

Sanitizing Argentina

Hegemonic Whiteness in the Europe of South America

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Abstract

This thesis examines underlying perceptions in Argentina about European culture, class, and environment. In contemporary Argentina, the population is made up of a majority of European descendants, distinguishing it from other countries in Latin America. Probing into the recent migratory history, identities are remolded in order to emulate development and environmental attitudes similar to those of their European dominators. Current political doctrines reflect ideologies of Argentina's founding fathers and are consequently transmitted to individual opinions. Themes of coloniality, underdevelopment, hegemonic whiteness, and environment reveal what it means to be part of a country developing in the modern world system and what forces affect those ontologies.

Keywords: Argentina, coloniality, environment, Europe, hegemonic whiteness, identity, immigration, underdevelopment

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1.0 Introduction

The tragedy here is that we all have been led, knowingly or not, willingly or not, to see and to accept that image [European image] as our own reality and ours only. Because of it, for a very long time we have been what we are not, what we never should have been and what we never will be (Quijano 2000: 222).

I became quite curious about Argentina. I was expecting to find demographics similar to that of Peru—a mosaic of ethnicities that include backgrounds due to the Spanish Conquest, contemporary immigration, and those native to the country. After spending almost two years in Peru, I recall the pure joy as Peruvians spoke about their country and traditions, being proud of their roots and the preserved customs that are still maintained and practiced. To this day, about 80% of Peruvians have bloodlines to indigenous populations, the most well known being the Quechuans who continue to cherish the language and culture (Kimutai Too 2017). With enthusiasm, Peruvians could take you back through history and into the land that makes their home from the desert coast, over the monumental Andes Mountains and through the Amazon rainforest. I observed a respect for the numerous perspectives of interpreting and living among each background in the country, taking pride in these differences and desiring to protect even the earliest cultures from losing value and importance.

It certainly was my mistake upon arriving to Argentina to make the assumption that I would find people comparable to those in Peru since it is a completely different country. Being aware of the significant Spanish Conquest that affected much of the Americas, an even higher flow of migrants to Argentina compared to Peru, and of the prominent indigenous roots, it is not a

skewed conjecture to presume similarities. Strangers and friends habitually told me that ‘Argentina is a country of immigrants, full of diversity, just like in the United States.’ Part of that statement is true; Argentina is a country full of immigrants and their descendants. Therefore, diversity must have existed, but it seemed to be defined a bit differently than how I considered diversity because I found something peculiar about the Argentines I was encountering. The first and foremost difference that stuck out to me was an apparent ‘whiteness’—in physical appearance and as a category of privilege—where I was forced to question if a bloodline to an indigenous culture was even present. The diversity that they were referring to was the immigration that took place and resulted in populating the country with foreigners. In fact, to this day, 97% of the population is of European descent while only 3% remains of aboriginal descent (CIA 2017). I observed a blended nation in physical appearance and in culture, not recognizing different ontological and epistemological backgrounds in the forefront, and in turn, a seeming renovation of a country that resembles demographics and philosophies to that of European ‘white’ countries.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

My aim is to unfold a story on how the role of historical nation-making¹ shapes the political and social milieu and affects present-day relationships of people to their environment and their perceptions of development strategies. Combining and diving into three important contexts: historical, political, and individual, this thesis will reveal reasons that, due to a chase for development and modernization, Argentine politics promoted a ‘white’ country in physical appearance, policy strategies, and philosophy. Former and present leaders of Argentina, in the name of modernization, unpacked hegemonic whiteness among its population that pushed aside any alternative ontologies that made Argentina a place far more comparable to other countries that also experienced similar immigration and colonialism trends from ‘white people’. Classifying the term ‘hegemony’⁵ as a culturally dominant way of thought and being, Gramsci states,

Even if one admits that other cultures have had an importance and a significance in the process of “hierarchical” unification of world civilisation (and this should certainly be admitted without question),

¹ Nation-making produces a variety of definitions, but for the context of this paper, Nation-making refers to immigration in the 19th and 20th century to Argentina and how that has affected modern day individuals and politics.

they have had a universal value only in so far as they have become constituent elements of European culture, which is the only historically and concretely universal culture—in so far, that is, as they have contributed to the process of European thought and been assimilated by it (Gramsci, in Gramsci et al 1971: 765).

I argue that present-day Argentina is drastically more similar to its European parents in people and thought than to its Latin American siblings, by blindly following the neoliberal path to join the ‘developed world’ in both epistemic and ontologic ways.

This thesis is focused on the following research questions to provide exploration into the Argentine case:

1. How has coloniality played a role in redefining identity and environmental awareness in the Argentine context?
2. In what sense have leaders of Argentina promoted hegemonic and ‘normative’ environmental and social perceptions as a means of nation-making and development?
3. In which ways could have individuals’ attitudes about whiteness, cleanliness, environment and civilization have been manifested through nation-making and immigration?

2.0 Background and Context

“Los mexicanos descienden de los aztecas, los peruanos de los inca, y los argentinos descienden de los barcos.”

[“The Mexicans descend from the Aztecs, the Peruvians from the Inca, and the Argentines descend (disembark) from the ships.”]

- **Octavio Paz 1914-1998, Mexican Poet**

2.1 Immigration in the 19th and 20th Century to the Americas

2.1.1 Immigration to the Americas

The United States is predominantly recognized as a country of immigrants, but it is often not known that South America also received many immigrants during the same time period (Baily and Míguez 2003). Following the ‘discovery’ of the Americas, there was obvious movement from European countries to the West, but in the 19th and 20th century, migration reached an all time high to both North and South America (Baily and Míguez 2003; Goebel 2016). Between 1820 and 1932, the United States drew in more than 30 million people, mostly from countries in Northwestern Europe such as Britain, Germany, and Ireland (Baily and Míguez 2003: *xiv*). The second most desired country for European immigrants was Argentina, accepting more than 6 million people during the same time period and quadrupling its inhabitants (Goebel 2016: 3). Canada, Brazil and Uruguay also had significant numbers, but much less than the two leading countries (Baily and Míguez 2003). In fact, between 1850 and 1930, more than one million Swedes moved to the United States and around 1900 Chicago was the third biggest “Swedish” city (Beijbom and Johansson 1971: 8). There are several hypotheses as to why there was such massive migration to the West during the 19th and 20th century, and more specifically why the United States and Argentina received the most immigrants rather than other countries which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Alongside the growth of industrialization and urbanization in Europe, populations rose and financial strains became more of an issue. Therefore, a dip in the economic situation of potential immigrants pushed people West in hope for a more stable future in the Americas (Goebel 2016). As globalization between Europe and the Americas grew, immigration seemed like a valid option, especially to the countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean. Ports on the Atlantic allowed for better access to Europe for trade and for immigrants to arrive from and return to their host countries (Goebel 2016: 6). Furthermore, an increased immigration corresponded with a greater gross national product of the recipient country, which meant more economic stability (Baily and Míguez 2003: *xv*). The government in Argentina also provided lodging, help for finding work, and tickets to the final destination for foreigners. Although moving to a foreign country is never

an easy transition, the options available in Argentina made the possibility of life in a new place an easier adjustment. However, the most interesting argument surprisingly has to do with the pull factors coming from Argentina revolving around ethnicity and nationality.

