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Kayla Frain

kayla.frain@student.fairfield.edu

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How a Tweet Brought People to the Street: Social Media and the Success of Ni Una Menos

Kayla Frain

Fairfield University

International Studies Capstone

Professor Dina Franceschi

“Ni Una Menos is part of that revolutionary lineage of feminist’s politics in Argentina. We are the daughters of their disobedience. We are the *locas*, or crazy women, as the Madres [de Plaza de Mayo] were called. We are the heirs of the *desaparecidas* [disappeared] and the feminist organizations that came before us. We translate this powerful heritage into a political language trained in queer poetry and literature, a movement that I like to call *las lenguas de las locas*, [the language of the insane], amplified by a critical use of the tools of communications technology.” -

Cecilia Palmeiro, member of Ni Una Menos since 2015

Abstract

Femicide is a problem all over the globe, taking one woman every six hours. In Argentina, the Ni Una Menos movement was formed with the main goal of decreasing the number of femicides happening in Argentina each year. The Ni Una Menos movement draws from the success of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo while at the same time integrating 21st century mass media to galvanize the public towards effective social and political change.

Literature Review

When Chiara Paez was 14 years old and a few weeks pregnant, she was beaten to death by her boyfriend and his mother. Her body was found after a three day search in the garden of her boyfriend's house. A few months prior, Daiana Garcia, 19 years old, was found on the side of the road. All of her remains were inside a garbage bag. Maria Eugenia Lanzetti, 44-year-old schoolteacher was killed in front of her students by her husband when he cut her throat. Andrea Tacumán was shot dead by her boyfriend. Fiorella Aghem was murdered in the Misiones provinces by her boyfriend. Her body was found in the middle of a yerba plantation. Vanina Cattáneo was set on fire by her partner, suffering from burns on 50 percent of her body. She died a few days later. Angeles Rawson was 16 when she disappeared on the way home from gym class. Her body was found by a worker at a garbage processing plant outside of Buenos Aires. Behind every femicide there is a story just like one of these. These are just a few examples of the gender violence that is happening every single day in Argentina. The violent killings of women are not new, but within the last six years they have become more prominent in the Argentina's news reports. The statistics are startling about gender violence in Argentina; a woman dies every 30 hours due to gender based violence; one child is left without a mother every 26 hours. These crimes are called "femicides". Femicides are the killing of women because of their gender. These

crimes against women can take many forms. They are committed in both public and private places, during the night or in broad daylight, and sometimes there is even a bystander. Femicide can be seen as both a political and a public health problem and it needs to be addressed.

Argentina is a country where the gender norms are extremely prevalent. These women are expected to fulfill a role inside of the house where they take care of both the children and household (Marini 1977). After the economic crisis in 2001-2002 there was hope that the government would begin to help change these gender norms as most families were sinking into poverty. Instead with 'Plan Familias' and 'Universal child allowance' the government inadvertently discouraged women from seeking non-motherhood paid employment and reinforced traditional gender roles (Lopreite 2015). 98 percent of the direct recipients of the allowance were mothers in the universal child allowance program (Lopreite 2015). The traditional roles of motherhood are something that Argentina is proud of and believes is the best for the country (Marini 1977).

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were some of the first women to push the limits as to what it means to be a mother. The Mothers stepped outside of the house and made their voices heard. They were standing up for their children and elevating women's agency by speaking out. During the *Guerra Sucia* (Dirty War) in Argentina, 30,000 people were taken by the dictatorship for speaking out against the government (Bondrea 2014). In reaction to the missing children, the mothers took to the street to look for their children. The children who disappeared were of all ages. Many were in their teens, early 20s and 30s, most of which had strong feelings against the dictatorship (Luengo 2018). The dictatorship wanted to "purge from society the idea of subversion along with the ideologies and political traditions that junta leaders connected with" (Lewis 2001). The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo were some of the first people in Argentina to

fight for human rights and to acknowledge that what the dictatorship did was not legal (Luengo 2018). The Mothers paved the way for a human rights discussions, demonstrated how to grow awareness and demand justice.

Néston Kirchner came into power in 2003 and made a change to focus more on global human rights (Muengo 2018). With the large emphasis on human rights, some women begin to make the argument that women's rights are human rights (Borland, 2007, Lopreite, 2012). With the improved definition of human rights the context was set up for the creation of the Ni Una Menos¹ movement. Social media plays an important role in how people communicate with each other and how information can be spread (Youmans 2012, Kidd 2016). The Ni Una Menos movement uses social media to grow awareness, strategize and promote their cause. The Ni Una Menos movement began with a tweet from Ojeda after hearing about another femicide (Fuentes 2019). Feminists, activists, women and men throughout all of Argentina decided that they had had enough and began to demand the end to femicide. The use of the hashtag, #niunamenos, is an essential part of the movement and has allowed people to identify the Ni Una Menos movement and join the cause (Luengo 2018).

The Ni Una Menos movement draws from the success of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo while at the same time integrating 21st century mass media to galvanize the public towards effective social and political change. This paper will discuss the social movement methods that the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo used and the methods that the Ni Una Menos movement is currently using. The resource mobilization theory will be used to evaluate the success of the two movements. The resource mobilization theory is based on the idea that there must be available resources that can be mobilized in order for successful social movements to

¹ Not One Less. Movement that started in Argentina in 2015. Not one less woman dies of femicide in Argentina.

occur (McCarthy and Zald 1977) Twitter and Facebook will be the main mass media platforms that will be analyzed throughout, as these platforms are the most popular vehicles used by the Ni Una Menos movement. At the time of the Ni Una Menos movement, many people saw the role of women to be inside of the house and taking care of children. As Argentina has progressed more and more women are living professional lives and choosing not to marry or conform to the traditional norms. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement were obeying these gendered norms, as they were doing what any mother would do, look for their missing children. The Ni Una Menos is something that Argentina has never seen before. The role of social media allowed the Ni Una Menos movement to gain real traction, pushing this movement forward to make both social and political change.

Femicide

According to the World Health Organization, “Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls” (World Health Organization 2014). Femicide is often committed by a man, and sometimes female family members can assist in the killings. Femicide differs from homicide because the cases of femicide are perpetrated by partners, ex-partners, male family members, and usually involve ongoing abuse in the home, sexual violence, threats, and intimidations. These are situations where the woman has significantly less power than the man.

