

Femicide in Buenos Aires:  
Social Change Through Interpersonal Education

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Swarthmore College  
5/3/2016

## ABSTRACT

### Femicide in Buenos Aires: Social Change Through Interpersonal Education

This paper explores the trajectory of social thought concerning femicide, particularly as it relates to the 2015 #NiUnaMenos movement in Buenos Aires. Through framing gender as a social construct, this paper illuminates the connection between cultural, structural and personal violence. In this framework, individual murders become a social phenomenon. The critical consciousness fostered by the #NiUnaMenos movement reveals the potential of interpersonal education to effect social change.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, this thesis would not have come together without the gentle guidance of my thesis advisors Christine Schuetze and Roseann Liu. Thank you to my professors in Buenos Aires, Viviana Seoane, Manuela Barral and Cecilia Belej, for encouraging my research and connecting me with amazing contacts within the field of gender studies in Buenos Aires. Gracias a las personas que entrevisté por aguantar mi español y por compartir sus historias y pensamientos honestas.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to my intelligent, hilarious and ferocious thesis writing buddies Anya Rose and Isabella Bellezza. Also thank you to my mommas, and brothers for supporting me through this process with your love, and understanding of comma placement.

## Chapter 1 Introduction: Welcome to Buenos Aires

*“Es solo un piropo” It’s only a compliment*

The first day I was in Buenos Aires, Argentina the weather was steamy. I left the house to explore with a friend wearing a black tank top and a yellow knee length skirt. I was excited to see what the day would hold. What food would I try? How would the subway feel? What would the people be like? On my way to the subway station I saw a group of construction workers ahead of me. With the awareness that I would have to pass them my palms began to sweat. As I came closer they stopped working and turned their gaze to me. My body warmed under their eyes and I quickened my step. When I was closest to them I heard a symphony of whistles and groans and exclamations of *“hermosa.”* I kept my chin high and continued on my way, trying not to show my fear of being a woman alone in a large new city. I had experienced street harassment before. “I can handle this,” I thought to myself. But as I continued around the city that day I became overwhelmed and upset by both the number of comments and the crude content. I felt a strong physical repulsion to these men and yet a strange thrill of danger and the sexual gaze. These comments seemed to go beyond what are labeled catcalls or street harassment in the United States in both their frequency and intensity. I experienced an internal conflict between wanting to be an open-minded foreigner who was culturally savvy and wanting to be honest about the burning anger and sense of threat to my body.

At the end of this long first day of exploring Buenos Aires I came home and asked my host parents about the comments on the street. But being a Spanish student, in order to communicate what I was feeling I needed to figure out the Spanish word for catcall or street harassment. As I described my experience, a pseudo game of charades ensued in which my host parents searched for the word to describe my experience. The word that arose from this

conversation was “un piropo” which translates to “a compliment.” I rejected this word choice and insisted that my experience was negative, that I did not like this, that women do not ask for this kind of attention. But no matter my explanation, the answer remained the same from my host parents later from the women that ran my study abroad program. In these conversations the tone was that these comments on the street were kind, that they were “just a part of the culture,” something to which I would soon become accustomed.

This interpretation did not sit well with me, and during my time in Buenos Aires I did not enjoy this aspect of being a woman. I was shaken by *piropos* in the street on a daily basis and I was even more upset at the notion that I was the one “out of line” for not properly enjoying the comments. The way my experience was being defined by others did not feel right and I did not know how to reconcile my gut instinct with the information I was receiving. At the time, I attributed these inconsistencies to a Machismo culture and presumed that most people in Buenos Aires thought differently about what it meant to respect the rights of women. The fact that in Buenos Aires no one I spoke to could describe these comments in a way other than a compliment was indicative of the narratives and social interpretation of this practice. Further, maybe it was on account of my cultural background that I had only ever considered these situations with negative language and considered them sexual harassment. I became immensely curious about the connection between language, culture, and practice in this regard. The discomfort I had with *piropos* and the discord of how these experiences were considered in Buenos Aires as compared to how I considered them given my background was the initial inspiration for this thesis. Suffice to say, I am not an unbiased author: the beginning stages of the research for this thesis were fueled by an anger and rejection of what I was experiencing. It is important to note the origins of my thinking, as I am not an unbiased writer. I am a young woman who had a visceral reaction.

Through my research I have come to a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in Buenos Aires. As a result, I strive to use my feelings about my experiences as data rather than the whole truth. To the extent I fail, my hope is that this thesis is otherwise coherent on the issue of gender dynamics in Buenos Aires.

### **Why Buenos Aires? —A Political and Historical Rationale**

Studying gender within Buenos Aires is especially relevant due to its political environment and culture. Argentina has seen real progress in terms of gender equality in recent legislature; including the Sexual Education Mandate (ESI) passed in 2006, legalization of gay marriage passed in 2010, and a gender identification law, which grants the right to change gender and sex identification on legal documents in Argentina. Examination of the gender situation in Buenos Aires will show that as compared to other like cities it is progressive in terms of laws around gender equality. In 2015 the rise of the #NiUnaMenos movement, a community that denounces femicide, brought a series of demands to congress which indicated ways to further improve the gender situation in the country. Additionally, the #NiUnaMenos campaign that was born in Buenos Aires has spread to over 100 countries. Therefore it is evident that Argentina, and specifically the city of Buenos Aires is internationally inspiring improved gender legislation.

Argentina experienced a long period of turbulent dictatorships from 1966-1983. The memories of hardship during this time have fostered a strong culture of protest in Buenos Aires. This is evident in the practice of weekly protests from the time of the dictatorship to present day in the Plaza de Mayo<sup>1</sup>. The citizens of Buenos Aires may more regularly exercise their ability to speak up against what they think is wrong and to communicate what they need than the citizens

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<sup>1</sup> Silvia Sigal, "Las Plazas De La Dictadura," in *La Plaza De Mayo: Una Crónica* (Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2006), pg. #324.

of many countries of the world. The political sensitivity of Buenos Aires citizens suggests that issues may be publicly discussed more readily than in other places. This fact was personally evident in that before I living in Buenos Aires I had never heard the term femicide before.

Femicide evaluates the murder of women by men they are in close interpersonal relationships with on a societal level. This social understanding of what was previously seen as individual cases was a direct result of the #NiUnaMenos (Not One Less) movement, a campaign to stop femicide. #NiUnaMenos brought thousands in Buenos Aires together through a Twitter campaign and march to speak out against femicide. The campaign invited people in Buenos Aires to draw connections between the horrific phenomenon of femicide and daily-normalized aspects of gender performance, such as the *piropo*. The #NiUnaMenos movement became a momentous force that drew new support everyday, from sharing articles on Facebook, to celebrity endorsements, to a photo project of people declaring their opposition to femicide. This movement made femicide the most talked about issue in the city.

### **Theoretical Frame: Butler, Galtung & Freire**

The work of theorists Judith Butler, Johan Galtung, and Paulo Freire, all shed light on the relations of power and gender, like that at play in Buenos Aires. Butler, posits that gender is a social construct. She argues that gender is a repetitive performance, and that how each person chooses to act this performance out is shaped by their social environment<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the construction of gender is hidden in its performance, which is to say that an individual's performance can be seen both as a result of their surroundings and at the same time contributes to shaping other's gender performance. To understand gender as an aspect of society as a socially

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<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," JSTOR, 519-531, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893>.

produced currency, reproduced through ongoing corporeal performance (and not a static identity), provides a strong narrative to critically discuss the connection between gender and power in Buenos Aires. Additionally, acknowledging gender and gender performance as continuously and culturally-shaped similarly creates the possibility that gender roles can be changed through intention.

Gender relations in Buenos Aires today are entangled with power dynamics. Addressing only cis-gender identities, the archetypes of powerful male and weak female are commonly equated to agent and passive subject, respectively. Because masculinity is defined in opposition to and in a place of power over femininity, social pressure forces men to hold power over others as a demonstration of masculinity. While these dynamics do not encompass every type of masculinity or how people choose to perform masculinity, they are pervasive societal ideas that shape the way men and women act and interact. Additionally, understanding the way power is intertwined in gender archetypes can be helpful in beginning to see the invisible violence of how normalized gender roles can be seen as cultural violence.

Theorist Johan Galtung categorizes violence in three different ways: as structural violence, cultural violence and direct violence. These categories are organized into Galtung's violence triangle, which visually communicates the causal links that connect each category to the other.