2.1.2 The White Factor and (Re)Making Argentina

“The Melting Pot” has been historically used as a metaphor to describe a region of blended culture and ethnic fusion. Originally coined by the French-American J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur after immigrating to the United States in 1755, St. John de Crèvecoeur saw his new home across the Atlantic ocean becoming a completely new species of people, born through an amalgamation of races and transforming into a super nation. “Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world” (St. John Crèvecoeur 1782: 55). It can be argued that a nation bursting with individuals from all over the world provides an enriching atmosphere for sharing stories, language, and culture. In fact, creolization does provide a braiding of people from various strands of the world, tangling and intermingling local and foreign culture and resulting in a culture completely unique (Hannerz 1987). Yet, the concept of this “Melting Pot” is not to recognize the range of traditions that exists in the world, but rather to merge these different customs and produce homogeneity. The use of the word ‘melt’ attests to a conversion from one to another, similar to two metals melting together to form an entirely different compound. Countries desiring to emulate this superhuman society are not necessarily striving for a new race of people but are rather endorsing a dominant background type to populate its country (Bastia and vom Hau 2013).

As stated previously, the United States saw much more immigrants than their southern counterpart, which many historians attribute to the North’s appeal as a developed country, seen as modern and progressive, while their southern counterpart was seen as barbaric and ‘backwards’ (Goebel 2016). Yet, these ‘barbarians’, or more appropriately known as the elites, played a crucial role in fostering a nation and racial vision based primarily on skin color in hopes for a lifestyle and world standing similar to that of Europe, the United States and other developed regions (Bastia and vom Hau 2017). Specifically in Argentina, these policies were central for the ruling elites to facilitate their vision of an advanced and civilized nation (Schneider 1996). In 1876, Argentina passed a law regarding immigration reflecting the bourgeois desire of nurturing European immigration so as to lay the responsibility of civilizing and mixing with the former population (Kraay 2007: 142). Even more than 40 years later, Juan B. Alberdi, an Argentine

diplomat and theorist who significantly influenced the Argentine Constitution, titled a section of his book, *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina*, (*Bases and Starting Points for the Political Organization of the Argentine Republic*) as “De la Inmigración como Medio de Progreso y de Cultura para la América del Sud” translated to “Immigration as a Means of Progress and Culture for South America” (1915). After only a few decades of immigration, the population in Argentina not only increased, but also immigrants outnumbered those who were born inside the borders, transforming Argentina into a nation of immigrants.

2.2 Neoliberal Experimentation as a means of Development

It would be a fairly complex and extensive task to undergo a thorough investigation, explanation, and understanding of the political past and its association with neoliberalism from the colonial times to the present in Argentina. Therefore, this section will be dedicated to providing a simple foundation for understanding certain class and colonial structures as they pertain to neoliberalism that have accumulated throughout history due to the immigration previously conveyed.

2.2.1 Bourgeoisie, Land, and Power

Although it is said that Argentina only officially began implementing neoliberal values in the early 1970s, these dogmas strongly accompanied the mass migration of the 19th and 20th century and arguably even started with the independence of Argentina in the early 1800s (Frank 1969; Cooney 2007). Along with the pull of Europeans to Argentina, there was a push in Argentine government and the elite to take advantage of the ‘hard-working’ group of people (foreigners) to develop the land for the world market (Frank 1969). With the goal of modernizing the native groups of Argentina and encourage ‘cross-breeding’, policies essentially made it legal to remove native populations from their property to allow the elite foreigners to have easy and cheap access to rich and productive land (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017). Political actors in Argentina, known as Generation 80, played a critical role in mobilizing immigrants and promoted policies that went as far as giving away land to newcomers in order to more easily begin life in a new country, but also, and maybe more significant, to promote an “agricultural colonization” ideology (Bastia and vom Hau 2013). Migrants were expected to populate the interior parts of the country, provide labor, and transform this property into productive land for the state (Bastia and vom Hau 2013). On the other hand, children of indigenous were taken away from their families and put in boarding schools, they were also trained in skills necessary for labor in pertinent industries and agriculture (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017: 613). Subsequently, in the 1970s, the government

heavily endorsed the agro-industry evermore, furthering the elite land-owning ‘oligarchy’ power for the purpose of contributing in transnational corporations (Cooney 2007). Thus, the goal towards the land in Argentina was one and the same: capital.

Prior to World War II, land distribution and the “agricultural colonization” was at an all time high in Argentina, whereas after the war, industrialization became grounds for neoliberal policies (Cooney 2007). However, at the time of high immigration, the Argentine government’s pull factor to find a strong working class to cultivate and perform labor on the land found an accelerant with the compatible logic of the migrants themselves: a push factor to begin a new life. Because of the difficult economic times in Europe at the time and poverty and hunger on the brink, immigrating to a country that provided heaps of conveniences was not unfavorable. Moreover, the land that was marketed as available for the taking was perfect for cultivating crops and raising cattle, and migrants tended to come from countries that were predominantly dedicated to rural production. It was more likely that a person who already was acquainted with a lifestyle in the countryside and was able to labor on the land would settle in a foreign country with a similar landscape than one who had never experienced a rural lifestyle or vocation.

3.0 Analytical Framework

3.1 Coloniality

First coined by Anibal Quijano, ‘coloniality’ is a concept that describes the narrative between modernity and colonialism. Colonialism created a framework in which terms such as ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nationality’ were made in order to classify/discriminate between the colonizers and colonized (Quijano 2007). Through this classification and systematic repression, Latin America’s history has been permanently manipulated, resulting in a thriving Eurocentered coloniality (Quijano 2007). This angle looks at a group of people who have a set of beliefs that parallel those of developed countries and live their lives according to these principles, believing them to be the ‘correct’ way to live as “civilized” people. Instead of focusing on minority groups that have been oppressed through colonization, I will be focusing on people in the Buenos Aires province that come from families that have settled in Argentina during the 19th and 20th centuries and how a Eurocentric vision reincarnated itself on Argentine land. Although this thesis has many directions and areas of exploration due to the enormity of the topic, I wish to focus on how

immigration from a particular region in the world has influenced previous and current political agendas, and how these two forces shape individuals' judgments and perceptions.

However, there is a unique twist. The study subjects are those whom have originated from the existing hegemonic system and take pride in this origin. The civilization and barbarism dichotomy survives through the struggle of contemporary Argentine citizens' rejection of decolonization. The nexus of the present-day Argentine individual and European descendant obscures the standard coloniality situation. And although coloniality holds a strong spot in Argentine life, its case is very different than the other Latin American countries. Because of the extensive governmental corruption throughout the history in Latin America, it is an easy jump to lump Argentina with all the patterns and stereotypes with the rest of Latin America (Waisman 1987: 3). Similarly to other Latin American countries, Argentina has become a slave to an ideology collecting social, environmental and economic costs that sustains underdevelopment. The distinction is that Argentina is home to a population of people made up of European immigrants, resembling 'new countries' such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States which puzzles academics and historians as to why they have not seen development similarly to countries of 'lands of recent settlement' (Waisman 1987: 3-4).

Whiteness as a dominating identity, a self-loathing culture, and blindly following the hegemony for progress are some of the consequences that will be further discussed in the analysis section. The following section provides the theoretical foundation for the analysis of the findings.

