

**Pristine Traditions of the *Volk*:  
Antimodernism and Cultural Section  
in German Buenos Aires, 1905-1915**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how German-speaking elites in Buenos Aires selected the symbols that represented the broader community and that ethnic members used to construct their own identity and memory. This paper will examine one of Buenos Aires' two daily German-language newspapers, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, between 1905 and 1915. It argues that symbols of European heritage were not remembered equally in Buenos Aires. Instead, ethnic leaders selectively chose symbols and imposed them on the community in order to streamline their own cultural adjustment to a new world. Other socio-economic groups surely contested these representations, but the role of elites was crucial. When crossing the Atlantic, Europeans did not only encounter other peoples but also themselves. While contact with Argentines reshaped these immigrants, lack of contact with Europe also played a key role in the perception of the self.

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## **Introduction**

Ethnic institutions play a central role in migration studies. They offer insight into immigrants' behaviour, attitudes, linguistic practices, and identity. Recent contributions from cultural history have demonstrated how the cultural identity expressed in these institutions has changed over time. What is missing from this discussion, however, is a detailed analysis of how these institutions select the symbols that represent the community and that ethnic members use to construct their own identity and memory. This paper will examine one of Buenos Aires' two daily German-language newspapers, the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, between 1905 and 1915. It will demonstrate that ethnic leaders shaped the nature of the German community of Buenos Aires through a process of *cultural selection*. Symbols of European heritage were not remembered equally in Buenos Aires but rather selected and imposed on the community. This study examines how Europeans encountered and reshaped their culture and identity while on a foreign continent.

## **Historiography**

This study relies on the concept of antimodernism from Canadian, American, and German historiography. In the study of antimodernism, historians have examined elite responses to pressures brought by urbanization, industrialization, class conflict, and the relationship between local and national identities. Scholars have illustrated how the ruling elite decided to selectively retain certain parts of the past, certain traditions, and certain symbols of a simpler time. I will draw on several studies that deal with the relationship between tradition and the modernity in forming a cultural identity as theoretical models that can inform migration studies. I will modify the concept of antimodernism to describe another sort of dialectical relationship between tradition and cultural change.

Jackson Lears' 1981 seminal work, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, analyzes how a large group of middle- and upper-class people in the Northeastern United States accepted and resisted the changes in their society that they generally associated with modernity. This related most

notably to industrialization, the “triumph of the clock” in the work place, urbanization, and the culture of consumption. Lears writes that the antimodern impulse was rooted in a crisis of cultural authority.<sup>1</sup> Yet these antimodernists were not escapists from the modern world; their quest for authenticity eased apprehensions about the changing world and streamlined their acceptance of the new society.<sup>2</sup> Lears argues that antimodernism smoothed the transition to modern culture even as it sustained protest against that culture.<sup>3</sup> This concept of a hegemonic social group resisting some aspects of new culture and accepting others can have a wider application.

Ian McKay’s influential book *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* expands on one key idea of Lears’ book and adds the concept of *cultural selection*. Part of Lears’ book looks at how antimodernists selectively collected medieval and renaissance art and artifacts while overlooking other objects and periods. McKay’s book focuses almost exclusively on arts, crafts, and folk songs. He argues that a cultural elite has reconstructed public perception of Nova Scotia’s past by emphasizing a purer, simpler, and more idyllic heritage than is actually the case. Rural fisher folk were constructed as the bearers of Nova Scotia’s cultural essence.<sup>4</sup> Cultural elites erased ethnic and class differences as well as rural poverty while they selectively chose an idea of the “Folk” that satisfied the needs of a different social group, namely the urban middle-class. They did so to confront the cultural change that “threatened” their society, to create a provincial identity, and to promote tourism.

McKay examines the mass dissemination of folk images, handicrafts, and folkloric stories and songs. He argues that antimodernists silenced the voices of the people they claimed to represent.<sup>5</sup> They believed that society had an “organic unity” and a core of

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>4</sup> Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), xv.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

underlying traditions.<sup>6</sup> This study will use McKay's description of *cultural selection* to analyze the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. His argument that cultural elites silence "authentic" aspects of culture and heritage in the process of cultural selection resembles the situation of the German community of Buenos Aires. There, ethnic elites selectively reminded immigrants about certain symbols of heritage. In so doing, they constructed German culture differently than elites in Germany.

