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Making the Right Choice: the polarized US
abortion debate and its transnational
implications.

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Abstract

The abortion debate in the United States has become increasingly polarized where the legality and morality of abortion is continuously discussed. This has given rise to an abortion movement and countermovement, commonly referred to as the pro-choice movement and pro-life movement. These movements are furthermore working transnationally to promote their agendas and contribute to social and political change across nation borders. Following a critical approach to research, this study focused on two nonprofit organizations based in the United States placed at oppositional parts of the abortion movement, Planned Parenthood Global and Heartbeat International, and how they use human rights-based language to construct their arguments. Due to the transnational aspects of these organizations, this study further investigated how the organizations transfer aspects of the polarized United States abortion debate into their transnational work. Through applying framing processes within social movement theory, and postcolonial insights, a qualitative thematic document analysis of the organizations' official websites was conducted. The results presented significant incorporation of rights-based arguments, particularly within the pro-abortion organization. Within the anti-abortion organization, rights-based language was found to have stronger ties to religion than to the international human rights framework. Rights-based language was also found to be overlapping between the two organizations' communication, which suggests processes of frame extension and frame amplification on both sides. Furthermore, characteristics of the United States abortion debate was prevalent throughout both sides' transnational communication. These findings further showcase power relations across North-South borders and suggest that communicative power of the Global North, specifically the United States, have implications in communities in the Global South. The results contribute to the existing body of research within abortion movements in the United States and transnationally, as well as the field of social movement research.

Key Words: Abortion, Social movement, Pro-life, Pro-choice, United States, Transnational, Human rights

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation:	Meaning:
PP	Planned Parenthood
PPG	Planned Parenthood Global
HI	Heartbeat International
GGR	The global gag rule
GOP	The republican party
TA	Thematic analysis
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
CEDAW	The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

1. Introduction

In the United States (US), the public and political debate on abortion has become widespread and increasingly polarized, particularly since the landmark constitutional law change on abortion in 1973. The debate is generally understood as divided in two opposing sides, commonly referred to as *pro-choice* and *pro-life*. Social movements with focus on reproductive health rights have emerged, and in response, countermovements that oppose abortion. These opposing movements are now widespread and working from different perspectives towards political and social change (Saurette & Gordon, 2016).

Over time, social movements in general have become increasingly transnational in their approach, meaning that they work across national borders (Tarrow, 2005). The abortion movements are no exception (Daire, Kloster & Storeng, 2018). Transnational movements need to adhere to larger international institutions and frameworks to work for the change they aim for. One such strategy has been a focus on international human rights and whether stakeholders uphold signed treaties (Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002). Furthermore, according to De Jong (2017), social movements have developed towards being more professionalized, and NGOs and other formal organizations are more incorporated in the movements (Tarrow, 2005). Social movements working across North-South borders must further adhere to certain power dynamics due to colonial and imperial history, as well as current power dynamics concerning, for instance, financial aid and access to resources (Dhamoon, 2015; De Jong, 2017).

The US is the leading donor of aid within family planning in the world (USAID, 2021), and simultaneously have foreign policies implemented to restrict aid recipients from working for abortion access. This affects how US-based networks and organizations working with issues concerning abortion can communicate and provide support transnationally (Sully & Ahmed, 2021). I aim to bridge the gap in previous research between the US abortion movements and how they communicate

transnationally, thereby affecting how the abortion debate develops across US borders. Moreover, I argue that an increased understanding of how social movements communicate their views may highlight how they mobilize supporters and succeed in change. In this study, I will therefore compare how two US-based transnational organizations placed on opposing sides in the abortion debate spread their respective agendas through their transnational communication. Therefore, the research questions guiding this thesis are:

- How do the pro-abortion versus anti-abortion transnational movements in the US construct their arguments using rights-based language?
- In what ways is the US abortion debate mirrored in the transnational abortion organizations' communication?

2. Literature Review

This literature review was conducted to contextualize the topic I aim to study within the existing body of research. In the following sections I present previous research on the topic of social movements, and particularly abortion movements in the US and globally, as well as transnationalism, the framing of arguments within abortion movements, and human rights. Considering that abortion is a widely politicized topic, particularly in the US, there is already a wide range of research concerning different aspects of the topic. This review will therefore also help situate my study within the field and clarify how I aim to make a valuable contribution to the field of research. I limited the sources to those in English and attempted to narrow down the focus through theoretical and methodological approaches related to this study.

2.1 Abortion Movements

As mentioned, due to the long history and politicized debates of abortion in the US, there is quite an amount of research conducted concerning particularly access to abortion (see for example Fuentes et al, 2015; Quast, Gonzalez & Ziemba, 2017; Munro et al, 2021), and the discourse around the topic in the country. Research on the topic of abortion has been conducted within a range of scholarly fields, such as,

law, medicine, development, geography, and gender studies (see Bearak, Burke & Jones, 2017; Romanis, Parsons & Hodson, 2020; Greubel, 2021; Calkin & Freeman, 2019; Artazo, Ramia & Menoyo, 2021).

In addition to studies on the general abortion discourse and debate in the US, there is a body of research focusing on the two opposing abortion movements in the country. What is commonly referred to as the pro-life and pro-choice movements in the US have been subject to research particularly since the landmark abortion law change in 1973, in the case of *Roe v. Wade*. However, the pro-choice versus pro-life dichotomy itself has been subject to criticism. As with any dichotomy, this dichotomy too has limitations, such as understanding the functionings of reproductive justice, particularly for people within marginalized groups (Smith, 2005). Smith further argues that the pro-choice versus pro-life binary both are part of a political system of capitalism and white supremacy, and that activists of color should develop alternative paradigms to move from this dichotomy. Other scholars have contributed to this critique of the dichotomy, and the viewing of the two movements as homogenous (Rye & Underhill, 2020; Price, 2010; Ludlow, 2008). These contributions are important to consider related to this topic, since I will be focusing on both sides of the abortion movement. Although I conceptualize the two sides as pro-abortion and anti-abortion, one should note that these sides are not homogenous as to not contribute further to the dichotomous understanding of the debate. I would further argue that this study will be a valuable contribution to these discussions, focusing on the abortion organizations' spread of their respective agendas and potentially affecting the debate landscape across US borders.

There is some comparative research of the two opposing abortion movements in the US, although it appears most comparative research on the subject is between countries. However, Kretschmer (2014) conducted a comparative study of two conservative US feminist organizations and how they relate to the issue of abortion, which became increasingly important to the general feminist movement. On a state level, a quantitative study was conducted comparing Missouri pro-life versus pro-

choice organizations' values, attitudes and beliefs (Granberg, 1982). Examples of comparative research concerning the use of language will be explored further in section 2.3. Moreover, Staggenborg (1988) provided a discussion on the consequences of the professionalization of social movements, with particular focus on the pro-choice movements in the US. She argues that a social movement in cooperation with formal social movement organizations are more likely to last than a movement with informal social movement organizations. These findings further imply a need to incorporate formal organizations in social movement research to a wider extent, which is something I aim to contribute with in this study.

2.2 Transnationalism

Foley (1999) studied the International Planned Parenthood Federation and how their network organizing strategies contributed to their successes of policy change in several countries, and access to family planning services. There is a body of research focused on the power of transnational NGOs. Hall, Schmitz and Dedmon (2020) have studied the importance of technology for NGOs, particularly concerning rapid mobilization. Moreover, the use and abuse of discursive power of international NGOs' online advocacy has been studied by Fernández-Aballí (2016), in the case of Amnesty International. This study concluded that the NGO portrayed themselves in heroic rhetoric while objectifying those depicted as victims (ibid).

Research focused on implications of US-based organizations working with reproductive health in specific countries in the Global South is furthermore a topic which is largely visible in the body of literature (see Daire, Kloster & Storeng, 2018). The Mexico City Policy, also known as the *global gag rule* (GGR), has been subject to research from several angles and perspectives, such as the impact on countries in the Global South which are aid recipients (see Ushie et al, 2020; Ravaoarisoa et al, 2020). The Policy has been researched both before (see Crane & Dusenberry, 2004) and during (see Banwell, 2020) the extension of the GGR during former US president Donald Trump's presidency. Research by Castle and Stepp (2021) suggest that national US religious identities are transferred into foreign

policy making. They analyzed the GGR as a part of their study to highlight this connection. Similarly, Banwell (2020) argues that the GGR during Trump's presidency is connected to national conservative views on gender.

The US foreign policy governing aid related to family planning known as the *Helms amendment*, has also been subject to research. For example, the historical and current implications of the Helms amendment have been studied by Feleke-Eshete (2020), who discusses the policy's ties to racism and colonialism. She provides a discussion on US senator Jesse Helms, whom the policy is named after, and his racist, homophobic and misogynist rhetoric and how this is reflected in the policy effects today. She refers to this as "neo-colonial US influence on local abortion laws" (p. 38). Pisan (2020) also provides a discussion of how the US uses foreign policies to control foreign women. He argues that the US must repeal the Helms amendment and ratify the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in order to move from the current harm the country inflicts on people in need of reproductive health in other countries. The call to ratify CEDAW has been concluded by other scholars as well (see de Silva de Alwis & Verveer, 2021; Koh, 2002).

The research presented in this section further emphasize the power the US holds to affect reproductive health across nation borders. Therefore, I argue that more research on how the abortion movements use communicative strategies to spread their views on organizational and individual levels rather than on policy levels, is needed. As has been highlighted before, organizations within social movements can have vast impact on the success and spread of agendas.

2.2.1 Transnational Social Movements

The topic of abortion is not only widely debated in the US, but in many parts of the world. Mason (2019) builds on research by, among others, Saurette and Gordon (2016) and provides a discussion on how the US anti-abortion movement increasingly use pro-woman rhetoric and consequently contribute to a rise of right-

wing politics globally, with particular focus on this phenomenon in Ireland and Russia. Moreover, Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002) argue that transnational networks can gain success over state actors by utilizing “prevailing international norms” (p. 71) such as human rights, through studying the case of US foreign policy in the 1970s.

Social Movement theory has been developed since the middle of the 1900s, and according to Tarrow (2005), research on social movements had been conducted in earlier stages; however, then mainly focused on reformist movements in the Global North. During the 1990s and 2000s, the theorization developed to transnational movements and the inclusion of a broader spectrum of actors, such as international organizations (Tarrow, 2005). Peppin Vaughan (2019) studied transnational movements within girls’ and women’s education and applied transnational social movement theory in dialogue with Tarrow (2005) and della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht (1999). Similarly, Dufour and Giraud (2007) applied this theory in their study on the women’s movement in Europe, also in dialogue with Tarrow (2005), and della Porta et. al (2006). Hrycak (2007) provided a similar discussion focused on transnational feminism in Ukraine, and posed some critique towards transnational movements. According to her, transnational movements are often based in the Global North, thus often focused on ‘western’ understandings of equality and undermining the local forms of activism. This has been argued by Montoya (2014) as well, who emphasizes the ‘western’ conceptualization of feminism. Similar critique has been discussed by De Jong (2017), who argues that transnational NGOs are often based in the Global North and can influence organizations in the Global South through funding and aid, and through the demands put on these organizations in order to receive it. I aim to further contribute to this body of transnational social movement research through a particular focus on the abortion movement and countermovement, and their communicative approaches.