3.2 Development of the Underdeveloped

Andre Gunder Frank's theory of the development of the underdeveloped provides an underlying theoretical basis for this thesis. He argues that current underdevelopment follows a long history of partaking in the world-capitalist system (Frank 1969: 7). It is a mistake to assume that an underdeveloped country resembles an earlier stage of development of a developed country, because that would also assume that development is a linear, one-directional process (ibid). Underdevelopment is not a stage of development, but rather its consequence (Galeano 1971). It is also erroneous to expect a European outcome when the history and circumstance is radically different in underdeveloped countries (Frank 1969). Frank proposes the metropolis-satellite structure as an explanation for continued underdevelopment in certain countries. The metropole is the center of commerce and the core that exploits on the peripheral satellite, usually through economic means (ibid). The concept describes economic surplus flowing out of the

underdeveloped third world and into the industrialized first world. By introducing free trade, those that have the closest ties to the metropolis also have a closer tie to the developed world and thus have the highest power and benefit the most (ibid). Given the present economic and political structure of Latin America, local capital is scarce while foreign capital is welcome (ibid: 177).

In the case of Argentina, after migration, land-owning migrant families were given land by the government, which as a result gave them power. Although native populations inhabited the territory, Argentine government recognized the land as *terra nullius*—vacant and available for the taking—viewing the land’s purpose for exploitation for agriculture, industry and commerce (Bateman and Pilkington 2011). An increased demand in the international market allowed the land-owning oligarchy to thrive through agricultural colonization specifically fostered by the government in order to expand capital and increase production. (Frank 1969: 15). The territory was used as a function for the market. It was hegemonic in its practice, bringing capital from the satellite (Argentina) to the metropolis (Europe). Although also a nation that falls into the category of countries that are exploited for their riches’ by Wallerstein’s (2004) world-systems theory, this thesis discusses why contemporary Argentina has not developed rather than focusing on capital accumulation in Europe. The Argentine bourgeois maintained control of the satellite and had the closest ties to the metropolis being able to easily benefit from the colonial structure set forth before them. This neoliberal model had a clear class bias and through the various modes of economic strategies in Argentina throughout history, the land-owning bourgeoisie maintained power by monopolizing on agricultural products for the metropole (Frank 1969). Put simply, foreigners (now Argentines) were owners of the land, had the strongest connection to the metropole, and were in the upper class. There was extreme dependence on the metropole, (the colonizers/countries abroad) and much foreign investment into Argentina such as technology and other products that Argentina did not produce themselves because of the exclusive agricultural monopoly.

What I extract from this theory is that the consequences of acting on the metropolis-satellite structure have evolved to give Argentina certain characteristics in how they view themselves in comparison to the developed world. The historical analysis that is given in the background section provides details that have shaped modern day Argentines. Being a country primarily of European descent, their re-made identity is linked to specific attitudes towards environment and development. Although at one point in the early 20th century, Argentina was one of the richest

countries of the world, participation in the neoliberal system made the European version of development impossible (Frank 1969; Cooney 2007).

3.3 Whiteness, Purity, Superiority and the Environment

Finally, whiteness as a theme of cleanliness and modernity reappears throughout the body of this thesis. Whiteness, in terms of physical appearance of people, was used as a justification of modernity and cleanliness of Europe and developed nations. “By reiterating its whiteness, Argentina would enter into modernity alongside its European exemplars” (Kaminsky 2009: 2). Whiteness is a category of privilege and power and its racial gauge is set at ‘normalcy’ (Frankenburg 1993; Brodtkin 1998; Ferber 1998; Doane 2003; Hughey 2009 cited in HWT 2014). Whiteness, as a color in and of itself, translates to signify pure cleanliness and unmarked by pollution (Berthold 2010). Whether it is physical or symbolic pollution, the mark imprints itself on a group of people or a place, creating social order, advancing status and pushing power dynamics (Douglas 1966). Thus, in the context of this thesis, white is a symbol that portrays the Europeans class and environment and the longing of Argentina to follow suit. Although this section is very brief in the analytical framework, the depth of these concepts are broadened and intensified in the discussion section in order to relate to the findings.

4.0 Methods

I was in Mar del Plata, Argentina from August 2017 to March 2018. Mar del Plata is in the province of Buenos Aires, which has a population of about 15.6 million people, making it the most populated province in all of Argentina (WPR 2018). The individuals that were interviewed are all from the Buenos Aires province, which is a limitation to this study considering the varying opinions and perceptions of the dynamic between the city and countryside. Class of individuals was not specifically asked but rather implied by asking selected questions to determine class such as ‘Do you have a private beach?’ or ‘In which zone of Mar del Plata or Buenos Aires do you live?’

Three methods were chosen for exploring the stated research questions. Participatory observation was meant as a foundational strategy that helped uncover themes of exploration for the next

methods. In-depth, unstructured and open interviews were used to help understand the individual interpretation of identity and ideas surrounding development and environment compared to other parts of the world. Finally, a discourse analysis on a speech by the President of Argentina assists in providing a perspective of present-day political language and how this dialogue is consistent with the opinions of Argentine citizens. Playing with scales in the methods of choice illustrate the intermingling between history and present-day discourse.

4.1 Participatory Observation

Participatory observation is a method I began implementing long before knowing what I would choose to research for a thesis. I had a few personal reasons for choosing to live and find an internship in Argentina; therefore, it was necessary to find my place as a foreigner in order to feel comfortable in my new home among those of a different culture than myself. Living my day-to-day life forced me to interact in a variety of ways with people that I encountered. This process of interaction allowed me to question, critique, wonder, and think about what was happening around me. I was struck by certain conversations I had with acquaintances. This accidental participatory observation, the conversations and daily life interactions are incorporated into the body of the thesis and will be described in the section titled “Findings”.

Participatory observation is when the researcher involves him or her self to a point that their inclusion is unidentifiable between him or her self and those being studied (Kawulich 2005). Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) describe researchers that exemplify participant observation as learning dialect and language, living in the region or community for an extended period of time, ‘hanging out’, recording experiences, and participating in daily activities with the group being studied. De Munck and Sobo (1998) describe ‘hanging out’ with study subjects as part of a three-step process of beginning as a stranger, moving to being considered an acquaintance, and then finally in an intimate relationship.

Although at first I had a difficult time using this academic tool, I viewed the research process from a position of curiosity rather than a position of judgment. I felt that I was a *kharisiri*, a creature that Bolivians refer to when speaking about researchers using their experiences for exploiting and sucking knowledge out of their study subjects (Burman 2018). But, the people with whom I interacted were aware of my thesis topic due to discussing with them my own thoughts and reflections as time passed. Whereas most anthropologists, human ecologists, sociologists, etc., go to a region in order to study a particular culture, that was not the case in my

scenario. I happened to find myself engrossed in various aspects of the culture that I chose to further investigate alongside my preliminary observations.

4.2 In-depth, Unstructured Interviews

To accompany my participant observation, I chose to take advantage of my geographic location and undergo in-depth interviews. Going into the in-depth conversations, the topics and flow became more focused and concrete due to the ideas that flourished through the participant observation. I felt I had a solid foundation in which I could dig a bit deeper into the inquiries that I was wondering about and a two-way conversation that flowed naturally was a better option than a standard question and answer style interview which can sometimes be seen as stressful and uncomfortable. In this manner, speakers could develop and reflect on their own thoughts and experiences and it also gave both the interviewer and the interviewee a chance to analyze and probe the topics together in a discussion-like manner (Taylor, DeVault and Bogdan 2015).