In *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, Celia Applegate examines how a local elite in the Palatinate constructed a state identity based on the borders around them. She argues that political borders served as the framework around which elites promoted a regional identity. Whereas McKay focuses on how a regional identity based on selective traditions coexisted with modernity, Applegate looks at how the local focus on tradition coexisted with interest in the national (which was modern).

Local elites in the Palatinate, particularly after 1871, revived interest in local history, customs, dialects, songs, and lyrical writings, a process they called *Heimatbestrebungen* (Heimat endeavours).<sup>7</sup> From 1872 to 1900, elites founded beautification societies that aimed to restore ruins, maintain castles, and build trails. They enhanced a town's reputation, instilling a civic pride and helping local businesses.<sup>8</sup> The *Heimat* tradition gave nature, history, and tradition a new meaning in modern era while it tried to reconcile all classes and factions.<sup>9</sup> These projects created a new mythology about the region's contribution to German nationhood.<sup>10</sup> These *Heimat* enthusiasts were antimodernists, according to Applegate,<sup>11</sup> but this is secondary to her examination of Palatinate identity and the ways that regional traditions coexisted national identity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Celia Applegate, *Nation of Provincials*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

Applegate's argument that regionalism was a part of nationalism (local tradition as part of the national state) can be transplanted to the study of Germans in Argentina. In Buenos Aires, elites presented symbols of ethnicity as tradition while interest in Argentina was the larger state identity. Her analysis of the elements of tradition that German elites were culturally selecting resembles many of the symbols found in German ethnic activities in Argentina.

Abigail Green's *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* examines how the state in Hanover, Saxony, and Württemberg tried to promote regional, state interests in their citizenry to combat national/imperial loyalties. They did so by sponsoring historical associations, art galleries, historical museums, monuments, and public festivals. She also examines the modernization of local monarchies, as well as the role of state newspapers and railroad networks in developing regional identities that would protect the interests of the ruling elites. Applegate and Green illustrate a common trend of local elites promoting symbols of regional cultural identity. In all four states studied, elites responded to the rise of German nationalism and the German Empire. Additionally, representations of German culture were not constant in Germany, and cultural change took place not only in Argentina but also in Germany itself.

Like Lears and McKay, this paper employs the concept *cultural hegemony* to explain the dialectical relationship between tradition and change. I argue, however, that cultural hegemony can exist at many levels. Like American, Canadian, and German elites, ethnic leaders also had power, and they responded to their own cultural crisis using tactics similar to antimodernists. They stressed ethnic cohesion over differences of class, religion, and country of origin. Like antimodernists, ethnic leaders looked to the past and selected key elements of it in order to minimize the cultural crisis they decided they faced. They emphasized certain German cultural traditions and symbols. They also helped their members integrate into Argentine civic society and thereby to accept their modern world.



This study relies on a growing body of scholarship regarding the role of ethnic newspapers in constructing their readers' identity and in changing the relationship between the ethnic community and greater society. Brent Peterson has argued that "what nineteenth-century German immigrants read was intimately connected with their continually shifting sense of who they were".<sup>13</sup> It also "constituted and represented the discursive universe in which the immigrants' search for identity took place".<sup>14</sup> Peterson essentially argues that ethnic newspapers gave a disparate group of German immigrants a common German-American identity and over time transformed the nature of this identity. Peter Conolly-Smith stresses the integrating effect of ethnic newspapers. He proposes that the press in pre-war New York City allowed German immigrants to access American culture while eliminating the language barrier. After newspapers translated American imagery into German, they then translated immigrants into Americans.<sup>15</sup> He explains that when reading information in their own language, immigrants link their ethnic identity to symbols of the host society.

Yet my application of *cultural selection* to immigration studies goes beyond the role of newspapers in shaping identity because it explains the power relations involved and the motivations for them. Elites selected culture that provided the foundation on which many immigrants constructed their identity. This shaped how immigrants remembered their heritage and how children born in the Americas negotiated Old and New World identities.

