

Polish and Mexican Immigration Patterns

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INTRODUCTION

Immigration is a very important aspect of United States history because without immigration, this nation would not exist. Immigrants have built this country, starting with the multi-national mixture of colonial settlers, continuing through the Scots-Irish of the early Federal period, the Irish driven from Ireland by the failure of the potato crops, the eastern and southern Europeans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the Asians and Latin Americans of the post-1960 period. Each group that has come to the United States has enriched the national culture and has contributed to the country's prosperity. The purpose of this unit is to help students learn about immigration. The discussion will deal with one group that Texas students readily identify as "immigrants" and with one group that students do not easily recognize as "immigrants." This unit is designed for an eleventh-grade United States history course that has students of average or slightly below average ability in reading and mathematics. Suggestions will be included that could be used with more advanced students.

This unit focuses on two ethnic groups, Polish and Mexican, at two different times, the 1880-1915 "New Immigration" and the 1985-2000 period. In each of these periods, New York and Chicago were the areas that attracted many Poles. Mexican immigrants in the earlier periods stayed mostly in the states bordering Mexico. In the nineteenth century, Texas attracted a small number of Poles who came through the port of Galveston and, in the contemporary post-Solidarity era, a substantial number of Poles have arrived in Houston. Mexicans, too, did not stay exclusively in the southwest, but in the twentieth century have moved to northern cities. The discussion includes an overview of the chronology of immigration regulation, the places in which each group settled, reasons for immigrating, the problems involved in counting immigrants, and general socioeconomic characteristics of each group. To help develop the students' mathematical abilities, the lesson plans include data that can be used to create graphs. The unit can be taught in consecutive lessons or can be divided and used in connection with the different eras that are studied in United States history courses.

DISCUSSION

Chronology of Immigration

At the time of the earliest American settlement, both Poles and Mexicans were present in areas that eventually became part of the United States. Poles, hired as glassblowers, were in Jamestown in 1606 and by 1616 protested their being denied the right to vote. Because a significant part of the southwest was originally part of Mexico, a Mexican population lived in areas that became the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which marked the end of the Mexican-American War. In the early nineteenth century, Polish immigration was spurred by political conditions in Poland, but, six years after the end of the Mexican War, there was a settlement in Panna Maria, TX (1854) that marked the beginning of immigration based on economic factors. The major periods of immigration from Poland are from 1880 to 1920, the post World War II arrival of displaced

persons (1945-1950), and the current period (1985 to date) in which people have left Poland for both political and economic reasons.

A relatively small Mexican population, about 50,000 became “American” because of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. (Massey 25). In the early twentieth century (1900-1927), political unrest and the demand for labor by the railroads encouraged migration from Mexico (Massey 32). World War II caused a great demand for farm workers and, in response, the “Bracero” program (1942-1964) enabled growers to hire Mexican employees. When this program ended, agribusiness’ need for inexpensive labor was one of the reasons that the number of undocumented workers rose. The amnesty provision in the Immigration Reform and Control Act (1987) increased the number of potential immigrants who could legally gain entry because of relationship to a person who had been approved for legal residency (Massey 49).

Counting Immigrants

There are problems in counting the number of immigrants from both Poland and Mexico. Because Poland did not exist as an independent country from 1795 to the signing of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, it is difficult to get an accurate count of people who were actually coming from Poland during this period. Poland was split among Russia, Austria, and Prussia/Germany. People who were ethnically Polish, but who lived in the Russian-controlled area might be listed as Russian and not Polish. United States ports of entry were not consistent in their use of nationality labels, so someone labeled “Russian” might be ethnically Russian or might be an ethnic Pole living in a Russian-controlled area. Areas that were traditionally or historically considered to be Polish might contain non-Poles such as Lithuanians or Germans, so using only a geographic criterion was and is misleading. A similar geographical identity problem occurs today with descendants of people who were born in the Baltic Sea city of Kolobrzeg/Kohlberg when it was part of East Prussia. Once they have emigrated, do they consider themselves Poles or Germans? Probably the decision would be based on the language that was primarily used at home and the way they identify the city. In the case of Kolobrzeg and of other areas along the Baltic where there had been historically a large number of ethnic Germans, most of the ethnic German population left the city following World War II and resettled in Germany. More accurate estimates on the ethnicity of Partition- era immigrants have been done by Lopata (Pula 19) who used last names as one of her criteria in determining who was Polish. For instance, the name Muller would be German, but Mlynarski would be Polish.