All in all, I carried out five in-depth interviews. Some of with whom I spoke I knew beforehand and others I met for the first time. I took notes on all five interviews and recorded the last two interviews; both conducted in Spanish. I took two main approaches in choosing the way to sample interviewees. I first began choosing people based on conversations I previously had during the preliminary months of living in Argentina, thus the first few interviews were with people I had already known. I was very honest with them—they knew I was in Argentina for academic purposes—and I easily expressed to them topics that interested me about Argentina and asking permission to ask about certain matters that could perhaps help me along in my thesis. People were very willing to discuss with me my questions as well as their perspective, and the conversation inclined towards a genuine dialogue. The second strategy I had was approaching people near the beach where people spent time sitting along the coast drinking *mate*, a special Argentine tea, or just enjoying the sun. This method turned out to be much more fruitful than I had imagined with many people very interested in speaking with me. I would typically approach those that were sitting alone as it made it easier for me to strike up a conversation, but I eventually graduated to approaching families as well as groups of friends. In these cases, there usually was a ‘lead speaker’ that spoke for most of the time while the others tended to stay out of the conversation and listen in. I always began by introducing myself and presented points of exploration and then explained why their perspective would be beneficial. The conversation

started out a bit awkward but eventually turned into a sincere dialogue that often lasted for up to an hour. You can find the presentation of each interviewee in the section titled “Findings”.

Because of an initial bias of my own natural thoughts and perspectives based on living, interacting and experiencing Argentina, I realize that I had a predisposition. I am no expert on Argentina, let alone where Argentines’ identities lie, and that was the purpose of doing the in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews provide room for individuals to explore their own perspectives and reflections while the interviewer can merely listen, respond, relate, and discuss (Taylor, DeVault, and Bogdan 2015). I tended to be in public areas in these cases such as the beach or a restaurant where other people were present and joined the conversation. On occasion, other people chimed in with what they thought as well which may or may not have interrupted or caused the interviewees to modify and adjust their opinions depending on the people involved in the conversation. Since this method is comprised of a social interaction, naturally it will contain its alterations and embellishments, and the dialogue should be taken with a grain of salt and not considered as profound beliefs (Taylor, DeVault and Bogdan 2015: 114).

4.3 Discourse Analysis

Political rhetoric largely influences its citizens. By coupling this method with the interviews, I will show that a discourse analysis of a recent Speech by the Argentine President and Chair of the G20, Mauricio Macri, links a secure affinity between the historical and individual context. This association will demonstrate that it is essential to inspect various dimensions to witness how each context reflects and relates to another. Phillips and Hardy (2002: 6) describe discourse analysis as a methodology that “tries to explore how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time”. By using language as a qualitative method, it helps understand how realities are constructed and how that social world is maintained and developed (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Rummaging through the words and expressions in an ambiance of an important international gathering will shed light and offer a worthy angle in political discourse.

I originally heard about this speech while living in Argentina because of a particular quote Macri stated about Europeans. Many South American scholars criticized the statement that could be read in newspaper and magazine articles published shortly after the conference. Curious, I decided to watch the speech. I asked myself pertinent questions while listening such as who the speech was written for, why he said something, how he said something, in what way did he talk,

and if what he was saying was reliable. I looked for patterns in the language and listened for key words that aligned with ideas that informants had also mentioned in order to find common themes. Exploring discourse on this scale (i.e. a Presidential speech) not only offers a reflection for how individuals are influenced in that country, but also provides an impression of that particular country to the viewer.

5.0 Findings

All informants have fictitious names. The interviews are a representation of the province of Buenos Aires and not a depiction of the entire Argentine population. I refer to Argentina and Argentines, but the focus is on those from the most populated part of the country, Buenos Aires.

5.1 Participant Observation Scenes

In this section I will depict various scenes and portray the conversations.

5.1.1 Karina

After teaching a yoga class, I began speaking about how I was a vegetarian, and I commented on how for me it was quite difficult to find vegetarian food options in restaurants due to the heavy meat industry in Argentina. A student at the yoga studio replied to me saying quite strongly, “We are behind here! We are behind!” almost yelling it with anger. She began expressing her own frustration at the ‘unconscious Argentine’ and the lack of variety of food products that are commonly found in places such as Europe and the United States. She continued to explain that Argentina is less progressed than these other places, citing as an example the lack of vegetarian options in restaurants.

5.1.2 A Supposed Social and Environmental Alternative

I was volunteering for a University-run organization called “Energies – A Social Alternative”. As its name infers, it is a group that focuses on the social aspect of energy. We would take trips to the outskirts of Mar del Plata, in areas that did not have access whether due to economic means or geographical location to gas or conventional methods to heat. Once we arrived to the various neighborhoods, we would construct makeshift ovens and water heaters out of sand, clay, plastic bottles, and other scrap material that was easily accessible. The goal of these various projects was to give people in a lower social class needed tools to empower them to find

alternatives to conventional methods. A secondary goal, or product rather, was that these methods were also better for the environment. Through the habitual outings, I learned that the target of this organization was not to encourage alternatives to conventional uses of energy but instead provide energy that was otherwise lacking in alternative ways. On one particular outing, I remember speaking with the professor that coordinated and organized the groups each week, and he spoke about how if he could give everyone gas for their homes, he would. There was no fight or activism against the corporations that provide gas or of the environmental detriments associated with using conventional techniques.

On our way to these outings, we drove along the coast, gazing towards the Atlantic Ocean. In the summertime, Mar del Plata becomes a tourist city, with people coming from all over the country for a few days in the sun. But upon looking towards the coast, instead of seeing beautiful sandy beaches, you look onto an ocean of individual tents and umbrellas that privatizes more than half the beach for those who want to rent a spot for a day or for the season. Following this site, a discussion broke out between the members of the shared car ride about this phenomenon. The same supervisor expressed that if people will pay to have a spot, then it is a great way to make money. He went on to explain that Mar del Plata has always been a place where tourists come to enjoy the beaches, and that companies might as well use the opportunity to capitalize on that desire. In his lifetime, (a man in about mid-50s) there has never been a time when the tents and umbrellas did not exist on the beaches of Mar del Plata. He said people love the beach in the summer, and they want the more private beach area, instead of spending their holiday time in a public area where it is crowded with people. If they have money, he argued, they should be able to buy a private spot, and the companies provide that for them.

5.2 In-depth Interviews in Mar del Plata, Argentina

A small description of each interviewee will be described prior to the details of the findings.

5.2.1 Rosa

The first woman I spoke to was in the area of the private beach. Rosa is a woman somewhere in her 50s and in the upper class. She spoke about how people who are from Italian descent join clubs in Argentina, and only people of Italian descent can join them. These clubs sponsor activities all over the country and there is one such club in Mar del Plata. There is a President and a Secretary, and it is a completely formed organization. Kids even travel together through these clubs as part of an activity. The point of this is to not lose their roots and keep customs and

traditions close to the families. Rosa talked about how she feels like Argentines always emulate people from Europe and the United States but not in the style of family life but rather in technology and lifestyle.