2.3 Rhetoric and Framing of Arguments

The rhetoric of the opposing movements in the US has been researched from different angles, for example by Vanderford (1989), who conducted a case study of the pro-life versus pro-choice movements. She found that both sides used vilification rhetoric, language which paints the “other side” as ungentle and malicious. Vilification rhetoric is not only used within the abortion debate, but a strategy employed in various political settings (Vanderford, 1989). The usage of vilification and polarization rhetoric has also been noted by McCaffrey and Keys (2000), who studied the competitive language by the pro-abortion movement as a response to the countermovement. Dillon (1993) compared the complexity of the abortion discourse arguments by analyzing pro-choice, pro-life, and multi-issue groups, and found that the levels of integrative complexity were low in both single-issue groups. Ricardo (2022) conducted a comparative study of the discourse around abortion in the US and Argentina, where they discussed the history leading to the legalization of abortion in Argentina versus the post-Roe v. Wade discussions of abortion in the US and how it has led to the unstable legality of the matter in the US today. They concluded that cultural norms influence the legality of abortion and the social climate surrounding the issue. Considering what these studies have found, I argue for a continuous focus on how parts of the abortion movements utilize different communication and rhetoric strategies to impact policy level change both in the US and across nation borders.

Greubel (2021) conducted a case study on Texas’ TRAP law (TX HB2) from 2013, using the analytical lens of benevolent sexism. She found that language of benevolent sexism was reflected in the analyzed documents with the aim to justify restricting accessibility to abortion in the state. Similarly, Doan and Schwarz (2020) conducted a latent content analysis on anti-abortion policies in the US, where they found that the language used constructed women as a homogenous group in need of protection by the state from the ‘unethical’ abortion providers.

Furthermore, Holman, Podrazik and Mohamed (2020) studied how the intersection of religion and gender influence attitudes towards abortion among Latinos in the US and concluded that factors such as church attendance among Latino men were more strongly associated with anti-abortion values. They further argued for the importance of applying intersectional perspectives when studying social identities and political preferences. Moreover, in an essay by Dubriwny and Siegfried (2021), the rhetorical aspect of justifying abortion was explored from a critical perspective. They analyzed late-term abortion narratives using a theoretical framework of intersectionality and reproductive justice, following former US president Donald Trump's anti-abortion remarks. There have been several studies on the topic applying an intersectional perspective, both concerning the accessibility of abortion in the country (Solazzo, 2019; Carson, 2021), and the public and political discourse (Thakkilapati, 2019; Dubriwny & Siegfried, 2021).

Intersectional perspectives within several scholarly fields have grown exponentially since Crenshaw's (1989) introduction of the concept in the 1980s. Intersectionality has not only been applied as a theoretical framework however. Price (2011) provides a discussion of how to implement intersectionality in research methodology. She argues that intersectional methodology in practice has been unclear, and aims to provide a discussion piece of how this can be done in research of reproductive and sexual health. Baird and Millar (2020) call for a continuous effort among scholars and activists to analyze the modalities of power which affect access to reproductive health, as a critique of neoliberalism. Notably, a critical approach to research and feminist perspectives dominate the field concerning abortion in the US. However, some examples of studies where the author visibly takes an anti-abortion stance can be found. Zumpano (2020) for example, provides a discussion of the legality of abortion in the country and includes an observational standpoint in which he proclaims himself as anti-abortion through his religious beliefs and upbringing.

Saurette and Gordon (2016) studied the anti-abortion movement in the US and Canada, focusing on how the narrative of groups opposing abortion has changed over time. Through critical discourse analysis, they analyzed the discourse of mainly anti-abortion organizations in Canada. They found that their arguments have changed to focus mainly on the rights of the fetus towards increasingly on how abortion harms women in various ways, thus a more “pro-woman” stance. In the analysis, they discussed how this shift can be compared to appropriating a standpoint feminist epistemology which argues against abortion and for women. The more contemporary “pro-woman” stance of the anti-abortion movement has also been discussed by Leach (2020). She refers to this more modernized anti-abortion discourse as neopatriarchal. This shift has also been noted by Rose (2011), who analyzed the anti-abortion movement through the concept of framing in social movement theory. She argues that there has occurred a frame extension in order to attract a wider demographic to join the movement. The theory of the framing process has been applied to other studies on the abortion movements as well (see Trumpy, 2016; Rohlinger, 2002; McCaffrey & Keys, 2000). The discursive change of the anti-abortion side has not only been reported within the movement, but in the majority of the restricting abortion policies across US states as well (Roberti, 2021).

This body of research indicate that the use of rhetoric and communication strategies have shifted over time, as well as across different groups of the population. Thus, this study will contribute to this field by focusing on two opposing organizations and their construction of arguments, which may translate in their transnational work.

2.4 Abortion and Human Rights

As mentioned earlier, human rights aspects have influenced research concerning abortion. However, the ratification of CEDAW and changes in foreign policy are not the only approaches to human rights and abortion within the field.

Studies on how a human rights approach has influenced the access to abortion has been conducted in, for example, Ireland and the UK. Bakhru (2017) examined through content analysis how the Irish Family Planning Association used human rights to argue for increased access to abortion in the country and thereby influenced the legal system to legalize abortion in Ireland. Lowe and Page (2019) studied anti-abortion activists in the UK and how they utilized human rights-based language reframed by religious beliefs in their arguments. Furthermore, human rights as a conceptual framework was applied by Smyth (2020) who studied transnational abortion movements and their implications in El Salvador. Deepak (2012) argues for a transformation within international social work on human rights and development by applying transnational feminist perspectives on globalization, and further discusses the concept of solidarity to move from the savior-victim dichotomy. Human Rights has been applied within social movement research by, for example, Hunt (2021) who studied how human rights framing had been used within pro-choice and pro-life actors in Ireland and Canada. She conducted a content analysis of news articles on abortion. Moreover, Hunt argues that more research on how social movements use framing to respond to countermovements, national and international political and social processes is needed. This is also something I aim to contribute to with this study focusing on the US abortion movement and countermovement.

Notably, there is a wide body of literature related to the issue I aim to study in this thesis. However, due to the influence the social movements on abortion have had, and still have on the US abortion laws and foreign aid policies, I aim with this study to contribute to the scholarly knowledge about the abortion discourse and use of rights-based language to spread their respective views on the topic. The framing of arguments within the movements are not static, as has been noted in the above sections. This study will also be a contribution to include formal organizations as part of social movement research. Furthermore, I argue that there is a need for further understanding of the way the two sides of the abortion movement in the US spread their politically, religiously, and morally influenced views beyond state

borders through transnational organizational work. Thus, I will focus on the construction of arguments within two nonprofit organizations part of the abortion movement and countermovement, and their usage of rights-based language to spread their respective agendas.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this study, I employed a deductive approach to the analysis, as will be outlined further in the methodology chapter. Thereby, the theoretical framework serves both as a tool for coding and analysis of data, and contributes to the discussion of the findings. In this chapter I will account for the theoretical and conceptual framework which was applied in the analysis of the data. Firstly, I will explain general conceptualizations used throughout the thesis, which is followed by a theoretical contextualization which highlights the theoretical approaches in which this study is situated, and an explanation of the theoretical perspectives and how they will be applied in this study.

3.1 Conceptualizations

An intersectional perspective has been implemented throughout this project and serves more as a methodological approach than applying it as a separate theory. This will be further explained in the methodological chapter. This approach does however impact the choice of words throughout the thesis. In a large portion of the literature review, and indeed some of the data, authors and scholars describe those in need of abortion services as ‘women’. However, not only women are recipients of such services. Using the concept of ‘women’ can contribute to homogenizing the group in need of abortion services, considering that the male versus female dichotomy is a social construct (Butler, 2006). Thus, I will throughout this thesis chose to use ‘people’ instead of ‘women’ to contribute to more inclusive and less discriminatory research, except in cases where the focus on women in particular is prevalent in the data. Moreover, I will conceptualize the two opposing movements as ‘pro-abortion’ and ‘anti-abortion’ as opposed to the popular terms ‘pro-life’ and

‘pro-choice’. This conceptualization will be favored partially to clarify the stance of the organizations, and partially due to the complexity of the terms ‘choice’ and ‘life’. These terms can be understood in different ways from different perspectives, therefore, ‘pro-choice’ and ‘pro-life’ will only be used when stated so in the material.

Furthermore, while discussing the US transnational work and their influence on other countries, I will favor the terms ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’, as these are those generally used while conceptualizing different parts of the world since the 1992 United Nations’ Rio de Janeiro environmental conference (Harding, 2006). However, I do stress that this type of conceptualization is binary and can limit the understanding of complex relations and contexts, as well as acknowledging that this sort of binary conceptualization has been a common implementation of the imperializing ‘West’ (ibid). Joachim (2013) has argued for the usage of the term ‘transnational’ over ‘international’ or ‘global’, due to its acknowledgement of both state and non-state actors, as well as highlighting the relation between local and international. Although these conceptualizations have been debated, transnational will be the term used throughout this study when discussing such social movements in line with the arguments posed by Joachim (2013).

3.2 Theoretical Contextualization

In this section I will outline the context in which the theoretical framework in this study is situated. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of the theoretical fields and their influence on how the chosen theoretical approaches were developed. This contextualization will further highlight theoretical perspectives which will be applied in the analysis of the data in this study.

Following the 1970s, theoretical perspectives developed with the aim to challenge the growth and spread of neoliberalism in the field of development. Human development approaches were an aspect of such challenging theories, which critiqued the earlier material focus on development and instead suggested a focus

on poverty and basic needs for human beings. A key theorist within this field was Amartya Sen, whose work focused on human development concerning inequality, poverty, and gender (Payne & Phillips, 2010). In the 1990s, Sen's work conceptualized various freedoms as an intrinsic part of development, where he argued that GNP is not the core assessment of development, but the freedoms which people could enjoy. These included social and economic freedoms as well as civil and political rights freedoms, connected to the concept of agency (Sen, 1999). Sen further discussed inequality issues within countries and not only through the North-South divide. For example, how populations of African Americans in poverty have a lower life expectancy than people in generally poorer countries, such as India (McLaren, 2017). These aspects are important to consider in the context of this study, taking into account that inaccessibility of reproductive health affects different groups of a population to different degrees. This can further be linked to the choice of applying intersectionality as a methodological tool in this study. The work by Sen and other scholars in the field had influence on the development agenda at large, for example the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and their Human Development Report (HDR) which started its annual launching in 1990 (Payne & Phillips, 2010).

Although the human development approaches had high impact, they were subject to criticism on the grounds of being a mere addition to the previous neoliberal approaches. Criticisms were also posed on account of their views on environmental sustainability, and gender. A parallel discussion of gender inequalities had taken place following the rise of the women's movements in the 1970s, giving rise to a women-in-development (WID) approach (Payne & Phillips, 2010). However, these approaches were criticized on the grounds of intersectional issues by, for example Harding (1987) who used the infamous phrase to "add women and stir" to describe this agenda. These criticisms paved way for the gender and development (GAD) approach, as a way to not homogenize the group 'women' (Payne & Phillips, 2010).

