

The Debate on Abortion in Northern Ireland:

An examination of voices and frames in mainstream media

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Abstract

The topic of this thesis is an analysis of the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland in terms of inclusion and exclusion of voices and frames. On December 15th 2015, a judge at the Belfast High Court ruled that the current abortion law in the province of Northern Ireland was incompatible with human rights, specifically when it came to abortion provisions in cases of fatal fetal abnormality and rape or incest. The Northern Ireland Assembly chose to vote on proposed amendments to the abortion law on February 10th 2016. This study examined the debate on abortion that took place in mainstream media in relation to the proposed changes to the law, with the scope limited to the time span between these two events. The problem formulation examined is:

How does the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland include some voices and frames and potentially exclude others?

Previous studies on abortion in Northern Ireland have identified that the anti-abortion view is dominant in the province's political institutions (see e.g. Smyth 2006; Thomson 2016;). There has been a tendency to draw on a common culture of pro-life that serve to make people of a different opinion refrain from voicing their views (see e.g. Fegan & Rebouche 2003). Furthermore, a study by Ferree et al. (2002) found that some actors were excluded from mainstream media in the public debate on abortion in both Germany and the United States. Therefore, it was deemed relevant to examine the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland in terms of inclusion and potential exclusion of voices and frames with the goal of discussing what potential implications this might have.

The voices and frames of the debate found in three newspapers in Northern Ireland were analyzed using Critical Frame Analysis. The data collected from the newspapers consisted of 58 news articles concerning the issue of abortion in the province in the period December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016. This included segments such as 'letters to the editor' and 'opinion letters'. I applied the concept of "voice" to refer to whether actors were quoted in the news articles, and thereby allowed to state their own opinions on abortion in their own words. The

type of frames identified were issue frames, which consist of ideas and arguments that make up common problem representations on abortion. Additionally, ideas from Young's (1997 & 2000) theory on communicative democracy were looked at in the analysis, specifically the two elements of "narrative" and "rhetoric". These are elements that can facilitate understanding and increase the possibility for people to participate in a discussion according to Young.

The findings showed that various types of actors were included in the debate and these were divided into five perspectives: political, legal, religious and civil society and citizen. It became apparent that medical professionals were excluded in the debate and therefore were kept from voicing their opinion on abortion. Furthermore, there was only found one single example of a woman who had an abortion and presented her experience in mainstream media. This sole narrative became a stereotype in the debate on abortion which can be seen as problematic since it set forth norms that other women who had an abortion could not identify with. However, the study identified frames that were both against amending the abortion law, but also frames in favor of amending it. Thus, there were not an exclusion in regard to this aspect which might otherwise have been expected based on previous studies and research.

To conclude, the study did find areas of exclusion in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland, particularly that medical professionals and women's different experiences were left out. This could mean that subsequent action could lack real legitimacy, as not all actors affected by the decision were able to voice their opinion on the issue.

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1. Introduction

Abortion continues to be a hotly discussed issue in Northern Ireland. In the province, abortion is criminalized except when the pregnancy is a threat to the woman's physical or mental health (Dyer, 2016a). Thereby, abortion is not allowed in circumstances of fatal fetal abnormality or when the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest (ibid). The policy is governed through the Offences Against Person Act of 1861 which states that any woman who procures an abortion or anyone who assists in the matter are committing a crime and liable to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment (Section 58 & 59). The Act has been subject to much debate throughout the 21st century both domestic and international. However, the policy has so far persisted due to a strong pro-life tradition in Northern Ireland that unites both Catholics and Ulster Protestants (Dyer, 2016a).

In 2016, the policy was at the center of public debate yet again in Northern Ireland. A judge at the High Court in Belfast had ruled in December 2015 that the province's current policy on abortion was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (Dyer, 2016a). The incompatibility was found in the prohibition of abortion in cases of fatal fetal abnormalities and in cases of rape or incest (Dyer, 2015). The judgement was appealed by the province; regardless, the Northern Ireland Assembly chose to vote on two proposals that would extend abortion to include these circumstances. In February 2016, the two proposals were rejected by a majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly, indicating that the pro-life tradition remains strong within the political institution.

Previous studies have found that the attitude of political institutions in Northern Ireland, including the Northern Ireland Assembly, toward abortion is characterized by an anti-abortion disposition. Lisa Smyth (2006) examined how moral conservatives frame their opposition to liberal sexual and reproductive service provisions in the province. She found that moral conservatives deliberately put emphasis on a common Northern Irish position to oppose

abortion access because it serves to delegitimize individuals not sharing these norms. The construction of such a common Northern Irish position has become widely accepted as even the British Parliament regards the province as different due to its history, therefore permitting the province to keep a different abortion policy than the rest of the United Kingdom (Thomson, 2015). Jennifer Thomson (2016) also found that abortion is viewed particularly negative in the political institutions with a strong tone of social conservatism that cuts across parties and political identity in Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the public were also active in discussing the abortion issue in 2016 with both pro-life and pro-choice groups holding protests to highlight their view on abortion (Ferguson, July 2016). These protests were induced by the prosecution of two women through the 1861 Offences Against Person Act: A mother accused of buying abortion pills for her underage daughter and a young woman charged with procuring substances to cause her own miscarriage (Dyer, 2016a). Nevertheless, a poll from October 2016 showed extensive support for policy change by the public with 72 percent of respondents supporting abortion in cases of rape or incest and just 15 percent opposed, as well as 67 percent support in cases of fatal fetal abnormalities and just 17 percent opposed (Amnesty International UK, October 2016). A similar survey conducted by the organization in February 2016 before the Northern Ireland Assembly voted on the matter likewise showed support in changing the abortion law to include these cases (Cromie, February 2016). Thus, the rejection of the two proposals by the Northern Ireland Assembly does not appear to reflect the majority opinion of the public.

Additionally, it can be added that Fiona Bloomer and Eileen Fegan (2013) noted in their study that the public has a more tolerant view on abortion than the political institutions. Bloomer and Fegan (2013) identified a bias against clarifying and applying the abortion law by Northern Irish institutions and dominant figures whereas the public appeared to be sympathetic to providing safe access to abortion, even though politicians – claiming to represent the majority view – remained hostile. This reinforces the observation of the Northern Ireland Assembly having a different, more conservative opinion on abortion compared to the majority of the public who are more tolerant on the matter.

1.1 Objective

Abortion is an issue that can be viewed in various ways. According to feminist theory, abortion constitutes body politics since it regulates bodies and in this case only the woman's body. This will be elaborated in section 4.2 in the theoretical framework. Adopting this perspective, abortion concerns women and their bodies intimately. Thereby, abortion is not a matter of national security where politicians must take a higher perspective into consideration when they legislate, rendering public opinion irrelevant. Abortion is an issue where public opinion can and should be taken into regard as it intimately affects one half of the population and regulation on the issue often revolve around whether to provide women with access to the procedure or not.

Through a comparative study, Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards and Dieter Rucht (2002) examined how public discourse on abortion is shaped in Germany and the United States. Ferree et al. (2002) used this study to address broader questions on democracy and the public sphere. They did this by looking at what types of actors that were provided a voice by the mainstream media as well as the various framings and the success of them. I will similarly analyze the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland as it unfolds in mainstream media. Mainstream media constitute an arena where "people have an opportunity to participate as citizens in shaping public discourse about matters that concern them" (Ferree et al., 2002, pp. 303-4). Thereby, this arena provides people with access to voice their opinion and potentially influence or sway decision-making in political institutions on an issue, rendering it an important forum.

I stated in the previous section that the Northern Ireland Assembly voted down two proposals to extend abortion, whereas the public was in favor of extending it. Thereby, the decision went against what most of the public wanted. Now this could be because they were unable to sway decision-makers with their opinion in the debate, but it could also be because they were not allowed to voice their opinion. In their study, Ferree et al. (2002) found that some people were excluded in the discussion on abortion in Germany and the United States as some people dominated; this was significant in the shaping of discourse on abortion and the nature of the public sphere. In relation to Northern Ireland, Eileen V. Fegan and Rachel Rebouche (2003) have stated that cultural intimidation has often discouraged people in the province from voicing pro-choice views, limiting people as active participants due to a lack of information,

legal clarity and power. Thus, there could be a potential inclusion problem when it comes to abortion in Northern Ireland due to the strong pro-life tradition in Northern Ireland coupled with the anti-abortion disposition of the Northern Ireland Assembly (see previous section) which could serve to discourage people of a different opinion to participate in the debate.

Taking the above into consideration, I want to examine the public debate on abortion concerning the inclusion of actors to see if there are any potential exclusions. Specifically, my objective is to analyze which actors that are provided a voice and the various frames presented in mainstream media; this in turn should make it possible to state something on the nature of the public sphere, specifically regarding the norm of inclusion in Northern Ireland.

1.2 Research question and sub-questions

How does the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland include some voices and frames and potentially exclude others?

- *Who is provided a voice in the public debate?*
- *How do these voices frame abortion?*
- *What are the consequences of this?*

I apply the term 'public debate' to convey that what I am analyzing is a discussion where opposing viewpoints is presented, in this case opposing viewpoints on abortion in mainstream media. The public debate that I refer to is the one that took place in Northern Ireland when the judge at the High Court in Belfast ruled that the province's current abortion law was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights on December 15th 2015 and until the Northern Ireland Assembly voted down the proposed amendments to the law on February 10th 2016.

1.3 Research design

This study will examine the public debate on abortion in terms of inclusion through an analysis of voices and frames in mainstream media. I will analyze news articles from three newspapers in Northern Ireland in the period December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016. To which I will

apply Critical Frame Analysis to identify the actors who are provided a voice in these newspapers and their various framings of abortion. Critical Frame Analysis originates from social movement theory, gender theory and policy theory (Verloo, 2005). The approach addresses discursive power dynamics by identifying the different representations that actors offer about policy problems (van der Haar & Verloo, 2016).

This will be done within a theoretical framework that will concern both inclusive communication and the issue of abortion. The part on inclusive communication will include notions on communicative democracy and three modes of communication theorized by Iris Marion Young (1997 & 2000). This will help to evaluate the inclusiveness of the abortion debate in Northern Ireland. The second part on abortion will outline important dimensions on the issue such as body politics, the private as the political and different ways of interpreting it. This will help situate the frames that I identify on abortion.

2. Methodology

2.1 Intrinsic case study

This study undertakes a case study of the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland to examine which voices and frames that are included and which are potentially excluded. I have chosen this case because of the intrinsic interest of the case itself. Abortion in Northern Ireland is a complex issue that has been a recurrent topic of discussion throughout the 21st century. Most of the discussions on the issue relate to the Offences Against Person Act of 1861 and the lack of clear guidance to the medical profession on when an abortion is legal and when medical advice becomes aiding the woman in procuring an abortion. This will be further elaborated in section 3 on historical context.

Abortion is understood to be so central to the history and culture of Northern Ireland that the British Parliament has let it keep its own distinct policy from the rest of the United Kingdom. This can be accredited to the existence of a strong belief system in the population consisting of large groups of Catholics and Ulster Protestants. As previously stated, both religious groups are against wide-spread access to abortion. The situation, however, was disrupted by the happenings of 2015 and 2016 where a High Court judge ruled that the abortion law was incompatible with human rights provisions and the province had to decide whether to change the law or not to which a public debate took place. Thereby, Northern Ireland is a case that presents interesting dimensions on abortion.

Abortion is dealt with by states differently according to their social, cultural and religious traditions. Therefore, states will also discuss the issue of abortion differently as exemplified by the comparative study conducted by Ferree et al. (2002) who found that the discourse on abortion is dominated by different actors in Germany and the United States. This study will only be able to state something about the discussion on abortion in Northern Ireland since it is an issue heavily rooted in national contexts – in this case the local context. Specifically, I will

establish which actors and discourses are included and which ones are excluded and where those excluded might find alternative spaces of articulation.

2.2 Public debate and the media

I apply the term 'public debate' to convey that what I am analyzing is a discussion where actors present opposing viewpoints and arguments with the goal of having theirs prevail. Public debate is a form of public discourse which is defined as "communication about topics and actors related to either some particular policy domain or to the broader interests and values that are engaged" (Ferree et al., 2002, p. 9). In this case, it is the communication on the policy domain of abortion that is discussed by different actors presenting different interests and values. Public discourse is often found to go beyond arguments and information to include images and symbols, however, I will only look at textual components in the newspaper articles I will analyze.

Mainstream media is often expected to provide a space for public deliberation and also to provide marginalized groups with a voice ensuring that they are included in the deliberation (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013). As Ferree et al. (2002) found this is not the case in Germany and the United States where some actors were excluded from voicing their opinion on abortion. Thereby, mainstream media should ideally include everyone, but sometimes they do not. Mainstream media can therefore encourage understanding if they include marginalized groups, but also reinforce discrimination and ignorance if they do not (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013). "Documenting whose perspectives are privileged and whose views are restrained in news reports reveals much about wider power relations in society" (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013, n.p.). This is often related to economic and social privilege which enable some groups' assumptions to dominate impacting minority groups (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013).