Femicide is very prevalent around the world but especially in Latin America. Out of the top 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide around the world, 14 of them are in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Figure 1 demonstrates the prevalence of femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2018, Brazil had the most femicides with 1,206 deaths. This is such a significant number of

women to be killed by their male partner. Argentina had 255 femicides in 2018. 255 is still a strikingly high number and is significant since this is way too many women to be dying due to femicide.

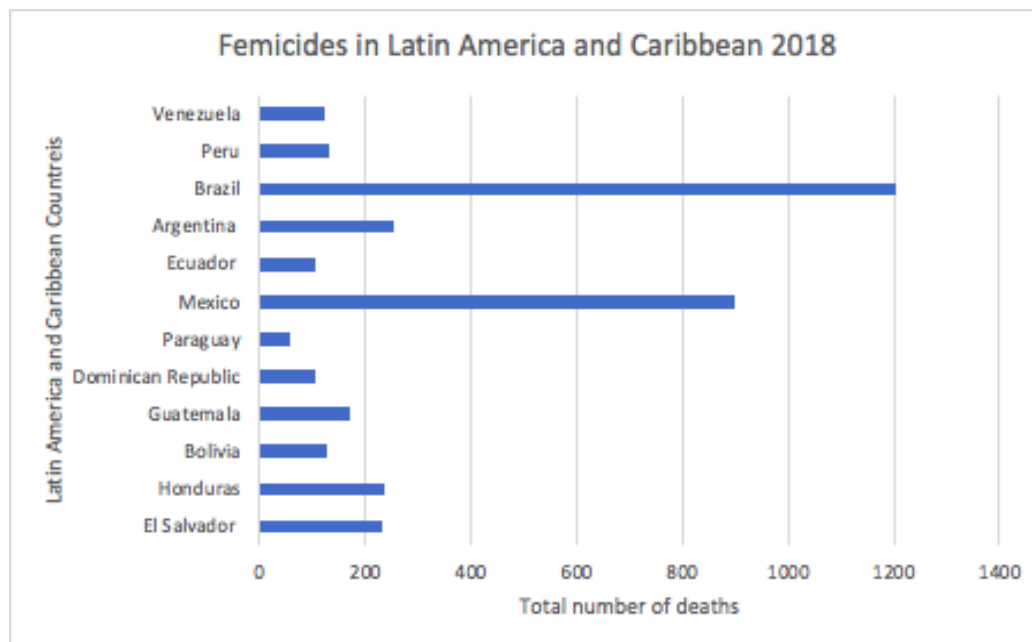


Figure 1: United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. 2018.

As indicated by the figure above, femicide is not just a problem in Argentina, it is spread throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

It can be argued that the start of the Ni Una Menos movement began in 2012. On April 18, 2012 Argentina's Cámara de Diputados² approved a bill that amends the Criminal Code, "Law No. 11.179 of 1984, art. 80 to include femicide as an aggravated type of homicide" (Rodriguez-Ferrand, 2012).

"The new provision includes the sanction of life imprisonment for an individual who kills his ascendant or descendant relative, spouse or former spouse, or a person with whom he has or has had an intimate relationship, even if they were not living together at

² The lower house of Argentina's Congress

the time of the crime. Femicide is defined as a crime of murder perpetrated by a man against a woman in the context of gender violence” (Rodriguez-Ferrand 2012).

The new amendment gives a definition to femicide, which was very much needed in Argentina. The levels of gender based violence had only been growing leading up to the amendment, so this was a much anticipated change that had to be made (Rodriguez-Ferrand 2012). In the year leading up to the amendment of the Criminal Code, there had been an increase rate of femicides in the country by 20 percent (Rodriguez-Ferrand 2012). Before the Criminal Code had been amended the murder would have just been considered a homicide. In addition to declaring femicide an aggravated form of homicide, the law denounces the killing of women as a crime of passion. Men could no longer claim that the killing of the wife or the girlfriend was a crime of passion or love (Piscopo 2016). They were committing murder and now that State of Argentina said they would recognize that, which seemed like a large victory for many.

When the State of Argentina changed the law because of the increasing numbers of femicide, it gave the Ni Una Menos movement legitimacy. Many people were ambitious that this law would start to make a difference. By including femicide in the law, hope was given to the people of Argentina that the government would start paying more attention to all of the femicides occurring around the country. There was an aspiration that funding would be allocated to do more research, or even start to provide resources to people who were suffering in violent relationships. This law was only the beginning of femicide becoming more recognized across the country. It is often the case that in Latin America and other countries, where police, public prosecutors and judges in Argentina fail to take violence against women and girls seriously (Piscopo 2016). This amendment to the Criminal Code provided hope for activists, women, and many around the country.

Taking a closer look at Argentina we can see that over the last 10 years the number of femicides have remained high. Every year the total number of femicides is above 200 but stays slightly below 300 femicides. Over the last few years the trend has been over 250 femicides each year.

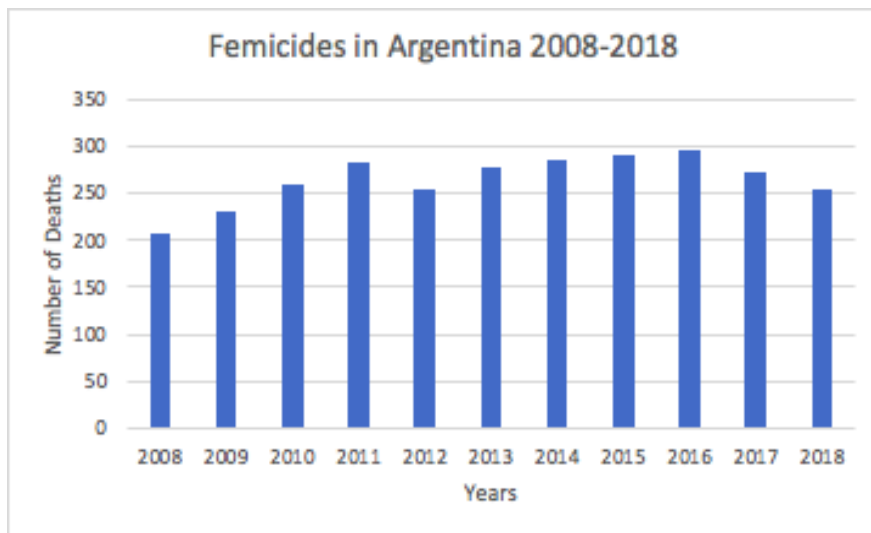


Figure 2: La Casa Del Encuentro 2018.