This paper builds on a large body of studies about intra-community relations. Russell Kazal has argued that the German community of Philadelphia at the turn of the twentieth century was in fact not a community. Generational, class, and religious differences segregated German speakers. This made it possible for sub-groups to increasingly participate in aspects of American society. Jonathan Zimmerman and Barbara

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<sup>13</sup> Brent Peterson, *Popular Narratives and Ethnic Identity: Literature and Community in Die Abendschule* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Conolly-Smith, *Translating America: An Immigrant Press Visualizes American Popular Culture, 1895-1918* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 286.

Lorenzkowski have demonstrated that immigrants in the American Mid-West and in Ontario often ignored the efforts of ethnic leaders to promote their cultural heritage. Many immigrants chose to define their ethnic identity on their own terms despite the admonishment of ethnic leaders. Both historians argue that not only immigrants and the host society engaged in cultural negotiation but that this process also included ethnic leaders who opposed other immigrants' ideas about cultural retention and change.

This paper proposes that we view power relations in the German "community" of Buenos Aires as a negotiation between three groups: German-Argentine elites; other German-speaking immigrants; and the Argentine host society. Immigrants had the power to accept or ignore the culture represented in ethnic associations. They could represent and remember their culture in their own way within a larger, Spanish-speaking society and reject the cultural hegemony of ethnic elites. In doing so, however, they chose to submit themselves to the higher level of cultural hegemony that Argentine elites possessed.

The host society participated in the process of cultural selection as well. Argentina influenced the curriculums of German-language schools through public policy and the fact that teachers and students lived in Argentina. Argentines often labelled all German speakers "German" rather than Swiss, Austrian, or *Russlanddeutsche*, and this had an influence on this ethnic group's cultural identity. Argentina permitted or suppressed the sale of German literature, German theatre production, the construction of small German monuments, the flying of foreign flags in front of ethnic institutions, and licensing popular festivals and parades. It was also Argentina that decided on the degree of contact with European countries. It allowed foreign-born priests, German trade missions, the German Embassy, and German funding of the *Deutsches Seemannsheim* and the *Deutscher Frauenverein* to influence working-class and rural German speakers.

### **Examples of cultural selection**

German culture existed and adapted in Buenos Aires at the individual, group, and institutional level. Not all manifestations of Germanness are examples of cultural

selection. A small business sold ethnic food and people sent their children to German-language schools without selectively defining German culture and without creating an artificial memory of traditions. However, the cultural elite, such as the publishers of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, promoted specific representations of German culture while silencing others. In this section, I will analyze how the paper and other institutions that the paper reported on chose to selectively represent German culture and heritage. German-speaking elites stressed the importance of German and Austrian emperors, organized popular celebrations and excursions, and promoted only a certain kind of German literature. The newspaper promoted ethnic cohesion over class divisions, and it tried to create a community based on ethnicity rather than state of origin.

These activities do not mirror exactly those of the cultural elites in German-speaking Europe for German-Argentines were responding to a different crisis of authority, that of living in a Spanish-speaking society rather than that of local elites in Germany in an emergent European empire. Over time, this produced a different cultural identity in two distant places (Europe and Argentina) while both groups believed they were authentically representing German culture. The constant reconstitution of German-Argentine culture in relation to the dominant Argentine society partially explains why cultural change in immigrant communities takes place and why it diverges from the changing culture Europe.

The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* held both Wilhelm II of Germany and Franz Josef I of Austria-Hungary in high esteem. In my view, these emperors represented tradition for German-speaking elites in Buenos Aires and helped them smooth the transition to their New World reality. Yet just as antimodern and modern ideas work together to create modernity, this interest in Old World traditions and New World realities shaped the cultural representations presented in the *Tageblatt*. The paper celebrated the sixtieth year of Franz Joseph's rule of Austria-Hungary in 1908.<sup>16</sup> The newspaper celebrated Wilhelm's birthday every January 27 and reported that other institutions did the same.