She spoke about how she lived in the United States for 8 months when she was in her 20s and that she saw people in the USA as being much more conscious of environmental impacts and nature. In contrast, people in Argentina were only just beginning to see those connections. She remembers that while taking a shower in California in 1989, she had to be conscious about conserving water because of the drought at the time, and people in Argentina would never be conscious about how long they spent in the shower. “Everyone in Argentina consumes and wants to show what they have and want the best things. But I do not think consumerism is bad when I want better shoes for the gym or a better phone for work. Those kinds of technologies are what they need” she said. Rosa said that Argentines adapt well but that they are a weird country. She said that they adapt well to the nice countries, following the rules and enjoying the luxuries of rule-following in other countries such as crossing the street when the light is green for pedestrians, but in their own country, they “turn into animals”. She talked about how all the countries in Latin America have many people of Spanish descent due to the Spanish colonization, but that she wished that they had a British colonizer so that she can have more laws like the north and live more like the north. While I was speaking with Rosa, a man approached us, another person whom I had met a few times and added to the overheard conversation saying, “We are Italians that speak Spanish”. He then went on to say that Argentines do not respect anything and they have so many riches but that they are poor.

5.2.2 Agata

Agata was about 50 years old and in the middle class. She had parents from Slovenia and spoke about how the mentality that her Father has is different than the mentality of Argentines. The Argentine takes advantage of people, robs people when they see the opportunity, and do not follow rules. She sees in her family values that come from her ancestors. She sees her father and her ancestors as much more civil and honest and that all of Europe is more advanced. Although she did not have Italian descent, she made the example of the word *villa*, which in Italian refers to a big house with a fancy garden, but in Spanish refers to a poor neighborhood without any resources. She said, “We do not have an identity” comparing to those in Peru. She said that Peruvians are more connected to their land and stand a bit taller than the Argentines with regards to where they are from. She described the Argentines as not connected to their land because of so

much immigration. She said in the past people came to Argentina to work and now people come from countries like Bolivia and Paraguay to use their resources. “Argentina is a generous country” referring to being generous towards foreigners. She complained that poorer people from Paraguay and Bolivia come to Argentina to get access to healthcare and education, but do not contribute to society such as by working or paying. She says they come to Argentina just to use our resources that all of the Argentines have to pay. She also said that although Argentina is generous to foreigners, Argentina is not generous to their indigenous people. She said that she sees indigenous people as needing to be modernized and that she has friends doing “some good work” in the Patagonia region where they help the indigenous Mapuche people become educated and properly clothed. She said there are many non-governmental organizations doing things like this to help give native populations opportunities in the absence of government assistance. She said people in Argentina do not respect others and, as a result, public areas are rarely clean. As she was talking about this, she was getting angry watching a group of teenagers litter their leftover lunch on the ground. She said that people in Argentina are lazy.

5.2.3 Vacationing Family

I spoke with a little boy of about 10 years old, a woman and a man about the age of 40 and in the middle to low social class from Buenos Aires. They were sitting along the coast, gazing out towards the ocean. The little boy was quite talkative saying that he would love to be able to go the United States because “they are way more advanced and way more modern.” The man responded saying specifically towards me “Yeah! You guys have way more technology; the politics are also way better. Here our politics sucks.” The man continued talking about how the economy in the United States is much better and that everyone in Argentina is poor. He asked me if I had ever been to Buenos Aires, in the city center, because he went on to say that they are crazy in Argentina but even worse in Buenos Aires. The woman added on, saying that only people that work are important and if you do not work then you are nothing.

5.2.4 Group of Men

Three men of about 23 years old, taking a small trip out of the city of Buenos Aires for a week together, in the middle to lower class, also spoke with me. One boy talked much more than the other two. He said that he does not feel attached or connected to Argentina [the land] at all. He said that both of his parents are from Spain, but he does not think they feel connected to either country, speaking of Argentina and Spain. He said that he thinks that ‘outside’ or in Europe is more safe and cheaper. He said that in Argentina there are always bad things happening that you

see on the news and that you see people in Europe and in the United States as enjoying a better lifestyle. Comparing Argentina to other countries, especially Latin American countries, Argentina is much more expensive, and although Argentines have a higher salary than most people in other Latin American countries, compared to outside that continent, they have very low salaries.

He says that the only way to develop is to continue in the same way that Europe and the first world has developed. “If it worked for them, then it will certainly work for Argentina and Latin America as well. The world wants to develop, and the world sees land as productive. No one can stay with the land because the world does not work that way, the world works in other ways.” He said that if you continue with the land just for the horses, then everyone would just continue without being developed. “One of the problems of development, of course, is the exploitation of the land,” he said. Argentina is not as much like this as the United States for example, he expressed. He feels that Argentina does not need to worry too much about the environment because in other places they have much more cars and pollution, and he sees it as a problem of those other countries. He does not think that the countries causing the pollution and destruction care too much about the environment either and over time people will start to care more.

There is no point for the big countries to pay attention to the environment, because if they do, they will lose money. He stated, “Also, the average person does not pay attention to the environment; I do not pay attention to the environment for example. People think about what is happening right now, in the present. We are not thinking about the future. This is just how normal people think, it is just the truth.” He said that he has always thought very highly of development but has never put much thought into the topic of nature and the environment and only started thinking about it because I brought up the topic. He repeated many times that ‘normal’ people just do not think like this, and he does not think they will unless there is some big threat. He said that maybe there should be more regulations, measurements and laws to control the way the world uses the environment. He said that first world such as the United States and Europe must lead in these areas before a country like Argentina will follow. He says that they will not start until they get to a point where everything is just too much.

5.2.5 Daniel

Daniel is also from Buenos Aires and was in Mar del Plata for a few days of vacationing during the summertime. He is an older man, somewhere in his upper 50s or lower 60s and upper class.

He spoke about how he has always referred to himself as a son of a Spaniard and that his friends also identify with the country from where their parents came from. He even confirmed that when he meets new people, generally people present themselves as children of whichever country their parents come from, and although he is Argentine, he said what makes people unique is where a family's country of origin is. He pointed out that the "native Argentine" is very rare to find, especially in the province of Buenos Aires, where most of the population of Argentina resides. He then began to speak about how Argentines are lazy and that the typical Argentine does not like to work and are not hard workers. He then continued and said that European blood gets up in the morning, goes to work, and they work hard. "I wake up at 8 in the morning and get home at 10 in the evening," he said. "The Argentine has a piece of paper in their hand and throws it on the ground while the European blood will throw that same piece of paper in the trash." He said that he has been to Europe and the United States and has travelled to many places and it is much cleaner than it is in Argentina. "There is another type of respect there." He said that in Argentina the middle class is a bit more conscious, but the lower class does not care about anything and is "just a disaster." He said it must be due to a lack of education that the lower class is this way. He told me that he is a Principal at a school for adults and emphasized that the middle and lower class do not think of environmental problems and that is why Argentina is dirty.

5.3 Discourse Analysis at the World Economic Forum 2018

On January 26-28, 2018, Mauricio Macri, the President of Argentina and current the Chair of the G20 made a special address at the 48th Annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Established in 1971 and embedded in the economic sector (as indicated by the name) the World Economic Forum's mission is devoted to improving the world's conditions by providing a platform for "bringing together the world's foremost CEOs, heads of state, ministers and policy-makers, experts and academics, international organizations, youth, technology innovators and representatives of civil society in an impartial space with the aim of driving positive change" (2018). This year's headline title was called "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World" pointing to economic and social incoherent structures in terms of varying governing strategies around the world (WEF 2018). The program introduced Macri as a leader of the G20 promoting inclusion and intergenerational progress while building Argentina to be a leading nation of the world. The purpose of the speech was to give a perspective of the state of the world and the vision of Argentina in the coming years.

