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Socio-Economic Conditions of Southern and Eastern European Immigrants in the United States,
1880-1924

OWEN W. REITENAUER

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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Randall Fegley
Associate Professor of History
Thesis Supervisor

Kirk Shaffer
Associate Professor of Latin American Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Sandy Feinstein
Associate Professor of English
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

Did the majority of southern and eastern European immigrants that entered the U.S. from 1880 through 1924 begin as an underclass, living in poverty? In addition, did these migrants only have the ability to work menial levels of employment? In a similar context, were northwestern European migrants able to obtain more opportunities than southern and eastern Europeans? If so, did northwestern Europeans restrict the latter? Could this have caused the perception of an underclass among southern and eastern Europeans? Ultimately, could this perception have led to negative behaviors or actions against these groups? What policies were implemented during this period to restrict southern and eastern European migrants? In addition, what effects did these policies have on southern and eastern European migrants?

From 1880 to 1924, the U.S. government enacted immigration policies. The majority of these policies were restrictive in nature. My research on historical data, including congressional policies, memoirs, and scholarly works on such topics identifies the possible causes of the change in U.S. attitude towards migrants. Numerous theoretical models influenced societal reactions towards this group. Research indicates various political movements that influenced policy makers during this period. There is a correlation between the economic and social opportunities of southern and eastern European migrants based on societal, individual policy makers' or political movements' perceptions of this group.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
 CHAPTER 1.	
INTRODUCTION	1
THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY.....	3
Othering	3
Immigrant Selectivity	4
Conventional Measurement of the Economic Impact of Immigration.....	5
Class Politics	9
Politicized Places.....	10
Politicized Ethnic Identity	11
Distributive Justice	12
Affective Intelligence	13
 CHAPTER 2.	
SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRATION TO THE US.....	16
Push and Pull Factors of Migration.....	16
Italy	19
Russia.....	22
Austro-Hungarian Empire.....	24

CHAPTER 3.

PUBLIC RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION.....27

 Increased Economic Implications Towards Immigrants27

 Josiah Strong28

 Francis Walker.....29

 American Federation of Labor.....30

 Immigration Restriction League.....32

 Radical Politics.....34

CHAPTER 4.

AGE OF IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION38

 Senate Committee on Immigration.....38

 The Literacy Act of 1917.....40

 The Emergency Quota Act of 1921.....42

 National Origins Act of 1924.....43

 Effects on Societal Views of American Immigration Policy.....43

CONCLUSION.....45

BIBLIOGRAPHY46-48

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: The Distribution of Worker Skills in the Source Country

Source: Hendrik Van den Berg and Orn B. Bodvarsson. *The Economics of Immigration: Theory and Policy*. New York: Springer (2009).

Figure 1.2: Wages versus Labor Opportunities Due to Immigration

Source: Donald R. Davis and David E. Weinstein. "United States Technological Superiority and the Losses From Migration." *Center for Immigration Studies*. Vol. 2-5 (2005).

Figure 1.3: Impact of News Frame and Ethnic Cue on Immigration Policy Preferences

Source: Ted Brader, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 52, Issue 4 (2008).

Figure 2.1: European Immigration into the United States (By country)

Source: Roger Daniels. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc (2002).

Figure 2.2: Percentage of Northwestern European Immigration Compared to Southern and Eastern Immigration from 1880 through 1910

Source: Immigration and Reactions to the New Order (1850-1930). Last Modified January 10, 2012. http://theomahaproject.org/module_display.php?mod_id=114&review=yes. Accessed January 10, 2012.

Figure 2.3: Comparison of Northwestern European Immigrants and Southern and Eastern European Immigrants from 1881 through 1940.

Source: Nationmaster. "Asian Exclusion Act." Last Modified 2005. <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Asian-Exclusion-Act>. Accessed December 8, 2011.

Figure 2.4: Italian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910

Source: U.S: Immigration Commission. William Paul Dillingham. "Emigration Conditions in Europe." Doc. No. 478 (1911), 138.

Figure 2.5: Russian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910

Source: U.S: Immigration Commission. William Paul Dillingham. “Emigration Conditions in Europe.” Doc. No. 478 (1911), 241.

Figure 2.6: Austro-Hungarian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910

Source: U.S: Immigration Commission. William Paul Dillingham. “Emigration Conditions in Europe.” Doc. No. 478 (1911), 353.

Figure 4.1: Literacy Rate of U.S. Population Compared to Southern and Eastern European Countries

Source: U.S: Immigration Commission. William Paul Dillingham. “Emigration Conditions in Europe.” Doc. No. 478 (1911), 33.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, immigration remained one of the few opportunities for the survival of certain groups. In environments where liberty and opportunity were threatened, immigration became the best solution for the unfortunate circumstances many groups encountered. People were willing to leave their homelands, risking their entire livelihoods, in search of a better future. Such was evident via southern and eastern European emigration beginning in the late nineteenth century. More than 20 million Europeans migrated across the Atlantic in search of a dream, a dream shared by millions before them, the dream of obtaining economic and social mobility in a new land or to acquire what they could and return home.¹

However, many found it difficult to achieve such goals. In some circumstances, immigrants' own lack of ambition hindered such achievement. For many, societal restrictions from receiving populations led to the inability of these immigrant groups to achieve societal and economic advancement. These societal restrictions derived from nativist attitudes of the U.S. population. Many U.S. citizens perceived southern and eastern Europeans immigrants as outsiders threatening to disrupt the cultural and economic foundations of their society.²

Immigration can be a transformative force that disrupts the societal framework of the host community. It can cause unexpected changes to the sending and receiving societies. These changes have a profound impact on the intergroup relations among natives and immigrants, as well as their descendants. There is almost no greater phenomenon in U.S. history that has affected the population more than immigration. Following southern and eastern European immigrants' arrival are processes

¹ "United States Immigration before 1965." Last Modified 2012. <http://www.history.com/topics/united-states-immigration-to-1965>. Accessed February 21, 2012.

² Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (2006), xv.

of acculturation into U.S. society that they experienced. In addition, national and state policies sought to hinder these immigrant groups from achieving economic and societal advancement.

Throughout the early twentieth century, as a response to societal fears of southern and eastern European immigration, the United States enacted some of the most restrictive immigration policies in history, such as the Literacy Act, the Emergency Quota Act, and the National Origins Act, which restricted southern and eastern European migrants from entering the U.S. Many believed these immigrant groups would undermine U.S. societal advancements. Upon arrival, many southern and eastern European immigrants were immediately labeled as outcasts and undesirables. Scholarship has been written depicting the factors behind policymakers' decisions regarding eastern and southern European immigration. This permits an understanding as to why such events have taken place in U.S. history.

THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY

Othering

The term “outsider” is any person or group that does not belong to a particular group. In regards to immigration, outsiders consist of multitudes of people from certain groups entering another group’s environment. When people begin to witness the entering of outsiders, their minds could begin to process fear--fear of the unknown, fear of a person or group who is foreign, whose ways are unfamiliar. This could lead to xenophobia and the perception of such groups being a societal threat towards their social order. This provides the rationale for various negative actions against the outsider. Altheide coined this phenomenon as “Othering”:

Threats to the public order and therefore to all good citizens are part of the focus of fear... Pointing to the ‘other,’ the outsider, the nonmember, the alien... ‘Othering’ is part of a social process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group. This requires the establishment and ‘group sense’ of symbolic boundaries of membership. These boundaries occur through institutional processes that are grounded in everyday situations and encounters.³

People often measure difference by judging the superiority versus inferiority in others, by viewing the differing attributes of others with indifference. Many locals portray this phenomenon when viewing the arrival of immigrants. They observe their differing traits negatively rather than simply accepting them. This allows fear to dictate how people react towards immigrants. People often fear what they do not understand. This can lead to difficulties for immigrants attempting to migrate into another society filled with concern.

As the number of immigrants venturing into a society increases, the feelings of anxiety from members of the host group increases dramatically as well. The fear that immigrants will increase the number of societal problems such as crime, poverty, and unemployment creates friction between the locals and those migrating. This leads to an increase in the development of a sense of belonging

³ David Altheide. *Terrorism and the Politics of Fear*. Oxford: AltaMira Press (2006), 116.

within members of a group. The members of the in-group band together with an “us versus them” mentality. As described by Altheide, natives label immigrants as outsiders, restricting them from various societal advantages. This is evident in the production of societal boundaries, such as the inability of some foreigners to obtain certain types of employment, live in certain locations, or venture to certain social gatherings within a community.⁴ Immigrants face these societal restrictions until they gain acceptance from the local population.

Acceptance can be difficult for immigrants to achieve when traveling to foreign lands. Almost immediately after relocation, as stated, locals often label immigrants as outsiders due to their foreign attributes. This characteristic of being an outsider can last years, even decades, depending on the ability of the immigrant community to prove its worth. The common question immigrants often experience from locals is, “Will this group be a benefit to society or a burden?” Of course, the answer is highly subjective and is based upon the values of the dominant societal group, such as socio-economic, religion, and politics. This question becomes the defining factor determining the societal boundaries that are placed on an immigrant group.