In Galtung's model, direct violence is defined as violence where the perpetrators are human beings. Direct violence—such as murder, rape, and abuse—is the most visible of the forms of violence. Structural violence is perhaps the most difficult form of violence to identify because no particular person or persons can be held directly responsible as the cause. This term refers to violence that is a part of the structure of human organizations and institutions (social, political, and economic). Finally, Galtung defines cultural violence as the legitimization of structural or direct violence within a society. Cultural meaning, symbols, and beliefs allow structural and direct violence to happen. While these cultural markers cannot be identified as the root cause of violence, “neither direct nor structural violence can go on for long without at least some support from culture.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, through Galtung's violence triangle we can understand *piropos* as a form of direct (or personal) violence, because they are visible instances of interpersonal violence committed by a human perpetrator. Further, we understand that these instances of direct violence would not be happening if the structure and culture were not in some way complicit.

Naming femicide as a problem through the #NiUnaMenos movement placed individual cases of direct violence into their larger social context. When these individual murders are considered together it is evident that a larger social phenomena is taking place. Previous to the #NiUnaMenos movement the disproportionate murder of women by male relatives was evident in the media only as a string of tragic cases. Looking at these instances individually, they could be culturally waived off as anomalies with narratives such as: “it was a tragic accident,” or “he was an emotionally unstable lunatic,” or “it was such a passionate relationship that the man

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<sup>3</sup> J. Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (1990), accessed April 23, 2016, doi:10.1177/0022343390027003005.

couldn't control himself." But the reality is that in 2014 a woman was killed every 30 hours in Buenos Aires.<sup>4</sup> Looking at femicide as a social phenomenon is crucial in understanding how to stop this epidemic.

Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* shapes the analysis of change that is already being employed in Buenos Aires, as well as give suggestions for future endeavors. In *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire identifies a binary: the oppressor and the oppressed. He explains that this binary is maintained by dehumanization of the oppressed by the oppressors. Further, Freire argues that despite their power, the oppressors do not have the strength to end oppression; they will never be able to relinquish enough power because it would require them to prioritize the others' lives over their own.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Freire proposes *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: a multifaceted radical solution to end oppression by the oppressed.

The Pedagogy first suggests that the oppressed must unveil the world of oppression, and through this engagement commit themselves to its transformation. Freire refers to this process of realization as critical consciousness, and suggests that the best way to foster it is through education. There are many different types of education, which can be used to achieve different end goals. Freire is careful to distinguish between "systematic education, which can only be changed by political power, and educational projects, which should be carried out with the oppressed in the process of organizing them." Arguably, systemic education is mired in educational practices based in a "banking" model of education in which a teacher deposits

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<sup>4</sup> "En Qué Creemos Y Qué Pedimos," Ni Una Menos, section goes here, accessed May 02, 2016, [http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page\\_id=8](http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page_id=8).

<sup>5</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 36.

knowledge on their students, and which ultimately continue oppressive relationships. Instead, Freire proposes an educational project of dialogic, mutual exchange that can be carried out in the process of revolution.

The dialogic education that Freire advocates takes place on the level of direct interpersonal conversations. Through this dialogic practice Freire suggests that each person will begin practicing critical consciousness, or in other words that they will become aware of how invisible structures and cultural norms shape their lived experience. This process helps individuals become conscious of the variety in the human experience, understand their incompleteness, and inspire a desire to be more fully human. Dialogic educational projects can be carried out by people in all walks of life on a daily basis because it is grounded in the human ability to communicate and learn from one another. Freire suggests that education is a practice of freedom that oppressors and oppressed alike can engage in to begin to create change.

Through this thesis I seek to understand the ways in which a culture of gender violence is maintained on an interpersonal level, and the extent to which social change and the eradication of gender violence can come through interpersonal education. A patriarchal system of gender violence is particularly relevant in Buenos Aires because of the #NiUnaMenos movement's unveiling of femicide as a social phenomenon. My analysis will use theorists Butler, Galtung and Freire to understand the relationship between personal and cultural violence. In her book *bodies in crisis: culture, violence and women's resistance in neoliberal Argentina*, Barbara Sutton links violence and specifically gender violence to broader structural issues such as the economic context, financial strain and how that can make women dependent on men and therefore in a position structurally where they cannot oppose violence and survive economically. While a crucial aspect of understanding the connections between structural, cultural and personal

violence it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead this thesis will apply a more detailed focus on the relationship between cultural and personal violence. Further, this analysis will permit an exploration of interpersonal education as a change making practice.

## **Methods**

I began this research during my five-month stay in Buenos Aires in 2015. With the support of my professors in the Swarthmore in Buenos Aires academic program, I made contact with a variety of sources in the fields of education and gender equality. I conducted hour-long, in-person interviews with five individuals from these fields. The participants spoke about their field of work, the role of sexual education in Buenos Aires, and their thoughts on teaching sexual education and social change.

The interviews provide in-depth, individual perspectives of the current gender climate in Buenos Aires and possible paths to change. These interviews demonstrate insight into the gender situation in Buenos Aires, the different spheres of thought, modes of education and mobilization surrounding the issue. The interviews follow the general framework outlined in Appendix A. The salient themes of gender violence, cultural reproduction, and interpersonal education ground this thesis.

The focus of the work is now centered on the interviewees experiences with gender dynamics, violence, and enacting change in their communities. Chapter 2 builds on the theory of Judith Butler to better understand gender roles in Buenos Aires, through the analysis of tango lyrics and soccer songs. Through Galtung's triangle of violence, chapter 2 will further analyze the power of #NiUnaMenos movement, and the resulting energy for social change. Next, Chapter 3 will evaluate the mandatory sexual education in Buenos Aires as a means of purposefully altering gender education. The interviewee's experiences concerning sexual education in the

past, and their thoughts on the its merits moving forward will ultimately communicate that sexual education is valuable in changing gender dynamics especially when it takes place through interpersonal education. Chapter 4 will further explore the merits of interpersonal education in alternative educational spaces such as social action groups' Martes Rojos and *Revista Furias*. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the arc of this argument and considers its implications and avenues that could be further investigated.

## Chapter 2: Gender Performance & the #NiUnaMenos Movement

On June 4th of 2015, thousands gathered in front of the Buenos Aires congress and called out “*basta*” (enough) to femicide and violence against women. Support for this action came about through the #NiUnaMenos (not one less) movement, which began as a massive twitter campaign. The #NiUnaMenos movement, which began in Argentina, has spread to cities around the world as a new voice against machista violence. In order to understand the significance of the #NiUnaMenos movement in Buenos Aires it is first necessary to recognize femicide as an end result of gender violence and analyze gender as a social construct. This contextual understanding of gender and femicide will allow for a deeper understanding of the effect of the #NiUnaMenos movement on Buenos Aires.

### **Femicide: unveiling cultural violence**

Femicide, or the misogynous killing of women by men is rooted in a feminist discourse, which emphasizes the patriarchal nature of society and the tendency to use violence as a tool of repression to maintain male dominance. The term began to gain traction when published in 1993 in a work by Jill Radford and Diana E.H Russell called *Femicide, the politics of woman killing*<sup>6</sup>. Unlike genocide, femicide does not have a legal implication, but it is starting to enter mainstream political discourse.

Gender violence is usually a shameful experience for women to talk about, it commonly happens behind closed doors and is internalized as normal or the woman’s fault. In a romantic relationship for example it is easy to feel that violence and passion are connected and to dismiss

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<sup>6</sup> Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (New York: Twayne, 1992).

the physical and emotional pain a partner causes. The word femicide takes a powerful political position because it brings domestic violence, which seems intensely personal and specific to a situation, and exposes the social nature of this practice. The more a society begins to see that gender violence and femicide exist, and as more stories of abuse and murder are shared the less this violence is about one particular person who did one bad thing. The less the media can portray the assault as a man losing his mind, or getting caught up in passion, the more it calls into question the society that is time and time again allowing such violence to happen.

The city of Buenos Aires has begun to understand the gravity of femicide and gender violence as evidenced through the mass support for the #NiUnaMenos movement. #NiUnaMenos quickly drew the support of other social organizations that work for gender equality. This connection as well as the widespread support shows that the people of Buenos Aires are no longer dismissing cases of women being murdered as individual instances but rather are beginning to see them on a social level, as femicide. To truly see femicide as a social phenomenon rooted in cultural practices one must first understand gender as a social construct that is continuously performed.