During the 1980s and 90s, there was an increase in so called post-development approaches which were influenced by postmodernism, postcolonialism, and radical feminist thought. Through these perspectives, social movement theory was developed further (Payne & Phillips, 2010). Postcolonial perspectives have influenced different academic fields, not least development studies and gender studies. Thus, I would argue that such perspectives are important to apply in this study due to the focus on the abortion debate across nation borders. Lewis and Mills (2003) emphasized a need to incorporate feminism into postcolonial theory in dialogue with Foucault's (1980) view on knowledge as a formation of power. They argue that second-wave feminism was predominantly focused on white women, highlighting that gender is always racialized. Moreover, they argue that in relation to the colonial and imperial history of the Global North, one should not assume that women in the Global South is a homogenous group that can be spoken for. In order to set an agenda for political action and change, activists of the Global North should work alongside activists in the Global South, with an emphasis on the concept of agency (Lewis & Mills, 2003). However, when working within transnational networks, one must be cautious to not simplify the complex contexts and relations existing across North-South borders. In order to succeed in sustainable political and social change transnationally, it is crucial to acknowledge that different groups of people are subject to different forms of oppression (McLaren, 2017). Thereby, from these perspectives, the concept of transnationalism has been a subject of discussion.

Dhamoon (2015) provides a critical discussion of transnationalism and intersectionality in which she argues that one must consider aspects of the matrix of domination within critical research on topics concerning, for example, transnationalism. Thus, I would argue that existing power imbalances should be considered when analyzing organizations working across nation borders. This should be considered in relation to both the organizations' communication and approaches, but also to how oneself as a researcher relays the findings. Moreover, Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that the success of international NGOs working for women's rights to some degree is credited to funding and support from aid

organizations from other countries. She argues that one example of such successful transnational cooperation across North-South borders is the development of the slogan “women’s rights are human rights” (ibid, p. 121).

In an increasingly globalizing world, scholars began studying social movements with transnational approaches further. Within this field of research, scholars have identified three main processes of *transnationalization*: *diffusion*, *internalization*, and *externalization*. The first process, diffusion, refers to the spread of information about a movement’s frames and practices across national borders. On the contrary, internalization refers to actions played out on the domestic arena, such as protests, responding to conflicts with external origins. Finally, externalization occurs when domestic movements target international institutions with the aim to pressure bodies of government within their local context, or as a way to mobilize resources and create alliances between national and international organizations (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). However, della Porta and Tarrow (2005) have identified an additional process which they argue is an important contribution to the three previously mentioned, namely, *transnational collective action*. They describe this process as “coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions” (ibid, pp. 2-3). These processes will be applied to this study in order to identify the characteristics of the organizations’ transnational approaches.

3.3 Framing of Social Movements

The theory of framing processes was developed by Goffman (1974). The theory has since been adapted to be more applicable for the analysis of the rhetorical processes of social movements (Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002; Snow et al, 1986). Snow and colleagues (1986) aimed to provide a theoretical perspective on the psychological, and structural and organizational factors of social movements. They identified four types of *frame alignment processes*, namely: *frame bridging*, *frame amplification*, *frame extension*, and *frame transformation*. The authors argue that one or more of these processes are crucial for movement participation. Thus, the

frame alignment processes will be applied in the analysis of the material in this study. I will below briefly explain what these entail.

Frame bridging refers to the linkage of two ideologically compatible frames which differ on a structural level. Such frame bridging can occur both on the organizational and individual level. Frame amplification can be summarized as a simplification or clarification of a movement's interpretive frame in order to link an issue to a person's immediate life. Thus, leading to more support and participation in said movement. The authors explain frame amplification as two-folded: value amplification and belief amplification, where values refer more to the end-goals of a movement and beliefs as ideational elements which support action towards reaching these end-goals. Frame extension, as the term implies, refers to the need of extending a frame to reach populations whose interests or perspectives may be in alliance with the movements objectives but were not reached by the original framework. Frame transformation on the other hand, occurs when there is a need for new frames or ideas which either complement the former or replace them (Snow et al, 1986). This process was referred by Goffman (1974) as keying. Snow et al (1986) identified two framing transformation processes, transformations of domain-specific, and global interpretive frames.

Framing applies to both what movements say and what they do, as well as through the connections between their rhetoric and their actions (Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002). Since its development, the framing theory of social movements has grown and been applied in several scholarly fields researching social movements of different kinds (Benford & Snow, 2000). Through applying this theory to the study, I aim to make a contribution to this body of research, specifically focused on organizational communication and its possible implications.

3.3.1 Human Rights Framing

Frame alignment processes has been applied to social movement research from the perspective of human rights. However, the concept of human rights has been

discussed critically by, for example, feminist and postcolonial scholars. I argue that such criticisms are important to take into consideration when employing a rights-based theoretical frame to analyze the data. I will here begin by highlighting critical perspectives on human rights before providing an explanation of human rights framing as a theoretical tool.

One perspective of criticism of the human rights framework, which has been argued to be the core issue of the universality of human rights, concerns who actually defines these rights (Steans et al, 2013). The perception of human rights as a concept from the Global North with origins in Eurocentrism is one of such critical debates on the topic (McLaren, 2017). Spade (2015) provides a discussion on the counterproductive legal system in relation to anti-discrimination laws in the US, and how criminalizing such behavior fails to protect those it affects. Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002) further discuss the potential of misuse of the “obligation” to intervene in countries who are perceived to violate human rights. Thus, providing an excuse for nations to invade or condemn enemies. McLaren (2017) argues that if feminists are to embrace human rights as a strategy it should be done from a critical and ambivalent standpoint. The human rights framework does favor a focus on legal and political rights, which has been discussed as part of the individualist Global North (Spade, 2015; McLaren, 2017). Claiming human rights as universal, as often stated, according to McLaren runs a risk of reproducing “Western cultural imperialism” (McLaren, 2017 p. 235). However, she further argues that categorizing rights as a concept of the Global North in itself, may in some cases risk partaking in cultural imperialism. Thus, when conducting feminist research within human rights one should acknowledge these risks as to avoid cross-culturally applying standards formed by the Global North’s liberal traditions (ibid).

3.3.2 Summary

Taking these discussions into consideration, I argue that applying a human rights-based theoretical framework can be useful in the context of this study. The focus on a social movement and countermovement originating in the Global North,

specifically the US, and how they frame arguments aimed to work cross-culturally may indeed contribute to the critical perspectives on human rights. Applying this theoretical frame critically on both sides of the abortion movement may moreover counter potential researcher bias, I would argue, due to the current polarization of the abortion debate landscape. Furthermore, the processes of transnationalization will serve as an approach to identify the specific transnational aspects of the organizations' communication. I will below further explain human rights framing as part of the framing alignment process presented earlier.

As mentioned in the literature review, Hunt (2021) utilized the theoretical framework of human rights framing in her study of abortion movements in Canada and Ireland. She argues that studying how human rights frames are used in such debates can indicate processes of global discourse. In this study, I will base the theoretical analysis on the frame alignment processes developed by Snow et al (1986) combined with a human rights approach. Human rights in this context can for example concern the right to life, and the right to health.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework applied to this study consists of the framing processes within social movement theory, the processes of transnationalization related to transnational social movements, and finally, critical postcolonial perspectives.

4. Background & Context

In order to more thoroughly grasp the topic I aim to study in this thesis, I will in the following sections go into more detail about the context in which the study takes place. The current situation in the US is a product of historical events, which is something to take into account when researching the current situation and how it may have influence transnationally. This chapter will additionally assist in answering the second research question. In order to analyze how the national US debate is reflected in transnational organizations' work, one must first be familiar

with the national debate climate and how it has developed over time. Therefore, these sections will provide an overview of the history of abortion in the US, the current discursive climate, and the country's relation to human rights and transnational aid work regarding sexual and reproductive health or "family planning". The sources used in this chapter are predominantly from previous research on the development of the abortion debate in the US, as well as from official international institutions.

4.1 Abortion History in the US

Abortion has a long history in the US, with shifting trends in public opinion and political discussions concerning the legality and morality of the procedure. The first judicial decision regarding abortion is dated back to 1812, with the Massachusetts case *Commonwealth v. Isaiah Bangs*. This case concerned at what point a miscarriage could be considered abortion within the British common law, which was in place at the time. The outcomes of this case applied to the white American citizens, and not the large population of African Americans residing in the country due to the slave trade. The slaves were instead regulated by the slave owner, who generally prohibited abortion due to the profit associated with the birthing of more slaves (Saurette & Gordon, 2016). I discuss these aspects of the history of how abortion regulation has had different effects on different parts of the US population since it is important to consider as the discriminatory history has had influence on how the US society works today. This may further impact how the two organizations of focus in this study frame their arguments and approaches related to, for example, discrimination.

Following the early 1800s, restrictive abortion regulations were increasingly implemented across the country, even though it was a widespread procedure and not particularly widely discussed until the late half of the century. This is when the issue of abortion progressed as a politicized topic in the US, and the debate originated from the arguments of elite groups of physicians portraying abortion as something linked to unmarried women lacking morals when women were expected

to fulfill their duties as wives. This increase in politicized debate was also influenced by the declining birth rate of white Americans and the increase of immigrants, as well as the professional self-interest of elite groups of white male physicians who, by increasing public debate on the topic, effectively overtook control of reproductive health from the midwives (Saurette & Gordon, 2016; Davis, 2003). Following this spread of anti-abortion arguments, abortion was banned in many states and those performing or receiving the procedure could be prosecuted. The debate was highly influenced by not only the elite physicians, but by religious, demographic, moral, and racial grounds (Saurette & Gordon, 2016). However, following this development, a movement for increased reproductive freedom formed in the late 1800s and early 1900s increasing access to contraceptives. Although this was the beginning of equality-based arguments for reproductive rights, the debate was influenced by radical groups in favor of birth control for certain groups to control reproduction of, particularly, African Americans, indigenous people, criminals, sex workers, and those suffering from mental illness (ibid).

In the 1960s and early 70s, public debate on abortion escalated. During this time, the formation of the highly polarized abortion debate we know today emerged. Feminist activists were increasingly involved in the issue within the new Women's Liberation movement (Davis, 2003), and rights-based language and issues of equality were influencing political and public debate. Furthermore, during this decade, the formation of activist organizations for abortion rights were growing in the US. This movement was leading up to the constitutional decision regarding abortion in 1973, and by that year abortion had been legalized in one third of the American states (Saurette & Gordon, 2016). However, one should take into consideration here that this movement was predominantly composed of white Americans. Due to the problematic history of birth control with involuntary sterilization of marginalized groups and the failure of the movement in the 1960s and 70s to recognize this discriminatory legacy, many from marginalized communities were skeptical toward the pro-abortion campaigning (Davis, 2003).

In 1973, the Supreme Court cases *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* lead to the decision that banning abortion was unconstitutional, ruling that many states' abortion laws violated the right to privacy and liberty of those in need of abortion. This ruling stated that an abortion in the first trimester of a pregnancy could not be regulated by the state, and that only in the third trimester states could limit abortion according to the constitution. Nonetheless, even in the third trimester abortion must be available in cases where it is necessary in order to preserve the health or life of the pregnant person. This case changed how abortion was regulated across the country, and it also changed the public debate on the issue to this day (Saurette & Gordon, 2016).

4.1.1 Abortion Since *Roe v. Wade*

During the 1960s and early 1970s in the political arena, the Republican party (GOP), were predominantly pro-abortion. In public opinion polls during that time, republican voters seemed more pro-abortion than democratic voters. However, this changed after 1976. In that year, the GOP shifted to an anti-abortion political platform following a desire to rise in popularity among democratic Catholics and evangelicals. This led to a general change in the GOP's politics towards an overall conservative platform which to this day is prevalent in the party's politics (Williams, 2011).