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<sup>16</sup> "Zum 60-jährigen Regierungsjubiläum des Kaisers," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, December 1, 1908, p. 1.

Reports on the celebrations appeared on the days before and after this event as well, and this indicates the importance the paper gave to the Kaiser. In January 1911, for example, the newspaper reported that 20 German clubs were involved in organizing the festivities. It celebrated the Kaiser's silver wedding anniversary in 1905,<sup>17</sup> and referred to him as the "Einiger unseres Vaterlandes und Volkes."<sup>18</sup>

Support for the emperors was not necessarily a top-down imposition of elite values. Nevertheless, using the monarchs as symbols of German culture was a choice. Ethnic leaders could have promoted republican values, something quite common in their host society. Yet they chose to let royalty represent their cultural identity, and it is possible they stressed this because they perceived a cultural crisis. Being immigrants might have made these German-speaking elites more monarchist than they would have been. The emperors represented tradition at a time when accepting Argentine modernity could have meant surrendering German cultural identity.

Much like Abigail Green has written was the case in Hanover, Württemberg, and Saxony, local elites in Buenos Aires organized festivals and group excursions to create a local identity rather than one linked to the modern nation-state. In Green's case, this implied state rather than the greater German nation, but in Buenos Aires, the local was German ethnicity (nation) and Argentina was the greater nation-state. The newspaper promoted, for example, nature excursions to Rio de la Plata's nearby delta in *El Tigre*. While the paper provides no evidence of beer festivals, other ethnic institutions probably organized these events with the intention of promoting community cohesion and "authentic" traditions in the face of daily interaction with the multiethnic modern world around them in Buenos Aires.

The newspaper presented its readers with high culture and as a result sculpted a certain kind of cultural identity. The *Tageblatt* promoted an annual masquerade ball every

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<sup>17</sup> "Berliner Leben," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 2, 1905, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> "Ueberseeische Post-Nachrichten: Deutschland," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 17, 1905, p. 2.

March. Up-coming operas, plays, and performances by the several German men's choirs received almost daily attention. In late April and early May 1905, the paper celebrated the hundredth anniversary of Schiller's death and his contribution to German literature. While on the one hand these cultural activities demonstrate the specific class outlook of the *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, it also shows the kind of traditions being practiced and remembered by Europeans far from Europe. The newspaper did not promote more popular forms of German literature. It was selectively creating a pristine image of German traditions to coexist with its interest in Argentine politics and trade.

The *Argentinisches Tageblatt's* focus on German speakers from all states of origin (pan-Germanism) offers another example of how we can apply Ian McKay's *cultural selection* to the study of immigrant adaptation. The paper labelled the community "germanisch" rather than German, Austrian, and Swiss. It spoke of *Stammesgesnossen* with different fatherlands but united through language and culture.<sup>19</sup> An ethnic newspaper can chose to sell its newspapers to *Deutsche*, *Deutsch-Argentinier*, *Germanen*, or to many other groups of people. The fact that the *Tageblatt* often spoke of *Germanen* was indeed a choice, and this choice was top-down symbol around which elites wanted community members to unite. Of course a working class Austrian immigrant in Argentina did not need to accept the label of *Germanen*, just as an office worker in Halifax does not need to imagine rural fisher folk as the essence of his cultural heritage. The process, however, is similar. In both cases, an elite group has tried to create an image of heritage that fits its own needs. A Germanic community would be larger than separate German, Austrian, Swiss, and *Russlanddeutsche* communities, and this constructed a German-Argentine cultural identity vis-à-vis the modern Argentine society.

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<sup>19</sup> "Angelegenheiten des germanischen Vereins," *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 25, 1905, p. 4.

A part of the *Tageblatt's* pan-Germanism was its interest in an ethnic “colony”.<sup>20</sup> The newspaper clearly sent a message to its readers that they were a part of a larger, imagined community of German-speaking Argentines. This, I argue, offers another example of cultural selection, because it presents all Germanophones as a united group. This silences generational differences that produced different identities based on Europe and Argentina to varying degrees. This also suppresses different loyalties to European emperors and the Argentine republic. This does not reflect the ways German culture was represented nor remembered, but it is, in my view, still an example of cultural selection. Labelling it a German “colony” is a decision that streamlined the way local elites negotiated new and old identities. While many members of the community may have similarly used this word, this does not imply that it was a naturally occurring idea any more than widespread reverence of the Kaiser or Schiller.

