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University of Nevada, Reno

**Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Immigrants and Their Descendants in Argentine
Audiovisual Popular Culture**

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

Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and the Honors Program

by

Christopher A.A. Gomez

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**UNIVERSITY
OF NEVADA
RENO**

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We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

CHRISTOPHER A.A. GOMEZ

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**Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Immigrants and Their Descendants in Argentine
Audiovisual Popular Culture**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS, SPANISH

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Abstract

For the past 40 years, immigration from China, Japan, and Korea has steadily grown bringing approximately 200,000 immigrants to Argentina. With an increase in the national population, questions of adaptation and integration into Argentine society are raised. To what degree are new immigrants affecting Argentine popular culture? Are there heavy Asian influences in the way characters are developed or how Asians are portrayed in film and television? This paper seeks to investigate the cultural presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants and their descendants in Argentine audiovisual popular culture. Research was carried out through the analysis of Argentine films, television programs, and YouTube video clips that portray Chinese, Japanese, and Korean persons. It was found that Argentine popular culture includes programs and films related to Japanese *anime*, Korean pop music, and Chinese characters and are accustomed to seeing actors of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean descent in main and supporting roles both in film and television. As Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants continue to move to Argentina, their role in shaping and defining Argentine popular culture has become more prominent.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mom, dad, and little brother for their encouraging words of support through this entire process. Many thanks to the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) for providing an amazing four-week summer program in Santiago de Chile. If it was not for the study abroad program, I would have not thought of going to South America let alone Buenos Aires where I was inspired to write about this thesis topic. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Darrell B. Lockhart for coming aboard with me on this project. His time, efforts, and advice are much appreciated. GO WOLF PACK!

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Introduction

Since the late 1880s, a flow of immigrants from Asia has arrived on Argentine soil. In just the last 30 years, a strong wave of immigration brought approximately 200,000 immigrants from Japan, Taiwan, Korea, and China in particular (“About Argentina”). Those immigrants now call Argentina their home and have assimilated into Argentine society. Nevertheless, immigrants do not completely dissolve ties with their homelands. Rather, parts of their homelands are brought to their new homes (Eckstein 1). These cultural differences are incorporated into their new communities as the world continues to be economically, socially, and politically connected (Rubin and Melnick 9). This thesis investigates the presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants and their descendants in forming Argentine audiovisual popular culture. Are there heavy Asian influences in the way characters are developed or how Asians are portrayed? The research takes into consideration Argentine films, television programs, and YouTube video clips that portray Chinese, Japanese, and Korean persons in Argentine popular culture.

Argentina is South America’s second largest country after Brazil in terms of both land mass and population (Central Intelligence Agency). Its people combine to form a rich, diverse population due to large waves of immigration. Argentines usually refer to the country as a *crisol de razas* (literally a crucible of races, or melting pot) (“About Argentina”). The first significant wave of immigrants to Argentina came from Europe between 1870 and 1930, but there continues to be immigration from regions all over the world including Asia and the Middle East. Of the nearly 43 million people living in Argentina, approximately 92% are Caucasian of Spanish and Italian descent (Central Intelligence Agency). At the terminus of the immigration wave in the late eighteenth century, approximately 50% of all European immigrants, approximately 2.3

million, came primarily from southern Italy (“About Argentina”). Like the United States of America, today’s Argentine population is a combination of races and identities.

As mentioned earlier, some sentiment and meaning can be lost when translating from Spanish to English. However, it is important to note that Argentina is not a politically-correct country in terms of the words and phrases used. The context, meaning, and intonation that Argentines use in daily jargon is not all-inclusive of concepts like race or religion. What Americans may perceive as harsh stereotypes may be concerned part of normal life for Argentines. When Argentines refer to ethnic minorities, a common umbrella term is generally used. For example, the noun “chino” has a different meaning in English than it does in Spanish. In English, the word is an adjective meaning “Chinese” or anything “deriving itself from China or the Chinese culture.” However, Argentines use the word as a synecdoche to collectively group all Asians. So people of Korean, Japanese, Filipino, Thai, etc. descent are all considered “chinos” to Argentines. Taking into account this observation, the “Barrio Chino” in the Belgrano neighborhood of Buenos Aires is comprised of more than just the Chinese ethnicity, but Korean, Japanese, and cultures that Americans would consider the Near East or the Middle East. Furthermore, these broad generalizations can also be found with different ethnicities and nationalities. When people from the United States refer to their nationality, the word “American” is used. However, the Spanish word “americanos” refers to anyone living in North America or Latin America. To refer to a person from the United States in Spanish, the word “estadounidense” is used. Furthermore, “gringo” refers to Italians, “ruso” refers to all Eastern Europeans and Jews regardless of country of origin, and “turco” refers to Middle Eastern groups such as Syrians, Persians, and Arabs. It is important to note that some of the analyzed films and television programs used generalized terms to define one or more cultural identities.

Chapter 1: Popular Culture in Latin America

“Popular culture” is a term that is easily identifiable, but troublesome to define. There is no single definition that is deemed correct or more adequate than another. From a psychological point of view, Rowe and Schelling suggest that “popular culture has shifting boundaries that allow for mobility of terms and concepts. The reconversion, resignification and resemanticization are appropriate ... to prevent [the cultural signs] from being wholly absorbed into the dominant power structure [mass media]” (11). This reference highlights the changing landscape of human thought and how words are used to describe concepts. Moreover, this problem is further perplexed because there are “principal points of contention [that] revolve around the act of naming. Whose culture, language, geography, and taste ‘qualify’ as popular, and as culture, and why?” (Lockhart 178). Through this introduction, a concise definition of “popular culture” shall be defined.

Contributors to writings on Latin American popular culture have employed different approaches, but there are two that emerged with surprising regularity: the cultural imperialism approach based on the Marxist theory of economic dependency and the works of Italian theorist Umberto Eco. The former approach divides the world into economically advanced, exploiting countries who manipulate peripheral or satellite countries with less resources (Hinds and Tatum xiv). Exploitative countries not only have economic power over satellite countries, but power over the means of production, distribution, and even content of mass media and popular culture such as films, television, radio, comics, and photonovels (Hinds and Tatum xiv). The latter approach uses Umberto Eco’s collection of essays entitled *Apocalyptic and Integrated Intellectuals: Mass Communications and Theories of Mass Culture* and *A Critical View of Culture: Mass Communications, Politics and the Avant-garde*. Eco’s thesis builds upon the

notion that “forms of high culture such as literature and art require interpretations by the observer” as seen in his work on semiotics or the study of signs (Caesar 44; Eco 30-31). Further analysis by Rowe and Schilling reinforces the two approaches named by Hinds and Tatum, but go further in saying that popular culture “arose with Romanticism, of an authentic rural culture under threat from industrialization and the modern culture industry (2). Massive migration of rural people into the cities and further industrialization brought a new element into the picture: integration of urban and rural peoples.

The notion of rural lifestyle in contrast to the urban, metropolitan way of living brings to light the mistranslation of the word “popular culture” from Spanish to English. Harold E. Hinds, Jr. and Charles M. Tatum recount their conceptual dilemma of defining popular culture in a Latin American context their journal entitled *Handbook of Latin American Popular Culture* (i-xiii). Often times, translators translate the Spanish phrase *cultura popular* to mean *popular culture* in English. However, this is not an accurate translation. *Cultura popular* connotes themes relating to “folk culture,” which is found thriving in rural areas (Hinds and Tatum xiii).

When defining Argentine popular culture, it is nearly impossible to do so without mentioning the impact of Buenos Aires. The amalgams of rural and urban life call attention to the importance of Buenos Aires to Argentina because many, if not all cultural products are funneled through the Argentine capital. As one might expect, there are numerous cultural, economic, and political relationships between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country. For example, Buenos Aires is the capital of the Argentine Republic and home to the federal government. Aerolíneas Argentinas, the national airline, has its main home at Ezeiza International Airport on the outskirts of the city. To further picture this idea, the dominance of cultural products originating from the vast metropolis of Buenos Aires overshadows to the point

of obscurity any cultural manifestations coming out of the interior provinces (Foster, *Buenos Aires: Perspectives on the City and Cultural Production*). Virtually all film and television production, original theatrical activity, and publishing houses are based in Buenos Aires (Foster, *Buenos Aires: Perspectives on the City and Cultural Production* 6). The Buenos Aires metropolitan area is home to nearly 40% of the country's population ("About Argentina" 24). It is important to remember Buenos Aires's influence in shaping how popular culture is defined in the Argentine Republic.

In just the last 30 years, there has been growing interest in research about urban impacts on Latin American culture as seen in the journal *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* (founded in 1981) and books such as *Handbook of Latin American Popular Culture* edited by Harold E. Hinds and Charles M. Tatum. From these writings, the definition of popular culture in Argentina continues to adapt with the continual movement of thoughts and ideas. There are simple interpretations such as David William Foster's when he affirms, "By popular culture we mean all those forms that impinge on our daily lives: newspapers, magazines, movies, television, greeting cards, and even social rituals" (*From Mafalda to Los Supermachos* 2). Nevertheless, there are explanations that incorporate national identity as seen in Eva Bueno's and Terry Caesar's book *Imagination beyond Nation*. They see popular culture in Latin America as "a sort of middle stratum between an adopted paradigm of national identity and a lived complexity of social reality" (15). Personally, I agree with Franco's own definition which "would be the broadest possible and would include a spectrum of signifying practices and pleasurable activities most of which fall outside the controlling discipline of official schooling" (Franco, "What's in a Name" 179). These events include eating at chain restaurants and watching a particular television program or film. Popular culture distinguishes one community from another and

presents thoughts and ideas in non-written form. Before the 1990s, the literacy rate in Latin American countries did not exceed 50 percent (Beezley and Curcio-Nagy xi). Rather than rely on printed materials, everyday customs such as oral traditions, music, and visual imagery served to represent a particular community.

With Franco's definition in mind, the focus of this thesis is on the audiovisual component popular culture. The audiovisual component specifically relates to any forms of media that combine both aural and ocular qualities. I am interested in the films, television programs, and YouTube videos that are broadcasted to Argentines on a daily basis. With the broad definition of popular culture and research of the many theories, I define popular culture as "any form of media or activity that impacts society." Like Foster's definition, my definition focuses on the daily influence that bombards individuals when they watch television, peruse the Internet, or read magazines or newspapers.

Chapter 2: The Study of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Immigrants to Argentina

In the summer of 2013, I had the privilege of traveling to South America and spending six weeks, four of which were in Santiago, Chile. I lived with a Chilean family in the middle class *comuna* (neighborhood) of Las Condes and attended La Universidad Andrés Bello. From firsthand experience, I noticed a lack of diversity in the population. There were many individuals of European and indigenous descent, but few of Asian, Middle Eastern, and even African descent. After my studies, I travelled to Buenos Aires and noticed the vast ethnic diversity of *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires), including the large population of Asians living in the city. I was surprised such a large group of Asians, especially in the neighborhood of Belgrano, where *El Barrio Chino* or Chinatown is located.