After the ruling of abortions as a constitutional right in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case¹, the rise of a movement against abortion developed in more concrete and successful ways. A more Christian influenced political right opposed to abortion took form, partially as a response to *Roe v. Wade*. This development of a stronger anti-abortion movement has since been a crucial part of the challenging of the legality and accessibility to abortion across the US, as well as the more polarized public and

¹ It should be noted that this law is currently being processed again in the Supreme Court through the case *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization*, and could be overturned in 2022 (Gerstein & Ward, 2022)

political debate of the topic. One of the first victories of the anti-abortion movement was the Hyde amendment in 1976, which stated that no federal money would fund abortion care. This effectively caused obstacles to access abortion for low-income persons (Saurette & Gordon, 2016). The Christian right were growing and succeeding in increasingly influencing the republican party after Roe v. Wade. This also led to a rising acceptance of religious influence in the political arena in general in the country, and indeed increased polarization of the two leading political parties, and the public debate on abortion. On state and individual level, anti-abortion activism became widespread starting from the 1970s and 80s and continuing today. One strategy has been demonstrations outside of abortion clinics, with protesters aiming to persuade people to choose not to abort their fetuses (ibid).

The 1976 Hyde amendment was not the only victory of the anti-abortion movement following Roe v. Wade. On the national level, there has been implementations of laws which aim to restrict access to abortion severely. Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, or more commonly known as TRAP laws, is one such example. TRAP laws are formed to promote health and safety in abortion clinics by demanding they fulfill certain standards or face closure of the clinic. They generally require clinics to follow standards of the states' ambulatory surgical centers, and additional requirements on physical standards of the clinic and staff spaces vary from state to state. Within the pro-abortion community, it is argued that these standards have few medical benefits and are only implemented with the intention of making it difficult for abortion clinics to stay open and for people in need of such services to have difficulty accessing them (Dordal, 2021; Guttmacher Institute, 2022a). Although the Supreme Court did challenge some of these laws in the case *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, TRAP laws still exist in various states and have had severe impact on the accessibility of reproductive health services. Many clinics have been forced to close, creating obstacles for those in need of abortion, such as long geographical distances between clinics, and delays in obtaining abortion services (Guttmacher Institute, 2022a).

4.2 An “Anti-gender” Agenda?

In order to contextualize the abortion movements in the US further, I will here expand briefly on the wider political climate which these movements are situated in. Through the developments of “new family configurations” in many countries including the US, a populist right-wing anti-gender movement has grown. This refers to, for example, the legalization of gay marriage, increasing gender equality, and developments within reproductive health matters. The anti-gender movement has expressed that such changes are a threat to traditional family values and “the natural order of things” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2021 pp. 5-6). This movement is visible in recent legal developments on state level in the US, not only through the obstacles raised towards access to abortion in many US states as discussed above. Recently, more conservative states have passed bills restricting trans and non-binary people in several ways. By framing the “anti-trans” legislation as a preservation of American values, political support for right-wing politicians has increased among predominantly white evangelicals (Crasnow, 2021).

4.3 Human Rights and US Aid

The US relation to human rights treaties, and their foreign aid policies governing transnational work on reproductive health have impact on organizations’ work across country borders. This section will therefore explain relevant policies and signed treaties. References to such documents may well be used by transnational organizations working for or against abortion. Thus, this overview is necessary to gain more knowledge about how the organizations relate to these issues in their framing of arguments.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created in the 1948 United Nations (UN) General Assembly and contains 30 articles which are the foundation of international legal frameworks such as human rights treaties and conventions. Furthermore, there are human rights treaties which, when ratified, states must follow (OHCHR, 2021). The US has been criticized by human rights organizations

for not signing and/or ratifying many of these treaties (Human Rights Watch, 2009). I will here only discuss those relevant to this study.

First and foremost, the country has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980, but has still not ratified it (OHCHR, n.d.), along with only 6 other countries (Human Rights Watch, 2009). States can sign a treaty, which implies that the state agrees to the treaty and intends to follow it. However, it is not until the state has ratified the treaty that it becomes legally binding. Additionally, the US is the only UN member in the world which have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), although they signed it in 1995 (OHCHR, n.d.; UNICEF, n.d.). The ratification of CRC has been debated in US congress, and it is argued that ratification could undermine US sovereignty, and that matters related to CRC are currently predominantly under state legislation, not under national government (Congressional Research Service, 2015). Even though the convention has not been ratified, the US has ratified two optional protocols to the convention in 2002 which concerns the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OHCHR, n.d.). Additional conventions which have been signed but not yet ratified includes the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). A convention which has not been signed nor ratified is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW). However, the country has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (OHCHR, n.d.).

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), are related to several human rights, for instance the right to life, the right to privacy, CESCR, and the right to be free from discrimination. SRHR are often referred to in relation to issues concerning early marriage, forced sterilization, access to health services, and abortion (OHCHR, 2022). Due to its relation to abortion, SRHR is a relevant

concept within the context of this study. Moreover, CEDAW is one convention which has been discussed and debated since it was signed in 1980, partially regarding whether or not it would imply a right to abortion. It has been discussed whether the US should ratify the convention with some reservations, then, concerning abortion as well as parental leave and maternal health (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

The US was ranked the largest donor of humanitarian aid in 2021 (Statista, 2022), and USAID is the largest bilateral donor within family planning and reproductive health (USAID, 2021). The US national stance on abortion has influence on how, and if, the country provides aid transnationally to promote development with regards to reproductive health in the Global South. There are two major policies which affect the US aid with regards to reproductive health, namely the Helms Amendment and the GGR. The Helms Amendment was implemented in connection with the Roe v. Wade case in 1973 and profoundly limits US foreign assistance to safe abortions. This policy affects aid in all countries who are recipients of US aid, indeed even those where abortion is legal. The GGR was implemented in 1984 and goes a step further (Sully & Ahmed, 2021). This policy bans foreign NGOs who receive some form of US funding from even using their own money to provide abortion related services, or face losing the US funding altogether. Since its implementation in 1984, the GGR has been rescinded and put in place again through governmental shifts in the US, generally the democratic party has rescinded the policy while the GOP has reinstated it (Guttmacher Institute, 2021).

During the presidency of the GOP's Donald Trump, the GGR was put in place and further expanded. Although the GGR was rescinded when Democrat Joe Biden took over the presidency, it is once again a short-term solution. The pro-abortion movement are calling for a permanent repeal of the policy through the passing of the Global Health, Empowerment and Rights Act (Global HER Act). Even if this succeeds, the Helms Amendment still would limit the potential for the US to give aid to organizations working with abortion services and information in the Global

South (Sully & Ahmed, 2021). There is however currently a repeal to the Helms Amendment in the works through the Abortion is Healthcare Everywhere Act (HR 1670) which was first introduced in 2020 and again in 2021 (Population Connection Fund, 2022).

The national debate on the topic of abortion thus influences the accessibility of abortion services in other countries receiving US aid. Moreover, the instability of the GGR through governmental change creates an uncertainty for organizations working with such aid, as well as for the countries and individuals in need of abortion services and information. These issues impact the abortion movements, and the organizations of focus in this study specifically due to their transnational approach.

5. Methodology

In this chapter I will lay out the methodological aspects applied in this study. Firstly, there will be a general methodological discussion of approaches influencing the project, followed by choices concerning data and analysis as well as potential limitations of the study. Finally, I will briefly outline the material for the analysis.

In line with the critical theory paradigm, I as a researcher view reality as shaped by social factors including political, cultural, economic, racial, and gendered ideas (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical approaches to research, such as feminist research, can be characterized as holding an emancipatory position with an aim of social change (Harding, 1991; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Moreover, within critical theory there tends to be a focus on dialogic methodological approaches, focusing on studying meaning within communication (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Applied to this research project, I argue that increased understanding of how social movements of different positions construct their arguments can also highlight how they gain followers and succeed in change on a political and legal level. Considering the transnational aspect of the second research question guiding this study, I further

argue that an analysis of US organizations with influences across country borders can contribute to the understanding of how national debates and discourses transfer to new contexts. Throughout the research process, I have implemented an intersectional approach in order to not unconsciously leave out potential viewpoints and as to not essentialize or homogenize the group of ‘women’ (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). The intersectional approach also contributes to highlight how different groups of people are affected by inaccessibility to reproductive health in different ways.

As within feminist critical research, I view knowledge as situated, as opposed to the positivist perspective based on the notion of objectivity (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004; Haraway, 1988), what Haraway (1988) refers to as the “god trick”. Instead, building on Haraway’s discussions, I would stress that knowledge builds on our embodied vision (ibid). As Harding (2006) puts it, “If no scientists intentionally put any politics into their work, then none can be assigned responsibility for the various politics that emerge from this work” (p. 10). Thus, and to increase reflexivity (Mason, 2002; Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004), I will here include my own positionality as a researcher.

I would argue that it is important to state that I identify with the “pro-choice” side of the abortion movement, as to not hide my personal views and opinions on the topic at hand. One could argue that this may affect the research negatively, favoring the one side of the movements I aim to study. However, as has been argued by Saurette and Gordon (2016), being an outsider when studying a social movement can be beneficial and lead to the researcher discovering aspects which may be invisible to that of an insider. Following this, I shall state that even though I support access to safe and legal abortions, I am not an active member of the pro-choice movement. Furthermore, since this study is conducted from a Swedish University and by a researcher who has grown up in a Swedish context, this research could be seen as one of an outsider. However, even though I would identify as a Swede foremost, I am half American and have a large part of my family in the US. This, I

would argue, gives me an opportunity to conduct this study as an outsider within, where I have knowledge and experience about the context although I primarily have observed it beyond the US borders. My background has allowed me to observe the development of the US from a distance, providing me with a critical outlook on the country's backwards development when it comes to human rights and living conditions for its citizens. This has led to a profound interest in these issues and a desire to contribute to emancipatory research to assist in the improvement of living conditions for marginalized communities in the US and those who are affected by its development across nation borders.

5.1 Sampling & Data

In order to answer the research questions guiding this thesis, I conducted a qualitative comparative study of documents as sources for data generation. To study how the two abortion movements construct their arguments, two nonprofit organizations – one from each side of the movement – were sampled. Due to the highly politicized topic, many organizations turned out to be involved in the political arena in one way or another. Thus, I did not opt for NGOs specifically. As part of this purposeful sampling process, I additionally aimed to sample organizations which were comparable in size in order to ensure a comparable analysis. The organizations sampled were *Planned Parenthood Global* and *Heartbeat International*. Both organizations sampled are associated with, directly or indirectly, care for pregnant people, offering information on their options and assistance in their unwanted pregnancy, as well as activism (Planned Parenthood, 2022a; Heartbeat International, 2022a). The data from these organizations consists of their respective websites, which can be defined as static data (Marotzki, Holze & Verständig, 2014).