5.3.1 Mauricio Macri Special Address

All statements from this section come from Macri unless otherwise stated.

The special lecture lasted for a little over ten minutes and included themes that addressed aspects of the economy, social atmosphere, and sustainability prospects in Argentina. Macri opened by highlighting that his purpose is to emphasize that Argentina is an unfailing collaborator for business and global politics. Calling attention to the title of the meeting, “Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World”, Macri pointed out that Argentina has been a country that has long suffered from a fracture; this fracture being the seclusion of Argentina from the rest of the world in the international arena. After being inaugurated into office in December 2015, Macri stated that the past two years has been spent putting the “economy in order and back on track.” Macri emphasized that Argentina is a country with potential because of its booming economy, talented entrepreneurial leaders, and natural resources and is on a path towards sustainable and inclusive growth. With regards to energy, Macri confirmed that 147 renewable energy projects have been approved and will be able to substitute for imports of oil. Following that statement, he declared that there is much potential for conventional methods of energy in Argentina as well. He pointed to the large hydrocarbon and lithium reserves and mining potentials that Argentina has for investments. Another area of investment is in tourism among Argentines in Argentina and spoke about the increase in airports and airline travel within the country. Macri defended the environment in the name of consumerism saying, “The outstanding sanitary and environmental standards are ready to meet the needs of the most sophisticated consumers.” He stated that he hopes that Argentina will be able to serve as a voice not only for their country, but also for the entire South American region and specifically in terms of three key areas: future of work without exclusion or social disintegration that involves education for training and updating skills, infrastructure for development through private investors, and sustainable future in terms of food security. Macri verified that “global growth is stable, but it has not reached everyone. This has undermined the confidence of many in globalization.”

A short question and answer session followed the special address with a representative of the World Economic Forum. The first matter that was specified was the interesting history of Argentina and how in 1910 Argentina had almost the same gross domestic product (GDP) as the United States. And, in 1945 Argentina was one of the richest countries in the entire world. The commentator asked, “What happened in between and when will we see Argentina back at the top?” Macri responded saying that Argentina is on its way to being an important global player.

He spoke once again towards the isolation of Argentina from the rest of the world, and how as a country, they need to be incorporated more into the international atmosphere. Macri is interested in building reliable relationships for a long-term basis for inclusive growth. He stated that his goal for Argentina is to reduce poverty through the vision of inclusive growth. To reduce poverty you need to create jobs and improve education. And for improving education and creating jobs, you need to increase investments. And for increasing investments, he needs to protect his citizens, build rule of law, and create transparency. The commentator responded saying that rule of law is a precondition for doing business internationally and receiving foreign investment so that the private investing companies see that their assets are not being challenged. The commentator then hinted at the corruption of Argentina in the past and spoke of keeping that corruption in the past.

The conversation turned towards Mercosur, a trade alliance between various countries in South America. The commentator alluded to the protectionist strategies of Mercosur and asked if the alliance plans on adopting agendas more aligned with the European Union (EU) such as free-trade agreements. He says that it seems that Mercosur is transforming and asked if this is a reform that is more permanent. Macri answered that an alliance between Mercosur and the EU will only help both and is “a natural association because everyone in Latin America are descendents of Europe”. The association would be a good guide for the path of development for Argentina, and for the EU, Argentina provides food security and a source of energy. His main reason for promoting the relationship between Mercosur and the European Union was for exports of produce to Europe.

6.0 Analysis and Discussion

“La lucha de clases no existe—se decreta—más que por culpa de los agentes foráneos que la encienden, pero en cambio existen las clases sociales, y a la opresión de unas por otras se la denomina el estilo occidental de vida”

(Galeano 1971: 22)

[“The fight of classes don’t exist—its enacted—even more because of the foreigners that light it, but instead of social

classes, the oppression of some over others is called the western style of life.”]

This section is dedicated to providing a detailed analysis of various themes central to each scale: from the creation of the Argentine state to current political agendas, and into the individual experience. This will extend to discuss the implications on a broader scheme as it relates to the global sphere.

6.1 Crafting the Argentine

Strategies that follow colonialism or mass migration to ensure the authority of the dominating population pilot authority are integration, assimilation, separation, or extermination. In each of these cases, the ones being integrated, assimilated, separated, or exterminated tend to be a native culture since the settlers view their new territory as land to be exploited for agriculture, industry, or other exploitative practices (Bateman and Pilkington 2011: 1). Each of these tactics put control into the hands of the colonizers to maneuver people, land, and power. In the case of Argentina, combinations of these strategies were utilized depending on the group of people as a means for an idealized Argentina nation. Although this thesis does not directly examine the effect on native populations from immigration, it is important to contextualize the Argentina case by looking into what strategies were enacted by policy makers that are observed in Argentina today.

The primary mission of The Law of Immigration and Colonization set in 1876 was to outline the composition of the envisioned characteristics as far as appearance and work ethic using the new European immigrants as catalyst for this aspiration (Bastia and vom Hau 2013; Kraay 2017). The foreigner had utterly and effortlessly become the majority in less than a century with political language exemplifying inclusion and representing everyone as equal in order to seek the envisioned Argentina (Schneider 1996). Yet, the inclusion factor only was constituted for the European immigrants. During the colonization period, native populations were exterminated on the basis of ‘ethnic cleansing’ (Quijano 2000). Later, the indigenous were left to be assimilated into the newly designed Argentina. Generation 80, the European descendant founding fathers and leaders directing Argentina towards order and peace, employed tactics for adopting a state standard for an idealized nation based on European ideologies (G80 2013). Any creeds that were

not a part of the European principles were eliminated and thus colonization took on an additional role molding Argentina as a nation that is a child of Europe.

There is a reason that Argentina is said to be the Europe of South America. Argentina seems to have much more similarities to Europe and other places of modern settlement such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States (Waisman 1987: 3) than to its South American counterparts. People that are born from these countries tend to associate themselves with where their ancestors came from, similarly to those of Argentina. The informant Daniel spoke about how whenever he meets people, it is always a common exchange to share what country your parents or grandparents came from. Rosa and Agata also shared stories about how their familial backgrounds have shaped who they have become and how they relate to other Argentines. Argentines “feel a new pride in being (descendants of) Europeans, and some start to identify with their countries of origin” (Schneider 1996: 187).

The majority of Argentine-born citizens are descendants of Europeans due to the historic pull of Europeans to immigrate. This occurrence is in many ways analogous to settler colonialism, where the impact of the migrants arrived, settled, and began to engrain their lives in a place where there previously existed alternative ontologies. To this day, the dominating ontology is that of European visage where even the President of the country, in front of an international panel at the World Economic Forum stated, “...everyone in Latin America is descendent of Europeans” (2018). This statement first and foremost completely lumps together all of Latin America and secondly disregards people of any other roots that currently exist and previously existed in the region of Latin America. This rhetoric demonstrates that the crafting of the Argentine as a person of Europe, a person of a white background, and specifically *not* a person of indigenous roots is not exclusively an issue of the past, but is in fact still a strong feature of what makes an Argentine today.