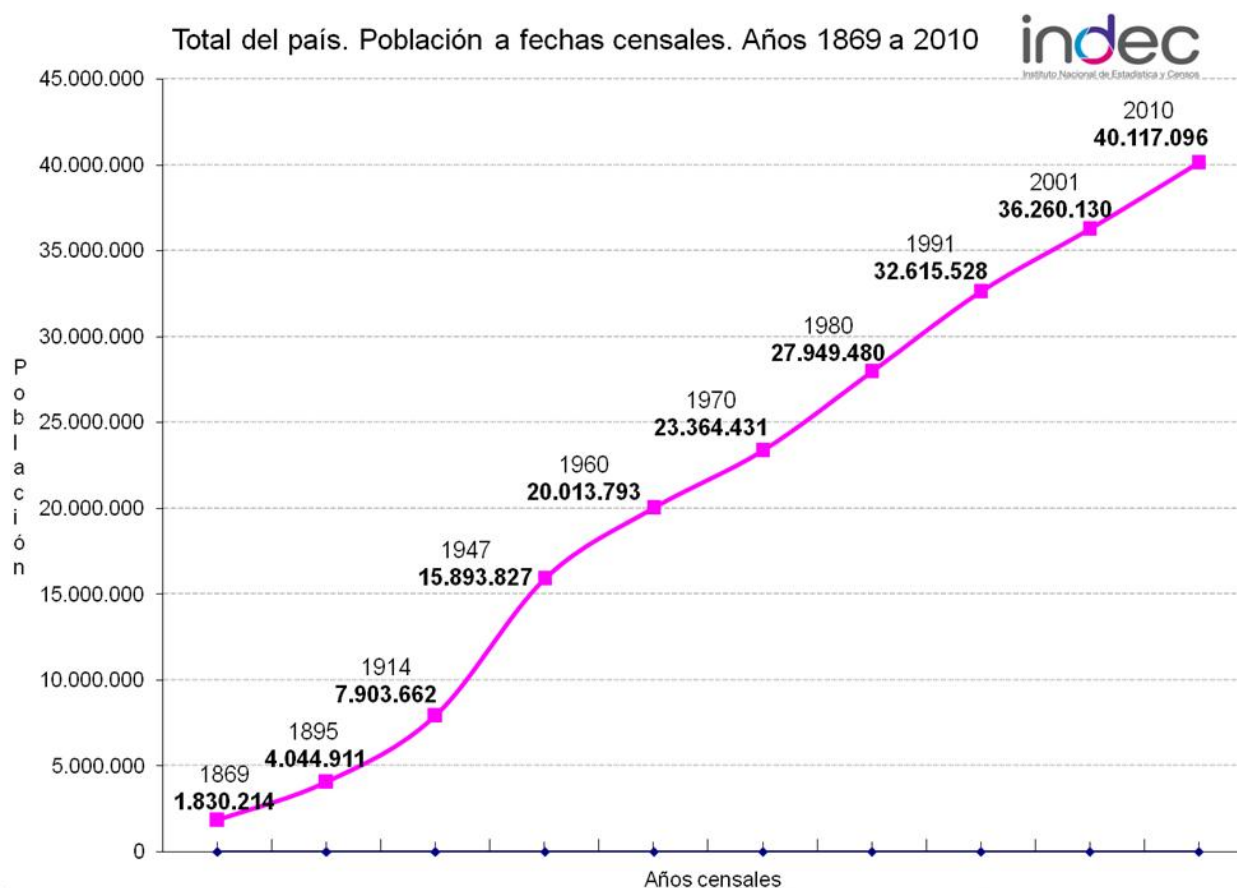
Upon researching national population statistics, I discovered that the Argentine Constitution did not provide for a decennial national census (*Argentine Constitution of 1898*). Constitutional reforms in 1898 mandated for population inquiries to be conducted for representation in the Senate, but did not explicitly state when. In practice, censuses were taken roughly every decade; however, reforms instituted in 1949 mandated a decennial census be done (*Argentine Constitution of 1949*). There have been only 10 national censuses taken for the following years: 1869, 1895, 1914, 1947, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1991, 2001 and 2010. The National Institute of Statistics and Censuses of Argentina or El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (INDEC) is charged with the duty of coordinating and assessing national, provincial, and local demographic information. Due to a lack of consistent information, it is difficult to paint an accurate picture of immigration starting at the beginning of the twentieth century. To add further disorder, the censuses conducted before 2010 only ask citizens if they were born in Argentina or abroad. There are no questions asking racial ethnicity or background. These numbers do not

take into account descendants of immigrants who were born in Argentina. It was only in 2010 that citizens were asked the country of their birth.

The most recent population figures come from the Bicentenary Census of 2010. Figure 1 shows the growth of the Argentine population every census that was recorded. As of the 2012, there were nearly 40 million people who live in Argentina. This figure represents a significant increase in 10 years since the last census in 2001 that reported roughly 36 million people. According to figure 2, approximately 1.7% of the Argentine population was born in Asia with 0.5% specifically from China. It is important to note that persons from Middle Eastern countries such as Libya and Syria are counted within this statistic. This statistic translates to 31,001 persons born in Asia with 8,929 from Mainland China, 7,321 from Korea (both North and South), 4,036 from Japan, and 2,875 from Taiwan that have moved to Argentina (see Table 1). Additionally, Table 1 shows the specific numbers for each country. Approximately 54% of persons born abroad live in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (see Table 2). However, provinces such as Mendoza and Misiones with strong Chinese, Japanese, and Korean communities present high numbers of persons born abroad in the data (see Tables 3 and 4). Data from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimate that 23,000 persons of Japanese descent and 11,675 Japanese citizens live in Argentina as of December 2011 ("Japan-Argentine Relations [Basic Data]"). The South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade recorded 22,354 people of Korean descent living in Argentina as of 2011 ("Current Status of Overseas Compatriots" 172). The People's Republic of China and the Republic of China do not have official statistics of how many of its citizens live in Argentina. However, it is reported by *Clarín*, a leading Argentine daily newspaper, that there are 120,000 persons of Chinese descent (Sánchez). The term "Chinese" conjures various definitions due to the region's past history.

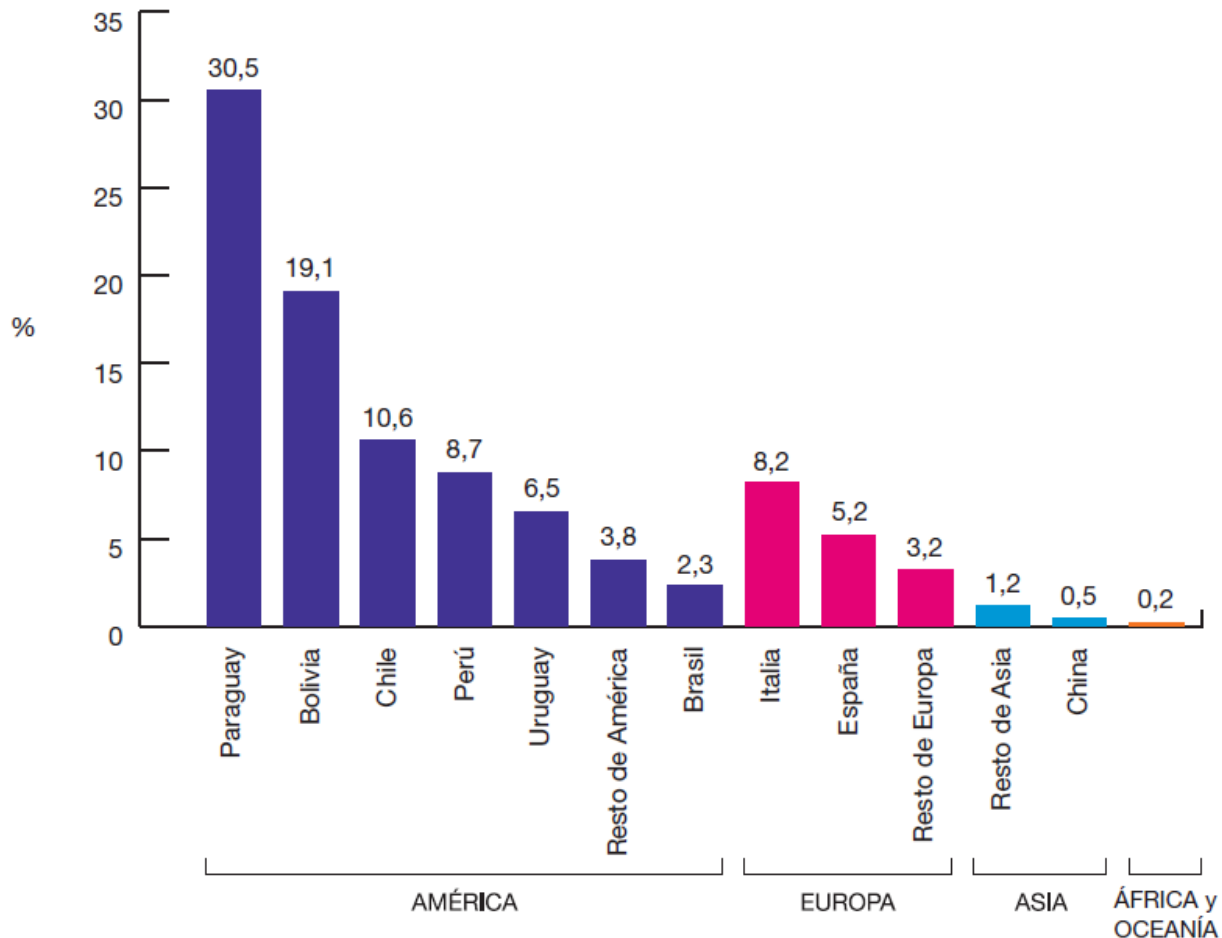
However, I use the term “Chinese” to refer to people under jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China. As a result of the latest Argentine census, I have chosen to research the three largest Asian ethnicities that call Argentina home: the Japanese, the Koreans, and the Chinese.

Figure 1. Total population of the Argentine Republic According to Census Records. Years 1869 to 2010



Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Figure 2. Percentage of total Argentine population born abroad according to place of birth. Year 2010.



Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Table 1. Total Argentine population born abroad according to place of birth and age groups. Year 2010.

Lugar de nacimiento	Total	Población nacida en el extranjero		
		Grupo de edad		
		0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	1.805.957	140.312	1.289.539	376.106
América	1.471.399	127.856	1.167.617	175.926
Países limítrofes	1.245.054	101.272	975.893	167.889
Bolivia	345.272	37.070	277.625	30.577
Brasil	41.330	3.499	30.520	7.311
Chile	191.147	4.820	142.168	44.159
Paraguay	550.713	52.195	433.435	65.083
Uruguay	116.592	3.688	92.145	20.759
Países no limítrofes	226.345	26.584	191.724	8.037
Perú	157.514	13.918	138.453	5.143
Resto de América	68.831	12.666	53.271	2.894
Europa	299.394	10.624	94.495	194.275
Alemania	8.416	565	4.152	3.699
España	94.030	5.884	26.208	61.938
Francia	6.995	624	4.484	1.887
Italia	147.499	1.977	41.823	103.699
Resto de Europa	42.454	1.574	17.828	23.052
Asia	31.001	1.526	24.201	5.274
China	8.929	240	8.452	237
Corea	7.321	245	5.988	1.088
Japón	4.036	251	1.919	1.866
Libano	933	8	349	576
Siria	1.337	12	663	662
Taiwán	2.875	33	2.588	254
Resto de Asia	5.570	737	4.242	591
África	2.738	119	2.107	512
Oceanía	1.425	187	1.119	119

Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Table 2. Total population of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires born abroad according to place of birth, age groups, and gender. Year 2010.

