

University of Nevada, Reno

**Wedding Bells Ring: How One Organization Changed the Face of LGBT Rights in  
Argentina**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**BACHELOR OF ARTS, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
BACHELOR OF ARTS, SPANISH**

by

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May, 2013

**UNIVERSITY  
OF NEVADA  
RENO**

**THE HONORS PROGRAM**

We recommend that the thesis  
prepared under our supervision by

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entitled

**Wedding Bells Ring: How One Organization Changed the Face of LGBT Rights in  
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be accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **Abstract**

During the 1970s, Argentina faced a harsh military dictatorship, which suppressed social movements in Argentine society and “disappeared” nearly 30,000 people. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community became a specific target of this dictatorship. In just 40 years, the LGBT movement in Argentina has transformed from a silenced movement into one of the most successful social movements in the country. In 2010, Argentina became the first country in Latin America to pass a law allowing equal marriage. This thesis touches on the reasons the LGBT rights movement in Argentina is progressing so rapidly. In particular, it provides an analysis of the media presented to the public by the leading organization of the LGBT movement in Argentina, the Federación Argentina LGBT (FALGBT) and shows how this organization worked to influence public opinion and ultimately help pass progressive legislation.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Linda Curcio, for her unwavering guidance and encouragement throughout the entire thesis writing process. She fosters in her students a love of learning and brings to this institution a genuine excitement and a remarkable breadth of knowledge in Latin American Studies. Dr. Curcio ensured that the thesis writing experience was positive and was always available for meetings, even greeting me with a smile the many times I was waiting outside her office early in the morning. She gave me direction when my topic was insurmountable, provided me with key resources to better understand my subject, and pushed me beyond that of which I thought myself capable.

I would also like to thank the director of the Honors Program, Dr. Tamara Valentine, for providing a fulfilling learning experience in writing and defending my thesis. Dr. Valentine encouraged me to take my research to an Honors Conference in Arizona, which was a highlight of my time at the university. She is constantly searching for ways to better the program and give the students the best opportunities for education and success.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their constant love, encouragement, and last minute editing help. They continue to provide moral support in my academic endeavors and bear the brunt of my most stressful moments with open arms and caring words. My success could not have been done without them and I do not have enough words to express my gratitude.

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## Introduction

On a cold day in the middle of Argentine winter, on July 14, 2010, the Senatorial debate regarding equal marriage commenced. Inside the legislature, the Senate hotly debated the issue, neither side having a majority of votes. Outside the Senate, the public congregated with equal contention: one side wielding religion and declaring equal marriage satanic, the other armed with rainbow flags and cries for equality. As concerts played outside to audiences from across Argentina, others held their breath while listening to the debate on television and radio. July 14<sup>th</sup> was the culmination of half a century of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) activism in Argentina and a determined four-year fight for equal marriage by one organization, the Federación Argentina LGBT (FALGBT). At 4:50 in the morning on July 15, 2010, the organization's dreams were realized. The Equal Marriage Law passed in Argentina, marking an historic moment as the first equal marriage law in Latin America and opening the doors for progressive LGBT activism in years to come.<sup>1</sup>

Although recent literature has discussed the history of the LGBT movement in Argentina and developed theories regarding its success, the scholarship has not examined the cultural discourse of the organization most associated with the success of the LGBT movement in Argentina today, FALGBT. Little has been written about the pivotal role of FALGBT in creating cultural forms with a particular message designed to influence public opinion. In addition to explaining scholarly theories regarding the success of the Argentine LGBT movement, this thesis will provide an analysis of the rhetoric, imagery,

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<sup>1</sup> Osvaldo Bazán, *Historia de la homosexualidad en la Argentina: De La Conquista De America Al Siglo Xxi*, (Buenos Aires: Marea Editorial, 2010), 225.

and discourse that FALGBT used as an integral part of the organization's plan to endorse a positive image of the Argentine LGBT movement that resonated with the broader Argentine public prior to the passage of equal marriage in Argentina.

In order to examine the success of the LGBT rights movement in Argentina, it is important to look at the history of the country in relation to social movements in general. Argentina experienced a brutally harsh military dictatorship from 1976 through 1983. Social movements in Argentina today are deeply rooted in the reaction to the injustices perpetrated during and directly following the military dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> As the military regime came to an end, Argentine society was ignited by an obstinate fear of injustice and a unifying desire to extend human rights to marginalized groups of society, which translated into a dramatic increase in social activism throughout the country.<sup>3</sup> This emphasis on human rights created a space for the mobilization of an LGBT rights movement.<sup>4</sup> Within three decades, in 2010, Argentina became the first country in Latin America to pass legislation allowing LGBT marriage.<sup>5</sup>

An historical background of the LGBT rights movement in Argentina leading up to the passage of the marriage legislation and paralleling the rise in LGBT activism with the democratization of the country provides a basis for the reader to understand the historical politics of Argentina in regards to the LGBT community and activism in

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<sup>2</sup> Shawn Schulenberg, "The Construction and Enactment of Same-Sex Marriage in Argentina," *Journal of Human Rights* 11 (2012): 107.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Brown "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia: The Lesbian LGBT Movement in Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives* 29 (2002): 120

<sup>4</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 121

<sup>5</sup> Jordi Diez, "Argentina: A Queer Tango between the Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State," in *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, ed. Manon Tremblay, et al. (Ashgate: Farnham Surrey, 2011), 13.



general. This basis situates FALGBT's place in the larger Argentine LGBT movement and contributes to a better understanding of the organization's success. In order to understand FALGBT's role in influencing public perception and catalyzing governmental change to implement legislation passing LGBT marriage, it is imperative to first set the stage by examining secondary sources regarding Argentine history and social movements. Secondary source information provides a greater understanding of FALGBT's development and rationale during the fight for equal marriage. These sources attribute a multitude of reasons for this rapid progress of Argentina's LGBT rights movement. Scholars discuss the democratization of the country post-dictatorship<sup>6</sup>, the role of Argentina's court system<sup>7</sup>, the Civil Code, and the support of strong allies with political power.<sup>8</sup> The analysis of FALGBT's motives in this thesis builds upon the theories of other scholars and additionally contributes a new perspective to the progressive LGBT rights movement in Argentina.

A review of the primary sources connected to the development of FALGBT including the organization's website, social media websites, and interviews of leaders within the organization, such as the organization's creator, María Rachid, are key in understanding the goals themselves as well as the methods of achieving them. Along with working to influence public opinion, this organization has also played a fundamental role in passing LGBT legislation. By additionally examining FALGBT's influence on governmental bodies in changing the Civil Code, it becomes clear why the organization's holistic strategy in implementing change was ultimately successful. A look at media

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<sup>6</sup> Diez, "Argentina," 17.

<sup>7</sup> Diez, "Argentina," 20.

<sup>8</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 107.

presented by the LGBT movement from its creation demonstrates the initial strategy of the movement and how it developed over time. From the beginning of the LGBT movement, Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA) worked to redefine the connotations of homosexuality in the public sphere. An in-depth analysis of the pictures and rhetoric in examples from CHA shows an early intent to sway public opinion regarding homosexuality. FALGBT continued this strategy in a parallel path. FALGBT adopted and perfected this technique from CHA and used it to accomplish progressive goals.

With strong Argentine leadership and international funding, FALGBT mobilized a previously polarized movement to work toward the common goal of equal marriage. The organization consciously reformulated the image of the LGBT community by maintaining a positive and highly visible image in Argentine press. This image facilitated the solidarity and growth of the LGBT community as well as the support of allies. Among these allies, FALGBT recruited human rights activists and deliberately painted LGBT issues as human rights issues to attract the support of the Argentine public. A contrast of FALGBT's rhetoric with that of the opposing side's shows how the organization successfully combated less positive or even negative reporting in the media. The techniques and language FALGBT used to portray their organization to the public, including videos, visual texts in the form of posters, news media appearances, and photos circulated by FALGBT demonstrate the intent of the organization to change the discourse of the LGBT rights movement to a discourse of human rights and maintain media attention on LGBT activism.

The LGBT rights movement in Argentina, led by FALGBT, was able to overcome

historical stigmas against homosexuality that were interwoven into Argentine culture by heavy religious and cultural influences that encouraged homophobia. Though these stigmas were not erased, the passage of equal marriage and other progressive laws indicates a paradigm shift in the country inspired by a rise in collective activism of marginalized groups. Whether FALGBT was influential in facilitating this paradigm shift cannot be concretely answered, but research demonstrates that the organization created a meticulously executed plan to redefine the public view of the LGBT community and simultaneously mobilize and recruit new support for the progressive cause. The following chapter presents a history of cultural understandings of homosexuality in Argentina and the correlations between Argentine views of homosexuality and general societal repression. To create a foundation for the research presented in this thesis, the chapter also discusses the history of LGBT activism in Argentina.

## **A History of the LGBT Rights Movement in Argentina**

Argentina's political history, like many countries in Latin America, is fraught with violent dictatorships and revolutionary activism. The violence of the dictatorship in Argentina and the refusal of the Catholic Church to denounce this violence led to a uniquely strong backlash that has been overwhelmingly successful in furthering democratization and encouraging human rights in the country. A political, historical context is imperative to understanding the role of gay rights activists leading to the passage of LGBT marriage. The interaction of gay activists with other human rights activists in the country and abroad is helpful in demonstrating the role of the LGBT rights movement in social activism in Argentina and in illustrating the success of the movement as a whole. Although the LGBT rights movement partnered with other human rights organizations, LGBT rights organizations have had arguably more success in realizing their ultimate goals.

Historically throughout the 1930s and 1940s, under great nationalist and Catholic influence in Argentina, homosexuality was seen as “a sin, a crime, and a sickness.”<sup>9</sup> Any expressions of sexuality that did not lead to reproduction became a target of the Church, and because the Church and the government were so deeply connected, the word “homosexual” became synonymous with traitor.<sup>10</sup> This homophobia, perpetuated by the Church and government, had legislative effects. In 1946, homosexuals were prohibited from voting in the province of Buenos Aires, and, in 1951, they were banned from

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<sup>9</sup> Bazán, *Historia*, 225.

<sup>10</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 226.

enlisting in the military.<sup>11</sup> In the 1950s, the popularization of the practice of psychoanalysis in Argentina focused on “sexual interpretations of private life and experience.”<sup>12</sup> Included in this emphasis on psychoanalysis was the conceptualization of homosexuality as a disease that not only could but also should be cured through psychotherapy.<sup>13</sup> There was a shift toward more liberal views regarding sexuality and society in the 1960s and 1970s, but the politics of the time ultimately stifled activism and ensured that the LGBT rights movement in Argentina would not hold a strong public voice until the 1980s.

Oppression of sexuality was one of many social controls placed upon the Argentine public at the time. During the 1960s, political power shifted between those who wanted civilian rule and those who favored military rule.<sup>14</sup> In particular, labor unions played an important role in influencing government through political protests.<sup>15</sup> Many of the union supporters, aptly named Peronists, remained loyal to Juan Domingo Perón, who governed Argentina from 1945-1955 but was later exiled by military forces from 1955-1973.<sup>16</sup> The Armed Forces sought to stifle Peronist ideals and control the labor unions.<sup>17</sup> Military power ultimately overcame the democratic forces and installed a dictatorship under Juan Carlos Onganía (1966-1970). The nation became of greatest

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<sup>11</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 255.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo, ed., *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 352.

<sup>13</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 302.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel K. Lewis, *The History of Argentina*, (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 123.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 129.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 123.

importance and the Armed Forces held the most power in the country.<sup>18</sup> Within Onganía's Armed Forces, homosexuality was strictly regulated, and with the perpetuation of the feminine stereotype connected with homosexuality, high standards of masculinity were imposed upon the men in the army as well as within Argentine society. The army forced *machista* ideals regarding how a man should act and punished those who were considered too feminine. This perpetuation of gendered ideals reinforced the homophobia of not only the Armed Forces and government, but also of the society.<sup>19</sup>

At the beginning of the 1960s, homosexual activism was mostly confined to discreet organizations in bars. Toward the end of the 1960s, however, the movement began to formally organize. By 1969, popular protests, especially among students, broke out in full force against the dictatorship, targeting the lack of individual freedoms afforded by the controlling government.<sup>20</sup> In the midst of Onganía's dictatorship and the consequential social activism, in 1969, Héctor Anabitarte created Grupo Nuestro Mundo, the first gay organization not only in Argentina, but also in Latin America.<sup>21</sup> Grupo Nuestro Mundo merged with other groups made up of "mostly male left-wing university students, anarchists, and religious organizations" to become Frente de Liberación Homosexual (FLH) in 1971.<sup>22</sup> FLH encouraged feminist and heterosexual participation to further their goals of reshaping the societal conceptualization of sexuality that placed

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<sup>18</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 310.

