

**THE POLITICS OF ANTI-GENDER CAMPAIGNS:
AN ANALYSIS OF CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES IN PERU REGARDING THE
EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM REFORM**

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Abstract

Through the lens of analyses of populist mobilizations informed by political sociology, this study offers a new perspective on tactics used by anti-gender campaigns. Specifically examining the Education Curriculum and the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género [Gender Equality Approach] in congressional debates in Peru in 2018 and 2019, this study uses a qualitative content analysis to identify central themes. The themes reveal tactics that sabotage feminist gains in educational reforms, spearheaded by Christian political actors. The argument is thus that Christian political actors use tactics such as coopting feminist concepts such as “gender” and re-framing it as “gender ideology”. This is an example of using “emotional epistemic loops” of information to achieve political goals, in this case advancing patriarchal Christian values and undermining feminist and gender equality gains.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Preamble

In 2017, a Peruvian collective of parents called “Padres en Acción” [Parents in Action] presented a demand in the form of *popular action* against the Ministry of Education’s resolution that approved the publication of the National Curriculum of Education. Under Peruvian law, a *popular action* is a constitutional process that aims to “guarantee the jurisdictional control of the constitutionality and legality of regulations and administrative rules” (Landa, 2010, p. 510). In other words, it is a process to verify that all government resolutions of administrative importance abide by the constitution. Among a few other allegations, “Padres en Acción” claimed that the curriculum was unconstitutional because there had been no participation of parents in the creation of the document, and most importantly, because it included a new questionable guideline called “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” [Gender Equality Approach].

“Padres en Acción” emphasised that the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” introduced the concept of “Identidad de Género” [Gender Identity], which they claimed was an “inexact and unscientific” idea of the human being because it implied that the sex of a person was not uniquely related to biology, and that this could turn into more than “two sexual manifestations” (Pacheco vs. Ministerio de Educación, 2017). However, when reading the curriculum section for the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género”, it becomes unclear where these inferences come from:

All people have the same potential to learn and develop fully. Gender Equality refers to the equal assessment of different behaviors, aspirations and needs of *women and men*.

[emphasis added]. In a situation of equality, the rights duties and opportunities of people

do not depend on their *gender identity* [emphasis added] and, therefore, everyone has the same conditions and possibilities to exercise their rights (...). Even though the things that we consider “feminine”, or “masculine” are based on a biological-sexual difference, these are notions that we construct day to day in our interactions. From the moment we are born, and throughout our lives, society constantly informs us of the attitudes and roles that are expected from us as men and women. Some of these assigned roles, however, translate as inequalities that affect the rights of people when, for example, the household duties are primarily associated with women, and become a reason for female students to leave school (Ministerio de Educacion, 2016, p. 23).

Even though the Curriculum refers to Gender Equality as a way to reduce social inequalities between men and women, the criticism remained strong and with popular support. In March of 2017, another collective of parents called “Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas” [Do not mess with my children] organized a national demonstration against the curriculum, where congresspeople of different parties participated and spoke to the public. In a news report of the protest, a young man called Christian Rosas, the spokesperson of the collective who appeared in many TV interviews at the time, claimed that the notion of difference between sex and gender “induces children to gender dysphoria, which is a mental disorder”, and that the idea of gender identity “promotes a pathology” (Cuarto Poder, 2017). In that same news report, when asked about the consequences for the government if the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” is not removed from the curriculum, Rosas says that “interpellations, motions of censure and a presidential vacancy” are on the table (Cuarto Poder, 2017). These words may have seemed like far-fetching threats if they came from any type of organizer, yet Christian Rosas was the son of

Christian priest and congressman Julio Rosas, who belonged to the major opposition party at the time, “Fuerza Popular”. This brought to light the involvement of Christian organizations in the fight against the curriculum, but also the close relationship that these organizers had with political power in congress.

1.2. Political Context

The political context surrounding the curriculum controversy plays an important role in the analysis of this case and gives us a different perspective on what is happening in Peru. In 2016, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski had just been elected president in the runoff by a tight margin (46.8% vs. 46.6%) against Keiko Fujimori, leader of “Fuerza Popular”, an organization that supported the cause against the curriculum. Peru is a presidential republic where power is divided in three branches: the executive through the president and the ministers, the legislative through a unitary congress, and the judicial through the Supreme Court and other systems of justice. Citizens elect their president and congresspeople by popular vote, and the 2016 elections placed the new government in a critical position.

Despite losing the presidency, Fujimori was able to seat 73 out of 130 congresspeople, a huge majority against the 18 seats for Kuczynski’s party. The rest of seats were completed by 4 other different parties. The advantage of a congress majority was essential for Fujimori’s opposition in the years that followed. At the end of the first year in power, the congress interpellated 3 different ministers leading to the censorship and resignation of two of them (RPP, 2017). This would be the prelude of a series of interpellations to many ministers of education, especially due to the criticism of the new curriculum. The opposition was very interested in taking over any executive mishap, and despite the resignations and separations among parties (RPP, 2017), the curriculum controversy was able to bring together those political factions.

Perhaps it was inevitable that under those circumstances and with the congresspeople's apparent stance on education and religion, any changes to the curriculum would be challenged both as a social matter by mobilizing public support, and as a political one by conditioning the stability of the executive branch to the use of the "Enfoque de Igualdad de Género" in the curriculum. This study finds necessary an analysis of the nature of the politics that influenced congress to oppose so fervently to the use of the "Enfoque de Igualdad de Género" in the curriculum, even when the lawsuit presented by "Padres En Acción" was finally declared unfounded by the Peruvian Supreme Court (Poder Judicial del Peru, 2019).

In 2018 and 2019 the congress held debates and sessions regarding the new education curriculum where the contents of congresspeople's speech in those events tell a story of a more complex campaign that focuses on a concept identified as "gender ideology". Opponents of the "Enfoque de Igualdad de Género" in the curriculum accused the government of trying to introduce "gender ideology" through this change in the curriculum which they claim is harmful for children and families. At an international scale, there have been multiple instances where organizations have also campaigned against "gender ideology" using it as a beacon to gain popular support and influence change in public policy. Usually, the public policy they oppose is related to women's rights, including access to abortion, sex same marriage, adoption, and overall educational reforms that deal with equality and discrimination (Aguilar, 2013; Zuk & Zuk, 2019; Carnac, 2020).

1.3. Research Question

This thesis explores the clash between Christian-informed politics and Feminist politics in the context of gender equality in social and educational policies. Through a political sociology perspective, I use the case of the anti-gender campaigns in Peruvian congress as an example of

this clash given that the campaign not only has characteristics of a populist mobilization consistent with global patterns, but also responds to cultural and social changes informed by feminist theory such as women's rights, same sex marriage, access to abortion, etc.

Through the analysis of the contents of two congress debates regarding the educational curriculum, this thesis proposes to investigate first the central themes that create conflict between Christian and Feminist politics and motivate the political involvement of anti-gender campaigners in Peruvian congress. Subsequently, and given that this debate happens in the context of changes in educational policies, this study also investigates the goals of this socio-political fight.

This thesis takes an inductive approach because while conducting research, I was able to expand my interest for anti-gender campaigns from a smaller analysis on their discourse to a more complex phenomenon that required a framework of political sociology to understand its significance. Therefore, this thesis will first focus on identifying and defining anti-gender campaigns at a local and international level, and subsequently situating its role as a force of resistance to major contemporary social and cultural shifts. This thesis takes a narrative style in order to convey the process that characterizes the anti-gender campaigns in Peru. A narrative style contributes to emphasizing the timeline of events in the political actions of anti-gender campaigns, which demonstrates how this phenomenon becomes relevant over time in Peruvian politics.

1.4. Thesis Overview

This chapter, the Introduction, presents the research problem and question, with the general context of this thesis. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, is divided into two parts. First, it outlines the feminist politics that have influenced the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the

curriculum of education and policy changes. This includes the influence of mainstreaming of feminisms, as well as the historical and current concerns influencing gender reforms and the opposition they have encountered from Christian political actors. The second part deals with the Christian politics that have served as foundation for the existence and proliferation of anti-gender gender campaigns in the western world. This includes an account of what constitutes Christian politics, the creation of the “gender ideology” as an enemy of Christian values, a review of anti-gender campaigns in Europe, and their involvement in state reforms and their function an opposing movement. Through this review, the conflict between these forms of politics will be clearer and it will inform the identification of central themes in the data from the congress sessions.

Chapter 3, Theoretical Framework, outlines political sociology as the field of study for this thesis, as it deals with a broad understanding of cultural politics in contestation and transformation of social identities and structures (Nash, 2010). Under this umbrella, this thesis uses populist mobilization theory, including a review of its populist tactics to analyze the content of the central themes that emerge from the data of the congress sessions. Populist mobilization theory will allow to identify the “dog-whistle” strategies against feminist politics embedded in the anti-gender narratives of the congress sessions, and in addition, to identify how this clash challenges political power by using a conflictual social issue.

Chapter 4, Methodology, presents the main and secondary research question, as well as an outline of the qualitative content analysis method in order to identify the central themes of the conflict and possible goals of the socio-political fight. This section also includes the process of drawing data from two different sessions of Peruvian congress. Both sessions were transcribed directly in the original language (Spanish) and later translated to be included in this study. In

addition, this chapter presents a description of the process of organization and analysis of the data, using the software NVivo and coding frames. To finalize the chapter, the study evaluates the ethical considerations of this project.

Chapter 5, Presentation of Data, includes a description of the curriculum of education as an instrumental part of the conflict, and it outlines the contents of both congress sessions that are used in the study, including topics of discussion, questions and other important details.

Chapter 6, Analysis and Discussion, presents a thematical analysis of the data collected. Each of these themes use the established theoretical framework to dissect the discussions in the congress sessions. The discussion section focuses on answering the research questions based on all the information analyzed before.

And lastly, chapter 7, Conclusion, offers a perspective on the relevancy of this study for the field of political sociology. In addition, it also discusses some of the existing limitations, while making emphasis on the things to be considered for future research about gender and anti-gender campaigns.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Feminist Politics

2.1.1. *Feminisms in the Mainstream*

The discussion surrounding the curriculum of education in Peru and its intent to introduce a gender perspective in educational practices is the direct result of the work of feminist activists and scholars. Addressing gender inequality, reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, and other issues have been important challenges that feminist-oriented politics have been working towards at and international and local level, and in countries like Peru, they have become the slighting rods for status quo politics.

According to Estelle B. Freedman (2002) in her book “No Turning Back,” feminism is defined as “a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. [And that] because most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies” (Freedman, 2002, p. 7). This definition touches upon some critical elements for this study. First, Freedman (2002) uses “equal worth,” acknowledging the social inequalities among people based on gender identity. This highlights *gender* as a factor for unequal treatment in society that concerns feminism.

Second, Freeman frames the definition in terms of the power relationships between “women and men” (Freedman, 2002, p. 7), which defies the argument of anti-gender campaigners that claims that “gender ideology” as an idea that negates the existence of women and men. And while feminism as a discipline has many dimensions, and more recently includes intersectional analyses, second wave feminisms explored the distinctions between male and female on the bases of sex (Nicholson, 1994). Gender differences were considered a character

distinction in second wave feminism, without replacing *sex* as a biological marker (Nicholson, 1994). Current feminisms are not restrained to fixed meanings assigned to sex and gender and intersectional perspectives are taken into consideration in how those meanings are shaped by different life experiences and modes of oppression.

When it comes to anti-gender campaigns and the crafting of “gender ideology”, feminism is signaled as the root cause for its existence. The mainstreaming of feminist thought was an important factor for conflict by Christian activism as it perceived it as threatening to its own ideologies. Feminist mainstreaming shifts its gears from trying to make sure women were part of development to integrate them in “systemic procedures and mechanisms ... of government and public institutions” (Baden & Goetz, 1997, p. 5). The bigger presence of feminism in politics in the form of state reforms opens a door for a different evaluation of how women’s rights and gender issues can be treated in the future. These types of changes are seen as challenges to *status quo* politics, that, in countries like Peru, where feminist politics have been contentious in government. Therefore, including gender perspectives on educational policy is perceived as a ground-breaking act that defies conventions and ensure more equal rights.

2.1.2. Historical Gender Concerns in Peru

The relationship between South American countries and Europe is not only about the history of colonization, but the close cultural ties to religious beliefs and rituals. Part of the colonization process included the turn to Catholicism as the dominant faith and dictator of moral values. As pointed out by Maruja Barrig (2017), in Peru, beginning in Lima, the higher classes relied entirely on Christian education at home and sent their children to private schools when they became available (2017). Barrig explains that the first public secondary school for women opened in 1928, but it was only the upper-middle classes who could afford higher education

(Barrig, 2017). Therefore, Christianity has been an important part of the education of the values of affluent groups who have access to political and social power. Social interactions and everyday life are influenced by these worldviews, whether it comes from the state, from dominant social groups, or directly from the Church.

Given that upper-middle class women's role in society was based on the responsibility of the family due to their Christian socialization, work and political involvement was not considered an appropriate place for women. For instance, in 1931, when upper-class politicians prepared to vote for a new constituent assembly, upper-middle class women were denied the right to vote and remained excluded for the next 25 years (Barrig, 2017). The systems of governance had created specific power dynamics by designating gender roles and defining political actors, a fact that would continue to make it difficult for the inclusion of women in positions of power.

However, these obstacles did not deter feminist movements from existing in the country. Second wave feminism influenced Peruvian women to create organizations and to involve themselves in movements of class solidarity with miners and teachers, even when those did not support feminist agendas (Vargas, 2004). Although small and mostly urban middle-class, feminisms in Peru were able to cement the basis for social programs that would eventually be important in the whole country. For example, in the 1980's food programs were not a relevant issue for the state despite the increasing poverty conditions, but the push from feminist activism made it possible to legislate in favor of programs such as the "Vaso de Leche" ["Cup of Milk" in reference to communal breakfast services] and "Comedores Municipales" ["Municipal Canteens"] (Palomino, 2004).

By the 1990's women's rights' activism played an important role in the denouncement of the abuses and violence committed by terrorist groups and the military in the years of the armed conflict (Villanueva, 2004). The consequences of active participation from left-wing popular organizations lead to the murders of feminist leaders Emma Hilario, Maria Elena Moyano and Pascuala Rosado by the Shining Path (Villanueva, 2004). During those same years, in Alberto Fujimori's government new issues created more challenges for feminist activism. Fujimori's regime introduced a variety of contraception techniques available for public access, but also established forced sterilization campaigns in rural areas of the country (Rousseau, 2020). While feminist activists were against forced contraception, conservative groups were outraged at the availability of family planning options. There was a double intentionality that the government had when promoting reproductive rights. Contraceptive alternatives were available to people in the capital—hence to higher socio-economic classes—but these same alternatives were forced upon indigenous, poor, and uneducated women whose lack of awareness made it impossible for them to consent. There was a deep contradiction in the fact that the regime used contraception to please the urban areas but tried to reduce poverty numbers by controlling indigenous women's bodies (Ruiz Alvarado, 2019). All of this happened while Fujimori made political changes to keep himself in power and turn his government into a dictatorship.

The introduction of major changes in gender politics such as voting rights, divorce and access to contraception was also fueled and contextualized by political and religious strategies. The Catholic church understood that it had to compromise its individual morality for that of the societies they served (Barrig, 2017, p. 71). New Vatican reforms were reflected in ideological changes from Brazilian, Chilean and El Salvadorean churches, which began to support popular movements and political groups against far-right dictatorships (Wiarda, 2019). In addition, in

order to maintain loyal followers amid social change in Latin America, the church was more lenient when it came to divorce and contraceptives. Given that the moral compass of social interactions had been heavily influenced by the Church through education and dominant groups, the shift in the Catholic attitude is also a factor that contributed to the acceptance of feminist concerns in the ruling class. It does not mean that feminist activism had a free way in state political action, and certainly not in congress legislation (Palomino, 2004). However, it meant that topics of concern for feminist social organizations were no longer treated as taboo in a conservative society.