Mainstream media represents a master forum in that it consists of players from all forums including political institutions, medical profession, academia and citizens (Ferree et al., 2002). These players all try to assert their influence in this master forum on an issue as it is a site of political contest (ibid). However, mainstream media should not be regarded as objective observers reporting on issues as they are also active in constructing events and relationships

presenting some aspects of reality and obscuring others (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013). Journalists are gatekeepers in that they decide which actors are quoted and paraphrased on an issue presenting them as important players within an issue (Ferree et al., 2002). Additionally, they themselves become players as they participate in the framing of an issue by commenting on others' opinions potentially providing their own meaning (ibid).

2.3 Critical frame analysis

I will undertake a discursive study on the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland as it unfolds in mainstream media. This will involve examining who is provided a voice in the discussion and their framing of the issue. Critical Frame Analysis is an approach that addresses discursive power dynamics related to policy-making (Verloo, 2005). Specifically, the approach is "designed to disclose and study the different representations that sociopolitical actors offer about policy problems and solutions in policy documents" (van der Haar & Verloo, 2016, pp. 1-2). It starts from the assumption that there are multiple interpretations in policy-making and that a policy will always represent a problem linking it to a specific solution and call for action (Verloo, 2005). However, I am analyzing media discourses and not policy documents in this study. I will therefore adapt this approach to fit my purpose which is mainly to identify voices and frames on abortion. This includes leaving some aspects out of the approach. As there are multiple interpretations in policy-making, there will likewise be different interpretations on an issue in mainstream media. Thereby, I can adapt the approach to this study.

Critical Frame Analysis was specifically focused on the framing and meaning of gender equality (Verloo, 2005). The approach is meant to uncover and deconstruct the multitude of meanings of gender equality (ibid). I will not specifically look at gender equality in terms of its interpretation and proposed solutions, however, I am looking at an issue that is gendered and relates to women's rights. Therefore, this study will in the end be able to state something about abortion and gender within this issue in Northern Ireland, but it is not specifically centered on the province's understanding of gender equality. Mieke Verloo (2005) also states that the approach is not only limited to the study of gender equality policies. Thus, it is not a problem that I apply it within another focus albeit I apply it in relation to a gendered issue.

2.3.1 Definition of voice and frame

I will identify which actors have a voice in the debate on abortion. By voice, I understand it in the same way as what Ferree et al. (2002) call 'standing' which means to have a voice in the media. To have a voice in the media is not the same as being mentioned or receive other coverage in the newspapers (Ferree et al., 2002). A journalist may write that a certain actor wants to protect unborn children against abortion. However, the actor has not been able to present his or her own interpretation on abortion in a language of his or her choosing. Ferree et al. (2002) states that it "refers to a group being treated as an actor with voice, not merely as an object being discussed by others" (p. 13). When I refer to voice, I mean the fact that an actor has been quoted in an article presenting his or her own viewpoints on abortion. These are the actors who I count as having had a voice in the debate on abortion in the media.

I will identify issue frames within the debate in mainstream media on abortion. According to Ferree et al. (2002):

"Issue frames call our attention to certain events and their underlying causes and consequences and direct our attention away from others. At the same time, they organize and make coherent an apparently diverse array of symbols, images, and arguments, linking them through an underlying organizing idea that suggests what is at stake on the issue." (p. 14)

Thereby, issue frames organize arguments by connecting them to an idea that serve to present what is regarded as the problem on an issue. An example of this could be if you have an argument that says that women should be able to choose whether to have an abortion as it is a human right to decide over private matters. This argument could then be linked to the idea of abortion being a human right to which other arguments could fall under. This idea simultaneously presents the problem of the issue that if women are not able to decide on abortion then it is a human rights violation.

Issue frames are abstract constructions since they are not linked to a specific document (Dombos, 2006). I will identify frames across newspaper articles because a newspaper article can contain different issue frames depending on the actors that have a voice in it. For instance, if a journalist quotes a pro-choice campaigner and a spokesperson from a pro-life organization in the same article then different arguments will be presented on abortion linking to different ideas on what constitutes the issue. Additionally, an actor can also present different arguments

that link to different ideas on what the issue is on abortion such as a human rights problem and a class issue. The actor is thereby drawing on two different frames in trying to get his or her point across. These frames are not incompatible as a lack of access to abortion is a problem in both, however, the reasonings are different.

2.3.2 Dimensions and sensitizing questions

Critical Frame Analysis sets out to analyze crucial dimensions of frames through a set of sensitizing questions that finds diagnosis, prognosis and call for action. Diagnosis is the identification of what is considered problematic and needs to change (Choudhry, 2016). Prognosis is the identification of what the proposed solution is to the problem (ibid). Whereas, the call for action concerns who should act (ibid). The set of sensitizing questions identify the problem, how it is framed, the solution offered, the construction of actors in the problem framing and who are voicing the frame (Verloo, 2005). Below in table 1, I have outlined the dimensions and sensitizing questions that I will use to guide my analysis.

Voice	Voice(s) speaking Perspective
Diagnosis	Why is it seen as a problem? Dimensions of gender Form (argumentation/style/conviction and techniques/dichotomies/metaphors/contrasts)
Attribution of roles in diagnosis	Problem holders (whose problem is it seen to be?)
Prognosis	What to do?
Attribution of roles in prognosis	Call for action and non-action (who should [not] do what?) Who has voice in suggesting suitable course of action?

Table 1. Dimensions and sensitizing questions in Critical Frame Analysis (Verloo, 2005, pp. 30-31)¹

¹ I have chosen some of the dimensions presented by Verloo (2005) and left others out which I did not find would fit my study namely 'Balance' and 'Normativity'. I have in the same way chosen what to look at in the different

In table 1, I have adapted the methodology presented by Verloo (2005, pp. 30-31) to include those dimensions and questions that I find prevalent to examine in relation to voice and frames in the debate on abortion. I will mainly identify the actors who are provided a voice by stating who is quoted in the newspapers and what perspective they present such as political, legal or civil society depending on what type of actor it is. Afterwards, I will outline the various frames identifying diagnosis and prognosis. In diagnosis, I will set forth why a frame regard abortion as a problem to which I will address the form of the argument and whether the frame is gendered or degendered. In prognosis, I will set forth what the solution is to the problem representation. The attribution of role in prognosis and diagnosis will be mentioned if it is of importance to the frame, otherwise it will not be addressed. When I have analyzed the voices and frames in the debate on abortion, I will be able to discuss who is left out of the debate and the potential consequences.

2.4 Data

This study will analyze news articles on the issue of abortion from three different Northern Irish newspapers: The Irish News, Belfast News Letter and Belfast Telegraph. The newspapers in Northern Ireland are political diverse with some representing unionist or nationalist streams and Catholic or Protestant notions (Gosling, 2005). Northern Ireland is a polarized society and the newspapers in the province continue to reflect this: "A Catholic who picked up the [Belfast] News Letter might throw it down in either anger or indifference, though most Protestants would never look at the Irish News" (Gosling, 2005, n.p.). I have chosen three different newspapers that each should represent one division in society to ensure that most segments are represented in the data.

The Irish News and Belfast News Letter are the initial newspapers who each target one half of society in Northern Ireland (Gosling, 2005). The Irish News is aimed at the Catholic/nationalist part of society whereas Belfast News Letter is aimed at the Protestant/unionist part (ibid). The Belfast Telegraph is a newer addition that targets a larger part of society; it is considered less

dimensions and left other things out to limit the scope of what I will address in the analysis. I do not apply 'dimensions of gender' as it was intended such as identifying norms, behavior and categories; instead I use it to address whether the issue is presented as gendered or degendered.

sectarian in its outlook as it is not overly pro-unionist so it still appeals to Catholics in the province (ibid). However, it should be noted that much of the content in the newspaper is taken from the UK Independent or Irish Independent (ibid).

The news articles are gathered from the period December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016 as this constitutes the period when the judge made the formal declaration of incompatibility until the Northern Ireland Assembly voted on whether to extend the abortion law. The news articles were collected through a search on 'abortion' in the archive located on the newspapers' websites. Following the search, I gathered all the news articles that concerned abortion in Northern Ireland as some of the news articles that came up in the search were not about the issue. I included letters to the editor and opinion letters with each one constituting an article. I gathered a total of 58 articles on abortion that was published in the specified time period. Table 2 below will outline the three newspapers, their outlook and how many articles I found on the issue of abortion in each newspaper. All of the news articles gathered in the period are attached as appendixes (58 appendixes) which I will refer to in my analysis.

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Outlook</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>
The Irish News	Catholic/nationalist	28
Belfast News Letter	Protestant/unionist	9
Belfast Telegraph	Pro-unionist	21

Table 2. Overview of data

2.5 Choice of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of two parts that will each help address one aspect of the study. The first part will set forth a constructionist/feminist theory on the public sphere. I will draw on Young's theorization of communicative democracy and three modes of inclusive communication. The theory presented by Young can be regarded as belonging under the constructionist/feminist thought on the public sphere (Ferree et al., 2002). In this tradition, writers share a critical approach "questioning existing arrangements and categories to see if they conceal hidden inequalities" (Ferree et al., 2002, pp. 306-7). The relationship between

discourse and power is a key notion within this tradition since norms and practices can privilege some speakers and disempower others (Ferree et al., 2002).

Young regards speakers as experts on their own experiences; thereby, the dismissal of some speakers and their experiences will restrict public debate (Ferree et al., 2002). The exclusion of some voices can be changed by challenging silences and expanding the debate through content and style (ibid). Thus, Young advocates popular inclusion as an important value in debates (ibid). This part of the theoretical framework will thereby help to state something on my findings on voice and the inclusiveness of the debate in Northern Ireland.

The second part of the theoretical framework will outline important elements on abortion. This will include situating abortion within its context of body politics, gender and the discussion on the political. Most importantly, this part will also present the five different ways of understanding abortion as defined by Joni Lovenduski and Joyce Outshoorn (1986) and discuss them up against the frames identified by Ferree et al. (2002) in their study on abortion. This will specifically help relate the frames that I identify in my analysis to theoretically informed dimensions.

2.6 Approach summed up

In this study, I will analyze which actors that are provided a voice and what kind of frames that are present in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland through news articles from three different newspapers. The news articles gathered have been published in the time spanning from December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016.

An actor has a voice in the debate if he or she is directly quoted in a news article. Through the dimensions in Critical Frame Analysis, I will also note the perspective of the actor: political, civil society, citizen et cetera. The frames identified in this study are issue frames where arguments are joined to an idea expressing the same problem. The dimensions of diagnosis and prognosis as well as the sensitizing questions within Critical Frame Analysis will guide the analysis of these issue frames. Mostly, I will analyze the arguments made by the actors who have a voice. However, since journalists can also actively participate in framing an issue by commenting on actors' opinions, I will take their arguments into regard if they actively present some.

Additionally, the first part of the theoretical framework is centered on the question of voice, whereas the second part is focused on the frames on abortion and important elements therein.

After I have done the above, I will have answered two of my sub-questions: Who is provided a voice in the public debate? and how do these voices frame abortion? I will then be able to consider who is left out of the debate and provide evidence of this through other sources. In this part, I will also comment on the theory presented by Young, specifically in regard to the three modes of communication. In turn, this should answer my third and last sub-question which is what the consequences are that some are potentially left out of the debate. The answers to these three sub-questions will then provide the conclusion to the research question.

3. Historical Context

3.1 The legal landscape

In Northern Ireland, abortion is governed by the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). In this law, Section 58 on 'Administering drugs or using instruments to procure abortion' states that any pregnant woman who

with intent to procure her own miscarriage, shall unlawfully administer to herself any poison or other noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use any instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent (...) shall be guilty of felony, and being convicted thereof shall be liable to be kept in penal servitude for life.

Thereby, Section 58 criminalizes any woman who has an abortion with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Section 59 on 'Procuring drugs & to cause abortion' criminalizes anyone who helps a woman have an abortion with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment as well:

Whosoever shall unlawfully supply or procure any poison or other noxious thing, or any instrument or thing whatsoever, knowing that the same is intended to be unlawfully used or employed with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman (...) shall be guilty of a misdemeanor (...).

Through these two sections, abortion was prohibited in all cases carrying with it severe punishment if not adhered to.

In 1939, the decision in *R v. Bourne* established that abortion was lawful if it was carried out with the intent to preserve a woman's mental or physical health (Daniels et al., 2013). The case took place in an English court where a doctor was prosecuted for having performed an illegal abortion on a fourteen-year-old girl that had been raped by soldiers (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). The doctor was acquitted because the court ruled that it was acceptable to carry out an abortion to preserve the life of the mother if the continuation of the pregnancy would render the woman a physical or mental wreck (*R v. Bourne*, 1939). Northern Ireland adopted this ruling

within the Criminal Justice Act 1945 through Section 25(1) on 'Punishment for child destruction' (Daniels et al., 2013). This section outlines that the taking of a child's life will result in life imprisonment unless the abortion is done to preserve the life of the mother (ibid). Thereby, an exception to the criminalization of abortion was introduced in this law.

Northern Ireland did not adopt the Abortion Act of 1967 which applies to the rest of Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland). The 1967 law identified the specific grounds for an abortion in terms of "time limits, social circumstances, or physical or mental abnormalities in the fetus where it is defined as seriously handicapped" (Daniels et al., 2013). However, Northern Ireland had its own Parliament then, which chose to ignore this new law; and when Direct Rule was resumed 1972, the UK government chose not to extend the act because of the consensus among the political parties in Northern Ireland that they were against abortion (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). Therefore, the province continues to rely on sections in the laws from 1861 and 1945 to address abortion.