<sup>19</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 326.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 335-336.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Brown, "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia: The Lesbian LGBT Movement in Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives* 29 (2002): 120.

reproduction at the heart of sexual relationships.<sup>23</sup> The group recognized the marginalization of the gay community and hoped to combat the dangers of the negative connotations associated with the word “homosexual” in society.<sup>24</sup> Activists within FLH, such as poet Néstor Perlongher, sought to ally the group with Peronism, and the group marched alongside other social activists in the fight to bring Perón out of exile in 1973.<sup>25</sup>

This diverse organization and the rise in social activism in general was the outcome of the era in which “the reshaping of the personal was seen as only the starting point for greater revolutionary transformations.”<sup>26</sup> The Cuban Revolution became an example of the power of the people to fight larger oppressive governments. Inspired by the Argentine leader of the Cuban Revolution, Ernesto “Che” Guevara, guerilla groups such as the Montoneros emerged, radicalizing politics in Argentina.<sup>27</sup> Despite the increase in social activism throughout Argentina, the push between the people and the military government resulted in military regimes in the 1970s that effectively quieted social activism for nearly a decade.

Entering the 1970s, Argentina was politically divided and facing severe economic problems.<sup>28</sup> Unable to quell the resistance movements and with an urgent need for government organization, the military forces allowed Peronists to once again participate in the elections in 1973.<sup>29</sup> Perón won reelection in June of 1973 and set to stabilize the

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<sup>23</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 342.

<sup>24</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 353.

<sup>25</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 354.

<sup>26</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 341.

<sup>27</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 342.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 132.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 135.

volatile country.<sup>30</sup> During this time, the FLH worked alongside women and union groups but chose to stay out of the public eye specifically as a gay rights organization.<sup>31</sup> Perón died in 1974 leaving behind a “hard-right, authoritarian regime” run by his widow, Isabel Perón, and a country deeply divided between leftist guerilla forces and right counter-attacks.<sup>32</sup>

The power vacuum left by Juan Perón’s absence led to a coup in 1976 headed by General Jorge Rafael Videla.<sup>33</sup> Videla’s extreme regime, called the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Proceso), focused its energy on eliminating all leftist groups that stood in opposition.<sup>34</sup> The FLH fell into this category and many members were tortured and murdered at the beginning of the coup.<sup>35</sup> Some fled, but ultimately, Videla’s rise to power silenced the gay rights movement for nearly a decade.<sup>36</sup> The year 1976 marked the beginning of *la guerra sucia* (The Dirty War) in Argentina in which the police and military captured thousands of people, whom they marked as “subversives” or “enemies of the state.”<sup>37</sup> Videla’s dictatorship, alongside those of Chile, Brazil, and Uruguay, created Operation Condor to locate and eliminate leftist opponents.<sup>38</sup> One goal of Operation Condor, publicly stated in 1982, was to eliminate homosexuals.<sup>39</sup> Under the military regime, approximately 30,000 people were “disappeared” and of these an

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 120-121.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 144.

<sup>35</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 365.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 121.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 144.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 144.

<sup>39</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 389.



estimated 400 were gay men and lesbians.<sup>40</sup> In the same year, under the name Coordinadora de Grupos Gays, some gay rights groups tried to organize a movement but were stifled by the increase in murders that occurred at the end of the dictatorship.<sup>41</sup> In 1981, Videla was replaced by General Roberto Viola, and later in the same year, General Leopoldo Galtieri seized control. Both leaders continued the work of Videla's dictatorship.<sup>42</sup>

The violence of the junta left a void for activism. In other countries such as Chile, the Catholic Church provided a formal opposition to the dictatorship.<sup>43</sup> In Argentina, however, the Church failed to separate itself fully from the Proceso.<sup>44</sup> The dilemma of moral opposition was then left in the hands of the people who began to fight for human rights through social activism. The dictatorship actively worked to silence most of this activism by detaining and disappearing members and raiding offices of protesting groups; however, certain groups managed to evade the oppressive forces. The most famous protests of the dictatorship were led by *Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* (The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) who began protesting the disappearances and the violence of the dictatorship in 1977.<sup>45</sup> Las Madres was composed primarily of women, mothers and grandmothers, protesting the disappearance of their children and grandchildren.<sup>46</sup> The women protested in the Plaza de Mayo in front of the Casa Rosada, the Argentine

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<sup>40</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 121.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 121.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 146.

<sup>43</sup> Marysa Navarro, "The Personal is Political: Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo," in *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Susan Eckstein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 248.

<sup>44</sup> Navarro, "The Personal," 248.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 148.

<sup>46</sup> Navarro, "The Personal," 249.

equivalent of the White House, in an area that had previously been host to many public protests during Perón's time and remains today a symbol of social activism.<sup>47</sup> Las Madres reached out to international human rights organizations and publicized their plight, and in turn highlighted the brutality of the Proceso, to the world.<sup>48</sup> The dictatorship, thanks in large part to Las Madres and their militancy, began to lose international standing and funding. Las Madres ultimately brought human rights to the front of the issues when the dictatorship crumbled.<sup>49</sup> The democratically elected president following the dictatorship, Raúl Alfonsín, proposed to bring justice to Argentina by placing the military officials who were responsible for the disappearances on public trial for crimes against humanity.<sup>50</sup> However, with threat of more military coups, many of the officers were pardoned, thus leaving Las Madres still searching for justice.<sup>51</sup> Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo today represent a voice of human rights in Argentina as they continue their search for justice of the disappeared.<sup>52</sup> Originally, in the 1980s, Las Madres did not support the gay rights movement, but in 1998, Hebe de Bonafini, the President and one of the founders for the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, showed her support of the Asociación Gay Argentina Contra la Opresión y la Marginación Social (AGAMOS).<sup>53</sup> Today, Hebe de Bonafini is listed as a signatory and supporter of the LGBT marriage

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<sup>47</sup> Navarro, "The Personal," 250-251.

<sup>48</sup> Navarro, "The Personal," 253

<sup>49</sup> Navarro, "The Personal," 254-255.

<sup>50</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 473.

<sup>51</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 474.

<sup>52</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 507.

<sup>53</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 405.

bill.<sup>54</sup>

As the dictatorship was drastically failing in the eyes of its people, economically and politically, it failed in the eyes of the world, as well. In 1982, Argentina attempted to seize control of the British held Malvinas Islands. The Argentine forces were no match for the strength of the British army and the defeat weakened the dictatorship.<sup>55</sup> A year later, in 1983, the dictatorship collapsed and the country began to move toward democratic rule.<sup>56</sup> The effects of the dictatorship weighed heavily on Argentine society. Tens of thousands of people were missing, and the infrastructure and economy were in disarray; however, the power of protest, in helping to end the dictatorship, led to a desire or even expectation of more freedoms among the populace.<sup>57</sup> Argentina at this time was ripe with social activism. Protest against the dictatorship and the Catholic Church, which had supported the dictatorship, opened the doors for activism of all kinds.<sup>58</sup> The Argentine society and government opinions regarding homosexuality still maintained connections between homosexuality and illness, but in the face of this contradiction, the gay community began to unify.<sup>59</sup> The gay and lesbian community began to openly express themselves in society. With an increase in gay bars and clubs, one club, Balvanera, was raided by police officers in March of 1984.<sup>60</sup> Armed with the

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<sup>54</sup> FALGBT Website, “Los mismos derechos, con los mismos nombres,” <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/00-derechos,03.php>.

<sup>55</sup> Nouzeilles and Montaldo, *The Argentina Reader*, 465.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *The History*, 151.

<sup>57</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 393.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 121.

<sup>59</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 397.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Brown, “Democracy and Sexual Difference: The Lesbian and Gay Movement in Argentina,” in *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. Barry D. Adam, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 112.

encouragement of the country's newly found freedoms and fed up with violent oppressions enforced by police and governmental institutions, 150 activists met in another gay bar, Contramano, in April 1984 to create the Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA), officially launching the gay rights movement in Argentina.<sup>61</sup> CHA followed in the footsteps of la Coordinadora de Grupos Gays, the group that had tried and failed to organize during the dictatorship, but now living in a democratic society, the group was able to focus on visibility.

The goal of CHA from the beginning was to make homosexuality visible and to turn gay rights into a question of human rights. In 1984, the president of CHA, Carlos Jáuregui, appeared embracing another man on the cover of a national magazine entitled *Siete Días*. The cover of the magazine read, "El riesgo de ser homosexual en la Argentina" (The risk of being homosexual in Argentina).<sup>62</sup> This was the first time that gays were visible to the public in Argentina, and it thus opened the door for more visibility in the future. At the same time, the psychoanalytic view that had categorized homosexuality as an illness began to recognize the fluidity of human sexuality.<sup>63</sup> In the same year, CHA also ran an advertisement in the most widely read daily newspaper in the country entitled "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia" (With discrimination and repression there is no democracy).<sup>64</sup> CHA defined the position of homosexuals as discriminated and repressed, thus connecting the plight of the gay community to that of the rest of oppressed Argentine society and willing the Argentine

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<sup>61</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 121.

<sup>62</sup> "Historia de la CHA," accessed February 9, 2013, <http://www.cha.org.ar/simple.php?menu=10&cat=50>.

<sup>63</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 397.

<sup>64</sup> Diez, "Argentina," 16.

public to sympathize with its situation. Facing bar raids and Catholic opposition, CHA hoped to gain support of the liberated public by publicizing the discrimination against gays in Argentine society and reframing the gay rights struggle into a collective struggle of human rights.<sup>65</sup>

CHA, the leading organization of the gay rights movement, had a series of successes at the turn of the century. In the late 1990s, the city of Buenos Aires, in the adoption of a new constitution, made illegal the discrimination of individuals based on sexual orientation.<sup>66</sup> In 2002, activists won another victory when the city of Buenos Aires became the first jurisdiction in Latin America to legalize civil unions.<sup>67</sup> On January 17, 2003, Marcelo Suntheim and César Cigliutti, the president of CHA, became the first gay couple to obtain a civil union in Latin America.<sup>68</sup> After the passage of Civil Unions, Buenos Aires became a hot spot for gay tourism in the early 2000s resulting in the creation of “un mercado gay” or a gay market and consequently in an increase in the visibility of the gay community.<sup>69</sup>

Although the government now formally recognized CHA, it remained a primarily male-dominated group that focused on the rights of gay men.<sup>70</sup> The sexism within CHA led to a split in the gay rights movement in Argentina and the formation of transgender and lesbian groups.<sup>71</sup> Transgender people faced public humiliation and discrimination as

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<sup>65</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 405.

<sup>66</sup> Diez, “Argentina,” 16.

<sup>67</sup> Diez, “Argentina,” 16.

<sup>68</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 450.

<sup>69</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 453-456.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 122.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 122.

well as police detention.<sup>72</sup> In 1993, the Asociación de Travestis Argentinas (Association of Argentine Transvestites) (ATA) was created to combat discrimination not just in Argentina, but within the gay community as a whole.<sup>73</sup> In 1996, the group added another ‘T’ for transexuales (transsexuals), and in 2001, an additional ‘T’ for transgéneros (transgenders), thus becoming the group ATTTA.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, various lesbian groups formed in the community to fight violence against women and protect young women thrown out of their houses because of their sexuality.<sup>75</sup> These organizations included La Casa de las Lunas, Amenaza Lésbiaca, Lesbianas en Marcha, Lesbianas a la Vista, and La Fulana.<sup>76</sup> At the turn of the century, the gay movement began to visibly include other identities and effectively became the LGBT movement.

After its victory in Buenos Aires, CHA hoped to push toward civil unions on a national level while other activists in the movement decided to move toward the legalization of marriage.<sup>77</sup> Due primarily to this split, a new organization emerged in 2006 that included trans members: the Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans (FALGBT).<sup>78</sup> Five organizations collaborated to form FALGBT: Vox Asociación Civil, the LGBT organization from the city of Rosario; Buenos Aires SIDA, an organization of those living with AIDS; La Fulana, a group of bisexual and gay

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<sup>72</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 458.

<sup>73</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 459.

<sup>74</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 460.

<sup>75</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 463.

<sup>76</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 462.

<sup>77</sup> Diez, “Argentina,” 16.

<sup>78</sup> Diez, “Argentina,” 16.

women; ATTTA; and Nexo, a group of gay men.<sup>79</sup> FALGBT was heavily influenced by Spanish Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), specifically la Fundación Triángulo and la Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGTB), who had worked to pass gay marriage in Spain in 2005.<sup>80</sup> The organizations in Spain contacted gay rights organizations in Latin America, hoping to collaborate with these organizations in the fight to legalize equal marriage outside of Spain.<sup>81</sup> Leader of a prominent gay rights organization in Spain, FELGTB reached out to the creator of FALGBT, María Rachid, and outlined the ways in which Spain was able to pass LGBT marriage and how these ideas may aid the cause in Argentina.<sup>82</sup> Based on FELGBT's advice, FALGBT fought for marriage equality without the option of civil unions and worked to get homosexuality as visible in the media as possible.<sup>83</sup>

FALGBT had a strategy that incorporated not only social activism, but also judicial, legislative and executive plans.<sup>84</sup> In 2007, the group began by targeting the country's court system. On February 14, 2007, Maria Rachid, president of FALGBT, and her partner, Claudia Castro, attempted and failed to marry in the City of Buenos Aires.<sup>85</sup> After their attempt failed, FALGBT's lawyer, Gustavo López, filed an appeal claiming that the decision violated the couple's constitutional rights.<sup>86</sup> When the court upheld the

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<sup>79</sup> Elisabeth Jay Friedman, "Constructing 'The Same Rights with the Same Names': The Impact of Spanish Norm Diffusion on Marriage Equality in Argentina," *Latin American Politics and Society*, 54 (2012): 43.