2.1.3. Confronting Christian Politics

The feminist historical concerns regarding gender issues in Peru has also been confronted by Christian political actors. As explained in the Christianity in Peru section of this chapter, the hegemonic nature of this religion has led to the over representation of politicians and authority figures in many government institutions. Following the case of forced sterilizations in Fujimori's government and the instrumentalization for women's bodies for political gain, the subsequent government of Alejandro Toledo had two Ministers of Health, Luis Solari and Fernando Carbone, who were members of the Sodalicio de Vida Cristiana [Sodalitium of Christian Life] and the Opus Dei. These two organizations are elite Catholic entities that include members of the Catholic church clergy as well as secular followers many of whom have had active political roles in the country. The first minister presented legislative measures to allow doctors refrain on their own judgement from performing abortions and sterilizations despite the law, and later he successfully declared a day to commemorate "unborn" children under law (Ewig, 2009). Interestingly, the second minister had also prohibited the use of the word "gender" in events or documents that pertained to the activities of the Ministry (Ewig, 2009), an indication of what was

to come in future years. Both ministers used the failures of Fujimori's sterilization campaigns *and* the rejection of feminist organizations to further the goals of elite Catholic organizations. In the official reports of the Peruvian ombudsman office, it was found that throughout the years the two ministers had been in charged, availability to contraception methods had been largely reduced, and in many instances the population was charged or denied originally free services for IUD's, oral contraceptives, and Plan B (Ewig, 2009). While the pushback from new feminist organizations succeeded in the lobby to the removal of Minister Carbone, the effects of Christian politics in government had already been extensive. The Ministry of Health had adopted a "pro-life" stance that frequently discourage family planning polices and reforms (Ewig, 2009).

In the case of evangelical churches and organizations, their work has concentrated more on same-sex marriage and gender identity reforms. They have rallied against municipal decrees to sanction discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, led by Christian Rosas who was in charge of the National Pro-Family Coordination (Tello, 2019). Rosas, mentioned in the *Introduction*, is the spokesperson of the group Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas. Furthermore, the influence of the American Christian Right on Peruvian evangelical leaders denotes that the goal of their political activism identifies women's reproductive rights as both symbolic and practical. The academic, religious, and political formation of current leaders, priests and spokespersons of Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas such as congressman Julia Rosas and son Christian Rosas, Guillermo Aguayo and wife Milagros Jauregui can be traced to Christian institutions such as Liberty University and the evangelical publishing house Nelson Group (Tello, 2019). This type of formation that fosters the use of religious values as part of the political agenda made it possible for American evangelical leaders to finance pro-life and pro-family rallies and political campaigns (Mujica, 2007).

Regarding women's rights, the Catholic and Evangelical churches found their politics to have common goals. For example, in the past few years they have worked together in presenting a unified voice via manifestos and declarations in 2014 and 2016 in response to regulations for abortion and the attempted same sex marriage bill, presenting a stance to "defend human life, the family and religious freedom" (Tello, 2019, p. 26). Even though the initiatives of women's reproductive and LGBT's rights have come in spurts and not necessarily backed by a strong feminist movement, Christian institutions have continuously reacted in opposition to any discussions that do not favor their agendas. Given that these institutions coordinate their political actions when the rights of women and LGBT groups are being discussed shows that their interests are rooted in the patriarchal ideology shared among Christian branches of belief. The way in which their responses also serve the political interests of the parties that back Christian politics in government institutions highlight the significant way in which their critiques *target* feminist advocacy for rights, including equality rights, when these issues become part of the public and political agenda in Peru.

2.1.4. Current Concerns Influencing the "Enfoque de Igualdad de Género"

One of the advocacy issues upon which feminist groups in Peru focus is that of violence against women and gender equality. Gender-based violence, for example, has become relevant enough to be an issue requiring special attention, not only because of how common it is, but because some of the normative ideas related to it have shifted. Increasingly incidents cause outrage and calls for justice from the public.

In 2015, Peru was shaken by the case of Arlette Contreras, a 25-year-old woman who was beaten in a hotel by her partner Adriano Pozo, son of the governor of the city of Huamanga in Ayacucho, where both Arlette and Adriano lived. The footage of the hotel security cameras

shows Arlette trying to escape from a drunk and naked Adriano moments after he tried to sexually abuse her and threatened to kill her if she left. Adriano dragged Arlette by the hair across the hotel lobby floor while a shocked receptionist struggled to help. Afterwards, municipal patrol guards appeared at the scene, but left soon after they dismissed the case as a couple's fight and described the beating as "minor injuries" (Barrig, 2017).

At the time, Arlette was studying law at university, so she decided to take her case to court in Ayacucho. Unfortunately, not only did Adriano hold the advantage of having a governor for a father, but also of being close friends with the president of the Superior Justice Court of the province. Just like the municipal patrol guards, the Court in Ayacucho only considered the "minor injuries" and sentenced Adriano to one year of preventive prison, rejecting any other accusation. Four years later, and after an intense battle with the legal system to take the lawsuit to a higher court, Arlette's case was finally resolved. The Superior Justice Court of Northern Lima sentenced Adriano Pozo to 11 years of jail for femicide attempt, but the judge did not apply the rape charges in Arlette's claim. The court argued that the evidence presented for the rape charges "could have been manipulated" and in addition, they said that Adriano did not have "psychosexual alterations" as psychological exams revealed (República, 2019).

The case of Arlette became one of the most visible motivations for a massive protest of women in the 2016 march *Ni Una Menos*. The mobilization brought to the streets more than 100,000 people to voice their disapproval of the State's inaction in the face of violence against women. In English, *Ni Una Menos* translates to "Not One Less," referring to the movements against femicide in Argentina. Here, *Ni Una Menos* protests started as a result of the alarming number of murders of young women at the hands of their partners. Despite what seemed like an overwhelming support for the cause in Peru, in the years after the first march, *Ni Una Menos*

could not gather as many people as the first time. Moreover, the reported cases of gender-based violence continued to increase in three of the most used emergency service systems of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

The first service is the “Women’s Emergency Centers” (CEM) that in 2016, the year of the *Ni Una Menos* protests, documented 70,510 people affected by domestic and sexual violence in Peru. In 2019, the total increased to 181,885. The second service is the “Line 100,” a 24-hour hot line specialized in giving support to people affected and involved in domestic and sexual violence. A number of 46,645 calls were made in 2016, and the leading causes were physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence. In 2019, the yearly registered number of calls was now 92,324, but this time, the ministry has not shown statistics on the causes. In the case of femicide, the numbers have been more revealing. In 2016, the reported number of femicides and femicide attempts was 124 and 258 respectively, and in 2019, the number was 166 and 404. The CEMs offer femicide statistics in the same reports, including the characteristics of the aggressors, who are mostly current and previous common-law partners, husbands, and boyfriends (Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, 2019).

It is important to note that femicide legislation was first incorporated to the Penal Code of Peru in December of 2011 by adding the “femicide” clause into the parricide code (Diaz et al., 2019). However, it is only in July of 2013 that femicide was given a specific and unique code, considering the crime as a manifestation of gender-based violence. Given that femicide is a novel term in the Peruvian legal system and social discourse, it is highly possible that the official statistics cannot show every single case of femicide and gender-based violence. The precedence of Arlette’s case shows that even when reported and taken to a court, the possibility of any form of justice or reparation is very low.

On the bright side, *Ni Una Menos* as a movement did spark online and mainstream media conversations. On the internet, more people used platforms to share their stories about various topics. Some of them were about sexual assault since childhood, medical violence when being treated by healthcare workers after miscarriages, and workplace harassment by bosses or colleagues. There seemed to be increasing awareness of the severity of the violence inflicted upon women. Even the mainstream media reported more and more cases, and today it is common to see cases of gender-based violence in the Peruvian mainstream news.

However, *Ni Una Menos* could not become a strong feminist movement in the long term. Since the movement organized itself online organically and was motivated by the results of the marches in Argentina, there was never a solid and visible leadership group. The temporary faces of the movement were survivors such as Arlette and others, as well as volunteers who put on work for the first march. In contrast, the Argentinian counterparts had more concrete victories, such as the law No. 27210 that provides free legal sponsorship for gender-based violence victims (Law 27210, 2015) and the “Unit for the Registration, Systematization and Monitoring of Femicides and Homicides Aggravated by Gender” (Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos, 2015). Despite its weak points, *Ni Una Menos* did have an impact in Peruvian politics because gender-based violence and machismo became issues that would be used in support of the *Enfoque de Igualdad de Género* in the curriculum of education. Overall, feminisms in Peru have made substantial gains that are reflected in reproductive rights and femicide legislation. The sole intention to have a gender-equality perspective in education shows that there are pressing matters that government officials identify as necessary for the development of the nation. And it should be logical that urgent social issues influence policy across a government administration.

However, there is a specific faction of political figures that mobilize opposition toward the gains of women's rights and equality reforms, and those are Christian-based politicians.

2.2. Christian Politics

2.2.1. Christianity and Peru

In order to understand the important role that Christian politicians play in the opposition to a gender perspective in educational policies, it is necessary to clarify what constitutes “Christian politics” in the context of feminist concerns for gender equality. Traditionally, many aspects of Peruvian culture are defined by Christian beliefs, specifically, those pertaining to the Roman Catholic church. Peruvian festivities, holidays and carnivals are a complex mixture of pre and post colonial traditions that fostered the hegemony of Christianity in the cultural DNA of Peruvian people. According to the most recent census in 2017, around 76% of the population identifies as Catholic, and 14.1% as Evangelical (INEI, 2017). While the number of Catholics has been decreasing in comparison to that of Evangelicals, the combination of these Christian beliefs makes up for around 90% of the population. However, the active political participation of Christian organization goes beyond the parentages of believers. Through a series of contemporary events such as the Islamic revolution, the liberation theology in Latin America and rise of the New Christian Right/Pentecostal Evangelism, religion became “public” in the sense that it was now a sign of social and community action in democratic societies (Casanova, 1994). Thus, “public religion” allows Christian organizations in Peru to actively participate in politics with the favor of a largely Christian population, which in turn strengthens the hegemony of Christianity and frames the issues surrounding the curriculum and the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género as contentious to the *status quo*.

Over the years, Christian politics in Peru have been able to contend with many issues that involve women and LGBTQ rights, and these have been exemplified in the involvement of two main branches of Christianity: The Catholic church, and Neo-Pentecostal evangelical churches. Before going over instances of active influence of these groups, it is important to note that Christian politics have a strong hegemonic power in the country given its extensive representativity in positions of authority in comparison with other political groups. During the armed conflict of the 1980's, religious groups played important social and political support roles that were recognized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Tello, 2019). This pushed the way for Christian individuals to actively pursue positions of power and in the 90's many joined Alberto Fujimori's party in the run for congress, particularly evangelical people. Ever since, all elected parliaments have had a Christian representative (Tello, 2019). The congresspeople who promoted changes in state reforms surrounding the "gender ideology" had actively supported the presence of religious congregations in congress. The same year of the protests against the curriculum, members of the opposition parties in congress held a Forum called "Importancia del Fortalecimiento de la Familia ante Amenazas del Sigo XXI" [The Importance of Strengthening the Family Against 21st Century Threats] where representatives of "Padres en Acción" and "Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas", such as Giuliana Calambrogio and Christian Rosas, respectively, were guest speakers (Congreso de la República del Peru, 2017). In this context, it is worth exploring the relationship between the social influence that Christianity has and how it translates into political action and representativity in congress.

Regarding Catholicism, Peruvians display an interesting contradiction in the way they identify and manifest their faith according to the Church's mandates. In addition to the decreasing number of Catholics in the country, the number of believers that go through the

sacraments of baptism, marriage and other have been in steady decline (Strotmann, 2006). Peruvians forego many of the sacraments that continue to be mandated by the church such as marriage. The number of common-law unions, instead of marriages encouraged by the Catholic Church, have been on the rise (Lecaros, 2015). In part, the decline of Catholic believers can be associated with the lack of offer and demand of churches and religious services such as masses, sacraments, and community activities. The Church in Peru never adjusted for the growth in population and the availability of places of worship remained in the central parts of the capital (Portocarrero et al., 2005). In turn, this led to less access and interest to fulfill all Catholic sacraments in the way the clergy suggests. However, this apparent decline does not seem to relate to the persistently high number of Peruvians who identify as Catholic. In South America, and in particular Peru, the concept of “*piedad popular*” [popular piety] has benefited the Church despite its complicated relationship with the phenomenon. Popular piety is a form of spontaneous devotion practiced by many Catholics in Latin America, a more secularized and independent way of being Catholic (Lecaros, 2015). Due to popular piety, the Catholic Church has been able sustain believers and an air of power as a religious institution.

Another decisive factor in the continuous high reputation of the Catholic church is the extensive social work carried out in social conflicts. During the conflict in Conga against an environmentally harmful mining company, local priests and catholic organizations acted as neutral parties between the population and the police force (Lecaros, 2015). While Peruvians might not abide by all the rules of the Church as a religious institution, they see it as important for the wellbeing of society. The population adopts Catholicism to its own traditions and parameters, and it idealizes the moral compass that the church represents (Lecaros, 2015). The good reputation of the church, regardless of how Peruvians understand their faith and devotion,

is continuously reinforced by politicians and the media. During elections, all presidential candidates have publicly strengthened relations with the Catholic Cardinal and other Christian leaders (Lecaros, 2015). These are acts of public relations necessary to earn the electoral trust, but also maintain close proximity to reputable institutions. Thus, it is not necessary to actively practice Catholicism as the scriptures dictate, but at least to *appear* as though one does. Being adjacent to the Catholic church implies being close to the ideals the institution represents.

Additionally, Peru also has the strong influence of specifically evangelical churches in both the political and social spheres. As previously mentioned, around 14% of Peruvians identify themselves as evangelicals, but over the years these churches have expanded across the country, specifically outside the capital and in rural areas (Lecaros, 2015). According to Tello (2019) evangelical leaders have been crucial in government opposition to progressive policies sympathetic with women's and LGBTQ rights. The rise of Neo-Pentecostalism among evangelical churches was fundamental for the shift to active political and social participation (Tello, 2019). This is because due to the introduction of Neo-Pentecostalism in evangelical beliefs, political and social participation has become an essential part of living their faith, in contrast to the notions of keeping religion as a private practice that was common for Pentecostalism (Espinoza, 2018). This shift in the religious landscape due to the rising influence of evangelical churches became evident in the increasing number of congresspeople who run their candidacies based on their religious identities and related socio-political stances. Thus, with a sympathetic representative constituency in positions of power, Christian politics have a strong momentum to oppose the achievements of feminist politics regarding gender equality issues deemed to be incompatible with their doctrines. Interestingly, although the hegemony of Christianity in the country stands on the ideals and the reputation of the churches more than the

practice of devotion of the population, politics that oppose gender-equality issues must tether itself to something other than religious dogma. And here is where the international anti-gender campaigns reveal the strategies used to make a strong political justification.

2.2.2. Anti-Gender Campaigns

In order to understand the “anti-gender campaigns”, one must understand the specific meaning that Christian politics assign to the term “gender”. Romain Carnac (2020) explains that “gender” is “a well-identified object against which the faithful must rise and fight. (...) [It is] shaped by the very discourse about it, simplifying reality and reducing the conflict to an opposition between ‘gender ideologists and the defenders of family, children’s rights, social harmony, and nature’” (Carnac 2020 p. 69). But who are the gender ideologists and why do they oppose family and children’s rights? In the instances when anti-gender campaigners have claimed that gender ideology is being imposed, there is no active social movement that says they are against the things that those who oppose defend. Instead, campaigners “rise and fight” government initiatives undertaking public policy, which means that “gender ideology” becomes a jumping off point to talk about same-sex marriage, equality in the classroom, and women’s rights on a political level. These issues are discussed as though they are in opposition to the values of the campaigners. In that context, this review of literature explores anti-gender campaigns, the use of “gender” and its “ideology”, and the concept that gives these campaigns purpose and shapes their actions.

Controversies over the content of educational reforms and curricula have appeared around the world. Over the years, there have been many critiques about the ways governments create and promote their programs (Shannon & Smith, 2015; Camicia 2008). However, regarding themes of gender and sexuality in education, Europe has experienced strong political opposition

to government reforms presented as “anti-gender campaigns”. These campaigns have been documented by scholars in multiple European countries, yet their significance for the Peruvian case is directly connected with the organization and operationalization they entail, as well as the fact that they share similar core values and strategies. “Anti-gender movements” or “anti-gender campaigns” (the term that will be used in this thesis) are defined as manifestations that combine protests, vigils and other organized activities advocating against gender and sexual equality from a conservative religious standpoint (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017). These campaigns have appeared in countries like France, Spain, Italy, Poland, among others, and they “share discourses, strategies and modes of action across borders” (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017, p. 2). Thus, the transnational nature of these campaigns requires a review of the commonalities among cases, the beliefs they hold, and the events that prompted their active manifestations.

Before diving into the characteristics of the anti-gender campaigns, it is crucial to understand the ‘enemy’ that binds campaigners together and gives name to their mobilizations. Campaigners against “gender” in Peru are vocal about their desire to eradicate “gender ideology” from the curriculum. This term was used by organizers and participants of the public demonstrations of 2017 as well as different congresspeople who publicly supported them (Cuarto Poder, 2017). Importantly, during the congress sessions chosen for this study, all references to a possible definition are somewhat vague. One can infer that “gender” on its own is the main concern of campaigners given their strong advocacy against the use of this term in the Peruvian curriculum, yet “gender” as a term holds little meaning to campaigners unless it is attributed to an array of social issues and political reforms with which that they disagree.