### **Gender Construction**

Gender is a difficult term to define because it exists within various historical contexts, which are always changing and are not comparable in all parts of the world. Simone de Beauvoir, a Feminist philosopher said, "no one is born [a woman], but, rather, a woman is made."<sup>7</sup> This phrase illustrates that gender identity is not a stable locus of agency—but rather that it is made in time and through a stylized repetition of acts. This definition is complementary with that of

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," *Yale French Studies*, no. 72 (1986), doi:10.2307/2930225.

Judith Butler, a philosopher whose work is instrumental to the fields of feminism and queer theory today, who argues that gender is constructed through performative acts. A historian who focuses on women and gender issues, Joan Scott, adds to this definition by saying that gender is a way of denoting "cultural constructions," which is to say the social creation of ideas about what is a man and a woman. It is clear from these definitions that gender is socially constructed and expressed with the body through performative acts.

Understanding gender as an ever-evolving series of performative acts that are culturally constructed implicates a cycle of teaching and learning. Teresa De Lauretis, a teacher who works with issues of gender and queer theory, proposes a technology of gender. Which is to say that everyone learns how to be masculine or feminine through various institutions in society. In considering the origins of gender violence the investigation centers on how members of society learn to perform their gender and which aspects of a culture produce and reproduce gender roles. In the chapter *Multiple Masculinities: the Worlds of Tango and Football in Argentina*, Eduardo Archetti states "tango and football [soccer] have become representative of performing Argentines and a pervasive global image of 'genuine' Argentine cultural productions. The next section seeks to understand how these two aspects of Buenos Aires culture "still play the double role of public mirrors and models of masculinities."<sup>8</sup>

### **Femicide & Tango**

Femicide statistics are divided into two categories: intimate femicide and non-intimate femicide. Intimacy violence can be linked to two prototypes of masculinity in tango lyrics. Intimate femicide refers to murders in which the victim and the perpetrator were family

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<sup>8</sup> Eduardo Archetti, "Multiple Masculinities: The Worlds of Tango and Football in Argentina," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (NY UP, 1997).

members, in a romantic relationship or living together. On the other hand non-intimate femicide refers to the murders committed by a man to an unknown woman. These two types of femicide do not happen with the same frequency, " 72.3% of cases, femicides are committed in the context of an intimate relationship and the accused are men."<sup>9</sup> Intimate femicide is a difficult subject to discuss in the public sphere because of proliferating notions about relationships between males and females. One principal belief that may function on a subconscious level is that a man owns his partner and has power over his female relatives. This notion intersects with the belief that intimate and family relationships should be private.

These conceptions of power within intimate relationships contribute to a common societal justification of the murderer's actions. The media commonly paints the perpetrator as emotionally tortured by a woman in his life because of something she did, and in romantic relationships it is namely a crime of passion. In other cases the media outright blames the victim, saying that the woman was promiscuous or "asking for it". The views represented in the media about intimate femicide reveal widely held ideologies about gender roles. Returning to the notion that gender is performed and constructed, we must ask ourselves how these victim blaming and female shaming narratives are taught and learned. The deeply embedded culture of tango communicates a similar male centered point of view in which the man is forever tortured by the women in his life. Tango is the dance and music associated with Buenos Aires. While the classical period of the tango took place between 1917-1935, the world of tango lives on today. It is evident that the culture of tango is relevant in Buenos Aires because there is a milonga (tango dance space) held in a park or a city square everyday of the week.

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<sup>9</sup> Gabriela Barcaglione and Silvia Chejter, *Femicidios E Impunidad* (Buenos Aires: Centro De Encuentros Cultura Y Mujer, 2005).

The archetypes of masculinity in tango lyrics proliferate notions of what it means to be a man that glorify violence and control over a woman. Tango lyrics are primarily expressions of emotions about relationships between men and women. Some of the emotions that are presented include love, pride and honor. Love is also classified by type of love, for example duty love, passion, friendship and romantic love. But the lyrics are not about a universal love, it is clear that the most value is placed on heterosexual relationships and even more so emphasizing sex and sensual love. A pattern where a romantic relationship means a man owns the woman he is with is evident in the lyrics of the tango *Propiedad Privada*--Private Property by Julio Jaramillos. The song begins:

*“Para que sepan todos a quién tu perteneces/  
Con sangre de mis venas te marcaré la frente/  
Para que te respeten aún con la mirada/  
Y sepan que tu eres mi propiedad privada”*

“So that everyone knows who you belong to/  
With the blood from my veins I’ll mark your forehead/  
So that everyone respects you even with their gaze/  
and so that they know that you are my private property”<sup>10</sup>

These lyrics explicitly articulate that women belong to men, women are property for men to own, and that by this same standard can be stolen. This message is usually communicated through the common narrative of a woman who leaves a man. In the songs the *compadrito*, a classically violent character is nostalgic about losing his woman and therefore his happiness.

A common overarching narrative in tango songs is about a romantic couple who live together but are not married and the woman is always “stepping out.” In other words, she is crossing a line from the private (the man’s house) to a world open with opportunity and where she may feel free. This newfound independence of the woman causes an identity crisis for the

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<sup>10</sup> Julio Jaramillo, "Letra 'Mi Propiedad Privada'" Musica.com, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.musica.com/letras.asp?letra=1927602>.

man that begins with the fact that he is not used to feeling out of control of a situation much less a woman. In some songs when the woman leaves the home space she enters into the world of the cabaret. That woman is called a milonguita and is defined by her sensuality, beauty and confidence. In other words milonguita is escaping the control of her male partner and exercising her independence.

The compadrito presented in tango lyrics is always seeking a woman who was his love in the past or one that can compare to her. Often times the compadrito expresses despair in his search for love within a society with fixed rules of behavior. The compadrito's anguish results in songs that express nostalgia, a male identity crisis, and sometimes revenge. This revenge is usually violent, for instance a fight with a knife to restore his power and place in the hierarchy of men. The lyrics of Private Property show a distinct aspect of violent revenge and pain of the compadrito, in which he marks his woman's face with his blood. This public marking is meant to communicate the man's ownership over the woman so that other men will know she is his. Therefore, it is clear that in this context the identity and honor of a man is dependent on the sexual behavior of his wife.

The tango illustrates different archetypes of moral men and women particularly in terms of how they face emotions in relationships. These models of masculinity and femininity form a structure of what is acceptable in society; in this way tango lyrics become an avenue through which gender identities manifest in real life.<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that although archetypes for both women and men are evident in tango lyrics, the teachings of masculinity are the primary focus because femininity in this context is defined as the compliment of masculinity.

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<sup>11</sup> Eduardo Archetti, "Multiple Masculinities: The Worlds of Tango and Football in Argentina," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (NY UP, 1997), 205.

The male archetype in tango lyrics teaches men that a real man is passionate and their identity and honor is based in their relationships and specifically their power over women. Following this line of reasoning if a woman has sex with another man it reflects poorly on the initial man. And following this false logic further, it is understandable that they would be violent or kill the woman. This result, for the man, may seem necessary or inevitable. Because when a man loses control over "his woman" it elicits an identity crisis, he has lost a part of his masculinity. To recover his identity he must prove his masculinity once again, a principal way to do that is through violence.

### **Femicide & Soccer**

In studying gender in Buenos Aires a crucial aspect to analyze is the world of soccer as a part of the culture that provides a space to express hyper masculinity. Soccer often times becomes a source of identity for example when first meeting someone in Buenos Aires one of the first things to ask is which team they support. Children and adults alike wear team jerseys on match day (especially when rivals Boca and River play), play soccer in the park and go to the stadium to watch the games in person. The ritual world of soccer transgresses societal norms of appropriate behavior. As an integral part of the culture of Buenos Aires, soccer disseminates a subversive script of how to be a man that would be inappropriate outside of the sphere of the game.

Eduardo Archetti, in a chapter called "Multiple Masculinities; The Worlds of Tango and Soccer in Argentina," discusses soccer as a work of theatre and analyzes its practices in terms of masculinity. This idea that a soccer match is a work of art is indicative of the fact that the world of soccer exists in an alternative reality and is a form for expression of masculinity. Unlike the world of tango where the central theme is the relationship between men and women, soccer is a

game focused on men and establishing a moral order. In the world of soccer the value of a man is classified in terms of autonomy, dependency, control, freedom, dignity, self-esteem, and loyalty.<sup>12</sup> To further understand this dynamic we will specifically examine the songs the fans sing during the game.