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	381.778	168.914	13.218	131.004	24.692	212.864	13.482	160.165	39.217
América	297.325	131.203	11.888	112.492	6.823	166.122	12.159	141.749	12.214
Países limítrofes	207.889	91.108	8.289	77.179	5.640	116.781	8.468	97.704	10.609
Bolivia	76.609	36.818	4.128	31.600	1.090	39.791	4.137	34.126	1.528
Brasil	10.357	4.254	375	3.614	265	6.103	373	5.149	581
Chile	9.857	4.386	216	3.609	561	5.471	155	4.251	1.065
Paraguay	80.325	31.752	3.266	27.041	1.445	48.573	3.467	41.725	3.381
Uruguay	30.741	13.898	304	11.315	2.279	16.843	336	12.453	4.054
Países no limítrofes (América)	89.436	40.095	3.599	35.313	1.183	49.341	3.691	44.045	1.605
Perú	60.478	26.360	2.267	23.444	649	34.118	2.341	30.862	915
Resto de América	28.958	13.735	1.332	11.869	534	15.223	1.350	13.183	690
Europa	66.083	28.206	895	10.745	16.566	37.877	896	11.467	25.514
Alemania	2.321	1.086	44	654	388	1.235	41	603	591
España	26.282	10.733	419	3.156	7.158	15.549	434	3.625	11.490
Francia	2.838	1.414	100	1.038	276	1.424	93	949	382
Italia	22.168	9.516	121	2.799	6.596	12.652	147	3.106	9.399
Resto de Europa	12.474	5.457	211	3.098	2.148	7.017	181	3.184	3.652
Asia	16.670	8.418	390	6.812	1.216	8.252	399	6.489	1.364
China	3.932	2.051	58	1.909	84	1.881	49	1.775	57
Corea	6.242	3.110	97	2.545	468	3.132	120	2.567	445
Japón	1.484	702	36	380	286	782	43	398	341
Libano	336	147	–	70	77	189	2	57	130
Siria	441	234	3	122	109	207	3	68	136
Taiwán	1.717	849	10	733	106	868	5	773	90
Resto de Asia	2.518	1.325	186	1.053	86	1.193	177	851	165
África	1.176	822	31	728	63	354	19	238	97
Oceanía	524	265	14	227	24	259	9	222	28

Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Table 3. Total population of the province of Mendoza born abroad according to place of birth, age groups, and gender. Year 2010.

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	65.619	30.936	3.364	21.731	5.841	34.683	3.295	24.439	6.949
América	55.646	26.223	2.953	19.942	3.328	29.423	2.924	22.696	3.803
Países limítrofes	46.556	22.100	1.933	16.959	3.208	24.456	1.911	18.874	3.671
Bolivia	27.239	13.919	1.520	10.880	1.519	13.320	1.510	10.446	1.364
Brasil	652	271	27	199	45	381	35	257	89
Chile	17.550	7.386	348	5.479	1.559	10.164	324	7.740	2.100
Paraguay	587	261	25	191	45	326	28	240	58
Uruguay	528	263	13	210	40	265	14	191	60
Países no limítrofes (América)	9.090	4.123	1.020	2.983	120	4.967	1.013	3.822	132
Perú	5.360	2.258	241	1.958	59	3.102	258	2.775	69
Resto de América	3.730	1.865	779	1.025	61	1.865	755	1.047	63
Europa	9.369	4.384	401	1.524	2.459	4.985	347	1.550	3.088
Alemania	188	93	7	65	21	95	5	59	31
España	4.130	1.902	293	587	1.022	2.228	256	640	1.332
Francia	310	154	15	113	26	156	12	95	49
Italia	3.786	1.770	59	513	1.198	2.016	47	511	1.458
Resto de Europa	955	465	27	246	192	490	27	245	218
Asia	446	235	5	185	45	211	11	149	51
China	108	58	–	54	4	50	1	47	2
Corea	41	25	1	20	4	16	–	13	3
Japón	40	18	–	11	7	22	2	7	13
Libano	33	16	–	6	10	17	–	4	13
Siria	35	16	–	3	13	19	–	4	15
Taiwán	79	40	–	39	1	39	1	38	–
Resto de Asia	110	62	4	52	6	48	7	36	5
África	77	49	1	41	7	28	2	19	7
Oceanía	81	45	4	39	2	36	11	25	–

Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Table 4. Total population of the province of Misiones born abroad according to place of birth, age groups, and gender. Year 2010.

Lugar de nacimiento	Población total nacida en el extranjero	Sexo y grupo de edad							
		Varones				Mujeres			
		Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más	Total	0 - 14	15 - 64	65 y más
Total	44.012	20.870	1.213	11.956	7.701	23.142	1.120	13.993	8.029
América	41.356	19.530	1.077	11.300	7.153	21.826	1.021	13.434	7.371
Países limítrofes	40.660	19.124	1.005	10.993	7.126	21.536	977	13.211	7.348
Bolivia	151	113	9	74	30	38	4	31	3
Brasil	13.000	6.059	226	3.877	1.956	6.941	217	4.280	2.444
Chile	281	142	9	106	27	139	9	106	24
Paraguay	26.799	12.569	751	6.748	5.070	14.230	733	8.658	4.839
Uruguay	429	241	10	188	43	188	14	136	38
Países no limítrofes (América)	696	406	72	307	27	290	44	223	23
Perú	156	100	7	81	12	56	3	52	1
Resto de América	540	306	65	226	15	234	41	171	22
Europa	2.063	1.032	115	431	486	1.031	87	365	579
Alemania	325	149	16	46	87	176	9	72	95
España	327	190	24	110	56	137	13	77	47
Francia	78	36	1	30	5	42	4	25	13
Italia	219	127	10	57	60	92	6	42	44
Resto de Europa	1.114	530	64	188	278	584	55	149	380
Asia	492	258	11	188	59	234	10	152	72
China	47	28	–	25	3	19	–	17	2
Corea	22	12	–	10	2	10	–	10	–
Japón	187	88	9	41	38	99	8	30	61
Libano	7	4	1	2	1	3	–	–	3
Siria	2	2	–	1	1	–	–	–	–
Taiwán	18	11	–	8	3	7	–	7	–
Resto de Asia	209	113	1	101	11	96	2	88	6
África	16	9	–	8	1	7	–	4	3
Oceanía	85	41	10	29	2	44	2	38	4

Source: Argentina. El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010. Buenos Aires: Censo del Bicentenario, Dec. 2012. Web. Web. 1 Mar. 2014. <http://www.censo2010.indec.gov.ar/index_cuadros_2.asp>

Chapter 3: The Japanese

Immigration to Argentina

The first mention of Japan in Argentine history dates back to the late sixteenth century with the description of a man baptized as Francisco Xapón (Onaha 2). His exact origin, how he arrived in Argentina, and other details about his life are brief and fragmented. Historians know he was a slave with Japanese roots because members considered to be of inferior social strata did not possess the right to carry a last name. The register in the Historic Archive of the Province of Córdoba verifies his sale to a local vicar by the name of Miguel G. de Porras.

In the political arena, the Iwakura Mission was the first official visit to Argentina sent by the Japanese military government known as the Shogunate in 1871. In its worldwide tour, the Shogunate aimed to modernize Japan and reintroduce Japanese culture to the world after a long period of isolation from the West (Onaha 3). This visit opened the doors to increasing dialogue between the two countries. The military government sent groups of young men to explore the country and report back with information pertaining to Argentina. Curiosity and interest began to circulate among the Japanese and conjured a strong desire to visit this foreign land (Onaha 4).

The first Japanese settler was Kinzo Makino, a former sailor, who bought land in 1890. His intent was to stay in Argentina in order to save up money and return to Japan. Makino cultivated crops on his land and later sold them for a profit at local markets including Buenos Aires. Through his economic establishment, he aided future immigrants and assisted in their transition to life in Argentina. His efforts were recognized by the emperor of Japan when the Count Nakamura award was presented to Makino in 1910 (Kikumura-Yano 76). Makino decided not to return to his homeland, but sent his eldest son to study in Japan and learn the culture and tradition (Kikumura-Yano 76-77). The government under the Argentine Constitution

of 1853, Law Number 817 was signed into effect on October 19, 1876, which restricted the flow of immigration into the country (Tigner 204). This law not only affected the small trickle of Japanese immigrants, but also the large masses of European immigrants.

Argentina and Japan established formal diplomatic ties by signing the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation on February 3, 1898. The trip of the Argentine frigate, *Presidente Sarmiento*, in 1900 further laid the foundation for dialogue between the two countries. The tour promoted the treaty and included stops in key port cities like Yokohama and Kobe. Along the way, President Sarmiento recruited Japanese waiters to serve on his voyage. The story of Yoshio Shinya, a young store worker, retold his personal interview with the president himself and subsequent journey across the Pacific (Onaha 6). Japan established its embassy in Buenos Aires in April 1902 with Narinori Okoshi serving as its ambassador (Masterson and Funada-Classen 88; Onaha 6).

Significant Japanese immigration began in 1908-1909 with families arriving from Okinawa and Kagoshima Prefecture. Settlements occurred indirectly since they originally immigrated to Brazil, Peru, Paraguay, and Chile (Kikumura-Yano 72). Those from Brazil were discontented colonists from the coffee plantations of São Paulo. Argentina's higher wages appealed to those from not only Peru and Brazil, but the homeland as well. For example, during the second decade of the twentieth century, a Japanese domestic servant in Buenos Aires could expect to earn 50 to 80 Argentine pesos per month or about \$20 to \$32 U.S. dollars. A gardener earned approximately USD \$20 to USD \$40, and a worker in a small shoe factory about USD \$60. Workers in Japanese factories were rarely able to earn more than USD 50¢ per day, or about USD \$13 a month, at this particular time (Masterson and Funada-Classen 89). Remigration from Brazil and Peru played a significant role in the Japanese population in

Argentina. Between 1906 and 1910, more than 300 Japanese-born workers came to the fertile lands of Argentina (Tigner 205).

Between 1914 and 1930, established Japanese immigrants were allowed to “call” or bring over relatives, friends, and acquaintances to Argentina (Tigner 204). They would eventually attain Argentine citizenship, but only after years of work and government approval. By 1920, the Japanese population reached nearly 2,000 individuals (Tigner 205). The Argentine government did not impose significant restrictions on Japanese immigration in the 1930s. It appeared that nearly all Japanese immigrants during the peak years of immigration were “called” or brought by relatives already living in Argentina. However, after 1930 “calling” was limited to spouses and relatives down to those of the third degree, or first cousins (Tigner 204). In 1938, two estimates from the Japanese Ministry of Overseas Affairs reported the number of people immigrating to Argentina. The low estimate reported 5,838 settlers while the high estimate listed 7,095 (Masterson and Funada-Classen 95). As a result of the outbreak of World War II and subsequent hostilities in the Pacific in December 1941, Japanese emigration to Argentina quickly halted.