2.2.3. Creating a “Gender Ideology”

“Gender ideology” as a concept can be traced to its Catholic origins in the theology that Pope John Paul II cemented before and throughout his reign. John Paul’s ideas that sexual acts are in service of true love and unity of body and soul marked a breaking point from classical notions in Catholicism about sexual desire as a matter of guilt and immorality (Carnac, 2013). However, despite the seemingly revolutionary feel of these teachings at the time, the moral stance of the Catholic Church became even more restrictive. John Paul II’s theology on sexuality was tied to the unquestionable sacrament of marriage only between man and woman, the complementary of sexes because of their differences, the condemnation of divorce and personal sexual pleasure, and the implication that a ‘responsible sexuality’ results in procreation (Carnac, 2013).

This reaffirmation in the relationship of sexuality and the creation of families would prompt continuous efforts by the Catholic Church and the next two popes to expand their evangelization projects in a more socio-political way. The Pontifical Council of the Family published a Lexicon that works as a dictionary of ethical topics in order to expose the “true contents of words” about gender; and in the same fashion, Pope Benedict XVI wrote the foreword for a book by priest Michel Schooyans and activist Marguerite Peeters called *The Gospel Facing Global Disorder*, one of the earliest publications about gender ideology in the UN (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017).

Within this context “gender ideology” has been conceived in opposition to the new wave of scholarly work on the complexities of gender and sexuality that do not conform with the mandates of the modern Catholic theology. Those who affirm the existence of a “gender ideology” believe that “gender [is an] ideological matrix of a set of abhorrent ethical and social

reforms, namely sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, protection against gender violence and others” (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017, p. 5). It is important to note here that this version of the concept exists in a silo, regardless of whether or not it concerns human rights activism or grassroots organizations, or even if it is being contested in academia. This version of “gender” and “gender ideology”, however, are contentious and hotly debated concepts.

At the same time, ‘gender’ has been a fluid and sometimes contradictory concept within feminist studies. Nicholson (1994) recognizes two feminist interpretations: “gender” to depict characteristics socially constructed in opposition to the biological body, and “gender” as a socially constructed knowledge and interpretation of the body, where ‘sex’ is absorbed by “gender” (Nicholson, 1994). Nicholson argues that, while the second understanding is commonly used to undermine the biological influence of ‘sex’, sex is still “assumed as the basis upon which cultural meanings are constructed” (Nicholson, 1994, p. 81). Under these interpretations, self-identity is built *over* the body. Nicholson relates the male/female distinction to *biological foundationalism*, which she defines as the “claim that distinctions of nature, at some basic level, manifest themselves in or ground sex identity, a cross-culturally common set of criteria for distinguishing women and men” (Nicholson, 1994, p. 82).

These feminist notions about the meaning and use of “gender” were beginning to be contested internationally at the UN Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995. At the time, the mainstreaming of gender already implied a push for “taking account of gender issues at all stages of policy-making and programme design and implementation” (Baden & Goetz, 1997, p. 5). However, the very purpose of gender mainstreaming was questioned in different events at the conference. On the one hand, there were critiques to the de-politization of

“gender”—as a concept that characterized women and men’s relations—to be institutionalized; and on the other hand, there were critiques to the over-politization of the term and the continued use of *gender perspectives* when the concept itself was regarded as inconsistent (Baden & Goetz, 1997). A paper written and distributed at the event by conservative U.S journalist Dale O’Leary would become the first of many publications that claimed that gender was dangerous and the UN perverse. She also published a book called “The Gender Agenda” where O’Leary writes:

Without fanfare or debate, the word gender has been substituted for the word sex. We used to talk about sex discrimination, but it’s gender discrimination. Forms, like credit applications, used to ask for an indication of our sex, but now they ask for our gender. It certainly seems innocent enough. Sex has a secondary meaning—sexual intercourse or sexual activity. Gender sounds more delicate and refined (O’Leary 1997, p. 11, as cited in Kuhar & Patternote, 2017, p. 10)

This and other subsequent works by O’Leary, which had been supported by the Vatican and used by bishops (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017), show that religious conservatives are concerned with the complex interpretation of ‘gender’ at an international level, where women’s issues were being discussed by multiple countries’ representatives. O’Leary evokes a sense of conspiracy, not only by using the word “agenda” in the book title, but also in her assumptions that changing sex for gender disguises itself as an innocent and delicate act. The fact that “gender” as a concept was complex to define and even challenged the notion of womanhood was seen as a threat to the conservative views that were adopted from Catholic beliefs. It was seen as a challenge to the notion that women’s and men’s roles for marriage and reproduction come from biology and not social constructs (Baden & Goetz, 1997).

2.2.4. The “Multi-Purpose Enemy” of Europe

A very important aspect of gender ideology is the fact that it gets deployed as an umbrella concept. As quoted before in Kuhar and Patternotes' (2017) definition this ideology tries to push reforms for multiple issues, such as “sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, sex education, gender violence” to name a few (Kuhar & Patternote, 2017, p. 5). Anti-gender campaigners see “gender ideology” as a “multi-purpose enemy” that can be adapted to different goals in different political moments (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017). This can be seen in the literature documenting the organization and mobilization of anti-gender campaigners in reaction to government reforms across Europe.

France is a well documented site of anti-gender campaigns. Around the 2010's, the French Catholic Church first showed disapproval of the French Ministry of Education's plans to “include a new unit entitled “Masculin/Féminin” in the secondary school biology curriculum, dealing with notions of biological sex, sexual identity, and sex roles, in order to develop reflection on the concept of gender” (Carnac 2020, p. 67). These concerns were rooted in the fact that the government was not approaching their programs from a Catholic ideal. This was also reflected in the public manifestations by Catholic leaders against the upcoming proposition for same-sex marriage legislation by the newly elected “Parti Socialist” [Socialist Party] lead by Francois Hollande. The archbishop of Paris called upon French Catholics to pray for the country so that children and teenagers can “receive the love of a father and a mother” (Vingt-Trois 2012 as cited in Carnac, 2020), a highly effective strategy in order to stir up public and media concerns. Subsequently, the Church and other activists would lead the first public demonstrations of “La Manif Pour Tous” [Protests For All] in direct response to the debates and approval of same-sex marriage legislation (Carnac, 2020). In typical right-wing fashion, “La Manif Pour

Tous” was a word play on the project’s original name, “Marriage Pour Tous” [Marriage For All], which indicates that the intention to mobilize people is not centered around one single policy reform, in this case same-sex marriage, but around multiple changes that do not abide by their religious ideals. It is an effective strategy to harbor support because it unites people against a common enemy.

In 2013, the Minister of Women’s Rights started an experimental program called “ABCD de l’egalite” that, according to the “Évaluation du Dispositif Experimental” [Evaluation of the Experimental Plan] document, was a program “to stimulate a positive change in the attitudes of teachers and students of both sexes” (Ministère de l’Education Nationale 2014, p. 1). The goal was that teachers could modify their practices for equal treatment of children, and to make students aware of representation and their own abilities (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, 2014). The prospect of this experimental program served to unite the Catholic Church and other non-Catholic religious institutions to promote campaigns to stop sending children to schools, eventually resulting in the end of the “ABCD de l’egalite” program (Carnac, 2020).

In the same fashion, countries like Poland have gone through similar anti-gender campaigns. Right-wing governments were closely tied with the influential Catholic Church, and alongside conservatives, explicitly showed their animosity toward “sexual minorities and women’s rights to abortion” (Zuk and Zuk 2020, p. 567). Their main argument was that reforms of this nature could constitute a threat to the Catholic national identity as a foreign influence (Zuk and Zuk, 2020). This nationalist idea of identity has been cultivated in close relationship with Catholicism. In the 1990’s, shortly after the fall of communism, the Catholic Church cemented its socio-political power alongside the new elites by infusing catholic fundamentalism

into public debate in the hopes of protecting their interests in the neoliberal system (Zuk and Zuk, 2020).

This notion of identity and the need to defend it prompted hateful language against vulnerable groups and fearmongering regarding “gender ideology”. Polish right-wing groups launched homophobic and anti-abortion propaganda all through social media, political debates, and video platforms; their demonstrations equated abortion with the Nazi killings in Auschwitz and suggested that pensions will be eliminated as a consequence of same sex marriage legislation (Zuk and Zul, 2020). It is essential to see that, for the anti-gender sentiments to remain strong in Poland, a nationalist catholic sentiment had to exist and be accepted as the norm.

In Sweden, the anti-gender campaigns were part of the 2018 elections, where political groups used the term “gender nonsense” to refer to financial government support toward gender and racism studies, as well as to claim that feminism was being imposed in schools to the detriment of children’s wellbeing (Nygren et al., 2018). In this case, anti-gender sentiments were combined with anti-Muslim and racist narratives that were already increasing in the country, bringing forward the connection among multiple forms of resistance to what is perceived as Swedish values (Nygren et al., 2018).

In Spain, the Catholic Church had a very important role in the anti-gender campaigns during the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The Church in Spain is normally able to meet and discuss issues related to finance and education with government representatives thanks to the existence of an official treaty; however, in the case of same-sex marriage, abortion and equality reforms—topics proposed by Zapatero’s government—their participation could only be indirect (Aguilar, 2013). Alongside those reforms, the government’s intention to shift to secular education was seen as a direct attack on the Church’s values, and prompted mobilization and

action as early as 2005, not only by conservative organizations but also by political parties (Aguilar, 2013). It is also important to note that, given the decreasing popularity of the Catholic Church regarding moral issues (CIS, 2008 as cited in Aguilar, 2013), the church has presented a nationalist stance by strengthening its ties with local authorities outside the central government in an attempt to maintain its influence (Aguilar, 2013).

These examples of how anti-gender campaigns have manifested themselves in different countries and shows a pattern of response and reaction toward a combination of issues and reforms influenced by more progressive governments or political groups. These issues are lumped together under a framed “gender ideology” that makes possible the union of different conservative groups. Gender ideology is seen as something that has intention for political power, threatening the foundations of knowledge and “imposing deviant and minority values on average people” (Paternote & Kuhar, 2018, p. 9). As such, *Gender Ideology*, according to Christian principles, becomes a multi-purpose “enemy” - a trigger that subsequently mobilizes Catholic activists and political actors. It serves to unite multiple players and we see consistent responses and political strategies across borders.

2.2.5. The “Gender Ideology” in State Reforms

According to Paternote and Kuhar (2018), anti-gender mobilizations “were all triggered by a specific policy debate, which vary cross-nationally, and can occur as a reaction to a concrete policy proposal” (Paternote & Kuhar, 2018, p. 8). This argument positions anti-gender campaigns as more than simple secular manifestations, but as a coordinated political response that can have major results for entire governments. As we see in the European campaigns, the strongest criticisms pertained to education reforms. In Peru, changes to the new Curriculum of

Education mobilized religious organizations to the “Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas” protests, but also promoted a series of political moves by congresspeople.

Alongside the publication of the Curriculum in October of 2016, the Executive was granted power by the Congress to legislate in “reactivation and formalization of the economy, citizen safety, the fight against corruption, water and sanitation, and the reorganization of Petroperu S.A” (Law 30506, 2016). This special power allowed the executive to present a series of legislative decrees. Three of them modified the Law for Organization and Functions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Law of the Peruvian National Police, and the Approval of the Code or Penal Responsibility of Adolescents (Legislative Decree 1266; 1267; 1348, 2016). The modifications of the Laws and the Code included, among other things, mentions to the “Enfoques de Derecho, Genero, e Interculturalidad” [Rights, Gender, and Interculturality Approaches], domestic and gender violence, as well as gender identity. According to the decrees, these concepts are used to expand the scope of public policy in terms of citizen safety, the orientation of principles for the National Police, and the regulation of appropriate law enforcement measures for adolescents with penal responsibilities.

In 2017, and at the same time of the Curriculum critiques, members of the “Comision de Constitucion” [Constitution Commission] of congress issued documents to ask for the removal of the phrases “gender approach, sexual orientation, and gender identity” from three different legislative decrees. The supporting arguments for this demand were the same for all three decrees. The commission argued that, although being a matter of public policy, that concerns the Executive, including these terms would exceed the faculties that were delegated, and prevent congress from debating them as a “Proyecto de Ley” [Bill]. These demands questioned the

addition of the terms sex, gender identity and sexual orientation, specifically in the lines that described discriminatory conduct.

For the Commission, mentioning specific ways of discrimination contradicted the article 2 of the Peruvian Constitution, that says “nadie debe ser discriminado por motivo de origen, raza, sexo, idioma, religión, opinión, condición económica o de cualquier otra índole” [nobody should be discriminated for reasons of origin, race, sex, language, religion, opinion, economic situation or of any other nature] (Const. Art.2, § 2). Therefore, rendering specific discussion about something that the constitution leaves open with the phrase ‘or any other nature’ would “create a wicked effect on the protection of minors’ rights that go against the penal law” (Bill 1309, 2017). Similar claims are made for the decrees that modified the procedures of the National Police, where the commission explains that public policy that focuses on a specific group—in reference to the functions of the Police to protect “populations at risk” using the human rights, gender and interculturality approaches—could “potentially be harmful of the principle of equality rights, in the sense that it could situate in helplessness and vulnerability persons who are not included in that group to which public policy attempts to center its attention” (Bill 1306, 2017).

Moving forward to 2018, the former president of congress and member of the opposing majority, Luis Galarreta, presented a bill to “promote the adoption of a *perspective* [emphasis added] of equality between women and men, and the exclusion in the legal system and public policy all terms that reference *gender ideology* [emphasis added] and any other that threatens equality between women and men” (Bill 3610, 2018). Twenty-one members of congress co-signed this bill, that in addition to proposing a change of name from “Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations” to “Ministry of *Family*, Women and Vulnerable Populations,” added the “protection, attention and promotion of the *family* [emphasis added] and its members, under

the perspective of equality between women and men (...) without excluding consideration to the peculiarities and differences that define them (...)" (Bill 3610, 2018.)

These attempts at intervention of administrative matters within educational policies that even go as far as proposing changes to the name of a Ministry emphasizes the political dimensions and intentions of anti-gender campaigns. Campaigners are informed by the view that "gender ideology" is seen as a "set of abhorrent ethical and social reforms" (Kuhar & Paternote, 2017, p. 5). Thus, anti-gender campaigns see political action as an important tool to fight a "perverse" ideology. Congress, Ministries, the state in general becomes the site where anti-gender campaigners must fight for the Christian values to prevail over "gender ideology". From the very start, it is a political and power struggle.

2.2.6. An Oppositional Movement

Having assessed the ideological foundations of the anti-gender campaigns and the way they operate; it is important to explain how they operate as a "movement". As has been explained, most of the campaigns in Europe and the one in Peru were a direct response to public policy that seemed to challenge their ideological position. Thus, being "anti-gender" cannot be taken simply as a reactionary or counter 'movement' given that it is difficult to identify "pro-gender" groups. This difference between defining anti-gender campaigns as a counter or as opposing movement is key because it allows to clarify the purpose of these campaigns and their role as a socio-political phenomenon.

In the study of social movements, conservative and progressive movements are typically analysed as movement-counter movement phenomena, focusing mostly on their origins, and treating them as monolithic in ideals (Carnac, 2020). In practice the relationships between movements are more in tune with how they interact and relate to each other, subjecting them to

continuous change. Carnac proposes to examine anti-gender campaigns in an opposing movements perspective because the example of the French Catholic movement shows that it “effectively forced itself into responding to its own discursive construction”, which lead to its internal fragmentation (Carnac, 2020, p. 67). While an opposing movement normally reacts to a pre-existing one, the main motivator of anti-gender campaigns is in reality policy that does not align with its interest.

Because of this the “enemy” of anti-gender campaigners is created to fit the narrative that their mobilizations have a defensive purpose. In addition, Carnac (2020) explains that this lack of consistency in how the enemy is defined allowed for the campaigns to organize and mobilize “within and outside the [Catholic] Church. Gradually, the imaginary enemy created by the Catholic movement began to empower the Catholic movement itself” (Carnac, 2020, p. 69). However, as what happens with opposing movements, internal fragmentation is very likely to occur, and this is even more possible with a crafted enemy prone to questioning and criticism. There was division in the Catholic community in France between those who adopted the anti-gender discourse and those who reject it on the basis of it being too radical, an issue that made a lot of groups publicly disassociate with the most conservative factions (Carnac, 2020).