Looking closely at the graph, one can notice that in 2012 to 2013 the number of femicides actually increased. As noted earlier, 2012 is the year that in Argentina the bill was passed that amended the Criminal Code. Now that femicides have been acknowledged by the law of Argentina for the first time, one could argue that it gave women and families the confidence that they needed to denounce gender based violence occurring in their homes and within their friends and family. This is why there is such a large jump in the number of femicides that have been reported from 2012 to 2013.

In Argentina, a woman dies every 30 hours due to gender violence (Chenou and Cepeda-Masemala 2019). A femicide can be defined as “killing women because of their gender” (Luengo 2018). Femicides are the cause of machismo which means strong masculine pride. Men feel as though they need to assert their dominance, so they kill their wife or girlfriend to prove their

machismo. The Ni Una Menos movement describes femicide as, “as an action carried out by a person in order to punish and psychologically destroy a woman considered to be someone’s property and they see this as an act of mass murder of humanity in the body of a woman” (Abrego 2017). There are two different forms of femicide. There can be intimate femicides, where women are dying inside of their home and public/warlike femicides, when women are dying in public places with bystanders (Segato 2016). Segato proposes that “there have never been more protective laws for women’s rights, training sessions for security forces, more published literature in circulation about women’s rights, more prizes and recognitions for accomplishments in the field of women’s rights, and yet we women continue dying” (Segato 2016). One of the biggest issues for Argentina is that no one is enforcing the laws. As Segato mentioned, the legal protection for women exists in Argentina, the problem is implementation. In 1931, Argentina was the first country to pass a statutory quota law which required at least 30 percent of political parties’ nominees for the national legislature to be women (Piscopo 2016). Similarly, in 2003, a trade union passed a quota law which required women to hold 30 percent of seats on labor unions’ directorates (Piscopo 2016). In 2002, there was a law passed mandating free contraception and in 2006 a comprehensive sexual education in public schools was required. Yet contraception and sexual education is still underprovided in many rural areas throughout Argentina (Piscopo 2016). There is a need to draw attention to the fact that Argentina’s government is not implementing the laws. It seems that there is a large disconnect. Discrimination is widespread throughout the country and there is limited political will and public pressure to systematically tackle gender discrimination. The community of Argentina as a whole needs to focus on these femicides and try to come up with a solution because the current plan is not strong enough. Women need to stop dying because they are a woman. When discussing femicides, Rita Segato states,

“the warlike attitude toward women's bodies in patriarchy and in its collective representations used to have the character of the Conquest of a territory and its annexation including possession through individual and collective rape or through slavery for sexual services” (Abrego 2017).

In a patriarchal country that has thickly rooted cultural norms of machismo, it takes time to break through these walls. With the use of social media the Ni Una Menos movement has been able to gain global attention and make a call to action for women, citizens and politicians, that would not have been made possible without the aid of social media.

Traditional Gender Roles

Argentina is a country where the gender norms are very prevalent in the society. It is expected that the women stay home, cook, clean and most importantly take care of the children. “The praise of the family as the foundation of society and of parental roles as the most important vehicle for the transmission of and control upon the observance of Christian and patriotic virtues” (Marini 1977). The image of women as the caregivers fulfills the Christian and political viewpoint that the place for the women is inside of the house. It is also stressed in the media that it is not the intention to confine women to the household but if they choose to venture outside, their household duties must always come first (Marini 1977).

Women for the most part are seen inside of the home. In figure 3, it demonstrates how the majority of the jobs in the population are filled by males. In 2019, over 60 percent of the male population was employed and only 40 percent of the female population was employed. The graph shows the trend of the two bars coming closer together. This provides hope that women are reaching some equality in the workplace.

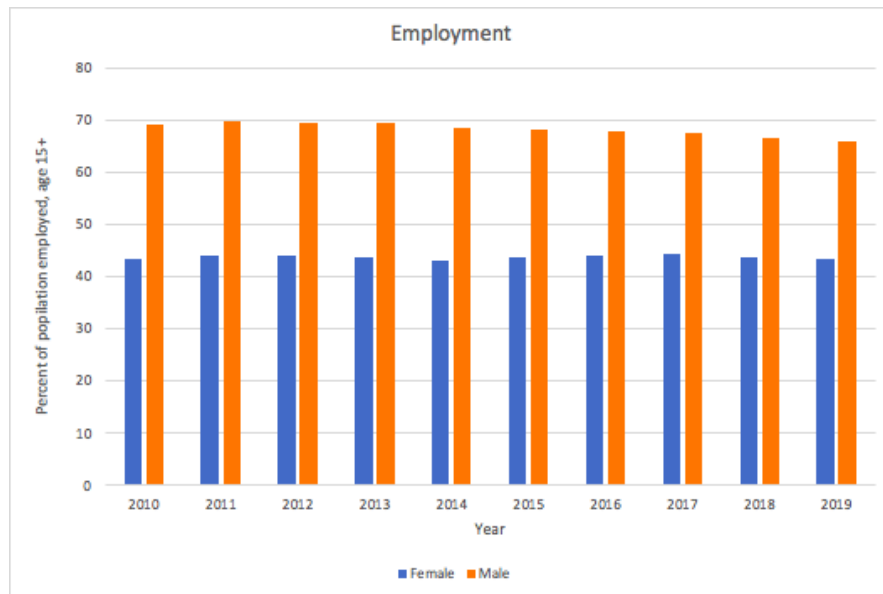


Figure 3: “World Development Indicators.” 2019.