6.2 Dirt and Dirty People

On accounts of the environment and upon anytime referring to nature, all of the informants related the environment to cleanliness. They spoke about how Europe and the United States do a much better job of keeping their cities clean and taking care of the earth such as picking up trash on the street, recycling practices, and hygiene. There was little to no conversation of environmental conflicts with respect to climate change, deforestation, or grander environmental issues. Daniel and Agata spoke about how people in the lower class in Argentina do not pay any

attention to the litter and are not educated enough about environmental issues. Agata went as far as becoming angry during our conversation while she noticed a few teenagers leave their garbage on the ground on the beach after eating lunch. Daniel spoke about how whenever he visits Europe and the United States, the streets are so clean, people know to throw their garbage in the trash bins, and recycling is a norm. He points out that the problem stems from the lower class, and that people in Europe are more aware and educated unlike the Argentines. Their response fits logically with Mary Douglas's (1966) concept of dirt as an organizational method of environment and people. A clean place is just the relocation of dirt to another area so as to not create disorder (ibid). For both Agata and Daniel, the presence litter/pollution/dirt is also a sign of disorder and impurity that they associate with the environment. The lower class is blamed and lumped along with the dirt that contributes to the informants conceived poor environmental standards.

An obsession with cleanliness and hygiene is an indicator that breeds white identity and enforces dirt as a symbol to represent contamination in others (Berthold 2010: 2). Both Daniel and Agata connected European values of sanitation to a superior group of people and grouped themselves into that chunk. Currently, there are many migrants moving over from neighboring countries because Argentina offers certain social benefits such as healthcare and education to not just citizens, but to foreigners as well (Kraay 20017). Agata expressed that this bothered her implying that Argentina should help its own citizens before aiding citizens of other countries. Similar to complaints from United States citizens about Mexicans and immigrants from Latin American countries, Kraay argues that there is a "hegemonic construction in Argentine society that homogenizes migrants from Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay and the Argentine interior based on phenotypic characteristics" (2007: 151). The informants saw these people as dirty, contributing to a dirty environment, and needed them removed. "Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment" (Douglas 1966: 2). Hegemonic whiteness, or white as a dominating physical characteristic, is associated not just with lower classes in Argentina, but also with other ethnicities that seem to pollute the Argentine culture. An envisioned moral and physical purity stems from a social and economic dominance (Berthold 2010). This phenomenon is expressed in Argentina over citizens of lower social classes and neighboring countries. Hegemonic whiteness then spills over towards a perception of the environment where a lack thereof, or nonexistent ways of thinking cause an alienation of actual environmental problems. Environmental concerns within the informants were surrounded by themes of purification and sanitation and then were immediately associated with people from

minority groups. An overwhelming majority of a white population does not produce the same kind of culture around nature and environment.

Macri also made a statement that lumped the words “sanitation” and “environment” into the same sentence as if they are one in the same, demonstrating the interchangeability between hygiene and environmental problems. “The outstanding sanitary and environmental standards are ready to meet the needs of the most sophisticated consumers,” Macri stated (2018). In this sentence he links sanitation and environment to “sophisticated consumers” and groups together the perception of cleanliness to those of a higher-class society. Even in political language, it is clearly observed that moving between colonial and indigenous worlds, between European standards and third world standards, and between white and nonwhite persons, that the dirtiness of one's skin can directly be correlated to the dirtiness of that society. It is as if ‘dirt’ and all of its connotations has a correct place to be, and it is not with the sophisticated, high class. Discourse plays a large role in the interpretation of real environmental issues. Although these mechanisms may not be conscious to the individual, they do help by maintaining power with the ‘pure’ white people and blinds people from actual environmental concerns that others may face.

6.3 A Lazy, Backwards Society

It became a sanctioned rhetoric to homogenize the nation culturally and phenotypically. This discourse epitomized disgust and deficiencies in the indigenous populations, promoting breeding within the society to combine people into the perfect desired race, eliminating unwanted characteristics that are associated with indigenous populations and ‘lower’ classes (Schneider 1996; Bastia and vom Hau 2013). It even went as far as taking children away from their families to cut off their ties to their culture and putting them in boarding schools to learn Spanish and how to act and behave like a ‘civilized Argentine’ (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017: 613). Oppression was disguised in the name of nationalization and modernity with political strategies falsely cheering on for the *indio* to become enlightened, whitened, and pure (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017). Generation 80’s focus on a clean and modernized Argentina stimulated a backwards and barbaric outlook on their country and has sneaked into present day attitudes.

More often than not, informants expressed a type of self-loathe when talking about certain parts of their country and of the people that inhabit it and they spoke about Argentina with a self-oppressed appearance. Without delay, Karina condemned Argentina for not having vegetarian options, using this example as a red flag of regress. Take Rosa, who explicitly stated that she had

wished that the British took over Argentina expressing that they are more organized and have a better work ethic than the Spanish. This comment goes hand in hand with policies that encouraged certain parts of Europe to immigrate to Argentina in hopes of bringing a positive work force into their country (Bastia and vom Hau 2013). Rosa said that Latinos are lazy and that is why the Argentines are lazy and never want to work. The woman of the vacationing family group said that if you do not work, you are nothing. This woman would be categorized into a group that is in a lower social class and is aware of the way other Argentines look at them, supporting a superior identity among elite Argentines.

Rosa also expressed that in other countries people follow rules and are more conscious and organized. Rosa is yielding to the same type of language that her founding fathers have used and wholly takes it as truth: that white people, in her case the British, are more welcomed and are a superior ethnicity. She said that when she lived in the United States in the 1980s, she for the first time had to be aware of the amount of time she spent in the shower because of a drought in California. She made a point to say that the United States citizens are more aware and smarter than Argentines because they were forced to be conscious on how much water was being used. Rosa expressed anger and frustration at people in her country for not being mindful while in developed countries these things seemed to be the norm. Daniel also brought up laziness in the lower class in Argentina. He spoke with a level of disgust at his own country and with grandeur when speaking about the countries in Europe that he has visited. Agata compared the word *villa* to the way in which it is referred to in Spanish versus in Italian. In Argentine Spanish, a *villa* means a low-income neighborhood where there is a lot of crime while in Italian it is a big, beautiful home. Agata made the point that even words are more elegant in Europe than in Argentina.

Although the descendants of the migrations are not being oppressed, they see their own peers as behind while seeing Europeans and other developed countries through rose-tinted glasses. It is self-subordination at the national scale; coloniality turned on its head. Their identity is reinforced by a negative attitude towards racial and social differences of people in their own country, using coloniality as a shield.

6.4 Following the Leader

Macri made a clear point in his address to the WEF that Argentina has vast resources for opportunities in renewable energy. Immediately after addressing the importance of renewable

energy, Macri jumped to the potential of the dirty, conventional methods of energy as well. This pitch's intention was not to increase renewable energy projects necessarily but instead to amplify private and foreign investors into the economy of Argentina and pursue endeavors into the world market by cooperating with the EU. In the search of exiting 'underdevelopment' Macri submits Argentina to an agenda that attempts to imitate what first world countries have done before him in order to find progress. The informant in the group of boys stated that part of the job of leading nations is to also lead in environmental action since they are the countries that have also lead in the destruction of nature. We find that the same practice of having the hegemony lead the way is seen as the only option for taking the next steps.