Following World War II, Juan Domingo Perón’s first government administration in 1947 called for the admission of 250,000 immigrants to work primarily in agriculture and industry (Masterson and Funada-Classen 204). However, the unfavorable land-tenure system discouraged large-scale Japanese immigration to the fertile pampas. The overthrow of Perón in 1955 precipitated a long period of civil military unrest and economic instability that made Argentina unattractive to immigration until the 1960s (Masterson and Funada-Classen 205).

In 1957, government agreements were achieved that allowed the *Kaigai Ijyu Jigyodan* (KIJ) to permit organized Japanese agricultural settlements in the provinces of Mendoza and

Misiones. The location of the Misiones community provided immigrants with a gradual assimilation due to its differentiated human landscape away from urban centers such as Buenos Aires. The colonization efforts were the most ambitious colonization efforts in Argentina in the post-World War II era. Furthermore, colonists enjoyed the warm, humid climatic conditions that reminded them of their homeland (Eidt 5). Japanese immigrants who originally settled in the Alto Paraná region of Paraguay, the second most important region of organized Japanese farm settlement in the Americas, crossed the border into the Argentine province of Misiones (Eidt 7). Its location directly across the Rio Paraná from the Japanese settlements in Argentina proved to be an enticing factor (Masterson and Funada-Classen 207). Colonists who began to arrive in the 1950s were able to benefit from social and economic support networks that were already in place after nearly five decades of Japanese presence in Argentina (Masterson and Funada-Classen 207). By 1952, the Japanese-Argentine population reached approximately 10,000.

The following thirty years marked a steady influx of immigrations. Nevertheless, *Dekasegi* migration signaled the reopening of the migratory flow between Argentina and Japan (Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi 261). This phenomenon occurred in the 1980s and affected not only Argentine-born Japanese, but Japanese immigrants into Argentina. For those already in Argentina, their role in Argentine society was seen as a “kind of subsystem inserted” (Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi 262). They considered themselves “Argentines,” but they also embraced their Japanese heritage seen in the different spheres of daily life: family references, village-framed reciprocal relationships, gastronomy, and attitudes towards elders. Surprisingly the term “Japanese-Argentines” did not exist, although the identification “Argentine of Japanese origin” was used.

Between 1988 and 1989, another wave of emigration took place. The economic crisis took its toll and caused hyperinflation which led worrisome Argentines to leave the country. There were raids on supermarkets and long lines wrapping around consulates with people waiting to apply for visas to the same countries their ancestors left decades before (Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi 263). The phrase “The only way out is Ezeiza (the international airport in Buenos Aires)” reflected the feelings of the people (ibid.). Between 1991 and 1992, the Argentine government checked inflation by pegging the Argentine peso to the American dollar (Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi 263). Despite these efforts, many Argentines of Japanese descent returned to their homeland during the economic crisis in the early 2000s.

Japanese Culture in Argentine Audiovisual Popular Culture

Anime, the Japanese word for animation, is a form of popular animated Japanese television programs (Napier 3-4; Pattern 275-276; Ruble and Lysne 37). This Japanese style can be compared to the Saturday cartoons and other animated programs that are seen in the United States. *Anime*'s diverse art form employs the use of hand-drawn and computer animation that focus on the realism of the setting rather than camera effects or angle shots. The most noticeable differences that set *anime* apart from other animated programs include the size of character proportions, specifically the character's head and use of large emotive or realistically sized eyes. Some *anime* programs have been adapted to Argentine audiences by incorporating the Spanish language and through the application of themes like soccer and character development. The nightly news program Telenoche aired a report highlighting the growing popularity of *anime* programs in Argentina and the “Oriental invasion” that is happening (Wiemeyer). The report includes interviews with *otakus*, or people who have a strong affinity for *anime*. These people

are different from the typical viewer because *otakus* take their obsession to a whole new level by dressing as their favorite characters. For example, the three *otakus*, Noelia, Ariel, and Illeana, model their favorite character's outfit in the report: Noelia as *Queen Nehelena* (from the program, *Sailor Moon*) in an ominous empress outfit adorned with gothic-style jewelry; Ariel as *Phoenix Ikki* (from the manga *Saint Seiya*) in a warrior outfit reminiscent of the show *Dragonball Z*; and Illeana as *Sailor Chibi Moon* (from the program, *Sailor Moon*) in a pink mini

Figure 3. *Otaku* characters. Sources: http://media.tumblr.com/tumblr_llw5bkCLDX1qfc61u.png, http://chivasblog.aceite.fbiz.com.br/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ikki_fenix.jpeg, and http://fc01.deviantart.net/fs70/f/2011/102/7/e/eternal_sailor_chivi_moon_by_armandinguid3duh6l.jpg

(a) Noelia as Queen Nehelena from the program, *Sailor Moon*



(b) Ariel as Phoenix Ikki from the manga, *Saint Seiya*



(c) Ileana as Sailor Chibi Moon from the program, *Sailor Moon*

dress with a pink wig and white platform boots (see fig. 3). By their appearances, it seems as if it was Halloween or they were going to a party or even a festival. However, these *otakus* in their mid-20s wear their outfits regularly for fun. Like Ariel, Noelia and Ileana tell of their obsession with *anime*. They began watching various *anime* programs such as *Sailor Moon* as children and continued to watch as they matured. Throughout the country, *otakus*, along with the average viewer of all ages, meet periodically to discuss the newest *anime* movies and the latest merchandise available to the public. These meetings can be compared to comic conventions held in the United States such as Comic-Con.

The news report continues with the interviews of the *otaku*'s parents who support their children's fascination. The parents mention how they would accompany their child to the store to buy costume accessories such as wigs, make-up, and fabrics. According to Noelia, her keen interest in *anime* has sparked her curiosity with the Japanese culture. She has started to learn the Japanese language and Japanese customs to better understand characters' actions and their cultural importance in the program. Furthermore, Noelia choreographs dance numbers to the Japanese music used in *anime* programs along with fellow enthusiasts. Ariel mentions that the programs have encouraged him to read more about the Greek myths that are intertwined with the

plots. The segment concludes looking back at *anime* programs from the 1970s such as *Speed Racer*, the robot shows like *Mobile Suit Gundam* from the 1980s, and modern-day shows such as *Sailor Moon*. These new generations of adolescents know not only Westernized superheroes like Superman and Batman, but also Moon Princess and Goku from the Orient.

Anime programs continue to be broadcast throughout Argentina, but instead of spoken dialogue in Japanese, characters speak in Spanish. The popular show *Captain Tsubasa* (also known as *Los Super Campeones* in Latin America) from the 1980s is a prime example of the Japanese influence in Argentina. Originally a *manga*, or Japanese comic, *Los Super Campeones* was adapted for television in a program that spanned four seasons. In episode 25 from the first season during which the audience witnesses a flashback of two young Argentine boys showing off their soccer abilities with an apple (CapitanTsubasaJr). As one of the young boys demonstrates bicycle kick, viewers are transported to the middle of a soccer game where the once young boy is now a handsome young soccer player. Due to the Argentine soccer player's jersey colored with the sky blue and white of the Argentine flag, viewers know that the childhood flashback is from the soccer player's youth as seen in figure 4. His opponents are from Japan with their navy blue, red-collared jerseys reminiscent of the actual Japanese national soccer team. From previous episodes, we learn the young boy is the main character, Oliver Atom, who loves soccer and his only goal in life is to win the FIFA World Cup. Like the *anime* program portrays, soccer is Argentina's national sport that nearly all men, women, and children play. In some respects, soccer is a religion, only second to that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Figure 4. The anime program, *Los Super Campeones*. Source: CapitanTsubasaJr



The Argentine cable television channel *elgourmet* is synonymous with that of the Food Network in the United States. Within the channel's repertoire, there are over a dozen chefs that have their own shows demonstrating to viewers how to prepare romantic dinners and lunches under 20 minutes. However, the channel has in its arsenal, Iwao Komiyama, a Japanese-Argentine sushi chef who was born and raised in La Plata. Chef Komiyama incorporates the use of local produce with Japanese cooking techniques that viewers can do at home. In a one-on-one interview with the channel, Komiyama recounts important moments in his life and his family history of being chefs (*elgourmetcomLatam*, "Perfiles: Iwao Komiyama"). Komiyama relates how he became one of the chefs on the channel. The Japanese-Argentine chef hosts a variety of television programs with titles ranging from *Wok Gourmet* to *Sushi n' Roll* and *Sushi con sabor latino* (Sushi with Latin flavor) (*elgourmetcomLatam*, "Iwao Komiyama"). In one particular example, Komiyama shows viewers how to prepare sashimi on his program *Sushi n' Roll*. Sashimi is seafood that is sliced into thin pieces and eaten raw (Toyoshima 260). Sashimi is not to be confused with sushi, which refers to pieces of seafood paired with vinegar-soaked rice (Traphagan and Brown 128). In this episode, Komiyama combines typical Argentine foods like octopus and lobster meat with Argentine spices to make an extremely flavorful dish. Dressed in his traditional blue coat, Komiyama slices the meat into fine pieces and uses chopsticks to

transport them to the serving plate from his chopping board (MegaDANRC). These subtle details show how Komiyama incorporates part of his Japanese heritage into his Latin American-made dishes.

Figure 5. Iwao Komiyama, Japanese-Argentine chef. Chef Komiyama in his interview with *elgourmet* (left) and cooking during his program, *Wok Gourmet* (right). Source: http://i.ytimg.com/vi/VBi1RfQ-C_M/0.jpg



In addition to Komiyama, *elgourmet* features another Japanese chef by the name of Takehiro Ohno. Chef Ohno's cuisine fuses Japanese ingredients and Latin American flavors together in a way that harmoniously brings together the two different worlds. Unlike the former, Ohno was born in Hokkaido prefecture and came to Argentina on multiple occasions for various business endeavors ("Takehiro Ohno"). In his TEDx conference presentation in Córdoba, Ohno recounts his upbringing in a traditional Japanese samurai family. He highlights three personally important virtues in the samurai culture: respect, humility, and honor (Ohno). These three virtues guided his upbringing and his career in the culinary field. Ohno's career started in his home prefecture and then to the Basque Country in Spain, Uruguay, and Argentina. On *elgourmet*, the Hokkaidan hosts programs entitled *O3.Oriente,Occidente,Ohno* (O3.Oriental,Western,Ohno) and *Okashi.Dulces.Ohno* (*okashi* is the Japanese word for "sweets" and *dulce* is the Spanish word for dessert). His techniques include those that were taught during

his studies at Nishi Kyushu University in Japan and from his mother when he was a small child (Ohno). An example of Chef Ohno's Japanese-Argentine fusion is seen in an episode of *Ohno* where the Japanese chef creates a meal of *guiso de berenjena* (eggplant stew) and *hamburguesa japonesa con champiñones en salsa de soja* (Japanese hamburger with mushrooms in soy sauce) as seen in figure 6 (elgourmetcomLatam, "Ohno – Guiso de berenjena y hamburguesa japonesa"). Eggplants are commonly used in Japanese cooking and Japan is one of the leading exporters in eastern Asia. According to the most recent figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Japan is the seventh largest producer of eggplants with a production total of approximately 327 tons (Amount of Eggplant Production in 2012). This complementary pairing mixes rich, yet distinctive flavors that are pleasing to the palate. Ohno goes one step further in pursuing this Asian-Latin flavor using ingredients from his Japanese mother's dessert recipes. In an episode of *Okashi.Dulces.Ohno*, Ohno makes a *torta marmolada de cacao y la de té verde con batatas fritas caramelizadas* (cocoa and green tea marble cake with fried caramelized yams). Cocoa beans are native to Latin America, specifically Central America and the Amazon basin (Zipperer 4). These tasty beans were discovered by Spanish conquistadors and taken back to Spain and the rest of Europe (Wood and Lass 4-6). In the culinary world, cocoa beans along with vanilla, sugar, and other spices are the elements used to make chocolate. Ohno's blending creates a rich dessert filled with bits from the East and Latin America (elgourmetcomLatam, "Okashi. Dulces. Ohno."). At the conclusion of each of his cooking demonstrations, Ohno completes the Asian-Latin American fusion by sharing facts and tidbits of his homeland. He sits in a replica of a *zashiki*, a traditional dining area complete with a low standing table and cushions and displays an object pertaining to Japanese culture or shares memories from his childhood in Japan.