Women play an essential role in the Argentine society and the government does their best to reinforce these roles through specific policies. After the economic crisis in 2001 - 2002 the government created a program called “Plan Familias” (Lopreite 2015). The intention of this program was to pay cash transfers to poor women who were working as a mother (Lopreite 2015). Yes, this program acknowledged motherhood as a job, but it reinforced the traditional gender roles of women as mothers. Furthermore, it discouraged women from seeking non-motherhood paid employment. The government also created “Universal child allowance” (Lopreite 2015). This piece of legislation was intended to encourage families to vaccinate their children and send them to school (Lopreite 2015). When this was done, the household would receive compensation. The program was designed to be gender neutral but when it was put into action, 98 percent of the recipients were mothers (Lopreite 2015). The goal of this program was to help reduce poverty and this part was successful. The unintended consequence was the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. These two programs have now stopped due to

government funding, but when they were both in full force, these programs were contributing to the long established gender roles in Argentina.

Guerra Sucia

The *Guerra Sucia*³ began in 1975 and lasted until 1983 (Scharpf, Balcells, & Sullivan, 2018). During this time “a campaign of state terrorism against real and suspected enemies of the state, leads to the death and disappearance of tens of thousands of Argentines and foreign nationals” (Lewis 2001). The goals of the dictatorship was to “purge from society the idea of subversion along with the ideologies and political traditions that junta leaders connected with” (Lewis, 2001). Most of the victims were young, in their teens to 30s. “This self-terrorism claimed around 30,000 disappearances of mostly students, according to their families. Whatever happened to all these people is still kept secret, but stories of torture, killings and burials at sea surfaced from the few witnesses” (Bondrea 2014). In reaction to the missing children in Argentina, the Mothers took to the streets to demand answers about those who had disappeared. Since the first time that the Mothers challenged the dictatorship, they have been making waves across Argentina. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo serve as an inspiration for the Ni Una Menos movement because they paved the way for human rights discussions, demonstrated how to build and grow awareness and demand justice from the government. The Mothers now serve as a symbol of resistance for the Ni Una Menos movement.

Resource Mobilization Theory

The resource mobilization theory is based on the idea that there must be available resources that can be mobilized in order for successful social movements to occur (McCarthy and Zald 1977). “Resource mobilization theory views social movements as normal, rational,

³ The Dirty War

institutionally rooted, political challenges by aggrieved groups” (Benford 2000). The resource mobilization theory states that most social movements are based on grievances. There must be a support base, constituents, individuals or organizations that provide support. Social movement organizations have a number of strategic tasks, “these tasks include mobilizing supporters, neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets” (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The resource mobilization theory also notes that there needs to be a relation to larger society. Most importantly the resource mobilization theory requires the presence of a resource. The resource mobilization theory is able to determine if a social movement is successful or not.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo

In 1977, the mothers of the disappeared children mobilized to the streets to demand the truth about their children. When these mothers took to the street, many people were taken aback. The traditional gender roles in Argentina imply that a woman should be in the household. One viewpoint is that the Mothers were fulfilling their traditional gender roles by making their way to the street to inquire more information about their children, as opposed to acting against these traditional roles, for a mother in Argentina their babies are everything. Mothers invest time, energy and money into their children; as they are their livelihood. So when someone takes your children, the response is simple and quite obvious; you try to find your child, your everything. The Mothers did what they did best, they were looking out for their children. “Men tended to be the main wage earner so they could not spend everyday looking for their children. Women have been socialized to be obedient and passive, they could not simply refused to be okay with the loss of their child” (Malin 1994). Women were filling their traditional role of motherhood by showing up to march. To the Mothers, the movement was not seen as extreme or radical at the

time. In the moment it was quite simple, the government had committed horrific human rights violations by taking their children, and they not only wanted, but needed answers. The Mothers showed up to the plaza with nothing more than their bodies and the intention of finding out more about their children.

The Mothers were persistent about finding the truth out about their children. They gathered in front of the Casa Rosada, which is the headquarters of the Argentine government in Buenos Aires. When the mothers of the disappeared first met they were just looking for answers from the government. After being turned down time and time again by officials, they decided it was time for them to take another approach. They began displaying the names and photographs of their loved ones who were part of the disappeared. The Mothers were gaining a great deal of attention from the people walking by. The plaza was a public place, so many people found out about their grievances. Soon after, the mothers decided to begin marching on Thursdays in the plaza. On April 30th, 1977, 14 brave women took to the streets to confront the brutal dictatorship and find answers to who had stolen their children (Femenía 1987). Four decades later and the Mothers have continued marching every Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon (Goñi 2017). The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo have completed 2,037 marches as of 2017 (Goñi 2017).

Resource Mobilization Theory and The Mothers

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement can be applied to the resource mobilization theory to prove that it was a successful movement. When looking at the movement from a birds eye view it is easy to think that the Mothers did not have many resources at their disposal. Even with the limited resources the Mothers made sure to mobilize them in an effective way. The Mothers utilized the Plaza de Mayo, the white handkerchief, and the role of Motherhood.

The Plaza de Mayo is an open public space. At one end of the Plaza there is the Casa Rosada⁴, which is the home to the President (Bondera 2014). The Mothers originally started congregating there because they wanted to get the attention of government officials (Bondera 2014). As the government was actively ignoring the angry Mothers, people who passed by would ask questions and were curious about what was going on in front of the Casa Rosada (Bondera 2014). The location of the Plaza de Mayo served as a strong resource for the Mothers because they were able to spread the word about their movement and inform curious citizens about the violations of human rights that the government committed.

Another resource that the Mothers utilized is their symbol of the white handkerchief. The white handkerchief is also the white diaper kerchiefs and is what is used to recognize the Mothers. This is an unlikely resource but one that was very successful with this movement. The image of the white handkerchief distributed throughout the community also helped get the word out of the movement. It also provided a constant reminder about the violations that the dictatorship had committed.

The final resource that the Mothers used to their advantage is the traditional gender norms. Like it has been mentioned before, the traditional role of Motherhood is ingrained in Argentine culture. Mothers are expected to take care of their children and the household. When their children disappeared, the Mothers see it as their duty to find their children. The Mothers utilize their traditional role of Motherhood to expand this obligation and show other Mothers that they can be doing more with their lives. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo mobilized their role and were able to get hundreds of women to march with them across Argentina to find answers about their missing children.