Using documents as data in qualitative analysis can entail different things, in this case the documents are virtual and official from private organizations. Scott (1990) has suggested four criteria for judgement of the quality of documents, which has also been discussed by Bryman (2008), namely, authenticity, credibility,

representativeness, and meaning. The question of authenticity in this context is quite straightforward since the documents at hand are those produced officially by the two organizations. Taking into account that this project aims to study the arguments posed by the organizations, potentially biased information or misleading facts will not affect the results. If anything, it will provide interesting points of analysis. Therefore, whether the documents fulfill the criteria of credibility will not affect the study. However, the question of representativeness needs to be addressed. As I have discussed elsewhere, the two movements are not homogenous, which has implications for whether the documents are representative of other organizations working within them. Through the sampling process I have nevertheless aimed to attend to these issues by sampling larger organizations with notable influence within the abortion movement and countermovement. The fourth criterion, meaning, refers to whether the documents are clear and understandable. Considering these websites are aimed at the public, and the organizations' desires to reach potential activists and people in need of their services, I would argue that the criterion can be considered fulfilled.

I shall here also provide a brief discussion on the reality of documents. Atkinson and Coffey (2004) point out that documents should be perceived as a distinct level of reality. Documents should therefore be analyzed within the context they were produced, as well as their intended crowd of readers. As Bryman (2008) discusses, then documents are produced to be perceived as positive for the authors and the organization and greater context they intend to represent. Furthermore, one should consider the intertextuality between documents when conducting this type of study. As Bryman (2008) highlights, intertextuality refers to how documents always refer or relate to other documents within the context at hand, meaning that the documents the material relates to are part of the existing wider context. Provided one views the reality of documents through this perspective, I argue that the analysis in this study can contribute with an insight to the greater context of organizations within social movements.

5.2 Material

In the following sections the material sampled for the study will be introduced as to provide an overview of the basis of the analysis.

5.2.1 Planned Parenthood (Global)

Planned Parenthood (PP) is a US nonprofit organization that was founded in 1916 and has grown exponentially since its founding. According to their website, they have 17 million supporters in the US alone through activism and donors. They are part of a network of over 600 health care centers in the US, operated by the organization itself as well as its affiliates. Furthermore, they provide sex education both online, and in classrooms and communities across the nation. The Planned Parenthood Federation of America was additionally one of the founding organizations of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, which is based in the UK (Planned Parenthood, 2022a). It should further be noted that the Guttmacher Institute, which has been used as a source for statistics on reproductive health in this thesis was initially founded as part of the PP organization. However, it is now an independent organization although it is still named after one of the former presidents of PP, Alan Guttmacher (Guttmacher Institute, 2022b).

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America has a division, or “international arm”, called Planned Parenthood Global (PPG) (Planned Parenthood, 2022b). This is the part of the organization that is the focus of analysis. Focused primarily on their transnational work for access to and information about reproductive health, this international arm works with over 70 partner organization across Latin America and Africa. However, the transnational work performed by the division is not operated in the same way as within the US. Transnationally, they do not facilitate or operate health care centers, but focus on providing resources, information, and building networks. This division has been conducting transnational work since 1971 (ibid).

Websites for analysis of PPG are to some extent part of the main PP website, however, they also have subpages which will be included, as well as all links to related brochures and documents. The main PP website can be found here: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>.

5.2.2 Heartbeat International

Founded in 1971 under the name Alternatives to Abortion, this organization started as a network of hotlines and pregnancy help services. Following the increase of abortion access in countries outside of the US, the organization changed its name and approach to Alternatives to Abortion International. The organization continuously grew with more members and networks, particularly reaching Catholics and evangelical Christians hoping to contribute to the decrease of abortions, and again changed the name to Heartbeat International (HI) in 1993. Today, HI works in locations across 6 continents assisting over 2800 service locations working to provide pregnancy help, maternity homes, and adoption agencies (Heartbeat International, 2022a). According to their website, HI is now the most wide-ranging network of organizations working with pregnancy help services in the world (Heartbeat International, 2022b).

In the early years of the organization's operation, the founders strategically made the decision not to frame their work based in religious terms. However, this changed as the organization and general "pro-life" movement progressed in the 1990s (Heartbeat International, 2016). In connection to the final name change, HI was reframed as an explicitly Christian association "dedicated to Biblical orthodoxy" (ibid, p. 9).

Since HI is an independent organization and not, like PPG, a division of a larger organization, the website for analysis will be the official HI website, which can be found here: <https://www.heartbeatinternational.org/>. Additionally, as with PPG, all subpages and linked brochures and documents will be included in the material.

5.3 Analytical Framework

To analyze the data, a form of qualitative content analysis (QCA) was conducted. The QCA-method describes meaning to the data through categorizing it within a coding frame. This method of analysis is both flexible and systematic, requiring the researcher to code data relevant to the research questions. This approach also limits the influence of the researcher's assumptions to mislead the analysis and rendering it biased (Schreier, 2014), which is suitable particularly in the case of this project considering the subjects of analysis are part of a polarized political debate. The analysis was conducted from more of a deductive approach, taking into account that employing a purely deductive approach would not be plausible (Braun & Clarke, 2012), since I framed my coding approach based on my theoretical framework, the background, and my research questions.

The analysis was coded with a thematic method based on Braun & Clarke's (2012) six-phase thematic analysis (TA) approach. There have been discussions among scholars whether QCA and TA are two separate methods of analysis or if TA is a sub-approach to QCA. Nevertheless, TA is argued to be a more purely qualitative approach and better suited for interpretive analyses on latent data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019), which I argue is more suitable for this project since I approached the data deductively. A deductive TA is also often linked to a critical approach to research (Braun & Clarke, 2012), which corresponds with the ontological and epistemological discussion I had in the beginning of this chapter. Throughout the analytical phases, I approached both datasets critically in order to counteract potential bias linked with my own positionality. Through this approach, the findings were more balanced, as opposed to portraying one of the organizations as predominantly "positive". Furthermore, the systematic aspect of TA assists to counteract potential bias of the results, as the method is rigorous and thorough in its approach.

The analytical process started through the first phase of TA, familiarizing myself with the data. I then constructed some initial codes based on the initial impressions

of the datasets, the literature review, background and context, and theoretical framework. The two datasets (HI and PPG) were first coded one at a time, and through the latter stages of analysis as a whole, in order to gain a view of which codes were visible in which dataset. Through the process, the initial codes were reevaluated, and some were removed. The coding process of the six-phases was conducted in the software NVivo, as to enable a structured and systematic coding process. Throughout the 6 phases, I incorporated queries and functions, such as word frequency queries and hierarchy charts, in the software to assist the process. Through the analytical phases, 23 codes were generated, of which 8 were sub-codes (see codebook in appendix). The codes were aimed to address the research questions guiding the study, and some were related to the theoretical framework and literature review.

Based on the codes I then generated 4 themes which were prominent throughout the datasets related to the research questions. Themes are viewed as patterns of meaning throughout the datasets, within which the codes can be categorized (Bryman, 2008). According to Braun and Clarke (2012), the themes should be distinctive enough to stand alone while simultaneously relate to each other to tell a cohesive story about the data. Themes were generated through the TA phases by searching for patterns within the coded data, primarily related to the research questions. The themes constructed through the analytical process were: a) 'pro-woman', b) 'the next generation', c) 'us vs them', and d) 'the west and the rest'.

5.4 Strengths and Limitations

The strengths and limitations of this study primarily concern the research sample and data analysis. While conducting this study I have considered useful approaches to measure the quality of qualitative research, as discussed by Mason (2002). The choice of analytical method in this project depends on the researcher to develop codes based on the research questions and theoretical framework. In this case, the background and literature review were also taken into account through the coding and analytical processes, which increases the validity of the study.

A potential limitation is the sample size for this analysis, which as mentioned, consists of two nonprofit organizations part of the abortion movement and countermovement. However, I do not aim to make broad generalizations of the two movements, considering that they are by no means homogenous, as discussed in the literature review and background chapters. Recognizing the sample consists of just two organizations, I aim with this study to instead provide an in-depth analysis of their respective framing of arguments which may offer an insight to how nonprofit organizations within the movements work discursively. Furthermore, as has been discussed by Tarrow (2005), I acknowledge that these are professionalized organizations and thus not entirely activist. They are however part of a broader process of contentious politics. The aspects discussed here also concern the validity and reliability of this project. Another method for data generation could have been qualitative interviews with activists in the two movements. This may have provided more depth to the analysis and strength to the results. However, interviews with staff members from the organizations could run the risk of being repetitive of the website material. Thus, the effect on the results may not have been crucial. In addition, by conducting interviews several ethical issues would arise, particularly due to the sensitivity of the issue at hand, which is not the case in this type of document analysis. Nevertheless, this option was not pursued due to inaccessibility. The material sampled to base the data analysis on is entirely in English, which eliminates the risks involved with translation and interpretation of data, as well as accessibility. This is also relevant for the contextualization within the country at hand, and previous research.

6. Results & Analysis

In this chapter I will present the results from this study in relation to the organizations' incorporation of the framing alignment processes, as well as the processes of transnationalization. The findings presented here are a collected summary based on the analysis, where I will refer to the organizations in a general

way and provide sources to the specific document from the data when direct quotes are presented. The chapter is divided based on the 4 themes which were generated through the analytical phases. Within each section I will first introduce the essence of each theme and then discuss the findings across the two datasets in a comparative manner. A discussion of the results will be presented in chapter 7.

6.1 Pro-Women

This theme was generated relating to the vast general focus on women and how the two organizations constructed their arguments based on women's rights or empowerment from different points of view. Furthermore, it highlights the debates on the concept of choice. Essentially, it encompasses women-centered arguments and human rights language specifically related to women. The theme was visible throughout the two datasets, nonetheless from different angles and perspectives.

6.1.1 Women's Rights

One of the codes, named "women's rights", was one of the most referenced throughout both datasets, although slightly more prevalent throughout the data of PPG. Related to this code, PPG used language related to SRHR to a much larger extent than HI. Through comparing the way the two organizations phrase their communication related to women's rights, it appears a difference in what they view as rights, and the preferred way to empower women. What seems to be more prevalent from HI are arguments of saving, rescuing, and helping women make the right choice related to their unwanted pregnancy. Their perspective on women's empowerment when it comes to unwanted or unplanned pregnancy is the strength and persistence to carry it through and still be able to chase their dreams in life. Through what they call the pregnancy help movement, women will receive support and encouragement to keep the pregnancy and "choose life". They also argue that going through with an abortion would lead to not only death for the fetus, but in addition, serious mental health consequences for the woman. Thus, the desire and call to rescue women from this fate and prevent abortion from being an option to consider. In their pregnancy help center they furthermore offer post-abortion care

for women in need, to show them compassion and care in order for them to move on, heal, and make “life-affirming” choices in the future. Their approach to the empowerment of women can be labeled as a form of frame extension. Through not only focusing on the right to life of the fetus, but on the pregnant woman to a wider extent, HI may be able to mobilize support within a wider range of groups in support of women’s empowerment.

While HI’s framing of arguments related to women tend to use softer words of “help”, “care”, “compassion”, and “rescue”, PPG appears to employ a different approach. Firstly, they refer directly to human rights treaties related to women’s rights, such as CEDAW, which is not visible in HI’s communication. PPG cross references which human rights related treaties and legal frameworks are in place in the particular country they discuss and argue for how the inaccessibility of abortion and contraceptives violates women’s rights in the context. Similar to HI, PPG argues for the empowerment of women related to their ability to follow their dreams, but argue that access to sexual and reproductive care is one of the main solutions for this problem. In addition, they touch upon mental health issues related to an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy and the dire health consequences suffered by women who are forced to carry through a pregnancy. These arguments are however mostly related to women who have become pregnant due to rape or within violent relationships. They not only discuss such situations with reference to SRHR, but to the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as well as the right to be free from discrimination. This approach to human rights-based arguments can be viewed as a form of frame bridging, arguing that people who stand by human rights also should be pro-abortion. Thereby linking the general human rights supporters to the pro-abortion movement.

