**Immigration Across the Disciplines**

**Week 2 Notes**

**Migration for Love, Labor, & Marriage**

Not all immigrants left their homelands for economic concerns (marriage and family often factored in.

Many migrants were young adults, and sex ratios of migrating groups were imbalanced.

1. Many were newly married or of an age to marry.
2. The imbalance in sex meant that migrants might have to seek marriages outside of their own national origins.

**Demographics**

Because women were a minority in immigration, movement between countries left an imbalance in the new country and in the homeland.

Many men returned to their home countries to marry, or sent for brides; conversely, many women immigrated to marry men from their own country.

**Legal Policies**

Some homelands required financial basis before marriage, driving couples to immigrate in order to secure marriage.

Some immigrants were forbidden by law to bring in a spouse or marry a native “white” citizen.

In countries that allowed marriage in absentia, “picture brides” arose, women who married a man that had immigrated to the US. Because of their status as a married couple, the man could then, according to US law, send for his bride. (Gentleman’s Act, 1908, stopped Japanese labor immigration but allowed for the immigration of wives and children)

Promotion of family reunification, especially following WWII, resulted in spikes in female immigrants to the US.

**Cultural Perceptions**

Each country had its own social and cultural regard for marriages, including their arrangement, necessity, and appropriate ages at which to marry. 🡪Migration helped break down these practices.

Immigration increased the chances of marrying across ethnic, national, and cultural boundaries.

**Information & Technology**

Increases in immigration and changes in technology have resulted in new ways to seek international marriage (international matchmaking businesses).

Advancements in communication and transportation allow individuals to seek spouses from ever greater distances.

**Italy’s Workers around the World**

Italians migrated in all directions, to locales all around the world, in search of work.

The US did not hold a majority of Italian immigrants; 2/3 went elsewhere.

The majority of Italian immigrants were unskilled workers or the lowliest of business owners (the majority were men). The majority of these went in commercial agriculture, with very few going into factory occupations. Rarely did these occupations allow for the formation of families outside of Italy.

Because of the imbalance of sex in migrant populations, Italian men that immigrated remained closely tied to the homeland.

Italy was not a world economic power, having been crippled when trade shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic🡪economic activity was supported by migrant workers (migrant economy).

1. The emancipation of African slave labor resulted in empires that required raw material from their colonies, but suddenly had no source of labor.
2. Anti-imperial revolutions in the Americas resulted in a “to govern is to populate” ideology.
3. Industrial capital spread from cities in northern Europe and Britain to cities in the Americas, while new plantations and mines arose in African and Asian colonies.

Close ties to home, and the often seasonal nature of agricultural work, resulted in high rates of returns (as high as 50%).

Italian seasonal work often meant constructing railroads and cities.

Italians predominantly relocated to South America (Brazil would offer free passage to whole families if they signed a contract to work on a coffee plantation), where they often started small businesses or their own farms.

**From Sicily to Elizabeth Street**

Sicilians were not among early migrants from Italy; entering the 1900s, however, a growing number began to migrate to large US cities, establishing districts for Italian-born citizens.

Social behavior was influenced by the imbalance in sex, age, and social class.

Migration allowed for a modification of previous social norms, often increasing family ties and allowing social boundaries to blur and be crossed. (Is this the source of the stereotypically strong ties of Italian-American families?)

Political situations in Sicily contributed to migration of its citizens (economic problems lead many artisans and workers to turn to the Socialist party, but the government quickly stopped efforts to organize unions and other similar organizations).

Based on agrotown social ideology, Sicilians cooperated socially in order to migrate and seek solutions to the declining economic conditions.

Migration did not depend on whatever social ties already existed, but was an avenue for expanding social ties (thus increasing social status).

As migration progressed, family became more important to its organization (the majority of Sicilian migrants had at least one relative that was also a migrant; many had family living nearby).

Distant family began to hold more importance, strengthening family ties across generations and laterally.

The *casa* (multiple, close generations living under one roof?) gave way to *parenti* (more distant relatives living together?).

**Occupation & Social Class**

Because few of the upper-class immigrated, the social standing was somewhat reordered. However, there was still a distinction between peasant status and artisan (middle-class) status.

Expanding cities, like NYC, provided ample jobs for lower class, unskilled workers.

The middle-class relied too heavily on unskilled labor to truly assume the role of social elite.

**Daily Life**

Businesses were very family oriented; all members of the family tended to help in some way, even those that might work elsewhere (factories, etc.).

“Partner” households (multiple families living together?) allowed women to share child-care responsibilities and take on wage-earning jobs.

While some aspects of women’s lives changed (more time for cooking), others did not; they focused heavily on cleaning floors, but dirty and smoke-stained walls did not faze them.

Most occupations (with the exception of grocers) were heavily seasonal.

Seasonal work effected whether or not children attended school; girls often missed to work in garment factories, whereas boys could more easily find summer jobs or others that better fit school schedules.

The majority of Sicilians chose to work close to home (many walked to work, had a trip of less than an hour, or worked from home).

Though laundry did hang on rooftops and on clotheslines out windows, it often hung in the kitchen to dry.

Women often sent children to purchase food for meals.

**Environmental Change & Daily Life**

Tenement living restricted women and children, but left men and adolescent boys relatively free to socialize.

Women of high social class in Sicily were often isolated, but many migrant women chaffed at such isolation and attempted to find constructive ways to socialize despite the new restrictions of the environment.