Immigrant Selectivity

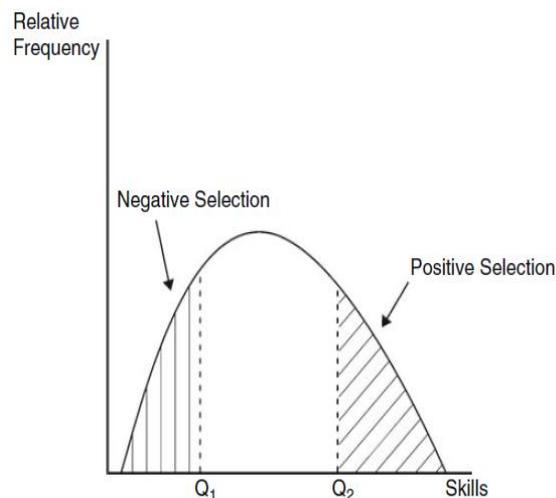
Nations accepting immigrants predominately acknowledge those who are viewed as economic assets, being profitable towards the economic system. Immigrants possessing capital worth, with the ability to invest or with highly valued skills, often gain acceptance from the local body prior to those lacking beneficial attributes. Chiswick wrote on this assertion of “Immigration Selectivity,” that “U.S. immigration policy has historically been based primarily on the premise that immigrants have a favorable impact on the destination country’s economic development.”⁵ Immigrant groups, who

⁵ Hendrik Van den Berg and Orn B. Bodvarsson. *The Economics of Immigration: Theory and Policy*. New York: Springer (2009), 79.

maintain various skill sets that are complementary to native workers, receive acceptance from the host community prior to those who do not. However, these skill sets must remain noncompetitive with native workers.⁶

Figure 1.1 illustrates Cheswick's theory of "Immigrant Selectivity." Immigrants that possess a skill set lower than the average skill level of native workers represented by Q_1 experience a selection bias by the host community. Immigrant groups that have a skill set higher than the average native worker, represented by Q_2 , also experience a selection bias from the local population.

Figure 1.1: The Distribution of Worker Skills in the Source Country



Acceptance is determined by the native perception of superiority over the immigrant group. Immigrant groups that possess skill sets that challenge native workers increase the possibility of an immigrant threat. Many natives maintain the perception that every immigrant admitted into the United States takes the place of an American laborer.

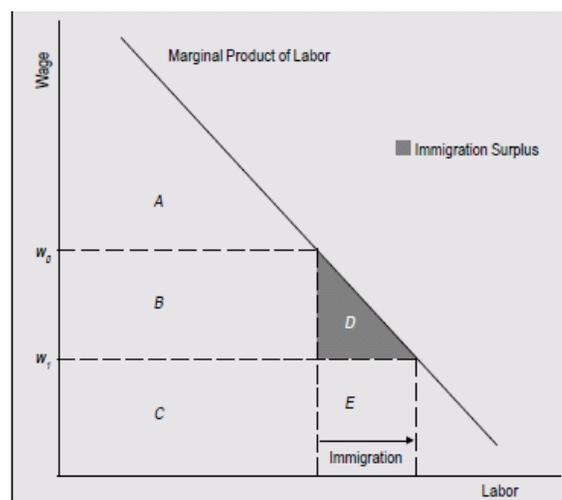
Conventional Measurement of the Economic Impact of Immigration

Protectionists also view the correlation between increases in immigration and decreases in wage rates as threatening to the native population. This is explained via Davis and Weinstein's

⁶ Ibid pg.80.

theory regarding the “Conventional Measurement of the Economic Impact of Immigration.” They argue that natives view wage rates via the concept of supply and demand. The influx of potential laborers due to immigration decreases the demand of labor, resulting in lower wage rates.⁷ **Figure 1.2** illustrates the demand of wages versus labor supply with a declining marginal product of labor curve. The height of the curve demonstrates the extra income earned from each additional worker from a fixed supply of employment opportunities. The intersection (W_0) represents the fixed amount of the native labor force with the marginal product of labor curve determined by wage rates prior to immigration. As the graph demonstrates, increases in immigration alter the domestic supply of labor. Therefore, increases in laborers, resulting from immigration based on fixed employment opportunities cause the total wages earned by laborers to dramatically decrease (W_1).

Figure 1.2: Wages Versus Labor Opportunities Due to Immigration



The concept of native superiority often deters the economic opportunities of immigrant groups, limiting creditable employment options. Employers are reluctant to hire immigrants for skilled labor positions because they fear that they are limiting the employment opportunities for

⁷ Donald R. Davis and David E. Weinstein. “United States Technological Superiority and the Losses from Migration.” *Center for Immigration Studies*. Vol. 2-5 (2005), 3.

natives, even though a certain immigrant may have more established skills. Thus, many are only able to work menial places of employment.

This increases the societal perception of immigrants only being capable of working menial forms of employment. Therefore, prior to finding employment, society has already perceived these immigrants as an underclass. This perception has jeopardized the ability of many immigrants arriving on American shores to obtain social and economic stability. Prior to arrival, many immigrants are subjected to the lowest levels of employment without any means of transcending to a higher social class:

With some exceptions, their individual educations and occupational skills were modest, and they confronted a generally unfavorable context on arrival: the U.S. government allowed them in but did not assume any responsibility for their well-being; employers hired them but assigned them to the lowest paying jobs; their own communities helped them but confined them in the process to the same, unskilled, dead end occupations filled by earlier arrivals.⁸

In many cases, nations actually searched specifically for immigrants from such groups to fill menial employment positions. Certain jobs in advanced societies have become stigmatized as unattractive to native workers. Natives refuse to apply to such menial levels of employment, regardless of the wage rate. However, many perceive that foreigners will be content with any form of employment regardless of its menial status because they viewed their past livelihoods as being outside of an industrialized nation.⁹

Based on these societal perceptions of immigrants, Hourwich argued that the acceptance of immigrants correlates with the economic advantages of hiring laborers for menial employment. Natives regulate the admission of immigrants based on the economic circumstances that dictate their societal perception of such groups. Hourwich explains, “The fluctuating supply of immigrant labor,

⁸ Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (2006), 121.

⁹ Vernon M. Briggs. “Immigrant Labor and the Issue of ‘Dirty Work’ in Advanced Industrial Societies.” *Population and Environment*. Vol. 14, No. 6 (1993), 505.

like that of any other commodity, may sometimes outrun the demand and at other times lag behind it.”¹⁰ When there is a demand for menial labor, many will encourage immigrants to come to fill those positions. However, when there is no longer any demand for labor, these positions held by immigrants are viewed as threatening to the native population.

Many perceive that because certain immigrant groups migrate due to lack of economic opportunities, they are willing to work in any form of employment. In some circumstances, this may be true. Some immigrants lack an education or specialized skill and migrate because they have no other option. Therefore, menial work may be their only employment option. However, many immigrants who are educated or have a desired skill are often discredited when arriving in another society, therefore, unable to obtain credible employment. Thus, many have no choice but to find menial levels of employment. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Society expects immigrants to be members of the lower class. Immigrants are treated in a manner that results in them being in the lower class. Society then discounts the educational and vocational achievements from their homelands and forces them into underemployment.

When certain immigrant groups attempt to receive an education to obtain better employment opportunities, societal boundaries established by natives still hinder such advancement. In a study that evaluated the earnings based on work-experiences, education, and time since immigration, Chiswick determined that immigrants received fewer earnings than natives even with advancements in education. Among natives, every year of additional education increased their earnings by seven percent, while immigrants only received a 5.5 percent increase in earnings. In addition, the positive

¹⁰ Isaac Aaronovich Hourwich. *Immigration and Labor: The Economic Aspects of European Immigration to the United States*. New York: Harper and Brothers (1922), 4.

effect of work experience for immigrants was largely discounted. Their earnings increased less each year for past work.¹¹

Societal advancements by immigrant groups via wage increases or credible employment opportunities minimize the perception of superiority by protectionist natives. In the majority of cases, societal resentment is based on the perceived threat of immigrant groups. When immigrants remain in menial employment, society maintains a clear level of superiority. However, when immigrant groups advance, nativist fears often circulate. This causes the possibility of negative actions against immigrant groups.

Class Politics

Fetzer describes this phenomenon as “Class Politics” in correlation with immigration’s threat to the native community’s economic well-being. He emphasizes, class politics defines a “class” as “a sociological group in the sense that its members, by virtue of their common placement in the economic structure, share common interests.”¹² The perceived threat that increases in immigration can cause a limitation in economic and employment opportunities and can lead native groups to form a joint front to combat such a threat. This concept has been discussed previously in regards to the “us versus them mentality” of natives against certain immigrant groups. Fetzer discusses further how class politics occur when the “material goals and aspirations of different social groups conflict and produce cleavages.” For example, members of conflicting socio-economic or political groups such as political parties or labor unions encounter a common threat pressuring them to group together to

¹¹ Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (2006), 90.

¹² Joel S. Fetzer. *Public Attitudes Towards Immigration in the United States, France, and Germany*. New York: Cambridge University Press (2000), 13.

alleviate perceived socio-economic or political harm.¹³ The level of a perceived threat could be determined by multiple factors. One of the most prominent is the rate of immigration to a location.

Politicized Places

Threat perception has been described via the theory of “Politicized Places.” Hopkins discusses how the level of a societal threat against certain immigrant groups represents the velocity and magnitude of an immigrant group entering the host population, when immigration is a noticeable national issue:

When communities are undergoing sudden demographic changes at the same time that salient national rhetoric politicizes immigration, immigrants can quickly become the targets of local political hostility. Sudden demographic changes generate uncertainty and attention. Coverage of immigration in the media can inform people about demographic changes and can politicize those changes in people’s minds. Acting in tandem, local demographics and nationally salient issues can produce anti-immigrant attitudes and outcomes.¹⁴

Hopkins based this theory on multiple data collections throughout the United States, including twelve national surveys and data collected from local anti-immigration laws. His results proved that abrupt changes in immigrant demographics in localities led to an 18 percent increase in the likelihood of favoring anti-immigration policies when immigration is a national issue.¹⁵

Hopkins emphasized that immigrants receive considerable attention locally when entering in large numbers in a short period. However, immigrants fail to influence anti-immigration policies on a national level until exterior pressures increase local attention. Hopkins states, “For that, people need salient frames that ‘define what the problem is and how to think about it.’ In other words, the demographic change might not be seen as having political

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Daniel J. Hopkins. “Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 104, No. 1 (2010), 40-41.

¹⁵ Ibid.

consequences unless frames are available that make such knowledge clear.”¹⁶ One of the most obvious national frames directing attention towards immigrants is the media. The media assist in the perception of immigrants as national threats.