The songs focus on the dynamics of relationships to create a hierarchical order, some of the principal relationships referenced are: Father / son; adult / child; "true man" (heterosexual man) / homosexual man. These dichotomous relationships show what constitutes a man through comparison and levels of power. For example the comparison between a father and son puts power in the hands of the father who has maturity over the child, the right to punish his son and the right to the respect of his son. This comparison can also refer to a sexual relationship in which the father has power over the child. Through these relationships it is evident that there is a distinction that "a man" is active while the "other" is passive. These relationships are clearly connected to the two opposing teams (and fans) for instance, if a team is active, aggressive, violent it is likely they are winning and that the others will lose their dignity.

The soccer match exists in an alternative social space where rules and hierarchies are suspended and replaced by a license of free masculine expression. This freedom results in crude language and metaphors in the songs the fans sing, for example in a match between Paraguay and Argentina fans sang a song with the line, "And now, and now / they suck my balls well." This example also reveals a power dynamic where the winner is a dominant male and has sexual power over the less masculine losers. More so it is a homosexual reference that says that the men who "give it" are real men and those who take it are gay.

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<sup>12</sup> Eduardo Archetti, "Multiple Masculinities: The Worlds of Tango and Football in Argentina," in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* (NY UP, 1997), 206.

Soccer songs show the masculine ideals in the world of soccer but they also translate to the real world. The simplification of what is masculine is a product of the structure of two opposing teams with one winner and one loser. Thanks to this structure there is one way to be a man, who is independent, strong, violent, an aggressor in sexual relations, in other words to have control over the world around them. But this type of masculinity is not only about demonstrating these qualities of strength, violence and aggression but also about subordinating and emasculating all others. Therefore, the lesson boys and men take away from the soccer stadium is that to be a man is to subordinate all others, both women and men.

The stadium is a hyper-masculine space where men go to express an exaggerated masculinity and to reassert their masculinity outside, in the real world. Following this ideology of soccer, to be hyper-masculine and to subordinate others is the only way to be a man, which often results in physical, sexual and verbal violence. It is important to distinguish that this violence is not caused by another person, but is an expression and affirmation of masculinity of the man.

### **The #NiUnaMenos movement**

The massive #NiUnaMenos march in front of Congress in Buenos Aires was the result of citizen outrage over a series of cases of femicide. It is difficult to pinpoint the initial force behind this movement because mounting awareness of femicide as an issue came as a result of increased news coverage, which came as a result of awareness. Femicide is not a new issue to Buenos Aires, in fact according to #NiUnaMenos in 2008 a woman was killed every 40 hours as a result of femicide, and by 2014 the number of victims had increased with a femicide taking place every

30 hours<sup>13</sup>. Therefore it is evident that this cycle of learning of cases of femicide and educating others was strengthened over years.

#NiUnaMenos began as a hashtag on Twitter and grew into a national and international movement denounce violence against women and femicide. In 2014 alone Argentina saw an estimated 277 cases of femicide<sup>14</sup>. #NiUnaMenos became a space for the citizens of Argentina to communicate their grief, fear, and anger about the high frequency of femicide and gender violence. Celebrities took to using the hashtag and posting photos of themselves with hand-written notes denouncing femicide, and soon femicide as a social phenomenon began to be publicly discussed.

This new social recognition of femicide in Buenos Aires was fostered primarily through media coverage. The citizens acknowledgment of femicide as a social issue in part sprang from a few famous femicides that were extensively covered in the media. Some of the cases that received a lot a attention were: *Teresa Quiroga, 65, was beaten and stabbed to death for trying to set up a woman on a date. Augustina Salinas, 26, was stabbed in the neck by her boyfriend on a public street corner and bled out as stunned pedestrians watched. Daiana Ayelén García, 19, went to a job interview and was found half naked in a trash bag. Noelia Akrap, 16, was beaten to death. Wanda Taddei was set on fire by her husband and burned to death*<sup>15</sup>.

In reading news reports of the violent murders and the beautiful lives lost it felt unjust to present one woman's case over another. Additionally, while the individual cases are emotionally

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<sup>13</sup> "En Qué Creemos Y Qué Pedimos," Ni Una Menos, accessed May 02, 2016, [http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page\\_id=8](http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page_id=8).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> "Femicidios: El Drama De Las Mujeres Asesinadas Por Sus Hombres," - 28.04.2015, April 28, 2015, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1788149-femicidios-el-drama-de-las-mujeres-asesinadas-por-sus-hombres>.

upsetting, it was not one horrific case that initiated public discourse. Rather it is the outrageous quantity of stories of violence, loss, and injustice that build on one another. That being said, the culmination of the energy fostered by the #NiUnaMenos movement was activated by the femicide of 14 year old, pregnant Chiara Perez, who was murdered by her boyfriend and buried in his backyard<sup>16</sup>. The culmination of this outrage resulted in marches in over 100 cities in Argentina with the largest estimated at 300,000 people in front of the Congress in Buenos Aires on June fourth, 2015.

### **Effects of #NiUnaMenos—Seeing Gender Violence as Cultural Violence**

The effects of the #NiUnaMenos movement are twofold. First, the movement unveiled the relationship between interpersonal violence and cultural violence. The #NiUnaMenos movement took a series of what were previously understood as individual murders and found a social connection between them. The shift in framing these issues brought about a societal reflection of the environment that was allowing this phenomenon to take place. This critical consciousness and reflection brought about a list of demands that #NiUnaMenos delivered to congress during their march on June 4, 2015. #NiUnaMenos called for:

1. Improved implementation and monitoring of the national action plan for the prevention, assistance and eradication of violence against women, as is established in law 26.485
2. That victims be guaranteed free access to justice through police offices and the judicial process.
3. That the one official register of the victims of violence against women be elaborated and that official statistics about femicides be completed.
4. That mandatory sexual education be guaranteed and expanded ESI in all educational levels, to form an equality and for a life free of discrimination and

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<sup>16</sup> "Confirman Que Chiara Estaba Embarazada Y Que La Mataron a Golpes," Telam, May 11, 2015, accessed March 26, 2016, <http://www.telam.com.ar/notas/201505/104570-homicidio-enterrada-rosario-chiara-paez.html>.

machista violence. That teachers and directors be appropriately prepared in this material.

5. That the protection of the victims of violence by guaranteed and that electronic monitoring of perpetrators to assure they do not violate the restraining order the courts put in place.<sup>17</sup>

These demands reveal a public call for structural and cultural approaches to change. It is key to note that these demands do not only address the femicide and gender violence after the fact, but also put emphasis on prevention of these crimes through education. This is evident in the demand for mandatory sexual education at all education levels. Through pleading for the active reshaping of gender norms through sexual education it is further evident that the #NiUnaMenos movement understands gender as culturally constructed. A better understanding of gender violence as a social phenomenon, and not just a personal problem, can help women feel legitimate in their pain and supported to get out of situations of violence. In Buenos Aires the implications of the #NiUnaMenos extend to other ways in which women are treated as inferior for example through the practice of the *piropo*, human trafficking, prostitution, beauty standards, etc. Further, acknowledging the social quality of gender violence brings into question other gender dynamics in a society that ultimately contribute to a culture of violence.

Second, embracing the social nature of femicide and the all encompassing slogan of “not one less”, which means to say not even one more woman will be a victim of femicide, brought together many different communities for one feminist cause. People approached the movement from a variety of backgrounds, which created space for inter-community dialogue as well as widespread visibility of femicide as a problem. #NiUnaMenos march and the momentum that continues today is notable not only in the number of women who have mobilized to, but also the

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<sup>17</sup> "En Qué Creemos Y Qué Pedimos," Ni Una Menos, accessed May 02, 2016, [http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page\\_id=8](http://niunamenos.com.ar/?page_id=8).

number of reports of gender violence. Interviewee Lucia Torre expressed “there are so many reports coming in that they [the government] has exhausted their therapists.” In this way increasing visibility of femicide, recognizing and talking about the social nature of gender violence is educating and empowering women to report violence.

Ana Maria identified #NiUnaMenos as an umbrella movement. Leading up to the march *Revista Furias*, like many other activist groups contributed to the #NiUnaMenos movement through the use of the hashtag in their postings, photographing the march, and ultimately creating a gallery of the different actions on their website. However, the fact that the movement became a social media trend made some doubt the legitimacy of the sentiments being expressed. Some wondered if #NiUnaMenos would just be a trending hashtag that people would use but not actually internalize the meaning behind the words. Ana Maria tried to clarify “#NiUnaMenos is not a game on twitter, #NiUnaMenos is not a little poster, #NiUnaMenos is a... political statement about our reality.” Ana Maria is adamant that at its heart #NiUnaMenos represents an attitude that allows for a positive construction of life where no one can kill women for being women. She sees this attitude being applied to all aspects of the gender experience; people are realizing “you do not have the implicit right to touch a woman’s ass, it is not women’s sole purpose to raise a child, we should not teach women to be submissive”, and more so that these attitudes contribute to femicide.