Throughout the years, several cases have tried to further specify the legal position on abortion in Northern Ireland. Two cases in the mid-1990s, *Re K* and *Re A.M.N.H.*, concerned a minor threatening suicide and a mentally handicapped woman who were severely distressed due to the pregnancy (Fegan & Rebouche, 2003; Irvine, 2001). The courts permitted abortions in both cases, as they found both women's physical and mental health at risk in accordance to the ruling in the *Bourne* case (Fegan & Rebouche, 2003). However, in *Re S.J.B* and *Re C.H.*, which also dealt with a minor and a mentally handicapped woman, the court restricted the meaning by demanding that the risk should be "real and serious" as well as "long term" (Fegan & Rebouche, 2003, p. 228).

3.2 Debates before 2015

From 2000 and onwards, many debates have arisen in the Northern Ireland as to whether the province should adopt the 1967 Abortion Act. When the Northern Ireland Assembly discussed this in 2000, a majority of speakers were against adopting it (N.A., 2000). Pro-life groups viewed the attempts to extend the 1967 Abortion Act as a way to make abortion more extensively available in the province so they vehemently opposed such an extension (Thomson, 2015; Daniels et al., 2013). Pro-choice groups, on the other hand, framed the issue as a health matter

with speakers stressing the need for access to information on reproductive health (N.A., 2000). The result of this discussion was the passing of the motion 'That this Assembly is opposed to the extension of the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland', establishing that there was a strong anti-abortion sentiment within the institution (Thomson, 2015).

The Family Planning Association Northern Ireland (FPANI) launched a campaign in 2001 to highlight the difficulties that medical professionals have in applying the abortion law (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). The organization took legal action against the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) accusing it of failing to ensure equal access to reproductive health care in the province (ibid). FPANI wanted a guidance to be issued that could enlighten women and medical professionals on instances when abortion is considered legal (ibid). However, pro-life groups saw it as an attempt to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland (Fegan & Rebouche, 2003). The resonance of this notion resulted in pro-life groups gaining permission to participate in the judicial review hearing on grounds of public interest (ibid).

It was ruled in 2004 that the DHSSPS had failed to perform its duty to provide services to women seeking lawful abortions in Northern Ireland (Fegan & Rebouche, 2003). At the same time, a Belfast Telegraph pole showed that 58 percent of respondents wanted to legalize abortion on demand (ibid). It took 5 years following this ruling before the first guidelines were published on how medical professionals could administer abortions (ibid). The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) applied for a judicial review of these guidelines since they did not restrict abortions to matters where it preserved the life of the woman (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). Due to the judicial review, the guidelines were withdrawn to be revised (ibid). Revised versions of the guidelines were then issued in 2010 and in 2013, but both were quickly withdrawn again (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013; O'Rourke, 2016).

Parallel to the issuance of guidelines, the abortion law in Northern Ireland became a matter of international concern. Among others, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) called upon the province in 2008 to amend its law so women would not be punished for having an abortion (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). FPANI, Alliance for Choice and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform also requested the CEDAW Committee to consider the access to abortion in the province under the CEDAW Optional Protocol (O'Rourke, 2016). Nevertheless, politicians continued to refute reform of the abortion policy

in Northern Ireland. They maintained that the population in the province were overwhelmingly pro-life in their view on abortion (Bloomer & Fegan, 2013). Contrary to a 2012 survey which showed that 59 percent of respondents wanted to legalize abortion in cases of rape or incest (ibid). The 2012 opening of the Marie Stopes Clinic, which performs abortions under the provisions of law in the province, has also been subject of much political attack (Thomson, 2015).

3.3 Debate 2015-2016

In 2015, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission chose to challenge the abortion policy in the High Court in Belfast. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission argued that the law violates the European Convention on Human Rights since abortions are not allowed in cases of rape or incest and serious fetal abnormalities. The judge ruled that the abortion law went against the convention in matters of fetal abnormalities where the child cannot survive after birth, rape and incest. In December that year, the judge made a formal declaration of incompatibility. (Dyer, 2016a) This judgment imposes no legal obligation to make a new compatible law, however, it is expected that legislators act on it (Dyer, 2015). The province's justice minister and attorney general chose to appeal the judgment (Dyer, 2016a).

The Northern Ireland Assembly voted in February 2016 on two proposals: one would permit abortion in cases of fatal fetal abnormality and the other would allow it in cases of rape or incest (Dyer, 2016b). If these amendments to the abortion law was accepted then it would have made the law compatible with the ruling by the high court judge. However, both proposals were out voted with 59 to 40 in cases of fatal fetal abnormality and 64 to 30 in cases of rape or incest (ibid). Thus, the Northern Ireland Assembly chose to maintain the abortion law in its current form.

During the period between the judgment and the vote in the assembly, two women were charged and tried under the two sections in the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act: a

mother accused of buying abortion pills for her underage daughter and a young woman for taking substances to induce an abortion² (Dyer, 2016a).

To be noted, new guidelines on abortion were published shortly after the vote in March 2016. These guidelines put emphasis on clinical judgement as to whether the pregnancy is a threat to the woman's physical or mental health (Dyer, 2016b). The impact of fetal abnormality on a woman's physical or mental health is stated as a factor to be taken into consideration and a 'don't ask don't tell policy' applies to women who seek medical treatment after taking abortion pills (ibid).

² The young woman received a three month suspended prison sentence:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/northern-irish-21-year-old-woman-given-prison-sentence-over-abor/>

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Communicative democracy

I will examine the public discussion on abortion in Northern Ireland as it plays out in the mainstream media in terms of voice and inclusion. Young (1997) sets forth her understanding of what constitutes democratic communication. This understanding has its point of departure in the model of deliberative democracy to which Young (1997) expands it to address what she identifies as problematic in it.

Deliberative democracy presents democracy as a process that creates a public where people can discuss collective problems and actions (Young, 1997). “In free and open dialogue others test and challenge these assertions and reasons. Participants are careful to sort out good reasons from bad reasons, valid arguments from invalid” (Young, 1997, p. 61). Through discussions, people will come to conclusions about what will best benefit the public and how to realize them. Thus, deliberative democracy sets forth the notion that discussions should be concentrated on finding the common good rather than people promoting private interests and this is done through public deliberation. (Young, 1997)

Young (1997) considers the representation of democracy as people joining together to decide policies and solutions rationally as the ideal, since it carries with it a conception of reason instead of power in politics. As Young (1997) states: “Policies ought to be adopted not because of the most powerful interests win but because the citizens and their representatives together determine their rightness after hearing and criticizing reasons” (p. 62). However, Young (1997) finds fault with two assumptions in the model of deliberative democracy that can serve to exclude people from discussions. The first one is the tendency to restrict discussions to revolve around arguments which can carry cultural biases rendering some unable to participate. Thereby, speech itself can serve to privilege or exclude certain people in discussions as societies often value dispassionate and disembodied arguments and formal language. The

second one is that unity is assumed either as a starting point or as an outcome of discussion. This is unlikely as there are not enough shared understandings to all of the many problems in society. Additionally, if discussions just appeal to shared grounds then nobody has to revise their viewpoints to understand what lies beyond them which renders discussion unnecessary. These processes of exclusion are invisible in deliberative democracy as it just assumes public deliberation to be culturally neutral and universal. (Young, 1997)

To address these problematics in the model of deliberative democracy, Young (1997) instead proposes a theory of communicative democracy that is attentive to social and cultural differences and the idea that power can enter speech itself. This theory revolves around three communicative elements that help maintain the plurality that Young (1997) finds important in public discussions. Plurality is important as people's change of preference in a discussion on a given problem comes about through listening across differences of position and perspective. The three communicative elements are: greeting, rhetoric and narrative. These elements will not replace argument, but they will supplement it to render the public deliberation more inclusive. (Young, 1997)

I note that Young and her theorization is often related to political discussions on policies and solutions. The ideal of communicative democracy is to recognize that to solve collective problems, it "requires a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of social situation (...)" (Young, 1997, pp. 73-4). I find that this ideal and notions on inclusive communication does not exclusively apply to debates in political institutions, but also in general to public debates taking place in other forums such as the media. The debates in the media can relate to collective problems, including various policy issues such as what to do about abortion after the ruling of the High Court in Northern Ireland. These public debates are a way for citizens to have an impact on decision-making by voicing their opinion and interpretation of a problem to the rest of the public which include representatives from the political institutions. By voicing their opinion, people can thereby potentially influence politicians and their decisions on an issue. I adopt Young's theorization to my study on a debate in mainstream media as I find it in accordance and not in contradiction with the ideas of inclusion that she sets forth.

4.1.1 Notions on inclusion and exclusion

According to Young (2000), the legitimacy of decisions can be increased by ensuring that those who are affected by the decisions are included in the process, thereby providing them with an opportunity to influence the outcomes. Democracies are often criticized for being dominated by certain social groups who have more influence on political decisions, whereas others are excluded from having any significant impact on the outcomes. Young (2000) states: "Strong and normatively legitimate democracy (...) includes all equally in the process that leads to decisions all those who will be affected by them" (p. 11). Thus, she finds inclusion to be the democratic ideal in that everyone who are affected must be able to have impact on the matter.

In democracies, there will be a struggle for voice by social groups. "People of differing social positions or interests must struggle to raise issues because others may be threatened by those issues or they may simply think that different issues are more important" (Young, 2000, p. 50). This could include raising an issue in the media. After people have succeeded in getting an issue on the agenda, they will then have to struggle to get their views heard and to persuade others that their view is the correct one (Young, 2000). The struggle is also not level as some groups are disadvantaged, whereas others are more privileged and thus more easily able to dominate. This could be through the valuation of certain speech in discussions. However, it could also be done much more deliberately as some individuals strive for power, motivating them to buy sufficient media time to dominate the public discussion on an issue (Young, 2000).

There are two types of exclusion: external and internal. External exclusion is the most obvious form where individuals or social groups are kept out of decision-making or where a social group dominates the outcome. Internal exclusion is less noticeable as individuals or social groups are included in the discussion and decision-making process, instead they are excluded through discursive dominance. (Young, 2000) This type of exclusion occurs when "the terms of discourse make assumptions some do not share, the interaction privileges specific styles of expression, [or] the participation of some people are dismissed as out of order" (Young, 2000, p. 53). Thereby, individuals and social groups can be formally included in the decision-making process, but they can experience internal exclusion if their claims are not taken seriously - disregarded as too different from the general view or rendered null through style of speech. Regardless, they still lack a real opportunity to influence decision-making even if they have

gained access to the process. The three elements of democratic communication are proposed to counteract internal exclusion. (Young, 2000)

4.1.2 Elements of inclusive communication

The three communicative elements are greeting (where an individual recognizes others through an act of acknowledgement), rhetoric (the expression of arguments situating speakers and audience in relation to each other) and narrative (storytelling that enables understanding between people with different experiences). These elements do not replace argument, but instead they aid the making of arguments enriching the public discussion. Additionally, they enable understanding and interaction in ways that argument cannot facilitate by itself. (Young, 2000) This is due to people living different lives, influenced differently by social structures and interactions which means that “the effort to shape arguments according to shared premises within shared discursive frameworks sometimes excludes the expression of some needs, interests, and suffering of injustice, because these cannot be voiced with the operative premises and frameworks” (Young, 2000, p. 37) Argument can therefore serve to exclude people from a discussion and as a consequence should not be considered the only form of speech valid in discussions (Young, 2000). The next paragraphs will elaborate on what the three elements can add to public discussion.

Greeting involves acknowledging individuals and social groups through literal greetings or addressing somebody by name, but it can also include symbolic actions including handshakes, hugs and small talk (Young, 2000). This acknowledgement serves to create respect and discursive equality among discussants because when an individual greets another individual, he or she takes the risk of trusting that others will make a similar gesture of trust (Young, 2000). This will establish a bond that is necessary for a discussion, or else people will not listen to each other as they would believe there was no mutual respect (Young, 2000).

According to Young (2000), greeting should be made in the second person address and not in the third person:

“If a social segment rarely if ever appears as a group to whom deliberators appeal, and if there are few signs that participants in public debate believe themselves accountable to that social segment among others, then that social segment has almost certainly been excluded from discussion.” (p. 62)

Thereby, in cases where there are made no direct appeals to a social group in a public discussion then this group can be considered excluded. This propose some problems in relation to my study. I will not be able to apply the element of greeting to my analysis as I am analyzing mainstream media where there is no physical interaction between the people in the debate. Therefore, the only acknowledgement I will be able to identify, I assume is made in the third person. The form of greeting I will find will thereby not be able to state anything about the inclusion of social groups in the discussion of abortion. Thus, I will not apply this communicative element.

Rhetoric assumes a distinction between the message of a discourse and how this message is conveyed stylistically through tone, figures of speech and visual aids. Tone relates to the emotion conveyed in a discourse such as sadness, anger or joy et cetera. All forms of discourse have an emotional tone – even what is considered emotionless discourse carries a tone of calmness and distance. Figures of speech include simile and metaphor along with the attitudes they produce including to be playful, ironic or mocking. Visual aids make a point without involving speech and can be signs, banners or the use of symbols. (Young, 2000) I will apply tone and figures of speech in my analysis, however, I will not address visual aids as I will only focus on the written discourse in mainstream media.