⁴ Pink House

Although not obvious upon first glance, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo movement can be applied to the resource mobilization theory. The Mothers utilize three resources, the Plaza, the white handkerchief, and the traditional role of Motherhood. Resource mobilization theory places a large emphasis on resources and opportunity (Buechler 1993). To evaluate how the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo utilize the resource mobilization theory, it will be defined into three parts, support base, strategy and tactics, and relation to larger society (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo is a social movement that is based upon grievances. The Mothers are marching because they are grieving their disappeared children who are presumably dead. When the Mothers began their marches they were not really supported by anyone. This is not to say that people were against what they were marching for but public organizations did not immediately take notice. The Mothers used a public and open area to congregate so they did not need to have any supporters provide that. The Mothers really did not rely on any outside help from organizations. They were just happy when people wanted to join them in the search for their children.

The tactics used by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to mobilize supporters were the role of Motherhood and word of mouth. The Mothers movement emphasized that the role of a mother was to look for their children, and it was their duty to find out what happened to them.. Mothers also utilized word of mouth. By talking about the disappearances they were able to spread awareness of where they were meeting each week to get more citizens to join them.

The resource mobilization theory highlights the resources that the Mothers utilized to make their movement successful. The Mothers took advantage of the public Plaza de Mayo and its location in front of the Casa Rosa, the classic image and symbolism of the white handkerchief and the expansion from the traditional gender roles of a woman.

Counter Argument

It can be argued that the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo play an important role of the Ni Una Menos movement. The Mothers serve as an inspiration as they paved the way for women to advocate for their rights. But this was not the Mothers intention. By taking to the street every Thursday at 3:30pm the it can be argued that the Mothers were just fulfilling their role of Motherhood and nothing more.

The role of women is essential to the Argentine culture. It is expected that the women of Argentina fulfill all their duties inside of the household before they venture out. The daily life in Argentina is gendered. So for women this means that they are the primary caregivers for children and of their household (Borland 2007). With this knowledge it is quite clear to make the connection with why women took to the streets. During the Dirty War many kids were taken, they had disappeared. Their mothers had no idea where they were, so naturally they began to search for their children. When a child is missing the expected response of a mother is to look for her child. So it was not surprising that the Mothers took to the streets because this was fulfilling their role as a Mother. As women began to protest, they were still expected to be taking care of the household and children (Borland 2007). The mothers of the disappeared were fulfilling their role of motherhood when they took to the streets to look for their children.

This argument is important. Yes, the Mothers did fulfill their role of a women when they began marching around the Plaza de Mayo. But in doing this they did so much more. I am arguing that the primary goal of the women protesting was to empower other women and to create a space where you can challenge the status quo. The Mothers saw the wave of protests as an opportunity to make demands for gender equity and social justice.

The resource mobilization theory provides us with a comprehensive way to analyze the success of a movement. When applying the resource mobilization theory to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, it is clear that they are successful. The Ni Una Menos movement adopts some key elements from the Mothers which further the Ni Una Menos argument and cause. A large part of the success that Ni Una Menos has had is due to the Mothers, but another extremely important part of the puzzle is social media. Social media is Ni Una Menos resource and they utilize all aspects of this tool. The Ni Una Menos movement draws from the success of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo while at the same time integrating 21st century mass media to galvanize the public towards effective social and political change.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Social media is also the driving factor in the success of the Ni Una Menos movement. The resource mobilization theory model can be applied to the Ni Una Menos movement to analyze the success of the movement so far. Resource mobilization emerged in the 1970s by McCarthy and Zald as a way to study social movements. According to the resource mobilization perspective, “social movements are an extension of politics by other means, and can be analyzed in terms of conflicts of interest just like other political struggle. Movements are also seen as structured and patterned, so that they can be analyzed in terms of organizational dynamics just like other forms of institutional action” (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Resource mobilization theory emphasizes resources and opportunity (Buechler 1993). The resource mobilization theory highlights the interaction between resource availability, the preexisting organization of preference structures and entrepreneurs attempts to meet preference demand (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The Ni Una Menos movement utilizes social media as a resource and incorporates it into already existing organizations. Through applying the resource mobilization theory to the Ni Una

Menos movement it is clear that the success of the movement is because of the utilization of social media. To evaluate how Ni Una Menos utilizes the resource mobilization theory, it will be evaluated in three parts: support base, strategy and tactics, and relation to larger society.

Resource

In the 21st century social media was created, which made news spread at an even faster rate. People are able to access news and information at their fingertips. For this paper, social media will be defined as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow for the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). Platforms such as Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Whatsapp and Facebook are the most common in Argentina. As of 2018, the leading social media platform in Argentina was Youtube, where 93 percent of internet users utilize Youtube. Not far behind was Facebook at 91 percent, Instagram at 68 percent and Twitter at 46 percent ("Leading social media platforms in Argentina as of 3rd quarter 2018" 2019). When someone posts on these platforms, they are creating user generated content. User generated content can be described as "various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end users" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

For something to be considered user generated content it must fulfill three basic requirements. The first requirement is that it must be published on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site. The second says it needs to show creative effort, and the third demands that it be created outside of the professional setting (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). These social networks have allowed for the mobilization of social groups not just in Argentina but around the world. Social media allows people to connect even though they may be millions of miles away, and because of this social media can make the world feel smaller. Social media can

also be used to facilitate events and ease the spread of information because all you have to do is “share” or “retweet” the news with a click of a button. It allows people to reach a wider audience at a much faster pace. Social media is the driving factor for the creation, mobilization and success of the Ni Una Menos movement.

Many people are optimistic that social media will be monumental in relation to social movements. The term “techno-optimism” refers to “those approaches that emphasize the potential of social media technologies to solve social problems” (Kidd 2016). While there are some challenges with social media, techno-optimists focus on the positive. Social movements that utilize technology are not solely on the internet, as it is important that they have a balance of both communication via social media and in person. Social movements like the Ni Una Menos movement use social media to organize, generate awareness and spread information. “New social movements spontaneously generate in moments of indignation and spread virally, both online and off” (Kidd 2016). By having both social media and in person communication, social movements are ensuring that everyone is informed.

However, being too optimistic of social media raises concerns. There are three major flaws, “(i) it overstates the newness of social media; (ii) it jumps to prediction without evidence; and (iii) it underestimates the capacity of existing hegemonies to adapt to technology” (Kidd 2016). The Ni Una Menos movement has done a good job with balancing the use of social media and in person protests. It is great to have faith in social media, but one must remember that there are limitations to almost everything.