**Society & Culture**

The “nuclear” family changed, and parents often complained that their children adopted American ideals of independence (they had a “right” to playtime and recreation, a “right” to keep their wages to themselves, etc.), undermining the solidarity of the family unit.

Sicilian family was centered on making the family unit prosperous so that the children, when the time came, could marry and thus continue being successful (so the children would individually benefit from family solidarity); in the US, saving to buy a house or other property meant that the children’s wages were put to a different use, thus decreasing the chance of a child individually benefiting from family solidarity and increasing the desire to seek one’s own way.

Because older children took over supervision of younger children, they began to socialize with their own generation instead of relying upon the close family unit. 🡪expanding social circles

Eventually, younger individuals married and chose to seek larger apartments in better neighborhoods, branching out from locales like Elizabeth Street in search of a better environment.

This resulted in larger communities with better housing that still held strong social ties, just with expanded boundaries.

Over time, the Sicilian immigrants molded themselves into a single working class, as opposed to the complex social hierarchy of Italy. Because of ties to family, few class-based organizations survived.

Social values were altered by cramped living conditions (it was no longer impossible to supervise women with men who were not necessarily related, etc.).

Although the family did play a necessary role in the homeland, the Sicilian ideal was in fact a sort of disconnection from others (becoming like an artisan—social elite). However, the opposite effect began to take place in immigrants; family ties became paramount and demanded unwavering loyalty.

**The Downtown Jews**

Much of New York City is comprised of chronological layers of culture, as one group took over the region of a previous group.

Following the Civil War, the “character” (p. 41) of immigration began to shift from that of enterprising individuals breaking free of “overripe” civilizations to that of people seeking to escape poverty, oppression, etc. (people that would be okay with surviving, but not thriving).

This resulted in an increase in immigration, requiring the construction of new facilities (Ellis Island)

New York developed quickly from a rural-type area into a city crafted with geometry and destroying the old to make room for the new.

The rise of millionaires gave rise to new types of politics, of which immigrants were a tool…political bosses and their organizations essentially bought the votes of immigrants and other poor or socially low citizens by doing them favors and guiding them.

Under William Tweed, Tammany Hall (democratic) surrounded itself with Irish immigrants; later, Italians became the mainstay.

1820s-50s: Irish were the predominant immigrants (“Five Points” area to the north of City Hall).

1840s: Germans began to dominate, liberal Germans seeking to escape the rigid social structure of their country. (“Dutchtown” in Lower East Side of Manhattan)

German and German-speaking Jews were a part of this. They entered, largely, into business (esp. garment trade), and ushered in the blurring of lines between residence and business.

1870s: Yiddish-speaking Jews (Poland, etc.) began to immigrate in large numbers. These largely worked for the Jewish population already there, settling near them on Canal St. where they attracted the Russian Jews beginning in 1882.

Business followed this patter: Push-cart 🡪 peddling customers 🡪 setting up a more permanent shop

Clothing contractors came into being as business owners sought to become merchant-manufacturing powers. They produced raw cloth, which was finished by the contractors and sold back to the merchant to be sold at retail or wholesale.

This “domestic industry” resulted in ever worsening housing conditions (sweatshops).

Intellectuals, especially from Russia, were forced into similar occupations; for the first time in history, workers that were already educated were seeing the darker, often hidden aspects of manufacturing and living conditions.

**The Jewish East Side**

**Abraham Cahan**

Born July 7 1860 in Russia & came to America in 1882. He was a Socialist leader, novelist, critic, and newspaperman (obituary in *NY Times*). Founded the first Jewish union in USA.

As he attempted to start his literary career, supported by Howells, but American Jewish literature was regarded as comic/a joke. His persistence, and Howells’ continuing support, resulting in the publishing of his first novella, *Yekl*, which was a success.

Politically active, having overthrown Tammany Hall’s hold on the Lower East Side and sent a Socialist to Congress. He was removed from the Socialist party when he supported Roosevelt.

**Henry James**

Born in NYC & regarded by Howells as the greatest novelist of all time.

Entered Harvard Law School, where he became associated with many prominent literary figures. He was never generally popular, and stuck to novels after an unsuccessful foray into playwriting, developing a writing style that further narrowed his field of fans.

His fame and popularity only came about after his death.

***The American Scene***

James immediately writes in a negative way regarding Jews, comparing them to worms that can survive after being cut into pieces and other animals, in one instance comparing the their environment to a cage.

He seems to write with thinly veiled sarcasm and irony, especially when referring to “New Jerusalem” and discussing the propagation and rise of the “lower” values (greed?).

p. 76 “freedom to grow up to be blighted.”

**Jacob Riis**

Born in Denmark in 1849; “editor, author, journalist, reformer, and photographer”

Came to the USA in 1870 & worked a number of odd jobs. As an eventual reporter, he befriended Theodore Roosevelt (when Roosevelt was Police Commissioner).

He advocated civic reform and worked to clean up various regions of the city and photographed many of the poorer “slums” to bring attention to their need.

***How the Other Half Lives***

He paints a vivid and detailed picture of the Jewish areas of the city.

His depiction of the stereotypical thriftiness of the Jews and the consequential poverty level they endure is almost disturbing. Of particular interest is the length they go to in order to hide illness, resulting in spreading diseases further when the bacteria are transferred via the clothes they manufacture and send to be sold.

**Lillian Wald**

Born in Cincinnati, 10 March 1867. During her life, she took part in a multitude of service tasks, advocating, children, immigrants, and healthcare.

***Windows on Henry Street***

Wald writes compassionately of the importance of cultural values and traditions and the need to stress these to new generations.