<sup>80</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 469.

<sup>81</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 476.

<sup>82</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 478.

<sup>83</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 478.

<sup>84</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 480.

<sup>85</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 480.

<sup>86</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 49.

decision to deny the couple the right to marry, the couple then appealed to the Supreme Court.<sup>87</sup> FALGBT organized further attempts at same-sex marriages, and when these failed, the organization continued to appeal.<sup>88</sup> Alex Freyre and José María Di Bello were among these failed attempts. In November 2009, a judge in Buenos Aires, Gabriela Seijas, ruled the prohibition of the couple's marriage by articles 172 and 188 of the Civil Code unconstitutional and ordered the Civil Registry to issue the couple a marriage license.<sup>89</sup> This decision was supported via a message on Facebook from the conservative mayor of the city, Mauricio Macri.<sup>90</sup> The mayor had, in previous interviews, displayed his aversion for homosexuality, and so Macri's support came as a surprise to many.<sup>91</sup> On December 1, 2009, on World Aids Day, the couple decided to marry.<sup>92</sup> However, hours before the wedding, under the influence of Catholic lawyers, Seijas's decision was overruled and the couple's marriage was annulled.<sup>93</sup> Realizing the strength of the religious force in Buenos Aires, FALGBT then turned to a more socially progressive jurisdiction with less influence from the Catholic Church, the province of Tierra del Fuego.<sup>94</sup> With the support of the socially progressive governor, Fabiana Ríos, on December 28, 2009, Alex Freyre and José María Di Bello became the first couple to marry in Argentina in the city of Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego.<sup>95</sup> Freyre and Bello were also

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Bazán, *La Historia*, 480.

<sup>87</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 481.

<sup>88</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 480.

<sup>89</sup> FALGBT Prezi.

<sup>90</sup> FALGBT Prezi.

<sup>91</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 492.

<sup>92</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 493.

<sup>93</sup> Diez, "Argentina," 13.

<sup>94</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 502-503.

<sup>95</sup> Diez, "Argentina," 13.



the first couple to marry in Latin America. After their marriage, other couples were inspired to try as well. Undeterred by the previous failed attempts at marriage in Buenos Aires, same-sex couples in the country's capital fought for equal marriage in the court system until they, too, gained success. Damián Bernath and Jorge Salazar Capón became the first gay couple to marry in Buenos Aires.<sup>96</sup> In addition to working toward LGBT marriage in 2009, the LGBT rights movement encouraged the country to lift the ban on gays in the military.<sup>97</sup> The success in this area overturned archaic laws that had been in place since 1951.

In the fight toward LGBT marriage, FALGBT also worked within the legislative branch. A bill to allow equal marriage was introduced in 2007, and when that failed, another was introduced in 2009.<sup>98</sup> On May 5, 2010, the bill passed through Congress and moved onto debate in the Senate.<sup>99</sup> By the time this bill passed through the Congress, five same-sex couples had successfully married through FALGBT's judicial plan, but their marriages were not legal according to the Civil Code.<sup>100</sup> Publicized by success in Congress and upcoming Senate discussions, the LGBT movement was highly debated in the country. The Catholic Church took a strong stand against LGBT marriage claiming "Los chicos tenemos derecho a un papa y una mama" (Children have a right to a father

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<sup>96</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 505.

<sup>97</sup> AG Magazine, "Militares gays no seran penalizados en las Fuerzas Armadas Argentinas," last modified February 22, 2009, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.agmagazine.info/2009/02/27/desde-hoy-los-militares-gays-no-seran-penalizados-en-las-fuerzas-armadas-argentinas/>.

<sup>98</sup> Friedman "Constructing," 50.

<sup>99</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 514.

<sup>100</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 509.

and a mother).<sup>101</sup> The opposition, however, was overshadowed by the success of the LGBT movement. By July 2010, nine same-sex couples had successfully married, including the first lesbian marriage on June 25, 2010 between Verónica Dessio and Carolina Pérez.<sup>102</sup> The opponents of the law in the Senate began to push toward civil unions as an alternative, but FALGBT, powered by the slogan they had borrowed from Spanish NGOs “los mismos derechos con los mismos nombres” (the same rights with the same names), took an all-or-nothing attitude and pushed toward marriage.<sup>103</sup> Finally on July 15, 2010, after many hours of debate in the Senate and support from the president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Argentina reformed the Civil Code to include the Equal Marriage Law thus legalizing LGBT marriage throughout the country.<sup>104</sup>

The LGBT rights movement in Argentina has had unparalleled success in obtaining equal rights. Fueled by the injustices of the dictatorship, Argentina as a country focused heavily on human rights issues, and the social movements in the 1980s opened a space for gay activism. By redefining LGBT rights as human rights from the beginning, the LGBT rights movement was able to join the country in the search for justice. With a multifaceted approach of gaining public support and working within the Argentine governmental system, the LGBT rights movement has had, inarguably, the most success in Latin America.

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<sup>101</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 541.

<sup>102</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 530.

<sup>103</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 539.

<sup>104</sup> Federación Argentina de LGBT (FALGBT) Website. Accessed on April 12, 2013. Last modified December 2012. <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/>.

### **The Success Behind the LGBT Rights Movement in Argentina**

Scholars have examined the LGBT rights movement in Argentina from many angles hoping to explain how the country progressed from violently targeting gays in the 1980s to passing a law allowing gay marriage just three decades later. Scholars attribute this success to several factors: the structure of the Argentine government, the influence from key organizations both in Argentina and in Spain, the attitude of the Argentine public toward human rights, and the lack of a heavy religious influence in Argentina. The multifaceted answer to the rapid progression of the LGBT movement in Argentina cannot be answered with a single explanation, but, in fact must be discussed in both a national and global context that considers the complex history of the country as well as the present-day governmental and social situations.

Stephen Brown's seminal 2002 article, "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia: The Lesbian LGBT Movement in Argentina," is widely cited as a comprehensive chronicle of the LGBT rights movement in Argentina. In this article, Brown provides the historical background of the movement until the mid 1990s. He argues that the driving force behind the movement was a focus on human rights and identity. From the beginning, the LGBT rights organization, CHA, worked to focus on changing the discourse regarding homosexuality—in a sense embracing it proudly to eliminate homophobia.<sup>105</sup> International support and opportunities of a newly liberated country allowed CHA to gain more visibility in hopes of "normalizing" homosexuality.<sup>106</sup> Brown defines CHA as an "assimilationist organization" because it is in "favor of

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<sup>105</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 127.

<sup>106</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 133.

integration into the heterosexual ‘mainstream,’ arguing that prejudice (homophobia) alone keeps them apart.”<sup>107</sup> Brown criticizes assimilationist groups like CHA for not initially including diverse identity groups, such as transgender people, into the community. If diversity is not embraced, then “social movements lose their potential for wider social transformation.”<sup>108</sup> Embracing the “different-but-equal” approach, civil rights-based groups such as Gays DC filled in the gaps of diversity when CHA failed.<sup>109</sup> The last type of group that Brown cites is the “radical groups” that work to reject the system and redefine sexuality like the Grupo de Jóvenes Gays y Lesbianas “Construyendo Nuestra Sexualidad.”<sup>110</sup> Brown completed this article before the creation of FALGBT, but predicted the creation of FALGBT when he talked of the “fractures within the CHA over focus and ideology.”<sup>111</sup> He ends his article with advice for the LGBT movement to ally with “partners for change” in order to achieve its goals, which essentially became the strategy adopted by FALGBT.<sup>112</sup>

In “The Construction and Enactment of Same-Sex Marriage in Argentina,” Shawn Schulenberg builds on Brown’s article in examining the reasons Argentina was able to pass legislation on LGBT marriage before more economically developed countries. Like Brown, he describes the history of the movement, but because the article was published in 2012, Schulenberg’s information extends beyond that of Brown. Schulenberg discusses

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<sup>107</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 128.

<sup>108</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 132.

<sup>109</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 129.

<sup>110</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 130.

<sup>111</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 133.

<sup>112</sup> Brown, “Con discriminación,” 135.

the split from CHA and the creation of FALGBT.<sup>113</sup> He confirms Brown's prediction that this split was caused by ideological differences between assimilationists and civil rights-based groups that were willing to include other identities in the movement.<sup>114</sup>

Schulenberg states that FALGBT sought to "coordinate the many diverse factions of the movement."<sup>115</sup> CHA was the first organization to push for civil unions in Buenos Aires in 2002. At its creation, FALGBT worked toward the passage of the equal marriage law.<sup>116</sup> This goal marks the major difference between CHA and FALGBT. Despite the split, however, the separation of the organizations has not been detrimental to the overall cause of the movement.<sup>117</sup>

Schulenberg concludes that the LGBT rights movement Argentina was successful because the movement articulated its desire for the legalization of marriage and had the organized political structure to pursue this interest.<sup>118</sup> In addition, the influence and pressure on the three branches of government, and strong allies within the government, helped clear the pathway toward the passage of equal marriage. FALGBT orchestrated a judicial strategy in which same-sex couples attempted to marry as any heterosexual couple could. When these requests were denied, the FALGBT's lawyers then challenged the constitutionality of the denied requests and appealed the court's decision to deny the same-sex couples the right to marry.<sup>119</sup> Legislatively and executively, with the support of strong allies in positions of power such as Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the president

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<sup>113</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 109.

<sup>114</sup> Brown, "Con discriminación," 131.

<sup>115</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 108.

<sup>116</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 110.

<sup>117</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 109.

<sup>118</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 122.

<sup>119</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 114.

at the time, and members of Congress, FALGBT proposed a marriage bill that was successful.<sup>120</sup> Schulenberg builds on Brown's article to discuss the history of the creation and strategy of the organizations, but expands Brown's ideas to explain the passage of LGBT marriage.

Jordi Díez, in "Argentina: A Queer Tango between the Lesbian and LGBT Movement and the State," more or less agrees with Schulenberg, but extends the argument to include the impact of democratization following the end of the dictatorship in 1983 as an additional contributing factor to the progression of the LGBT movement in Argentina.<sup>121</sup> Díez discusses the extreme repression and violence facing the homosexual population during the Dirty War (1973-1983) and how this repression affected the movement as "these individuals sought to create public awareness of their continued repression."<sup>122</sup> Essentially, the period following the dictatorship opened the country to opportunities for discourse and activism in the public sphere. Similar to Schulenberg, Díez argues that the federal political structure and the judicial procedures of the country, in conjunction with powerful political allies, greatly affected the outcome of LGBT marriage legislation.<sup>123</sup> Díez touches on the international influence of Spanish LGBT NGOs, but also concludes that the state played a significant role.<sup>124</sup>

Building on both Schulenberg and Díez, Maria Gracia Andía frames the legalization of equal marriage by discussing FALGBT's strategic use of the court system in Argentina. Andía outlines the importance of mobilization and the role FALGBT

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<sup>120</sup> Schulenberg, "The Construction," 106.

<sup>121</sup> Díez, "Argentina," 23.

<sup>122</sup> Díez, "Argentina," 15.

<sup>123</sup> Díez, "Argentina," 23.

<sup>124</sup> Díez, "Argentina," 16.

played in increasing visibility and facilitating mobilization by organizing high profile same-sex marriage attempts.<sup>125</sup> The value of Andía's research is in her use of previous historical scholarship to focus on FALGBT's individual strategy. In addition, Andía cites the shift in Argentina's legislative system and the breakdown of political parties as opening doors to legislation like equal marriage.<sup>126</sup> The author predicts the continued success of the Argentine LGBT rights movement.

In his book, *La Historia de la homosexualidad en la Argentina / History of Homosexuality in Argentina: De La Conquista De America Al Siglo Xxi*, journalist Osvaldo Bazán provides a detailed history of sexuality in Argentina concluding with the passage of the legalization of LGBT marriage. Bazán does not make any formal inquiries regarding why LGBT marriage was passed in Argentina, but his thorough history provides a strong base for other developing theories. Bazán discusses the split of CHA and FALGBT and the heavy Spanish influence on FALGBT's first president, María Rachid.<sup>127</sup> The book details the history of the passage of the marriage law with interviews and firsthand accounts of the events leading up to the passage. Although Bazán refrains from analyzing the progress of the movement and especially from attributing its success to either of the two main organizations, CHA or FALGBT, both Diez and Schulenberg source his book as a basis for their historical analyses. Unlike the other articles, Bazán examines the history of sexuality in Argentina through a cultural lens in addition to

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<sup>125</sup> María Gracia Andía, "Legal Mobilization and the Road to Same-Sex Marriage in Argentina," in *Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America: Promise and Resistance*, ed. Jason Pierceson, Adriana Piatti-Crocker, and Shawn Schulenberg (Lexington Books, 2012), 131.