2.3. The Conflict

In order to begin exploring the main research question of this thesis which looks for central themes creating conflict and motivating political involvement of anti-gender campaigners in Peruvian congress, the previous two sections in this chapter have explored the characteristics and motivations of Christian and Feminist politics. While each of these forms of political action attracted participants to defend issues of their own interest, this review of the literature shows that there is conflict in the way they approach the conversation about “gender”. Anti-gender

campaigners in Europe have followed patterns of populist and nationalist politics in their opposition to public policy or state reforms that deal with feminist-influenced issues. And feminisms, on the other hand, have influenced the relevance of these issues in modern political action without explicitly creating movements to oppose anti-gender campaigners. Thus, the themes of conflict can be generated by the dissonance in the understanding of purpose that the education curriculum holds. Anti-gender campaigns oppose political reforms influenced by feminisms, not a “gender ideology” or a movement “pro-gender ideology” as those do not seem to exist as active groups.

In that context, the themes of conflict for this study could arise from an intentional mischaracterization of the curriculum that anti-gender campaigners demonstrate when they denounce it in congress. Considering that feminist thought informs the new political reforms for gender equality, anti-gender campaigners recognize that as a threat to their interests and create a false enemy in the form of “gender ideology” to oppose changes. These mischaracterizations of gender equality reforms could inform the themes that the research question seeks, while casting light over the interests that anti-gender campaigners want to protect so fervently.

The secondary research question is also interested in the possible goals of this socio-political fight. In order to include this analysis at the same time that the themes are being identified, it is necessary to set a bigger framework that help us understand why anti-gender campaigns could intentionally fight political reform that extents the concept of “gender”. It has become clear in this review of the literature that the use of “gender” goes beyond the academic understanding of the word’s meaning. The “gender ideology” that campaigners use as the “enemy” of morals and values is an empty vessel for a series of topics with which Christian politics take issue. Therefore, the next chapter on theoretical framework deals with a macro

vision of the sociology of politics, in hopes to find better tools to understand this conflict and answer both research questions with an all-encompassing analysis.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1. Political Sociology

In order to understand the anti-gender campaigns in Peru beyond the European examples, it is necessary to set a framework that can help in the analysis of the political aspects of these campaigns and the way they present themselves in congress. This study proposes first a political-sociology perspective. Political sociology has been around as an interdisciplinary field of studies for a relative short time. However, there has been a lot of improvement in how the field has changed over the years. According to Neuman (2008), “political sociology is the study of power and relationships between society and politics” (Neuman, 2008, p. 3). However, a more comprehensive definition of the term breaks away from only thinking about “power”. According to scholar Kate Nash (2010), political sociology “concerns cultural politics, which is the interpretation of social meanings that support, challenge, or change the definitions, perspectives, and identities of social actors, to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others, across state and society” (Nash, 2010, p.37).

Nash also explains that, because of the changes brought forward by globalization in terms of economy, culture and politics, social identities are now relevant in the relationship of society and politics (Nash, 2010). Things like non-partisan organizations, social movements, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality have transformed how power and politics are seen and studied. Therefore, a political sociology perspective would make sense of how social relations and institutions are challenged without having to be tied to a state level. It helps understand how social relations are made political in the first place without coming strictly from a hierarchical structure of power such as the state and government.

As noted in the literature review chapter, actors that exercise feminist politics in Peru had been able to make important gains regarding reproductive rights and sanctions for gender-based violence such as femicide legislation, and most recently the inclusion of a gender perspective in the education through the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. Yet, through anti-gender campaigns Christian politics have responded in opposition when it comes to policy making. Approaching this response from a political sociology perspective is important because it is a way of making politics outside “state-centered and class-based models of political participation” (Nash, 2010, p. 4). The agitated political response of anti-gender campaigners against gender-equality policies become a political issue that requires contemporary tools to make sense of its relevancy and impact. One of those tools is the importance of “meanings” for contemporary political sociology. Drawing inspiration from the field of cultural politics, where “culture” is influenced by changing social structures, Nash (2010) explains that “meaning” comes from a symbolic understanding of words and that “language does not simply *name* the world; it makes sense of it and orders it for us” (Nash, 2010, p. 32).

In cultural politics, this view on meanings signifies that, on the one hand, *social meanings* are in continuous flux as that is an essential characteristic of a fluid culture; while on the other hand, they can also become hegemonic when taken for granted (Nash, 2010). And hegemonic meanings, ultimately, are harder to challenge and can disproportionately affect one group over another. Therefore, social life is structured according to how meanings are used, and which ones become relevant in a political sense. That political dimension is concerned with a struggle over power, not only about what social meanings become the norm or routine, but also about how the state is a site to regulate and legitimize certain meanings (Nash, 2010).

In that context, it is possible to use this understanding of meanings under contemporary political sociology to establish that the conflict that arises between Christian and Feminist politics lies on the lack of consensus over what social meanings should be institutionalized and made part of state policy. If one is adopted over the other, “it is easier for some actors to realize their existing projects and goals, while others have to alter and adapt as best as they can to new situations” (Nash, 2010, p. 37). Therefore, the case of anti-gender campaigns in Peru centers around the curriculum of education and the interpretations of “gender”. The government acceptance and validation of gender perspectives in education not only affects the understanding of the version of the term “gender” proposed by Christians groups, but it shows a struggle for power. The achievements of feminist work on gender in the curriculum signals a struggle between groups that conceive of the world in different ways and mobilize in order to see the state to adopt their perspective.

This contemporary framework for the sociology of politics makes it possible to situate the anti-gender campaigns in Peru as a socio-political issue while establishing the basis for conflict over the interpretation of social meanings. However, given that anti-gender campaigns constitute an organized movement that is capable of using public platforms to politically challenge the state, it is necessary to be more specific in the theory. To articulate the actions of the anti-gender campaign in Peru, it is necessary to explore the sociology of populism, as this is the source of similarities with other anti-gender campaigns in Europe. Therefore, this study follows Robert Jansen’s work on *populist mobilizations* as a way to understand populist practices in relation to the challenges of cultural and social changes, such as feminist politics.

3.2. Populist Mobilization

Populist mobilization is a sociological concept proposed by Jansen (2011) to understand populism by its practical use in politics, whether it is by the politicians during campaigns or by political actors trying to gather popular support. According to Jansen (2011) populism should be understood as a “political *means* that can be undertaken by challengers and incumbents of various stripes in pursuit of a wide range of social, political and economic agendas” (Jansen, 2011, p. 77). Jansen reconceptualizes populism from a regime or ideology to a political practice that focuses on gaining support. This does not mean that previous approaches are wrong or should be discarded, but that their strengths can be used to present an approach that allows for case comparisons of patterns and consequences (Jansen, 2011, p. 81). In the case of this study, the patterns and consequences lie in the Christian-driven arguments and strategies used to delegitimize feminist gains. His proposed definition of a *populist mobilization* is that they are “sustained, large-scale political projects that mobilize ordinarily marginalized social sectors into publicly visible and contentious political action, while articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes ordinary people” (Jansen, 2011, p. 82).

A *political project*, as Jansen characterizes it, is a set of concerted activities with the aim of altering in any way relations at the nation-state level (Jansen, 2011, p. 82). In that context, populist mobilizations operate by combining popular mobilization, which refers to the coordinated political action and organizational capacity of a group on individuals; and populist tactics, which refer to symbols, styles and statements that reinforce the populist principle of anti-elitism and nationalism (Jansen, 2011). One of the key characteristics to identify if a regime or movement can be studied as populist mobilizations, is by looking at where and when they enacted such projects. This allows for a better understanding of the relationship between the

social and political circumstances that fuel the need of politicians to engage in these practices and secure power.

Another important characteristic that Jansen notes about populist mobilizations is that this new use of the concept of populism understands a mobilization as something “undertaken at specific historical moments, [that] is sustained for limited durations, and is subject to fluctuation in its character and intensity over time” (Jansen, 2011, p. 85). For this study, this is a relevant feature as it breaks the temporal restrictions of classical populism, and it allows to view the mobilizations by the way they organize and how their objectives shift or adapt over time. The data used in this study comes from two congress sessions over the span of two years reflecting the time period that this issue lasted in the public agenda.

This reconceptualization of populism for the study of anti-gender campaigns fits under the umbrella of contemporary political sociology as it works as a political practice that challenges social meanings that defy the worldview of Christian politics. Anti-gender campaigns followed the dual organized activities of popular mobilization and populist tactics. The debates in Congress regarding the use of the Gender Inequality Approach in the curriculum has been preceded by organized protests of “Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas” and politicians who opposed the inclusion of the term gender and any mention of sexual orientation and identities in schools. This demonstrates that, as populist mobilizations, these campaigns are concerned with the way the state uses meanings that make space for gender equality and suggests that they are the reason why they push back against feminist politics. As observed in the “Opposing Movement” section, anti-gender campaigns are created as a response to specific content in politics - the institutionalization of meanings originated in feminism such as the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. As a political project, anti-gender campaigns meet much of the criteria for a populist

mobilization but the core of its pursuit of power lies in the conflict with emerging and changing social meanings that divert from the hegemonic, which is absent in the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género.

Matters of gender equality and other topics brought forward by local and international feminisms become politically relevant when they are contentious in the sense that they get to be politicized to the point where there are public demonstrations, activism, and lawsuits against their existence in public policy. The fervent opposition of the use of the term “gender” from the curriculum is a form of political action that puts political pressure on Congress. It is a form of political action and leadership coming from political actors that are both part of the religious groups they mobilize, but also congresspeople that have the enough power to question or censor Ministers.

While it is relevant to see the connections between Anti-Gender campaigners and Christianity in the way these mobilizations manifest publicly, it is also important to assess how they made use of their populist tactics to contest the use of the term “gender”. Anti-gender campaigns become relevant and successful in their ability to gain popular support because they can channel and benefit from ideas and tactics that resonate with those who share similar values, specially if these claims relate to education, as is the case of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum.

3.2.1. Characteristics and Tactics of Populist Mobilizations

According to Harsin (2018), the populism used in the anti-gender campaign tactics lies in the ability to appeal to the differences between the “people” and the elites. The anti-gender campaigners categorize the elites as corrupt, morally deviant, and set apart from most of the population (Harsin, 2018). This is an essential part of the anti-gender narrative because

campaigners need to sustain the “enemy” that, while it cannot be represented in a person or group, it comes in the form of reforms. Thus, authorities and governments, by approving public policy, become the elites who promote “gender ideology”.

The mobilizations have to instill *nostalgia*, “a conception of utopian return to ‘a life that has already been lived’ ... [one] more authentic than the present” and morally superior to it” (Taggart, 2004; Stanley, 2013 as cited in Harsin, 2018, p. 36). This idea of nostalgia cannot simply be evoked out of thin air. Anti-gender campaigns have to insist on the pervasiveness of *gender ideology* to create a narrative of moral superiority that is represented in their Christian values. Given that *gender ideology* is a representation of reforms that are seen as a threat to Christian values and its conceptions of reality, thus a populist strategy refuses to acknowledge a shift into what had been conceived to be perfect.

Another characteristic of populism is the concept of “heartland”. For Taggart (2004), heartland is “an idealised conception of the community they [the populist] serve (...) constructed retrospectively from the past” (Taggart, 2004, p. 274). Populism evokes a Utopian-like world that should draw from values from the past that have been lost, even when these are ahistorical and inaccurate (Taggart, 2004). In that context, nostalgia is an important component of the *heartland* because it is the feeling that could connect individuals in the idealized community. The heartland assumes everyone went by the same values, and that the reality lived before the change, in this case the introduction of gender ideology, was perfect.

A major point of populism is the sense of identity it creates. Laclau and Mouffe (2014) explain that although groups might be socially and politically different, they construct a temporary identity under the umbrella of oppression, which in turn creates “equivalential links” among them (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, xiii). For Harsin (2018), this translates in the array

different demands that anti-gender groups have, while using terms like “citizen” or “working class” to refer to themselves and separate themselves from institutions of power (Harsin 2018, p. 36). This factor could help understand how nostalgia and the heartlands work effectively for anti-gender campaigners. Creating a sense of identity to unite and fight an “evil” force that is vaguely explained as “gender ideology” sets the tone for an array of forces and groups to join together against a common enemy. However, in the context that anti-gender campaigns, the enemy - “gender ideology” - is a product of Christian politics’ own creation. This presents a contradiction for the very same Church, as they themselves are a representation of the “elites” that according to anti-gender campaigners, promote the ideology. Christian clergies are the elites of the countries where anti-gender campaigns have prevailed. The self-proclaimed denomination of “citizens” against “elites” in the mobilizations is misleading and shows that these are mere tactics to gather support rather than an accurate depiction of who they are and what are their goals. When these denominations come from groups that hold power such as congresspeople, politicians or religious leaders, the intention is to suggest that they are part of “the people” and thus can claim to oppose power.

These tactics of action would be unsuccessful in making anti-gender campaigns relevant if they did not appeal to the different emotions that arise from challenges to hegemonic social meanings. Demertzis (2020), explains that political emotions come from the interactions of individuals who engaging in specific situations, and they are felt in relation to other emotions (Demertzis, 2020, p. 154). Anger and fear, in politics, are provoked when political actors blame their grievances on specific targets that could be economic and intellectual elites, as well as immigrants and other groups (Demertzis, 2020). Those grievances in anti-gender campaigns can be a resistance to the loss of power in the face of changes in the political status quo. After anger

there is also resentment, an emotion that prompts intentional action to rectify the damage caused (Demertzis, 2020). An interesting dimension of anti-gender campaigns is that, as a populist mobilization, it is able to fuel those emotions to maintain social support and power by purposely using and spreading misinformation about “gender ideology” in the form of rumor bombs and questionable scientific claims.

3.2.2. Rumor Bombs

To justify their resistance and intolerance of the curriculum contents, anti-gender campaigners use a very effective method of communication such as rumor bombs, “an emotionally and attentionally strategic claim of questionable veracity, common to post-truth politics” (Harsin, 2006, 2014 as cited in Harsin, 2018, p. 38). In France, when the ABC De L’egalite program started in schools, the group LMPT alleged that not only the elites and the left were interfering in the education system, but that “they wanted to give [homosexual couples] access to medically assisted surrogate pregnancy, deny differences between boys and girls, and impose sex education on children in pre-schools” (Gross et al., 2014 as cited in Harsin 2018, p. 38). As seen in the review of anti-gender campaigns in France in page 14, the ABD De l’egalite program did not have such a goal.

In that context, Harsin (2018) is able to identify that in anti-gender campaigns, rumor bombs act as “emotional epistemic loops” of information (Harsin, 2018, p. 42) because they are used to generate distrust in conventional media and official sources, in favor of their own “alternative” media. This becomes a powerful political message because it can be replicated by political actors without ever being questioned and fact checked. Therefore, it is a very specific tactic to set the tone of political intervention and to create a justification for the resistance in changes of social meanings. If feminist politics are successfully mischaracterized in the public

eye, the perception could be that there is no basis for it to be institutionalized and adopted as state policy.

Rumor bombs, as a concept, has been mainly studied as part of post-truth politics, specifically as a form of identification of anti-media, anti-science and anti-intellectual practices that are often seen in right-wing movements (Harsin, 2018). While some of those characteristics have been present in anti-gender campaigns in France and the rest of Europe, this study focuses on the use of rumor bombs to identify the communicational tools of anti-gender campaigns as a populist mobilization. Rumor bombs are used to present unverified facts and claims that hold no evidence in the documents that they alleged. And in addition, they are useful in sparking emotional outrage, and specifically anger (Harsin, 2018). As seen in the previous section, the use of emotions is a common tactic of populist mobilizations to gather support but using a rumor bomb as a communicative tool can drive emotions from the political actors who make such claims, and from the receptor who believes in it. Ultimately, rumor bombs play an important role in the populist tactics of anti-gender campaigns and are necessary in the analysis of the central themes of conflict that this study seeks to answer.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

The focus of this study is to answer two important questions regarding anti-gender campaigns from a political sociology perspective. The main and subsequent questions—what are the central themes in the conflict between Christian politics and feminist politics, and what are the possible end-goals of this struggle—require a qualitative approach that can allow for the close examination of texts, as well as their interpretation under a particular socio-political context. In this case, the political aspect of the anti-gender campaigns in Peru.

Qualitative Content Analysis describes “the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way” (Schreier, 2012, p. 2). Using Qualitative Content Analysis, one can examine verbal and visual materials, as well as documents and archival materials that require some degree of interpretation (Schreier, 2012). For this study, the data are in the form of texts, such as Congress sessions transcripts, and some excerpts from the National Curriculum of Education.