PPG refers more to international human rights treaties in their arguments than HI, and justifies their work based on specific countries’ signed treaties that should be upheld. PPG seems to focus on the *universality* of human rights. This can be viewed as a form of frame amplification. The emphasis on human rights can be seen as

value amplification, referring to the end goal of the movement – that human rights should be upheld and accessible to all human beings. The claim that abortion is a human right is then a belief amplification. This statement emphasizes a degree of seriousness due to the value of human rights as absolute and universal, therefore the inaccessibility of abortion is a serious violation of rights. Such belief amplification further highlights the call to stand up against these violations and contribute to change.

The concept of discrimination, specifically, was also apparent throughout both datasets. HI argues that abortion-vulnerable women are targeted by abortion providers, and that PP has a history of promoting contraception and abortion on the basis of a racist agenda. HI also states that their affiliates will not discriminate based on “race, creed, color, national origin, age, or marital status” (Heartbeat International, 2022c). Moreover, they have developed models of care to better assist “special populations” which refers to, for example, native Americans. Statistics which shows how marginalized groups of women are predominantly targeted by abortion providers are also presented in the HI dataset. A focus on discrimination towards different groups of women is visible throughout the PPG data as well. However, their approach towards discriminatory practices concerns the access to care, as opposed to the approach visible in the HI data. PPG argues that criminalizing abortion in instances of rape contributes to another level of victimization and discrimination of women. They provide arguments stating that they incorporate an intersectional approach in their work, including communication about discriminatory practices on the basis of sexuality and gender identity. I would argue that PPG’s increased focus on the concept of discrimination could be viewed as a process of frame transformation, considering the problematic background of promoting contraceptives and abortion access based on, for example, racist and ableist premises, as discussed in the background chapter. The problematic past has also been criticized by HI, as will be discussed further in section 6.3.1.

PPG provides criticism towards views and policies which, according to them, tend to focus on the reproductive function of the woman and not on her as a person with rights. For example, in one document provided on their website, it is stated that “women are recognized as sexual objects and reproductive vehicles whose rights are not effectively recognized” (Casas Isaza et. al, n.d.). Whereas HI tends to focus on either the rights of the fetus or the rights of women as mothers. However, HI does discuss the issue of violence against women and argue for an inclusion of men in their pregnancy help centers to help them develop as good fathers and partners. And, as mentioned earlier, the women’s ability to reach goals for their futures after a pregnancy, either while raising the child with support from the community, or through the option of adoption.

6.1.2 The Concept of Choice

Another widely prevalent topic related to this theme throughout both datasets is the concept and understanding of choice. The concept of choice was used in arguments in both organizations, nonetheless again from different perspectives. PPG constructs choice in their arguments as an inherent right. They argue that choosing whether or not to carry through a pregnancy is a human right and should thus be protected as such. In addition, the phrase “forced pregnancy” is frequently used throughout the PPG dataset and implies their view on the importance of choice.

The concept of choice is not less employed in arguments by HI. However, they frequently emphasized the importance of “true choice”, which is understood as when a woman is fully informed about the consequences of abortion and can make an informed and “life-affirming” decision. They continuously construct their arguments of choice based on the premise that a life-affirming choice is the right choice, while at the same time emphasizing that no woman is forced to not choose an abortion. Furthermore, HI has an initiative of abortion pill reversal. When arguing for this method, they use the concept of choice in similar ways as in PPG’s arguments. Here, HI focuses on the woman’s right to choose to change her mind about a medical abortion, and that no woman should be forced to carry through an

abortion they have regretted. They frame this initiative as a second chance to choose life. In addition to their emphasis on the importance of choice, or the right choice, there also tends to be arguments implying that choice can be a burden. It is argued that women see abortion as the lesser of three evils (motherhood, adoption, and abortion) when faced with an unwanted pregnancy, and that they are choosing it because it seems like the easy way out. They further frame their work as lifting the responsibility of choice from the woman.

6.2 The Next Generation

A focus on infants, children, and youth was apparent in both organizations' communication. This theme, in essence, focuses on the rights of children, when in development these rights come in to play, and the spread of the organizations' respective views, beliefs, and agendas to the younger generations. As within the other constructed themes, this was visible throughout both datasets from different angles and approaches.

6.2.1 A Youth Approach

Both organizations appear to have a quite paramount emphasis on teaching youths about topics related to pregnancy and the prevention of unwanted pregnancy. They both hold initiatives focused on the education of youths related to these topics as well as the spread of their agendas to young people, although from vastly different perspectives and approaches. This is also a theme where their approach to religion becomes increasingly visible. HI and their affiliates conduct lectures and teaching sessions focused on youth, where they teach a life-affirming approach. They do not inform about contraception or abortion, but teach about abstinence until marriage and encourage young people to wait until they are ready for marriage and raising children to engage in sexual activities. In addition, they teach about healthy relationships. Furthermore, HI promotes the "traditional family" and argues that through a life-affirming and abstinence approach, abortion will be unwanted today and unthinkable for future generations.

PPG on the other hand, approach youth education from a different perspective. They also hold lectures and teaching sessions focused on youths, but teach about modern contraceptive methods, sexuality, sexual and gender identities, and cultural norms. PPG provides a manual for the development of peer education, from which affiliates can learn how to educate youth leaders in their communities to spread the information to their peers. This manual contains information about how contraceptives work, the reproductive systems of males and females, sexually transmittable infections, and how to approach youths with this information in a way they find interesting and increasing the success of spreading this information in their communities. PPG argues that focusing on youth education will decrease unwanted pregnancies, particularly pregnancies among young people. Within this approach, they refer to human rights such as the rights of the child, the right to health, and the right to information. Although a direct reference to human rights is not visible in HI's communication within this theme, they do discuss topics which can be linked to human rights. Particularly, that girls should grow up to be able to make a fully informed, life-affirming decision if faced with an unplanned pregnancy.

6.2.2 The Right to Life

Connections to human rights treaties is more visible in both organizations' communication regarding how children are affected by abortion and unwanted pregnancies. HI has a particularly vast focus on the right to life within these discussions. Throughout the HI dataset, references to the right to life of the fetus is prevalent, not least when referring to making life-affirming choices and being pro-life. Here, they use words such as "saving" and "rescuing" babies. They refer to their work as life-saving, and encourage the public to join in and help saving lives from abortion. PPG refers less to the right to life, although they do include it in their communication related to pregnancy in adolescents. However, they do not refer to the right to life of the fetus, but the right of the child who is forced to carry out an unwanted pregnancy.

PPG argues that the right to life encompasses the right to live a decent life, which is “stolen” from adolescents who become pregnant. In addition, they discuss the health risks involved with carrying through a pregnancy at a young age, and argue that this is a violation of human rights since there exists preventions of maternal deaths and related health effects, however it is not accessible due to anti-abortion legislations and cultural stigma. Furthermore, it is stated that unwanted pregnancy among young women and girls maintains cycles of poverty. PPG makes these statements particularly in relation to their Latin American campaign “niñas no madres” (girls not mothers). The niñas no madres campaign could be categorized as transnational collective action, as it is a campaign in which PPG cooperates with local organizations in Latin America to put pressure on local governments for political change. Viewed from the PPG affiliate organizations’ perspective, this is also a form of externalization. The local organizations, in cooperation with PPG, target international institutions with the aim of political change on their local government level. What is notable in both organizations’ communication related to the right to life is that both use harsher language with words such as “attack”, “lives are robbed”, “killing babies”, “stolen lives”, and “death-defying”. They both argue for the right to life with conviction, although differ in whose life they are defending.

PPG further utilizes frame extension through the increasing focus on children’s rights. By providing stories of adolescent girls forced to carry through a pregnancy, they can reach advocates and supporters of children’s rights to gain more support. The way they combine individual stories from young girls with statistics and human rights treaties signed in the relevant countries, PPG provides powerful arguments that could lead to more support for their organizations by children’s rights advocates in particular. The focus on children’s rights is clearly visible in HI’s arguments as well, although the focus relies heavily upon the right to life. I would categorize HI’s life-affirming arguments as a form of frame amplification. The right to life would be the value amplification, whereas the belief amplification would relate to the view of abortion as murder/taking a life. Here the seriousness of the

issue is amplified and one can link those who promote and provide abortion as the ones to blame.

6.3 Us vs Them

This theme was constructed to showcase the polarizing language between the two organizations. However, it does not only concern arguments against the other organization in particular, but general language that highlight the two opposing sides of the abortion debate. The theme encompasses how they view their own side, the opposing side, and the language they use to amplify their side as the “good” one.

6.3.1 Moral Superiority

Emphasizing the polarizing debate on abortion is prevalent in both organizations' communication, however, HI tends to use these type of arguments more frequently. Notably, HI names PP (however, not PPG) specifically when discussing the opposing side of the abortion debate, whereas HI, or any other anti-abortion organization, is not mentioned in the dataset of PPG. HI proclaims that PP's history of promoting contraception and abortion based on a racist agenda questions the moral compass of the organization to this day. While presenting the history of HI, they describe how one of the founders was a refugee from Nazi-ridden Europe and was therefore committed to saving lives by opposing abortion in the US, implying that HI is therefore morally superior. It is stated that this founding member “with perfect moral clarity, she saw the dehumanizing process unfold again with the legalization of abortion” (Heartbeat International, 2016, p. 4). HI further questions PP's agenda of financial gain by promoting medical services such as contraception and abortion. The concept of morality in relation to abortion is reoccurring throughout the HI dataset, often tied to their Christian approach. They argue that Americans with good conscience should join their cause to promote life, and that being pro-life is a fight for survival. They use the term “big abortion” to refer to how pro-abortion organizations and providers target “abortion-vulnerable” women and communities, discussing American cities “plagued” with abortion.

Furthermore, HI promotes an initiative called “babies go to congress” by referring to it as “one event Planned Parenthood could never dream of pulling off” (Heartbeat International, 2016, p. 11). In contrast to PPG’s transnational collective action campaign, the babies go to congress event is a local US campaign, but aims to highlight the importance of their pregnancy help movement for abortion-vulnerable women in the country, and to celebrate the mothers’ life-affirming choices. This campaign could be an additional link to HI’s frame extension to reach a wider audience of supporters, and in particular, women. It is significant to note here that HI does not seem to have any campaigns with transnational focus. As an organization which claims to have a vast focus on pregnancy help across national borders, as even claimed in the organization’s name, they tend to have a disproportionate focus on the US.

PPG focuses more on the anti-abortion opposition as a whole in their communication on the topic. They refer to the opposition’s views as ideologically driven, and argue that politics and ideology should not stand between a patient and their care provider. Similar arguments are used when referring to restricting abortion policies affecting countries in the Global South, which are viewed as driven by ideology instead of science and evidence. They further state that movements, organizations, and politicians supporting such legislation are part of an anti-human rights agenda. In relation to this, PPG discusses the need for a view on abortion as a human right and public health issue as opposed to the dichotomy of scientific arguments and moral beliefs on the topic. They pose criticism towards the binary understanding of for versus against abortion, and the polarization of the debate in general. However, the organization seems to simultaneously contribute to this polarization in similar ways as HI, although not as direct. For example, they argue that supporters of human rights, free speech, and gender equality should support their cause to fight for access to care for women around the world. Such argumentation can further be linked to PPG’s frame amplification as well as frame extension discussed in previous sections.