Femicide, the most extreme form of gender violence is relevant today in Buenos Aires and around the world. Gender is an ever-evolving performance that is constructed within a social context. In order to end femicide in Buenos Aires it is necessary to analyze gender roles and to highlight aspects of society that proliferate extreme images of masculinity and femininity. In Buenos Aires two of the aspects of society that send strong messages about gender roles are

tango and soccer. Tango lyrics send the message that a man is passionate and that a great part of their identity is connected with their relationship to a woman. The songs sung at soccer games send the message that a man must be a person who dominates others with active force, control, and aggression. These ideas lead men toward committing acts of violence when he feels he needs to strengthen his masculinity. Although these aspects of culture are deeply influential in everyday life in Buenos Aires, gender is not a stable identity, which means we have the power to create change.

This analysis does not seek to attribute femicide explicitly to the culture of gender in Buenos Aires. Rather, it aims to show the interconnected nature between personal violence and cultural violence. Unveiling the constructed essence of gender precipitates a critical conscious attitude in which citizens can understand that existing gender dynamics are not statically defined in nature, but rather can be shaped by individuals. Being able to see the way culture shapes the actions of the individual (achieving critical consciousness), allows for the individual to educate others through interpersonal education, which then can insight critical consciousness in others and ultimately bring about cultural change. Chapter 3 seeks to place this understanding of the relationship between the personal and the cultural in the context of structural implementations for change. Further the next section will introduce interpersonal education as a crucial aspect of structural change.

### Chapter 3: Sexual Education and Social Change

Argentine law concerning gender equality is considered progressive when compared to other nations of the world. For instance the democratic reshaping of Argentina in the 1980s precipitated Argentina to establish a quota for the number of women that must hold seats in Congress. The quota law, passed in 1991, was the first of its kind in Latin America and is evidence that Argentine politics are striving for gender equality. The effect of the quota was evident as early as 2006, when women made up 39 percent of the legislature in Argentina, while they only accounted for 16 percent of congress in the United States<sup>18</sup>. Also contributing to a promising climate of gender equality was the approval of a national sexual education mandate commonly referred to as ESI (Educación Sexual Integral). This law came as the first installment in a series of laws that addressed gender. ESI was followed by the legalization of gay marriage passed in 2010, and a gender identification law that allows anyone to legally change their gender and sex identification by their own volition. This gender identification law is the only one of its kind in the world that does not pathologize the transgender/ gender queer experience, but rather gives each individual the right to self identify and to be socially acknowledged in a way that affirms their experience.

Based on the liberal political and legal climate of Argentina one would expect the attitudes on gender in the country at large to be similar. However, despite these laws the issues of femicide and gender violence are still a part of the daily experience in Buenos Aires. This begs the question: can laws reshape gender norms to promote a larger atmosphere of gender equality?

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<sup>18</sup> "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)," Data, section goes here, accessed April 02, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>.

In order to assess the power of a law to create social change in terms of gender equality we have to return to the gender theory discussed in Chapter 2. The dominant theories that reveal how gender is socially constructed and is articulated through an ongoing performance is liberating. In the context of gender inequality it provides hope; that we have agency, that if gender is continually being constructed then this opens the possibility to shape how it is constructed in such a way as to not result in violence. In order to take advantage of this power we must look to the ways in which people continually learn and teach gender performance. Primary avenues of teaching values especially in the Buenos Aires context are social institutions such as religion and public schools. Lessons about how to perform gender come through in classes no matter the subject, but especially in sexual education. This connection is acknowledged by the Argentine government, which cites equality in the treatment and opportunity from women and men as an objective of the mandatory sexual education law passed in 2006. The next section seeks to understand the connections between the educational experiences of the people I interviewed and the lesson about gender performance that they learned.

### **Past sexual education & learned gender dynamics**

I asked my interviewees what sexual education was like when they were in school. Without hesitation Maripaula Fortún, a quick witted feminist in her fifties, answered, “de eso no se habla,” which translates as “of this one does not speak.” This phrase cleanly communicates the underlying sentiment of all of the conversations I had with adults in Buenos Aires about sexual education. When there is no curriculum that discusses sex or relationships between men and women, a student learns that a topic is taboo, secret, and dangerous. Further the education one receives about gender in this context is shaped by observations of how adults around them perform gender. Maripaula first and foremost learned that schools that had both young men and

women were dangerous, which is to say that any kind of social interaction between men and women at this young age was immoral. She comments that not having classes about gender, bodies, or sex, but living in a society strictly divided by gender created huge insecurities simply from lack of information.

Mateo Vargas spoke to a similar sentiment of insecurity in himself and a sense of guilt about his sexuality. Mateo grew up in a conservative religious school and family, where you had to repress your sexuality because it was seen as a crime. Sexual relations were only for reproduction, so during adolescence young people fought with guilt and shame. Mateo describes it as, “our bodies are asking something of us, but within the context we were shaped it was our lust and curiosity on one side and what was moral on the other.” Mateo notes that the pervasive idea was that sex was sacred and because of the school curriculum, teachers or adults did not teach them about sex. In this way the purposeful lack of sexual education was paired with a tone of religious repression and moral judgment.

All interviewees spoke to the fact that no matter the formal stance of their teachers or their parents, they found other ways to learn about sex and relationships. In Mateo’s case the information that circulated was through a community of his friends older brothers, “so teachings went on filtering with each person it was passed through.” Maripaula did not formally learn about her body or sex until she entered university, but remembers in elementary school sneaking looks at her parents’ anatomy books and trying to copy the pictures down to show her friends.

For Ana Maria the closest thing to sexual education that she received in school was a day when a sanitary napkin company came to the school to hand out products. This same day she remembers her teacher putting on a video that explained how young girls would begin to grow breasts and pubic hair. Some might say Ana Maria had a sexual education in comparison to the

other interviewees but she points out, “they didn’t teach how to take care of yourself, how to put on a condom, or about birth control pills...there wasn’t recognition of the body.”

The extremely limited sexual education that the people I interviewed experienced in school did not mean that they did not learn about sex. The lack of good sexual education *was* an education about how to be a sexual being--which was intended to convey to not be sexual. Growing up in an environment that repressed student’s sexuality, Mateo learned to not speak to adults about sex. Leaving a young teenager with a developing body and natural curiosity about sex to their own devices means that the information they gain about sex comes from peers. Discussing sex with peers can be a healthy thing, but it is not sufficient to be the primary way that someone learns about sex. Additionally, as a young male, Mateo learned about sex from his male peers, making his knowledge of heterosexual intercourse based completely in the male perspective. The lack of female voices in this type of sexual education presents sex as about the man’s pleasure and on the man’s terms. This narrative builds on the biological power that men have over women in terms of size and musculature as well as the power of being the sexual penetrator rather than the partner who gets penetrated. Thus, when sexual education is absent from schools, men learn through different means; more so, the education that they receive largely excludes the female perspective, and ultimately reinscribes harmful gendered power dynamics.

The women I interviewed confirmed that they internalized this power dynamic partly as a result of poor sexual education in school. However they were on the opposite side of the coin. They learned that sex, talking about sex, enjoying sex was for men. Ana Maria discussed how this belief that sexual education was connected to the man meant she thought “that it wasn’t my issue.” Even in terms of protecting herself against sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy she carried the notion that “he would take care of me... which is to say I delegated my health and

my body to another person.” This realization is powerful because it reveals how the idea of love is enmeshed in the assumption that men are supposed to care for women, and further that women cannot take care of themselves without a man. So where men learned that sex was physically pleasurable for them and a space where they could exercise power, women were encouraged to enjoy being cared for--that romantic connection comes from dependence.