Outside the studio, Buenos Aires is home to many green spaces across the city that harmoniously blend the loud, fast-paced style of the city with the relaxing, tranquil environment of parks. In total, the city has world-renowned parks around the city named after monumental dates in Argentine history and famous founding fathers such as Parque Tres de Febrero (*February 3rd Park*) and Plaza San Martín. In particular, *El Jardín Japonés (Japanese Garden)* in the neighborhood of Palermo has become one of the most well-known spots to *porteños* and visitors alike. In a ten-minute weekend report for the channel *Canal 5 Noticias* or *C5N*, a news correspondent reports on the fun activities *porteños* can enjoy on a warm September spring day. The camera pans out to a crowd of people walking over the iconic red imperial-like bridge and little children throwing bread crumbs to the fish below in the water as seen in figure 7. Next, Sergio Miyagi, the press coordinator for the Japanese Garden, is interviewed. Miyagi speaks about the importance of the park between the Argentine Republic and the State of Japan and the recreation of the Japanese countryside in the middle of Buenos Aires (C5N, “Buen Finde”). Furthermore, Miyagi highlights the park as a generous gift to the people of Buenos Aires and Argentina for being so gracious and welcoming to the arrival of Japanese immigrants. The program continues with on-the-spot interviews with local children and adults telling their favorite parts of the park and what attractions there are to do. *El Jardín Japonés* has played host to a slew of events from welcoming foreign dignitaries to highlighting various exhibitions of the Japanese culture. A YouTube clip reveals an interview between Tea Alberti, a tea connoisseur with her own blog called *Tea&co.* with Ayako Kishimoto, the curator of the Argentine-Japanese Cultural Foundation (*teaandco*). In this interview, Kishimoto describes *chashitsu*, the next exhibit that would be on display. *Chashitsu* is the Japanese word for “tea rooms” where tea ceremonies take place (Harris). Viewers learn about the historical background of tea ceremonies

and their important role in welcoming new guests and even negotiating business transactions.

The clip ends with Alberti inquiring about the specifics of the upcoming exhibit.

Figure 6. Takehiro Ohno, Japanese-Argentine chef. Chef Ohno cooking during his program, *O3.Oriente,Occidente,Ohno* (top left), his dishes of guiso de berenjena y hamburguesa japonesa (top right and bottom left), and his TEDx talk in Córdoba (bottom right). Sources: elgourmetcomLatam, “Ohno – Guiso de berenjena y hamburguesa japonesa”; Ohno



Figure 7. *El Jardín Japonés* in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Source:
<http://www.elmundoenmimaleta.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/jardin-japo.jpg>



Figure 8. Japanese *taiko* drums. The all-female intermediate *taiko* group from the Buenos Aires Taiko Dôjo (top) and the all-male *kumi-daiko* or ensemble-style group from Aichi Prefecture, Japan (bottom). Sources:
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/06/TaikoDrummersAichiJapan.jpg>



In Japanese culture, music plays an important role in ceremonies, but also serves as entertainment to the Japanese. The *taiko* drums are one of the most noticeable Japanese

instrument due to its size and range of sound. A part of the musical family of percussion instruments, the *taiko* drums play a tremendous role in Japanese culture. In feudal times, the rhythm of the *taiko* set the marching pace during battle and called out orders and troop movement (Turnball 27-28). This musical tradition can be seen in festivals and cultural associations across the Argentine Republic. A Google search of the popular search engine's Argentine site retrieved uploaded video footage of Argentines playing *taiko* drums in festivals and parks across Buenos Aires. Figure 8 shows a comparison of the all-female intermediate group from the Buenos Aires Taiko Dôjo group with an all-male *kumi-daiko* or ensemble-style group from Aichi Prefecture, Japan (Cristobo).

Dissemination of the Japanese culture is available not only for Japanese-Argentines, but also Argentines of European descent who are interested in learning the numerous customs. Japanese cultural associations around the country foment native customs such as *shodou* or calligraphy; kanji, the Japanese writing system; and proper Japanese etiquette. During a celebration, Masashi Mizukami, the Japanese ambassador to Argentina describes how the two cultures have a common fondness for tea (Pla, "Embajador de Japón"). Argentines have a strong affinity for the native tea known as *mate* while the Japanese prefer green tea. Descendants of Japanese immigrants can be seen prominently in society such as Mario Alberto Ishii. Ishii is the grandson of Japanese immigrants, but also the mayor of Paz County in the province of Buenos Aires.

Chapter 4: The Koreans

Immigration to Argentina

When the term “Korea” is used in this paper, there is no distinction made between North and South Korea. Rather, the term refers to the entire Korean peninsula. At the end of World War II, the Japanese lost control of the Korean peninsula and conceded the territory to American forces that occupied land south of the 38th parallel and to Soviet forces who occupied the northern part. Tensions grew at the thirty-eighth parallel following the failure of holding peninsula-wide elections in 1948 (Trincheri 2). Furthermore, emigration increased to different parts of the world including North and South America as the onset of war loomed after reunification talks ended without compromise or a definite answer.

The Korean diaspora saw immigrants travelling to different parts of the world including North America, Europe, and South America. The most well-known Koreans were twelve North Korean prisoners captured during the Korean War (Trincheri 2). These prisoners declined the repatriation agreements offered under the terms of the Korean Armistice Agreement and were resettled in the Argentine country in 1956 and 1957 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Mera, “La comunidad coreana de Buenos Aires” 1; Rimoldi de Ladmann 8; Trincheri 2).

In the 1960s, Korea’s economic outlook was bleak. The rapid industrialization, due in part to the United States government following the Korean War, quickly altered the country’s traditional agricultural economy (Bialogorski and Bargman 19). Though one of the side-effects was rapid population growth, the human increase made social mobility to the professional and upper classes, and access to higher education increasingly difficult (Bialogorski and Bargman 19). In 1963, the per capita GDP of Argentina was USD \$566 and USD \$300 for Brazil was

nearly two times greater than compared to Korea's at roughly USD \$145 (Park 19). Despite the economic bleakness, Korea was producing highly trained professionals, businessmen, and entrepreneurs, but did not have the physical or economical resources to support their endeavors. There were nearly 43 million inhabitants living in a territory of 100,000 square kilometers, approximately the size of the state of Kentucky. This rapid growth led the Korean government to relocate and subsidize some of its surplus population to Argentina and Brazil, where immigrants were promised their own public or untapped land to live on and cultivate (Oh 365). In 1962, South Korea and Argentina established diplomatic relations and in the following year the Korean Embassy was established in Buenos Aires. In the same year, the Korean government implemented the Overseas Emigration Act, which promoted the aforementioned overseas relocation policy. The first officially documented Koreans, comprising of 78 Koreans, came to Argentina on October 14, 1965, and formed the first Korean community in the country (Bialogorski 2; Mera, "La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires" 1-2; Park 20). The families cultivated 400 hectares (about 1000 acres) of land at La Marque town near Choele Choel ciudad, approximately 1,100 kilometers (about 700 miles) from the southern end of Buenos Aires (Park 21). These families were aided by an Argentine Christian service organization and Peronist social policies that included free medicine, education, and even housing (Park 21). However, immigration was halted due to restrictive Asian immigration practices put in place by the June 28, 1966 military coup d'état of General Juan Carlos Onganía. The General Act on Migration and Immigration Development implemented harsher immigration policies towards Asians in 1981 (Novick 11-12). The act stated that foreigners were not authorized to carry out paid activities thus hindering access to health care and education (Novick 12). It was not until at the

end of the Videla dictatorship in 1983 when Argentina lifted the immigration restrictions (Oteiza, Aruj, and Novick 15).

In addition to directly coming to Argentina from Korea, more Korean immigrants came by way of Paraguay in 1966, and further populated the agrarian colony of Lamarque (Mera, “La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires” 2; Trinchero 2). Besides settling in the cities, Korean immigrants created agrarian settlements such as the ones in El Valle Medio in the province of Río Negro. Between 1970 and 1978, more than 2,800 people (roughly 500 families) moved to rural area of the Pampas due to the South Korean government’s encouragement (Mera, “La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires” 2).

Further military conflict between North and South Korea and internal destabilization of the South Korean government promoted great urgency to move out of the Korean peninsula. In 1960, General Park Chung-hee led a military coup d’état and declared martial law for 18 years until his assassination in 1979. The years that followed Park’s dictatorship were marked by political turmoil and instability triggering the biggest wave of Korean immigrants to Argentina between 1985 and 1988 (Bialogorski 2). The signing of the *Acta de Procedimiento* or Procedures Agreement in 1985 between Argentina and South Korea welcomed migrants from a modern and industrialized South Korea in the midst of a strong economic recession in Argentina (Mera, “La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires” 2). This concept of “conditional” migration brought approximately 20,000 Koreans arrived in Argentina between 1984 and 1986 (Bialogorski and Bargman 19; Chun 192–205). In addition to the agreement, the Argentine government encouraged capital investments and allowed Koreans to immigrate provided that each Korean would deposit at least USD \$30,000 into the Argentine National Bank (Banco de la Nación) (Courtis 117). At the same time, the Korean government began to promote “investment

emigration,” which aimed to establish small to medium-sized industries in host countries (Park 21). For instance, in 1984, 25 families were granted entry for bicycle manufacturing investment and started to build factories in the state of Santa Fe. Approximately 400 families invested funds in Argentine mining companies (Chun 189–196).

In the 1990s, young Koreans traveled to Argentina on study visas to pursue careers in the fields of dentistry, medicine, economics, law, textile design and architecture (Bialogorski 2). Approximately 42,000 students came at the peak (Mera, “La inmigración coreana en Buenos Aires” 1). At the end of their studies, many decided to stay in Argentina and integrated themselves into Argentine society. Today, there are an estimated 22,000 Koreans in Argentina (“Current Status of Overseas Compatriots” 172).