<sup>126</sup> Andía, "Legal Mobilization," 132.

<sup>127</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 478.

providing a far more detailed account of the Congressional debates and the role of leaders in the LGBT movement. Bazán's book is a valuable historical basis for the LGBT rights movement in Argentina that lends to theoretical arguments regarding its success.

Shifting from an analysis of governmental approach, Mario Pecheny discusses the importance of the change in the homosexual discourse to embrace homosexuality with pride and to break the barrier of silence between the heterosexual and homosexual worlds. The shattering of this barrier was the key to increasing visibility and acceptance of the LGBT community. Pecheny's argument is unique in that it breaks from other scholarly research of political institutions, and emphasizes the discourse shift within the movement itself and the importance of embracing pride in a movement.<sup>128</sup> In a separate article written for *Americas Quarterly*, Pecheny, in conjunction with Javier Corrales, cites six reasons for why LGBT marriage passed in Argentina: (1) The loss of the Catholic Church's influence; (2) The separation of Church and political parties within Argentina; (3) Transnational legal resources and international influence; (4) Domestic legal resources fighting for the cause; (5) The use of democracy; and finally (6) The president in 2010 (and the current president), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who supported the legislation.<sup>129</sup> Although Pecheny has written scholarly essays on the topic, the *Americas Quarterly* article is a brief news article that simplifies his ideas and research on the subject in order to appeal to the readers. Pecheny's discussion, though brief, reflects

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<sup>128</sup> Pecheny, Mario, "De La 'no-discriminación' al 'reconocimiento social.' Un Análisis De La Evolución De Las Demandas Políticas De Las Minorías Sexuales En América Latina," paper presented at the XXIII Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, September 6–8, (2001): 6.

<sup>129</sup> Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, "Six Reasons Why Argentina Legalized Gay Marriage First," *Americas Quarterly*. Last modified July 30, 2010. <http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/1753>.



important research that succinctly strikes at the heart of the reasons for the Argentine LGBT movement's success.

A 2010 study for *AmericasBarometer Insights* entitled, "Support for Same Sex Marriage in Latin America" shows that Argentina had the second highest support for same-sex marriage in the Americas (Canada was first).<sup>130</sup> The authors, Germán Lodola and Margarita Corral, surveyed 26 countries and an approximate total of 42,000 people throughout the Americas.<sup>131</sup> In an attempt to explain this phenomenon using the data, the authors state that there is a negative correlation between strong religious values and acceptance of same-sex marriage; the more religious an individual is, the less likely that individual is to support equal marriage. The authors find a connection between socioeconomic status and support of LGBT marriage. They explain: "In addition, we found that levels of support are higher among wealthier people, individuals living in larger cities, and women. In our analyses of national-level factors, we found strong empirical evidence for the classic claim that both economic development and education increase tolerance for homosexual rights."<sup>132</sup> In analyzing data in the form of surveys, the article gauges public support and seeks to instead explain the support rather than the legislation. The article fills a gap left by other researchers by raising the issue of socioeconomic status and education and its effect on the support of LGBT rights, two areas that are unaddressed in other articles.

In, "Uso estratégico del derecho: reconocimiento del matrimonio de parejas del

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<sup>130</sup> Germán Lodola and Margarita Corral, "Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America," Report no. 44. *AmericasBarometer Insights* (2010): 2.

<sup>131</sup> Lodola and Corral, "Support," 2.

<sup>132</sup> Lodola and Corral, "Support," 6.

mismo sexo en Argentina,” Mariana Anahí Manzo explores the different visions of human rights within the LGBT rights movement in Argentina by analyzing the rhetoric of lawyers on both sides of the issue and how their public positions directly affected the legal passage of LGBT marriage in the country. The author positions the Catholic Church as the main opponent of LGBT marriage, and recognizes the relationship of the Church and the legal system.<sup>133</sup> The interviews with lawyers on both sides of the debate contribute valuable information to the topic. The author points out that the lawyers in favor of LGBT marriage were much less experienced and much younger than the lawyers siding with traditional family values, yet were able to succeed because they had a better understanding of the political environment in Argentina and formed advantageous alliances within the Argentine government.<sup>134</sup> She relates this success to power differences; the fact that the younger, inexperienced lawyers could overcome the more powerful, experienced lawyers is perhaps her best argument as evidence of a shift of social values within Argentine society. Her study, however, is focused on another city in Argentina, Córdoba, and not on Argentina as a whole, nor on Buenos Aires, a city that is an important player in the movement. This article differs from the others in that it addresses the legal discourse of the opposition, which proves valuable in understanding and analyzing the strengths and weakness of the arguments of each side, and how those strengths and weaknesses contributed to the progression toward passage.

Like Manzo, “Global Movements, Global Opposition: Sexual Rights Claims and Christian Conservatism” by Jesse Nancarrow Clarke briefly touches on the Catholic

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<sup>133</sup> Mariana Anahí Manzo, "Uso estratégico del derecho: reconocimiento del matrimonio de parejas del mismo sexo en Argentina," *Oñati Socio-Legal Series 1* (2012): 8.

<sup>134</sup> Anahí Manzo, “Uso estratégico,” 16.

Church's influence. Clarke discusses the role of the Catholic Church in spreading homophobic ideals and gaining visibility for the opposition through Argentine media, a point emphasized by Bazán as well, but states that the human rights discourse utilized by FALGBT has ultimately been triumphant.<sup>135</sup> Although the article is published in 2011 after LGBT legislation passed, Clarke exclusively outlines the positions of the LGBT movement versus the Church and does not address the political or governmental legislation.

Elisabeth Jay Friedman's "Constructing 'The Same Rights with the Same Names': The Impact of Spanish Norm Diffusion on Marriage Equality in Argentina" touches on the involvement of the Spanish LGBT rights movement in Argentina.<sup>136</sup> Brown and Diez also discuss the involvement of Spanish NGOs in the passage of LGBT marriage, but Friedman attributes the success of the movement primarily to Spain who passed LGBT marriage five years before Argentina in 2005.<sup>137</sup> Friedman uses interviews from key figures in the Argentine LGBT rights movement, such as María Rachid, stating that FALGBT looked to Spain as an influential model.<sup>138</sup> Spain and Argentina have certain "sociocultural linkages"<sup>139</sup> and their histories from dictatorship to liberalization as well as a unique rejection of the Catholic Church made Argentina a prime recipient for aid from Spanish LGBT NGOs. FALGBT used the Spanish model from their slogan, "The Same Rights With the Same Names," in its campaign to reject civil unions and

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<sup>135</sup> Jesse Nancarrow Clarke, "Global Movements, Global Opposition: Sexual Rights Claims and Christian Conservatism," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne D'études Du Développement* 24 (2003): 362.

<sup>136</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 29.

<sup>137</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 469.

<sup>138</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 45.

<sup>139</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 41.

work directly for equal marriage.<sup>140</sup> In addition to providing a model, Spanish NGOs supplied financial and political support to Argentine NGOs.<sup>141</sup> Friedman's argument is convincing, supported by interviews from both the Spanish and Argentine movements that do not deny the international involvement. Although the author's discussion perhaps fails to give proper credit to the Argentine organization for adapting the Spanish model into a successful operation for Argentina.<sup>142</sup> While the other articles explain the political process of the passage of LGBT marriage, Friedman's article gives insight into the players behind those political processes.

Jamila A. Humphrie's analysis in "El derecho para decir 'sí, quiero': el movimiento LGBTQ en los EE. UU., España, y la Argentina" mirrors that of both Friedman and Brown. Humphrie explains that the LGBT movement in Argentina was directly affected by the commercialized international exchange of ideas, ideologies, and cultures.<sup>143</sup> Like Friedman, Humphrie explains the connection between the LGBT rights movement in Spain and the movement in Argentina. She argues that the LGBT movement in the United States, with LGBT uprisings such as the Stonewall riots in 1969 New York, affected both the movements in Spain and in Argentina. She analyzes the similarities of the three movements' strategies in guaranteeing civil rights; and, like Brown, discusses the use of assimilation as a strategy instead of liberation.<sup>144</sup> Humphrie also examines the differences in strategy between CHA and FALGBT and how they are

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<sup>140</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 39.

<sup>141</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 41.

<sup>142</sup> Friedman, "Constructing," 49.

<sup>143</sup> Jamila A. Humphrie, "El derecho para decir 'sí, quiero': el movimiento LGBTQ en los EE. UU., España, y la Argentina," *Hispanic Studies Honors Projects* (2011): 5.

<sup>144</sup> Humphrie, "El derecho," 7.

connected to the global LGBT movement. Rather than hoping to provide an answer to the question of progress in Argentina as other articles have done, Humphrie's intent is to show the effect of the globalization of ideas on human rights movements as exemplified in the connection between the LGBT rights movements in the United States, Spain, and Argentina.

As the scholarly research suggests, Argentina was the perfect place for the LGBT rights movement to flourish. The international influence, especially from Spain, provided a model for the Argentina's LGBT movement and gave the main organization, FALGBT, both financial aid and a concrete and successful example. The shift in Argentina away from the Catholic Church, which had failed to speak out against the brutality of the dictatorship, and the tendency toward a human rights discourse after democratization created an environment in which the LGBT movement found a voice. FALGBT's pressure on the different branches of government and the support of powerful politicians and lawyers pushed legislation into action. Ultimately, it was the combination of these elements that led to the current success of the LGBT rights movement in Argentina. In addition to the information scholars have examined in Argentina's LGBT rights movement, FALGBT's manipulation of social media to formulate a specific image of the LGBT community for the Argentine public complemented the organization's strategic governmental legislation plan to influence the outcome of equal marriage legislation.

## **The Organization That Changed the Face of the LGBT Rights Movement in Argentina**

Argentina's evolving understanding of sexuality can be traced throughout history. Prior to the dictatorship, homosexuality was viewed as a psychological disease. In certain areas of Argentine society today, homosexuality is still considered to be a choice and is regarded as a wrong choice, especially in the Catholic community, which considers homosexuality a sin that must be overcome or cured.<sup>145</sup> In order to assess the ways in which FALGBT worked to influence public opinion regarding the LGBT movement, it is helpful to understand the effects of societal influences on sexuality more generally.

While aspects of human sexuality have biological roots, Ken Plummer explains that human sexualities are “socially produced... socially organized, socially maintained, and socially transformed.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, societal perceptions of sexuality are shaped by the power structures in place in a society. Groups that are typically marginalized by power structures in society, such as women and the LGBT community, challenge the inequality of sexual organizations in society by organizing to form movements and working to gain a voice in society. Historians who research developing nations have started to “rethink the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism not only on the construction of sexuality, but on the ways research has been conducted and the voices that have been allowed to

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<sup>145</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 302.

<sup>146</sup> Ken Plummer, “Foreword: Permanence and Change: *Sexual Conduct—Thirty Years On*,” in *Sexual Conduct: The Sources of Human Sexuality*, by John H. Gagnon and William Simon (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 2005), xii.

speak.”<sup>147</sup> The heterosexist views, or views that regard heterosexuality as the norm, are typically regarded as Eurocentric views that remain in place in developing nations as remnants of the colonial structures of the past. The rise in LGBT activism in Argentina, therefore, is indicative of both a shift in the power structure of society, and the result of a movement challenging and changing the power structure in place.

In this way, the success of the LGBT movement in Argentina could be attributed to a rise, particularly in Latin America, of what scholars call identity politics. Charles Hale defines identity politics as “collective sensibilities and actions that come from a particular location within society, in direct defiance of universal categories that tend to subsume, erase, or suppress this particularity”<sup>148</sup> and explains that identity politics begin when groups mobilize to “engage in politics with one another, the state, and other powerful adversaries.”<sup>149</sup> In the case of Argentina, identity politics began with the return to democracy in 1983, in which groups such as Las Madres spoke out against the injustices and unified as the matriarchal voice of human rights. As Amy Risley writes, “Repression was essential for the emergence of the [human rights] movement and the formation of collective identities among activists.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, oppression became the catalyst for social activism. In Argentina, the human rights movement was led by groups such as Las Madres, who opened doors of opportunity for other activists in the

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<sup>147</sup> Richard Parker, Regina Maria Barbosa, and Peter Aggleton, *Framing the Sexual Subject: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Power* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press: 2000), 8-9.

<sup>148</sup> Charles R. Hale, “Cultural Politics of Identity in Latin America,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 568.

<sup>149</sup> Hale, “Cultural Politics,” 572.

<sup>150</sup> Amy Risley, “Human Rights in Argentina,” in *Contention in Context: Political Opportunities and the Emergence of Protest*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 97.

country.<sup>151</sup> When, the country began to transition to democracy, the LGBT movement was able to rediscover a voice that had previously been silenced by the Proceso. Oppressed identities became more visible and at the same time, more politically active. As a result, the LGBT movement challenged norms of sexuality reinforced by hierarchical systems of power and set social change into action. As Hale explains, “The term ‘subversion’ sheds its former meaning of ‘conspiring against the system’ and refers instead to the art of working at the interstices, finding the inevitable cracks and contradictions in the oppressor’s identity, discourse, or institutional practice, and using them to the subaltern’s advantage.”<sup>152</sup> As the LGBT movement in Argentina reclaimed a political voice, its very marginality allowed for the movement to now contribute to the larger political and social changes afoot.