Through the interviewees’ discussion of their own sexual education growing up it is possible to make a link between the messages communicated about sex and gender in school and the lessons that are internalized. It is evident that past sexual education, or explicit lack of sexual education in Buenos Aires reinscribed the gendered power dynamics. The dynamics built through sexual education easily add onto proliferating societal ideals about gender performance as taught through other social staples: Tango and Soccer. This continual loop of teaching, learning, and performing male superiority and power comes at the expense of women’s rights. This inequality is glaringly evident in the women’s lack of power to make decisions about her own body; these decisions range from whether or not a woman would like to be told she is beautiful, if a woman has the right to end a pregnancy, and ultimately if a woman wants to live or not. While noting these injustices is infuriating, it allows us to see the relationship between lessons concerning sexuality communicated in school and future gender performance. In this way if we seek different gender dynamics we must work to actively change the sexual education young people receive in school.

### **Mandatory Sexual Education in Buenos Aires**

The mandatory sexual education law, passed in 2006, seeks to create a systematic teaching and learning space for students of any age that promotes knowledge and the ability to make informed decisions concerning one’s own body, interpersonal relationships, exercising

sexuality and the rights of young people within these issues. Ana Maria Moreno, a practical thinker and passionate leader of *Revista Furias*, describes ESI as, “something that has not yet been applied, it is something that many people are fighting for a base knowledge, of how to take care of our bodies, to respect our bodies, to know how to conduct ourselves, and mainly to take care of our bodies and other people’s bodies, and the diversity of bodies.” The Argentine Ministry of Education and Sports lists the objectives of the law as:

- “ 1) To incorporate sexual education in educational design in a way that works towards harmonic balance and permanence.
- 2) To ensure the transmission of pertinent information, precise, reliable and updated in the different aspects involved in sexual education.
- 3) To promote responsible attitudes towards sexuality.
- 4) To prevent problems related to health in general and sexual health and reproductive health in particular.
- 5) To obtain equal treatment and opportunities for women and men.”<sup>19</sup>

While these objectives seem sound on the whole, there are two issues it raises that leave me doubting its efficacy when implemented. First, Article 3 raises the notion of “responsible attitudes towards sexuality.” The word responsibility indicates a “correct path,” which conflicts with the reality of the citizen’s in Buenos Aires’s attitudes towards sexuality. Which is to say that responsible may mean a number of different things to heads of schools, and teachers who implement the law. More so, “responsibility” carries a sense of culpability. For instance, if someone does not follow the “responsible” path in terms of their sexual activity and something goes wrong, for instance an unwanted pregnancy or STI, then they only have themselves to blame because “they should have known better.” In fact this reasoning is commonly used in abstinence only sexual education programs in the United States. Contrarily, the word “responsible” could be used to teach students about consent to sexual activity and how to

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<sup>19</sup> "Programa Nacional De Educacion Sexual Integral Ley 26.150," October 23, 2006, pg. #, accessed March 3, 2016, [http://www.me.gov.ar/me\\_prog/esi/doc/ley26150.pdf](http://www.me.gov.ar/me_prog/esi/doc/ley26150.pdf).

communicate effectively with a sexual partner; for instance “If a sexual partner is intoxicated and cannot give consent it is your *responsibility* to respect that.” Responsibility is therefore a flexible term that can be used however the teacher pleases. Lucia Torre, an educator that trains teachers asserted that professors and principals commonly understand the law but believe that teaching responsible sexuality means not addressing the subject at all or teaching abstinence only curriculum:

Each district applies these narratives in their own way. In the case of the city of Buenos Aires, which obviously is more conservative and because of this there is so much influence of the church, the application of sexual education remains open. It is left to the disposition of the principal of the school. Because of this if the principal agrees with this [ESI] they will implement it, and if not then no one can control them.

In this way, the mandatory sexual education that ESI elicits allows teachers to shape their approach to the material through what they believe contributes to a responsible sexual attitude. In this way, teachers may pass their own beliefs about sex down to their students and in ways that further reinscribe existing gender dynamics. To be clear, a professor that does not address sexual education still passes their beliefs down to their students. In talking about their sexual education in school the people I interviewed showed the effects of not addressing sexuality or gender dynamics. Why would a professor who was being asked by the government to teach a subject not teach it? Maripaula Fortún puts it simply, “primarily because sexual education is interpreted as education about exercising coital sex period.” This type of misperception of the subject material can be overcome with teacher training program.

The issue of training teachers in how to instruct sexual education is touched on in the ESI legislation. But it does not go beyond saying that the government of Buenos Aires will create capacitation classes for teachers. Maripaula doubts the abilities of ESI to be improved with teacher formation, she states, “it is true that there is a law that mandates [sexual education] but it is also true that there is not sufficient formation of the people and no one can change their own

mind...for another person nor for a course.” I agree that teacher training alone will not bring sexual education to a level where it actively changes gender norms. Instead teacher preparation in sexual education must work in combination with interpersonal educational models to change the teachers’ beliefs concerning the importance of sexual education.

It should be noted that while we are discussing teacher formation for sexual education, teacher formation in all subjects can help subvert gender norms. Any teacher can encourage gender equality in the greater world by actively emphasizing its importance in the classroom. Additionally, teachers can encourage critical thinking skills and the importance of self-reflection and reflecting on a community's actions through their lessons. Paula Korta, a young teacher in a trans-friendly school, employs this type of critical reflection in her classroom through starting discussions about the social implications of particular words. For example Paula recounted a time a student in her class said the word B\*\*\*\* and she asked the class to discuss how the word is used. The discussion opened Paula’s eyes to how “working with one word can educate people about a larger issue.” When asked about her thoughts on teaching methods specific to sexual education, Paula noted that the issue of sexual education for young people today “is not a lack of specific information, but is more an issue of if you transmit, not values-- I don’t like the word values, but ethics, or communicate as a yourself, a person with a body.” This quote reveals the essence of what needs to be added to teacher formation to make ESI a law that can change gender norms—interpersonal connection. As Paula says, it is helpful for students to understand information about sexuality as it concerns and is modeled by real people. The next chapter seeks to show how these kinds of interpersonal connections are fundamental to social change of gender norms and violence.

## Chapter 4: Social change through Interpersonal Education

In the last chapter I discussed how political policy in Buenos Aires addresses gender inequality. For the most part, Argentina, and Buenos Aires in particular, has many progressive laws in place. Some of which include: mandatory sexual education in public schools, equal marriage rights, and a law that says you can change your gender identification without a sex change and simply at any place that one would get an identification card. While this research was conducted in 2015 Cristina Kirchner was president, and women made up 37% of the Argentine congress, compared to 19.4 % in the United States congress<sup>20</sup>. However, within this same context a woman is murdered every 30 hours due to gender violence. How do we reconcile the political situation in Buenos Aires with the gender violence that citizen's experience on a daily basis? In this chapter I argue that these policies, while crucial in striving for gender equality, would be more effective in combination with interpersonal education that takes place through alternative education spaces. And more so, that the interpersonal education spaces are more powerful than large policy in creating change.

Social organizations that address gender inequality and strive to create alternative educational spaces are not hard to come by in Buenos Aires. The culture of community organizing is evident through posters on the street, public demonstrations, and word of mouth. My research began in these spaces because they are easy to access, and they show the way people are politically taking control of their own education and the education of other people around them. In other words, these spaces are attractive because they illuminate an active connection between political policy and daily life. I will use two groups, *Revista Furias* and

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<sup>20</sup> "Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)," Data, section goes here, accessed April 02, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>.

Martes Rojas to draw out the complexities of this public space and to show that interpersonal education is crucial in effecting lasting social change.

The notion of interpersonal education originates in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>21</sup>. Through the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire seeks to create an education style that allows students to arrive at critical consciousness about the causes of their oppression. Freire defines the "oppressed" as those with less power, whose freedom has been taken away by the "oppressors." Applying this notion to gender dynamics in a patriarchal society women are commonly seen as oppressed and men as oppressors. However, these are not two stagnant clearly defined groups, rather humans hold a variety of identities that place them at the intersection of different spaces. For example, a white woman from a high socioeconomic class does not experience the same level of oppression as a black woman from a low socioeconomic class. Within this spectrum of oppression people fall in the middle, which is to say they are oppressed in some sense of their identity and privileged in others. But the point of this discussion is not to figure out exactly how to label each person in reference to what spaces they are oppressed and in what spaces they oppress others because oppression in any quantity is unacceptable. Rather Freire argues that to stop this system of oppression we must engage and become critically conscious of the world around us.