Young (2000) identifies certain positive functions of rhetoric in relation to argument. First, rhetoric helps to put an issue on the agenda since it can serve as a way of creating attention on an issue by drawing on the emotions of the public (Young, 2000). Additionally, rhetoric shape arguments and makes them appropriate to a specific audience: “[It] constructs the speaker, audience, and occasion by invoking or creating specific connotations, symbols, and commitments (...) we construct our positions and messages in a way appropriate to a particular context and audience to which we are speaking” (Young, 2000, pp. 68-9). Rhetoric thus serve to situate speech and link it to certain desires (Young, 1997). I will apply the second function of rhetoric since attention has been brought on the issue of abortion in Northern Ireland; I just want to identify the frames positioned in mainstream media by actors.

Narrative serves to foster understanding among individuals and social groups who have different experiences and foci through storytelling (Young, 2000). Internal exclusion can happen when individuals do not have a common understanding and are therefore unable to

appeal to shared experiences, assumptions and values. Thus, they cannot recognize each other's position and as Young (2000) states: "Too often in such situations the assumptions, experiences, and values of some members of the polity dominate the discourse and of others is misunderstood, devalued, or reconstructed to fit the dominant paradigms" (pp. 70-1). People must come to a shared understanding, evidence and normative principles to base a proposed action on (Young, 2000). Therefore, when individuals and social groups have different understandings, there is no common notions to appeal to (ibid). In these occurrences, narrative will help mediate between social groups (Young, 1997).

Narrative facilitates understandings in three ways. To begin with, narrative presents the specific experiences of individuals situated socially different from others, but who must understand these experiences to do right by them. Narrative can thereby serve to evoke sympathy in others by presenting subjective experiences. Secondly, narrative divulges values, culture and meaning to people who is positioned differently in society. Lastly, narrative contains a social perspective based on a social group's point of view, but it also gives an account of other positions that affect this social group's perspective. (Young, 1997) "Thus, listeners can learn about how their own position, actions, and values appear to others from the story they tell" (Young, 1997, p. 73).

Therefore, narrative furthers the possibility of setting up an understanding between different social groups and can serve to empower excluded groups. Storytelling allows people to develop language and present why their suffering is an injustice. Furthermore, it provides the possibility to understand the experiences of others by countering pre-understandings and stereotypes which an argument cannot do by itself. A narrative gives account to experiences, needs and problems enabling others to gain insight into a social group situated differently in society from themselves. Especially as it can help reveal values, priorities and cultural meanings that will explain to outsiders why certain practices, places or symbols are valuable to some social groups. (Young, 2000)

4.1.3 Manipulative uses of the elements

As previously stated, the three elements supplement argument in different ways. Greeting precedes a discussion and serves for participants to acknowledge each other's subjectivity. If they do not greet each other then arguments become irrelevant since the participants are not

listening to each other. Rhetoric accompanies an argument by situating it for a particular audience through tone and style. Whereas, narrative is important to facilitate understanding of an argument across differences or if there is a lack of shared premise which is needed for an argument to find ground. (Young, 2000)

However, just like an argument can be false, the three elements can be applied in manipulative ways. Greeting can be made as pure pretend where people make a great show of acknowledging individuals or social groups, only to ignore them during a discussion. Likewise, irrational appeals or desires can be drawn on through rhetoric and narrative, distracting people from the essence or lack of substance in what is being said. Narratives can also serve to create stereotypes if they become generalized. The only way to deal with manipulative uses of the three elements is by looking at it critically; listeners should be critical in their evaluation when it comes to applications of greetings, rhetoric and narrative. (Young, 2000)

4.2 Dimensions on abortion

Abortion is body politics as it constitutes regulation by society on matters of the body. Amy G. Mazur (2002) states that “[b]ody politics policy is very different from other areas of feminist government action. Its focus is on the most private elements of women’s and men’s lives; their bodies, their sexuality, and their reproductive capabilities” (p. 137). This presents the idea that body politics is a complicated policy area as it revolves around women and men’s private lives. Many issues associated with the body, including rape, contraception, sexual harassment and pregnancy, were not traditionally regarded as political (Waylen et al., 2013). This relates to the discussion on what constitutes the political which feminists have attempted to broaden to include private issues such those issues that make up body politics (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007).

The political has often been presumed to be in opposition to the personal. The political has most commonly been defined as “public, objective and rational” which are “all qualities usually associated with masculinity” (Holmes, 2000, p. 306). This also makes sense when taking into regards that the political sphere has traditionally been where men made decisions in relation to society. Whereas, the definition of the personal links it to the domestic and private sphere and the issues found within this sphere. Thus, the political has been regarded as distinct from women, bodies, emotions, sex and intimate relationships. Feminist endeavors have questioned

this separation of the political (public) and the personal (private) by trying to expand the political to include that of the personal. (Holmes, 2000)

Feminist efforts to expand the political is heavily connected with the second wave of feminism which stressed that 'the personal is political' (Mazur, 2002). This phrase set forth the argument that private issues should be considered a political matter since private issues are rooted in larger societal structures and institutions (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). Societies construct men and women as two different kind of persons via norms, values and institutions along with situating them as being sexually attracted to each other (ibid). This serves to render heterosexual identities as the norm which in turn sets up notions of masculinity and femininity that often result in unequal positioning of men and women in their private lives (ibid). According to this argument, issues in the private sphere can then only be solved through political means as they are rooted in society (ibid).

4.2.1 A degendered gender issue

Reproduction is addressed within body politics and the term basically covers the production of children. It has most often been relegated to the private sphere outside of political influence; however, these days societies are very involved in people's reproductive lives among others through public health systems, sex education and abortion laws. There are three features of reproduction which renders it an important issue to feminist theory and political practice. First, reproduction is considered female territory as it is women who birth children. Second, this results in femininity being defined in relation to reproduction and motherhood. And lastly, reproduction is a collective concern since it involves the production of the next generations. (Mottier, 2013)

Véronique Mottier (2013) states that it is often taken for granted in policy making and public debates that it is women who become pregnant and birth children. This is a problem as abortion only concerns women's bodies. Thereby, it is an important dimension of the issue that is not usually addressed. Additionally, Mottier (2013) presents that "political claims around abortion continue to be intertwined with debates over sex education, motherhood, femininity, and female sexuality more generally today, whereas men and masculinity are little thematized in contraceptive and abortion rights controversies" (p. 224). The arguments on abortion are related to other notions that concern women such as their sexuality or the matter of

motherhood. Thus, it is often linked to ideas about womanhood though not necessarily explicitly.

According to Dorothy McBride Stetson (2001), the issue of abortion relates to gender conflict which is “disputes pertaining to people in their roles as females and males” (p. 3). Gender conflicts often arise in three main areas: work and family, sexuality and lastly reproduction (Stetson, 2001). The reproductive dimension includes the issue of abortion which, as stated in the previous paragraph, often become related to other ideas about women. Societies are often in a gender conflict on abortion and its use, especially as to whom should have control over it (ibid). When these gender conflicts are put onto the public agenda, they become gender issues that relate to how public policies affect men and women in their gender roles (ibid).

Often gender issues are not defined as gendered in that they affect men and women differently, even though they will certainly have those effects. This is often the case with abortion. Stetson (2001) states:

“When the issue is before the public, despite the fact that abortions are performed only on women and never on men, policy-makers have often framed it in other terms – doctors’ rights, fetal rights, law enforcement, morality, religion, progressivism, family planning, eugenics – rather than discussing women’s privacy, choice, health, autonomy, or sexuality.” (p. 3)

Thus, abortions are rarely formulated as an issue pertaining to women albeit it is women who need abortions. Instead, it is formulated as relating to other matters serving to degender the issue. In my analysis, I will note whether the frames can be seen to degender the issue of abortion, or if they maintain the obvious gender dimension.

4.2.2 Different understandings of abortion

According to Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986), abortion has been defined in four different ways: feminist, medical, moral and criminal. The feminist definition understands abortion as a woman’s issue in that it should concern itself with women’s right to choose. Whereas, the medical sees it as an issue for doctors and medical regulation to secure safe abortion in cases where it is needed/justified. The moral way defines abortion as an ethical issue of securing the life of the unborn; thereby, this understanding is against abortion. Lastly, the criminal one

regards procuring an abortion as a criminal act that should be punished. (Lovenduski & Outshoorn, 1986)

It should be noted, that the feminist definition of abortion as a woman's choice outlined above has been critiqued. By only constructing abortion as a private issue, it is said to ignore the social, political and economic forces that constrain women's choice on abortion. Women are not free from societal influence when making a choice on whether to abort or not. This renders it more than a private issue, but a public one as well. Additionally, if abortion is only regarded as a private issue then societies do not need to ensure that women have access to abortion services which then serve to limit women and their choice even more. (Smyth, 2002) This adds a more nuanced way of defining it as a women's choice than positioned in the feminist definition presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn.

Ferree et al. (2002) identified eight main frames on abortion in their study on the issue in Germany and the United States. In terms of rights frames, they identified four: fetal life, balancing, women's rights as well as individual and state. The frame on fetal life is similar to that of the moral definition by Lovenduski and Outshoorn. This frame is centered on the sacredness of human life and understands abortion as the taking of an unborn child's life; thereby, it is against abortions. Balancing is neutral in that the frame sees the issue as a matter of finding a balance between the rights of the fetus and the woman's right to choose. No rights are in this frame understood as absolute, but the rights of the fetus increase with fetal viability. The frame on women's rights is identical to the feminist definition by Lovenduski and Outshoorn, as it regards abortion as involving the most fundamental right of a woman to decide over her own body and whether to have a child or not. Lastly, the frame on individual and state view abortion as an intrusion of the state into private lives. The decision on abortion is a private matter between the woman, her doctor, family and others she chooses to consult. Thus, the state should not be involved in the decision. (Ferree et al., 2002)

The other frames are: social morality, effects on society, pragmatic consequences and social justice. The frame on social morality regards the issue as indicative of the moral system of society: how unborn children are treated is a testament to whether society are governed by a deeper moral vision or not. Thereby, abortion is part of a larger judgement on society. The effects on society is a neutral frame; it views abortion as an issue to which no common agreement can be reached and compromise is the only option to end the conflict. The frame

on pragmatic consequences pertains to the effects of criminalizing abortion in that it forces women to obtain abortions under conditions that increase physical and psychological health risks. This frame judges attempts to limit abortion to not reduce abortions, but just increase the cost. Finally, the frame of justice is whether the laws on abortion affect the poor more than others; it is unfair to have a system where poor women do not have a choice, but other women do. (Ferree et al., 2002)

In table 3 below, the various ways of understanding abortion, presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) and Ferree et al. (2002), are displayed with the name and main interpretation of the issue. The frame of women's rights is positioned under the feminist definition as it encompasses the same notion of abortion being a women's right to choose. Likewise, both the frames on fetal life and social morality are positioned under the moral definition as they present a similar idea of abortion as an ethical issue. The understandings outlined in table 3 will help situate the frames that I find in my analysis in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland.

Feminist:	<i>Women's rights:</i> Abortion involves the most fundamental right of a woman to decide over her own body.
Balancing:	A matter of finding a balance between the rights of the fetus and the woman's right to choose.
Moral:	An ethical issue of securing the life of the unborn. <i>Fetal life:</i> Centered on the sacredness of human life and understands abortion as the taking of an unborn child's life. <i>Social morality:</i> Regards the issue as indicative of the moral system of society.
Medical:	An issue for doctors and medical regulation to secure safe abortion where it is needed/justified.
Individual and state:	Abortion is an intrusion of the state into private lives.
Effects on society:	No common agreement can be reached in society – compromise is the only option.
Social justice:	Whether the laws on abortion affect the poor more than others.
Criminal:	Procuring an abortion is a criminal act that should be punished.

Pragmatic consequences:	The effects of criminalizing abortion forces women to obtain abortions under conditions that increase health risks.
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Table 3. Overview on different ways of understanding abortion reworked from Lovenduski & Outshoorn (1986) and Ferree et al. (2002)

5. Analysis: Voices and Frames in the Debate on Abortion in Northern Ireland

The following sub-sections will outline the voices and the frames found within the debate on abortion from December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016 in the three selected newspapers. The first part will address those voices and frames that are against changing the abortion law, whereas the next part addresses those that are in favor of changing it. It should be noted that some of the frames interconnect somewhat with each so some of the same notions can be repeated. Diagnosis and prognosis will be identified under each frame. Additionally, it will be specified whether the frames are gendered or degendered in their interpretation of abortion as 4.2.1 sets forth the idea that abortion is seldom presented as a gender issue. The different understandings of abortion outlined in table 3 in 4.2.2 will also be drawn upon to see if the frames reflect some of these understandings.

5.1 Voices against change in legislation

In the period December 15th 2015 to February 10th across the selected newspapers, those who are voicing opinions that go against changing the current legislation on abortion make up political actors, the attorney general, representatives from churches or religious organisations. These opinions often reflect a pro-life perspective in that their argument is based on the child constituting life from moment of conception. Additionally, through segments such as 'letters to the editor' and 'opinion letters', readers can write in with their opinions on all types of issues including abortion. During the time period, there are quite a few citizens who write in to the selected newspapers expressing pro-life sentiments.