The rationale the use of this method is that Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is a variation of Content Analysis (CA), used in the social sciences and communication research. In its basic form, CA is characterized by being empirically grounded, transcendent of traditional analytical notions, and subjected to its own methodology (Krippendorff, 2013). In practice, QCA emerges as a way to introduce more variety and flexibility in the analysis of the material given that meaning in data is not always obvious but rather latent and contextual (Schreier, 2012).

Given that the transcripts from both congress sessions contain abundant data that requires an account of the context, QCA is an appropriate tool. It enables the organization of topics in the transcripts according to overarching themes, arguments in favor or against the *Enfoque de*

Igualdad de Género, and the even the political roles of the speakers. The advantage of using QCA is that the coding process comes from the material being studied, in this case the transcripts. All topics emerge from the material and help create an open coding frame that describes topics of discussion. In addition, this method allows for the reduction of data through the classification of topics or themes that are common across different coding categories (Schreier, 2012). This is a beneficial strategy for this paper because the research question is aiming to find connections among topics of discussion in order to point larger themes of study.

4.2. Data Set

The material used in this study was collected based on a political sociology framework. Given that this study deals with the tensions between of Christian and feminist politics in the Peruvian congress, I decided to use the video footage of two different congress sessions that bring forward the arguments surrounding a specific debate about school curriculum reform. In addition, I have included a description of the curriculum because it is the document that prompted anti-gender campaigns in Peru. This study does not consider the curriculum as a source of themes for Christian and Feminist conflict, but rather as an instrument subjected to the anti-gender narrative promoted by anti-gender campaigners. As a populist movement, anti-gender campaigns use and benefit from different issues to promote their agendas, and the curriculum is one of those materials that serve to spark conflict in Peruvian politics. However, as will be shown in the next chapter, the curriculum itself does not produce the themes for conflict; instead, those themes arise from the political conversations around it. This is the reason why this material is best used in a descriptive manner.

The logic behind selecting two congress sessions rather than one is the level of representation that they offer. The selected videos, specifically, present two different instances of

struggle for political control with congressional proceedings. The first is a session of the “Comisión de Educación” [Education Commission] on July 4th, 2018, and the second is the interpellation of the Minister of Education in a Plenary Session of Congress on May 9th, 2019.

The Interpellation of the Minister in 2019 was also selected because it allowed the participation of representatives of all parties in congress, providing a wider range of views. This interpellation in particular is set to be a process to question the Minister over the curriculum of education, with the added factor that the Minister is new. The change makes it possible to assess any differences in the government’s messaging regarding the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, as well as other contributions for the research question themes.

It is necessary to clarify the agendas for both sessions before presenting the data. In the Education Commission of 2018, Minister of Education Daniel Alfaro was called to give a presentation and answer questions regarding the educational content of the school texts at the ‘Basic Regular Education’ level and the broader curriculum of education. As read in the official documents of congress, the topics included in the agenda were the following:

- 1) Procedure and responsibilities of the school texts editing and content verification.
- 2) Actions regarding the content with political and ideological bias in the school texts.
- 3) Corrective measures, procedures, quality control and transparency mechanisms that the Ministry will take.
- 4) Date of delivery of the new contents of the texts.
- 5) Actions regarding the Supreme court decision about the Curriculum of Basic Education.
- 6) Information about the measures to guarantee the participation of society in the process of formulation and construction of the Curriculum, in accordance with article 34 of the General Law of Education (Congreso de la República, 2018).

In the case of the interpellation of 2019, the new Minister of Education, Flor Pablo, was summoned by Congress to answer the questionnaire regarding:

The irregularities found in the elaboration and printing of educational materials of the Basic Regular Education, which has economically affected the national treasury and harmed students' rights to appropriate and quality education; all of this being a representation of a structural crisis of the Peruvian educational system (Congreso de la República, 2019, p. 16).

This interpellation is a political control mechanism allowed under the Peruvian constitution that grants the rights to the Congress to determine political responsibility of any minister over the matter being questioned (Const. Art.6, § 131). After the hearing and the participation of all representatives, the congress votes to either accept the response, censor the minister, or deny the confidence question over the minister under interpellation (Const. Art.6, § 132).

Apart from the discussion of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum, the congress sessions also debate the content of the school textbooks regarding history and the words that those texts use to describe the years of domestic terrorism in the country. Hence why the agenda also refer to the educational materials. A majority of congresspeople criticized the use of the term “conflicto armado” (armed conflict) instead of “terrorism”, as well as the inclusion of information from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding human rights violations from the state through the military and Alberto Fujimori's dictatorship. While these issues are not the focus of this study, it is worth mentioning because there is one theme of analysis that requires this contextual information.

Regarding the technical aspects of the data set, the video recordings of the two congress sessions are published in the official channel of the “Congreso de la República” [Congress]. The 2018 session is divided in 11 parts, with a total of 4 hours and 41 minutes; while the 2019 interpellation is divided in 20 parts, with a total of 9 hours and 49 minutes. Both recordings are in Spanish and include all intermissions.

As an added feature of the data set to be analyzed, this study also includes a description of the contents of the Curriculum of Basic Education that addresses the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. The curriculum has a total of 224 pages, yet the focus will be on section II that includes an explanation of the “Enfoques Transversales” [Transversal Approaches] where the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is described. There are a few other sections used in order to describe the meanings, and in addition, a translation of the glossary that includes some of the terms used in the congress sessions.

4.3. Process

This study follows three major phases to dissect and organize the material from the recordings. The first phase is the selection and transformation of data from audiovisual to text. In the data set section of this chapter, I have explained the reasons behind the selection of the two congress sessions. After selecting the material, the two video recordings were manually transcribed in Spanish using the software NVivo in order to organize the large amount of text being produced, including time stamps and speaker information. The purpose of maintaining the original language of the events in the transcript is to pick up on the nuanced discussion that shows ambiguity in the use of concepts and the argumentation of the ministers and congresspeople. In turn, this is beneficial in the process of selecting quotes that accurately represent the themes, while providing a good basis for the translation of said quotes.

The second phase was the organization of data. The advantage of having gone through the transcription process in the first phase is that it allowed me to create a combination of concept-driven and data-driven categories for my preliminary coding framework. A concept-driven way of creating categories is about basing the work on existent knowledge (Schreier, 2012). Having gone through the entire transcriptions, I had a more comprehensive understanding of the topics that ministers, congresspeople and intervenors used when discussing the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum. In addition, the relevancy of these categories responded to the preliminary literature review conducted this study. Thus, a data-driven approach responds to a more inductive type of research, where the categories arise from the material itself (Schreier, 2012). The inductive characteristic of this strategy made it possible to approach the transcripts in a more descriptive way, which was necessary in order to answer the research question that aims to establish themes for the conflict over the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género.

In that context, I used an adapted version of open coding from grounded theory in the qualitative content analysis. This strategy entails three steps: “conceptualizing, defining categories, and developing categories” (Schreier, 2012, p. 115). To begin, I went over all transcripts and examined the concepts that came from each speaker in both congress sessions and used NVivo features to create a list of simple concepts next to the passages reviewed. Then, I proceeded to define categories by identifying overarching topics, in this case categories, that showed differences and similarities in the concepts created. Finally, the developing category stage of open coding allowed me to create a structure based on the categories and concepts created, where I could easily identify which congress session to which the categories belonged.

Given that this open coding process created two reference coding frames for each congress session, I continued to do a segmentation of the material into *units of coding* to make

sure the important parts remained coded. Given that this process was heavily data-driven, the overlap in the concepts from both sessions allowed me to unify the frames while maintaining a distinction between both. In addition, this process of segmentation was useful to define the *context units* from the transcripts. These are “portions of the surrounding material that you need to understand the meaning of a given unit of coding” (Schreier, 2012, p. 133). As a result of this process, I created a single coding frame that I was able to test by doing a new revision of the relevant parts of the material. This allowed me to modify concepts and categories and have one solid frame with codes that were useful. As the last step, I verified the coding frame with my supervisor.

The third and final major phase for the dissection and organization of the material is the analysis and presentation of results. The main research question is about the central themes that create conflict between Christian and Feminist politics and motivate the political involvement of anti-gender campaigners in Peruvian congress. In order to clearly define those central themes from the coding frame and the coded material, the results had to be organized in a combination of the theoretical framework input and the data findings. Using populist mobilization as the theory to explain the anti-gender campaigns as a socio-political phenomenon that meets a set of characteristics, I look at populist practices in actions and discourse. That is why by using the parameters of the theoretical framework I was able to find patterns that showed connections among the concepts in the coding frame while maintaining the political affiliations of the speakers and their overall stance on the subject matter.

This analysis provided an organization of data that included units of coding with their respective context units from both congress sessions in a table that showcases examples for each theme. In the next chapter, the data set is divided in six main themes in response to the research

question about the central themes of conflict. These themes are 1) Gender in Education, 2) Ideologies and Terrorism, 3) Foreign Influence, 4) Status Quo Defiance, 5) Religious Morals and 6) Scientific Authority. Each of them has present a subset of categories that allow for a more specific analysis of quotes and meaning in the speeches of the congress sessions.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

Given the qualitative nature of the methodology, it is important to offer some ethical considerations before presenting the findings. As mentioned before, the material used for the congress sessions transcripts and the summary of the agendas were published by the official account of the Peruvian congress, and publicly accessible.¹ Unfortunately, no official website had archived transcripts of both sessions, which made it necessary to manually transcribe all the content, and subsequently, translate them to English. A reasonable concern in this regard is that translation and interpretation are not my areas of expertise. Although Spanish is my first language and I am fluent in English, there is a distinction between my personal language skills and that of professional translators and interpreters. I have worked on the translations of the findings to the best of my ability, yet I do consider that these must be taken as basic translations open to critique. In an effort to reduce the limitations of the translated text, I have included markers that help clarify terms or phrases that are not fully clear in the original language. This has been done using brackets when necessary. By doing so, I hope to keep the transparency in the data from the transcription process.

Additionally, I recognize my personal biases as a researcher and the extent of influence it has on my findings and analysis. This study was conceived from my interest on political and

¹ All congressional agendas are publicly available at <https://www.mimp.gob.pe/omep/estadisticas-violencia.php>. The video recordings used in this paper are also publicly available at <https://www.youtube.com/c/congresoperutv/videos>

social issues in my home country, Peru, but also based on my personal frustrations with the way the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género was discussed some years ago. Thus, it is expected that my stance on the subject matter affects the research process in terms of the theoretical perspectives taken to examine the case and the political actors who I used to focus the analysis. This means that I must review with a critical lens the way I conduct my analysis in order to minimise bias and fairly reflect on the responses I deem necessary for the themes I am proposing.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Data

5.1. Curriculum Description

The National Curriculum of Basic Education was published in 2016 and incorporated a methodology of seven “Enfoques Transversales” [Transversal Approaches] that are “the meanings and assessments that permeate characteristics of the profile and competencies” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016 p. 192) The profile that they reference is the “Perfil del Estudiante” [Profile of the Student], which is a series of characteristics that students should have at the end of their basic education. In order to achieve the characteristics of that profile, the ministry proposes the use of the “Enfoques Transversales” to guide the behavior of teachers, students, and staff in “values and attitudes” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016 p. 192).

The “Enfoques” are presented and explained in the following order, “Enfoque de Derechos” [Human Rights Approach], “Enfoque Inclusivo o de Atención a la Diversidad” [Inclusivity or Attention to Diversity Approach], “Enfoque Intercultural” [Interculturality Approach], “Enfoque Igualdad de Género” [Gender Equality Approach], “Enfoque Ambiental” [Environmental Approach], “Enfoque Orientación al Bien Común” [Orientation to the Common Good Approach], and “Enfoque Búsqueda de la Excelencia” [Pursuit of Excellence Approach]. Each of them includes a list of values, attitudes and situational examples that show how the “Enfoques” could present themselves in the classroom.

The Curriculum explains that the “Enfoque Igualdad de Género” comes from the “Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Género” [National Plan for Gender Equality] published in 2012 by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. The curriculum describes this “Enfoque” in 3 parts: “Igualdad y Dignidad” [Equality and Dignity], Justicia [Justice], and “Empatía” [Empathy]. With the values of Equality and Dignity, the curriculum proposes to “recognize the

inherent value of each person, above any gender difference” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). This is exemplified by avoiding making “discriminatory distinctions between men and women” and to give the same responsibilities to male and female students in the classroom. The value of Justice aims to ensure that those “affected by gender inequalities are given what corresponds to them” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p. 23). This includes the attendance of pregnant students, and the respect of the body to prevent “possible situations of sexual violence” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p. 23). The last value of Empathy aims for the recognition of “affective emotional needs of others and showing sensibility of them to identify gender inequality situations” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p. 23). This translates in the classroom to “students and teachers analyzing prejudices among genders” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p. 23).

Consequently, when examining the 31 competencies that the curriculum dictates, only the first competency denotes a clear relationship with the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género”. The first competency, “Construye su Identidad” [Identity Construction] expects students to “recognize and value their bodies, their way of feeling, thinking, and acting, recognizing the many different identities that define them (historic, ethnic, social, sexual, cultural, of gender, environmental, among others) as a product of continuous interactions among individuals and the diverse contexts in which they develop (family, school, community)” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p.45). One of the capacities that this competency includes is “[The student] lives their sexuality in an integral and responsible way, according to their development and maturity stage” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p.45).

All competencies have expected outcomes divided into eight levels, each with a description and indicator of the levels corresponding to each of the three basic education cycles in Peru: Pre-school, Elementary, and Secondary school. Among other characteristics, the ones in

relation to the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” express the following: at the end of Pre-School, students are expected to “recognize themselves as woman or man and explain that both can do the same activities”. At the end of Elementary school, students should “establish equality relationships between men and women and to explain its importance. (...) Identify behaviors to protect themselves from situations that risk their integrity in relation to their sexuality” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016 p. 47) At the end of secondary school, the student should relate to others without discrimination of gender and sexual orientation. In addition, they should “develop affective relationships of friendship or romantic, based on reciprocity and respect. [They should] identify situations that attempt the sexual and reproductive rights and propose guidelines to prevent and protect themselves from those” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016 p. 47). That is the extent on the “Enfoque Igualdad de Género” in the competencies of a graduated student.

5.2. Synthesis of Congress Sessions

5.2.1. Education Commission Session

The session of the Education Commission on July 4th, 2018 had Minister Daniel Alfaro’s presentation of the procedures for printing the school texts and the implications of possible editing changes. The use of *gender* was very limited in the Minister’s presentation and answers. Even when the president of the commission for education explicitly asked how the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género could contribute to the reduction of *machista* violence in the country, the minister did not clarify this point.

Congresspeople, on the other hand, were able to propose further questions to the minister’s presentation. They questioned the use of the term *gender* in the textbooks and in the curriculum, alleging that the school textbooks presented the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género as

information about homosexuality, incest, and gender transitioning. During their interventions, members of the Commission claimed that, although violence against women existed, the executive should discuss violence as all-encompassing and not related to *gender*. In addition, the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” was referred to as an *ideology* multiple times, despite the lack of definition.

As explained in the methodology section, this session includes the participation of two intervenors from the association of parents “Padres en Accion” [Parents in Action] and Unidos Pro-Familia [United Pro-Family]. The congresspeople that invited them to the session justified their presence by explaining that they represented the plaintiffs in the Popular Action put on the Supreme Court against the Ministry for the use of the term “gender” in the curriculum. During this session, the Supreme Court had yet to deliver its final verdict. Thus, congresspeople and the intervenors argued that the Ministry could not include anything related to the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the new textbooks that would be printed because it would go against the judicial process.

Although the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is not mentioned in the commission’s agenda, around 70% of interventions by all participants are centered around this topic. In addition, Minister Alfaro was not in charge of the Curriculum publication and the production of the school textbooks, so his responses about citizen participation were limited to his time in office.

The 2018 Education Commission is one of the first archived recordings that centers the discussion around the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum. Although there is another session from the same commission in 2017, the congress archive does not offer a full recording to the public. Any standard session at the Education Commission includes the

participation of the commission members and a government official if they are being asked to present or make a case for any procedure relevant to the commission. The 2018 session chosen, however, includes the participation of two intervenors in addition to the Minister of Education and the commission members. One intervenor was from the organization previously mentioned, “Padres En Accion” [Parents in Action], and the other from a group called “Unidos Pro-Familia” [United Pro-Family]. Both were invited by a congressional member of the commission. This contributes to the analysis in this study because it brings forward data from anti-gender organizations adjacent to political actors without having to widen the scope of the research question.