It would have been impossible for the LGBT community to organize and obtain equal marriage under Videla’s dictatorship in the 1970s, but as the society became more democratic and societal understandings of sexuality were transformed, impossibilities became a phenomenon of the oppressed Argentine past. FALGBT invoked, not just tolerance, but acceptance of the LGBT community within the Argentine public, and this acceptance was influential in the passage of the Equal Marriage Law. The organization purposefully engineered a multi-faceted image to the public that simultaneously worked to reflect existing public acceptance and recruit new public support of LGBT marriage. Through facilitating community building and mobilizing the LGBT community in Argentina, increasing the visibility of the LGBT community in a positive light, reframing

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<sup>151</sup> Risley, “Human Rights,” 98.

<sup>152</sup> Hale, “Cultural Politics,” 581.



the discourse of LGBT rights into human rights, and countering the negativity of the Catholic opposition, FALGBT successfully created an environment in which the Equal Marriage Law could be passed.

### Community Building and Mobilization



Figure 1:  
<http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/11/17/rechazan-iniciativa-de-objecion-de-conciencia-contr-el-matrimonio-igualitario-en-chaco/>

From its creation, FALGBT was founded on the inclusion of a number of LGBT organizations that represent various identities within the movement. As an umbrella organization comprised of many identities, FALGBT encompassed and effectively mobilized the LGBT movement toward a united goal. One of FALGBT's posters, as shown in Figure 1, hails the slogan, "Unidos por la diversidad" (United by diversity) and shows the

rainbow colors from FALGBT's slogan overlapping.<sup>153</sup> The symbolism of the various colors of the rainbow, and their overlapping in this poster demonstrates FALGBT's diversity and portrays a message of strength and unity. FALGBT's website lists the diverse groups that fall under the umbrella of the single organization, showing more than 50 member groups.<sup>154</sup> There are seven organizing members of FALGBT: Area Queer, ATTTA, Club de Osos de Buenos Aires, Fundación Buenos Aires SIDA, Grupo NEXO,

<sup>153</sup> AG Magazine, "Rechazan iniciativa de objeción de conciencia contra el matrimonio igualitario en Chaco," accessed on March 31, 2013, <http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/11/17/rechazan-iniciativa-de-objecion-de-conciencia-contr-el-matrimonio-igualitario-en-chaco/>.

<sup>154</sup> FALGBT Members Page, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/01-miembros.php>.

La Fulana, and VOX Asociación Civil. These organizing members are the five groups that joined to create FALGBT in 2006 with the addition of Area Queer and Club de Osos de Buenos Aires. Area Queer is an organization that works with the University of Buenos Aires to examine inequalities born from class differences in Argentine society and how these inequalities are connected to systematic oppression.<sup>155</sup> The group is an important addition in that it blends the academic and nonacademic world and provides an understanding of the sources of the oppressions faced by the LGBT community in order to better combat these oppressions through political and judicial processes. The Club de Osos de Buenos Aires is the first and only Bear Club, not just in Argentina, but in all of South America. A “bear” is a subculture of the gay culture that refers to a large, masculine, hairy man. This organization provides networking and socializing opportunities for its community. The inclusion of this organization in FALGBT’s major organizing members is demonstrative of the acceptance of diversity that is at the core of FALGBT. Upon entering FALGBT’s website, the running banner at the top of the page flashes the logo of each of the seven main organizations separately before displaying the Federación Argentina LGBT title.<sup>156</sup> Directly following, the rainbow petals appear that make up the FALGBT’s logo; they appear separately before combining into the rainbow flower. The theme of the running banner is the separation and then consequential meshing of the many organizations to create FALGBT, and symbolically, the diversity of the many colors of the rainbow, first appearing separately, and then unifying to create the inclusive label of FALGBT.

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<sup>155</sup> FALGBT Website, Members Page.

<sup>156</sup> FALGBT’s Website.

This diversity is further represented in the Acceding Members section of the FALGBT's Members page.<sup>157</sup> Included in this section are LGBT groups from various provinces in Argentina thus showing how FALGBT has been able to reach all parts of Argentina and mobilize the country as a whole. FALGBT's influence reaches to citizens living internationally, as well. One group, Mateando, was created for Argentines and Uruguayans living in New York. There are groups that represent the Christian Community, Evangelist Christianity, and Judaism. These groups work to incorporate religion into the debate for LGBT rights and recognize that the two concepts are not mutually exclusive, but rather can coexist and fight for the greater good. In an effort to reach solidarity, FALGBT is careful to avoid discrimination, even the Buenos Aires Leather Club, a group of LGBT people who have leather fetishes, holds a place within FALGBT. A major contributor to the organization's success was its ability to mobilize these diverse groups that were able to accede to a greater goal and formulate a cohesive identity of sexual diversity. Throughout the years, this diversity has grown, and the union of other organizations has helped give their cause success through strength in numbers. Further, by publicizing their diversity, FALGBT appears to be an all-encompassing organization that increases its appeal by not isolating any group of people. The overall effect of seeing these organizations listed in one place allows the viewer to understand the breadth of diversity incorporated in the organizational structure of FALGBT. For Argentine members of the LGBT community, FALGBT's website becomes a portal for information in which everyone has a place and no one is turned away. FALGBT is able to attract new members of the marginalized LGBT community, effectively increasing

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<sup>157</sup> FALGBT Website, Members Page.

community-building efforts and giving solace to members of society who may have previously felt rejected. The organization is also, in effect, flaunting its strength, size, and capacity by listing the 50 organizations. Thus, the diversity of the organization and the displaying of this diversity work twofold to both attract new members and legitimize FALGBT.

In addition to providing information about the organization, FALGBT's website, as shown in Figure 2, is designed to foster community building within Argentina's LGBT community. The colorful website incorporates news and recent FALGBT activism with sponsored events, especially targeted at LGBT youth, and encourages volunteers to participate. The sidebar of the website shows advertisements of organizations that are either members of FALGBT, or supporters of the organization. FALGBT uses its website to spread information about the organization and demonstrate to the public the objectives of the organization in Argentina. Moreover, the website becomes a place where members of the LGBT community in Argentina can learn about events where they can meet other people within the community.

**Federación Argentina de Lesbianas Gays Bisexuales y Trans**

INICIO OBJETIVOS MIEMBROS ACCIONES DERECHOS CREDOS MERCOSUR PRENSA VIDEOS

**secretaría de la juventud lgbt**

▶ **CAFE LITERARIO JUVENTUD LGBT:** Los jueves de 18.30 a 20 hs. Mitre 2815, 1° pso, of 122. Secretaría de la Juventud LGBT. La juventud FALGBT lxs invita: a tomar café, a traer algo para leer (o para que sea leído), libros, textos, escritos personales, poemas, etc. a debatir, a lograr un espacio de respeto, libre expresión y entretenimiento. El café literario tendrá tiene distintas temáticas. Si desean pueden traer revistas cualquiera de las que tengan para luego realizar las actividades preparadas. Son todxs bienvenidos!! Se agradece su difusión.

▶ **JUVENTUD LGBT FALGBT.** Somos un grupo de jóvenes con diferentes creencias e ideologías, pero con una misma inquietud: ¿qué podemos aportar a la lucha por la igualdad de derechos de todos y todas?. Sentiamos que con la mera crítica y queja constante hacia una sociedad excluyente, lesbofóbica, homofóbica y transfóbica no bastaba. Teniamos que actuar. ¿Pero cómo? **PARTICIPA** (Leer +)

▶ **SE REALIZÓ EL PRIMER CAMPAMENTO NACIONAL DE LA JUVENTUD LGBT.** Realizado en Tala Huasi, Córdoba. (Leer +)

▶ **JUVENTUD LGBT.** Si querés participar te convocamos a trabajar con nosotros. Para mayor

**activismo de la FALGBT**

▶ CERCA DE 200 PARLAMENTARIOS BRASILEÑOS SE COMPROMETIERON CON LA LEY DE IGUALDAD. (30/03/2011) Durante la tarde del martes 29 de marzo la Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans participó del lanzamiento del Frente Parlamentario para la Ciudadanía LGBT en el cual cerca de 200 Diputadas/os y Senadoras/es se comprometieron a impulsar la Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario en ese país. (Leer +)

▶ HISTORICA DECLARACIÓN SOBRE DIVERSIDAD SEXUAL EN EL CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS DE LA ONU. (25/03/2011) El pasado 22 de marzo se presentó en el Consejo de DDHH de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, con sede en Ginebra, Suiza, una "Declaración conjunta para poner alto a los actos de violencia, y a las violaciones de derechos humanos relacionadas, dirigidos contra las personas por su orientación sexual e identidad de género". Nunca antes una declaración al respecto había alcanzando tanto apoyo. (Leer +)

▶ REPUDIO A LAS AMENAZAS DE MUERTE Y SOLIDARIDAD CON EL DIPUTADO BRASILEÑO JEAN WYLLYS. (22/03/2011) El autor de la enmienda constitucional para permitir el Matrimonio Igualitario en Brasil fue amenazado por grupos que se oponen a la igualdad de derechos. (Leer +)

▶ La FALGBTy ATTTA RECLAMAN CRONOGRAMA PARA LA LEY DE IDENTIDAD (28/02/2011). La Federación Argentina de lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y trans y ATTTA (Asociación de travestis,

**Ley de Identidad de Género**  
Por el género te querés o no querés pero es por el derecho a tener los derechos

MI IDENTIDAD MI DERECHO

LA ASOCIACIÓN DE TRAVESTIS ATTTA

La FALGBT editó una Guía para comunicadoras y comunicadores Derecho a la Identidad. Ley de Identidad de Género y Ley de Atención Integral de la Salud para Personas Trans

Descargar o Leer en PDF (385kb)

Figure 2:<http://www.lgbt.org.ar/home.php>

FALGBT's website, which is effectively used as a networking tool itself, also links to the group's Facebook page. Social media such as Facebook was and remains a helpful tool in mobilizing the community. Rheingold, Saveri, and Vian explain the uses and advantages of social media:

Social software is a set of tools that enable group-forming networks to emerge quickly. It includes numerous media, utilities, and applications that empower individual efforts, link individuals together into larger aggregates, interconnect groups, provide metadata about network dynamics, flows, and traffic, allowing social networks to form, clump, become visible, and be measured, tracked, and interconnected.<sup>158</sup>

Facebook has allowed for the empowerment of groups through mobilization and visibility, thus social media have proven to be effective in political activism and the formation of group identity, especially in areas with more readily available Internet

<sup>158</sup> Howard Rheingold, A. Saveri, and K. Vian, "Technologies of Cooperation," *Institute for the Future* (2005): 22.

access.<sup>159</sup> In 2010, Argentina saw a nine percent growth in the number of Facebook users in the country, representing about 20 percent of the entire population.<sup>160</sup> With a steadily growing number of Facebook users, and recognition of the impact of Facebook on social activism, FALGBT began experimenting with the uses of social media to further its cause. The organization began to use Facebook in 2010, recruiting people to attend demonstrations in favor of the LGBT marriage law urging public participation and placing a special emphasis on mobilization and demonstrating strength in numbers. After accomplishing the goal of passing LGBT marriage in 2010, FALGBT continues to utilize social media today in increasing mobilization and visibility.<sup>161</sup>

Two years prior to the passage of the Equal Marriage Law, FALGBT recognized the influence of targeting youth culture and facilitating a creative environment that fostered activism in favor of its cause. One example of FALGBT's efforts toward building a community was the 2008 Queer Art Festival, which was organized with Area Queer, Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo (Inadi),

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<sup>159</sup> Christina Neumayer and Celina Raffl, "Facebook for global protest: The potential and limits of social software for grassroots activism," in *Proceedings of the 5th Prato Community Informatics & Development Informatics Conference*, 2008.

<sup>160</sup> Eric Eldon, "Facebook Sees Solid Growth Around the World in March 2010," *Inside Facebook*, last modified April 6, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/04/06/facebook-sees-solid-growth-around-the-world-in-march-2010/>.

<sup>161</sup> FLGBT is now a part of Twitter, Blogspot, and Youtube, broadcasting news articles, videos, and organization updates to a broader audience via these social media outlets. Their participation in events has increased in just the last three years. Over 200,000 people marched in the 2012 pride parade in Buenos Aires compared to 70,000 in 2009. "Acciones realizadas por la FALGBT 2009" <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/06-acciones-2009.php>.