There are several examples of how the paper promoted a unified, classless, stateless, ethnic community. On October 2, 1905, for example, in discussing the Germanischer Verein, a pan-German organization, the *Tageblatt* wrote, “Es handelt sich um ein altes arbeitsunfähiges Paar, das seit langen Jahren zur deutschen Kolonie von Buenos Aires zählt...”<sup>21</sup> Reporting on a visit to Rosario by the German ambassador, the paper wrote that “Der k. deutsche Gesandte Freiherr v. Waldhausen wurde gestern bei seiner Ankunft in Rosario vom k. deutschen Konsul Hrn. Tietjen, den Vertretern der deutschen Gesellschaft und vielen Mitgliedern der deutschen Kolonie [von Rosario] am Bahnhof empfangen.”<sup>22</sup> During the war, the paper wrote, “die deutsche Kolonie hat seit

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<sup>20</sup> Analyzing the paper’s usage, it appears that *Kolonie* meant *community* rather than extension of the German empire. While this usage may seem odd today, German, English, and Spanish dictionaries still recognize this older meaning. One can speak of the English colony in Berlin/*die englische Kolonie in Berlin/la colonia inglesa en Berlín*. When referring to an ethnic enclave in another European country, nobody thinks of imperial aspirations. Based on the way the Germans in Argentina used the word, the same should also be the case in South America. One hundred years ago in Buenos Aires, this word could and did have two very different meanings. Because this usage did not suggest any imperial aspirations, it would be helpful, at least in English, that historians not label the *community* in Buenos Aires a *colony*.

<sup>21</sup> “Aufruf!” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 2, 1905, p 2.

<sup>22</sup> “Personalien,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, April 25, 1905, p. 1.

Kriegsausbruch eine Opferwilligkeit bewiesen...Gebt uns Kleider und Wäsche für unsere Obdachlosen Landsleute! Wohltun an des Volkes Genossen ist Dienst für das Vaterland.”<sup>23</sup> We can determine many other things from such citations, but for the purpose of this study, I present them only to demonstrate how the newspaper promoted a unified community, for which it defined the cultural symbols and traditions.

A final example of the cultural selection in the *Tageblatt* is its emphasis on ethnic cohesion over class divisions. The newspaper informed readers about Argentine laws and politics and helped working-class and wage-labouring immigrants find jobs and housing through the Verein zur Förderung germanischer Einwanderung, which advertised daily in the *Tageblatt*. The newspaper thus tried to increase the size of its ethnic readership because helping integration would prevent emigration to Europe. Through these elite efforts, the newspaper brought Germanophones of all classes under their leadership rather than allowing them to find their own way in the dominant Argentine society. In encouraging a cohesive community, the *Tageblatt* responded like antimodernists. While antimodernists in Germany, Canada, and the United States longed for simpler times in a world without the class conflict brought by modern industrialism, the *Tageblatt* too wanted all socio-economic groups to unite around a common culture, which the elites defined. In Buenos Aires, these German-speaking elites tried to overshadow class differences with ideas of tradition and feelings of belonging. To do so, the paper appealed to ethnic identity and selected the symbols that defined that ethnicity.

### **Agency and Alternatives**

It has not been my intention to show how ethnic leaders acted upon the majority of immigrants. Instead, I have aimed only to demonstrate how ethnic leaders tried to do so. Through the *Argentinisches Tageblatt* and the other ethnic institutions that the paper discussed, it appears that German-speaking leaders defined the symbols that represented their culture and formed the basis of their ethnic identity. They responded to a cultural crisis by defining German culture in a certain way. In neither case did other socio-

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<sup>23</sup> “An die deutsche Kolonie,” *Argentinisches Tageblatt*, October 1, 1915, p. 7.

economic groups have to accept these views. Nonetheless, studies of cultural hegemony generally recognize that elites play an influential role in defining the cultural imaginary of other groups.