Given that the main reason for the minister’s participation was to answer questions about the budget for textbooks and content of the curriculum, the coding conducted for the concepts was, as previously mentioned, applied to about 70% of the transcription material. This is because the discussions shifted from the logistics of printing and distribution of texts to the content and terminology about terrorism in the books. When the discussion shifted to topics of gender in the curriculum, the concepts, definitions, and topics showed an interesting variety in how the minister and congresspeople approached the discussion. The coding list shows that Minister Alfaro talked about the importance of critical thinking, the role of parents in education, the role of the 2030 sustainable goals, the difference with other approaches in the curriculum and his definition of “gender”. Congresspeople who were in favor of using the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” talked about the sustainable goals regarding education, development, and gender empowerment. Some of the discussion included the national agreements for education and the issues of violence against women in the country. One congressman took time to ask about the purpose of the intervenors in the session and questioned their representativity. On the part of

congresspeople who opposed the use of the “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género”, the coding list increases vastly as they had more interventions and talking points. These congresspeople presented arguments that centered parents as the sole figures for teaching values and that the Ministry must always work in tandem with them. Many interventions were focused on the implications of using the term “gender” in the curriculum and textbooks. Congresspeople argued that the use of the term corresponded to a foreign “ideology” that the Ministry was adopting and introducing in education. The concept of “gender” was discussed as a “lifestyle” and as something that goes “against the natural order” and overall, congresspeople used “ideology” and “gender” interchangeably. Toward the final part of the session, both intervenors were allowed to speak, and both coincided in framing “gender” as something against the family and biological sexes. They demanded that the Ministry consult parent organizations and remove the term in order to “protect children”.

5.2.2. Interpellation Session

The session for the interpellation of the Minister of Education, Flor Pablo happened on May 9th, 2019, around one year after the session in the Education Commission. As noted in the agenda on page 42, Congress did not use Enfoque de Igualdad de Género as a premise for the Interpellation of the Minister. A month before the interpellation, the Supreme Court had already declared the complaint brought by *Padres en Accion* unfounded (Poder Judicial, 2019). While minister Pablo used the term *gender* in more instances than in the previous session, they were related to the interpellation questionnaire about the gender approach in education policies. Only 5 out of 29 inquiries in the questionnaire referred to the use and intent of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. The questions have been translated to the following points:

- Question number 1, about the so-called Enfoque de Género or Enfoque de Igualdad de Género included in the ministry's curriculum of basic regular education: do we all have a gender identity or only some people? What is the meaning of the "gender identity" that the curriculum refers to? Are the concepts of gender identity and gender approach (Enfoque de Género) of the Ministry of Education the same from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Energy and Mines, Ministry of Health, etc.? Is it the only tool considered by the UN in the Sustainable Development Goals? Is the Enfoque de Género a human right as declared by the NGO International Amnesty or is it only a practical tool?
- Question number 9, the political constitution of the state, in article 13 declares that parents have the duty of educate their children, and the right to participate in the educative process. In that context, how many family parents have been asked about the so-called Enfoque de Género and for how long? Specify which collectives and organizations of parents have been consulted.
- Questions number 11, the demand of "Padres en Accion" regarding the exclusion of the Enfoque de Género from the curriculum of education was admitted in court in the first instance level on July 13th, 2017. Therefore, the Ministry of Education was prohibited from publishing and distributing any material about the Enfoque or Ideología [Ideology] de Género. Why, despite the court ruling of the first level that prohibited the Ministry of education from promoting this ideology or approach, it was included disregarding the ruling since 2018? When were the educational materials elaborated and approved?

- Question number 26, what is the participation of the feminist NGOs “Manuela Ramos”, “Promsex”, “Demus”, among others, in the elaboration of the contents or workshops [about the Enfoque de Género] of any kind?
- Question number 29, A few days ago, you said to all the media, in reference to the so-called Enfoque de Género, that, “we want tolerant people that do not discriminate”. Do you consider that people that do not agree with the so-called Enfoque de Género, the millions and millions of family parents, are intolerant and discriminatory?

In order to answer the questions, the minister Pablo uses the term “gender” to explain the educational approach but focuses on describing issues of discrimination and inequality in order to address its purpose in the curriculum. She explains that the gender approach is a part of the 7 transversal educational approaches (see page 56), and that it is influenced by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals similarly to what was said in the 2018 session. In addition, she mentions other uses of the concept of “gender” in the educational documents are specifically to discuss identity, human rights, integral sex education and the prevention of violence.

In this Interpellation, congresspeople had the right to intervene for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the designated time for each political party. They could interrupt their colleagues and direct more questions to the Minister, although they were not expected to be answered right away. The term gender was mostly discussed in relation to the issue of Enfoque de Igualdad de Género and Ideología de Género, which was used interchangeably as seen in the interpellation questionnaire. In addition, the term gender was also discussed in opposition to other topics of priority for the state, such as infrastructure, poverty, and budget expenses in the Ministry of Education. Many of the interventions used gender as a topic that should not be debated nor

problematized. In addition, gender-based violence was discussed as an existing issue but that it should be all-encompassing and not related to gender. The larger number of codes for the 2019 sessions shows that a lot of the interventions did not necessarily correlate to the questions answered by the minister. Congresspeople against the use of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género often brought up unverified information of the dangers of gender perspectives in other countries, in an attempt to demonstrate what is next to come should Peru follow the same steps. Congresspeople in favor, on the other hand, echoed most of the points given by the minister yet omitted critique for the Christian arguments that those opposed gave.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

The following six sections represent the six themes obtained from the process of coding and analysis. As explained in the methodology chapter, these six themes of analysis derive from the connections found in the commonality of topics that were coded from the transcripts. To make a more detailed examination of each theme, a selection of the most representative quotes was included to demonstrate how these themes come to be. These are also separated by sub-categories that provide a rounder analysis of their meaning. Theory on populist mobilizations is used to make sense of the themes and to assess their importance for the research questions.

6.1. Gender in Education

The analysis of the first theme, Gender in Education, is centered around the debates created by the use and existence of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum, going from the way the Ministry explains it to the way it is verbally interpreted by congresspeople. In this section, the quotes selected reflect different ways to refer and interpret the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, exposing an intentional misinterpretation of what the curriculum presents. In addition, some of the quotes are dissected using characteristics of anti-gender campaigns as populist mobilizations, such as rumor bomb proliferation. “Rumor bombs”, as explored in the theoretical framework section, have been a distinct feature of anti-gender campaigns and populist politics.

6.1.1. The Ministry’s understanding of “Gender”

The two ministers of education that speak in the two congress sessions refer to the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in two distinct ways: gender roles in terms of violence against women, and discrimination by sexual orientation. Regarding gender roles and violence, Minister Alfaro says the following:

When we talk about gender, we are talking about the most important issues now: the reduction of violence against women. We are talking about the roles that society gives men and women that we have to change. We have to tell men that they can stay at home, and women can go to work and there's nothing wrong with that. We have to tell men that if a woman rejects him, he doesn't need to get frustrated to the point of committing violent acts against her. And to fight that, the tool of gender is very kind because it allows more than to tell people's sexual or biological origin, to tell which roles to change in society that have been assigned to those biological sexes. (Alfaro, translation, July 4, 2018).

Minister Alfaro makes a connection between using “gender” in the curriculum as a tool to reduce violence against women” recognizing that the ways people are socialized in the country are an important issue that should be address in education. Minister Pablo, on the other hand, emphasizes the points of the previous minister about eliminating negative gender stereotypes, but also adds to her speech:

The gender approach also prooves respect toward all people with no distinction. And I will say this with clarity, with no distinction of their sexual orientation. We cannot allow, such as the case of a school when I was regional director, a case where a youngster, an adolescent, that had been drowned, put on a water cylinder for being homosexual. Nobody deserves to suffer any mistreatment, discrimination and even less for their sexual orientation. We recognize and we all know that the second cause for bullying is homophobia in schools. And I think, ladies and gentlemen, that this is unacceptable (Pablo, translation, May 9, 2019).

Essentially, the two ministers present the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género as a method to close the gap of inequality between men and women, which is the same information given in the curriculum. However, when Minister Pablo clarifies that the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género also tackles discrimination due to sexual orientation, this is something that is not explicitly mentioned in that specific section of the curriculum. References to the issue of discrimination are only stated in two of the “expected competencies” that students must have at the end of their education: “Construction of Identity” and “Coexists and Lives Democratically in The Search for Benefit of All”. While all the seven methodologies, including the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género are meant to be infused in the list of competencies, the description of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género makes it clear that its purpose is to hold “in equal value the different behaviors and needs of women and men” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016, p. 23).

Therefore, it is necessary to mention that while these arguments of the construction of gender roles, violence against women, and discrimination by sexual orientation could be of importance to the Ministry of Education and state policies of gender equality, the curriculum, as it is written, does not offer more than a guide to what is expected in the classroom in terms of values and attitudes in the education process. This could be interpreted as the first steps to make the National Plan for Gender Equality more present in multiple instances of government and therefore, working on the institutionalization of feminist politics. The arguments are used as ways to justify the need for a Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in educational policies, but do not seem to be intended as clarifications on its practical use in the classroom which is necessary to clarify in order to establish its importance and relevancy in the curriculum. It is possible that the lack of details is a way for the Ministry to enter a territory of fundamentalist issues with which it does not want to deal.

6.1.2. Congresspeople Against “Gender”

This lack of solid explanation and the use of instrumental arguments as seen before creates additional conflict with anti-gender congresspeople as they focus on giving more etymological explanations of “gender” and the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. Congressman Tubino says that

In conclusion, the term gender has evolved, differentiating itself from the word sex, to express the reality of the men and women roles situation as social constructs, subject to change. That human beings are neutral when they are born and we can choose to be men, women, or a combination of both when we grow up. We are concerned that that stream of thought is nailed in the social, political, and legal contemporary discourse. It does not promote equality between sexes (Tubino, translation, May 9, 2019).

Here, congressman Tubino takes issue with the term “gender”, rather than with the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género and the curriculum contents, his critiques are related to what the term means rather than the purpose to which the Ministry refers. As the literature review presents, anti-gender campaigners think of gender and sex as inseparable, so the feminist position that the gender identity of a person is influenced by their social reality transgresses their beliefs rooted in Christian ideology. Their understanding of “men and women” is fixed, and it should be talked about “sex” because biological essentialism does not distinguish biological sex from gender identity, therefore, using the term “gender” in the curriculum seems confrontational, regardless of how it is being used as a methodology for education.

In another instance, congressman from Fuerza Popular, Angel Neyra reads a definition of “gender ideology” as encompassing four dimensions:

It says it has 4 dimensions and there is that confusion here. 4 dimensions, or 4 types. But in dissociation. [Reads] "Gender identity identifies what the person feels, and it can coincide or not with biological sex. Biological sex, the body that one is born with. Gender role, social role, man, or woman, that is determined by society. And sexual orientation, to whom a person is attracted to" [Stops reading] All those concepts, here there's a mingle. (...) [Starts reading] "The approach or ideology of gender, as the ideology to distort the fundamental principle of democracy". That is what we are discussing. Liberty. [Reads] "Refers to freedom of thought of the individual, as to say the personal self (Neyra, translation, May 9, 2019)

This claim that the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género goes against democracy and freedom fits the description of a rumor bomb. As explained in page the theoretical framework section, a rumor bomb is a strategy, it serves the purpose of creating an emotional claim that does not suit the reality. It is designed to create controversy everywhere anti-gender campaigners strategically use questionable sources to bring forward emotional claims. It is unclear how the four dimensions he attributes to gender ideology (gender identity, biological sex, gender roles and sexual orientation) result in a disruption of democracy. His conclusion is inconsistent with the information he is giving about "gender ideology" as he is defining concepts and immediately claiming those ideas disrupt democracy and freedom without any reasoning behind. Congressman Neyra intentionally makes this connection to appeal to the fear that, through a perspective of gender in education, the population might lose their autonomy. That is why he uses descriptions of identity and sexuality

As noted in the transcript, congressman Neyra reads what seems like a pre-written script. In congress sessions, congresspeople have no impediment of using or reading in their

interventions. However, at no point during his intervention there is an explanation of the sources of his quotes, so, it is not possible to know if these are his own words. Regardless, the statement continues to be a rumor bomb because the claim of an anti-democratic gender approach is not supported by the evidence in the curriculum. The definitions do not provide a reason to qualify the educational methodology as restrictive of a person's autonomy. Those claims pander to emotional outrage over an unsupported information.

6.1.3. Congresspeople in Favor of “Gender”

In the case of congresspeople in favor of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, congresswoman Glave presents her reasons on why it is important in relation to the other Enfoques proposed in the curriculum:

But we include the interculturality approach because we are a post-colonial country.

Because here existed a colonial process, based on racial differentiation at many times. (...)

And the gender approach is necessary because we as women have lived a historical

discrimination. The patriarchal system and machismo exist since long ago. And

confronting power inequality that this type of pattern has represented requires a specific approach in education (Glave, translation, May 9, 2019).

This statement seems closer to what is presented in the curriculum regarding “equal valorization of men and women”, while adding feminist politics on historical power inequality. In addition, this argument responds to the common anti-gender tactic seen during the congress sessions, that there is no need to create a new approach that deals with gender because the other approaches already consider inclusivity and no discrimination. This is seen in the framing of the interpellation questionnaire in page 62. This tactic of suppression is a way to erase the relevancy of gender inequality from a political discussion that could redefine the social meaning. Ignoring

a separate discussion and policy consideration of the topic only contributes to the issue being forgotten and never challenged.

Another common argument in favor of the Enfoque in the congress sessions is the need for “integral sex education”. The curriculum mentions this topic in the “Identity” competency that reads “[Students should] Identify situations that attempt the sexual and reproductive rights and propose guidelines to prevent and protect themselves from those” (Ministerio de Educación, 2016) and this is related to the principle of Justice in the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género section. Regarding this issue, congressman De Belaunde says:

So, if we keep with the mindset that a 13-year-old cannot receive the info that they need, of sex education. Because in reality "we are perverting them". That kid is going to receive inadequate sources. And we will create schemes and patterns of violence. Schemes where women are treated as objects and not subjects of rights. And they will receive information that will keep the *machista* structures that damage the integrity of our boys and girls and adolescents. If we do not give an integral sex education according to each development stage, we are not giving them the tools for them to defend themselves from abuse (De Belaunde, translation, May 9, 2019).

Congress De Belaunde refers to integral sex education because the topic was subject of critique in some instances of the debate. While the congressman’s arguments find support in the official documents, it should be noted that it continues to rely on the “expected outcomes” of the gender approach in the face of anti-gender campaigns that directly questions the use of the word “gender” to begin with. The inclusion of “integral sex education” in the array of criticisms by anti-gender campaigns regarding the curriculum demonstrates that in reality, the issue is not

merely the use of the term “gender” in the context of equality of opportunities. The extent of control that campaigners seek reaches reproductive rights and information distributed in schools. And while this discussion did not fully develop in the congress sessions used for this study, congressman De Belaunde uses this topic following the comments by other congresspeople regarding children’s innocence. The push back from anti-gender campaigners toward sex education is an attempt to control the body by restricting what children in school can and cannot know, and the campaigners disguise their arguments under the premise of a “gender ideology” to avoid being questioned about this.

6.2. Ideology and Terrorism

6.2.1. Approach vs. Ideology

As seen throughout the Presentation of Data and the analysis of the first theme, anti-gender congresspeople use the term “ideology” as an equivalent to “approach” or “perspective” when talking about the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género. In the curriculum and in the Plan Nacional de Igualdad de Género (National Plan of Gender Equality), the official name for this perspective is “Enfoque de Igualdad de Género” or “Gender Equality Approach”. Given that most congress interventions do not use the correct full name, this shows an added issue when making differentiation between the term “gender” and the approach in the curriculum. However, anti-gender congresspeople are emphatic in talking about the Gender Equality Approach and Gender Ideology as one and the same.

In a direct response to some of the words of Minister Alfaro in the 2018 session, congressman Rosas says the following:

Because, also, in his statements in El Comercio [newspaper] he says, ‘I want to be convincing’ he says, uh! The minister of education. ‘I want to be convincing about the

position in the MINEDU [Ministry of Education]’. He is not talking about his personal point of view. ‘In the MINEDU’! Post-politics. Public policy. ‘Gender equality is a tool that we have to use to eradicate violence against women from the schools’ We are talking about gender equality. That means, he is talking from an ideology. From an ideologized perspective!’ (Rosas, translation, July 4, 2018).

Without going into details of what constitutes an ideology and how it is the same as the gender perspective adopted in the curriculum, congressman Rosas uses “ideology” and “ideologized” perspective in a derogatory way, as if the ministry has exposed their bad faith in using “gender equality”. This issue comes from the previous theme where anti-gender congresspeople do not accept the word “gender” given its connection to feminist studies, and where there is no consensus over biological essentialism. As the literature shows, “gender ideology” is conceived as an empty vessel term that lumps together misconceptions over feminist influenced policy (same-sex marriage, gender equality, rights to abortion, etc.). Thus, for anti-gender campaigners, the mere use of the word “gender” in any administrative or policy issue, categorically affirms the “gender ideology” they believe in, and for that, it must be opposed.