Support Base - Mothers

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo inspired the Ni Una Menos movement and set the stage for the movement to take place. Both the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Ni Una

Menos movement are based upon grievances towards the government. The Mothers provide support to Ni Una Menos by physically showing up to rallies and marches and by providing inspiration in their fight. Fighting for human rights, developing awareness and demanding justice are three areas that the Mothers have provided support for Ni Una Menos.

Human Rights

The Mothers believed that when the dictatorship took their children that they were in direct violation of human rights. The actions taken by the dictatorship were wrong. No human should be taken away from their family and killed because of their beliefs. The Mothers felt that “all human lives are valuable and deserving of respect, regardless of the individual’s particular ideological or political affiliation” (Luengo 2018). The Mothers used the human rights argument as they marched each Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon in Buenos Aires. It was not until Argentina became a democracy in 1983 that the country officially recognized human rights as something that is legitimate and decided that as a country they were going to pay more attention to the human rights violations within their country (Lopreite 2012). Many were energized by the country’s new commitment, “Argentina’s new commitment to human rights provided a new opportunity structure for women, and all citizens” (Lopreite 2012) This new governmental acknowledgement of human rights allowed people to examine the atrocities that happened during the Dirty War but also provides hope for the future that there will be limited violations. The commitment to human rights also informed people of what their rights were as humans allowing them to know and be aware of the times when these rights were being taken away from citizens. Under President Néstor Kirchner, the term human rights began to develop more traction in the country. Kirchner established close links with many human rights organizations, which included the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. This was a very symbolic act by Kirchner

and was continued on by his predecessor, Cristina Krichner. The attention to human rights is the immediate context for the immersion of the Ni Una Menos movement.

The Mothers marched in the street because of the human rights violations that occurred to their children. It can be argued that the Mothers were the first group to advocate for a human rights violations in the form of a social movement. The Mothers determination to find answers about their children inspired the Ni Una Menos movement. The Ni Una Menos movement echoes the fight of the Mothers for human rights issues.

Developing Awareness

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo quickly developed a routine after seeing just how many women came to join the movement. The movements began with just a few mothers walking down to the house of the President to try and discover more information. Everytime the authorities refused to allow the women to proceed any further. As time went on, this gathering of Mothers grew exponentially. The Mothers utilized word of mouth to spread information. The Mothers also made themselves known by protesting in a public place. Since they were in the plaza, it is a very public place. People who were walking by and curious about the Mothers were about to spread awareness about their fight and grow the movement that way. In no time the movement had grown to about 300 women. Once the movement got to a significant size they became more structured. The Mothers met every Thursday at 3:30 in the afternoon, wearing a white head kerchief and chanting “Bring them back alive” (Bondrea 2014). The Mothers did a lot to develop their image and bring awareness to their cause.

The repetition of the movement is one of the key factors that helped bring awareness to the movement. The Mothers became a symbol of reliability. The people in the community knew that if they wanted to participate in a march, the Mothers would be at the plaza every Thursday at

3:30 in the afternoon. The white handkerchief also helped bring attention to the cause. The white handkerchief allowed the Mothers to be easily identified and quickly became a symbol for the movement. Also by having the white handkerchief become the symbol, this was able to be drawn, put on posters and spread throughout the country. The white handkerchief are one of the most distinguishing features of the Mothers (Bondrea 2014). Whenever one sees a white handkerchief on the sidewalk or in a poster, the immediate association is the Mothers. The Ni Una Menos also utilizes the handkerchief which ties them to the Mothers. For the Mothers, the handkerchief represents diapers and the purity of Motherhood (Bouvard 2004).

The Ni Una Menos movement learned from the Mothers how to bring awareness to their movement. Even though the Ni Una Menos movement occurs a few decades later the strategies used by the Mothers are still relevant. The Mothers utilized word of mouth. Mothers would tell other moms about their plans and then they would all meet up. With the use of technology, the spread of information can be wider. So for the Ni Una Menos movement word of mouth is also used, but takes place on social media. People are sharing with their friends, inviting others and texting everyone that they know about a gathering. The Mothers also used the plaza to their advantage to bring awareness to their cause. The plaza for the Mothers is like social media to Ni Una Menos. Social media is a public platform that Ni Una Menos uses to spread their message. Another tactic that made the Mother successful is their consistency and reliability. The Mothers met every Thursday at the same time in the same place (Bondrea 2014). The Ni Una Menos movement embodies this strategy by marching every June 3rd. The protest on June 3rd is both consistent and reliable. When the Ni Una Menos took it upon themselves to also use a handkerchief, they were using the symbol that the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo use. The green handkerchief echoes the white one of the Madres, “activists today are making the connections to

the women who have led struggles and refused to give up on their vision of social justice for decades” (Levy 2017). The handkerchief is a direct connection between the two social movements and it is something that will keep the group connected for decades to come.

Demanding Justice

The Mothers also represent persistence in their demand for justice. When the authorities told the Mothers that they could not go any further into the President's house, this did not stop them. The Mothers were on a mission. The determination of the Mothers is exhibited in the spirit of the Ni Una Menos movement. The Ni Una Menos movement demands justice for victims of femicide and an end to femicide, but they do not stop there. The movement also demands equal pays and abortion rights for women in Argentina. The inspiration to demand for justice in the Ni Una Menos movement comes from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Like the Mothers, the Ni Una Menos movement is a symbol of resistance.

Support Base - Creation of the Ni Una Menos Movement

An essential building block of the Ni Una Menos movement was the reading marathon that took place in March 2015. The reading marathon aimed to raise awareness of the killings of women in Argentina (Luengo 2018). The event was sparked after the murder of nineteen-year-old Daiana García. The reading marathon event was launched on social media through a Facebook page that encouraged activists, journalists, artists, writers and families who had been affected by femicide to join “a marathon of readings, projections and performances against femicide” (Fuentes 2019). The event was called “Ni Una Menos” by Vanina Escales, as she wanted to give urgency is the response needed for the daily murders of women (Fuentes 2019, Chenou and Cepeda-Másmela 2019). During the event, participants exchanged stories, testimonials, and hopes for the future of women and activists. The reading marathon played a large role in the

creation of the Ni Una Menos movement as it was useful in presenting the problem at hand: violence against women. It also enlarged the audience by making more people aware of the issue. This was achieved by having the event be created on social media, thus making easier for people to invite their networks. Ni Una Menos also took what they had learned from the Mothers about building awareness at had the reading marathon in a public place. They decided to host the event in a central location, the national library of Buenos Aires. Here, people were able to join the reading marathon even if they had not heard of the event prior.

