide focuses on social science articles. Most hard science articles follow the same format but won't have as much theory and literature review. Humanities scholarship does not usually follow the scientific method so won't have the same structure (like the Gordon chapter; Gordon is a historian)

## Feminist Mobilization and the Abortion Debate in Latin America: Lessons from Argentina

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When Argentine president Mauricio Macri announced in March 2018 that he supported a “responsible and mature” national debate regarding the decriminalization of abortion, it took many by surprise. In a Catholic country with a center-right government, where public opinion regarding abortion had hardly moved in decades — why would the abortion debate surface in Argentina when it did? Our answer is grounded in the social movements literature, as we argue that the organizational framework necessary for growing the decriminalization movement had already been built by an emergent feminist movement of unprecedented scope and influence: *Ni Una Menos*. By expanding the movement’s social justice frame from gender violence to encompass abortion rights, feminist activists were able to change public opinion and expand the scope of debate, making salient an issue that had long been politically untouchable. We marshal evidence from multiple surveys carried out before, during, and after the abortion debate and in-depth interviews to shed light on the sources of abortion rights movements in unlikely contexts.

When Argentine president Mauricio Macri announced in March 2018 that he supported a “responsible and mature” national debate regarding the decriminalization of abortion, many were surprised. After all, in 2015, he was the first conservative president elected in Argentina in more than a decade, and no abortion debate had emerged under prior center-left governments. Moreover, Argentina is a Catholic country, which has, if anything, seen an uptick in religiosity over the past decade and little recent movement in public support for abortion rights preceding Macri’s announcement. Extant scholarship indicates that public discussions regarding abortion decriminalization appear on the political agenda when countries become more secular, play host to supportive public opinion, and have a left majority in both the executive and the legislature; therefore, the timing and intensity of the abortion rights movement in Argentina poses an intriguing puzzle.

In light of recent legislative debates regarding abortion in other countries in Latin America, this article addresses the following question: Why did the abortion debate surface in Argentina when it did, in spite of a litany of factors that suggest it would be an unlikely case for decriminalization?

# What's in an article?

- **Literature Review**
  - A summary of what has been written about the topic so far
  - Identifies a “hole” in the literature– something missing that the author wants to provide
- **Theory & Hypotheses**
  - Theoretical framework: Concepts, definitions, or assumptions underlying the author’s argument
  - Theoretical mechanisms: the underlying infrastructure, logic, or causal force that does the “work” in the author’s argument
  - Hypotheses: Proposed explanation or answer to the author’s question

## EXISTING EXPLANATIONS OF ABORTION POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

Scholarship shows that public discussions about abortion decriminalization appear on the political agenda when a country grows increasingly secular, plays host to supportive public opinion, and has a left majority in both the executive and the legislature (Blofield 2013; Htun 2003; Kreitzer 2015; Lopreite 2012; Morgenstern 2012; Sutton and Borland 2013; Tabbush et al. 2016). Examining recent changes in abortion policies in Latin America, Blofield and Ewig (2017, 482) highlight an additional factor: “the *type* of left party in power.”<sup>1</sup>

The emphasis on declining religiosity in explaining movements for abortion rights would seem to find support in modern-day Latin

### Mechanism 1: The Organizational Base of Ni Una Menos

The success of feminist groups in putting abortion on the agenda resulted in part from their ability to leverage existing organizational structures supplied by Ni Una Menos, which linked women to one another based on a common feminist identity. Abortion activists drew on the social movement “base” constructed by Ni Una Menos — that is, “movement organizations, networks, participants and the accumulated cultural artefacts, memories, and traditions that contribute to social movement campaigns” (Tarrow and Tilley 2007, 114) — to overcome collective action problems and articulate their shared claims. With the requisite

### Mechanism 2: Expanding the Ni Una Menos Frame to Include Abortion Rights

The second mechanism that we argue explains the emergence of a powerful abortion rights movement in Argentina is the effort that activists made to frame abortion as a social justice issue, not dissimilar from gender violence. Collective action frames are “schemata of interpretation” (Goffman 1974) that are “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford 1988, 198; see also McAdam 2017; Pedriana 2006; Snow 2013). Instead of arguing about the origins of life and the viability of the fetus, or legal justifications regarding the right to privacy, Argentine feminists framed the discussion in terms of social equality and justice — particularly economic justice. By emphasizing that mostly poor women

# What's in an article?

## DATA AND METHODS

The empirical portion of this article proceeds in two stages. First, drawing on survey data from the AmericasBarometer national surveys of Argentina from 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2019, we provide evidence for the significant uptick in female participation in protest participation during the lead-up to the abortion legalization debate and report results from

- **Methods**

- How the author conducted the research
- e.g. Quantitative (statistical) or Qualitative (interviews, archives)

- **Results**

- Presents the data
- Quantitative Methods:
  - Explain data source
  - Explain techniques for statistical analysis

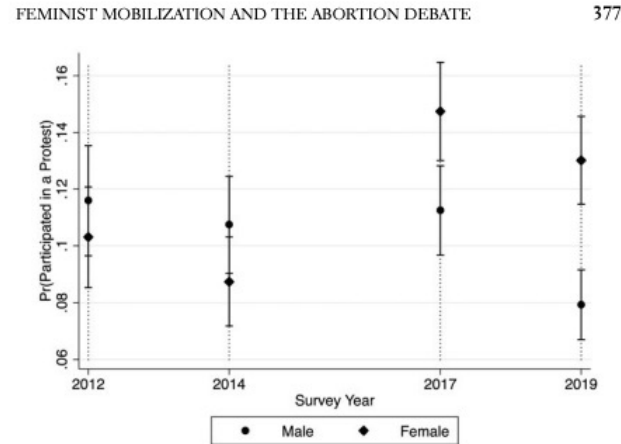


FIGURE 1. Predicted probabilities of protest by gender and year.