In table 4 below, I have provided an outline of the actors who voice sentiments that are against changing the current legislation. I have positioned the actors in accordance to which perspective they represent: political, legal, civil society, religious or citizen.

Political perspective	<p><i>Arlene Foster</i> Party leader of the Democratic Unionist Party</p> <p><i>Dolores Kelly</i> Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for the Social Democratic Labour Party</p> <p><i>David Ford</i> Justice Minister and party leader for Alliance who appealed elements of the 2015 High Court ruling on the province's abortion law</p> <p><i>Democratic Unionist Party (spokesperson & party statements)</i> The party voted as a bloc against amending the abortion law in February 2016</p> <p><i>Social Democratic and Labour Party (party statements)</i> The party also voted as a bloc against the amendments in February 2016</p>
Legal perspective	<p><i>John Larkin</i> Northern Ireland Attorney General who appealed the entirety of the 2015 High Court ruling on the province's abortion law</p>
Civil society perspective	<p><i>Nola Leach</i> Chief Executive of CARE (Christian Action Research Education) in Northern Ireland that engages with politicians to among others protect human life at all stages</p> <p><i>David Smyth</i> Public Policy Officer at Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland that represents Evangelical Christians in society</p> <p><i>Bernadette Smyth</i> Founder and Director of Precious Life which is the largest pro-life group in Northern Ireland that oppose abortion through activism and campaigning</p> <p><i>Catherine Sewell</i> Member of the St. Joseph's Pro-life Group Dungannon that promote the protection of life from conception to natural death</p>
Religious perspective	<p><i>Catholic Bishops (official statement)</i></p>

	<i>Paul S. Burns</i> Pastor at Adullam Christian Fellowship Church <i>Kyle Paisley</i> Reverend
Citizen perspective	<i>'Jamie'</i> 14-year old brother to an unborn child Readers: <i>TH Mitchell</i> <i>Jarlath Vaughan</i> <i>Rita Brennan</i> <i>Joseph L. Conroy</i> <i>Liam Gibson</i> <i>Stiofan O. Duibhfinn</i> <i>'Christian Realist'</i> <i>Donald Gale</i>

Table 4. Actors against amending the abortion law

As evident from the table, the main political actors who are against changing legislation on abortion are representatives from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), as well as Justice Minister David Ford from the party Alliance. The Attorney General John Larkin, who was active in the High Court case on abortion, also expressed opinions against changing the legislation in the selected newspapers.

Representatives from CARE Northern Ireland and Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland, both organisations lobbying for the influence of Christian values in politics and society, can also be found in the discussion on the side against changing the abortion law. Furthermore, the Christian and the Catholic perspective are also present in the debate through an official statement from the Catholic Bishops and statements from two members of the clergy. Moreover, individuals from two pro-life groups have a voice in the media: the largest one in the province and one specifically focused on the city Dungannon. The largest one Precious Life is synonymous with its founder Bernadette Smyth; however, I note that she was not allotted much space in the Belfast Telegraph, News Letter nor Irish News to voice her opinion in the specified time period. This is perplexing as Bernadette Smyth is a big campaigner on the pro-life side. There is even one reader who writes in to praise and thank her (see appendix 1).

There are several citizens who voice their opinion mostly by writing in to the three newspapers. The only information known about these persons are what they provide themselves since the letters are often just signed with a name. However, the one that should be noted is 'Jamie' whose contribution was published as an article by itself (see appendix 2). What makes this one interesting is that it is written by a 14-year-old boy, but not from his own perspective. Instead, he has written it from the perspective of his unborn brother that was diagnosed with a fatal fetal abnormality (Edward's Syndrome) and died in the 39th week gestation. This will be further addressed in section 5.1.5.

5.1.1 Abortion renders some life more valuable

A frame that dominates is that all life has value and abortion serve to render some life more valuable than others. Nora Leach, Chief Executive of CARE, states: "We argue life begins at conception and the baby even at this early stage has value. If we legalise abortion on grounds of fatal foetal abnormality or sexual violence we will send a message that the lives of some unborn babies are less valuable than others" (appendix 11). This frame conveys that life starts from the moment of conception and that all fetuses are equally, valuable life no matter the disability or abnormality. Thereby, the diagnosis is that abortion makes some life more valuable than others when reality is that no life is more valuable.

Some link this idea to the teachings of the bible, including Pastor Paul S. Burns who says: "The bible teaches that life begins in the womb (...) if there is a semblance of life, surely that child deserves to live – be it if only for hours/days – as it is a living being?" (appendix 17). It is presented as wrong to abort a fetus because it is incompatible with religious teachings and a religious outlook on the world. This frame relates the moral understanding on abortion, since it bases its reasoning in religious teachings on ethic. It specifically reflects that of fetal life where life is regarded as sacred and abortion is the taking of a life. Additionally, there is an attempt to humanize the fetuses. The fetuses are referred to as 'unborn children' and 'babies in the womb' as well as stating that parents to children with fatal fetal abnormalities have treasured the time spent with them despite how long or short this was (appendix 11). This is to invoke sympathy for the fetuses helping to bring forth the argument of the frame that they constitute valuable life.

The prognosis is that pregnancies should be continued regardless of fatal fetal abnormalities and rape or incest. It is accepted that it might be necessary to abort if the woman's life is in danger, as it is better to save one life than lose both (appendix 11). Likewise, abortion could be done if the child is already dead since God would not be so cruel as to demand that a woman "carry a dead child in her womb" (appendix 17).

There is little reference to women in this frame as the focus is put on the fetus. This serve to degender the issue which Stetson (2001) says is often the case with abortion. The priority is to give voice to the fetuses. As Nora Leach states "We want to make sure our unborn children have a voice who will speak for them. In a debate that quickly becomes all about personal choice and individual rights, we must not forget the vulnerable babies in the womb. They should have a voice" (appendix 11). Others make a similar point that the unborn child has no freedom to choose (appendix 17). The fetuses are presented as vulnerable since they cannot speak up or decide for themselves. This serve to render the tone righteous in that since fetuses cannot speak up for themselves, then these actors will.

5.1.2 Abortion is based on faulty medical notions

Abortion is also framed as potentially being conducted on erroneous medical ideas. Many state that the term fatal fetal abnormality does not have any concrete definition. Arlene Foster, party leader of the DUP, states that "there is no such condition as fatal foetal abnormality³ – it is a whole range of conditions which fall within that" (appendix 10). Whereas, the chief executive of CARE Nola Leach states that "[t]he amendments fail to properly define what actually constitutes serious disability" (appendix 11). Some fear that the lack of commonly understood definition will serve to abort fetuses that do not have fatal conditions, including Reverend Paisley who states that he heard an interpretation that resembled dwarfism (appendix 12).

Nola Leach states that "doctors will be left trying to decide what degree of fatal foetal abnormality qualifies for legal protection and what actually constitutes serious disability" (appendix 11). Thereby, it is a problem that will affect the medical profession as doctors must

³ The judge from the 2015 High Court ruling on abortion made a statement emphasizing that he never suggested fatal fetal abnormality was a medical term, but instead he stated it was a group of conditions that makes survival outside of the womb impossible (see appendix 20).

make decisions on abortions without a clear legal basis. Decisions that go beyond their medical capabilities (appendix 11). This is problematic as a reader refer to a study that found that doctors use the term fatal fetal abnormality when doctors believe that the child will not have a life worth living regardless of whether death is certain (appendix 13). By another reader, it is even stated that doctors cannot know for sure if a fetus will die or not (appendix 44). The subjectivity of the decision made by doctors is of concern. Thereby, the diagnosis is that doctors will carry out abortions without a clear basis, resting on subjective opinions.

This is a process frame in that it does not state anything on the topic of abortion, but instead it presents the decision-making procedure on abortion as a problem. The frame does not reflect any of the understandings presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) and Ferree et al. (2002). Instead, it critiques the medical understanding where abortion is positioned as a matter that the medical profession should make decisions on since these will be based on faulty notions and subjective opinions. Thus, the medical professionals are not capable of making these decisions. Furthermore, this frame is degendered.

Within this frame of faulty medical notions, an argument is also presented by Arlene Foster, the DUP and Nola Leach that the amendments to the abortion law has not been adequately thought out; they have been rushed (appendix 3, 11 & 14). The prognosis proposed by them is to establish a working group of clinicians and legally qualified persons to figure out how to best address the matter of fatal fetal abnormality so it does not become based on faulty medical notions and subjective decisions made by individual doctors (appendix 14 & 15).

5.1.3 Abortion is discrimination against children

Abortion due to fatal fetal abnormality is framed as discrimination against children and goes against international human rights documents. The Attorney General John Larkin states: "Providing for a criminal law exception for 'fatal fetal abnormality' (...) provides unborn children diagnosed with such a disability with much less protection under the law of Northern Ireland than those without such a disability" (appendix 7 & 8). His concern is that the amendment that will make it legal to abort due to fatal fetal abnormality will breach articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (appendix 7). Whereas, the reader Rita Brennan states that abortion in general goes against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child since it includes the right to life (appendix 9).

In terms of diagnosis, abortion is then a problem because it goes against the equal protection afforded to children in human rights documents. The form of the argument takes on a legal perspective and that of a human rights perspective. It is emphasized that all fetuses, disregarding disabilities or fatal diagnoses, should be protected through law. This frame most closely relates to the moral understanding of abortion of protecting the life of the fetus; however, it relates it the moral conduct presented by international documents and not a religious moral.

The rhetoric is subdued with a tone of reason. John Larkin states that it would be “inconceivable that the Strasbourg Court, if asked to consider article 8 in the context of ‘fatal’ fetal abnormality, would find that the ECHR [European Court of Human Rights] requires protection of the rights of women in a way which discriminates against unborn children with that particular disability” (appendix 7). Rhetoric such as this qualifies as what Young (2000) states is often believed to be emotionless since the arguments are presented as matter-of-fact. The rational is that women’s rights cannot be upheld if it means they would oppose the rights of the fetus. This does not reflect an understanding of balancing since this frame does not position abortion as a matter of finding a balance, but that since women’s rights impose on those of the fetus then they cannot be upheld. The frame is gendered in the sense that it acknowledges that it is women’s rights abortion affect.

The prognosis involves appealing the 2015 decision made by the High Court on Northern Ireland’s abortion law, basing it on the legal argument that it goes against international human rights documents discriminating against children.

5.1.4 Abortion on demand is the result

A frame is that any form of amendments to the abortion law will pave the way for future extensions, ultimately abortion on demand. Dolores Kelly, an MLA for the SDLP, states “what legislators may believe is a discreet and minor development of existing law, has also introduced a critical difference to the underlying philosophy of abortion which will undoubtedly be focused upon those who seek greater change” (appendix 3). This greater change is at worst stated to be abortion on demand which would make access to abortion even more widespread than the 1967 Abortion Act does in the rest of the United Kingdom (see appendix 3, 4 & 5). The 1967 Abortion Act has been considered too progressive by pro-life groups in Northern Ireland, as

presented in 3.2 in the historical context. To convey that any amendment ultimately will result in abortion becoming more widely accessible than this law is drawing on a fear that many people have in Northern Ireland.

In terms of diagnosis, the problem is that amendments will result in abortion on demand which is too liberal and something the public do not want. Justice Minister David Ford argues that it is an unintended consequence and unwanted: “I don’t think that was the judge’s intention, I don’t think that’s what the people of Northern Ireland want (...)” (appendix 5). Here an internal exclusion is positioned, which Young (2000) define among others as when people make assumptions that some do not share. It is presented that people do not want to have abortion on demand; thereby those who do not share this opinion are implied to be deviating from what the rest of the population wants. Furthermore, this is a process frame as it is concerned that amendments will result further access to abortion and it is degendered as it does not refer to women or their bodies. It does not reflect any of the understandings presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) or Ferree et al. (2002).

The prognosis in this frame varies. The solution is not to change the abortion law, but it is also proposed that the 2015 decision by the High Court should be appealed to acquire clarification on the matter (appendix 5).

5.1.5 Abortion is murder

Abortion is framed as murder. The reader Joseph L. Conroy states: “(...) the basic and inescapable case against abortion is its definition – abortion is ‘the deliberate and intentional killing of the baby in the womb’” (appendix 18). Additionally, Donald Gale states that abortion is the same as if you killed a child after it was born: “So, a child of 22 weeks can be given advanced care, or attacked and killed on request. Once born the child has full protection in law. Anyone killing it would incur a murder charge. But in the womb it can be assaulted with impunity” (appendix 19). The act itself is represented as problematic since by aborting a fetus that is in the womb, it corresponds to the killing a child outside of the womb. Thus, the diagnosis is that abortion is a problem because it is murder of children and that this is a crime like all other murders. The frame thereby reflects the understanding of criminal where abortion is a criminal act and should be punished. It is not explicitly stated that abortion should be punishable in this frame. However, as it is understood to constitute the crime of murder which

is punishable on all other accounts then it must be implied that abortion should likewise be punished.