In the case of Germanophones in Buenos Aires, there were several alternatives to the image of German culture that the *Tageblatt* presented. First, they could find other ethnic institutions and associations that remembered German culture differently. An ethnic trade union, a German bar, a German sports team, or even a German-language Church offered conflicting images of what defined people's Germanness. Second, one could choose to define their culture at the personal or familial level. They could allow food, conversations, songs, and dialect to define their culture. People could quite easily reject symbols of monarchs, Schiller, and a classless imagined community. Third, they could mix these self-definitions of culture with the dominant Argentine culture around them, which was always the case on a long enough timeline. They could choose what marked their culture such as language, tradition, food, faith, and family structures and integrate this with symbols and practices of Argentine culture. They could go to Spanish-language operas, join an Argentine sports team, eat some Argentine food, sing the Argentine national anthem, eat meals at Argentine times of the day, and follow Argentine work schedules while remembering and performing their German cultural heritage on their own terms.

### **Broader Significance**

Notwithstanding disagreements between the elite and other German speakers, my goal has been to highlight how immigrants selectively remembered and defined German culture. The working class may not have done exactly what the elites did, but they too selectively defined their culture. It is important to note not only that symbols of Germanness persisted in Buenos Aires, but also that other symbols that could define Germanness were absent in the sources that historians use to study ethnic communities.

Different groups engage in cultural selection at different times and in different places. A national identity and cultural symbols are selectively chosen as a part of the immigrant



experience. In 1911, only eight percent of the German speakers of Ontario were born in Germany, and almost all of those people had left Europe before 1871. Yet the German Kaiser figured more prominently in the pages of their ethnic press than in the *Tageblatt*. This is most obviously an example of cultural selection. Greek restaurants in Toronto today are often decorated with pictures of ancient Greek ruins in Athens even though almost all Greeks in the city came from or descend from people from one specific rural region in Greece. The City of Toronto decorates the lampposts in its Little Italy with maps of Italy and yet the neighbourhood's residents hail from only one small region of southern Italy. This shows that not only the ethnic leadership defines the symbols of cultural identity but also the higher level of cultural hegemony, the host society.

This paper also contributes to the discussion of cultural hegemony. I argue that hegemony can exist at different levels without necessarily supporting nor challenging the cultural hegemony of the most dominant group. The elites who defined the German cultural identity of Buenos Aires did not subvert the ultimate hegemony of Argentine elites. Allowing the Kaiser to be important for ethnic identity does not threaten any core principles of the Argentine elite. Its hegemony was expressed through the dominant status of the Spanish language in government and business, civic loyalty in terms of taxes and trade, acceptance of Argentine labour relations, and recognition of Argentine diplomatic sovereignty.

German-speaking elites' cultural hegemony of the over members of the ethnic community did not support the Argentine elite's hegemony. Instead, it was a lower level of power that dealt with different issues. The German group could only have this hegemony because the Argentine group tolerated it, and these were two levels of hegemony that could generally coexist. As the wartime experience of German communities in Brazil, the United States, and Canada show, this cultural autonomy can come into conflict with the more dominant group, and in this case ethnic cultural hegemony quickly dissolves. When this happens, ethnic culture is not instantly eradicated but rather left to individuals and families to define for themselves. In other places, therefore, the power of the host society suddenly removed the Kaiser and Schiller, but

ethnic food, song, dialect, and faith continued without the *cultural selection* of the ethnic elites.

### **Conclusion**

The *Argentinisches Tageblatt* selected the symbols that represented the German-speaking community of Buenos Aires at the turn of the twentieth century. This in turn had a major impact on how ethnic members constructed their own identity and memory. Ethnic leaders did not shape the nature of the community equally and authentically but selectively chose symbols in order to streamline their own cultural adjustment to a new world. Other socio-economic groups surely contested these representations, but the role of elites was indeed crucial. When crossing the Atlantic, Europeans did not only encounter other peoples but also themselves. While contact with Argentines reshaped these immigrants, lack of contact with Europe also played a key role in the perception of the self.

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