Korean Culture in Argentine Audiovisual Popular Culture

In just the last two years (2012-2013), *Pop Coreano* (also known as Korean pop or K-pop) music has been exported from the Korean peninsula at increasing rates. The popularity surrounding the catchy, electronic genre has risen and gained worldwide recognition. What makes this particular music genre so popular is the fusion of synthesized music, sharp dance routines and fashionable, colorful outfits that combine musical elements of electronic, disco, rock, R&B, and hip-hop (Rousse-Marquet). The genre takes inspiration from Japanese pop culture and late 1990s American pop, but adds a Korean flare that highlights confident personalities in a way that appeals to socially conservative markets (Rousse-Marquet). While the melody and lyrics of K-pop intrigue listeners, the auditory component makes up only a part of K-pop’s popularity. Another major part to K-pop is the visual component. Groups tend to have three or more singers and together dance in-sync creating crisp formations and movements. This choreography complements the characteristics of the lyrics of the song by providing a visual

interpretation. There are no barriers for Argentine dancers who take up K-pop. Though the music still contains lyrics in Korean and have the same number of dancers in group, Argentine performers add their own flair. At times, they are inspired by native dances such as the *tango*, Argentina's own cultural dance. Native Argentine groups like Phytotix incorporate these dance patterns into their original choreography as seen in figure 9.

Figure 9. K-pop music groups. The Argentine K-pop dance group, Phytotix (left) and the well-known Korean-based dance group, Kara (right). Sources: Pla, "Se realiza en Buenos Aires importante concurso de Pop Coreano para Latinoamérica"; <http://jto.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/fd20120902bja.jpg>



K-pop has grown in popularity not only in Argentina, but in all of Latin America with tens of thousands of teenagers flocking to sold-out concerts in the region (Bishop; Trivedi). In Argentina, El Centro Cultural Coreano en América Latina (Korean Cultural Center in Latin America) was established in 2006 and sponsored by the Embassy of South Korea ("Concurso K-pop Latinoamérica | Edición 2014"). As part of the Center's mission to spread and promote Korean culture, tourism, and sport, el *Concurso K-pop Latinoamérica* (K-pop Latin American Concert) was created to showcase Latin American talent annually. The format is similar to that of talent shows like MTV's *So You Think You Can Dance?* and NBC's *America's Got Talent*. Dance groups compete against each other and the winner is chosen based on judges' decisions (CentroCultural Coreano, "Spot Final del Concurso"; Pla, "Se realiza en Buenos Aires"). During the most recent concert in 2013, 13 finalists were selected from amongst 200 groups representing

12 Latin American countries (CentroCultural Coreano, “Final del Concurso”). Some winners have gone on tour with headlining groups.

The most acclaimed K-pop song “Gangnam Style” by South Korean singer PSY has redefined the landscape of K-pop. On the video sharing website, YouTube, the video has almost two billion views and has been certified by the Guinness Book of World Records as the first video to be viewed more than one billion times, the most watched video online, and the most “liked” video online (Guinness World Record News). Audiences may wonder what makes “Gangnam Style” so popular in particular. It could stem from the captivating beat and refrain “Hey Sexy Lady” or the horse trot-inspired dance moves of PSY himself (officialpsy). The video itself is in reference to the lifestyle of affluent South Koreans living in the Gangnam District of Seoul and highlights the fashion trends and personalities of Seoul’s elite.

The song reached international audiences almost immediately once it was uploaded to YouTube in the summer of 2012. In Argentina alone, the song was number one for nearly six weeks (Todo Noticias TN Argentina). It became so popular that even the leading conservative Argentine newspaper, *La Nación*, published an article about PSY and his mega success alongside political news. The K-pop phenomenon inspired countless numbers of parodies made by Argentines across the country and even morning television programs (Todo Noticias TN Argentina). The first airing of “Gangnam Style” occurred on the morning television program *Antes del Mediodía (am)* on the popular *Telefe* channel. Like NBC’s *Today’s Show*, ABC’s *Good Morning America*, and CBS’s *CBS This Morning*, *am* blends features like news headlines, weather reports, one-on-one interviews, current affairs, and segments on the latest music and entertainment trends. However, the program segments are usually presented in a comedic, humorous manner thanks to Argentine personalities Darío Barassi and his rabbit puppet

companion, Pepe Pompín. When “Gangnam fever” reached Buenos Aires, hosts of *am* welcomed a fake PSY (played by Barassi) from Seoul who was murmuring incoherent Korean phrases (DALEmanuel). The show takes Barassi, in his PSY inspired bow-tie suit, to the streets of Chinatown in the Buenos Aires community of Belgrano as seen in figure 10 (Telefe, “AM – Chung PSY”). Continuing with his jumbled Korean words, Barassi berates passing *porteños* asking them if the Gangnam Style dance is familiar or not. Some on-lookers are perplexed and have no idea what Barassi is talking about. On the contrary, some immediately recognize the melody and start dancing with others joining the makeshift dance floor. In another segment, one of the *am* hosts returns to Chinatown asking if Koreans are the only people who know the Gangnam Style dance (Telefe, “¿Solo los coreanos pueden bailarlo?”).

Morning talk shows are not the only entities rushing to put an Argentine spin on Gangnam Style. Amateur videographers are putting together their own parodies of the famous Korean song. The Argentine film studio, Susurros Film Studio, in Misiones province made their own version of “Gangnam Style” using local locations such as a community park, bus depot, the local soccer club in the capital of Posadas and Santa Cecilia Ranch, and government entities including the Misiones province police and the Argentine National Gendarmerie (susurros09). The video includes many on the scenes from the original video, but clips from Argentine life are also included like a handball and soccer game. Another parody includes the Korean melody, but with Spanish lyrics. Rather than translating the lyrics verbatim from Korean to Spanish, the user creates his own interpretation of the Korean lifestyle mentioned. Unlike the original video where PSY and his dancers move around Seoul, the five minute video takes place in what seems a photo studio with a plain white backdrop (likuadodefrutilla). This Argentine take on the well-known video allowed Spanish-speaking audiences in Latin America to become part of the

phenomenon. Some Argentine fan groups are so enthralled with the Korean phenomenon that flash mobs are taking place in front of famous monuments in Buenos Aires such as the Obelisk and in provinces across the country as seen in figure 11 (Flores; Harmitton; Mujica; omega royale; Psy Argentina; Zanotti). The iconic horse-trot, lasso, and horse-riding stances choreographed by PSY are widely recognized within the Argentine Republic.

Figure 10. Gangnam Style in the Argentine media. The morning program, *am*, followed host Darío Barassi into *El Barrio Chino*. Sources: Telefe, “AM – Chung PSY”; Telefe, “AM – ¿Solo los coreanos pueden bailar?”



Figure 11. Gangnam Style takes over Argentina. The original music video by PSY (top left) has seen many remakes: the *Telefe* comedy *Graduados* (top right), Darío Barassi (bottom left), and a flash mob in front of the Obelisk in Buenos Aires (bottom right). Sources: Graduados2012; likuadodefrutilla; officialpsy; Psy Argentina



Korean immigrants and their descendants can be seen in television programs and independent Argentine movies. For example, Natalia Kim is a rising actress of both Korean and Japanese descent as seen in figure 12. Kim was born to a Japanese father and Korean mother in Buenos Aires and studied musical theater at the prestigious Instituto Julio Bocca under the world-renowned ballet dancer who gives the institution its name. The first film Kim appeared in is entitled *El Tigre Escondido* (The Hidden Tiger). The plot follows Bernardo, a 50-year-old overwhelmed, confused man who is having marital issues with his wife, Diana. The pair begins to argue and fight to the point that neither can be in the same room as each other. Bernardo decides to take a small vacation to Diana's house in the posh, suburban town of Tigre located on the banks of the Paraná Delta in the province of Buenos Aires. During their stay, Bernardo has a clandestine affair with Nancy, *la ama china de llaves* (the Asian housekeeper played by Kim) and further complicates his relationship with Diana. Diana's and Bernardo's relationship is filled with high and low points that are marked by constant yelling, physical abuse, and jealousy (Gotika Group). Diana notices that Bernardo has taken a keen interest in Nancy and sees how he watches her. One scene in particular focuses on Bernardo's seduction of Nancy (Seba's Bruno). Bernardo then flees to Patagonia where his judgment is further blurred and spirals into further disillusionment without knowing that Nancy is emotionally suffering like him.

Natalia Kim has also appeared in various roles on Argentine dramas like *Siempre Listos* (Always Ready), *Mentime que me gusta* (I Like It When You Lie to Me), and *Justo a tiempo* (Right on Time). In her latest role on El Trece's superhero live-action television series *Los únicos* (The Uniques), Kim plays the recurring role of "Akira", the daughter of a Japanese businessman who wants to assassinate the villains of the series (eltrece). Kim is not the only Korean descendant that can be found on Argentine television. Chang Kim Sung plays "Walter

Mao” on the *Telefe* comedy *Graduados* as seen in figure 12 (The Graduates). Mao is the right-hand man to his boss and close friend, Clemente Falsini. In contrast to the typical, secondary roles that Asians usually hold, Walter Mao is a prominent character who is essential to the plot of the series. Walter is not the stereotypical Asian who knows neither little Spanish nor Argentine customs rather, he is comfortable speaking Spanish and even knows *lunfardo* or local porteño slang. Sung’s character is so prominent that in an episode he has his own dance sequence. Mao charms one of his colleagues by switching out his eyeglasses for a pair of black sunglasses and turns the office floor into a dance floor for the infamous song “Gangnam Style” and the subsequent horse trot as seen in figure 11 (*Graduados*2012). Unlike Natalia Kim, Sung was born in South Korea and traveled to Buenos Aires with his family when he was a young child. The youngest son enjoyed soccer and proceeded to become a tailor before switching professions to acting at age 35. His late start and lack of experience did not stop him from becoming one of the most beloved characters on the popular Argentine primetime show, but also in shows such as *Hombres de honor*, *Los simuladores*, *Mi primera boda*, *Viudas*, and *Pompeya*.

Figure 12. Argentine-Korean Actors. Chang Kim Sung (left) and Natalia Kim (right). Sources: http://a.espncdn.com/media/motion/2012/1029/Hu_121029_Deportes_PQ_ChangKimSung/Hu_121029_Deportes_PQ_ChangKimSung.jpg



Despite today's popularity of Korean culture in Argentina, it was not too long ago that Koreans were the punch line of numerous harsh and distasteful jokes. As the migration of thousands of Koreans continued into the 1970s, so did the discrimination and stereotyping of Koreans on television. The comedy sketch show *Juana y sus hermanas (Juana and Her Sisters)* included short acts that depicted the mentality and thinking of the day. In particular, a sketch portrayed a Korean woman (played by the host of the program, Juana Molina) in a supermarket buying a ladle for the purpose of chopping (*losvideosdelpela*). At first, the Korean questions how much the ladle is and then bargains for a cheaper price because it appears old and used. Unwilling to accept the offer, the Argentine clerk becomes agitated when the woman insists and demonstrates the ladle is unable to cut a piece of food. When the clerk shows a cutting knife, the woman declares that the knife is what she needs. The Korean continues to bargain the price down and succeeds in doing so when the clerk gives up as seen in figure 13. This clip shows the prevailing attitude of Argentines towards Asian immigrants at the time. These immigrants did not have full mastery of the Spanish language and could not fully express themselves or what they needed. At times, words in the native language were used, but the majority of Argentines did not speak an Asian language. This language barrier can be seen in the following transcript of the aforementioned episode according to *losvideosdelpela*:

JUANA: Lleva esto. ¿Cuánta cuesta?