Interpersonal education and critical engagement according to Freire are modes of education that at their root seek liberation. In terms of the changing the culture around gender performance and violence in Buenos Aires it seems that the dividing lines that serve to dehumanize the other need to be broken down. Freire suggests that liberation comes from a style

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<sup>21</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

of mutual humanization, in which people critically engage with experiences they did not understand before. This philosophy assumes that human and society are not dichotomous, meaning that they are continuously shaped by one another. The beauty of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is that it can be flexibly applied in a number of different contexts, to address a number of different types of oppression. Buenos Aires is seeing this pedagogy employed in social action groups, magazines, and other community spaces, which principally serve as spaces to foster interpersonal education. This next section will analyze to what extent *Revista Furias* and *Martes Rojos* successfully work within Freire's Pedagogical framework.

### **Revista Furias: a critically conscious community**

The main goal of *Revista Furias* centers on gender and sexualities because the writers believe that behind their expressions there is a key, historical path through which power has traveled and functioned. It is the belief of those at *Revista Furias* that there is a gendered reality that one cannot simply choose to see. Further, because of the pervasive quality of power dynamics in relation to gender and sexuality, a critical eye cannot be contained to theoretical space but should shape a life perspective. During its five years in existence *Revista Furias* has published 26 issues<sup>22</sup>. The *Revista Furias* shares their work and searches for change through their web page and social media presence on Facebook and twitter. They have won two awards, one of which, "Lola Mora," is presented by the government of Buenos Aires to the source that transmits an image of women that goes against gender stereotypes and promotes equality of opportunities and rights of women.

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<sup>22</sup> "Acerca De - Revista Furias," *Revista Furias*, section goes here, accessed February 16, 2016, <http://revistafurias.com/acerca-de/>.

The name of the *revista* (magazine) gives a taste of the spunky tone of its articles. *Furias* literally translates to fury, rage, or force but *furias* also refers to the three greek goddesses of vengeance. *Revista Furias* began as a personal project that experimented with a different type of communication, a space where one could continuously form and reform opinions on an issue. The founding members of *Revista Furias* were initially influenced by a group of women that created a magazine called *Revista Brujas*. The *Revista Furias* was born based in the idea of a group of women writing together, they did not start out as gender activists, they did not know the main issues. Rather, Ana Maria explains “we identified with a few issues amongst us, and with them we as a group of friends started with *Revista Furias*” Ana Maria explains that *Revista Furias* addresses many different issues, not only gender which is becoming more visible in society. She notes that even five years ago gender dynamics were not addressed to the same extent in the context of Argentina or internationally.

Ana Maria points to newly implemented laws in Buenos Aires to illustrate that the intention of *Revista Furias* is “to start to study, to prepare ourselves.” In that preparation Ana Maria has found that gender is a field of studies that once you enter into you can’t leave “ you can’t look at life in any other way, it will no longer be padded and protected.” Freire’s notion of mutual learning is rooted in the natural human desire to share their experience with others. Because of this, when new information changes an individual’s perspective, and they are emotionally affected by it they seek to pass that revelatory information onto others. In this way, through their own studies, the women who contribute to *Revista Furias*, found a deep desire to share their perspective with the larger society. Ana Maria describes the moment in which she realized that the motive behind the magazine could be about more than educating themselves, but could be something that opens other people’s eyes. Freire would mark this as the moment when

*Revista Furias* transformed from a mutual learning small group to a mutual learning community. This moment was powerful for Ana Maria because for the first time she saw how something that she had started with friends could be a tool in transforming society. At this point *Revista Furias* became not only a journal but also a communication team to educate people about gender.

Ana Maria suggests that “we live in a system, that is machista, patriarchal, and capitalist” and because of this the subversive ways that it functions are naturalized to most people. Because of the interconnected nature of machismo, patriarchy, and capitalism, once a person has become aware of one aspect of this system they will make connections to seemingly unrelated aspects of life. The process of learning about the interconnected systems that control society and how individuals interact with them is revolutionary and thus is discussed with the people in the community. These discussions, often started by a frustration, or a recent realization about how one is participating in the system, become educational. Therefore, *Revista Furias* through its multimedia presence creates a community of readers and critical thinkers that want to engage in interpersonal education with those around them.

On the ground, these interactions play out in a variety of daily moments. For instance, Ana Maria sees the presence of this type of education in discussing with a friend what is wrong with the sexist joke that they made. Similar types of moments may occur when standing up for a woman being harassed on the subway, or explaining the emotional effect of receiving a *piropo* on the street. It should be noted that it is not the job of the person experiencing these moments to try to engage in an educational moment at the time, but rather as a community, people must strive to speak up in particular instances. These interactions are valuable in the sense that discussing a topic such as oppression that is sometimes seen as abstract with someone in person,

and hearing how they personally have been affected by the topic, attaches a real life experience to a point of view.

Despite the value in the interactions *Revista Furias* fosters, at this point it is politically limited. When I asked Ana Maria what she saw as the magazine's biggest challenge she stated that the growth of *Revista Furias* is limited by funding. She also noted that all of the people who work for *Revista Furias* are volunteers, and that the intellectual work that they love does not pay the bills. In this way she raised the economic situation of the magazine and its creators as an obstacle to the work that they seek to do and the audience they can reach. This concern is valid, but there seems to be another socioeconomic challenge imbedded in the educational style of *Revista Furias* that needs to be discussed. *Revista Furias* exists in an exclusive educational space because of the mediums of its work and the social community it reaches. The printed magazine has a limited audience in the sense that it can only be consumed by literate people, additionally it is likely that the type of literate person who is going to pick up the journal is already somewhat socially conscious. The community aspect of *Revista Furias* that comes from the social media presence is limited to people with the economic means to be able to access a computer or smartphone. Similarly, even interpersonal exchanges prompted by *Revista Furias* like discussions between friends, more often than not, tend to take place in homogeneous spaces. In this way, *Revista Furias* exists in a somewhat exclusive social space.

For the communities that *Revista Furias* does reach the model of interpersonal education work well. But this change making space remains difficult for some to access. If people of a lower socioeconomic background cannot easily access social movement spaces then their voices and perspectives are not being brought to the table. The exclusion of these voices is an injustice to all parties involved; obviously the people who go unheard are wronged because they did not

get the opportunity to participate in social change that will affect their lives, and the *Revista Furias* community members miss out on important insight from this part of the population. The issue of access is unfortunate and deserves time and energy to fix, but *Revista Furias* as it exists is a valuable change making space.

### **Martes Rojos: mobile interpersonal education**

Martes Rojos is a civilian action community that meets in neighborhoods of Buenos Aires to take down flyers advertising sex (prostitution). Martes Rojos does not have a webpage, but instead functions through Facebook. Therefore in order to learn about the organization I sat down to talk with Martes Rojos member, and thoughtful feminist, Mateo Vargas. Our conversation centered on his work with Martes Rojos, how it fit into larger gender issues in Buenos Aires and specifically how it interacts with the protest of #NiUnaMenos. It should be noted that Mateo is the only male identifying person that I interviewed, while being an active feminist voice his masculinity set a different tone for the interview.

According to Mateo, Martes Rojos began in December of 2012 thanks to the trial of Marita Veron. Marita Veron was a 23-year-old woman from Tucuman, a province of Argentina, who was kidnapped on April 3rd of 2002 from the corner of the block where she lived. Her mother, Susana Trimarco searched for Marita with the police, but she saw little progress, and sensed that the local police were corrupted by the mafia and complicit in sex trafficking. Susana Trimarco took matters into her own hands by dressing as a madam and entering brothels offering to buy women and girls being held captive. The women that Trimarco was able to make contact with in the brothels gave her clues as to where her daughter was being held captive. Trimarco rescued some of the women she spoke with and became a guardian to 129 former sex slaves, whom she sheltered in her home where she also cared for Marita's daughter, Micaela, who was 3

years old when her mother was abducted<sup>23</sup>. Trimarco's fight to find her daughter grew and became well known in the media. As Mateo explained to me, "Argentina through Susana Trimarco became conscious of the problem," that was previously not recognized in general society. Before, Argentines did not understand or see the situation of sexual exploitation, but through Trimarco, some began to rally against human trafficking.

The new widespread acknowledgment of sexual trafficking as a societal problem opened the door for conversation about other forms of gender violence. Mateo said "from there the issue exploded." Women were empowered by the public recognition of one form of gender violence and Argentina saw an increase in the number of women who were denouncing violence in their lives. In this way Mateo marks the importance of the case of Marita Veron and Susana Trimarco's efforts in creating a climate "where one could actively try to educate themselves and in which through this learning everyone became indignant." This societal energy fueled Martes Rojas's first action.