Notably, both organizations include the fact that republican US presidents have put the GGR in place, while democrats have repealed it, while both argue that they do not officially support any one political party. In these discussions, both organizations further employ harsher language portraying their work as a “fight” against what they respectively believe as the bad side. PPG frames their work as a fight against attacks on SRHR, and a fight for a better future. However, such framing is more prevalent and more aggressive within the HI dataset. For example, they compare fetuses to bomb victims in the sense that some find it easier to kill them when they cannot see them. In another scenario, the comparison is with modern slavery. They also argue that they are involved in a fight against a global evil. Furthermore, parables to war-like scenarios occur in HI’s communication. They use terms such as “first responders”, “army”, “foot soldiers”, and simply “war against abortion”. In these contexts, religious parables further stand out, as on one occasion where they compare their fight against abortion as a David versus Goliath battle.

It is apparent throughout the data that HI approaches their work with strong ties to religion, specifically Christianity. The religious approach by HI can be identified as a form of frame bridging, particularly since the organization adjusted their approach to be implicitly Christian during the 1990s. Thus, linking the frames by anti-abortion networks with the US Christian conservative right wing politics to reach a wider audience of supporters. While PPG does not explicitly oppose religion, they do in some cases highlight how religious beliefs can appear as a hurdle to advance development of SRHR and equality. They pose critique towards the conservative abstinence only approach and traditional family values, which is being taught to youths in many communities. In their view, presenting scientific arguments can help religious legislators and community leaders overcome their convictions on abortion and contraceptives. Critical arguments against the Catholic Church’s alliances with governmental sectors furthering criminalization of abortion is also prevalent in the dataset. However, PPG does emphasize the importance of

including religious leaders in community work to advance human rights related to women and sexual and reproductive health, due to their power and influence.

6.3.2 Diffusion

Even though abortion and general reproductive health affects people across North-South borders, I would argue that the polarized debate in the US is visible in the organizations' communication transnationally, and this strong dichotomy of the movement and the countermovement may not be as dominant in many of the countries in which they work. Thus, transferring the debate landscape to other contexts. This, I would argue, can be seen as a form of diffusion. Both organizations engage in spreading the values, beliefs, and practices of the side of the movement they are part of transnationally through their communication. This includes the strong incorporation of the concept of choice from the two opposing perspectives, which has immense influence on the US debate. Furthermore, the two sides' approach to religion is a large component of US national abortion debate, which may not be the case outside nation borders. The process of diffusion can additionally be linked to the organizations' claims to not be in support of neither of the two main US political parties, but nonetheless both emphasize the republican versus democratic relations to the GGR. This suggests that they do partake in the polarization and politicizing of the debate, which further is transferred in their transnational communication due to the ties between US foreign policy and the organizations' transnational work.

6.4 The West and the Rest

The final theme that was apparent through the data relates to the organizations' view on the importance, responsibility, and impact of the Global North, particularly the US. It includes communication regarding North-South relations, US funding, the concept of rights, and transnational work approaches. This theme further showcases how the organizations' beliefs and agendas are directly or indirectly transferred into their transnational work.

HI's leading motto is "reach, rescue, renew" and these words are prevalent throughout the dataset applied to different topics and discussions. They aim to renew communities and "broken cities" for life around the world through their pregnancy help movement. They argue that due to the presence of Christians and abortion around the world, they can reach communities across all continents to aid people faced with an unplanned pregnancy through a life-affirming approach, which they refer to as humanitarian and missionary work. However, they frame their transnational approach as focused on local affiliates from a grass root level in each particular country they operate in. PPG has a similar approach to their transnational work. They state that they support locally led organizations and initiatives focused on advancing SRHR around the world. Both organizations have a particular focus on the Global South where HI argue that there are women particularly vulnerable to abortion, and PPG argue that there is particularly restricted access to sexual and reproductive health. Both organizations further have certain requirements for their affiliate organizations to reach in order to be supported by them.

6.4.1 Foreign Policy

PPG provides a large amount of information on the GGR and how the policy has impact on different levels in countries where they work. They pose strong criticism towards how the US foreign aid policies affect populations in the Global South and contribute negatively to the advancement of SRHR and access to various forms of health care. PPG further argues that access to such health care is fundamental for a country's development, and that the GGR and Helms amendment hinder development. The power and impact of the US is strongly highlighted throughout the dataset. Within these discussions, the issue of morals once again occurs. PPG argues that since the US is the largest aid donor within family planning, they have a moral obligation towards women and girls' health globally.

Furthermore, it is argued that these restricting foreign policies impose on local governing since they restrict funding to organizations working with abortion even

in countries where abortion is legal. In these discussions, PPG also use human rights to argue against the policies, particularly women's rights, the right to information, and freedom of speech. In addition, they provide arguments around US issues which translate to other countries through their work. For example, they argue that national US debates concerning race have impact on staff working outside the US. This vast focus on criticism towards the US foreign policies and how they account for effects on organizations and communities outside US borders can be seen as a form of internalization. PPG puts pressure on the domestic government, and aims to mobilize on the national arena as a response to the US foreign policy affects transnationally. Furthermore, the actions performed by PPG's affiliate organization in other countries in response to the restricting US foreign policies could be seen as an externalization process. Through voicing concerns about the defunding of organizations and its effects towards international institutions, they aim to pressure their own domestic governments to take action, in addition to pressuring the US government to change their policies.

In contrast, HI does not focus on the GGR nor the Helms amendment in the dataset. However, they do emphasize the power and impact of the US. For example, they state that the US national legality of abortion has impact on how other countries approach the issue, and that overturning *Roe v. Wade* would send a message to the rest of the world that abortion is not something desired. Like PPG, HI focuses on the right to health for women and communities around the world, and that the US have great impact through transnational work, and power as a leading nation. Here the religious approach of the organization shines through as well. HI argues that they work to restore God's plan for our sexuality through working in countries where women are abortion-vulnerable, to "reach even more nations with the gospel of life" (Heartbeat International, 2022d). This type of argumentation can further be linked to HI's diffusion process, which was discussed further in section 6.3.2, due to the spread of the organization's Christian frames and practices across nation borders.

7. Discussion

The results presented in the previous chapter suggest that both organizations include rights based language in their communication, although to different degrees and from different angles. These results served to answer the first research question of this study. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the national US abortion debate climate is visible in the organizations' communication directed towards their transnational work, which answers the second research question. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the literature review, background and context, as well as the theoretical contextualization. The chapter is divided into three sections; rights-based arguments, postcolonial contributions, and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Rights-Based Arguments

As presented in the findings chapter, human rights language was prevalent throughout the datasets to different degrees, although in a more direct manner by PPG. It was found that HI did include rights-based language, but their arguments tended to be more related to religion than within the specific framework of international human rights. This is interesting when taking into consideration the study by Lowe and Page (2019), who found similar results among anti-abortion activists in the UK. Additionally, HI identify as a Christian organization, particularly in line with Catholic and Evangelical Christianity, which is in line with the GOP's realignment in the abortion debate to attract these populations in particular (Williams, 2011), as discussed in chapter 4. This study further showcases how religion, specifically Christianity, influences the anti-abortion side to a much larger extent than the pro-abortion side. This should be noted in relation to the findings discussed by Castle and Stepp (2021), who stated that the US religious identities are mirrored in US foreign policy making, exemplifying the GGR. Therefore, the explicit incorporation of religious based arguments and approaches by the anti-abortion side could lead to implications on policy level in the country, both affecting the national population and across nation borders

A prominent theme throughout both datasets was related to women's rights, which was presented under the theme "pro-women". As has been noted in previous research (see Rose, 2011; Saurette & Gordon, 2016; Leach, 2020), the anti-abortion movement seem to have appropriated a pro-woman rhetoric as opposed to the previous strong pro-life focus, then, referring to the life of the fetus. Rose (2011) referred to this shift as a form of frame extension. Similar results were found in this study. Although HI still employs a strong focus on the right to life of the fetus, they incorporate a more nuanced pro-woman rhetoric as well. The argument here is essentially that it is in the best interest of the woman to be against abortion due to the mental health effects abortion causes the woman. They use nurturing and soft language in these contexts, arguing for a need to "rescue" women from abortion. These results are significant since this type of language was found in the study by Greubel (2021) as well, with the focus on restrictive abortion policies, which she categorizes as benevolent sexism. Similar results were further reported by Doan and Schwarz (2020). However, in line with Rose (2011), I argue that this shift towards a pro-woman approach can be seen as a frame extension. With the increasing focus on women's rights and equality in the US and elsewhere, a shift towards a woman-centered approach could lead to an extension of the movement's frames to reach a wider range of supporters, perhaps in particular, women. This is significant to note in order to further the understanding of how anti-abortion groups and organizations attract more followers and supporters.

What is further significant in the findings presented is how the organizations overlap in their rights-based language. The right to life has been typically associated with the anti-abortion side of the debate, whereas women's rights have typically been associated with the pro-abortion side. However, the findings of this study indicate both the frame extension of focusing on a pro-woman approach of the anti-abortion organization, as well as a different approach to the right to life of the pro-abortion organization. This indicates that certain human rights-based approaches cannot be exclusively linked to either of the sides of the abortion debate, further

showcasing that the movement and countermovement are not respectively homogenous. As discussed before, the usage of human rights language to influence state actors for change has been a successful strategy in some cases (Bakhru, 2017; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002), which is why I argue that the results regarding the organizations' rights-based arguments are important to consider to further comprehend the mobilization of the abortion movement and countermovement.

As presented in the results chapter, both organizations engaged in polarizing arguments, which reflects the overall polarized debate landscape about abortion in the US. Both organizations' usage of frame amplification mirrors the oppositional positions they hold in the abortion debate. PPG's focus on human rights as universal and fundamental implies that the belief of who to blame for the inaccessibility of abortion lies with those who have an anti-human rights agenda. Notably, PPG does argue throughout the dataset that there is a movement of an anti-human rights agenda increasing worldwide. Furthermore, HI's belief that those who promote and provide abortion are the ones to blame for taking lives places PPG at opposition. Moreover, as presented in the findings chapter, HI does mention PP explicitly as one organization they are opposing. PPG argues that the ones restricting abortion are ideologically driven, and HI argues that those promoting abortion are financially driven. This framing of arguments and belief of who to blame, as well as stereotypes about the antagonists has been documented in previous research as well. Vanderford (1989), and McCaffrey and Keys (2000), also found what Vanderford refers to as vilification language on both sides of the movement.

Moreover, it is significant that both organizations make use of parables to war-like scenarios, although HI stands out as more direct with such arguments. Both HI and PPG tend to imply that they are the "good" ones fighting a larger enemy. As presented in the findings, HI uses terms such as "big abortion" and suggests their war on abortion is like the David versus Goliath battle. Meanwhile, PPG argues that they are fighting an increasing movement with anti-human rights agendas. These types of arguments are also part of their respective belief amplification, by

stereotyping their opposition, suggesting who to blame, and highlighting the seriousness of the issue at hand. This should be noted in relation to Hrycak's (2007) criticism of transnational movements being predominantly focused on 'western' issues and Montoya's (2014) criticism of the 'western' conceptualizations of equality and feminism employed in transnational work. These issues will be discussed further in the upcoming section.