Politicized Ethnic Identity

Immigration’s ability to threateningly alter the national identity of the host population is another perceived threat discussed by Wald. Wald’s theory of “Politicized Ethnic Identity” determines the negative response by a native population towards a foreign group by its characteristics. When entering a native population, new groups increase nativist fears while maintaining encompassing traditions, cultural practices, distinct differences in race, language, and appearance. The native population perceives certain immigrant groups portraying these characteristics as more threatening to the dominant social identity. These factors do not cause the immediate reaction of the host population themselves. However, they do assist in determining the magnitude of the societal reaction of certain groups:

Groups are more likely to be well-received by the host population if they are white, English speaking, relatively small and geographically dispersed, and share the dominant Christian faith of the American people. Clearly, race and language remain central divides in the United States and strong factors that impede the incorporation of non-white and foreign language groups. Similarly, large, highly concentrated groups may ‘stick out,’ generating resentment and resistance from nativist elements.¹⁷

One of the leading arguments by nativists regarding ethnic identity is that immigrant communities are in their society, but not part of it.

The increase of immigrant traits that differ from mainstream society magnifies their foreignness, providing a fertile ground for speculations about their intentions. Their foreign culture

¹⁶ Ibid pgs. 41-43.

¹⁷ Kenneth D. Wald. “Homeland Interests in Hostland Politics: Politicized Ethnic Identity among Middle Eastern Heritage Groups in the United States.” <http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/kenwald/pos6292/Wald%202006.doc>. Accessed November 16, 2011, 5.

eludes their ability to explain themselves successfully. This is why many first generation immigrant groups experience the most hostility. It is simply because their traits are the most separate or foreign from mainstream society. It is also because most first generation immigrant groups lack a voice. Although many of these immigrant groups publish works such as newspaper articles or labor papers, they often fail to gather national attention capable of effecting a change in societal perception and public policy. The offspring of immigrants are more in tune with American culture and the English language, therefore, contributing to their ability to gain a “voice” in politics, commerce, and religion. This allows them to reaffirm their identities that were attacked throughout their parents’ generation, providing them with the ability to obtain membership into the host society.¹⁸

Distributive Justice

The political philosopher Michael Walzer discussed immigration regarding the concept of membership. He asserted that nations are justified in determining which outsiders should or should not be granted admission into a national community. His concept of membership has derived from his more extensive theory of “Distributive Justice,” which emphasizes the primary value distributed among one another of membership into a community. Walzer explains, “Membership is a good that can only be distributed by taking people in or refusing to take them.” In that, members of a community have an obligation and a right to base membership on what would be most suitable to societal preferences.¹⁹

A country is a membership community, a ‘world of common meanings’ and shared ‘ways of life,’ which its members are entitled to preserve. Because the unimpeded entry of strangers would render such preservation impossible, the members of a national community must have the right ‘to make their own admissions policy, to control and sometimes restrain the flow of immigrants.’²⁰

¹⁸ Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (2006), 119.

¹⁹ Linda Bosniak. *The Citizen and the Alien: Dilemmas of Contemporary Membership*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2006), 40.

²⁰ Ibid.

Immigration can alter the composition of people, their culture, and identity. People often strive for the preservation of the culture that they share, therefore, receiving populations' desire immigration policies that protect their culture, identity, and composition. Walzer states, "Immigration triggers these deep responses because it forces people to address the question, Who are we and who do we want to be?"²¹ Therefore, certain groups are rejected by society prior to arrival. Even those admitted are automatically perceived as inferior due to their alien characteristics compared to the native population.

Affective Intelligence

Public reaction towards immigration has been triggered by certain cues from immigrant groups. These cues have been outlined above, such as their skill set, education level, magnitude of immigration, or foreign characteristics. As Brader, Valentino, and Suhay note, "Cues influence opinion in other policy domains by priming attitudes toward the group in question. Brief references to groups that benefit from a policy as well as subtle visual cues in news or political ads can cause group attitudes to play a larger role in opinion formation."²²

For example, groups that migrate due to lack of economic opportunity may trigger the perception of economic competition or a strain on social services. In addition, large influxes of migrants in a short period may cause a similar response. Migrants who practice religions that are not akin to society or who are non-English speaking may initiate cultural tensions as well. These cues trigger an emotional response, while certain cues increase the level of anxiety from receiving populations.²³ This is evident via the theory of "Affective Intelligence."

²¹ Pete C. Meilaender. *Toward a Theory of Immigration*. New York: Palgrave (2001), 84.

²² Ted Brader, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 52, Issue 4 (2008), 962.

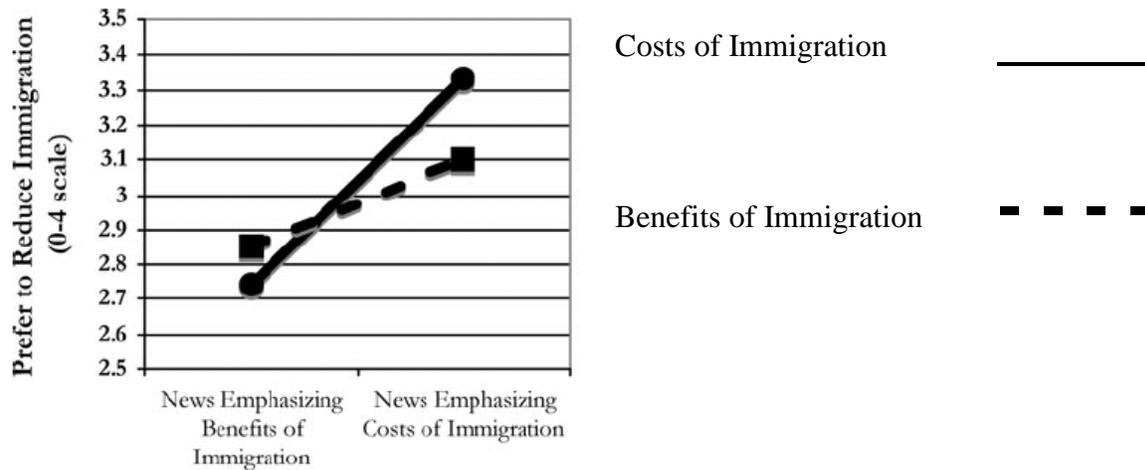
²³ Ibid.

Affective Intelligence differentiates between two emotional systems, the disposition system and the surveillance system. The disposition system measures the level of enthusiasm generated by the feedback of a group's progress towards initial goals and interests. The surveillance system measures the level of anxiety or fear generated in response to possible threats from a group. Brader, Valentino, and Suhay explain, "Under typical circumstances, therefore, we expect the emotional impact of group cues to shape opinion and behavior, even though it is plausible for such cues to affect opinion by changing perceptions about the nature or severity of a threat (sic). To an extent, group cues trigger anxiety about immigration."²⁴ Such anxiety derives from the availability of information concerning such cues by the receiving population. Thus, beliefs surrounding the severity of issues regarding immigration and emotional responses are often correlated. Ultimately, these emotions are based on motivational impulses that increase the likelihood of native groups to take political action.

Such political action leads to the circulation of anti-immigration sentiment throughout society. Constant motivational impulses derived from a one-sided information source regarding certain cues from immigrant groups increases the societal perception of immigration entirely. **Figure 1.3** illustrates such a phenomenon based on the impact of news regarding immigrant cues on immigration policy. While society receives information demonstrating the potential benefits of immigration, societal views are mild concerning the reduction of immigration. However, when news emphasizes negative cues concerning the costs of immigration, societal views alter in favor of restricting immigration.

²⁴ Ibid pg. 963.

Figure 1.3: Impact of News Frame and Ethnic Cue on Immigration Policy Preference



Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States altered its stance towards immigration. Prior to the 19th century, the United States virtually had an open door policy. There were no restrictive policies on immigration. However, after 1882, new restrictions targeting certain immigrant groups arose. Since then, there have been many actions against certain immigrant groups. Southern and eastern European migrants were the primary targets of these new policies from 1880 through 1924. During this time, more migrants traveled to U.S. shores than in any other period. The reaction by American society led to the inability for many southern and eastern European migrants to obtain similar social and economic advantages that their European brothers obtained since the beginning of the seventeenth century. This period of high immigration led to the most restrictive U.S. policies towards immigrant groups in U.S. history.

CHAPTER 2

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRATION TO THE US

Push and Pull Factors of Migration

The Industrial Revolution began to spread throughout southern and eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century. This led to severe socio-economic and political disruptions. Malaria and cholera outbreaks, over-population, and high birth rates caused intolerable conditions throughout Europe. In addition, political repression often accompanied these unbearable circumstances. Altogether, European governments were unable or unwilling to deal with these enormous issues. Therefore, many nations encouraged people to migrate, especially to the U.S.²⁵ These push factors contributed to mass migration from southern and eastern Europe throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In addition, unlike any other time in history, steamship travel made immigration a faster and more comfortable journey, therefore, increasing the rate of migration. This led to a drastic change in immigration demographics, as Cohn notes:

After the Civil War, the vast majority of immigrants arrived on steamships. As a result, the voyage time fell initially to about two weeks and it continued to decline into the twentieth century. All in all, the period from 1865 through 1914, when immigration was not restricted and steamships were dominant, saw an average yearly immigrant volume of almost 529,000. In contrast, average yearly immigration between 1820 and 1860 via sailing ship was only 123,000, and even between 1847 and 1860 was only 266,000.²⁶

Prior to the late nineteenth century, immigration consisted of the “old immigrants,” those originating from northwestern Europe, such as Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia. However, after 1880, immigration began to shift from northwestern Europe to southern and eastern Europe. Northwestern European immigrants continued to migrate into the United States in increasing

²⁵ Michael C. LeMay. *From Open Door to Dutch Door: An Analysis of U.S. Immigration Policy since 1820*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers (1987), 36.