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Table 1. Logistic regression models of protest participation in Argentina, 2012–19

Variables	Participated in a Protest in Previous 12 Months (1 = yes, 0 = no)	
	(1)	(2)
Female	0.258*** (0.093)	-0.128 (0.206)
Age	-0.014*** (0.003)	-0.013*** (0.003)
Quintile of wealth	0.052 (0.035)	0.055 (0.036)
Education	0.521*** (0.074)	0.518*** (0.074)
Interest in politics	0.019*** (0.001)	0.019*** (0.001)
Urban	-0.066 (0.180)	-0.059 (0.181)
Size of place	-0.120*** (0.045)	-0.122*** (0.045)
Civic activism	0.013*** (0.002)	0.014*** (0.002)
Sociotropic evaluation	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
Skin color	0.031 (0.034)	0.027 (0.034)
Presidential approval	-0.013*** (0.002)	-0.013*** (0.002)
2014	-0.147 (0.149)	-0.123 (0.204)
2017	0.231* (0.138)	-0.048 (0.195)
2019	-0.044 (0.146)	-0.491** (0.205)
2014 * Gender		-0.080 (0.289)
2017 * Gender		0.513* (0.264)
2019 * Gender		0.803*** (0.263)
Constant	-3.527*** (0.389)	-3.061*** (0.372)
Observations	5,687	5,687

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.  
\*\*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*  $p < .1$ .

# What's in an article?

- **Results**
  - Presents the data
  - Qualitative: case study, quotes from interviews or archives, explanation of interview data
- **Discussion & Conclusion**
  - A more in-depth analysis of the data that links back to the research question and hypotheses
  - Implications or real-world applications
  - Future research

## Evidence from the Field: The Origins of an Abortion Rights Movement

We gathered evidence by attending meetings of social movements that participated in the campaign for abortion decriminalization in 2017, 2018, and 2019. We also interviewed female high school and college students from private and public schools and colleges. Both of us have been conducting interviews with social movements for more than a decade, and discussions about abortion decriminalization have been ubiquitous in our recent fieldwork in the city and province of Buenos Aires and Mendoza province. One of us was in the field conducting a survey in poor neighborhoods while these events were taking place, and several interviewees, most of them women, referred to these issues in open-ended questions.

### *From Ni Una Menos to ¡Aborto Legal Ya! (Legal Abortion Now!)*

When activists marched to commemorate the first anniversary of Ni Una Menos, there was a notable shift in terms of the extent to which leaders mentioned abortion rights in the lead-up to the event. The issue first appeared in an official Ni Una Menos manifesto on May 9, 2016, weeks before the annual march. In the communiqué, activists made explicit the connection between abortion laws and gender violence, using the case of a girl in Tucumán Province who had been imprisoned after having a miscarriage:

When a young woman is imprisoned in Tucumán, condemned to eight years in prison for homicide when she had a miscarriage, in a fraudulent case, it obligates us to reiterate the claim that without legalized abortion, there is no “Ni Una Menos,” and go back to the streets with more resolve than ever before. To *machista* violence and those who would perpetrate it, we say: Ni Una Menos, and against our bodies, Never Again.

## CONCLUSION

This article represents a first attempt at explaining why the Argentine abortion debate gained traction in an unlikely context. Despite relatively stable public opinion regarding abortion rights, increasing religiosity, and a conservative party in government, Argentina experienced unprecedented rates of activism for abortion decriminalization in 2018. We argue this unexpected turn in Argentine politics is explained by the existing mobilization structures supplied by the Ni Una Menos movement and a framing device for claim-making that emphasized how abortion prohibition deepens social inequities in Argentina.

# How to take notes on an academic article

## 1. Motivation/Research Question

- What is the author trying to explain?

## 2. Argument

- What is the author's main argument, or the point they are trying to make?

## 3. Theoretical framework:

- Definitions
- Assumptions
- Theories or major concepts

# How to take notes on an academic article

## 4. Methods

- What methods did the author use?
- What data do they use?

## 5. Results

- Here is where you take notes on the main body of the article
- What did the author find?
- (How) did the author's data support their argument?

## 6. Discussion/Critique

- As you read, write down your own questions and critiques
- Implications, applications, areas for future research

# Let's practice!

## 6-part notes outline on today's reading:

1. Motivation/Research Question
2. Argument
3. Theoretical framework:
  - Definitions, assumptions, theories or major concepts
4. Methods
5. Results/Body
  - What did the author find?
  - (How) did the author's data support their argument?
6. Discussion/Critique