CASHIER: Esto...treinta mil.

JUANA: ¿Para cambiar? Muy caro...pero distinto.

CASHIER: ¿Cómo distinto?

JUANA: Ahhh...paga más barato.

CASHIER: No, no...mire el precio es ése...vale treinta mil.

JUANA: No, no...está viejo.

CASHIER: ¿De dónde saca Ud. que está viejo?

JUANA: (struggles to find the correct word) porque no tiene más ... eh... uhm...
(mumbles a distinct sound)

CASHIER: ¿Perdón?

JUANA: (mumbles an incomprehensible word, uses hand motions to describe what she is trying to communicate)

CASHIER: (confused) Lo siento... repítame una vez más porque no-

JUANA: (mumbles an incomprehensible word once again) ... no corta.

CASHIER: Ah, ¿filo? Pues, claro no tiene. ¿Por qué no corta?

JUANA: Sí, ¿presta esta? (reaches over and picks up a package of crackers)

CASHIER: Sí, sí.

JUANA: Mira. Esa hacer demostración. (Juana takes the ladle and smashes the package of crackers to demonstrate that the ladle is incapable of cutting)

CASHIER: ¡Ah!

JUANA: Sí. Es plasta.

CASHIER: (stands up in distress) Sí es plasta. No corta. Esto no corta. Cucharón no corta. No lleva filo. Cucharón, filo, no.

Figure 13. A frame from the comedy sketch, *Juana y sus hermanas*. This frame shows Juana (left) bargaining the price with the cashier (right). Source: losvideosdelpela



Additionally, haggling is common in street markets in Asia. The clip reflected the mindset when immigrants were shopping at local supermarkets and stores. If the set price seemed too high, one could negotiate with the seller for a cheaper price. In another sketch from *Juana y sus hermanas*,

Juana Molina portrays a Chinese register clerk at a Chinese supermarket that is supposed to teach a class about Argentine history. A man approaches the checkout stand inquiring about the class, but is then shocked to see that the checkout stand is transformed into a classroom complete with a chalkboard and picture of the Argentine liberator, José San Martín. As the sketch progresses, it is clearly obvious that the clerk does not know the major people involved in the Argentine fight for independence against Spanish or the Argentine government. She confuses the role of José San Martín and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, two prominent leaders that appeared approximately 50 years from each other. This clip further demonstrates the notion that some members of Argentine society thought that Asian immigrants were incapable of speaking Spanish and learning Argentine history. Fortunately, this notion of incomprehension is gradually eroding with educating subsequent generations.

For Korean Chang Kim Sung, playing the role of “Walter Mao” is not just an honor; it is an accomplishment in breaking down negative social stereotypes associated with being Asian (Puraquimica2012). Ever since Sung moved to Argentina more than 30 years ago, he feels that he is “more Argentine than *dulce de leche* and *churrasco*” (*dulce de leche* is a sweet confection made of milk and *churrasco* is thinly sliced beef that gauchos used as part of their *asados* or barbecues) (Kim Sung, “Por Fin No Hago De Oriental”). Early in his acting career, Sung played over 15 roles as a “chino” working in a supermarket or a “chino” in an organized mafia (Kim Sung, “Con Su Papel en Graduados”). This time around Sung has the freedom and liberty to shape the Chinese character of Walter Mao. Staying true to the character’s Chinese background, Sung added his own elements such as Mao’s birth year. According to the Chinese astrological calendar, Mao was born in the year of the dog and incorporates this piece of information in the relationship between Mao and his boss, Clemente Falsini (Kim Sung, “El “Chino” de

Graduados”). The two men foster a relation akin to a dynamic duo that work well together. Mao comes to the defense of Falsini in times of need and is willing to do anything to prevent harm. Mao’s faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion resemble the relationship of a dog and its owner. Sung’s portrayal of “Walter Mao” earned him a nomination for a prestigious Martín Fierro Award as “Newcomer of the Year” (a Martín Fierro Award is presented by the Asociación de Periodistas de la Televisión y Radiofonía Argentina (Association of Journalists of Argentine Television and Radio) and is similar to that of an Emmy Award) (“Se conocieron los nominados a Los Martín Fierro 2013”).

Chapter 5: The Chinese

Immigration to Argentina

The history of China was and continues to be an ongoing battle in political arenas and even philosophical debates. Even the word “China” conjures up varying definitions and meanings depending on a person’s birthplace, his or her political ideology, and even his or her upbringing. Since the Cultural Revolution, there has been a divide in how the world and the Chinese themselves view China. Currently, there are two states: the Communist led People’s Republic of China and the democratic Republic of China (also known as Taiwan). In the “Two Chinas: One Policy” rule, the two are independent governments that claim to be the lawful “China”. For the purpose of this paper, the Taiwanese are considered Chinese from the island of Taiwan.

Unlike the Japanese and Korean immigrations, the start of Chinese immigration to Argentina began almost three decades later. In 1979, China institutionalized an open-door policy to the Western world for the first time in its history (Skeldon and Hugo 335-336). The government, under the guidance of politician Deng Xiaoping, allowed foreign investment into the country and started sending its scholars and students overseas to industrialized countries (Dillon 74; Ito, Krueger, and Wei 74-75; Liu 292). Many Chinese students enjoyed their host country so much that many applied for citizenship and stayed permanently (Liu 293). These *xin yimin* or “new migrants” faced significant population pressures at home. Some pressures included the availability for marital partners and educational opportunities and the intense competition for jobs plagued Chinese society (Chan 226). Living abroad encouraged young Chinese to look outside their home country for opportunity and even stay in their study abroad country. Departures began to increase after 1984; however, this number accelerated when new

laws permitted Chinese nationals to study abroad if they paid their own fees (Brandt and Rawski 19; Guerassimoff 145). However, there were growing numbers of illegal Chinese immigrants who reached the Americas in cargo ships and containers (Guerassimoff 140-141). By the 1990s, roughly 20,000 Chinese nationals called Argentina home (Poston, Mao, and Yu 637).

Following the end of World War II, the Chinese Civil War resumed between Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party and Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang Nationalist Party. In 1949, Chiang's forces retreated to the island province of Taiwan and established the Nationalist government in Taipei (Rubinstein 404). Martial law was soon declared by Chiang and authoritarian rule lasted until 1987 (Taiwan Martial Law). During this 38 year period of rule, hundreds of thousands of citizens who were labeled pro-Communist or anti-government supporters were arrested, tortured, and even killed. These years encouraged migration off of the island to countries like Argentina. Furthermore, many young males fled the island to avoid serving in the military (Chiang and Chen 11). Due to the dispute between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China, the Argentine Republic does not politically recognize the Republic of China. Instead, the Taipei Commercial and Cultural Office serves as the *de facto* embassy and consulate under the guise of being unofficial commercial entities of the Republic of China (Vang 46). Since the political relationship between the two countries is not technically official, statistics are not heavily reliable. In total, there are approximately 12,000 Argentines of Chinese and Taiwanese descent living in Argentina ("About Argentina").

Chinese Culture in Argentine Audiovisual Popular Culture

The film *Un cuento chino* (*Chinese Take-Away*) has been one of the most popular films in Argentina grossing over \$10 million in the first three months of 2011 alone (Smith). The comedy follows the life of Roberto, a grumpy hardware store owner who is disenchanted and

apathetic with the world (*Un cuento chino*). Roberto enjoys being single, living alone, yelling at customers, and counting nails in a box for accuracy. However, his mundane life changes when a taxi driver throws out a passenger, a young Chinese man who does not know a single word of Spanish, in front of Roberto's car. Roberto helps the stranger and finds out that the young man's name is Jun (played by Taiwan-born actor Ignacio Huang) who came to Buenos Aires with only the address of his last living relative. Unfortunately, the address proves to be useless, and Jun has nowhere else to go until Roberto decides to provide him a room. Roberto attempts to help Jun's search by calling the local police and the Chinese embassy, and going to Chinatown. All three efforts are unrewarding. During the course of the film, audiences witness Roberto's transformation from a man with a cold heart and stern face to a man who feels and expresses emotion. The added language barrier between Jun and Roberto gives a humorous aspect to the film as seen in figure 14. Since neither character speaks the same language as the other, both men must rely on facial expressions and hand gestures to communicate. By the end, Jun finally finds his relative and moves out of Roberto's house. However, the impact the two men made on each is priceless and leaves the audience empathizing with the characters.

Figure 14. Still shots from *Un cuento chino*. Ricardo Darín as "Roberto" and Ignacio Huang as "Jun". Source: *Un cuento chino* (Chinese Take-Out)



The success of *Un cuento chino* launched the Ignacio Huang into popularity all over the country. Ignacio has done television interviews with programs such as TV Pública's *Vivo en Argentina* where he reminisced about his early days in Argentina as an 11 year-old boy from

Taipei, Taiwan (TV Pública, “Vivo en Argentina: Un lugar en el mundo: Ignacio Huang – 17-08-11”). At first, Huang was a graphic designer, but then switched careers to the theater where he starred in productions before moving into television and film. When the film won the Premio Goya (the Spanish equivalent of an Academy Award) for Best Film, Huang did interviews for major new channels such as C5N and Canal 26 further publicizing his fame as seen in figure 15 (ArgDVD; C5N, “C5N – Espectaculos). For a better part of the 2011 and 2012 season, *Un cuento chino* was the biggest non-American film to be widely broadcasted in Argentina.

Figure 15. Ignacio Huang’s interviews with the Argentine media. Ignacio Huang is interviewed during a news program on Canal 26 (left) and TV Pública’s *Vivo en Argentina* daytime show (right). Sources: ArgDVD; TV Pública, “Vivo en Argentina: Un lugar en el mundo: Ignacio Huang – 17-08-11”



At the start of 2013, Chinese-Argentine born director Juan Martín Hsu directed his first feature length film entitled *Balneario La Salada* (La Salada Beach). *La Salada* touches upon themes new immigrants to Argentina face, especially Hsu’s family. The plot follows three recently arrived immigrants in Argentina and their experience struggling with loneliness and isolation from home. Two of the three storylines include experiences from Asian immigrants: a Korean father and his daughter preparing for an arranged marriage and a Taiwanese DVD seller who is in search of a girlfriend (“Synopsis of “La Salada”). The independent film also includes

well-established Asian-Argentine actors including Chang Kim Sung from the television show *Graduados* and Ignacio Huang from *Un cuento chino*. According to Hsu, the mission of his first feature project is to “dispel the stereotypes that immigrants have and focus on the experience of how different people adapt to a new environment” (“‘Verano En La Salada’, Un Filme Sobre La Inmigración y La Soledad”). Throughout its appearances in film festivals such as the San Sebastián International Film Festival in Spain, audiences and jurors alike have come to appreciate the film’s approach to a new environment. Jurors in San Sebastián awarded the film the *Film in Progress 24 Industry Award* which is given to Latin American films to complete and distribute in Spain (Montesoro). The film continues to travel to different festivals including the Buenos Aires International Independent Film Festival (Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente) and the Havana International Festival (Festival Internacional de la Habana).