²⁶ Raymond L. Cohn. “Immigration to the United States.” Last Modified February 2010. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>. Accessed December 13, 2011.

numbers. However, these numbers were minimal compared to immigration from southern and eastern European states. From 1901 through 1910, the greatest decade of American immigration, northwestern immigration accounted for 1.5 million migrants. However, southern and eastern European immigration included over 6.5 million migrants.²⁷

The charts below contrast northwestern European immigration to southern and eastern immigration from 1901 through 1910. **Figure 2.1** illustrates European immigration to the U.S. by country from 1901 through 1910. **Figure 2.2** compares the percentage of northwestern European immigration to eastern and southern European immigration from 1880 through 1910. **Figure 2.3** illustrates the number of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe compared to those from northwestern Europe from 1881-1940.

Figure 2.1: European Immigration into the United States (By country)

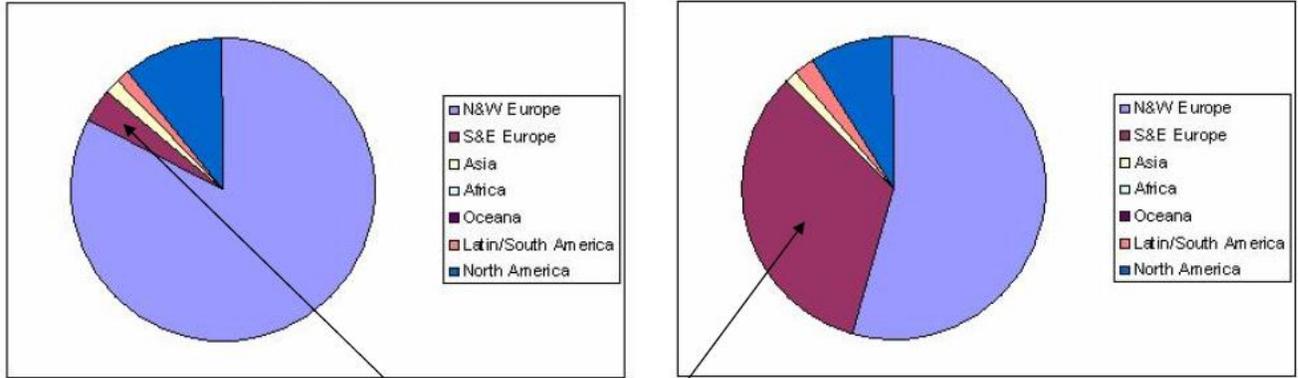
COUNTRY	1901-1910	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Austria-Hungary	2,145,266	26.6
Italy	2,045,877	25.4
Russia	1,597,306	19.8
Britain	525,590	6.5
Germany	341,498	4.2
Ireland	339,065	4.2
Sweden	249,534	3.1
Norway	190,605	2.4
Greece	167,519	2.1
Other European	<u>453,780</u>	5.6
Total European	8,056,040	

²⁷ Roger Daniels. *Coming to American: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc (2002), 188.

Figure 2.2: Percentage of Northwestern European Immigration Compared to Southern and Eastern Immigration from 1880 through 1910

Place of Origin of the American Immigrant Population (1880)

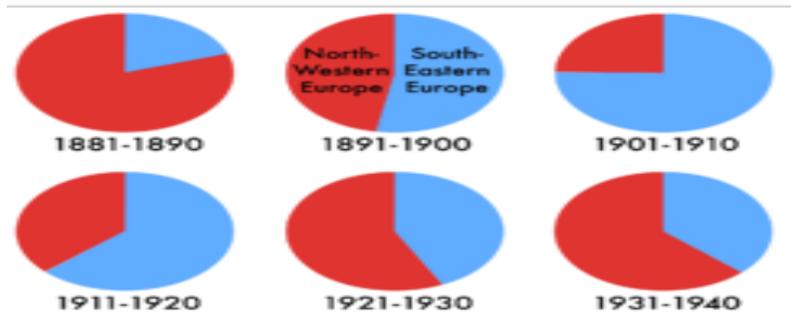
Place of Origin of the American Immigrant Population (1910)



Difference in percentage of Southern and Eastern European Immigrants

Figure 2.3: Comparison of Northwestern European Immigrants and Southern and Eastern European Immigrants from 1881 through 1940.

Relative Proportions of Immigrants from North Western Europe and Southern and Eastern Europe in the Decades Before and After Immigration Restriction Legislation.



The three main sources of southern and eastern European immigration derived from Italy, Russia, and Austro-Hungary. From 1880 through 1900, immigration from these nations increased

dramatically: Italian immigrants from 55,759 to 651,893; Russian immigrants from 35,284 to 505,280; immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 72,969 to 592,707.²⁸

Italy

Figure 2.4: Italian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910

Period.	Total European Immigration.	Italian Immigration.	
		Number.	Per cent of total European Immigration.
1820-1830a.....	106,508	439	0.4
1831-1840.....	495,688	2,253	.5
1841-1850.....	1,597,501	1,870	.1
1851-1860.....	2,452,660	9,231	.4
1861-1870.....	2,065,272	11,725	.6
1871-1880.....	2,272,329	55,759	2.5
1881-1890.....	4,739,266	307,309	6.5
1891-1900.....	3,585,777	651,893	18.2
1901-1910.....	8,213,409	2,045,877	24.9
Total:	25,528,410	3,046,356	12.1

Italians represented the largest ethnic group from southern and eastern Europe to migrate into the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to the 1850 census, only 3,645 foreign born Italians lived in the United States.²⁹ However, towards the end of the twentieth century, over 4.1 million Italians immigrated to the United States.³⁰

Beginning in the 1880's, the size and character of Italian immigration changed. The three hundred thousand immigrants of the 1880s were more than three times as many as had come in all American history; the six hundred thousand of the 1890s doubled that, and the more than two million of the first decade of the new century represented a further tripling. Put another way, the forty-four thousand Italian born of 1880 represented about six of every thousand foreign born in the nation; by 1920 more than 1.6 million Italian born represented 117 in every thousand foreign born.³¹

²⁸ U.S: Immigration Commission. William P. Dillingham. "Emigration Conditions in Europe." Doc. No. 748 (1911), 138, 241, and 353.

²⁹ Roger Daniels. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc (2002), 192.

³⁰ Ibid pg. 190.

³¹ Ibid pg. 194.

After Italy's unification in 1871, wealthy Italians from northern Italy took control of the majority of land in the south. Prosperous northern Italians earned vast amounts of wealth at the hands of many impoverished southerners. Southern Italy, specifically Mezzogiorno, was widely ignored by the Italian government; most of the attention remained focused on the north, causing severe underdevelopment in the southern regions.

The Italians in this region were shopkeepers, teachers, bakers, fishermen, and farmers. Many were forced to work more than one occupation to provide for their families. The majority lived in houses comprised of mud and stone:

Beginning in the 1870s, Italian birthrates rose and death rates fell. Population pressure became severe, especially in Il Mezzogiorno, the southern and poorest provinces (sic) of Italy. As late as 1900, the illiteracy rate in southern Italy was 70 percent, ten times the rate in England, France, or Germany. The Italian government was dominated by northerners, and southerners were hurt by high taxes and high protective tariffs on northern industrial goods. Southerners also suffered from a scarcity of cultivatable land, soil erosion and deforestation, and a lack of coal and iron ore needed by industry.³²

Undoubtedly, conditions in southern Italy were much worse than the north. However, northern Italians also had difficulty providing for their families due to their small plots of land. Italy was plagued with high taxes, low wages, and underemployment. In addition, Italy suffered from a cholera outbreak in 1887 that led to the deaths of thousands.³³ These conditions prompted Italians to leave their homelands in search for better social and economic conditions.

The initial Italian immigration was circular. Italians coined it as the "birds of passage." Inspired by employment opportunities and higher wages abroad, these pull factors encouraged many Italian migrants to travel to Great Britain, South America, and eventually the United States to seek work before returning to their homelands. In the U.S., Italians took construction and railroad

³² Digital History. "Italian Immigration." Last Modified December 7, 2011. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/italian_immigration.cfm. Accessed December 8, 2011.

³³ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. "Italians in Pennsylvania." <http://pa.gov/portal/server.pt/community/groups/4286/italians/471928>. Accessed December 7, 2011.

building occupations in the northern states and even picked cotton and worked as cigar rollers in the South.³⁴ Rose notes, “The Italian laborers, after they have worked for a while in their country, returned to Italy, where, with their savings...they looked forward to a comfortable future, trading and farming, keeping alive in their mountain villages...some of the American spirit they acquired in this country. Yet a large majority of them re-patriated sooner or later...to America.”³⁵

Between 20 and 30 percent of all the Italian immigrants that entered the United States returned to Italy.³⁶ However, continued economic and environmental misfortune prompted many Italians to migrate to the United States permanently. In addition, during this period, Italy was plagued with natural disasters. On April 4, 1906, Mount Vesuvius erupted causing tremendous damage. In 1908, a powerful earthquake struck, killing over 120,000 people.³⁷ These push factors caused the U.S. to witness the greatest wave of immigration to date.

³⁴ Philip Marshman Rose. *Italians in America*. New York: George H. Doran Company (1922), 55.

³⁵ Angela Chang. “Birds of Passage” and “Sojourners”: A Historical and Ethnographic Analysis of Chinese Migration to Prato, Italy” (2010).
http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/2530/ICS%20Senior%20Thesis_Final%20Draft_Angela%20Chang_PRINT.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed December 8, 2011, 32, 32.

³⁶ Digital History. “Italian Immigration.” Last Modified December 7, 2011.

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/italian_immigration.cfm. Accessed December 8, 2011.

³⁷ RMS. “The 1908 Messina Earthquake: 100-Year Retrospective” (2008).

http://www.rms.com/publications/1908_messina_earthquake.pdf. Accessed December 7, 2011, 1.

Russia

Figure 2.5: Russian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910.