In this frame, abortion is compared to Herod's massacre⁴ which is a biblical story of infanticide and to German parents sending their disabled children to be murdered during the Nazi regime (appendix 19). When it comes to pregnancy due to rape, the fetus is stated to be "totally innocent, guiltless and in no way responsible for the father's crime. You could say mother and child are both victims" (appendix 18). The fetus should not be punished for what the father has done. The dichotomy is set forth of the fetus and the woman as victims and the father as the criminal. Since the woman and child are both innocent, there is no grounds for an abortion in cases of rape either. The woman can remain innocent by keeping a child or she can acquire an abortion. If she acquires an abortion, then the frame will regard her as a criminal. The frame does mention women, but the frame does not relate abortion as concerning women and their bodies.

Within this frame, there is a fictive narrative made by 14-year-old Jamie on behalf of his brother John Edward who was an unborn child (see appendix 2). According to Young (1997), narratives foster understanding between individuals who have different experiences. This is done in three ways: presenting subjective experiences that can invoke sympathy; divulging values, culture and meaning; and containing a social perspective (Young, 1997). Jamie is not presenting his own subjective experiences, instead they are assumed by him presented to be those of his unborn brother. Nevertheless, this narrative tries to invoke sympathy by emphasizing that a child with a fatal fetus abnormality is just like any other child since it has the same organs and limbs (appendix 2).

This narrative also serves to present meaning even though it fictive one. It sets forth the meaning that abortion is murder: "To get rid of me? Kill me? While here in this paradise, it is just the same as killing me inside or outside of my mother's womb. It is murder with just a less invasive, sounding name that is termination" (appendix 2). In terms of rhetoric, the womb is compared to paradise to stress how an abortion serves to ruin the contentment of the fetus

⁴ The biblical story of King Herod who created mass infanticide when he ordered the killing of all newborn male babies as he felt threatened by the foretelling of the birth of a new king of Jews. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/herod.shtml>

and expressing how horrible an act abortion really is. A plea is made for people to give them a chance at life: “So please just like I was let live for a short time (39 weeks), let others live too, and die with dignity like any other human being. Don’t kill us, we deserve the best chance we can get” (appendix 2). Young (2000) states that narratives allow individuals to present why their suffering is an injustice. The narrative does serve to present an outlook on why abortion is an injustice. However, the problem is that the narrative is fictive which makes it manipulative since the perspective of the unborn it sets forth is not authentic even though the life story of John Edward is true. Instead, the narrative is a generalization of what the experiences of an unborn child is believed to be.

In regard to prognosis, it is insisted that abortion can never be the solution (appendix 19). The solution is proposed as to make perinatal hospice care available across the country instead which will provide families with the opportunity to experience moments with their baby. Likewise, society must also offer essential support as some abortions are based on financial and social reasons (appendix 19).

5.1.6 Abortion is a commercial industry

Abortion is framed as a commercial industry. Liam Gibson, a reader, states: “But rather than protect the lives of Irish babies Sinn Féin voted to defend the interests of the British abortion industry” (appendix 4). A dichotomy is presented of “commercial abortionists” on the one hand and “protection of unborn children” on the other (appendix 4). I note that this frame does not apply industry figuratively about abortion; the frame understands it literally as being a business. The diagnosis is that abortion is an unethical business that trades in the death of unborn children. As the reader ‘Christian realist’ states: “A mass market in death is corrupt and needs change” (appendix 6). Furthermore, the reader Catherine Sewell states that that the notion of having an abortion clinic on every corner will not happen (appendix 46).

The frame is de-gendered as there is no mention of women and their bodies, instead the abortion industry is pitted against the lives of unborn children. The frame represents the moral understanding on abortion since it focuses on the protection of unborn children, but here it just becomes protection of children against the depraved commercial industry of abortion and not a religious moral.

The prognosis is of course not to amend the abortion law in Northern Ireland. However, it is also stated that it would be preferable if people prevent pregnancies through contraception instead of abortions (appendix 6).

5.1.7 Abortion is not just a woman's issue

Abortion is also presented as more than an issue for women. Arlene Foster states: "These are planned pregnancies, these are people looking forward with their husband, with their partner, to a new baby coming and then to get this absolutely devastating news about the foetus... and so it is not just about the woman (...)" (appendix 10). Nola Leach also states: "Everyone agrees fatal foetal abnormalities or sexual crimes resulting in unplanned pregnancies are deeply traumatic for the people involved" (appendix 11). Abortion is regarded as more than a woman's issue since it affects all the people involved and not just the woman. The diagnosis is that since abortion concerns everybody involved, the issue should not be dealt with specifically as a woman's issue. The frame does not reflect any of the ones presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) or Ferree et al. (2002).

In this frame, it is presumed that those who become pregnant are couples who have planned it and are looking forward to becoming parents. This excludes the notion of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies. As previously stated, Mottier (2013) proclaims that it is often taken for granted that it is women who reproduce which she states is an important dimension since it concerns women's bodies and women's bodies only. However, in this frame, the importance of this dimension is argued to be false – it affects everyone and no more the woman than the other parties. Thereby, the frame is trying to degender the issue by de-emphasizing the woman's part in the abortion issue as equal to all others. I therefore classify it as a degendered because it is the aim of the frame. The prognosis also becomes to stop addressing the issue in terms of women and instead talk about the effect it has on families.

5.1.8 Abortion is selfish

Another frame is that abortion is selfish action. As Jamie states: "My mum didn't just think of herself. Carrying me to full term was the best gift she could give me and the best gift any mum can give to her baby" (appendix 2). A fetus is presented as content in the womb since it is "warm, comfortable, not in pain, getting all the nutrition I need via my Mum's blood supply"

(appendix 2). Thereby, abortion is not an action committed for the sake of the fetus since it does not suffer. The diagnosis is that abortion is a selfish act only benefitting the woman. This frame does not reflect any of the understandings on abortion presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) and Ferree et al. (2002).

The frame is gendered since it presents women as the ones who decides on abortion and is an important part of the frame since they constitute those doing this selfish act. Furthermore, this frame is interlinked with ideas of women and motherhood. The frame sets forth the idea that mothers should be altruistic when it comes to their children and let them live and die in their own time. Thus, the prognosis is for women to carry their babies to full term no matter the reason.

5.1.9 Sum-up

Frame	Understanding of abortion	Gender dimension	Actors
<i>Abortion renders some life more valuable</i>	Moral (fetal life)	Degendered	Nola Leach Catholic Bishops Pastor Paul S. Burns Jarlath Vaughan Bernadette Smyth David Smyth William Austin David Ford
<i>Abortion is based on faulty medical notions</i>	Process frame	Degendered	Arlene Foster Nola Leach Reverend Paisley TH Mitchell The DUP
<i>Abortion is discrimination against children</i>	Moral	Gendered	John Larkin Rita Brennan TH Mitchell
<i>Abortion on demand is the result</i>	Process frame	Degendered	Dolores Kelly David Ford Catherine Sewell Liam Gibson
<i>Abortion is murder</i>	Criminal	Gendered	Joseph L. Conroy Donald Gale Jamie
<i>Abortion is a commercial industry</i>	Moral	Degendered	Catherine Sewell Liam Gibson 'Christian Realist'

<i>Abortion is not just a woman's issue</i>	-	Degendered	Arlene Foster Nola Leach
<i>Abortion is selfish</i>	-	Gendered	Jamie

Table 5. Overview of frames against amendments

5.2 Voices in favor of change in legislation

In the debate spanning from December 15th 2015 to February 10th 2016, those who are voicing opinions that are in favor of changing the current legislation in the selected newspapers make up Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), judicial actors, representatives from civil society organisations as well as campaigners and citizens. Even though they are in favor of changing the legislation, it does not mean that they are pro-choice and want women to have free access to abortion – some just want to expand abortion to include cases of fatal fetal abnormality and rape or incest. Table 4 below provides an outline of the actors who are in favor of changing the law. The table positions the actors in accordance to what type of perspective they represent: political, legal, civil society or citizen.

Political perspective	<p><i>Clare Bailey</i> MLA for the Green Party</p> <p><i>Steven Agnew</i> Party leader for the Green Party</p> <p><i>Steward Dickson</i> MLA for Alliance who proposed an amendment (together with Trevor Lunn) to include abortion in circumstances of fatal fetal abnormality</p> <p><i>Trevor Lunn</i> MLA for Alliance who proposed the amendment (together with Steward Dickson) to include abortion in circumstances of fatal fetal abnormality</p> <p><i>Caitriona Ruane</i> MLA for Sinn Féin</p> <p><i>Mike Nesbitt</i> MLA for the Ulster Unionist Party</p>
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Legal perspective	<p><i>Les Allamby</i> Chief Commissioner at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) which brought the case of abortion to the High Court in 2015.</p> <p><i>Mr. Justice Horner</i> High Court Judge who made the formal declaration of incompatibility in December 2015.</p>
Civil society perspective	<p><i>Patrick Corrigan</i> Amnesty International's Northern Ireland Programme Director.</p> <p><i>Colm O'Gorman</i> Executive Director of Amnesty International Ireland</p> <p><i>Grainne Teggart</i> Amnesty International's My Body My Rights campaigner</p> <p><i>Alliance for Choice (spokesperson)</i> The activist organization campaigns for abortion rights in Northern Ireland</p>
Citizen perspective	<p><i>Sarah Ewart</i> A high-profile campaigner for change in the law</p> <p><i>Goreti Horgan</i> A pro-choice campaigner</p> <p>Readers: <i>Allister Matthews</i> <i>Martin D. Stern</i> <i>Hugh Gildea</i></p>

Table 6. Actors in favor of amending the abortion law

As evident from the table, the political actors who voice opinions favorable for changing the abortion law are from the Green Party, Alliance, the Ulster Unionist Party and Sein Féin. Additionally, a commissioner from the Human Rights Commission is also provided space in the three newspapers to voice his opinion on abortion; as does the judge who made a formal declaration of incompatibility of the abortion law in Northern Ireland with the obligations under the Human Rights Act.

There are several representatives from the non-governmental organization Amnesty International, including the Programme Director for Northern Ireland and the Executive

Director for Ireland. A spokesperson for Alliance for Choice is also part of the debate. Alliance for Choice is a non-governmental organization that fights for rights to abortion in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, some campaigners are also provided a voice in the debate, including Sarah Ewart who is a high-profile campaigner fighting for change regarding fatal fetal abnormalities. Sarah Ewart was pregnant when her baby at 19 weeks was diagnosed with a fatal defect which meant that the brain and skull had not developed properly; it would die either before or moments after birth. She chose to travel to get an abortion. Her name and story is brought up by multiple of the actors in the debate.

Lastly, a few readers also have a voice in the debate through the segments: 'opinion letters' and 'letters to the editor.'

5.2.1 Abortion is a woman's fundamental right

Abortion is framed as a woman's fundamental right, including her right to health care. Colm O'Gorman, the Executive Director of Amnesty International Ireland, states that the current abortion law in Northern Ireland violates girls and women's rights (appendix 27). The diagnosis is that the lack of abortion in cases of fatal fetal abnormality and rape or incest goes against women's rights. The frame is gendered and reflects the feminist understanding in that abortion concerns women's rights albeit here the right to choose is presented to apply in limited circumstances. However, this could be because of the context in Northern Ireland since it is these cases that have been found incompatible and these that are up for a vote.

Women are presented as helpless because of the current situation. Less Allamby, the Chief Commissioner at the NIHRC, states that if it continues then the political institution will have neglected "the fundamental rights of vulnerable women and girls facing the most difficult circumstances" (appendix 3). Additionally, Patrick Corrigan, Amnesty's Northern Ireland Programme Director, also stresses that women who need to have an abortion are not criminals (appendix 28). Thereby, women are seen as being wronged and not in the wrong.

The prognosis becomes to ensure that women can access their rights fully. As Patrick Corrigan states, there must be made "changes to abortion law to ensure that women are able to access fully their human right to healthcare" (appendix 28). The ones who are positioned as able to do this is the Northern Ireland Assembly. Abortion due to rape should be based on women's

complaint and they should not undergo any procedures as it could delay or prevent access (appendix 29). When it comes to the case of fatal fetal abnormality, women should be able to abort if it is severe and fatal and it should be left up to the medical professionals to decide when a case meets this standard (ibid). This last bit on fatal fetal abnormality resembles the medical understanding on abortion where the medical professionals should decide when there are grounds for an abortion.

5.2.2 Abortion is a healthcare issue

Abortion is framed as healthcare that needs to be made available for women in Northern Ireland. Steven Agnew, the leader of the Green Party, states: “Every week we have 20 women travelling from Northern Ireland across the water and wouldn’t it be great if they were able to receive that healthcare at home?” (appendix 21). The diagnosis is that the lack of access to this healthcare at home, forces women to travel elsewhere to acquire it and causes further distress. Steward Dickson, a MLA for Alliance Party, states: “The traumatic journey to England for many young women is one that is becoming a shame on Northern Ireland and to force women with fatal foetal abnormality pregnancy to look elsewhere for support and help makes this worse” (appendix 3). These women have already experienced an injustice and they will experience further trauma by having to travel for healthcare that they need. This reflects the understanding of pragmatic consequences as it presents the effects of criminalizing abortion as forcing women to obtain them under increased health risks. Here, it is particularly mental health risks through the adding of further trauma.

The frame is clearly gendered as it presents the lack of abortion as a problem for women. Women are overall presented as weak, among others they are called “victims of a horrific crime” and they have “suffered a terrible tragedy” (appendix 22). Additionally, a journalist also states in his article that “both vulnerable women and healthcare professionals express their frustration and anger about what they see is a fundamental healthcare issue (...)” (appendix 23). So, women are positioned as vulnerable and victims hurting which gives the frame a tone of compassion in that society should help them.