"Más de 200.000 personas marcharon por el Orgullo LGBTIQ en la ciudad de Buenos Aires," *Secretaría de Prensa FALGBT Blog* November 12, 2012, <http://prensa-falgbt.blogspot.com/2012/11/mas-de-200000-personas-marcharon-por-el.html>.

and the University of Buenos Aires. FALGBT explains,

Art has been, since modernization, a privileged tool in thinking and producing social change. For this reason, this discipline is close to the queer spirit whose historical place is to be a generational factory of cultural and institutional transformations in order to obtain social inclusion and civil equality for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against, persecuted, repressed, and excluded.<sup>162</sup>

This festival, with a focus on youth activism, brought in visual artists, poets, musicians, filmmakers, authors, and performers who presented their works of art, all of which have queer themes and focused on the breakdown of social norms in society. The purpose of the festival was to motivate and mobilize a generation of social activists. Classes, debates, and discussions were available to participants. The focus on the new generation

shows the organization's awareness of the future, which ensured the steady road toward progress that the organization has been able to achieve.




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<sup>162</sup> FALGBT Website, “Festival de Arte Queer-2008: Arte Joven”  
<http://www.lgbt.org.ar/00,grilla-00.php>.



Some of the artists featured in the Queer Art Festival of 2008 were students and local artists. Other artists contributed art to the festival as well, including an exhibit called Berengénero, a performance and

photographic piece accompanied by poetry created by artist, Katja von Helldorff in collaboration with Joana Coppi, Sabrina,

Ariel Devincenzo, and Mirjam

Hirsch. The black and white

images portray individuals whose physical appearance challenges stereotypical norms of gender and sexuality. The individuals stand in public areas of Buenos Aires with backdrops that include advertisements

which reinforce gender norms, thus

juxtaposing the supposed normal and

abnormal to challenge society's perceptions of both ideas. The photographs of the performances are shown in black and white, in an attempt to "displace repressive borders giving the illusion that there is a gray zone in which the utopian third gender exists."<sup>163</sup>

Many of the visual, musical, and theatrical pieces of art in the Queer Art Festival of 2008, like Berengénero, challenge norms of masculinity and femininity and the societal structures in place that reinforce these norms. The interjection of artwork that opened



Figure 4: <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/00,grilla-01.php>

<sup>163</sup> FALGBT Website.



dialogue for the restructuring of the building blocks of a heterosexist society into the academic world and its crossover into a festival in the capital city indicates that FALGBT hoped to foster engagement and participation between queer theorists, sociologists, and the public. The participation of professors and sociologists in the festival who provided classes and workshops like “Legislation, Rights, and Gender and Sexual Diversity in Today’s Argentina” show that FALGBT hoped to further acceptance through education and set the stage for discussions regarding LGBT rights among a younger generation with the idea that these individuals would become more involved in the movement.

### *Increasing Visibility*

In addition to creating the base of support within the LGBT community, FALGBT focused on publicizing the LGBT cause to draw support from the general Argentine public. To increase the visibility of the LGBT movement in Argentina, FALGBT recruited celebrities to endorse the LGBT marriage law. During the debate in the Senate at the beginning of June 2010, FALGBT presented a few short videos showcasing the support of 44 actors, actresses, and musicians in favor of the marriage law under the title, “La Cultura dice Sí al matrimonio para parejas del mismo sexo” (The Culture says Yes to marriage for same-sex partners).<sup>164</sup> The video demonstrates the support of award-winning actress, Norma Aleandro, for example, who is one of Argentina’s most famous actresses and had a history of standing up for human rights

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<sup>164</sup> AG Magazine, “Famosos le dan el Sí al matrimonio gay,” last modified on June 7, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/06/07/famosos-le-dan-el-si-al-matrimonio-para-parejas-del-mismo-sexo/>.

during the dictatorship.<sup>165</sup> The videos also show the support of celebrities of all ages and different professions, such as Natalia Oreiro, Latin Grammy-nominated singer and actress, and famous musician, Pedro Aznar. Each of the videos begins by saying that on July 14, the Senate will decide between equality and discrimination. Following this introduction, in an intimate setting, some sitting on their couches at home, others in their places of work, the celebrities state their name and voice their support saying, “Yo estoy al favor del matrimonio para parejas del mismo sexo” (I am in favor of marriage for same-sex couples). Two of the videos show the celebrities explaining why the denial of marriage is discrimination, for example, saying, “Everyday, thousands and thousands of Argentines fall in love, some form a partnership and marry. Others form partnerships, but cannot marry.”<sup>166</sup> The celebrities paint a picture for the audience outlining that the partnerships created between same-sex and opposite-sex couples are equal and that denying the couples the right to marry is discrimination. They demonstrate that “ya es

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<sup>165</sup> Larry Rohter, “A Part Made for Her, About Life With a Maid,” last modified on July 15, 2007, accessed on March 26, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/movies/15larr.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/15/movies/15larr.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>166</sup> Elmismoamororg, *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/user/elmismoamororg>.

tiempo” (it is time) that Argentine culture recognize this equality under the law. The video creates a dichotomy between discrimination and equality, thus telling the audience that if they are not in favor of equal marriage, they are discriminating against the LGBT community.



Figure 5: <http://www.sentidog.com/lat/2010/06/famosos-que-apoyan-la-ley-de-matrimonio-gay-en-argentina.html>

These beloved celebrities are shown in an informal and comfortable setting; as a consequence, the message is presented in a relatable way, as if the celebrities are having a personal conversation with the audience. The videos are designed, not only to gain broad attention from the Argentine public, but also to ensure that the audience is listening and understanding. The president of FALGBT, María Rachid, explains the message of the video in the context of the Senate meetings, “The idea of the meeting is to demonstrate the important social consensus that exists for the legal recognition of our equality. Marriage for everyone is a reality in Argentina, supported by the citizens of this country, and by the representatives of culture and art, among others.”<sup>167</sup> These videos circulated

<sup>167</sup> AG Magazine, “Famosos le dan el Sí al matrimonio gay,” last modified on June 7, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/06/07/famosos-le-dan-el-si-al-matrimonio-para-parejas-del-mismo-sexo/>

on Facebook and YouTube and were played on Argentine television stations.<sup>168</sup> The celebrities are also shown holding rainbow posters that relay the same message, such as the photograph in Figure 5.<sup>169</sup> The photographs, taken by a famous photography company called Fuentes & Fernandez Fotografías, are snapshots from the videos in which the celebrities are wearing normal clothes and portrayed in an everyday, informal setting. The combination of the images and the videos allow for the same message, given in a colloquial and relatable way, to be circulated in various forms throughout Argentine society. The use of celebrities in the message guaranteed that the media and the public were paying attention.

In the broader world of marketing, celebrity endorsements have been used in a number of ways. The individual testimonials of the celebrities and the explanations as to why they agreed with the Equal Marriage Law are shown on the YouTube channel, [elmismoamor.org](http://www.elmismoamor.org).<sup>170</sup> The title of each of the videos begins with the name of the celebrity and is followed by “dice Sí a la Igualdad” (says Yes to Equality). By using a popular celebrity to represent a company or a product, the hope is that the attractive and illustrious qualities of the celebrity will then be associated with the product or company. Further, the celebrity’s appearance increases and maintains media attention on the

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<sup>168</sup> Sentidog, “Presentaron spots con famosos a favor del matrimonio gay,” last modified on June 8, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.sentidog.com/lat/2010/06/presentaron-spots-con-famosos-a-favor-del-matrimonio-gay.html>

<sup>169</sup> Sentidog, “Famosos que apoyan la ley de matrimonio gay en Argentina,” last modified on June 8, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.sentidog.com/lat/2010/06/famosos-que-apoyan-la-ley-de-matrimonio-gay-en-argentina.html>

<sup>170</sup> “Matriomonio para Todas y Todos!” <http://www.youtube.com/user/elmismoamororg>

advertised product.<sup>171</sup>

In the case of Argentina, FALGBT applied these tried and true methods to further their own cause. FALGBT, the “company” advertised its “product,” the LGBT marriage law, to both the general public of Argentina, and the elected representatives who were to vote on the law. The use of celebrity endorsements was another tactic of the organization to maintain a positive public image in Argentina while the debates occurred. As Rachid expressed, the celebrities were cultural representatives of the country. From the beginning, with the influence from Spanish LGBT NGOs, FALGBT worked to increase the visibility of gays and lesbians in the public view.<sup>172</sup> The celebrities’ opinions reflected and also influenced the popular opinions of the public. FALGBT relied on the adoration of celebrities to provide credibility and thus acceptance to the argument in favor of LGBT marriage. By demonstrating the support of not just one, but 44 celebrities from many cultural genres, FALGBT showed the overwhelming popularity of their campaign, relying on the impact of the celebrity voice in carrying more influence than less famous individuals. When presented to elected officials, the endorsements not only reflected public support, but also encouraged more public support by increasing visibility through media attention and creating a correlation between famous celebrities and the marriage law.

In their judicial strategy, FALGBT handpicked the couples who attempted marriage in the public eye. Whether these individuals were celebrities who happened to be gay, or gay individuals who were made famous by media attention, they were

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<sup>171</sup> Zafer Erdogan, “Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review,” *Journal of Marketing Management* 15 (1999): 291.

<sup>172</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 478.

specifically chosen for the way in which they were able to represent the LGBT community to the Argentine public. Maria Andía emphasizes this point when she states, “In each case, the Federation analyzed the pros and cons of every couple, their visibility and empathy they reveal in society.”<sup>173</sup> The first couple to attempt marriage under the direction of FALGBT was the president of the organization, María Rachid and her partner, Claudia Castro. Rachid and Castro also appear in a video presented on [elmismoamor.org](http://www.elmismoamor.org) entitled, “La Justicia nos debe una respuesta” (Justice owes us an answer).<sup>174</sup> At the beginning, the video says, “Las parejas del mismo sexo piden a la corte suprema que se expida” (Same-sex couples ask the supreme court to issue [marriage licenses]). The video takes place in an intimate setting, presumably in Rachid and Castro’s home. The couple explains that the Equal Marriage law is being debated and that it is not an issue of the rights of one partner, but the same rights for everyone. The video ends with FALGBT’s slogan, “El mismo amor, los mismos derechos, con los mismos nombres” (The same love, the same rights, with the same names). As Rachid and Castro open their home and private life to the public, it personalizes the campaign. As president of FALGBT at the time and the first publicized same-sex couple to attempt marriage, Rachid and Castro worked to bring visibility to the leaders of the organization thus bringing the organization closer to the public and laying the framework for the plan the organization was implementing. There was not a stratification of power, but instead

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<sup>173</sup> Maria Gracia Andía, “Mobilization and the Road to Same-Sex Marriage in Argentina,” in *Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America: Promise and Resistance*, ed. by Jason Pierceson, Adriana Piatti-Crocker, and Shawn Schulenberg (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 137.

<sup>174</sup> [Elmismoamor.org](http://www.youtube.com/user/elmismoamor.org), “La Justicia nos debe una respuesta,” accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/user/elmismoamor.org>

everyone within the organization was fighting for the same rights and hence carried a common message forward to the populace.

The second marriage request was from telenovela actor, Ernesto Larrese, and his partner, Alejandro Vannelli.<sup>175</sup> By choosing Larrese and Vannelli as the second couple to attempt marriage, FALGBT elected a couple that was accustomed to media attention and was able to relay the message of the organization to the people. Further, the election of this couple ensured not only more media attention, but media attention that prompted the sympathy of the public. The couples attempting marriage became encouraging role models for the Argentine LGBT community to work toward similar goals. Laresse and Vannelli also made a video similar to that of Rachid and Castro entitled, “La Justicia nos debe una respuesta” (The Justice System owes us a response).<sup>176</sup> Laresse and Vannelli sit on a couch in their home in comfortable clothing. As Larrese affectionately places his hand on Vannelli’s leg, the couple explains that they are Argentine citizens that comply with all the duties expected of citizens and then pose the question to the audience: “Why do we not have the same rights?” They then explain how they have formed a family twenty-four years ago and recently attempted to marry and are now waiting for a response from the court. The video ends with FALGBT’s slogan. Laresse and Vannelli provide a friendly face of not only a famous couple, but also a dutiful couple whose relationship is clearly full of love. These videos attempt to break down stereotypes of the LGBT community as radically different and hyper-sexualized. By portraying the couples

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<sup>175</sup> Andía, “Mobilization,” 138.

<sup>176</sup> Elmismoamor.org, “La Justicia nos debe una respuesta,” accessed on March 26, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv3-QpgZhhE&list=UUzvXv14vlCpX5IoY11W6\\_4g&index=49](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv3-QpgZhhE&list=UUzvXv14vlCpX5IoY11W6_4g&index=49).

in their homes, discussing their normal lives and the creation of their families, the couples normalize the LGBT “lifestyle” to the Argentine public in hopes that if the public understands that LGBT relationships are no different than their own, they will be more willing to accept equal marriage.