Period.	Total European immigration.	Russian immigration.	
		Number.	Per cent of total European immigration.
1820-1830 ^a	106,508	89	0.1
1831-1840	495,688	277	0.1
1841-1850	1,597,501	551	(b)
1851-1860	2,452,660	457	(b)
1861-1870	2,065,272	2,512	0.1
1871-1880	2,272,329	39,284	1.7
1881-1890	4,739,266	213,282	4.5
1891-1900	3,582,815	505,280	14.1
1901-1910	8,213,409	1,597,306	19.4
Total	25,528,410	2,359,048	9.2

Most Russian immigrants to the United States from 1881 to 1924 were Jewish. The 1850 census was the first time population statistics provided records of foreign-born Americans. There were only 1,400 recorded Russians living in the United States. By the 1920 census, over 1.4 million had migrated to the United States.³⁸ Push factors regarding Russian immigration can be traced back to the late eighteenth century. Under the rule of Catherine the Great, Russia was a class society divided into nobility, clergy, peasantry, and two urban estates of merchants and townspeople. Catherine the Great wanted to promote urban mercantile centers. However, the majority of Russian society during that period was bound to the land as peasants. Therefore, she invited Jews to register to live in the two mercantile states, where they were given full rights. This angered the majority of

³⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Region and Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population, With Geographic Detail Shown in Decennial Census Publications of 1930 or Earlier: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 1990." Last Modified March 9, 1999. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html>. Accessed December 7, 2011.

Russians because of the perceptions that Jews were inferior as well as commercial rivals. This led to continuous bouts of violence against Jews.³⁹

By the 1800s, the Russian government began to view Jews as undesirables who were eliminating the social opportunities for fellow Russians. Since that time, the Russian government began a social campaign of attacking Russian Jews. Similar to the pre-conditions of the holocaust in Nazi Germany, the Russian government formed an ideological perspective to dehumanize Jewish Russians. Klier and Lambroza explain, “The government decided that ‘Jewish exploitation’ was to blame for the ‘abnormal’ relations of Christians and Jews, and moved to deny the Jews any means to despoil their Gentile neighbors.” Jews were forced into selective occupations such as agriculture, manufacturing, and handicrafts.⁴⁰ Such acts were often associated with pogroms.

Pogroms are state-sponsored attacks against Russian Jews. They were fueled by anti-Semitic rumors from officials and media outlets. The first pogroms occurred in 1821, 1849, and 1859. Horrific as these events were, they were concentrated events that did not reach a massive scale. It was not until the death of Alexander II that these pogroms occurred in a national setting.⁴¹

On March 1, 1881, revolutionaries assassinated Alexander II. Jews were blamed for the attack and all of Russia’s ills. Therefore, one of the most horrific pogroms was initiated against Russian Jews from 1881 to 1884. Historians note, “The anti-Jewish pogroms were preceded (and accompanied) by persistent rumors to the effect that the Tsar had issued a decree instructing the people to beat and plunder Jews for having murdered his father and for exploiting the people.”⁴² These pogroms caused over a million Russian Jews to flee, primarily to the U.S. Many Russian Jews received letters from friends and families living in the United States, inspiring them to come. In

³⁹ John Doyle Klier, Shlomo Lambroza. *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge (1992), 4-5.

⁴⁰ Ibid pg. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid pg. 15.

⁴² Ibid pg. 45.

addition, “the promise of the ‘golden opportunity’ afforded by the U. S. was the beacon that drew millions.”⁴³

Although Jews accounted for the majority of Russian immigrants, non-Jewish Russians migrated in large numbers as well. After the massive Jewish migration into the U.S., many other Russians were inspired to make the same journey for better socio-economic opportunities, this being due to similar socio-economic conditions that plagued other southern and eastern European countries:

The statistics of those entering from 1899 to 1910 show that the predominating element from the Empire, or 43.8 percent, were Jews; next came the Poles with 27.0 percent, while the Russians comprised only 4.4 per cent, the remainder being scattered among various other nationalities. It seems probable, therefore, that up to 1899 the number of Russian Slavs was insignificant. From Russia the Jews were the chief settlers in America and their enthusiastic reports stimulated the Russians themselves to make the venture.⁴⁴

Immigration steadily continued until the eve of World War I and was completely halted due to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.⁴⁵

Austro-Hungarian Empire

Figure 2.6: Austro-Hungarian Immigration to the United States from 1820 through 1910

Period.	Total European Immigration.	Austro-Hungarian immigration.	
		Number.	Per cent of total European Immigration.
1820-1830	106,508		
1831-1840	495,688		
1841-1850	1,597,501		
1851-1860	2,452,660		
1861-1870	2,065,272	7,800	0.4
1871-1880	2,272,329	72,969	3.2
1881-1890	4,739,266	353,719	7.5
1891-1900	3,582,815	592,707	16.5
1901-1910	8,213,409	2,145,266	26.1
Total	25,528,410	3,172,461	12.4

⁴³ Michael C. LeMay. *From Open Door to Dutch Door: An Analysis of U.S. Immigration Policy since 1820*. Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT (1987), 39.

⁴⁴ Jerome Davis. *The Russian Immigrant*. New York: The Macmillan Company (1922), 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid* pg. 9.

Migration from the Austro-Hungarian Empire began as early as the eighteenth century. However, this consisted of only a small number of migrants. Emigration from the Austro-Hungarian Empire was restricted to most. People who wanted to migrate from the Austro-Hungarian Empire legally had to petition. Those whose petitions were granted lost their status as Austro-Hungarians and were treated as outsiders.⁴⁶ This explains the slow growth of Austro-Hungarian migration prior to 1880. In 1861, only 51 people reported being born from this region. They did not reach to over 1,000 people until 1869, when the U.S. admitted 1,499 migrants. However, in 1880, the number admitted increased to 17,267. In 1907, this number increased to 338,452, “a number not equaled by any other country of any year.”⁴⁷ During the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, migration increased dramatically:

According to the port records of Bremen and Hamburg in Germany, in 1876 only 7,626 inhabitants of Austria-Hungary headed overseas, yet by 1900 the numbers had leapt to 62,605. In the period 1890-1914 approximately 15 million people left Europe in the direction of the U.S.A.... The vast majority of these people were born in southern and eastern Europe, but more than 20% came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴⁸

Over 5 million people from the Austro-Hungarian Empire region moved to the United States from 1876 through 1910.⁴⁹

Continued weak socio-economic conditions, due to the industrial revolution that swept across Europe, plagued this region. Austria and Hungary faced a severe scarcity of agricultural land, a severe lack of industrial development, and the majority of available resources were impoverished. In addition, overpopulation increased these intolerable conditions. These push factors prompted many to migrate. Wage rates throughout the region were incredibly low compared to wage rates in the

⁴⁶ Franz A. J. Szabo. *Austrian Immigration to Canada: Selected Essays*. Ottawa: Carleton University Press. (1996), 56.

⁴⁷ U.S.: Immigration Commission, William Paul Dillingham. “Emigration Conditions in Europe.” Doc. No. 748 (1911), 352.

⁴⁸ Josef Ehmer, Annemarie Steidl, Hermann Zeitlhofer. “Migration Patterns in Late Imperial Austria.” *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Working Paper No. 3 (2007), 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Pg. 7.

United States.⁵⁰ Many saw the U.S. as their only opportunity for survival. In 1867, Emperor Franz Josef united Austria and Hungary to create the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He abolished the previous migration restrictions where only those who were licensed or served in the military were able to migrate. This led to a rapid increase in migration from the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the turn-of-the century.

⁵⁰ U.S: Immigration Commission, William Paul Dillingham. "Emigration Conditions in Europe." Doc. No. 748 (1911), 365-370.

CHAPTER 3

PUBLIC RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION

Increased Economic Implications towards Immigrants

The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century marked an unprecedented turning point in U.S. history as the origin of immigration changed from northwestern Europe to southern and eastern Europe. These “new immigrants” flooded U.S. ports in hopes of seeking similar opportunities that were afforded to their European neighbors. In 1903, 857,046 immigrants arrived on American shores, followed in 1905 with over one million immigrants. This was the most immigrants that American society had ever witnessed.⁵¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants from southern and eastern Europe accounted for nearly 69% of the entire foreign population.⁵²

For many of these migrants the hardships of leaving their homelands and traveling to new lands were only half of their worries. Upon arrival, these new immigrants experienced harsh reactions from the native population. Many natives grew worried about the different characteristics of these new migrants. Unlike the majority of migrants prior to 1880, these migrant groups derived from a part of Europe that was foreign to the majority of the native population.

The old immigrants, persons from the British Isles and northwestern Europe who came before the 1880’s, were very much like the settlers of the colonies and were relatively easy to assimilate. The new immigrants, persons from southern and eastern Europe who came after the 1880’s, were of very different ethnicity who spoke strange languages and worshipped strange gods--that is, they were not Protestants.⁵³

⁵¹ John M. Lund. “Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission.” *University of Vermont: History Review*. Vol. 6 (1994). <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/histreview/vol6/lund.html>. Accessed April 28, 2011.

⁵² Raymond L. Cohn. “Immigration to the United States.” Last Modified February 1, 2010. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>. Accessed April 27, 2011.

⁵³ Roger Daniels. *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc (2002), 121.

The apparent differences of these new migrants were widely perceived as threatening. Many perceived this new wave of immigration as an invasion that could disrupt the cultural and economic foundations of American society. The predominant northwestern European society permitted them in but failed to accept their European brothers as part of society. The rapid increase of these different immigrant groups spawned a massive societal response to deal with this potential threat. This led to the spread of nativist ideologies throughout the United States. Many proponents of nativism began to publish works against these new immigrants.

Josiah Strong

One of the most notable outspoken critics against southern and eastern European immigrants was Josiah Strong. Strong was a clergyman from Ohio who promoted religious-based solutions to solve American society's ills. One of his most notable arguments was how immigration plagued U.S. society, especially its cities. Although Strong emphasized the adverse effects America's rapid urbanization had on society, he directed these arguments towards immigrants. Strong implicated immigrants as a degraded group that had assisted in the decay of American rural society.