In this frame, actors draw on the narrative of Sarah Ewart whose experience is presented again as a “tragic story” (appendix 26). Sarah Ewart’s first pregnancy was diagnosed with anencephaly which meant that the fetus would not survive outside of the womb and if the

fetus died during the pregnancy then she could be poisoned; she had to travel to England to get an abortion as in Northern Ireland the laws would require that the pregnancy continue until her life was truly at risk (appendix 22). The narrative of Sarah Ewart is drawn on as a testimony of the injustice women whose babies are diagnosed with a fatal fetal abnormality experience. However, it quickly becomes a generalization of the ideal woman who deserves to access an abortion.

In terms of prognosis, the solution is to pass the proposed amendments to the abortion law in Northern Ireland. Instead of adding to women's tragedy, society should provide them with access to abortion since it is needed healthcare (appendix 22).

5.2.3 Abortion is protection of women

Abortion is also framed as a matter of protecting women from pain and death. Grainne Teggart, a campaigner for Amnesty International, states: "Abortions not being lawful doesn't mean that women and girls don't have abortions (...). It means that they either resort to desperate, sometimes dangerous, measures or they seek those services elsewhere at great financial and emotional expense" (appendix 27). Goreti Horgan, a pro-choice campaigner, states that since it is often women who have sought medical advice that are prosecuted, it will serve to "put women off seeking medical help and [we] have to hope that it will not lead to someone dying because they are afraid to go to hospital" (appendix 25). Thus, the diagnosis is that the criminalization of abortion in Northern Ireland can lead to women taking desperate, dangerous measures and potentially end in death. This clearly reflects that understanding of pragmatic consequence where the repercussion of criminalization is that it forces women into obtaining it in ways that can constitute a risk to their health. Here, it is the physical risk to women's health which is problematized.

Sarah Ewart presents her own experience with abortion. In her narrative, she states that her decision to abort her child was not a decision taken lightly as she wanted the baby (appendix 32). She presents it as a tough decision. Additionally, she states: "I've been told I've a higher chance of it happening again. I hope and pray it will never happen again. But none of us are guaranteed that, and we need that protection here" (appendix 32). She wants protection for herself and those women who become pregnant with a child that has a fatal defect. In accordance with the three ways that narratives facilitate understanding theorized by Young

(1997), Sarah Ewart's telling of her story presents specific experiences which could enable people who have not experienced having to abort a child due to a fatal defect to understand the importance of a change in the abortion law or sympathize with her situation. She is able through the narrative to present her experience, in terms of what she has encountered and feel is a problem, as well as what she needs to have happen for it to be rectified.

The prognosis is that the abortion law must be changed. Sarah Ewart specifically urges politicians to provide women with the needed medical procedures in the hospitals that they live (appendix 33). This prognosis is the same as that of the previous frame.

5.2.4 Abortion is a woman's choice

Clare Bailey, a MLA for the Green Party, sets forth the frame that abortion should be entrusted to women – they should be able to decide whether to have one or not. She presents her own narrative as a woman in Northern Ireland. She states that in Northern Ireland, one quarter of the population is likely to be raped or abused, she adds: "If I am one of those women who are raped or abused, Assembly statistics have shown me that I am highly unlikely to see my abuser in a court of law facing criminal prosecution. The odds of me becoming pregnant as a result of sexual crime are greater" (appendix 34). Thereby, her narrative presents the predicament she will be in if she experiences a sexual crime.

The diagnosis is that since abortion is criminalized, women cannot decide what is in their best interest even though the decision does not affect anyone else. Women are not trusted to make their own decision on abortion. Clare Bailey asserts that MLAs should trust her to decide what is best for her as "[w]e are both aware that whatever my decision might be under these conditions, it will have no impact at all on your quality of life" (appendix 34). Mike Nesbitt, MLA for the Ulster Unionist Party, presents a similar notion: "I am not comfortable standing here as a man discussing what a woman should do with her body" (appendix 3). He will not decide what a woman should do with her body (appendix 3). The frame is gendered in that it is a decision women must make since it is their bodies; it resembles the feminist understanding where abortion is the fundamental right of a woman to decide on her own body. Albeit, it is presented to be in limited cases on fatal fetal abnormality and rape or incest, but this could again be due to the context the frame exists within.

Additionally, it can be mentioned under this frame how the journalist McCann criticizes how the debate on abortion is conducted in terms that are insulting to women. McCann states that the idea of strong women asserting their right is foreign in the debate: “What is left out is the idea that when a woman finds herself with an unwanted pregnancy and considers the implications for herself and consults her own conscience, then it is she who must decide what to do. To say otherwise is simply to say that women can’t be trusted” (appendix 35). Thereby, this again presents that abortion should be a matter for the woman to decide or else society must view them as unable to be trusted.

The prognosis is ultimately for MLAs to adopt the proposed amendments on abortion and let women decide on the matter in the limited circumstances allowed by the law. By doing this, the assembly will stop endorsing forced pregnancy laws (appendix 34).

5.2.5 Abortion is a class issue

Abortion is also presented as a class issue. The diagnosis is that poor women who cannot afford to travel are impelled to take illegal abortion pills risking criminal charges or forced to continue the pregnancy. These women are forced by circumstance to become criminals. A spokesperson for Alliance for Choice states: “This is a clear class issue; only those without the money to travel are going to risk causing an illegal abortion (...)” (appendix 25). Similarly, women from Northern Ireland have to pay a lot of money for abortion in Great Britain which is free for other women in the country (appendix 22). This issue has also been brought up by a mother and her teenager who are fighting for women in Northern Ireland to receive free abortions through the National Health Service in England (appendix 24). Thus, it is stated that “the poorest and most vulnerable of women” must continue with the pregnancy (appendix 3).

By presenting the problem on abortion to be a class issue that affect poor women the most as they cannot afford the travel cost nor the cost of the procedure, it reflects the understanding of social justice. Social justice finds that abortion affect the poor more than others. The only way to solve this issue is by ending the criminalization of abortion in Northern Ireland. The prognosis is to make abortion and abortion pills legal so women will not be forced into being criminals or into remaining pregnant (appendix 25). The issue is gendered since it is regarded as a class issue among women.

5.2.6 Abortion is matter of balance

Lastly, abortion is framed as a matter of balance. The diagnosis is that abortion is complex because it concerns two persons and by prioritizing one then the other becomes of lower importance. The reader Hugh Gildea questions what happens if the mother's life is in danger due to the pregnancy – whether she just becomes collateral damage and her rights subservient (appendix 30). This is cleared up by another reader Martin D. Stern who states that one consideration is that the mother is alive whereas the unborn child is only a potential life (appendix 31). This he argues can make an abortion acceptable in some limited cases (appendix 31). This reflects the understanding of balancing where it is a matter of finding a middle ground between the rights of the mother and those of the fetus. The frame is gendered and I have included it as in favor of amending the legislation since it views abortion as agreeable in some circumstances which could be fatal fetal abnormality and rape or incest. The prognosis is difficult to identify other than there must be found a balance on when abortion is acceptable and when it is not.

5.2.7 Sum-up

Frame	Understanding of abortion	Gender dimension	Actors
<i>Abortion is a woman's fundamental right</i>	Feminist	Gendered	Les Allamby Patrick Corrigan Mr. Justice Horner Colm O'Gorman Martin D. Stern
<i>Abortion is a healthcare issue</i>	Pragmatic consequences (mental health risks)	Gendered	Stewart Dickson Steven Agnew Sarah Ewart Patrick Corrigan
<i>Abortion is protection of women</i>	Pragmatic consequences (physical health risks)	Gendered	Goreti Horgan Trevor Lunn Sarah Ewart Grainne Teggart
<i>Abortion is a woman's choice</i>	Feminist	Gendered	Catriona Ruane Mike Nesbitt Clare Bailey
<i>Abortion is a class issue</i>	Social justice	Gendered	Spokesperson for Alliance for Choice Steven Agnew Stewart Dickson

<i>Abortion is a matter of balance</i>	Balancing	Gendered	Hugh Gildea Martin D. Stern
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Table 7. Overview of frames in favor of amendments

5.3 Excluded voices and consequences

This section will reflect on the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The previous two sections identified the actors who have a voice as well as the frames presented in the three newspapers. Several different actors representing different perspectives are included. The actors can be seen to represent five different perspectives: political, legal, civil society, religious and citizen. This makes it evident that the medical perspective is not included in the debate on abortion as no medical professionals voice their opinion on abortion.

5.3.1 Medical perspective

Medical professionals do not have a voice in the three Northern Irish newspapers, but they are provided a voice in the Guardian. The Guardian published a news article⁵⁵ during the same period of the debate where different medical professionals in Northern Ireland present their opinion on abortion. In this news article, medical professionals state that they are afraid to assist women in any way on the matter of abortion, including offering advice, providing information on British abortion clinics or carrying out legal abortions (Gentleman, January 2016). They are afraid that by providing these services then they might be breaking the law and could be prosecuted. As a member of the Northern Ireland committee of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists states: “There is a real sense of fear, and concern that one of us could end up in prison” (Gentleman, January 2016, para. 3). They see this as the main problem as it makes them refrain from providing healthcare services that the women might need.

⁵⁵ Gentleman, Amelia. (2016, January 5). Northern Ireland medics fear prison over abortion advice. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/05/northern-ireland-medics-fear-prison-abortion-advice>

The exclusion of medical professionals in the debate on abortion mean that they cannot present their experiences in regard to abortion. In the Guardian, medical professionals set forth their narratives in the news article. The director for Northern Ireland at the Royal College of Midwives tells about her experience of being suspected of wrongdoing when she was brought in to be questioned by the police. She was interviewed for four hours after telling a newspaper that she had been present at terminations where she was confused as to the legality of the cases (Gentleman, January 2016). The fear of wrongdoing remains with her as she states: “Unless the doctor makes a written declaration to say that in my opinion this procedure meets the requirements of the law in Northern Ireland, midwives [can] live with the fear that something that has happened in the past may come back and haunt them” (Gentleman, January 2016, para. 23). The exclusion of medical professionals and their narratives means that they do not have the possibility to influence the debate on abortion.

A reason as to why this perspective is excluded from the debate in Northern Ireland could be because none of the frames identified in the three newspapers contain the medical understanding on abortion. According to Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986), the medical understanding on abortion believes it should be left up to medical professionals to decide when an abortion should be carried out. The only frame that comes close to this idea is that of abortion based on faulty medical notions. The prognosis of this frame is to let clinicians and legal experts devise how best to deal with fatal fetal abnormality. However, the frame does not want medical professionals to freely decide on individual cases, as it believes that they will base this on subjective notions on when a life is worth living. Thus, the lack of a frame that presents abortion as a matter that medical professionals should decide over, could mean that their opinion and perspective is seen as unnecessary to include in the debate.

5.3.2 Narratives by other women

Both Sarah Ewart and Clare Bailey present narratives in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland. However, Sarah Ewart is the only woman who has had an abortion and presents her experience in the selected newspapers. This narrative facilitates the three kinds of understandings that Young (1997) sets forth: it presents the specific experience of Sarah Ewart as a Northern Irish woman who has had on abortion, it divulges the meaning that for her abortion is healthcare and protection of women and lastly, she sets forth that those refusing

to change the abortion law are causing women like her further pain. Sarah Ewart gets to present her suffering and it succeeds in facilitating understanding as other actors draw on it in their arguments.

Sarah Ewart's story fits perfectly into the debate in Northern Ireland as it is not too radical. She wanted the baby, but had to abort due to a fatal fetal abnormality which meant that her child would not possibly survive after birth. Furthermore, she could end up being poisoned and her life would then be in danger. If this happened, then she could have acquired a legal abortion in Northern Ireland (that is if she could find a doctor willing to carry out the procedure). Therefore, her story is a acceptable scenario of when abortion could be necessary without it causing a massive outcry in a religious society with a strict abortion law such as Northern Ireland. This is both due to her wanting the child, but also because her situation does not deviate too much from the current legislation – she could potentially have acquired a legal abortion later in her pregnancy.

As Sarah Ewart's narrative is the only one provided by a woman who have had an abortion and it is continuously drawn on as an example by other actors, it ends up becoming a stereotype. The Guardian published both a news article⁶ and two small video clips⁷ where other Northern Irish women tell their stories of abortion. The news article and video clips were published in the same period as the debate on abortion in the province. These women's narratives make it evident that Sarah Ewart's story is specific to her and may be representative for some Northern Irish women, but not all women who have had need of an abortion.