FALGBT’s website also shows videos of the news stories of the couples who attempted marriage as well as the success of the first couple to successfully marry, Alex Freyre and José María Di Bello.<sup>177</sup> In an interview with AG Magazine, a gay news source in Argentina, Freyre and Di Bello, who are both HIV positive and members of the Fundación Buenos Aires SIDA, tell the story of their successful marriage. In the fight for equality, the couple also makes visible the issues facing healthcare for the LGBT community that they have personally faced through their own diagnoses, as well as discrimination issues facing the trans community. By outlining the discrimination that the LGBT community faces, the couple justifies the fight for equality under the law as a path toward fighting other forms of discrimination. The couple eloquently makes reference to the history of the fight for equal marriage that led to their success. The media attention of the couple’s marriage and the expert way in which the couple handled such media attention provided hope and inspiration for the LGBT community, which led to many couples in turn attempting to marry throughout Argentina and a rise in the success of same-sex marriages. By choosing well-spoken couples who were able to voice the issues FALGBT wished to convey to the public, the organization created a positive image of the LGBT community in the Argentine public. The use of celebrity endorsements, both straight and queer, and same-sex couples, who essentially became celebrities in the

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<sup>177</sup> FALGBT Website, Videos, <http://www.lgbt.org.ar/05-video-01.php>.



media, rallied the LGBT community in Argentina to become a cohesive force and gathered the sympathy and support of straight allies to work toward their goal.

*Reframing the Discourse*

FALGBT advantageously framed the discourse of the LGBT movement to fit the many human rights movements in Argentina that were challenging oppression, thus slipping into the cracks of the previously heterosexist society until Argentina could not ignore the LGBT movement. In the quest for LGBT marriage, FALGBT used the recognition created by the predecessors of the movement (FLH, CHA, etc) to further increase visibility and enact legislation that challenged the structure of Argentine society. In the 1984 edition of Argentina's magazine, *Siete Días*, the famed leader of CHA, Carlos Jáuregui, daringly appeared holding another man, thus marking the first time gay men had been openly out in the media.<sup>178</sup> Jáuregui became the first face of the gay rights movement in Argentina, marching in favor of sexual diversity and against AIDS. FALGBT adopted the same strategy of not only publicizing the LGBT rights movement in mass media, but also using the president, María Rachid, as a symbol of the movement. Further, CHA, an organization that formed at the onset of the democratization of Argentina, utilized the rhetoric of democracy versus discrimination that was emphasized at the time. In a newspaper advertisement, CHA claimed, "Con discriminación y represión no hay democracia" (With discrimination and repression there is no democracy),<sup>179</sup> thus framing the plights of the gay community as repressed. Only two decades later, the discrimination and repression from the dictatorship still provided a

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<sup>178</sup> Comunidad Homosexual Argentina, "25 años de la CHA," accessed on March 30, 2013, <http://www.cha.org.ar/¿quienes-somos/25-anos-de-la-cha/>.

<sup>179</sup> Diez, "'Argentina,'" 16.

valid threat for the Argentine public. FALGBT used similar rhetoric as CHA had used to help the Argentine public understand the severity of discrimination the LGBT community faced.

As Gary Mucciaroni explains, “The story of sexual politics is both a narrative about a heterosexist majority that has used religion and ideology to maintain its cultural and legal privileges and a story of social learning in which disproportionately younger, more educated citizens have come to know openly gay people and have responded with greater tolerance and support for LGBT equality.”<sup>180</sup> FALGBT defined its place within the system by first defining marriage as a human right and then by structuring their argument to outline the discrimination of the inability to have this right. The rhetoric in interviews of the couples who attempted marriages, such as Laresse and Vanelli, as well as Freyre and DiBello’s successful marriage, demonstrates FALGBT’s desire to show LGBT rights as human rights. Laresse says, “Somos profesionales, pagamos nuestros impuestos... cumplimos con todas las obligaciones de cualquier otro ciudadano, entonces porque no tenemos los mismos derechos?” (We are professionals, we pay our taxes... we comply with all the obligations like any other citizen, so why don’t we have the same rights?).<sup>181</sup> FALGBT tells the public that couples like Laresse and Vannelli do their civic duty to the nation, but they are denied the basic human right of marriage. They are treated as second-class citizens, although they deserve to be treated as equal. By framing the discourse in this manner and by presenting this information through a legitimate,

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<sup>180</sup> Gary Mucciaroni, “The Study of LGBT Politics and Its Contributions to Political Science,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (2011): 17.

<sup>181</sup> Elmismoamororg, “La Justicia nos debe una repuesta (Video 1),” *YouTube*, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv3-QpgZhE&list=UUzvXv14vlCpX5IoY11W6\\_4g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv3-QpgZhE&list=UUzvXv14vlCpX5IoY11W6_4g).

professional couple, FALGBT challenges the Argentine public to treat the couple as citizens, but more, as humans. The organization asked Argentine society to not only tolerate, but also accept the rights of the LGBT movement and stand on the progressive side of history. Both the mobilization of the movement and the image portrayed to the public by FALGBT allowed the organization to establish the validity of their place and their rights.



Figure 6: <http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/02/25/con-amplio-apoyo-parlamentario-se-retoma-el-debate-sobre-matrimonio-de-parejas-del-mismo-sexo/>

With the rise of a negative backlash against the LGBT community directly before the passage of the LGBT marriage law

in 2010, FALGBT adopted a clever

rhetorical strategy. “With the support of a good part of the media, artists, and progressive intellectuals, they started to name the law: ‘Egalitarian Marriage Law.’”<sup>182</sup> Posters presented by FALGBT online as well as photographed posters held by supporters in demonstrations hail slogans such as “Matrimonio igualitario en Argentina”<sup>183</sup> (Equal Marriage in Argentina) and “Queremos igualdad! Queremos matrimonio!”<sup>184</sup> (We want equality! We want marriage!). The poster shows the legislative building as a backdrop, while along the bottom, faceless people rally, holding a large rainbow flag. By including people of different genders, but having them remain faceless with no indication of their

<sup>182</sup> Andía, “Mobilization and the Road to Same-Sex Marriage in Argentina,” 142.

<sup>183</sup> “La Ciudad de Buenos Aires habilita el matrimonio igualitario para turistas,” last modified on May 18, 2012, accessed on March 30, 2013, [http://peekg.com/leyes\\_y\\_tolerancia\\_social/la-ciudad-de-buenos-aires-habilita-el-matrimonio-igualitario-para-turistas](http://peekg.com/leyes_y_tolerancia_social/la-ciudad-de-buenos-aires-habilita-el-matrimonio-igualitario-para-turistas).

<sup>184</sup> AG Magazine, “Con amplio apoyo parlamentario se retoma el debate sobre matrimonio de parejas del mismo sexo,” last modified on February 25, 2010, accessed on March 26, 2013, <http://www.agmagazine.info/2010/02/25/con-amplio-apoyo-parlamentario-se-retoma-el-debate-sobre-matrimonio-de-parejas-del-mismo-sexo/>.

sexualities, FALGBT underlines the slogan of equality (literally) under the law. The poster encourages people to rally and placing the location in front of the legislative building making the viewer aware that the government is the primary obstacle between the LGBT community and equality. By associating equality with the formally recognized institution of marriage, FALGBT was able to push uncompromisingly toward their goal of marriage. Leaders of FALGBT realized that if they obtained civil unions before equal marriage as a stepping stone, the Argentine government and opponents of the LGBT movement would say that the LGBT community had equal rights and would be unresponsive to passing marriage legislation. While opposition in the Senate proposed civil unions as an alternative that was in a sense separate but equal, and CHA supported civil unions as a criticism of the institution of marriage, FALGBT cried, “Los mismos derechos con los mismos nombres” (The same rights with the same names).<sup>185</sup> FALGBT appealed to hearts of the Argentine public, who remain, even to this day, sensitive to threats to their democracy following the dictatorship. By making the LGBT community visible to the public and romanticizing stories, FALGBT humanized and personalized the plight of the LGBT community. Further, in addition to framing the LGBT rights movement into a human rights movement, the organization worked to convince the public that marriage was a basic human right, and by denying this right to a percentage of the population, the country was denying a marginalized community their natural human rights. The closeting of gays and the oppression of denying marriage, without explicitly being said, was then connected to the oppression the country had previously faced. The public that remembered the dictatorship, or had family members who could remember,

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<sup>185</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 539.

empathized with the LGBT community.

Fortifying the connection to human rights activism, FALGBT gained the support of “no fewer than 73 human-rights organizations, including the famous Madres de la Plaza de Mayo.”<sup>186</sup> FALGBT not only presented LGBT rights as human rights, the organization also had the support of the leaders of human rights activism in the country. The support of these organizations, and especially the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, legitimized FALGBT’s claim that LGBT rights were human rights. If one was against LGBT rights, one was against human rights and was thus an ally of the oppressor. The connection to the various human rights activist groups worked like celebrity endorsements, drawing attention to the rights of the LGBT community, as well as validating their decision to fight for their rights.

### Counteracting Opposition



Figure 7:  
<http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/noticia/163229/>



Figure 8:  
<http://infoitati.blogspot.com/2010/07/13-de-julio-manifestacion-favor-del.html>

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<sup>186</sup> Omar G. Encarnación, “Latin America’s Gay Rights Revolution” *Journal of Democracy* 22 (2011): 108.

Overcoming the negative backlash from organized religion was an obstacle for FALGBT. Argentina is a country with a heavy religious influence, especially from the Catholic Church. Current president of FALGBT, Esteban Paulón, says that Evangelical and Pentecostal churches also continue to be strong antagonists.<sup>187</sup> In protests, opponents of equal marriage rallied against the law (shown in Figures 7 and 8) by claiming that the law violated the rights of families and children. They held signs that said, “Matrimonio mujer y varón, mamá y papá,” (Marriage man and woman, mother and father) “Los chicos tenemos derecho a un papá y una mamá” (Children have a right to a father and mother).<sup>188</sup> Unfortunately for the Church, this argument ostracized single parents and divorcees in many cases. In order to combat this criticism of equal marriage, FALGBT set out to prove that the equal marriage law did not violate religious faith, nor did it tear apart families. The violent opposition that the Church provided during the fight for the LGBT marriage law helped unify LGBT identity. FALGBT did not necessarily challenge faith, but revealed the oppression and the injustice within the institution of the Catholic Church in order to recruit those who disagreed with these injustices to the LGBT movement’s cause. In March of 2010, months before the law passed, FALGBT posted news articles on their Facebook page revealing papal scandals of child abuse and connections to prostitution.<sup>189</sup> By publicizing these stories, FALGBT hoped to undermine the moral credibility of the institution that was targeting the LGBT community for being

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<sup>187</sup> “How Argentina is bringing the fight for gay marriage to you,” last modified on October 17, accessed on March 26, 2013, 2012, <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/how-argentina-bringing-fight-gay-marriage-you171012>.

<sup>188</sup> Bazán, *La Historia*, 541.

<sup>189</sup> FALGBT Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/FALGBT>.

immoral.

Through a series of short videos, uploaded onto the YouTube channel *elmismoamororg*, FALGBT began a campaign to target groups of the Argentine public that may have stereotypically been against LGBT marriage. In addition to celebrity testimonials that provided an argument that “Culture Says Yes to Equality,” there were also a series of videos with messages that cross broad cultural contexts like “The Media Say Yes to Equality.”<sup>190</sup> This video shows various clips from famous news stations like *Vivo* with newscasters publicly voicing their support for marriage equality. The video, “Science Says Yes to Equality,” gives testimonials from various psychologists or representatives of scientist from universities and organizations who have given their support to FALGBT in favor of the Equal Marriage law. To emphasize that religion and equal marriage are not mutually exclusive, FALGBT shared six videos entitled, “Faith Says Yes to Equality.” In each video, the audience hears from a representative of a different faith, Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Evangelist, Jewish, and Africanist, who pledged their support of equal marriage. All of the videos say that the church that these individuals represent stands for equality and against discrimination, and thus supports the rights of all of Argentina’s citizens, including LGBT citizens. A concluding video “Argentina already said Yes to Equality,” makes the case that because Culture, History, Religion, and Science are behind the fight for equality, it is time for the Equal Marriage Law to pass.

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<sup>190</sup> *Elmismoamororg*, *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/user/elmismoamororg>.



Although FALGBT's videos targeted the oppressive institution of the Catholic Church in Argentina, they did not wish to isolate supporters with religious beliefs. The organization makes a distinction between the institution and religious faith in the videos explaining that "Faith Says Yes to Equality" because LGBT issues are human rights issues and discrimination negatively affects Argentina as a country. FALGBT's website has a "Credos" section created by the Secretary of Religious Diversity of FALGBT



Figure 9: <http://www.youtube.com/elmismoamororg>

that explains the position of various religions who support LGBT rights. For example, one faith claims "Cristianismo, sí, homofobia, no" (Christianity, yes, homophobia, no). In making the distinction between the institution of the Catholic Church and religious faith, FALGBT portrayed a message that the populace could maintain their faith and religious piety and still disagree with the Catholic Church's biases. The organization was then able to stand up against their main opponent, the Catholic Church, without losing the support of people in the country with religious faith.

Another marketing strategy that FALGBT used was a video that told the history of the legalization of divorce and the opposition from the Catholic Church, whose argument of traditional family values more than half a century before eerily reflects the same opposition the Church displayed against the Equal Marriage Law. This strategy undermined the Church's opposition and concurrently recruited an even broader group, divorcees, into the fold. Among the videos are three called, "Te parece justo?" (Does this

seem just to you?).