He connected the majority of southern and eastern European migration into U.S. cities as a symbol of societal destruction, corrupting the American way of life that thrived during the years of mostly northwestern European migration. He described immigrants as inferior criminals who disrupted American society in his book *Our Country*. This book became one of the most influential works in the late nineteenth century:

Immigration brings unquestioned benefits, but these do not concern our argument. It complicates almost every home missionary problem and furnishes the soil which feeds the life of several of the most noxious growths of our civilization.... The typical immigrant is a European peasant, whose horizon has been narrow, whose moral and religious training has been meager or false, and whose ideas of life are low. Not a few belong to the pauper and criminal classes.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Josiah Strong. *Our America*. New York: The Baker & Taylor Company (1885), 40.

Strong argued that these new immigrants posed a grave threat to American Christian and moral ideals. He asserted that these new immigrants demoralized American culture and failed to take advantage of the prosperity that was afforded to them when they entered the United States. Strong assisted in fueling a national front forged with nativist ideologies. Soon many natives began to argue in favor of restricting southern and eastern European immigrants from entering the United States altogether, ending the United States' open door policy to immigration that had existed since the U.S. became a nation. One of these outspoken supporters of immigration restriction was Francis Walker.

Francis Walker

Walker was a former Civil War General, president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the American Economic Association, as well as the Superintendent of the 1870 and 1890 censuses. Walker argued that the massive wave of southern and eastern European immigrants would destroy American society by infesting it with inferior people:

When we speak of the restriction of immigration, at the present time, we have in mind measures undertaken for the purpose of straining out from the vast throngs of foreigners arriving at our ports a few hundreds, or possibly thousands of persons, deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, insane, pauper, or criminal, who might otherwise become a hopeless burden upon the country, perhaps even an active source of mischief.... For nearly two generations, great numbers of persons utterly unable to earn their living, because of one or another form of physical or mental disability, and others who were, from widely different causes, unfit to be members of any decent community, were admitted to our ports without challenge or question.⁵⁵

Walker's assertion strengthened the societal outcry in favor of immigration restriction. As the topic of immigration restriction began to grow each day, soon other groups began to argue for immigration restriction.

When arriving on American shores, immigrants' only option for employment was low-skilled manufacturing jobs. Very few immigrants found it possible to find any reputable employment. As the majority of immigrants continued to fill these low-skilled jobs, the societal perception of

⁵⁵ Francis A. Walker. "Restriction of Immigration." *The Atlantic Monthly*. Vol. 77, No. 464 (1896), 822.

immigrants working such menial jobs increased. Low-skilled jobs during this era consisted of manufacturers, servants, farmers, and laborers, while skilled jobs consisted of teachers, doctors, and artisans.⁵⁶ This societal perception made the opportunity for immigrants to obtain a reputable source of employment increasingly difficult, which caused the societal perception of immigrants as a lower class to increase as well. Thus, a downwards spiral was created. The minimal opportunities of immigrants fueled a perception of a low-class society, which in turn decreased immigrant's opportunities, leading to a barrier, blocking immigrants from obtaining social mobility.

Albert Rees, a labor economist who became the Chief Inflation Monitor during the Ford Administration, found that real wage rates for skilled manufacturing jobs rose by 40 percent from 1890 to 1914, with an average rate of 1.4 percent annually. However, for low-skilled manufacturing jobs, the real wage rates depreciated. This came to a climax in 1907, when the real wage rates of low-skilled manufacturers stagnated, reaching an all-time low.⁵⁷ The depreciation of real wage rates for immigrants in addition to the circumstances described above strengthened the societal perception of a lower class status. This intensified the political view of immigrants who became viewed as the economic burden affecting society.

American Federation of Labor

Immigration caused a massive flood of job seekers, which negatively impacted the ability to obtain low-skilled labor jobs. Briggs observed, "If they welcome immigrants, endorse liberal admission policies, and favor lax enforcement against violators, the result is that the segments of the labor supply are inflated and the ensuing market pressures make it more difficult for unions

⁵⁶ Raymond L. Cohn. "Immigration to the United States." Last Modified February 1, 2010. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>. Accessed February 22, 2012.

⁵⁷ Claudia Goldin. *Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921*. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research (1994), 244.

to win economic gains for their membership.”⁵⁸ American labor unions, which were already fearful of the negative effects of mass immigration, became increasingly protective of the rights of natural born citizens to remain economically stable. In the 1880s, labor unions, most notably the AFL began to put pressure on the U.S. government, which was already skeptical about immigration. The AFL viewed the massive flow of immigrants annually as a hindrance to maintain steady employment for American workers. This became increasingly prevalent during times of recession where unemployment was already on the rise.

The AFL believed that southern and eastern Europe immigration would disrupt the labor movement. Assisted by previous works that dehumanized these groups, they feared that these new immigrants would be unable to adjust to U.S. standards of living. They believed that southern and eastern European immigrants would undermine attempts to increase wage rates by becoming pawns for exploitive employers, creating a large reserve labor pool and potential source of strikebreakers. Lane notes, “There was little optimism that the mass of immigrants from the south and east of Europe would be able to adjust in these ways: it was far more likely that they would afford the employers the means of overwhelming and destroying the labor movement.”⁵⁹

Therefore, the AFL sought to limit the flow of southern and eastern European immigrants from entering the U.S. Debouzy states, “Between 1881 and 1897 not a single year passed that organized labor did not demand legislation to restrict immigration into the U.S. or demand that acts already existing be enforced more strigently.”⁶⁰ This is evident when looking at the AFL backed Contract Labor Law of 1885. This law prohibited any American employer from securing labor contracts with any potential immigrant prior to their arrival to the U.S. In addition, it prohibited

⁵⁸ Vernon M. Briggs. “American Unionism and U.S. Immigration Policy.” *Center for Immigration Studies* (2001), 1.

⁵⁹ A. T. Lane. “American Trade Unions, Mass Immigration and the Literacy Test: 1900–1917.” *Labor History*. Vol. 25, Issue 1 (2001), 12.

⁶⁰ Marianne Debouzy. *In the Shadow of the Statue of Liberty: Immigrants, Workers, and Citizens in the American Republic, 1880-1920*. Illinois: First University of Illinois Press (1992), 231.

steamship captains from transporting any immigrant under a labor contract. However, this law failed to curb the AFL's desired flow of immigrants, which prompted the AFL to be in favor of the possibility of a literacy test. The AFL remained focused on immigration restriction throughout the nineteenth century.

However, in the twentieth century, the AFL began to relax its stance towards immigration restriction. In the 1900s and 1910s, the AFL supported immigrant unions in Tampa, Florida. This was primarily due to their rival, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which fought for immigrant rights in the work force and organized one central union comprised of both immigrant and native labor unions in the early 1900s. Although labor unions began to relax their critical stance towards immigration in the 1900s, they successfully encouraged other outspoken groups in favor of immigration restriction, most notably the Immigration Restriction League.

Immigration Restriction League

In 1894, Charles Warren, Robert DeCourcy Ward, and Prescott Farnsworth Hall, three Harvard University graduates, formed the Immigration Restriction League. The Immigration Restriction League consistently published pamphlets, newspapers and journal articles to distribute their ideas throughout the American population. They argued that southern and eastern European immigrants posed a grave threat towards American society due to their supposed inferior traits:

It should be distinctly noted that the quality of this immigration has, until within the last few years, been high, and that the people who have come in the greatest numbers have been akin to the American race in language or in origin, and have, therefore, been capable of ready assimilation. When, however, we come to look at the races which have been contributing largely and in increasing proportion to our immigration during the last few years, we see how much more difficult the problem becomes. Our immigration has until lately been chiefly made up of the most intelligent and the most desirable races of Europe, but recently the numbers have greatly increased of those who are without question the most illiterate and the most depraved people of that continent.⁶¹

⁶¹ Robert De C. Ward. "The Present Aspect of the Immigration Problem." *The Charities Review*. Vol. 3-8 (1894), 390.

The Immigration Restriction League became one of the most powerful advocates in favor of immigration restriction. Although the AFL was one of the largest groups to promote immigration restriction, it was for economic reasons. The Immigration Restriction League's purpose was based on ethnic and cultural superiority, which increased the intensity of their campaign. They feared that the millions of non-northwestern European races would disrupt the racial balance in the United States. These millions of newcomers would then alter the socio-economic and political institutions by voting for unprecedented measures in their favor, thus destroying the ideals of American society:⁶²

A flurry of widely read newspaper editorials, magazine articles, and books alerted readers to the perceived dangers of this influx. Anti-immigrant hyperbole, including Massachusetts Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's 'Efforts to Restrict Undesirable Immigration,' ... and Immigration Restriction League spokesman Prescott Hall's 'Selection of Immigration,' captivated the Progressive imagination by emphasizing the undesirability of southern and eastern Europeans. Their arguments fueled the fear inherent in the demand for greater restriction and persuaded many to put aside the ideal of America as an asylum for the oppressed.⁶³

The Immigration Restriction League made similar attempts as the AFL to limit the capabilities of southern and eastern European migrants in an effort to maintain cultural superiority.

The Immigration Restriction League lobbied policy makers into implementing restrictive policies against southern and eastern European immigrants. One of the most vigorous attempts was the Literacy Act of 1917. The Immigration Restriction League as well as other outspoken nativist supporters became a symbol of the xenophobic attitudes of many persons throughout the United States. The apprehension of the local population became evident through the actions of this group. It became clear that the acceptance into American society became based on the ethnicity and economic advantages of migrants. However, another important factor influenced the political environment affecting immigration, radical politics.

⁶² Prescott F. Hall. "Immigration and the World War." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 93 (1921), 192.

⁶³ John M. Lund. "Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission." *University of Vermont: History Review*. Vol. 6 (1994). <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/histreview/vol6/lund.html>. Accessed April 28, 2011.

Radical Politics

Fear became one of the primary factors that influenced immigration politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many perceived the current flood of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe as a cultural invasion. However, other geo-political events caused open immigration to be a grave concern, not for socio-economic reasons, but for national security. In 1892, Henry Clay Frick, the manager of Carnegie Steel, destroyed the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in the Homestead Strike. In response, Alexander Berkman, a Russian anarchist, forced himself into Frick's office and opened fire. He failed to kill Frick, however he succeeded in increasing paranoia of possible attacks from radical migrants.