On May 11th, 2015, radio journalist Marcela Ojeda was outraged to hear about yet another femicide in Argentina. Ojeda posted a single tweet that sparked the global movement Ni Una Menos, “Actrices, políticas, artistas, empresarias, referentes sociales...mujeres, todas, bah...no vamos a levantar la voz? NOS ESTAN MATANDO”⁵. Ojeda’s tweet was in response to the discovery of Chiara Paéz body, a fourteen year old girl buried alive. The tweet triggered a response of 252 likes and 197 retweets⁶ (Fuentes 2019). Ojeda’s tweet prompted the street demonstrations across all of Argentina. Marcela Ojeda was not the only one who took to Twitter to voice her frustration. She was joined by television journalist Florence Etcheves, journalist Hinde Pomeraniec, director of Barcelona Ingrid Beck, and television journalist Valeria Sampedro. The group of women began to organize a march that would bring awareness to femicide and call for action. Even though these women had not met each other before, they were all united under the same cause.

These women used social media to get the word out about the first march. They created a NiUnaMenos twitter account, which now has 69.6K followers so they could continue to spread

⁵ Actresses, politicians, artists, business women, social representatives ... women, all of us, bah ... are we not going to raise our voices? THEY ARE KILLING US.

⁶ The tweet now has 250 retweets and 735 likes

the news. The women asked friends and family members to post pictures with the hashtag #niunamenos just so they could get the word out more. Through doing so, the women were working to make the problem visible.

Less than a month after Ojeda's tweet the first march had been organized and took place June 3, 2015. There were about 200,000 people in Buenos Aires and thousands of people in cities all across Argentina that took place in the march (Chenou and Cepeda-Mámela 2019). Out of the 200,000 people who attended the march in Buenos Aires, 61.2 percent of the people marching found out about the march through a form of social media.

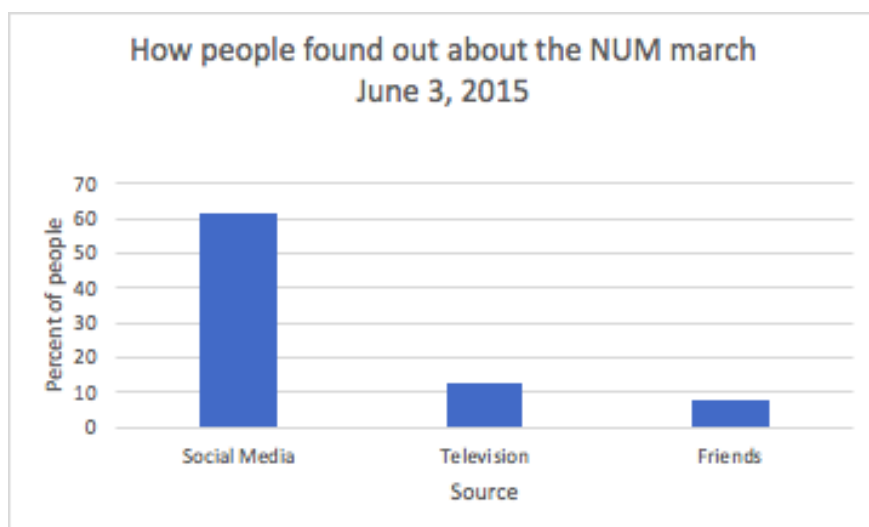


Figure 4: De Angelis, Carlos. 2015.

This data emphasizes the point that social media was so important in getting people to the streets for the Ni Una Menos movement. Social media allowed for the leaders of the movement to get the word out fast, it took less than one month for the whole march to come together. As shown by the graph, over 60 percent of people out about the march through social media. The other ways that people heard about the march was through television and through friends. Television was around 12 percent and friends was under 10 percent. It also shows how powerful and widespread social media is.

Every June 3rd, the Ni Una Menos movement marches, “Ponemos cuerpo, palabra, banderas y carteles para decir que la violencia machista mata y no sólo cuando el corazón deja de latir. Porque la violencia machista también mata, lentamente, cuando coarta libertades, participación política y social, la chance de inventar otros mundos, otras comunidades, otros vínculos”⁷ (niunamenos.org). By using the #niunamenos as the slogan for the June 3rd march, the hashtag was able to cross national borders and inspire other movements in neighboring countries.

Strategies and Tactics

The Ni Una Menos movement has been able to use social media to come up with strategies and tactics. Just one march gave the movement lots of media attention. *El País* stated, “Argentina is experiencing a time of great political turmoil and division in the middle of the electoral campaign. However, the mobilization of #NotOneLess has been so great that all candidates have backed this group’s demands” and *La Nación* described, “the demonstration managed to unite clashing flags under one slogan: shouting down femicide and changing a culture of violence. [It was] an encounter where people from all social classes, creeds, and ideologies visualized #NotOneLess” (Luengo 2018). The movement gained national attention and this could not have been done without the help of Twitter to get the word out. The creation of the Ni Una Menos movement relied on Twitter to spread the word about the movement, gain a greater audience, and get people to the street to march throughout Argentina.

The Ni Una Menos continues to utilize social media as a way to keep people informed and create a call to action. A year after the first demonstration in June 2015, Ni Una Menos held

⁷ We put body, word, flags and posters to say that macho violence kills and not only when the heart stops beating. Because sexist violence also kills, slowly, when it restricts freedoms, political and social participation, the chance to invent other worlds, other communities, other ties.

a second rally in June 2016 where they used the hashtag #VivasNosQueremos⁸, which sites the march against gender violence that was held in Argentina (Fuentes 2019). On October 19, 2016 there was a sporadic march in which the leaders of the Ni Una Menos organization used Twitter to mobilize the public. On October 12, 2016 Lucia Pérez, was brutally murdered. The march on October 19, was inspired by Lucia Pérez and demanded an end to the violence of patriarchy, the right to legal, safe, and free abortions, and for opening space for all our life (niunamenos.org). For this march, the Ni Una Menos movement used the hashtag #NosotrasParamos⁹, and they also adopted the hashtag #MiercolesNegro, taken the Polish women who just had a strike against a planned abortion ban and used the hashtag #BlackMonday.