6.2.2. The Politics of “Ideology”

In tandem with the confusion between approach and ideology, I would argue that the vilification of the term “ideology” responds to the populist strategies that characterize anti-gender campaigns. ‘Gender Ideology’ is recognized as the enemy, but in order to ascribe an evil nature that instills fear, questioning the etymology of the word gender is not enough. A disagreement over academic and Catholic understandings of the body, sex and gender is hard to present to the public for a mobilization that seeks public support in order to have political power.

Instead, it is necessary to create a narrative that resonates with contemporary Peruvian history. Intervenor Calambrogio says in her 2018 speech:

There are two Marxist ideologies that are predominating in education. One is terrorism: The Shining Path's thought [or "doctrine"]. The Gonzalo's thought [or "doctrine"]. It is communism. And the other is Marxism, the cultural Marxism of gender ideology or of the gender approach. And the bias is there (Calambrogio, translation, July 4, 2018).

In the attempt to characterize the ideology of the terrorist group, Shining Path as being the same as the "gender ideology", anti-gender campaigners frame the *enemy* as dangerous and with the potential of being responsible for the mass murders of thousands of Peruvians. This fear-inducing strategy antagonizes the government in multiple fronts: by attributing a false concept such as the "gender ideology" to the Ministry's curriculum, and by painting them as a morally deviant elite who seeks to impose that "ideology".

Ideology, as a term, can be simply defined as an "interconnected set of assumptions, beliefs, values, and ideas that guides how people think about and evaluate issues" (Newman, 2008, p. 298). However, in the political level, ideologies can also define how societies organize themselves and that has been with criticism historically (Schwarzmantel, 2008). This negative understanding of the term "ideology" is amplified by anti-gender campaigners:

[Reads] "The *ideology* approach [emphasis added] is a neo terrorism against the fundamental freedom of the individual. It is the first strategy to ridicule our weak democracy with the objective of taking power. Where the militants of this approach see the state as a money maker for a class unable to exercise power under democracy when this gender approach strategy show a new terrorism that wants to install a tyranny. The

gender approach, promoted by the state from the Ministry of Education, creates distrust about its [the Ministry's] own capacity to think about those problems that really matter to them" (...) "The gender approach is strategy to distract democracy through... [Mic cuts off] ... through the weakening of family traditions, of its individual freedom in relation to their thinking and decisions. They say, we cannot allow the politization of this topic against education. We will not allow, either, that the political structure and its resources are used to smuggle the gender ideology or approach, distorting the mind of our children and adolescents without the consent of their parents. That is neo terrorism. That is a crime against humanity. It is an aberrant ideology against nature in the diversification of the natural definition of the genders (Neyra, translation, May 9, 2019).

These are the words of congressman Neyra, who in the previous theme has also mentioned that the "gender ideology" was anti-democratic. And perhaps this is why he so often talks about the threat to democracy in these debates. Despite the lack of arguments to justify the claims of an anti-democratic ideology, the "gender ideology", and indirectly, the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is presented as an enemy that the public can recognize and rally against, while also affirming the conflict between Christian and Feminist politics regarding the understanding of the term "gender".

6.3. Foreign Influence

Another topic of discussion present in the congress sessions is the influence of international forces, either in favor or against the use of a perspective of gender in education. As seen in the theme of Ideology and Terrorism, the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is viewed as an

ideology that poses drastic changes to the country's democratic systems. However, in this section we will explore the different kinds of foreign influences that seem to prevail in the debate.

6.3.1. The Sustainable Development Goals

During the speeches of congresswoman Montenegro in 2018, and Minister Pablo in 2019, a common reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 was made in order to justify the highlight the importance of gender equality in education. Minister Pablo says:

The development objective #5 of the 2030 agenda, as you may know, poses the objective of gender, and to finally eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Equality between the genders is not only a fundamental human right, but an indispensable condition to achieve a peaceful, prosper and sustainable world. (...) Because equality is a right and a principle that should guide political decisions (Pablo, translation, May 9, 2019).

This is a relevant position from the Ministry because it shows that the inclusion of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum not only comes from the work that the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations in the creation of the National Plan of Equality, but also from the mainstreaming of women issues adopted to the guidelines for social development.

In addition, "gender" is also used in the Sustainable Development Goals to refer to equality for women and girls. Thus, the wording is perceived to be against Christian politics. The Ministry's allusion to the UN is a matter of conflict and suspicion on the part of anti-gender campaigners. This is because it implies that using a Enfoque de Igualdad de Género solely responds to foreign interests. Even if the Sustainable Development Goal emphasizes an interest

in eliminating discrimination, which should also be of Peruvian interests, they cannot be accepted by anti-gender campaigners as they do not explicitly reinforce Christianity,

6.3.2. Peru vs. The World

When discussing foreign influences in the sessions, an interesting claim is made by congressman Rosas about “sex changes” in Spain was that “children get sex changes” since they are 5 years old. He claims that this is product of “being taught to explore their sex”, where “sex” seems to refer to sexuality instead of biological determinants. This claim implies that the discussion of sex and sexuality in education is only of foreign influence, and that its purpose is “sex changes” for children. Regardless of the Spanish laws for gender transition procedures, the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in Peru does not include any mentions of such laws, nor “sex changes”. This tactic benefits from the fact that during the congress session it is not possible to verify if the claims about Spanish laws and regulations are truthful. And even so, such claims should not inform a debate on the education curriculum in Peru.

Now, if for some colleagues there is no issues with their children being taught to explore their sex at an early age, I pity those kids. Here we have to inform ourselves at the international level. Just like in Spain children get sex changes at 5 years old. With tax money. If you have not read that, then where does ignorance come from? That is why family parents are outraged. Family parents demand! Some say, “where [does it] come from?” They want to ignore it on purpose and intentionally. We cannot allow the gender approach to be implemented in the country's education. On the contrary, an education with principles and values should be implemented since that is what Peru requires, Mrs. president (Rosas, translation, July 4, 2018).

Anti-gender campaigners talk about “pitying children” and the misuse of “tax money” in order to scare the public and attribute the responsibility for this rumor bomb to the Ministry, furthering their characterization as the enemy who promotes “gender ideology” and puts the country at risk. These types of claims are used in the sessions as foreign threats embedded in populist characteristics of nostalgia. Congressman Tubino says the following about some differences with the past and present:

To say in addition, Mrs. minister, and to all the country, that it concerns us, for example, a series of topics that we see influence our country from abroad. Therefore, when we talk about gender approach, the first thing that concerns us, and some think is an exaggeration, is the term gender. Because in our country we have always seen the term gender as a difference between men and women. But that does not happen now in the world anymore. And that is a topic that we must debate (Tubino, translation, May 9, 2019).

This shows that foreign influences are not only discussed in terms of the consequences of the “gender approach” but also in terms of how concepts change over time and how they compare to the reality Peruvians live in. However, when congressman Tubino says that in Peru, gender has always been about the “difference between men and women”, he is using nostalgia to refer to the authentic past that has been lived and differentiating it from the concerning foreign influence of the “gender approach”.

Using misleading information about Spanish laws and pretending that there has ever been a Peruvian definition of gender can be seen as tactics to bring forward nationalist sentiments. By using an unverified claim to make an example of another country, anti-gender campaigners instill fear about the consequences of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in education and also on

definitions of gender differences that are not universal truths. Anti-gender campaigners need to situate themselves as defenders of the true “Peruvian values” that can only be the same as Christian values and are only sovereign when they remain unchanged and separated from feminist-informed social changes.

6.4. Status Quo Defiance

In this theme there are five different areas that fall under the umbrella of change and *status quo* defiance. This means that the topics presented in Chapter Five are seen as issues that anti-gender campaigners see with apprehension on the assumption that the gender ideology, through the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is going to challenge the typical perception and understanding of them. In order to provide a more robust analysis, those five areas have been condensed in three points of analysis where the theoretical framework can aid to comprehend.

6.4.1. Sense of Identity

One of the important characteristics of populist mobilizations is the need to create a temporary sense of identity to unify supporters despite their differences. And while it is important to define and characterize the ‘enemy’, it is also necessary to give a name to those who the enemy threatens. In the case of the Peruvian anti-gender campaigns with the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, congresspeople refer to ‘family parents’ as the representatives of a bigger collective group. Congresswoman Noceda says:

Many times, we demand tolerance while being completely intolerant. When we simply think differently. But what have we seen? The prime minister disqualifying a group of family parents. Some congresspeople refer to family parents as liars, disqualifying always disqualifying. And what is it that we saw in the school textbooks? Also, permanently

disqualifying the values and the traditions of our peoples. Mistreating a group of the population. (Noceda, translation, May 9, 2019).

First, Noceda claims that there is a mistreatment by congresspeople, and that those “mistreated” are family parents. Not only she assumes that there is a consensus on these issues among parents, but also furthers the antagonization of government institutions in relation to a supposed common interest. This is an important fact because when she uses “family parents”, she refers to the “parents” organizations (for example, Padres en Accion) who lead the lawsuit against the education curriculum, and whose representative (Mrs. Calambrogio) spoke at the 2018 congress session. Congresswoman Noceda assumes a position of defense of this organization claiming that they are being “disqualified” yet seems to purposely refer to them as “family parents” to evoke representativity and a populist sense of identity. The tactic is to set up a direct confrontation between the state and the public over the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, while giving the sense of a hostile environment where the public, in the form of “family parents” are being ignored.

In the same quote, Mrs. Noceda says that there is a permanent disqualification of “the values and traditions of our peoples”. This critique lacks an explanation of what “values” and “traditions” she refers to, and most importantly, who the “peoples” are. Similarly, to how the term “family parents” was used, the “people” is an important unifier in populist mobilizations. Anti-gender campaigns use the words “values” and “traditions” to refer to their own sets of beliefs, which are based on Catholicism given the origins of these mobilizations. However, by ascribing those values” and “traditions” to a bigger collective, such as the Peruvian “people”

those “values and traditions” become universal. Thus, the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género becomes a threat to everyone’s values and traditions, even if not everyone believes in them.

Language is another point of unification for anti-gender sentiments. Congressman Miyashiro says:

If we read a little about what the Real Academia Espanola [Royal Spanish Academy] says, it is an aberration to use “todos, todes or to-@-s [“at sign” is used in the speech] And what’s being called inclusive language is clear proof that our educational system is being introduced with an ideology that is alien to the Peruvian people’s will, to whom we are compromised to serve (Miyashiro, translation, May 9, 2019).

Gender inclusive language is not a feature of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum, yet it is attributed to the educational system to prove the disruptive nature of the public policies on gender in the anti-gender narrative. Therefore, by using a false claim over the use of a language that is “alien” to Peruvians, anti-gender campaigners can still call a shared sense of outrage to hypothetical changes to the way they speak and understand the world.

6.4.2. Defending Children and Families

In the context of the European anti-gender campaigns and following the lawsuit to the curriculum of education, it is expected that one of the most discussed topics is the apparent threat that the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género means to the wellbeing of children, especially in a discussion about education. Congresswoman Arimborgo makes a strong accusation:

But, what about the kids? Do they not count? Kids should be respected. (...) And it does not matter due to the corruption in the Education Ministry, whose function now it’s exactly the contrary of taking care of the integrity of children. That Ministry, systematically, with

ill intent, with treachery, it has organized a pseudo-educative plan. Its purpose is to destroy children and teenagers' innocence. This corruption is worse than the Brazilians! It is the one that pretends to make victims out of the bodies and souls of our children! (Arimborgo, translation, May 9, 2019).

First, Arimborgo accuses the ministry of purposely wanting to 'destroy children's innocence' with the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, taking away its educative nature by calling it "pseudo-educative". Anti-gender campaigners use this fear tactic because the wellbeing of children is, in essence, a big part of the purpose of education. Calambrogio does not provide an explanation on how the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género victimizes children's "bodies and souls" unless one assumes the veracity of the claims of other congresspeople regarding "sex change" and "neo-terrorism".

Congresswoman Arimborgo also compares the implementation of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género to the corruption cases involving the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht with the Peruvian government. Therefore, anti-gender campaigners in the congress sessions use combined strategies to create distrust in the institutions by their "morally deviant" acts, even when they are not necessarily related.

In the case of the debates on the "family", multiple speakers in both sessions attributed a disruptive quality that the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género presents, without necessarily offering specific reasoning outside of what the school textbooks do not explicitly mention. Intervenor Calambrogio claims that there is a lack of information about the family in contrast with discussions about love and sexuality in the textbooks:

There is not a single mention about marriage and family in the 3 books. When marriage and the family are values that the constitution, in article 4, protects and promotes.

However, none of the texts mention a single thing about marriage and family. . It only talks about falling in love, sexuality and having a partner! I am sorry, but spouses and marriage are not only about couples. It is more than that. And it is not possible that our children are not being taught that. Later we will complain about family ruptures, about why there are no family values! (Calambrogio, translation, July 4, 2018).

Mrs. Calambrogio uses the constitution to justify her disapproval, and refers to article four of the Peruvian constitution that reads:

The community and the State specially protect the child, the adolescent, the mother, and the elderly in situation of abandonment. It also protects the family and promotes marriage. It recognizes these last two as natural and fundamental institutes of society. The type of marriage and the causes of separation and dissolution are regulated by law (Const. Art.4).

For Calambrogio, the omission of the ‘family’ as a constitutional value in the school textbook, and by association, the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum, ultimately implies a threat of said institution. It also disregards the purpose of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the curriculum as it is written in the official document. For anti-gender campaigners, it is unacceptable that the Ministry does not use the terms “family” and “marriage” as important values in education, yet it is left to say what kind of discussion about these issues they want to promote. Given that during the debates, they argued that education, in terms of gender and sexuality, should be the parents’ responsibility, it remains unclear how far they want the government to take the conversation of those “values. Therefore, these claims by anti-gender campaigners expose that the intention of their lawsuits to regulate terms in the curriculum, not

come only from an etymologic critique of the term “gender” as being different than biological “sex”, but also from the need to impose their own beliefs on how a “family” should be and how a couple should act.

6.4.3. Homophobia

The discussion about homophobia is included in this section because it shows a point of conflict due to the perception of anti-gender campaigners regarding sexual orientation and how they talk about it in terms of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género and other congresspeople.

Congressman Rosas says:

We are not homophobic. A homophobic is the one who hates a person. We do not hate. Here in this congress and in other place we have people who have publicly confessed being homosexual. I have just gifted a bible to a colleague who has publicly confessed [their] sexual orientation. I shook his hand, I greeted him. Of course, we are colleagues at work. There is no hate, president. Nowhere. We teach to respect everybody. (Rosas, translation, May 9, 2019).

In order to defend himself and anti-gender campaigners of homophobia claims, Rosas prides himself on gifting a bible to his colleague while still using the term “confess” to refer to the sexual orientation of a person, as if it was a sin. Congressman Rosas adds afterwards,

What happens is that there is a hypersensitivity. “Do not look at me! Do not say [that] to me. Do not talk to me!”. And they call us homophobic. On the contrary, as Christians we love people. And we have many friends and people who left that orientation and decided to recover their natural identity (Rosas, translation, May 9, 2019).

Using a term like “hypersensitivity” when attempting to deflect the homophobia present in many anti-gender mobilizations, is contradictory in his claims of respect for people. Anti-gender campaigners shield their position with the claims that, as Christians, they “love people”, yet they reaffirm the notion that gay people should “recover their natural identity”. For that reason, it is possible to make a connection between the Christian understanding of the sexuality and the body and how it clashes with educational policy that openly opposes discrimination of the basis of sexual orientation. While this topic is not part of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género section, anti-gender campaigners in the congress sessions had denounced homosexual relationships in one literature book for high school students and described it as an “aberration”, and they had also shared homophobic jokes referencing the only two gay congresspeople in that period without further warnings.

Congressman Bruce, who is openly gay, counterargues Rosas’ claims about homophobia by saying: “...in the demonstrations of Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas [Anti-gender group referenced in the introduction], I can show the pictures with my image and an unrepeatable phrase in this congress” (Bruce, translation, May 9, 2019). In that context, there is a substantial contradiction in the words of congressman Rosas and what anti-gender groups do in their public demonstrations. Rosas himself refuses to identify himself in congress as homophobic, yet his religious and political could be interpreted to the contrary. During both congress sessions, when the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is discussed, there is homophobic language and views that are seen as normal and part of the status quo of Peruvian politics. Hence the discomfort when these behaviors are being questioned in these debates.