Soon afterwards, in 1901, an immigrant anarchist attacked another U.S. symbolic figure. However, unlike Berkman, he succeeded in eliminating his target, President McKinley. The death of President McKinley caused a national uproar demanding more emphasis on U.S. security. Throughout U.S. history, anarchist groups have always been a concern. The United States and anarchist groups have always been in conflict. The anarchists view the U.S. government's belief in capitalism and centralized government as imperialist and tyrannical, while the U.S. views anarchists as instruments of chaos and menaces to society. Anarchist groups existed in American society since the American Revolution, although they were never a centralized movement.⁶⁴ However, Anarchism in the late nineteenth century began to gain momentum via a European newspaper, *Liberty*:

Liberty, a periodical published and edited by Benjamin R. Tucker from 1881 to 1908. During its twenty-seven year publication, *Liberty* chronicled the intellectual development of the libertarian movement. It served as a conduit of foreign thought. It was the forum for lengthy, high-caliber debate on issues such as children's rights, intellectual property, natural rights and

⁶⁴ Chris Vials. "The Despotism of the Popular: Anarchy and Leon Czolgosz at the Turn of the Century." *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-Present)*, Vol. 3, Issue 2 (2004).
http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2004/vials.htm. Accessed February 27, 2012.

economics.... It is natural to use *Liberty* as a textbook of libertarian culture of the late nineteenth century.⁶⁵

In the early twentieth century, the U.S. began to focus more intently on anarchist groups, primarily due to the anarchist movement in Mexico, led by Ricardo Flores Magón. Magón's interests were primarily in Mexico; however, he caught the attention of a suspicious U.S. government when publishing monthly magazines promoting the anarchist movement during the Mexican Revolution in California.

More importantly, Berkman and Czolgosz were not simply representing the anarchist movement but rather southern and eastern European migrants. Vials explains, "Within a context of imperialist war, the second wave of European immigration, and the long dreaded class conflicts attending the closing of the frontier in 1890, the signifiers 'anarchist' and 'anarchy' functioned to embody a wide range of anxieties in public discourse."⁶⁶ Such anxieties included political assassinations and public bombings. These attacks at the hands of migrants ignited the fury of an entire nation already filled with concern regarding immigration.

The societal discontent towards immigrants fueled radical politics. Many migrants who entered the U.S. became politicized in order to fight what they felt was societal injustice:

Employers exploited them with low wages, miserable working conditions, and substandard housing. The most powerful American labor union, the resolutely middle-class American Federation of Labor (AFL), excluded them because they were underclass, unskilled, contaminated with radical ideas, and because they allegedly drove down wages for native workers. Most of these immigrants shunned politics, distrusted all government, and drifted with the tide. But some became politicized. From 1885, the time the first group met in San Francisco, anarchist groups existed.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Wendy McElroy. "The Culture of Individualist Anarchism in Late Nineteenth-Century America." *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*. Vol. 5, No. 3 (1981), 291.

⁶⁶ Chris Vials. "The Despotism of the Popular: Anarchy and Leon Czolgosz at the Turn of the Century." *Americana: The Journal of American Popular Culture (1900-Present)*. Vol. 3, Issue 2 (2004).
http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/fall_2004/vials.htm. Accessed February 27, 2012.

⁶⁷ Charles Howard McCormick. *Hopeless Cases: The Hunt for the Red Scare Terrorist Bombers*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America (2005), 10.

In 1920, a group of Italian anarchists caused one of the worst terrorist attacks in the twentieth century. A bomb laden horse drawn wagon was placed in front of the U.S. Assay Office and J.P. Morgan and Company, in the heart of Wall Street, New York, the symbol of U.S. capitalism. At noon, the wagon exploded, killing over thirty people and wounding three hundred.⁶⁸ The explosion was followed by further bomb threats leading to a full FBI investigation. The FBI found irrefutable evidence linking the attack to Italian anarchists. However, no one was convicted. The true plotters of the attack remain a mystery in U.S. law enforcement.⁶⁹

The attack help spread the infamous Red Scare of radical politics that fueled fear and skepticism of all immigrants. The day after the Wall Street explosion, Attorney General Palmer informed reporters that the “Reds” were behind the attack. Immediately, Attorney General Palmer initiated an anti-Red program to combat these political radicals. The anti-Red program published weekly reports in the General Intelligence Bulletin, which was comprised of reports of radical activities throughout every field office in the U.S. The Red Scare caused southern and eastern European migrants to be the focus of almost every citizen and law enforcement agency throughout the U.S.⁷⁰

Another key event that influenced the politics of immigration was the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917. This event ended czarist Russia and replaced it with a radical socialist regime. The Bolshevik Revolution and the anarchist attacks in 1892, 1901, and 1920 transformed the U.S. into a nation of fear. Burnett states, “The nation was gripped in fear. Innocent people were jailed for

⁶⁸ Ibid pgs. 65-66.

⁶⁹ Ibid pg. 76.

⁷⁰ Ibid pgs. 75-76.

expressing their views, civil liberties were ignored, and many Americans feared that a Bolshevik-style revolution was at hand.”⁷¹

The combination of attacks from migrant radicals, socialist revolution, and mass migration transformed the U.S. into a state of fear directed against migrants. Advocates for the continuance of open immigration in the U.S. became widely ignored as fears of chaos and open revolution plagued American society. Congressional representatives argued that allowing unrestricted immigration would lead to an increase in unemployment, reduction of labor standards, and the elimination of traditional northwestern European bloodlines. However, most importantly, many throughout Congress believed they had a duty to protect American institutions from immigrant Reds and those most likely to be unsympathetic to America’s existing order.⁷²

This problem of immigration legislation and the public attitude towards aliens in general reflected the most obvious effect of the continuing patriotic crusade. Through it, the belief was perpetuated that most aliens were susceptible to radical philosophies and therefore represented an element which particularly endangered the nation.⁷³

Fears in Congress that open immigration would lead to an invasion of immigrant Reds led many to believe that immigration restriction was now a requirement for national security.

⁷¹ Paul Burnett. “The Red Scare”. <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/SaccoV/redscare.html>. Accessed February 28, 2012.

⁷² Robert K. Murray. *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1955), 265-266.

⁷³ *Ibid* pg. 265.

CHAPTER 4

AGE OF IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

Senate Committee on Immigration

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt responded to the societal outcry regarding the restriction of immigration in the U.S. by declaring only the “right kind” of immigrant could ensure the health of the nation. President Theodore Roosevelt instructed officials that they should not judge based on race or religion but merely the individual quality of a person. Only immigrants deemed a benefit to society were permitted into the United States, while all others were banned from entering. The U.S. feared that open immigration would cause a flood of criminals, paupers, prostitutes, and those who were physically and mentally disabled into society.

This led to the Immigration Act of 1903, which banned all unaccompanied females from entering the U.S., in an effort to reduce the spread of potential prostitutes. In 1906, the Senate Committee on Immigration chaired by Senator Paul Dillingham passed amendments to the Immigration Act of 1903. These amendments prohibited all unaccomplished persons less than seventeen years of age. It placed a \$4.00 head tax on each immigrant. In addition, immigrants deemed physically defective, as well as women who were viewed as likely to become prostitutes were prohibited from entering the United States.⁷⁴

These policies were direct attacks against southern and eastern European immigrants who were perceived to possess undesirable traits. These policies paved the way for some of the most restrictive policies against southern and eastern European migrants. After the Immigration Act of 1906, Senator Dillingham was given authority to spearhead the Dillingham Commission, which was an independent committee authorized to investigate the ethnic and racial attributes of

⁷⁴ John M. Lund. “Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission.” *University of Vermont: History Review*. Vol. 6 (1994). <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/histreview/vol6/lund.html>. Accessed April 28, 2011.

southern and eastern Europeans, especially how these groups could affect American society.

This commission investigated literacy rates among southern and eastern Europeans, compared to northwestern Europeans, and the effects these groups had in cities. They even disguised themselves as sex traffickers to determine the likelihood of southern and eastern European women entering prostitution.⁷⁵

The last of the 1907 investigations probed the ‘white-slave traffic,’ a subject Dillingham viewed as ‘the most pitiful and most revolting phase of the immigration question.’ An elaborate network of agents posing as ‘procurers, importers, and pimps’ infiltrated prostitution rings in twelve cities. In these urban centers (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Butte, Denver, Buffalo, Boston, and New Orleans), agents investigated the means and methods of inducing immigrants to prostitution.⁷⁶

The Dillingham Commission published its findings in 1911, confirming the inferiority of southern and eastern European migrants compared to the northwestern European population in the U.S. The report’s strongest support of southern and eastern European inferiority states the difference in literacy rates of southern and eastern European countries compared to the U.S., as illustrated in **Figure 4.1**.

Figure 4.1: Literacy Rate of U.S. Population Compared to Southern and Eastern European Countries

Country.	Per cent of illit-eracy.	Date.	Basis.
Austria.....	23.8	1900	Persons 6 years of age or over...
Belgium.....	21.9	1900	Total population.....
Finland.....	a 1.2	1900	Population 15 years of age or over.
Hungary.....	41.0	1900	Total civil population 6 years of age or over.
Italy.....	48.5	1905	Population 6 years of age or over.
Portugal.....	75.1	1900do.....
Roumania.....	61.4	1899	Population 10 years of age or over.
Russia.....	72.0	1897	Population 9 years of age or over.
Servia.....	83.0	1900	Total population.....
Spain.....	63.8	1900do.....
United States.....	10.7	1900	Population 10 years of age or

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

With the exception of Finland, this report verifies southern and eastern European nations' high illiteracy rate compared to the U.S. population. The Dillingham Commission used such evidence to justify the need to restrict southern and eastern European migrants from entering the U.S. The Harvard University Library research states, "The Dillingham Commission, which began its work in 1907, had concluded by 1911 that immigration from southern and eastern Europe posed a serious threat to American society and culture and should therefore be greatly reduced."⁷⁷ Although this report was later recanted, it helped drive a society already concerned about immigration into implementing the most restrictive immigration policies against a certain group in U.S. history, the first being the Literacy Act of 1917.