Counting Mexican immigrants also causes problems. The United States-Mexican border was relatively open until the early twentieth century, when the threat of Mexican incursions in the Pancho Villa era caused the fortification of the frontier. (Massey 26) Until the formation of the Border Patrol in 1924, people could move back and forth easily and accurate counts are difficult to obtain. After 1964, the year the Bracero program ended, the continued demand for low-wage workers encourages the entry of undocumented workers, the number of which can be fairly well estimated (11 million), but cannot be definitively stated. There is also the problem of not counting twice people who come to the United States, return to Mexico and then migrate again. Current studies on Mexican immigration (Massey, Andreas) show the circularity of the movement of workers between countries. Sometimes it is more accurate to refer to the “migration” of workers and not the “immigration” of workers.

Circularity of immigration patterns is another similarity between early Polish and Mexican immigrants. From 1899-1913, 49 percent of Polish immigrants were from the Russian-controlled area and two-thirds of these immigrants were male. A significant number of these immigrants returned to Poland and, in many cases, immigrated to the United States a second time (Pula 18). A difference in the migration patterns is that the majority of the Poles settled in urban areas unlike the Mexican worker who was usually in agriculture and settled in rural places.

Preponderance of male immigrants is also characteristic of Mexican immigrants who are the first in their family to immigrate.

Immigration Regulation

Until the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the number of people immigrating to the United States was not limited by the federal government, although individual states or ports could forbid entry to persons who might become a burden to society (Jones 215). Attempts to control certain types of immigration arose with the passage of the Foran Act (1885) that made it illegal to import groups of people as contract labor. Here the emphasis was on restricting organizations that imported labor and not on the individual immigrant. Some of the political pressure behind these limitations came from labor unions, such as the Knights of Labor, that were worried that immigrants either would work for less money and depress wages of Native Americans or would be used as strike breakers.

Serious opposition to immigration started in California with the establishment of the Chinese Exclusion League (1880s) and in Boston with the formation of the Immigration Restriction League (1894). Jones believes that the force behind this was the Boston Brahmin fear that their group would, in the future, lose political power and the preeminent status of their class (222). There was also the undeniable fact that the Roman Catholic Irish were gaining in political clout, a situation that gave credence to the fear that new immigrants would further sap the political influence of the Protestant Yankees. The League wanted to restrict immigration by imposing a literacy test. The motive for and the results of this requirement are analogous to those of literacy tests used for voting by which the poor and the uneducated were eliminated. The legislation for this test was approved by Congress after having been introduced by Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Mass), who later became a vehement foe of the Versailles Treaty. The act was vetoed by Presidents Cleveland, Taft, and Wilson, before finally being passed in 1917 (Jones 231).

The Dillingham Commission was established by Congress (1907) to study and to examine immigration. This commission was responsible for drawing the sharp lines between the “old” pre-1890 European immigration and the “new” immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The Commission erroneously believed that the two groups had different reasons for immigrating. The older immigrants who, with the exclusion of the Irish, met less prejudice, were believed to be self-motivated, whereas the newer immigrants were coming as a result of advertising by steamship companies and the need for cheap labor by American business (Jones 153). The earlier group fit the ideal of the self-motivated, independent-minded American who bettered himself by his own efforts whereas the latter groups seemed to be weaker in character and to be more easily swayed by temporary monetary advantage. Differences in languages and religion and fear of these differences contributed to the belief that the new immigrants could not be assimilated. On the west coast, worry about Asian immigrants, who could not be easily assimilated, was one of the factors that led to the Gentlemen’s Agreement (1907) that cut off immigration from Japan. Fear and jealousy of Japanese economic prosperity was an additional reason for the elimination of immigration.

After World War I, the desire for isolationism and worry about involvement in foreign affairs increased pressures for nativism. The fear of Communism and anarchism led to drastic measures to control immigration into east coast cities. Immigrants coming from countries that were identified with either Communism or anarchist movements were especially unwanted. In 1921, immigration from Europe was limited to 3 percent of the number of people from a country who were living in the United States at the time of the 1910 census. The Johnson-Reed Act (1924) further restricted immigration by setting the limit at 2 percent of the resident population of a country living in the United States in 1890. This earlier year cut down the eligibility of people from southern and eastern Europe because the largest immigration from these places occurred

after 1890. These provisions were only to be in effect until a quota could be devised to allot 150,000 entries from all countries (Jones 237). The miscounting of Poles might further curtail the number of immigrants. Limits of similar types were continued in the McCarran Walter Act (1952).