6.5 Normative White Identities and Development

Capitalizing on the land has been a central theme in the development of Argentina for exports in the agricultural and meat industries. As stated previously, strategies to promote emigration from desired European countries promoted giving land to immigrants in rural parts of Argentina for cultivation purposes (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017). Pushing indigenous populations off of this land was not unusual and with the land-owning oligarchy in power, the land was utilized very similarly to how these former Europeans made a living in Europe (Dunstan and Peñaloza 2017). It is a crucial to note the deliberate 'hand-out' of land to specified nationalities distinguishes the Argentine case from that of other heavily immigrated countries such as the United States (Quijano 2000: 225). Although I did not interview any farmers, it is fair to touch upon the way in which land was used to provide an analysis and critique of development strategies in Argentina:

[F]ortified by modernizing narratives and ideology, a population from the metropole moves to occupy a territory and fashion a new society in a space conceptualized as vacant and free: as available for the taking (Bateman and Pilkington 2011: 1).

In contemporary Argentina, Macri spoke about how one of his core goals is a sustainable future in terms of food. His proposal for uniting the EU with Mercosur for exporting agricultural goods is primarily based on increased revenue and further exploitation of the land for Argentina. This land-owning oligarchy ideology that has roots in Europe has carried over into present-day Argentina where land is developed for food goods to be sent overseas. The word *hacienda* in Spanish means estate and refers to an area of land for farming and agriculture purposes. The *Ministerio de Hacienda*, translated to Ministry of Treasury refers to the Spanish of Cervantes

hacienda meaning capital, which demonstrates the relationship that the settlers/migrants had with the land. The informant in the group of boys talked about how the only way to develop is to recreate the approach that the Europeans had. He said that only way to use the land now is for development purposes and that they can not live in the past. Building upon power structures from colonial relations, the dominant groups in Argentina have embraced the Eurocentric view as the only way towards development and nation-making (Quijano 2000: 229). The Eurocentric model is an unspoken normative that has spread and been engrained into Europeans' colonies throughout history where today even after independence, these ways of living are the standard.

Branching off of the 'standard' ontology, the informant from the group of boys also used the word 'normal' often when referring to how people are. He said, "This is just how normal people think. It is just the truth." There is much research on whiteness as a normative identity that is an unconscious or assumed 'baseline race' (McIntosh 1988; Frankenburg 1993; Delgado and Stefancic 1997 cited in Hughey 2009). Every informant considered themselves white and of European descent, and statistics show that the Argentine majority is of comparable demographics genetically speaking. This majority self-categorizes themselves as a part of the white culture, or rather, excludes themselves from those that are not white. This grouping of whiteness also has a set of invisible principles and privileges that are fundamentally established in the Argentine culture. In other words, 'normal' is equivalent to being white and following a set of unspoken rules. Those who fall into this 'normalized' category, whether consciously or not, have a difficult time imagining any other way of thinking or being; consequently, they fall outside of this 'normal' spectrum. Agata made a point about giving indigenous people proper clothing and mainstream education opportunities indicating that her view also aligns with the same 'normalcy' concept of dominant groups in Argentina.

Normalcy also extends to development. Macri constantly returned to the word inclusion in terms of the international arena and becoming a significant global player in industry and development. Macri's statements crying out to be incorporated in 'the fractured world' seemed more to be shouting at the craving of affluence that Argentines feel they deserve since they too claim to be Europeans. The commentator mentioned that in the early 20th century, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world, comparing Argentina to developed nations in Europe. Macri responded, commenting that liberal democracies and political stability contribute to economic growth, which supports the theory of modernization. In Macri's eyes, development is a linear

step-wise process that has only one track—and that is what his political agenda is selling to Argentine citizens.

7.0 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to illustrate how the role of nation-making shapes the political and social atmosphere and affects modern day individuals and their attitudes towards their physical environment and development strategies as a country. The concentration was set in Argentina, a country that is off-the-beaten-path within Latin America in terms of population demographics and economic history. Coloniality has played a major role in redefining identity and environmental awareness due to massive immigration during the 19th and 20th century bringing more than six million immigrants from European countries. Although present-day Argentines were not ‘colonized’, but rather descendents of migrants, informants recounted history without any ‘ifs’ ‘ands’ or ‘buts’ when referring to immigration and colonization of the past. Their sense of belonging to Europe and Argentina simultaneously was felt by wanting to recreate a Europe in their own country with respect to environmental standards and governmental politics. The task ‘to modernize’ was seen an elemental problem, but in reality the underdevelopment of nations is part of a much larger historical discourse (Escobar 1995: 7). Leaders promoted hegemonic policies and conventional environmental and social perceptions in the name of development and recreating the former wealthy Argentina that stood up alongside developed nations of the world.

From the founding fathers of Generation 80 to the current President, the Eurocentric vision has guided Argentine philosophy. “That Europe, as colonial dominator of the world, could impose a process of reidentification of other regions of the world as new geocultural identities” (Quijano 2000: 218). Not only through development policies, but also through political language, Argentines have been taught that the Eurocentric way is the universal way, while alternatives are inferior and even primitive, supporting the idea that coloniality continues to play a clear role in defining what it means to be an Argentine. This logic comes straightforward in the Argentine case, because they see themselves as originating from that world. Although most are now 2nd and 3rd generations, the country in which they are born is discerned as the subaltern. It is the ‘other’.

[E]uropean culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction. Cultural Europeanisation was transformed into an aspiration. It was a way of participating and later to reach the same material benefits and the same power as the Europeans: viz, to conquer nature in short for ‘development’. European culture became a universal cultural model (Quijano 2007: 169).

Retracing through time, we notice that Argentina was considered one of the wealthiest countries at one time. Embarrassed to have made the list of ‘countries that needed help’ rather than the ‘countries that could help’ by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, politicians are eternally pinned to the immigration event when millions of Europeans found savior and refuge in Argentina (Waisman 1987: 10). The transformation from being at the top to now being considered underdeveloped also contribute to the attitudes that individuals have about what it means to be powerful and superior, and then associating those ideas with whiteness and normality.

Informants constantly decried the filth and backwardness of their country while simultaneously showing satisfaction with having roots that stemmed from the almighty Europe. The civilization and barbarism dichotomy is a visible line in Argentine perspective through a belief system that is strongly aligned in western ideologies. There is a reason why Argentina is known as the Europe of South America. In people, policy and thought, Argentines redefined what it means to be an Argentine and in the process suffocated narratives that created diverse ways of development that did not align with the path of modernization that Europe followed. The Spanish conquest made its mark, leaving coloniality in its place, and the immigration of the 19th and 20th century solidified the coloniality atmosphere through a flow of people and the homogenizing epistemes and ontologies of Europe. With continued discourse in political agendas and individuals’ perceptions on transforming a ‘dirty’ country into one that can also live in the riches and comfortable lifestyle like the hegemony, a sustainable future is not in the cards.

I suggest that a decolonial turn is necessary for development with a dictionary of terminology that is outside the Eurocentric playbook (Demaria and Kothari 2017). It is crucial to engage in post-development options that critique conventional development and bring light to alternatives. And while these alternatives are generally surfaced through marginalized groups, Argentina can

use the ‘fractured world’ defense to their advantage and help create a new future for themselves and be one of many voices representing Latin America rather than sticking to the standardized ideologies that are made to disintegrate other ontologies. The Latin American will have to become conscious of the fact that he or she has been working for the European.

8.0 References

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