The Literacy Act of 1917

Although there was a growing presence of pro-restriction groups, Congress was divided in how it should regulate immigration. There were those who were against immigration restriction policies. When the amendment of the Immigration Act of 1903 was circulating Congress, the Senate attached a literacy requirement to the bill. However, the House, which was less pro-restriction, rejected it, forcing Dillingham to delete the attachment of a literacy test. This began to change due to World War I.

The emergence of World War I helped fuel anti-immigrant ideologies throughout the U.S. Many of those who were once against restriction policies began to be in favor of restriction as countless unassimilated immigrants began to enter the U.S. during a time of war. A report from the Harvard University Library states, "As the time of immigration to the United States rose higher and higher through the nineteenth century and up to World War I, restriction sentiment rose also.... Anti-alien sentiments were aroused, together with fears of allegedly unassimilated

⁷⁷ Harvard University Library. "Dillingham Commission". Last Modified 2012. <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigration/dillingham.html>. Accessed January 31, 2012.

foreign-born minorities and ‘hyphenated Americans’.”⁷⁸ Soon those in favor of immigration restriction represented enough votes to pass the Immigration Act of 1917.

The Immigration Act of 1917 increased the head tax of immigrants entering U.S. ports to \$8.00. It strengthened the power of immigration officials to exclude and deport immigrants. The Immigration Act also required a literacy test for those seeking permanent residence.⁷⁹

Immigrants over the age of sixteen, who were physically able, were required to read a portion of the United States Constitution in a language of their choosing prior to entering the United States.

These tests specifically targeted southern and eastern Europeans, who represented the largest illiteracy rates throughout Europe. A report by the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration indicated that only 33.4 percent of eastern European immigrants and 44.9 percent of southern European immigrants that entered U.S. ports from 1899 to 1910 were literate.⁸⁰

Therefore, the Literacy Test was designed to severely limit the number of southern and eastern European migrants entering the U.S. Hutchinson explains, “It was believed to be at once restrictive and selective in its action, promising not only to limit the number of aliens who could qualify for admission, but also to check the immigration of such undesired classes of aliens as potential public charges, delinquents, and southeastern European laborers.”⁸¹

Nativists were optimistic about the limitations this law placed on possible immigrants, until the end of World War I. Shortly after World War I, the U.S projected an unprecedented number of immigrants arriving on U.S. shores. World War I dislocated millions of southern and eastern Europeans that represented classes that would be able to pass the literacy test. Steamship agents reported that over 10 million immigrants could be booked to migrate to the U.S. immediately:

⁷⁸ Edward P. Hutchinson. “Immigration Policy since World War I.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 262 (1949), 15.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid pg. 238.

⁸¹ Ibid pg. 15.

Much of the opposition to immigration was aroused not so much by the volume of immigration itself as by the fact that an increased proportion of the immigrants were coming from southern and eastern Europe. The quota formulas were deliberately designed to check this 'new' immigration. In the last fiscal year proceeding World War I immigrants from southern and eastern Europe outnumbered those from northern and western Europe by almost six to one.⁸²

Therefore, the U.S. began to discuss policies that would directly prohibit immigrants from southern and eastern Europe from entering the U.S., as is evident in the Emergency Quota and National Origins Act.

The Emergency Quota Act of 1921

In 1920, due to the potential flood of immigrants, the House proposed the Johnson Act. This would restrict all immigration entirely for two years. However, this bill failed to pass the Senate. Soon afterwards, Congress proposed the Emergency Quota Act of 1921. The Emergency Quota Act placed a cap on all migrants attempting to enter the U.S. based on their foreign-born ratios in 1910. Only three percent of all foreign-born immigrants from any nation were to be admitted into the U.S. annually. In addition, it placed a general cap of only 350,000 admissible immigrants annually.⁸³ However, those from northwestern Europe represented a much larger number in 1910. According to the 1910 census, the U.S. had 7,306,325 foreign-born people from northwestern Europe, while there were only 4,500,932 persons from southern and eastern Europe.⁸⁴ By 1921, immigration from northwestern Europe was in rapid decline. Therefore, the majority of slots remained open for immigrants from northwestern Europe, while those from southern and eastern Europe filled quickly. For every five northern and western

⁸² Ibid pg. 17.

⁸³ Raymond L. Cohn. "Immigration to the United States." Last Modified February 1, 2010. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>. Accessed April 27, 2011.

⁸⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census. "Region and Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population, With Geographic Detail Shown in Decennial Census Publications of 1930 or Earlier: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 1990." Last Modified October 31, 2011. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html>. Accessed January 31, 2012.

European immigrants, only four southern and eastern European immigrants were granted admission. In 1924, slots for southern and eastern Europeans were reduced further.⁸⁵

National Origins Act of 1924

In 1924, Congress passed the National Origins Act. This required immigrants to obtain visas from an American consulate prior to admission into the United States. It reduced the amount of total immigrants allowed in the U.S. annually to only 165,000. The National Origins Act also based new limits on immigrants from the United States population in 1890.⁸⁶ The 1890 population included much fewer immigrants from eastern and southern European nations than the population in 1910:

While retaining in all respects the list of excluded classes prescribed in the Immigration Act of 1917--a list composed of those undesirable by reason of physical or mental defects, or because of bad character or of the holding of doctrines contrary to American ideals--the new law made permanent the temporary expedient laid down in the Act of 1921, namely the principle of numerical limitation based upon the number of residents of the United States of similar nationality. Instead of the limitation of 3 percent based upon the census in 1910, the new law made the percentage two percent, beginning July 1, 1924, and based it upon the census of 1890.⁸⁷

Due to these new proportions, northwestern European immigrants were granted over six times as many slots as southern and eastern Europeans.

Effects on Societal Views of American Immigration Policy

The Emergency Quota and National Origins Acts sealed the fate for millions of southern and eastern European immigrants. Millions of immigrants were immediately rejected, while those who were not rejected had to attempt to earn a living in a society that blatantly rejected them. After the implementation of these acts, American society became convinced that these “new immigrants” were inferior to the native population:

⁸⁵ Raymond L. Cohn. “Immigration to the United States.” Last Modified February 1, 2010. <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>. Accessed April 27, 2011.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Middleton Beaman. “Current Legislation: The Immigration Act of 1924.” *American Bar Association Journal*. Vol. 10 (1924), 490.

Immigrants are accused pretty much of the opposite--inertia, organizational incapacity, and docility--, which undermined the efforts of the unions and weakened the political organizations of the working class. The central European peasant, 'so steeped in deference, so poor, and so desperate for the American dream that he knelt down and kissed the hand of the boss who sent him to work,' was a favorite of employers.... The characterization and denunciation of immigrants as either a radical threat or an inferior stock that undermined the welfare of American workers was based on a stereotypical image of newcomers. Then, as now, all immigrants were portrayed as having similar traits.⁸⁸

Millions were forced to prove their worth to a society that provided no assistance.

This perception of immigrants completely hindered the possibility of economic and social mobility. Many of the immigrants required the acceptance of the native community in order to have social credibility, but, most importantly to gain economic credibility as well. Without acceptance, many immigrants became deadlocked at low-skilled employment, with low wage compensation. This situation plagued many immigrants migrating into the United States since the 1920's. Many immigrants found themselves in inconceivable situations where they found no escape due to the minimal opportunities granted to them.

⁸⁸ Alejandro Portes, Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Immigrant America: A Portrait*. Los Angeles: University of California Press (2006), 122.

CONCLUSION

The United States began as a nation of immigrants. People from various lands throughout Europe flooded into the U.S. in hopes of leaving the ill conditions of their past and taking a giant leap towards the future. By the end of the 18th century, these immigrants found a new identity as Americans, a people who risked their entire livelihoods to search for a more suitable life. However, as generations passed, American society forgot about the hardships their ancestors faced. This can be verified by the behavior of American society towards southern and eastern European migrants. In any society, radical change is always met with fear and skepticism. In U.S. immigration history this was no different. Millions of migrants were labeled as outsiders and an underclass before arriving at U.S. ports. They were forced to prove their right to live in a nation that has always been proud of being a nation of freedom and liberty.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century became a landmark period that altered U.S. immigration policy. After this period, the U.S. has never returned to its open door immigration policy. The reasons for such a radical change in policy have always derived from fear. This fear began as a concern that migrants would disrupt the socio-economic and cultural framework of American society and become a matter of national security as it is today. As stated, the factors that determine U.S. immigration policy have changed throughout U.S. history. However, one aspect of immigration policy has never changed: those most negatively affected from changes to immigration policy are not citizens but migrants who need to migrate in order to survive.

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OWEN W. REITENAUER
4404 10th Ave., Temple, PA 19560
484-955-5551
OWR5001@psu.edu

EDUCATION

<u>Muhlenberg High School</u> High School Diploma	Graduation Date: May 2006
<u>Pennsylvania State University</u> Bachelor of Arts: Global Studies	Graduation Date: May 2012
<u>Reading Area Community College</u> Associates of Arts: General Studies	Graduation Date: May 2009

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Reading Area Community College

- Dean's List **2007**
- President's List **2008--2010**

Pennsylvania State University

- Dean's List **2009—2012**
- Boscov Excellent Award **2011—2012**
- Global Studies Academic Excellent Award **2012**
- History Highest GPA Award **2012**
- Student Marshall for High GPA at Graduation **2012**

HONORS

<u>Reading Area Community College</u> Honor Society of Phi Theta Kappa	2008--2009
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<u>Pennsylvania State University</u> Schreyers Honors College with Thesis titled: <i>Socio-Economic Conditions of Southern and Eastern European Immigrants in the United States, 1880-1924</i>	2010--2012
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