7.2 Postcolonial Contributions

Human rights have been discussed critically with regards to the risks of imposing the framework developed in the Global North on countries in the Global South, as well as using human rights violations as a justification to intervene in other countries governing policies (Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002; McLaren, 2017). These are important aspects to consider when conducting this type of analysis. PPG views human rights as fundamental and universal, which is shown in their transnational communication as well as in their arguments for focusing on communities in the Global South. As a US based organization, critical reflections about the justifications one applies in order to intervene in other countries should be considered. Although PPG does discuss risks of neocolonial approaches in relation to the US government and their restrictive foreign aid policies, the GGR and Helms amendment, no critical reflection of their own part in intervening in other countries can be found in the dataset. I would argue that this is particularly problematic due to their work supporting change on governmental and policy levels in countries in the Global South. However, PPG does not implicitly focus on legal and political rights, but claim to incorporate cultural sensitivity and intersectional perspectives, which implies some critical approach within their work. I would however emphasize that even though they claim to incorporate an intersectional approach, they refer to people in need of reproductive health as 'women' throughout the dataset.

Although HI does not use human rights to justify their transnational work to the same extent as PPG, these reflections should be applied in relation to their work as

well. HI states some pillars on which they take a stance not to discriminate. However, these grounds are limited to but a few of those stated in the human right to be free from discrimination (United Nations, n.d.). Considering that HI does not refer to international human rights treaties in relation to their US based work nor treaties signed by the countries in which they work transnationally, the question arises of how the pillars of discrimination within their approach were chosen.

PPG poses strong criticism towards the US foreign policies related to family planning services and information. They criticize these for using a neocolonial approach which affects the accessibility of reproductive health even in countries where abortion is legal, and hinders progress on local level. As discussed by Yuval-Davis (1997), funding by international aid organizations can be a crucial component for the success of a women's organization to reach political change. The GGR provides obstacles for funding of such organizations working for reproductive health and in turn affects the possibility of change in this direction on policy level in countries in the Global South. The cooperation with formal organizations within a social movement can also be an indicator of the success of the movement (Staggenborg, 1988), and when policies affect these organizations it could have a prominent influence on the success of the movement. The fact that the US foreign policies on family planning are not discussed, more than briefly mentioning the GGR, by HI, an organization working transnationally, is notable. Although their approach to family planning services are not necessarily affected negatively by the policies in place, they do not discuss them in a positive manner either.

HI defines their approach as humanitarian and missionary work, which should not be less subject to criticism, I would argue, considering postcolonial perspectives to development. Labeling the work as humanitarian and missionary is a problematic approach from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, considering the necessity of being aware and sensitive to the power dynamics when working in transnational settings (Dhamoon, 2015; Lewis & Mills, 2003). Furthermore, I would pose critique towards HI's victimizing language towards people they deem in need of

pregnancy help centers. The usage of terms such as “rescuing”, “saving” and “abortion-vulnerable” highlights the power dynamic in place between themselves as an organization in the Global North versus the women and communities they aim to “reach, rescue, and renew”. These leading words of HI can also be tied to the problematic colonial past and present of the Global North, as their objective is to “renew communities for life”. These types of arguments further contribute to the savior-victim dichotomy, as discussed by Deepak (2012).

The emphasis on the power and impact of the US in transnational work on family planning and reproductive health should be discussed in relation to power relations as well. PPG argues against the US foreign policies on family planning and states that these restrictions on organizations’ work devalues the importance of choice, suggesting that the policies force organizations to comply with ideologically influenced policies or be defunded. I would argue that HI’s approach to the concept of choice is similarly contradicting. They argue for “true choice” and implies that the only right choice is a life-affirming choice, which raises the question whether they value choice at all. Framing their approach as “true choice” while only supporting the woman if she makes the “right” choice. Both organizations are US based which entails a certain financial power over some of their affiliates in the Global South. As organizations working with affiliates, they further hold power to choose who to cooperate with, which can be linked to the discussions of NGOs based in the Global North by De Jong (2017). The transnational aspect of organizational work within social movements thus come with certain power imbalances. I would argue that there is a lack of reflections of these power relations across both datasets, although, as mentioned before, PPG provides some discussions on related issues, particularly in relation to intersectionality. This can further be linked to the findings discussed by Fernández-Aballí (2016), where the NGO was found to portray themselves in heroic manners while objectifying those depicted as victims, who the organization aims to save.

Finally, both PPG and HI have a central focus on children and youths in their work and arguments for their views on abortion. As presented in the analysis, both organizations initiate campaigns to support their views, and two examples of these are HI's babies go to congress, and PPG's niñas no madres campaign. It is significant to note how HI does not seem to have any campaigns related to transnational collective action, but a predominant US focus. They engage in discussions on national level regarding abortion and general reproductive health to a greater extent than on a transnational level. I would argue that this suggests that the national US abortion debate is even more translated than in their transnational communication.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Another aspect related to the organizations' focus on young people is their use of the internet to mobilize young people where the organizations work. The importance of technology in these contexts has been emphasized by Hall, Schmitz and Dedmon (2020) who studied the mobilization of NGOs specifically. From the findings in this study on two nonprofit organizations, a similar trend can be noted. The use of the internet to mobilize as well as spread information on their respective agendas is visible throughout this analysis, and I would argue that this is one important aspect to take into account for future research on the abortion movement and countermovement. Future research should engage more with organizations within the abortion movements and their usage of internet based communication, such as social media. However, one aspect I noted throughout the analysis in this study was the desire to be able to ask follow-up questions about the material to the staff and/or volunteers at the two organizations. Incorporating interviews with activists within the opposing movements not necessarily connected to the specific organizations could also contribute to wider understanding of their construction of arguments. Therefore, adding another dimension to the research design with interviews is something I would suggest for future research on the topic in order to gain a wider and deeper understanding of how the opposing movements argue for versus against abortion.

Furthermore, although there is a wide body of research on the abortion movements in the US, I would argue, based on the literature review conducted in this project, that more critical research should focus on the pro-abortion side as well as the anti-abortion side. Critical research aims to be emancipatory and a contribution to change (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004), and in order to improve conditions for people in need of reproductive health care, improvements could be made on the pro-abortion side with contributions from critical research. I would also suggest that future research should engage in the theoretical frame of benevolent sexism, as applied in the study by Greubel (2021), when studying the abortion movements' communication. Findings reported in this study could be linked to benevolent sexism, which is why an explicit focus on this would be a great contribution for future research.

8. Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that both sides of the abortion movement in the US incorporate human rights-based language to construct their arguments. However, to different degrees and from different perspectives. PPG used human rights in a more direct manner, by referring to human rights treaties in place in any particular country they work in. Furthermore, they used human rights to construct their arguments for increased support through processes of frame amplification and frame extension. While, PPG's rights-based language was direct and clearly visible throughout the dataset, HI's employment of rights-based arguments was not as clear cut. They did not refer to specific human rights treaties directly, but incorporated arguments which could be linked to human rights. HI had a predominant focus on the right to life, which has been shown in previous studies, and aligns with the general perception of the anti-abortion movement, considering they tend to refer to themselves as pro-life. However, they did incorporate other rights in their arguments as well, including the right to freedom of discrimination, the right to information, and child rights.

What was particularly significant in the outcome of this study was the overlapping of rights-based arguments of the two organizations. Both PPG and HI had predominant focus on women's empowerment, and the right to life (and a decent life). The increasing focus on women within the anti-abortion movement has been noted in previous research as well, which suggests that this shift is widespread within the movement. The arguments related to the right to life were also prevalent throughout both datasets. However, this right was interpreted and applied from different perspectives in the organizations' communication. HI had a predominant focus on the absolute right to life of the fetus, whereas PPG argued for the right to a decent life for young women and girls faced with an unwanted pregnancy and being forced to carry it through.

Another significant finding was the different conceptualizations of choice. Both organizations were found to discuss the concept of choice throughout the datasets. This was expected within the PPG dataset due to the pro-abortion movements commonly known label, pro-choice. What was especially noteworthy was the discussions of choice within HI's communication. They tended to argue for a true, fully informed choice, i.e. a life-affirming choice, while simultaneously referring to choice as a burden for the affected woman. These results of the overlapping incorporation of rights-based language and the debate of choice indicate that the two sides of the movement employ framing processes to mobilize to a wider range of supporters, which is an important finding for further understanding of how social movements, and particularly abortion movements, grow and succeed in social and political change.

Throughout the datasets, the organizations' transnational communication could be linked to the national US abortion debate, suggesting that the US debate climate is transferred through the organizations' transnational work. This could influence the debate climate across nation borders, thus furthering the polarization of the abortion debate. The way the organizations communicate transnationally was criticized from

postcolonial perspectives, suggesting that there are risks concerning power imbalances and neocolonialism within their work. These findings are important to consider both in future research, and for transnational organizations, in order to improve North-South relations and cooperation, as well as to improve conditions for people living in communities where these organizations operate.

Based on the findings and analysis in this study, it is apparent that both organizations directly or indirectly transfer the national US abortion debate climate transnationally. It is particularly interesting to consider how both organizations emphasize the impact the US has on the rest of the world, and that HI specifically states that an overturning of *Roe v. Wade* would send a message across nation borders that abortion is not something desired, considering that law is now at risk of being overturned in 2022. How will this potentially historic law change affect the US debate landscape on abortion? How will the movements change their communication and construction of arguments if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned? And what implications will this lead to transnationally? These are issues important to consider in future inquires in order to increase understanding of the influence of transnational communication within the US abortion debate.

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Appendix

Codebook

Name	Description	Files	References
'Western' issue	relating their work to particularly 'western' issues and conflicts	3	4
Burden of choice	choice as a liability, something impacting a person negatively.	9	11
Challenges religion	Implying religion as a negative or hurdle, negative impacts of religion	3	8
Diffusion	Theoretical code. the spread of a movement's frames and practices across nation borders.	38	64
Discrimination	Who they claim not to discriminate, who they claim are discriminated against.	23	69
Intersectionality	The mentioning of the concept and/or communication of work that is clearly based in intersectional thought.	2	17
Heroism	eventuating themselves as "heroes", doing good, saving lives etc.	36	66
Human Rights		15	57
Child rights		12	42
Civil Rights	Other rights such as free speech, freedom of assembly etc.	1	1
Right to health	their work improving health, prioritizing or arguing for healthcare etc.	32	85
Right to information		9	29
Right to life	No matter whose life, the "sanctity" of life	58	136
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health rights	25	91
Women's rights	Empowering women, right to choose, and other rights based language related to the woman in particular.	26	77
Importance of choice	related to right to choose, "true" choice	54	136
Polarization	Amplifying the two sides of the movement/issue, or their sides as "good"	35	107
Power of Religion	work and arguments based on religious beliefs or importance, "in gods name", spreading the christian beliefs and values, religious leaders impact etc.	36	73
Stereotyping	stereotyping or homogenizing the	7	11

Name	Description	Files	References
	counterpart, "victims" etc.		
US impact	reflections on US leadership on the topic, influence on other organizations or countries	30	138
Victimizing	helping/aiding/saving/rescuing women and/or fetuses from abortion, painting them as vulnerable populations in need of rescue	34	75
Vilification	Rhetoric painting the opposing side as "bad", against particular organizations, the "abortion industry", the opposing movement, etc.	34	77
War and fight	linking their work/movement to war-like scenarios or fights/battles	16	26