There was a law proposed to change the pornographic advertisements that were printed and pasted around the city. The proposal was addressed by congress at the end of the term so it was likely that it would be postponed or forgotten. To draw attention to this proposal and demand it be addressed, Martes Rojas began a twitter campaign against the verdict of the case of Marita Veron. This energy grew, a Facebook group was created and Martes Rojas came alive. The group decided to meet to take down the explicit advertisements in performative protest. They carried red plastic bags normally used in hospitals for medical waste for two reasons: first to make a symbolic link between the scraps of bodies that would be placed in these bags in

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<sup>23</sup> "Fundación Maria De Los Ángeles," Fundación Maria De Los Ángeles, accessed February 24, 2016, <http://www.fundacionmariadelosangeles.org/>.

hospitals and the scraps of paper that are evidence of a female dismemberment/ violence victims. Second, the red bags showed group unity and the bright color drew the attention of passersby.

Martes Rojos organizes primarily through a public Facebook page. The dynamics of a social media community, in addition to the educational and symbolic nature of the weekly actions result in fluid and ever-growing community. On the group page they identify the goal of their work is “to arrive at a point where everyone as citizens takes on the responsibility to take action against the disgrace of human trafficking.” In our conversation Mateo spoke to the universality of an issue such as human trafficking, “in my case as a brother of women, I have a lot of female friends, women I have dated, and any one of them could be subjected to human trafficking. That is the reason that we all must consider this issue personal, we must feel it because something has to be done. We cannot remain ignorant and close our eyes.” Mateo notes that while the actions of Martes Rojos may seem small, they are a way of standing up against human trafficking that all citizens can do. In this way Mateo notes the importance of individuals’ recognition of human trafficking as a step in creating social change. Initial recognition is the starting base for educating oneself about an issue and further taking a stand.

When members of Martes Rojos are taking down the explicit advertisements around Buenos Aires passersby commonly approach them with curiosity or outrage. Some of these questions carry a tone of disapproval as if saying, “Who are you to take these down?” In some instances, in a neighborhood called 11, Martes Rojos participants were physically abused by people who saw them taking down the advertisements. From then on the group had to have a police escort to stay safe while taking down the advertisements. Even in an extreme case such as this Mateo assured me, “ a reaction is always good.” It is in these interpersonal moments in the

street that a dialogue about the situation of sex trafficking in contrast to autonomous prostitution can take place.

In this instance, the police escort became a positive part of the experience because through conversations and over time the police officers assigned to escort Martes Rojas joined them in taking down the advertisements.

This situation serves as a good example of how Martes Rojas's actions are designed to initiate interpersonal education and mutual learning. When the reaction to Martes Rojas is negative it gives the members the space to articulate why they see taking down the advertisements as important. Visceral anger at what the group does provides fuel for the mutual learning to take place, in other words it creates a situation in which the person outside of the group wants to engage with them. Mateo believes that for every negative reaction there is a positive one, where passerby ask questions and begin to help with the action for a while. Regardless of the tone of the individual who stops to ask questions of the group, the most common question the group receives is "how will taking down these advertisements stop human trafficking?" When faced with this question Mateo's answer is direct, "we don't believe that this will stop human trafficking, rather we see it as a symbolic step and a way of beginning a larger conversation." This quote brings home Martes Rojas' goal and what they have achieved so far-- to make the issue of human trafficking visible, and to initiate moments of interpersonal education.

In 2015 Martes Rojas identified their goal of their group was to open people's eyes and to foster conversations about the issue of human trafficking. These goals clearly align with Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed in terms making the issue of human trafficking visible to the general public, for change can only come when a critical mass of people see and understand the atrocities

that are happening. These goals are beautifully accessible to all people because the explicit advertisements are in the most frequented parts of the city. Additionally, the nature of the action is inclusive in the sense that anyone passing by can see what the group is doing, ask why it is important and may go on to participate in their own way. Similar to *Revista Furias*, involvement in Martes Rojos is to some extent based on whether an individual has access to a facebook. But unlike *Revista Furias* the fact that Martes Rojos is based in regular actions gives the group more regular presence in different neighborhoods, which provides a level of exposure to the issue for people who do not have access to the internet.

### **Spaces for interpersonal education**

Both Martes Rojos and *Revista Furias* foster social change in the sense that they create spaces for interpersonal education to take place. In a social atmosphere such as Buenos Aires, where protests are seen as the primary mode to making change, these groups present a powerful addition. These groups work on a daily basis to educate Buenos Aires residents about gender issues. Because these groups connect with Buenos Aires communities regularly and not only when there is a specific crisis to protest, they do not alienate passerby who are curious and would like to engage but don't know how. In this way the ongoing interpersonal education that Martes Rojos and *Revista Furias* foster open the issues that they are passionate about to a larger community.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

*“Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge”*

-Winston Churchill

Gender violence and femicide happen around the world. The climate of femicide and social change in Buenos Aires is particularly relevant today as it was the birth place of the #NiUnaMenos movement. Additionally, Buenos Aires presents a strong juxtaposition between a relatively liberal gender context professionally and politically, and the shocking rates of gender violence including femicide. Gender is a social construct that is ever changing and based in its surroundings. Judith Butler and many other theorists see gender as a performance rather than a stable identity. This outlook is key in understanding situations of gender violence such as femicide because it extinguishes the argument that gender violence is a natural part of relationships between men and women. Further, seeing gender as a performance rather than a static part of identity gives agency to individuals and societies to actively change gender performance.

This thesis has illuminated the depth and complexity of gender violence in Buenos Aires. Through an interdisciplinary approach drawing on Anthropology, Sociology and Educational theory this thesis seeks to understand the interactions between individual, culture and structure. Embracing the great complexity of gender violence and femicide has been important to this thesis and ultimately has helped me to identify a few simple steps to change. Before a problem can be appropriately addressed it must first be denaturalized and the parties involved must be humanized. In seeking to understand gender violence in Buenos Aires I had to breakdown my gendered experience, which meant setting aside some of my anger towards men, and trying to sympathize with another experience that is not my own (the male experience). In this thesis the

theory behind Galtung's triangle of violence allowed me to see the interconnected nature of the structure, culture and individual. This frame resulted in an understanding, which dispersed the power of the individual experiences of violence among different causal levels. While it is necessary to recognize the complexities of the production of gender violence on multiple levels, when faced with this it can be difficult to not feel overwhelmed and hopeless.

I hope this thesis and the stories presented within demonstrate that social change can be initiated on an interpersonal level. Becoming critically conscious—unveiling the structural and cultural aspects in one's life—and fostering critical consciousness in others is a radical step towards change. Each person, who becomes critically conscious of the world around them, has the opportunity to begin to change their behavior so that they personally work to stop the reproduction of violent gender roles. Moreover, this thesis argues that individuals can work toward cultural change through interpersonal education and the encouragement of critical consciousness in others. The analysis of the place of sexual education in Buenos Aires as well as the investigation of *Revista Furias* and *Martes Rojos*, demonstrate that interpersonal education is applicable to both structured and unstructured spaces. This analysis can serve as a basis for adopting critical consciousness and further creating change through interpersonal education. Since structure, culture, and personal violence are interconnected, this model can be applied beyond the realm of femicide in Buenos Aires.

## Appendix A

### Interview protocol:

1. I would like to start off by talking about the work you currently do.
  - a. What is your job title?
  - b. How did you get to this work/job?
  - c. What is important to you about it? What are your goals?
  - d. What are the challenges? What do you see as your successes so far?
  - e. Would you consider yourself an educator?
2. How would you describe the current place of sexual education in Buenos Aires/Argentina?
  - a. Has it changed over time? In what ways? What has contributed to that change?
  - b. How has this context affected the work you do?
3. How would describe the current experiences/framing/position of women and girls in Buenos Aires/Argentina?
  - a. Has it changed over time?
  - b. Do you think it is changing particularly right now? What do you think of the #NiUnaMenos movement?
  - c. How does this context impact the work you do?
  - d. What do you see as the relationship between teaching sexual education and helping address issues of gender roles in Buenos Aires?
4. What were your own experiences in sexual education growing up?
  - a. Where did your information come from?
  - b. What were the main things that you took away from this education?
  - c. What worked? What do wish had happened differently?
  - d. Are there any ways in which your own experiences affect the work that you do now?
5. What are the approaches you see as most effective in teaching about sexuality/sexual education?
  - a. How did you learn those approaches?
  - b. Why do you think they are most effective?
  - c. How effective are these approaches to helping create social change around gender roles in Buenos Aires?

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