Social media is used to continue to mobilize people towards short term and long term solutions for femicide. One of the campaigns that Ni Una Menos ran was the “De la foto a la firm”¹⁰. In which the activists asked celebrities and public officials to do more to support the movement while they had been great with posting selfies and pictures, the activists wanted more. The organizers were asking the celebrities and public officials to sign a document in which they pledged to get resources to end violence against women. Through this campaign, the activists were able to get the issue of gender violence on the political agenda during a presidential election year. This got politicians talking about gender based violence throughout their political campaigns and made people more aware of the issue. This campaign utilized social media, paired with a call to action encouraging people in a position of power to do something more.

The hashtags are what mobilized the people in the case of Argentina. A hashtag can be considered “technopolitics” meaning, “the centrality of uses of technology in the organization,

⁸ #WeWantOurselvesAlive

⁹ #WomenStrike

¹⁰ From picture to signature

communication and performance of collective action is contemporary social movements” (Fuentes 2019). By creating a hashtag of the slogan, it brought people together, and made it easy for people to see what Ni Una Menos was doing, as when you looked up the movement you would see the hashtag. The hashtag works “as anchors to retrieve what has been said and done in response to femicide or gender violence more broadly, hashtag such as #NiUnaMenos enable movements to expand their base, exploiting dispersion, multiplicity and a-synchronicity” (Fuentes 2019). The use of all of the different hashtags allows the Ni Una Menos movement to expand, making it more well known and international while at the same time mobilizing the masses within a short time period.

Relation to larger society

Since 2015 those involved in the Ni Una Menos movement have fought to bring about a lot of change in their society. The Ni Una Menos movement has been extremely successful in making people aware of femicide in Argentina.

In 2016, President Mauricio Macri created a national plan to fight violence against women in Argentina (“National Action Plan for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women.” 2016). This plan was titled “The National Action Plan for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women” (“National Action Plan for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women.” 2016). The goals of this plan were to create a network of women refuges, create a budget for the electronic tagging of violent men, introduce gender violence in school curriculum, staff a telephone helpline for women, and gain access to microcredit to promote economic autonomy for women (“Argentina Announces New Gender Violence Plan.” 2016 and “National Action Plan for the Prevention,

Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women.” 2016). These were very ambitious goals for Argentina, but much needed as the femicide rate was continuing to increase.

It has been three years since the creation of President Macri’s plan, and there has been little improvement. If anything, Argentina has seen an increase in femicide. In 2018, there were 19 femicides in the month of January. In January of this year, there were 30 femicides in 31 days. This was an increase of 11 femicides in one month just a year apart. This has created some major movement within the activist communities in Argentina. Mujeres de la Matria Latinoamericana (MuMaLá), a feminist activist group, is calling for Argentina to declare a state of emergency. The goal of declaring a state of emergency to allow MuMaLá to get their budget back for two years, so then they can make breaking out of systemic violence a priority.

Later this year, the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development granted eight million Euro to Argentina to “boost efforts and strengthen institutions to make sure that women and girls never have to live in fear again” with the goal of achieving true gender equality and living in a larger society. This is great for Argentina, as they have been granted funds to help combat the ever growing issue of femicide. So far, the funds have yet to be allocated to a specific resource.

The Ni Una Menos movement is still very active in Argentina. Their most recent march was on November 25th, which was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Santillana 2019). The Ni Una Menos movement led this movement with the message, “sexual violence is political violence” (Santillana 2019). Since 2015, the Ni Una Menos movement has been fighting to bring about equality to women.

In an interview with the New York Times, cartoonist and writer Maitena Burundarena states, “The solution has to come from society, it won’t come from the state, not all men are like

that, we have to win over the good ones, no right-thinking man can tolerate violence against women. But someone has to start teaching the ones who don't understand it that women are not the property of men" (Goñi 2015). The problem of femicide is so deeply rooted in their society that a few changes to the law might not make a difference. The Ni Una Menos movement is trying to change how society views and talks about femicide. Ni Una Menos is trying to prevent femicide from ever occurring again, and is doing this by trying to change the perception in society in Argentina that the killing of women is not okay.

Counter Argument

Social media can be dangerous for social movements. This paper argues that social media helps to galvanize people to the streets for the Ni Una Menos movement. But it is important to recognize that social media does not always work. Many people will argue that social media actually has no effect on a social movement. These people argue that "social media is an impressive patina that in actuality does little to fundamentally transform the way that human beings relate to each other in the real world" (Kidd 2016). Social media creates a barrier and it becomes hard for people to relate in the world of the internet. Malcolm Gladwell argues that people are motivated by close relationships. This would be high risk activism. People who are deeply connected to each other will make a greater difference for the cause. Social media does not allow for close relationships because they are all via the internet. Social media also does not encourage a lot of action. As seen in the Ni Una Menos movement, "Social media encourages people to participate by posting and liking, not by going into the streets" (Kidd 2016). People do not mind liking or sharing a message, but when they actually have to do something, then people are not that reliable.

Even though there can be an argument made for how social media does not play a role in social movements. In the Ni Una Menos movement social media played a large role and did inspire action. Social media was the driving force behind getting people to the streets to protest gender based violence in Argentina. It can be argued that the Ni Una Menos movement would not exist without the existence of Twitter.

Conclusion

The Ni Una Menos movement draws from the success of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo well at the same time integrating 21st century mass media to galvanize the public towards effective social and political change. By applying the resource mobilization theory to both the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Ni Una Menos movement it is clear that they are both successful in gaining awareness and demanding justice. Even though the resources used by the groups were different, the Mothers still managed to inspire the Ni Una Menos movement. There is still more research to be done in this area. To further my research, I think it would be useful for someone to expand on what other countries who are facing a similar issue of femicide are doing to create change in their country, if they are doing anything.

Gender-based violence is an extremely important subject that needs to be discussed. It is not just something that happens in other countries, it is happening right here in the United States. I think in general more research needs to be done in this area, as it is something that people tend to avoid because of the sensitive nature of the topic. It is our duty as researchers, academics and citizens to not let gender based violence become an epidemic.

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