⁶ Fishwick, Carmen. (2016, January 5). Illegal pills and trauma: how Northern Ireland's abortion ban affects women. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/05/abortion-in-northern-ireland-women-share-their-experiences>

⁷ Video clip 1: Kaye, Lucy; Carson, Mary; Susman, Dan & Tait, Michael. (2016, January 5). 'If abortion were legal in Northern Ireland, women wouldn't have to suffer' [video clip]. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/video/2016/jan/05/abortion-legal-northern-ireland-women-suffer-video> & video clip 2: Carson, Mary; Slaney, Rowan; Swaby, Jonross; Tait, Michael; Brown, Eamonn & Fishwick, Carmen. (2016, January 6). Abortion in Northern Ireland: 'Why don't we trust women to make the right choice?' [video clip]. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2016/jan/06/abortion-in-northern-ireland-why-dont-we-trust-women-to-make-the-right-choice-video>

Many of the narratives describe other experiences. Some women state that their pregnancy was both unplanned and unwanted, with some of them being on the contraceptive pill when it happened. As one woman states: “It was quite a shock when I found out I was pregnant because I was on the pill (...) I was like why is this happening to me now it’s not part of my plan for my life to go through this” (Kaye et al., January 2016, 0:40). The reasoning behind them acquiring an abortion for many of them is because they do not want the baby. This is opposed to Sarah Ewart who wanted the baby, but had to abort due to circumstance.

Furthermore, many of these women resorted to buying abortion pills as they could not afford to travel. Clara states: “I had resigned myself to the fact that I would just have to carry on with the pregnancy as I wouldn’t have had the money to go to England (...) If I hadn’t been able to buy abortion pills online, I would be continuing a pregnancy that was severely affecting my mental health” (Fishwick, January 2016, para. 15). Similarly, Farah states that she also resorted to abortion pills since “[i]t felt like something was growing inside of me, that it was violating my body” (Fishwick, January 2016, para. 27). These women became criminals by buying abortion pills to procure an abortion which is illegal. Additionally, some of the women state that they also helped other women access these abortion pills. In one of the video clips, both of the women state this: “I acquired another one of the tablets. I put out on my Facebook if you’re going through a crisis pregnancy contact me here if you need any help (...)” (Kaye et al., January 2016, 4:03) and “I do help other women to access abortion pills and I think the only way this law is gonna change is by making it unworkable (...)” (Kaye et al., January 2016, 4:46). Thus, these women actively resist the current abortion law by continuously defying it.

This makes it apparent how the narrative by Sarah Ewart helps to shape the debate in Northern Ireland as to the expectations of what kind of women that aborts. In the frames, women are often presented as victims, vulnerable, traumatized and/or in need of protection. There is also an expectation by some that the pregnancy is planned and wanted. However, these other frames in the Guardian present other experiences that deviate quite a bit from these ideas as they aborted because of it being an unwanted pregnancy. This deviation could mean that the other women’s stories will have more difficulty in finding ground in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland, as they do not fit the norm. Young (2000) presents that individuals can experience internal exclusion, among others if their experiences are disregarded as too different from the general ones. If Sarah Ewart is assumed to represent the woman who must

have access to abortion, then it dismisses these other women's account as they deviate too much from her experience. Furthermore, these women will not be able to identify with what is being presented in the debate.

5.3.3 The gendered dimension

In section 5.1 and 5.2, the frames are addressed as to whether they can be regarded as gendered or degendered. I deemed the frame gendered if it contained a reference that related abortion to women. However, the frames did not overall have to present abortion as an issue for women. The frame could present abortion as discrimination of children, but if it positioned it against women's rights, I considered that it acknowledged the role of women in the issue since it addressed it as women's rights and not just human rights in general. Albeit, it did not present the problematization with women at the center of the issue.

I found that all frames in favor of amending the abortion law, presented the issue as gendered whereas quite a few of the frames against amending the law did not present it as relating to women. This could be because some of these frames were process frames. According to the theoretical framework section 4.2.1, abortion is an issue where it is often neglected that it pertains to women and their reproduction. Mottier (2013) presents that it is often taken for granted how it is women who become pregnant and give birth to children. Likewise, Stetson (2001) has stated that abortion is often not framed in relation to women. This is the case in some of the frames such as the most prevalent one against abortion, which is the frame of 'abortion renders some life more valuable.' In this frame, the focus is completely on the fetus and how abortion wrongly make some life less valuable. Additionally, the frame of 'abortion is not just a woman's issue' is trying to degender the issue by arguing that it does not only affect women, but everyone involved. This tries to downplay that it is women who are the ones pregnant and directly affected by the lack of access to abortion. Nevertheless, the majority of the frames still present abortion as an issue pertaining to women's rights and their bodies.

Many of the frames correspond to those understandings of the issue presented by Lovenduski and Outshoorn (1986) and Ferree et al. (2002). Mainly, the moral understanding on abortion is reflected in many of the frames against amending the law and the feminist one can be found in a few of the frames in favor of amendments. I did not identify the understanding of 'individual and state' nor the one on 'effects on society.' However, since abortion has been

something the province has been involved in since the 19th century, then it is perhaps not surprising that it is not framed as an intervention by the state into the individual's private life. The one on 'effects on society' concerning compromise was not identified, but since abortion is an issue that often strongly divides people into pro-life or pro-choice, it is perhaps not surprising that nobody wants to compromise specifically in a religious society as Northern Ireland.

Lastly, Stetson (2001) and Mottier (2013) explain that arguments on abortion are often intertwined with notions on womanhood or women in their roles as women. This is reflected in some frames such as in the frame of 'abortion is selfish' which presents an idea on motherhood that mothers should be selfless when it comes to their children. Likewise, there is a certain expectation that women are excited to become mothers and has the support from their partner and family. These generalizations of women exclude those who do not fit into these expectations of women as mothers. Furthermore, women are often presented as victims or otherwise vulnerable, traumatized et cetera. This position women as weak who must be helped and it is criticized by one of the journalists (see appendix 35).

5.3.4 Consequences

In regard to Young's (1997 & 2000) theorization on communicative democracy, the exclusion of some actors in the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland presents some problematics. Medical professionals and different experiences from women who have had an abortion are excluded in the debate. Young (2000) states that the legitimacy of outcomes is increased if all those affected by the issue are included in the process, so they have the possibility to influence the outcome. Thereby, the findings that medical professionals and different experiences from women on abortion are excluded, questions the level of legitimacy of the outcome of the debate, especially as these are two groups that are very much affected by the abortion law. The medical professionals have to carry out abortions while navigating the legal landscape and women are affected by the level of access to abortion. Nevertheless, they have not been able to provide their opinions on the issue.

According to Young (1997), a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles and ways of expressing social situations are important in order to solve problems. It has already been addressed in the above paragraph the perspectives that have been excluded. In regard to speech, it is also

presented to privilege or exclude people from a discussion, due to societies preferring dispassionate and disembodied arguments (Young, 1997). Many of the frames can be found to have an emotional tone. In terms of metaphors and simile, there have not been many as often it is not figuratively speaking when an actor state that abortion is murder or that abortion is a commercial business, they believe that this is the case. However, the choice of words is still very colorful in their presentation of the issue. They are very literal in their presentation on abortion. However, the tone is often more emotional because people are trying to gain sympathy on behalf of the fetus or the women. The only one that specifically present a rational argument is in the frame of 'abortion is discrimination of children' as it sets forth more of a legal argument based on provisions from human rights documents. Thus, the type of speech cannot be identified in this study as serving to exclude some participating in the debate.

The narrative of Sarah Ewart becomes a stereotype which is not what Young (2000) intended it as. However, the reason for this is due to her being the only narrative that is presented of a woman that has had an abortion. If there were more narratives from other women who have had an abortion presented in the three newspapers, then the narrative would probably not end up as a stereotype. Therefore, the problem is not necessarily due to the element of narrative, but probably more a matter of needing more narratives to present a more nuanced view of women's experiences and to stop potential stereotyping. Nevertheless, this is not the only time in the debate where a narrative becomes problematic. The one by Jamie presents a manipulative use of the element. As previously mentioned, his is a fictive narrative presenting ideas on what he presumes must be the experiences of his unborn brother and others with fatal fetal abnormality. Thus, the examination of the debate on abortion in Northern Ireland has found identified some issues on this element, in terms of stereotyping and generalizations.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland as it took place in mainstream media represented by three Northern Irish newspapers. The debate in the study seen to commence after the High Court judge ruled on the 15th of December 2015 that the current abortion law was incompatible with human rights. The end date of the debate was set to the 10th of February 2016 where the Northern Ireland Assembly voted on amendments to the abortion law which potentially could have made it in line with the High Court ruling. The Northern Ireland Assembly defeated the amendments and the public debate on abortion continued; however, the end date was set in correlation with this event to limit the scope of the study.

The debate on abortion was explored in terms of inclusion specifically to see which voices and frames were included and which were potentially excluded. The notion of inclusion was determined to be of relevance as previous studies (see e.g. Smyth 2006; Thomson 2016, Fegan & Rebouche 2003) on Northern Ireland found that the anti-abortion understanding was prevalent in political institutions, and furthermore that a common culture of pro-life has served to make it difficult for some people to voice opinions that differed. Despite mainstream media being a forum where ideally everyone should be able to present their opinions, Ferree et al.'s (2002) study on abortion illustrated how some actors dominate in the debate on abortion, serving to exclude others. This made it relevant to examine the public debate on abortion regarding inclusion and exclusion in Northern Ireland, since, based on research, it was assumed plausible that the debate might exclude certain viewpoints and actors that did not share the anti-abortion or pro-life understanding.

The study on the Northern Ireland debate found that various types of actors were included: political, legal, religious and civil society. Citizens were given the opportunity to have a voice through the segments 'letters to the editor' and 'opinion letters'. Yet, it became apparent that

medical professionals were excluded in the debate in the three selected newspapers. This was not because they did not state their opinions to the media; on the contrary, they did so e.g. in an article published by the Guardian during the same time as the debate on abortion in the province. Instead, it appears in this study that the lack of a frame presenting the medical understanding on abortion could have caused the exclusion. A medical understanding would make the medical practitioners the decision-makers on whether it is justified and/or necessary to abort a child. However, there were no frames who presented such an understanding making the medical professionals opinion on the issue irrelevant.

Different narratives are present in the debate on abortion in the selected newspapers. However, most of these narratives present some problematics in terms of inclusion. Sarah Ewart is the only woman who has had an abortion that presents her narrative on the experience. The narrative is successful in facilitating understanding since it is continuously drawn on by other actors. Yet, her story constitutes a problem in the debate as she becomes a stereotype of the woman who needs an abortion. This could serve as an internal exclusion, since it presents certain assumptions about abortion which do not reflect the reality of all Northern Irish women who want an abortion. Thus, other women's claims could be taken less serious or disregarded as too deviant from the assumed norm. This appears to be the case in the Northern Ireland debate as the Guardian published an article and two video clips where various Northern Irish women provided narratives of their experiences on abortion. Many of these stories were very different from that of Sarah Ewart since they did not want the child and this, for many, were the reason for the abortion.

Thereby, the idea that narratives facilitate understandings are shown in this study to be true, yet it also presents a potential problem if the number of different narratives is not sufficient – because then it can construct stereotypes. Narratives can also be used to manipulate, whether intended or not, as shown by Jamie who assumes the experiences of his unborn brother. This narrative is fictive and instead provides generalizations on the experiences of a fetus; however, it still ends up facilitating understandings in the same way as other authentic narratives, such as Sarah Ewart. This poses an issue on Young's theorization of narrative.

The frames identified through this study is varied with both pro-life and pro-choice notions represented. Thereby, the pro-life notions do not serve to exclude that of pro-choice. Mostly, the debate can be divided into two understandings: moral on the side against amendments

and somewhat feminist on the side in favor of amendments. The rhetoric in the frames is mostly presented through *tone* as metaphors and similes are not prevalent in the arguments: most actors included in this study mean what they say literally, including that abortion is a commercial industry or that it is murder. Instead, the tone is often emotional in trying to invoke sympathy for either the fetus or the woman. Furthermore, some of the frames can be found to exclude the gender dimension of abortion, where the fact that it is women who need abortions remain unmentioned. These are found on the side *against* amending the abortion law.

6.1 Implications of inclusion/exclusion in the debate

The analysis of voices and frames in the public debate on abortion in Northern Ireland shows what implications it can have when some actors are excluded from voicing their opinion. The exclusion of medical professionals results in the fact that their perspective is neglected on abortion, albeit it being them who must carry out abortions within the legal basis. Yet, they have no say on the issue in the public debate in Northern Ireland. Additionally, it becomes problematic when there is only one narrative included from a woman who has been directly affected by the abortion law. This sole representation serves to set forth stereotypes on the women who want an abortion which could delegitimize other women's experiences. Women who provide experiences that do not fit into the stereotype could be regarded as deviant. However, it could also mean that other women will not be able to identify with the debate.

This study has found that the media are not inclusive of everybody as it is often believed to be and which has also been concluded previously by Ferree et al.'s (2002) study. The exclusion of some actors and the inclusion of others can be seen to *shape* and *manipulate* the debate toward specific action. The consequence is that a decision can be made on a wrong basis as not everyone has had a chance to set forth their perspective and opinions on the issue in the public debate. Thereby, they have not had the chance to influence the outcome on the issue. According to Young (1997 & 2000), the legitimacy of a decision increases if the discussion prior to it can be deemed inclusive of the actors and social groups affected by the decision. In this study, however, the debate can be found to both exclude medical professionals and women's

different experiences on abortion which constitute the actors mostly affected by the decision. Thus, this would mean that subsequent action would lack real legitimacy.

6.2 Further research on abortion

Abortion is heavily researched in feminist and other studies. While the conclusions of this study support prior findings, more research is needed on how public debate on abortion can be shaped through narratives to see if similar problematics occur of manipulative uses and stereotyping in other countries' contexts.

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Appendix Overview

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