Although restrictions and legislation were devised for immigrants from Europe and Asia, immigration from Mexico and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere was not a major concern to those seeking to limit entry to the United States. On the contrary, the virtual elimination of immigration from Asia caused by the Chinese Exclusion Act, the "Gentleman's Agreement" and the Barred Zone Act (1917) which also excluded Indians, combined with the reduction of immigration from Europe caused by World War I created a heightened demand for other unskilled labor in agriculture, construction, and industry. This demand was met by workers from Mexico who were recruited by private labor contractors known as "enganchadores" (Massey 27). The Mexican presence in Chicago begins at this time. To control Mexican immigration in the 1920s, the Federal Government created the United States Border Patrol (1924). This was the first time in United States history that there was an organized effort to apprehend and deport people. Deportations were increased during the Great Depression when the Mexican population of the United States was reduced by 41 percent (Massey 34). These deportations were caused by economic pressures and the fear that Mexicans would take jobs needed by Americans, a reaction that was similar to that of the Boston Brahmins of World War I era.

During World War II the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) granted 168,000 temporary visas to agricultural workers under the Bracero program. It was at this time that a limited number of Chinese immigrants were also permitted to enter. Opposition to Chinese immigrants weakened because China had become an ally of the United States in the war. Following World War II, efforts were made to remove undocumented workers. Operation Wetback (1954) resulted in the repatriation of over a million Mexican workers. When the Bracero program was ended in 1964 as a result of heightened awareness of its exploitative nature and increased opposition by organized labor, the demand for workers grew and agribusiness needed additional and, usually, undocumented employees. At this time the "Texas Proviso" was included in statutes, a provision that said that employers were not criminally responsible if their companies had employed undocumented workers (Massey 36). Similar regulations are still in effect. A company must ask for proof of legal residency status from prospective employees, but there is no requirement that the employer check on the legitimacy of documents that are offered. Therefore, as long as some sort of documentation has been given by a worker, the company cannot be charged with performing any illegal acts.

The Civil Rights era of the 1960s made Americans aware of the injustice in Immigration policy. Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) removed the country of origin quotas that were a product of overt racism and ethnic prejudice. These changes were consistent with the aims of Lyndon B. Johnson's plan for a Great Society, a program that also included the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act (1965), and the Fair Housing Act (1968). The immigration legislation was designed to offer all people an equal chance for immigration. There were, however, ramifications for Western Hemisphere countries. There was a limit of 180,000 visas a year for the hemisphere – the first time that a limit was put on Latin American and Canadian immigration (Massey 40.) Two factors, the cap on immigration numbers and the disappearance of the temporary workers program, fueled the growth of illegal immigration. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed in the Reagan administration (1986). This act provided penalties for employers who knew that they had hired undocumented workers. There was also an amnesty provided for about three million undocumented workers who had moved to the United States before 1982 and had lived here continuously since that time. The amnesty program especially benefited Mexican immigrants and

inadvertently gave a boost to additional legal immigration of people who could qualify under categories, such as close family relatives that were not subject to the quota (Massey 48). The IRCA provisions were directly responsible for the large increase in numbers of Mexican immigrants.

The 2006 election year debate over strengthening the border has had very sad consequences. The construction of fences near popular crossing spots has forced non-documented immigrants to cross at points that are geographically more remote and more dangerous because the new routes lead through desert areas. The number of immigrants who have died of thirst in the crossing has increased and has forced Texas authorities to rent refrigerator trucks to accommodate the bodies. Of the deaths, a large number have been women and children. (CBS *60 Minutes* 6/4/06) Other immigrants have suffocated while being transported in trailer trucks. Massey estimates that the death rate for illegal immigrants trying to cross the border tripled after the increase in border security that was instituted as a result of Operation Blockade (1997). This regulation effort built a wall along the border in the El Paso area. Operation Gatekeeper (1998) set up high intensity lights along part of the border. The death rate increased from 2 to 6 per 100,000. The actual number of deaths is about 350 a year (Massey 113-114).

The heightened security on the border has discouraged the circular migration, not only because of the physical barriers, but also because of the increased cost of illegal immigration. Going through very difficult terrain means that immigrants increasingly rely on the services of a *coyote*. As the trip has become more complicated, the *coyote's* fee has also increased. From 1986 to 1991 an immigrant crossing in the Tijuana area paid \$200-210 for guidance across. By 1998, after the strengthening of the border, the fee had risen to \$525 (Massey 130-131). Other costs are incurred in paying for the illegal documents that are necessary to get most jobs.