6.5. Religious Morals

Comparably to Status Quo Defiance, this theme has four different areas where religious morals have been discussed one way or another. Chapter five presents all four of them, but in order to develop an appropriate analysis, two points of discussion result more practical when dealing with topics that contradict and oppose themselves.

6.5.1. *Contradictory Messages*

In an interesting part of the discussion about the moral ethics of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, congressman Donayre pleads for the religiosity of other authorities: “If we had authorities that are close to God, from ministers, presidents, politicians and all, there would not be so many thieves, so many abusive people, so many corrupt people!” (Donayre, translation, July 4, 2018). This is a relevant take on the discussion of morals because congressman Donayre was the person who made the homophobic jokes referred in the previous theme. The congressman implies that being “closer to god” could reduce deviant behavior in authorities. This is the characteristic of a populist mobilization that antagonizes the elites and places the population as being better, in this case, actually close to God. Despite the fact that Peru is a laic country, the connotation of congressman Donayre’s remarks goes unquestioned because in practice, this is not a principle that is rigorously hold by all levels of governance.

On the opposite side of the spectrum of morals, other anti-gender congresspeople try to distance their positions from the religious standpoint. Instead, they appeal to the notion of universal principles. Congressman Rosas says:

We are talking about principles, about values that have no religious color. That do not have political tint. They transcend because those principles and values are universal and eternal. And kids should be educated by making them respect their identity from their

birth. It is either man or woman. And to teach them like that as they grow up (Rosas, translation, July 4, 2018).

In contrast with the position of congressman Donayre, Rosas appeals to universality and not religiosity despite having other anti-gender campaigners use Christian values in their interventions. In the same speech, he explains those “eternal” values as the fundamental difference between men and women. Given that anti-gender campaigns position themselves direct Catholic response to feminist studies and the evolution of feminist understanding of sex and gender, it is telling that they purposely try to universalize their set of beliefs, stripping away its inherent religiosity. This strategy is useful when inserting intrinsically religious worldviews in a political conversation, that must reach other groups and gain popular support to put pressure on governments. In this way, the message appears less radical, less aggressive.

6.5.2. Laicity vs. Religious Conservatism

There was, however, a critique on the religious nature of the morals that anti-gender campaigners demand to be promoted. Congressman Bruce says:

I have heard that some people who have a particular religious influence do not agree with [The Gender Approach]. Here, what should be clear is that the state is laic, and it must act in terms of reason and law, and not in terms of religious values. For that, each person will educate their children in terms of their own religious values. And they will inculcate them that. Good for them. I congratulate them and there is no problem with it. But do not pretend to impose those particular values on the rest of us. Because Peru is not a theocracy. Peru is a laic country, and therefore, reason and law is what matters, not any particular religious belief. (Bruce, translation, May 9, 2019).

As explained before and despite what Bruce says, the Ministry of Education continues to allow the course “Religion Education” be taught in public schools, and while parents can opt-out on their own, it is the default in education. The state has not achieved a laic educational system and thus, it is interesting that despite all, anti-gender campaigners push the narrative that the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género is a threat to religiosity in education. While some congresspeople can argue and question the Catholic motives of anti-gender mobilizations against the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the debates, interventions that call for authorities to believe in God with no problem, as previously seen, demonstrate that anti-gender campaigns have an existing ground for continuous development. Those conditions can strengthen their political power and their ability to stay relevant over time as a populist mobilization.

In contradiction of his own message, congressman Rosas says that anti-gender campaigners are rightfully conservative: “They also call us conservatives. Yes, we are conservatives. We conserve [preserve] the moral of our homeland. The millenary culture. The Peruvian values, we conserve [preserve]” (Rosas, translation, May 9, 2019). In his defense of being identified as ‘conservative’, congressman Rosas refers to the “millenary culture” of Peru. This is a term that is often used to describe the long history of Peruvian cultures before Colonialism. By doing these comparisons, congressman Rosas uses the principle of the “heartland” in populist mobilizations to identify anti-gender campaigners as guardsmen of the values of a utopian community that was supposed to exist in the past. Later he says that,

Christian thinking vindicates equality in dignity and value of men and women for the very fact of being created by God and having its image. And that is why we defend and fight about equality for all without discrimination. The real rights (Rosas, translation, May 9, 2019)

If anti-gender campaigners are those who defend the heartland values, Rosas' confirms that the values he refers to are Christian and those are the only ones they accept. Of course, this equivalence lacks historical accuracy because the religious beliefs of the-colonial Peru were not Christian-based. In addition, the intention of anti-gender campaigners to distance themselves from religiosity is feeble as it cannot be adopted consistently when using populist strategies to gather popular support.

6.6. Scientific Authority

This final theme explores the conflict that arises over the scientific validity of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género and the way it is discussed in terms of its application in the curriculum and the textbooks.

6.6.1. The Problem with Sources

The critique of the science behind the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in the congress sessions responds to a strategy that has been previously explored in the preceding themes: distancing the mobilization from Christian ideology to justify its political actions. Intervenor Calambrogio says: "There are no real citations. Scientific articles, for example, the Meyer report, of renowned psychiatrists that has a small summary that can be used for the kids in 3rd and 4th year of secondary school, right? And they are psychiatrists, the most renowned" (Calambrogio, translation, July 4, 2018).

She brings the name of a report to create a sense of trust and knowledge for her examples, yet she omits the type of psychiatry she is referring to why it must be read by students. Therefore, this appears to be a tactic to stir the debate away from religious values, avoid facing criticism, and give an academic flare to her intervention. The anti-gender campaign has to

present itself as a coalition that overlooks its religious foundations to appeal to the unity of “people” they claim to represent.

Interestingly, there is an inherent contradiction in their attempts to use scientific sources to support their demands, when other anti-gender congresspeople have already criticized academic elitism and foreign intervention throughout the sessions. It is hard to maintain an anti-elite narrative when the arguments they use come from values tied to religious elites in the country.

During her intervention, congresswoman Arimborgo makes some strong claims about the way science determines sexuality, reproduction, and families. In the first part of her speech, she says that,

Because, putting things in their right place, the biological function of sex and its organic anatomy is reproduction and not pleasure. Being the last, only subsidiary to the first function in agreement and correction. The family has as its primary mission, the social organization of the reproduction of the species. And the protection of the offspring to achieve in a social order, the cycles of being born, growing up, reproduction and death (Arimbrogo, translation, May 9, 2019).

Despite the heavy criticism about these remarks, by other congresspeople and the media days after, it is necessary to dissect these words with more detail. Mrs. Arimborgo uses questionable claims about biology to say that sex, understood as intercourse, only serves to create families. This resonates with the anti-gender campaigners’ negative views on how sex should be discussed in education. If “sex” is viewed as a means for reproduction and family creation only, then it is logical that anti-gender campaigners only accept heterosexual relations

and the notion that “gender” should be understood as biological sex. As shown in the literature on the origins of the “gender ideology”, Arimbogo’s words are no different than Catholic ideology, so the “scientific” framework attributed is simply another example of the distancing strategy to hide anti-gender religious core in order for be politically appealing. Arimbogo adds later on,

The biological sex of reproduction [original text is unclear on the meaning] is the basis of the cycle of human life. And its social organization is the family. This is the story of humanity and what science has synthesized in knowledge, and it is the common sense of normal people (Arimbogo, translation, May 9, 2019).

Appealing to the logic of “the story of humanity” and common sense is another example of “heartlands” in populist mobilizations. It evokes the idea of the nostalgic traditional past. For anti-gender campaigners, it is important to retain the status quo of social relations in order to maintain sense of normalcy of the world. While previous congresspeople concentrated in the disruption of traditions, Arimbogo uses “humanity” in an effort to remind the audience of the things that they have in common against the intervention of the governing elites. Of course, it is a reasonable move to preserve the “story of humanity” for campaigners, while also defending the natural processes of the cycle of life. But this becomes a deceptive tactic of anti-gender campaigners because there are no threats to the cycle of life, and there are no threats to humanity in the information of the National Curriculum. Referring to the methodologies of gender equality in the classroom as being a threat for humanity is intentionally creating a rumor bomb based on misconceptions. This, of course, could be refuted in a debate, yet the post-truth nature of this claims makes it difficult to critique narratives that intend to present alternative facts as irrefutable truths.

In her criticism of “normal people”, Mrs. Calambrogio fails to account for a clear definition of what constitutes normalcy in themes of family, reproduction, and biology. Given that her criticism attempts to come from a place of informed and scientific knowledge, it is, once again, contradictory that her intervention avoids a critical assessment of how families, reproduction and sexuality are studied today. This is more clearly seen in her use of biology to reduce human and sexual interactions as merely reproductive. This view pretends to make use of biology, on a surface level, to justify the backlash and criticism that the curriculum has sparked amounts anti-gender campaigners. There is not a comprehensive perspective of emotional or behavioral biology and the social impact of education.

In a way, these type of inaccurate narratives about science denote that anti-gender campaigns are capable of distorting knowledge and nit-picking information to fit specific claims and avoid questioning and critical thinking. Anti-gender campaigners are aware that, in the context of congress sessions where a minister is called to attend, there is little room for debate and questioning of ideas. Therefore, it is much easier to present claims that can be circulated as their “real truth” dressed as science and unbiased knowledge. Similar narratives have continuously circulated in the media prior to the congress sessions and the reinforcement of such claims in a political space without room for replica contributes to more misinformation.

6.7. Discussion

Through the identification and organization of these six themes of analysis, this study offers an answer for the main research question about the central themes that create conflict between Christian and Feminist politics and motivate the political involvement of anti-gender campaigners in Peruvian congress. The central themes are Gender in Education, Ideology and

Terrorism, Foreign Influence, Status Quo Defiance, Religious Morals and Scientific Authority. Within their analyses, these themes offer many tactics of populist mobilizations that anti-gender campaigns in Peru successfully use to attract support and create political conflict in congress.

In the discussion of the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género, the anti-gender campaign in Peru has led the political fight against this new methodological approach informed by feminist thought, not only in the curriculum of education, but as a new topic of interest for the state. Anti-gender campaigners have demonstrated that they can gather public support with massive participation, but also that they are able to push for their interests within congress. The themes identified as the central topics of conflict for Christian and Feminist politics show that anti-gender campaigners use different types of issues of concern for Christian politics and assign them, without evidence, to the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género in order to push their political project.

As discussed in chapter 3, populist mobilizations exist for the purpose of fostering political projects that aim to change nation-state relationships. Through the six themes identified in this study, anti-gender campaigns reveal themselves to use populist tactics of anti-elitism and nationalism in favor of placing themselves as a Christian political project that can confront the “pervasiveness” of the current state. And this is possible not because the state has completely dropped its Christian values, but because it is *starting* to adopt feminist-influenced policy. The mere attempt to introduce reforms that do not align with Christian politics is threatening to the hegemonic social meanings that exist given the great influence of Christianity through Catholic and Evangelical churches in Peru.

This Christian political project nourish itself with the patriarchal ideology in Christianity that based on the premise of the innocence of children and the protection of the *family*, seeks to

dismiss women and LGBT rights regarding gender-based violence, discrimination, and equality. By taking advantage of the hegemonic nature of Christianity in Peru, the course of action of Christian politics of converging their religious ideologies with the permanence of ministers contributes to political instability and the threat to government institutions. It is an effective political project because its populist tactics easily capture popular support given the hegemony of Christianity in Peru. Patriarchy in politics can be exercised with ease because feminisms are only represented in specific reforms coming from governments rather than a strong social movement with multiple representatives in congress and other institutions. Being that Christian values are already hegemonic in status and reputation; it seems apparent from the congress sessions analysed that a political project that uses populist mobilization tactics can easily frame issues of gender-based violence and discrimination as disruptive and worth eliminating from public policy.

In this way, we can answer the secondary research question, that the goal of the socio-political conflict that anti-gender campaigns bring is to establish a strong and popular project with Christian and patriarchal values that cannot be challenged by new public policies that recognizes gender as a marker of inequality and that must be addressed in education. And while this is a Christian political project, it does not limit itself to promoting said dogma, but to use that in favor of political control and power over government institutions, hence why these debates are in the Peruvian congress agenda. In addition, the reason why this project has to be studied as a populist mobilization, is because the theory allows us to see it as a populist political practice that will most definitely adapt its strategy according to how much public policy continues to change and the extent of feminist interventions in state decision-making.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Relevancy

Through this qualitative study of anti-gender campaigns in Peru articulated in a specific policy debate in Congress, it is possible to deepen our understanding of the relevance of populist mobilizations in the field of contemporary political sociology. Having explored the origins of anti-gender campaigns and the challenges they present for public policies; it is possible to see that these types of political projects hold an important significance in the field. Political actions are also informed by feminist movements that call for political leaders to address gender inequalities around the world. Peru is not an exception to these actions. Here, I argue that the inclusion of feminist mobilizations in public policy is evident in educational reforms. Furthermore, we see a resistance to those changes. Examining this conflict and analyzing the specific way these tensions present is important in political sociology. As this case demonstrates, within political action we can observe efforts to take control of the definition of “gender” either as a component of how we understand inequality, violence, and respect for others; or as a signal (‘dog whistle’) in order to limit attempts at transformation of social relations and other forms of change.

This study clarifies that anti-gender campaigns are not *in opposition* to social movements that fall along different ideological axes, but that they seek to block reforms, and narrow or broad, social changes that impact the status quo. As I argue in this paper, anti-gender campaigners are informed by Christian dogma on gender, sex, and sexuality. I further argue that these factors are rendered significant due to Christian hegemony, which has been the moral compass for many countries where Catholicism has greatly influenced social interactions. It is thus logical that anti-gender campaigns gather popular support when they suggest that (feminist-

informed) social changes threaten Christian world views. Crucially, the extent of intervention that these campaigns seek can interfere with political processes and the institutional stability of an entire nation. Hence this study identifies congress as the site where power struggles occur and the specific—school curriculum reforms—becomes the focus of the broad—making Christianity synonymous with Peruvian nationality. The re-framing of the ‘language’, or concepts, used by feminist activists and scholars, focusing on words such as ‘gender’ and re-pitching them as “gender ideology” serve as “emotional epistemic loops” of information (Harsin, 2018, p. 42) that in turn sabotage political gains and preserve the *status quo*.

7.2. Limitation of the Study

A limitation of this study is that it centers its attention to the political intervention of anti-gender campaigns in congress and not the public activities of organizations such as “Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas” or “Padres en Accion”. While the public demonstrations of anti-gender campaigns were not a focus when answering the research questions of this study, it is important that future research examines the impact that religious affiliations have on the successes of these groups. Some of the more vocal congresspeople against the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género were active participants within religious groups that led the protests against the education curriculum. Their presence in congress as elected officials suggest that Christian identity is one of the things that voters consider when choosing their representatives. Thus, it is important to research how Christian politics are validated in the first place.

7.3. Looking Ahead

In the search for a topic that suited my personal and academic interests, gender inequality issues were always the first to come to mind. The controversy that surrounded the education curriculum was an interesting starting point, as I envisioned this project as a means to think

through solutions to greater issues. As a researcher, I had the intention of arriving at conclusions that could be more practical and less theoretical, that could bring solutions to be included in public policies. However, during the research process, it became clear that the conversation about “gender” in and of itself, was contentious enough to prompt questions on how politically charged fundamental concepts can become. This is a challenging aspect of research as it can deter those who are interested in more practical approaches to the social sciences. Nevertheless, orienting my perspective allowed me to identify issues that I had originally taken for granted.

While it may seem that topics of gender, sex and sexuality are more easily discussed and included in political platforms as a result of decades of academic and activist work, the backlash and resistance has also become more active and vocal. It reminds us that we are still grappling with these questions: How do social structures affect our understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality? How do cultural differences affect those understandings? What can be done to improve the political approach to those issues?

As much as it is necessary to take concrete action to develop the conditions to reduce gender inequality, gender-based violence; to facilitate access to abortion and support LGBTQ rights in Peru, it is also crucial to track the resistance to even the most incremental changes. This year, during the 2021 elections, presidential and congressional candidates were asked their opinions about the Enfoque de Igualdad de Género and their intentions toward this policy. It has become a ‘lightning rod’ topic in Peruvian politics as it clearly had the capacity to attract or deter popular support. It is therefore a case study for academics who are interesting in focusing on how these topics and concepts ‘travel’ across different social groups and how they are defined in accordance with different political agendas. Academics and political actors are both implicated in public discussions, particularly when “gender” becomes a stand-in for misinformation and

fear, as much as it is an element of justice work. Language is alive and concepts have a life off the page, and as we see in Peru, feminist scholars and activists face challenges on some of the most fundamental aspects of their efforts. Locally and globally, anti-gender campaigners are attacking *words*, perhaps in the hopes that the changes brought about will crumble.

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