Historically, the illegalization of divorce led to huge percentages of illegitimate children.<sup>191</sup> Many couples sought divorces outside of Argentina, but upon returning,

found that the Argentine

government would not recognize these divorces.<sup>192</sup> In the fight against divorce, the Church used images of children saying, “Y vos que opinas del divorcio?” (And what do you think of divorce?), and emphasized divorce as a destruction of traditional family in Argentina. During the 1980s, following the dictatorship when Argentina was already disillusioned with the Catholic Church, divorce turned citizens and illegitimate children into second class citizens. The images shown in the video would seem familiar to the Argentine public in 2010 when the Church held signs that claimed, “La Familia Sí Importa” (Yes, Family Does Matter).<sup>193</sup> FALGBT effectively created an empathic connection between divorcees, many of whom could remember the fight only decades earlier, and members of the LGBT community. By implicating the Church as a common enemy, FALGBT hoped to gain the broader support of the Argentine public and illustrate



Figure 10: [http://noti-prensa.com/miles-se-manifiestaron-por-la-familia-“queremos-mama-y-papa-para-nuestros-hijos”/](http://noti-prensa.com/miles-se-manifiestaron-por-la-familia-queremos-mama-y-papa-para-nuestros-hijos/)

<sup>191</sup> Mala Htun, *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.

<sup>192</sup> Htun, *Sex and the state*, 96.

<sup>193</sup> “Miles se manifiestaron por la familia: ‘Queremos mamá y papá para nuestros hijos,’” accessed on March 26, 2013, [http://noti-prensa.com/miles-se-manifiestaron-por-la-familia-“queremos-mama-y-papa-para-nuestros-hijos”/#&slider1=2](http://noti-prensa.com/miles-se-manifiestaron-por-la-familia-queremos-mama-y-papa-para-nuestros-hijos/#&slider1=2).

that the Church's opposition to the equal marriage law was archaic and retrogressive.

Another video entitled, "Te parece justo?" (Does this seem just to you?) shows the history of women's suffrage in Argentina. Under Perón's government in 1947, and specifically with the influence of his wife, Eva Perón, Argentina granted suffrage to women. The video shows women under the leadership of the beloved Evita marching for equal rights and outlines that Eva understood the value of the same rights with the same names, echoing FALGBT's slogan. By equating the fight for LGBT rights with women's suffrage, FALGBT equated LGBT rights with the rights of the people and with the country's ultimate symbol of people's rights, Eva Perón. Further, the organization reminded the public of an issue which many may have forgotten. At one point in Argentine history, the Church and the government considered women second-class citizens. As the country progressed, however, women were granted equality. For the progression and betterment of Argentina, FALGBT asked the public to fall on the right side of history once again.

The videos are meant to be a reflection of public opinion, and simultaneously influence public acceptance by demonstrating that the popular opinion of the country was in favor of the Equal Marriage Law. The historical videos depicting the Church's opposition to divorce invalidated the Church's standing and showed that the Church's opinions and righteous adherence to so-called traditional family values were an inability to progress with the country that Argentina was quickly becoming. Although the Church opposed the divorce law, it still passed. Although some disagreed with women's suffrage, it still passed. The Church, with its archaic argument, was failing to recognize the inevitability of the passage of the Equal Marriage Law. FALGBT hoped to show that this

law was progressive, had the support of the people, and that its passage was assured.

While the Church was emphasizing to the public that LGBT marriage would mean the breakdown of Argentine families, FALGBT worked to show that this was not the case. One of the videos providing celebrity testimonials states, “Los hijos de parejas del mismo sexo tienen menos derechos que los demás” (Children of same-sex partners have less rights than other children) and “Votar por la igualdad es defender a las familias a TODAS, no sólo a algunas” (To vote for equality is to defend the families of EVERYONE, not just of some).<sup>194</sup> FALGBT showed that the Church’s discrimination against the LGBT community was not in favor of families, but rather discriminated against families. On Facebook, FALGBT advertised a Chilean reality television program called *Esta es mi familia* that told the story of a young lesbian and the effects on her family of her coming out.<sup>195</sup> Initially, the young woman’s parents felt guilty and as if their world had ended, but eventually the program showed that families could overcome the conflict and that love could surpass fear. Some of the videos on the FALGBT’s website depict the issue of gay adoption, a right that became available with the LGBT marriage law. One video enters the home and gives an intimate telling of the story of lesbian mothers raising their three children. The video gives testimonials from psychologists and fertilization experts that say that “familias diversas” or diverse families, such as families with two fathers, two mothers, single parent households, etc. do

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<sup>194</sup> Elmismoamor.org.

<sup>195</sup> FALGBT Facebook, “La televisión estatal de Chile estrenó un programa de diversidad familiar con vivencias de una joven lesbiana,” posted on March 23, 2010, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/federación-argentina-lgbt-falgbt/la-televisión-estatal-de-chile-estrenó-un-programa-de-diversidad-familiar-con-vi/10150161695780215>.

not necessarily have a negative impact on the child.<sup>196</sup> One psychologist emphasizes that single-parent households and households with gay parents have always existed, they are just becoming more visible in society. The Church claimed that children had a right to a mother and a father and that LGBT marriage devalued traditional family morals.

FALGBT actively fought this message by making visible families with LGBT parents whose children had positive lives, and by showing that discrimination of parents toward their LGBT children could and should, for the wellbeing of their children, be overcome.

FALGBT consciously and deliberately portrayed an image to the public that concentrated on combating the opposition and stereotypes in Argentine society in hopes of garnering the public support necessary for the passage of LGBT marriage in Argentina. FALGBT unified many diverse organizations and assembled toward the communal goal of passing LGBT marriage. With a solidified identity and a discourse that framed the rights of that identity as human rights, FALGBT set about normalizing the image of the LGBT community to the Argentine public. This unity and human rights discourse helped the organization to defeat opposition and realize their goal. FALGBT continues on the path of mobilization and visibility today utilizing social media heavily in order to continue to press the country's government to pass progressive laws in favor of giving rights to marginalized communities.

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<sup>196</sup> FALGBT Website, Videos.

### **Adelante**

Since the passage of equal marriage in Argentina, FALGBT has continued to promote progressive laws in the country. Directly after the passage of equal marriage, on July 21, 2010, Argentina passed a law extending equal marriage to tourists.<sup>197</sup> Canada and Argentina are the only countries that offer this extension of equal rights.<sup>198</sup> The passage of this law works twofold for Argentina. From an economic standpoint, gay tourism in Argentina had already risen after the passage of civil unions in Buenos Aires in 2002, thus establishing a gay market within the country. By embracing the international LGBT community and advertising marriage to tourists, Argentina is affording people from all over the world an extremely limited opportunity and reaping the economic benefits from the rise in gay tourism. Further, Argentina is seen in the world as a progressive country in the rankings with Canada and Europe, which allows the country to distance itself with the negative connotations associated with “third-world” or “developing” categories as well as its historical hard-right dictatorship.

FALGBT, continuing its invaluable role in the Argentine LGBT rights movement, has been at the forefront of the new progressive laws. Recently, FALGBT separated its main website into four categories that address the objectives of the organization. One category is FALGBT’s main website, which connects to many resources associated with the organization. Today, the organization continues to focus on LGBT youth by arranging book clubs, showing queer-themed movies, providing educational components, and

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<sup>197</sup> “Matrimonio Igualitario turistas,” accessed on April 5, 2013, [http://www.ciudadanialgbt.org/?page\\_id=60](http://www.ciudadanialgbt.org/?page_id=60).

<sup>198</sup> “Matrimonio Igualitario turistas.”

ensuring safe spaces for bullied youth.<sup>199</sup> FALGBT's second category explains the recently passed "Ley de Identidad de Género" (Gender Identity Law). This law, passed in May of 2012, aims at targeting discrimination against transgender people and allows transgender people to register under their preferred gender and name. This law also permits individuals, without court authorization, to have free surgical or pharmaceutical alterations to allow their physical self to match their internalized gender.<sup>200</sup> FALGBT's third category addresses and promotes the gay tourism law. The fourth category outlines the objectives of FALGBT in what the organization calls "Ciudadanía LGBT" (LGBT Citizenship). The current president of FALGBT, Esteban Paulón, outlines a legislative plan to combat discrimination against the LGBT community including access to education, healthcare, jobs, and public space.<sup>201</sup> FALGBT recognizes the successes in passing equal marriage and gender identity laws, but is still working toward the integration and equality of the LGBT community and hopes to make known to the public the continuing discrimination that the community faces.

Since 2010, FALGBT's use of media has only increased. The organization has dedicated a faction to Prensa-FALGBT, or FALGBT's press. FALGBT's Facebook page has over 7,500 subscribers. The organization uses Facebook to rally for equal marriage in Latin America, especially in Uruguay, Argentina's neighbor.<sup>202</sup> Recently, FALGBT has

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<sup>199</sup> FALGBT Website.

<sup>200</sup> "Argentina: New Law on Transgender Rights Approved," Library of Congress, last modified May 16, 2012, [http://www.loc.gov/lawweb/servlet/lloc\\_news?disp3\\_1205403153\\_text](http://www.loc.gov/lawweb/servlet/lloc_news?disp3_1205403153_text).

<sup>201</sup> Esteban Paulón, "Plan de Ciudadanía LGBT," accessed on April 5, 2013, page 7, <http://www.ciudadanialgbt.org/>.

<sup>202</sup> Uruguay passed an equal marriage law on April 11, 2013, making Uruguay the second country in Latin America and the 12<sup>th</sup> country in the world to legalize equal marriage.

also protested the election of Pope Francis Bergoglio, saying the pope “claimed the Equal Marriage Law was a plan of the devil” and his views regarding the LGBT community are “a bad sign for equality.”<sup>203</sup> FALGBT uses social media like Facebook to promote cultural events such as movies. For example, FALGBT is currently promoting the tour of a documentary entitled *Familias por Igual* (Families Alike), the first movie about same-sex parents in Argentina, on its Facebook page. The event details provide a synopsis and encourage fans to not only participate in the viewing, but also to promote the documentary themselves. The event details state,

Visualizing homosexual families is one of the outstanding themes in our society. Education is the beginning of the cultural battle to open doors of a past and a tradition that has restricted the basic rights of people solely for their sexual orientation. This is the axis that begins the tape of this documentary and promotes the demystification and eradication of fears so that our children may be born into a society with more justice and freedom.<sup>204</sup>

The poster of the movie shows two men and their daughter lounging in the grass, staring happily into the distance, and basking in sunlight. The movie poster focuses on the promotion of a positive familial image associated with homosexuality within the culture. In promoting family life, the movie breaks down stereotypes of immorality and promiscuity associated with homosexuality. Further, it opens the discussion for the normalization of LGBT couples adopting children, a greater goal of the movement. The

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“Uruguay’s Equal Marriage Act a step towards full equality in the Americas,” accessed on April 15, 2013, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/uruguay-s-equal-marriage-act-step-towards-full-equality-americas-2013-04-12>.

<sup>203</sup> FALGBT Facebook, posted March 13, 2013, accessed on April 5, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/federación-argentina-lgbt-falgbt/el-nombramiento-como-papa-de-quien-sostuvo-que-el-matrimonio-igualitario-era-un-10152656496255215>.

<sup>204</sup> FALGBT Facebook, posted on March 25, 2013, accessed on April 12, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/FALGBT?fref=ts>.



purpose of the movie is to educate and spread awareness of a positive image that works to eliminate negative stereotypes that remain as barriers to the movement's cause. In addition to Facebook, FALGBT is now a part of BlogSpot, YouTube, and Twitter, which are regularly used to connect the community and update the followers on recent events. FALGBT continues to support the LGBT community, and ultimately recognizes the advantage of social media as a tool for keeping the LGBT movement in the public eye and the issues at the forefront of the public's mind.

The organization's willingness to adapt to the growing popularity of technology and social media is indicative of its ability to focus on the implementation of future goals. An historical understanding of LGBT history both in Argentina and internationally aids FALGBT in the formulation of successful legislative plans. Aside from a formal legislative and judicial plan, the organization facilitated a conscious plan to affect and persuade the Argentine public to accept the LGBT community. The organization recognized the value in maintaining visibility of the LGBT community, using CHA as an Argentine model and success in Spain as an international model. The visibility in the public created by FALGBT made equal marriage an issue that the country, both citizens and legislators, could not ignore, thus ensuring the law's inevitability. The organization catered the image to fit the Argentine public, many of whom harbor residual fear of infringing on rights from the 1980s dictatorship. FALGBT associated the LGBT cause with the greater fight for human rights and against discrimination. Unlike any other previous organization, FALGBT mobilized a diverse number of identities within the LGBT community to accomplish a single goal. Finally, FALGBT constructed a public argument that targeted the discrimination of the Church, the organization's main

opponent, and undermined the legitimacy of the institution. FALGBT uses this plan to work toward other goals such as fighting discrimination and increasing the rights of transgender people. The organization's continuation of this successful method for gaining rights for the LGBT community, in conjunction with goals that accommodate advancing technologies and focus on engagement and education of future generations, ensure that the success of the LGBT movement in Argentina will endure.

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