On Disney Channel Lationamérica, the show *Supertorpe* features Argentine adolescents who attend high school like their peers, but have superhero powers (ANMTVChannelHD). In particular, martial artist master Chen Min plays the role of “Chin”, the nanny to the Truper children, Poli and Filo (todoteenangels2). Min uses her past experience in *wushu* (Chinese for “martial arts”) to protect the Truper’s from harm; however, there is one aspect that makes her job a little bit harder- Chin does not speak a word of Spanish (“La niñera que llegó de china”). In the teenage television series, Chin overcomes the language barrier thanks to Filo’s smart brain and his translations. In episode 10 entitled “Un cuento chino”, the Truper siblings and Chin time travel to prevent a valuable tea set from falling and breaking. However, the trio travels to different moments in their past and future further complicating the situation (*Supertorpe*). At the end of the episode, the tea set is saved, but the trio now knows to be careful in the first place in order to avoid a repeat of their time travelling ordeal.

In addition to what is seen as entertainment, the development of Chinese people in the media can be partially explained in a 2013 video segment done by the CCTV (Chinese Central Television) America News. Journalist Daniel Schweimler explored the small, but fast-growing Chinese population in Buenos Aires and spoke with *ArgenChinos* to explore their world. The opening of the video starts with views of *El Barrio Chino* (Chinatown) and the mix of Asian and *porteños* walking side by side. A *porteño* by the name of Gustavo Ng gives a personal interview about the integration of Chinese immigrants in Argentina (CCTV Americas Now). Ng, who is the executive director of Project Dang Dai, a Chinese-Argentine cultural exchange program, emphasizes the various relationships that exist between Argentina and China: trade, economic, diplomatic, and now cultural. Furthermore, Ng recounts the story of how his father, a Hong Kong native, traveled to Argentina to work in the soybean fields, married an Argentine, and stayed in Argentina instead of returning back to China.

The interview continues when the audience meets Hubo Wu and Ana Kuo. Hubo moved to Argentina in the early 1990s and describes his experience adjusting to Argentina including not know much about the country, its language, or its customs. For him, moving to Argentina was a chance to start a new life and prosper in a new setting. Ana Kuo moved from Taiwan as a child. Kuo founded the Chinese Cultural Association of Argentina to bridge the cultural gap between Argentines and Chinese. In particular, the association offers intensive language problems due to communication being at the root of integration problems. Newly arrived Chinese immigrants can take classes to learn the Spanish language and *porteños* can learn how to speak Mandarin across the city of Buenos Aires.

Conclusion

Immigration has played a significant role in the growth and development of the Argentine Republic. In just the last three decades, immigration from China, Japan, and Korea has boosted the population by approximately 200,000 people (“About Argentina”). The increase has allowed for more ethnic diversity in the population, but also more ethnic representation in films and television programs. In audiovisual media today, Chinese-Argentines, Japanese-Argentines, and Korean-Argentines serve as cultural ambassadors to their respective heritages. Each actor, actress, musician, chef, or television personality brings aspects of their homeland to Argentina and become teachers in the process while educating others about customs or traditions. Analyzing audiovisual items such as films and television programs have allowed for a glimpse into Argentine popular culture and seeing how the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans are portrayed.

Even more so now than ever, globalization has brought people together from varying cultures and corners of the world. Argentina is a country where people of diverse ethnic groups have lived together and share common stories of immigration and integration. In each of the three cultures analyzed in this thesis, there is an exchange of thoughts and ideas that begin to facilitate a dialogue to breakdown negative stereotypes and build rapport between opposite sides of society. At first, television programs such as *Juana y sus hermanas* depicted Chinese and Korean immigrants as dumb, foreign individuals that are culturally illiterate. As time progressed, attitudes and stereotypes changed. Men and women of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean descent were being added onto prominent television films and programs such as *Un cuento chino*, *Sushi con sabor latino*, and *Graduados*. The adding of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean actors to popular culture has increased presence and awareness of these ethnic groups in the media.

The countless numbers of journal articles and YouTube clips that are parts of this thesis have highlighted the importance of popular culture in society. According to Foster's definition of popular culture, anything that impacts the daily lives of people such as newspapers, magazines, movies, or television programs is considered popular culture (Foster, *From Mafalda to Los Supermachos 2*). On the contrary, Bueno's and Caesar's definition incorporates "a sort of middle stratum between national identity and a lived complexity of social reality" (15). The combination of these two definitions brings awareness to how the nation identifies itself through audiovisual media. The appearance of Chinese-Argentines, Japanese-Argentines, and Korean-Argentines in audiovisual media enriches the Argentine psyche and what it means to be an Argentine. The Immigrant Festival in Buenos Aires and Rosario emphasizes the importance of celebrating customs and traditions that were passed down from one generation to another even before reaching South America. The celebration not only allows for second-generation children to connect with their heritage, but for bystanders to learn about different cultures from across the world (NordicFreakies).

Through the use of the Internet via social media and video sharing websites, Argentine popular culture has been strongly influenced by Korean thoughts and ideas. PSY and his unforgettable "Gangnam Style" touched nearly every part of the continent and received over one billion hits on YouTube. Thanks to the Internet and YouTube, the music video was available on-demand for anyone to access. Furthermore, the spread of K-pop's popularity in Argentina has been heavily assisted by YouTube. El Centro Cultural Coreano en América Latina has its own YouTube channel filled with videos from K-pop concerts to cultural expositions held around Buenos Aires ("CentroCultural Coreano"). The Internet enables fans in Buenos Aires to stay up-to-date with the latest upload of videos and information in Seoul. This speedy connection

between continents continues to provide Argentines with the latest Korean pop music and allows the continual dispersion of Korean culture to the Argentine Republic.

In comparison to Japanese immigrants, Chinese immigrants began moving to Argentina more recently. Although Chinese immigration started almost 40 years ago, time has not adversely affected the continuing growth of Chinese influence in Argentina. Recent success through the film *Un cuento chino* has raised awareness of not only the cultural difference and language barrier that many Chinese immigrants experience. Furthermore, the Argentine film and television industries are realizing the economic success that is associated with films and programs with Chinese-descent actors. As popularity of these types of media increases, so does the awareness of the Chinese people. Often times, Chinese-Argentines are portrayed as owning a supermarket and living nearby or even above the establishment (Bogado Bordazar). What Argentine society is slowly realizing is that subsequent generations of Chinese immigrants are learning to read, write, and speak Spanish so that the language barrier is not a problem for communicating. The inclusion of a Chinese actress on a popular Latin Disney Channel program shows the inclusion of various ethnic groups. In my opinion, this addition demonstrates how negative stereotypes can be uprooted starting with the youth.

With the growing exposure that many Asian actors and actresses are receiving in Argentina, there is a slow, but conscious realization that there are different ethnic groups from Asia. Rather than grouping all Asians under one collective and referring to them as “chinos,” the media is using terms that reflect their culture such as *japonés* (Japanese), *coreano* (Korean), and *chino* (Chinese). In a segment on the morning television program *Antes del Mediodía (am)*, the corresponding anchor visits a Chinese supermarket and interviews a Chinese woman (Telefe, “AM – Diferencias entre coreanos y chinos”). During the interview, the correspondent questions

about the differences between Koreans and Chinese in a number of areas including language, food, eating habits, and clothes. It is apparent that the interviewee has moderate mastery of Spanish and has a difficult time answering questions, but she is able to describe the different types of food, how Chinese and Koreans sit to eat, and the types of dress each culture wears.

This thesis contributes to the growing academic research that is being done and to the cultural paradigm shift happening in Argentina. Researchers such as Drs. Mirta Bialogorski and Carolina Mera at the University of Buenos Aires and Dr. Cecilia Onaha at the University of La Plata alongside Asian cultural associations and organizations funded by various foreign governments have uncovered the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant experience in Argentina. Many other theses and dissertations have focused on topics such as the arrival of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean natives into Argentina, how they adapt to their new surroundings, how their descendants assimilate into Argentine culture, and the lasting impacts of cultural identity. Moreover, the analysis of audiovisual popular culture has provided insight into the attitudes and perceptions of Argentines about newly immigrated Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants and how society perceives ethnically different individuals.

Further Research

After completing research on this thesis, I feel that there are several topics that would be helpful in further facilitating dialogue about Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigration into Argentina. The first would be how immigrants culturally and politically identify themselves. For example, by looking at only the names of the Korean-Argentines mentioned in the Korean analysis, one can conjecture that immigrants have adapted themselves into Argentine society and have slowly integrated themselves and their family members into their new homeland. Take for example the Argentine actress Natalia Kim and the Argentine model Marcos Benjamín Lee. Both were born in Buenos Aires and their names mix common Spanish first names with traditional paternal Korean last names thus combining two different heritages. Moreover, the child's name is what society recognizes him or her by. This identification can be compared to a Catholic baptism when the priest asks the parents and godparents what name will be given to the child. In the interview with CCTV America, Pablo and Susana Jong moved from Sichuan province in search of a better life outside China. The married couple are university language professors and translators of classic Chinese poetry and literature. They, too, shared their humble beginnings in the Argentine capital and their work as they achieved success. To my surprise, their two children raise an important cultural issue for immigrants; do they consider themselves Argentine, Chinese, or even Chinese-Argentine? In this case, the Jong's 19 year old Chinese-born son considers himself Chinese, but their 15 year old Argentine-born daughter does not identify herself as Chinese or Argentine.

Another topic that should be researched is the impact of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean culture on extracurricular activities like athletics. The Korean sport of Taekwondo has become a well-known and popular martial art since its start the late 1960s. Popularity has increased due to

the wide spread attention the sport has received on national news programs. During the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, Argentine Sebastián Crismanich won gold in the 80 kilogram division. In doing so, Crismanich became the first Argentine since 1948 to win a gold medal, but also established taekwondo as an established sport in Argentina (Alperín). An additional sport to consider doing further research is soccer.

In Argentina, soccer is the most popular athletic discipline and a mainstay in Argentine culture (Argentina, La Secretaría de Deportes de la Nación y El Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos). In 2011, Kim Gwi-Hyeon was one of the first Korean-born players to sign with an Argentine soccer club. Kim played his inaugural two seasons for Club Atlético Vélez Sarsfield of the Argentine Primera División. However, when Kim was approximately 12 years old, he was brought by Armando Martínez, an Argentine soccer scout, to Argentina to improve his skills at the Club Atlético Vélez Sarsfield (gimgwi; Tagliaferri; TV Pública – Argentina, “Vivo en Argentina: Un lugar en el mundo: Kim Gwi Hyeon – 08-08-11”). Martínez became not only Kim’s coach, but adopted father. In an interview on the show *Vivo en Argentina* (I Live in Argentina), Kim recounts his integration into Argentine society with little knowledge of Spanish or the culture. After nearly seven years in the country, Kim considers himself a porteño with Korean roots. The Korean-Argentine blends both topics in a way that would make it appealing to do answer more research concerning cultural identity and sports.

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