The question of the effectiveness of the border is difficult to answer. The language used to describe immigration uses images of war, disaster and sports. There are “floods of immigrants.” We have to “fortify” the border or we will be inundated by a “rising tide” of illegal “aliens.” “Operation Hold-the-Line” was renamed to an even less friendly “Operation Blockade.” The Immigration and Reform Control Act encouraged the increase in the size of the Border Patrol; as a result this agency has become the United States’ largest police force (Massey 115). The efficiency of the Border Patrol has fallen since the passage of IRCA. In 1980, the average Border patrol officer made 280 arrests. This number grew to 450 in 1986. After the implementation of IRCA, the arrest per year for each officer fell to 160. Massey estimates that the cost to the federal government per illegal entry rose from \$200 in 1986 to \$1,100 per entry in 1991. He claims that current protection of the border is no more effective than that of 1986 and that it costs three billion dollars more each year to provide the same amount of enforcement (Massey 118).

Another trend that arose after the passage of IRCA was the lowering of the wages earned by both documented and undocumented workers. Some employers paid less as a result of the added paper work (Massey 120). Other employers, especially those hiring seasonal laborers, used job contractors to employ workers. This way, the factory or farm owner was not the person who hired the workers, but an independent contractor. All workers, documented or undocumented, had to work through this contractor. Adding this middle-man caused wages of farm workers to decline from \$4.10 an hour in 1980 to \$3.90 in 1988 and finally to \$3.40 in 1992 (Massey 121).

The 2006 debate over the heightened fortification and policing of the border has only started to address these issues. However, even the beginning of debate has had a positive effect because young immigrants and children of immigrants have been motivated to become involved in demonstrations that advocate a more open policy. If this activism can be transferred to participation in party politics, positive changes can result.

Reasons for Immigrating

The original period of Mexican immigration was characterized by many “target” immigrants – males who came to the United States to solve economic problems in their home villages. Perhaps an individual’s aim was to buy some land. His “target” was to earn enough money to solve the problem, purchase the property, and return home. These workers were not worried about job status or social status. Many came from agricultural areas and were employed on farms in the United States. As long as money was earned, they were willing to work long hours at any job to reach the goal. They could also send money back to relatives in Mexico, an act that would give them more status and respect at home. Their length of stay in the United States was several years (Massey 21). Post-IRCA immigrants moved beyond the target worker status and increased their expectations for an improved standard of living. They also stayed longer in the United States (Massey 41). Many of these workers found work in urban areas in construction and landscaping. The longer stays are caused by the increased danger and difficulty of crossing the border without a visa. Because returning to Mexico became more difficult, there is an increased desire to bring family members to the United States. Both Andreas and Massey stress that the increased fortification of the border has had the effect of increasing permanent residency in the United States by undocumented workers and has moved Mexican immigration out of the traditional receiving states (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Illinois) into all other areas. In 1993 24% of Polish immigrants and 19% of Mexican immigrants settled in Chicago (Portes 36). Agribusiness, meat and seafood packing houses provide jobs for many new Mexican workers. The locations of these new workplaces draw new workers further from the border.

The earlier period of Polish immigrants was similar to that of Mexican immigration. The first immigrant from a family was most likely to be male, either married or unmarried. Many of these men came from rural areas and had left because of their inability to get land on which to farm (Pula 17). Some had first worked briefly in urban areas in Poland and so were better prepared for life in United States cities than were those who came directly from a rural area. Once in the United States, they settled in the northeastern and north central industrial area that bordered the main railroad lines from western Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, northern New Jersey, through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan to Chicago and Milwaukee. Thomas and Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant in America* quotes from letters of immigrants. The letters show that some might have started off as “target” immigrants (the Wroblewski family, Thomas 101 ff.), sending money home to help out the family and to be put aside until their return. In this early period, Polish immigrants, like Mexican immigrants, frequently returned (Pula 18), although the greater distance reduced the frequency. Once they were settled in the United States, generally in an area that had other Poles, and had secured a good job, money could be saved to pay for tickets for other family members. Here there is a parallel to the modern practice of a Mexican family’s saving money to help pay for the cost of a *coyote* for relatives who want to cross the border (Massey 130).

The Poles who have immigrated in the twentieth century came at two different times. The group that came as a result of World War II contained many refugees and Displaced Persons. At the end of the war 1.9 million Poles were in Germany where they had been used as slave laborers (Jaroszynska-Kirchmann 60). Other Poles who were not in Poland at the War’s end were veterans of the Polish Army who had served in the Italian campaign, most notably at Monte Cassino and members of the Polish Air Force who were in England. Many of these people did not want to return to a country that was controlled by the Soviet Union. Between 1947 and 1951 357, 635 people were resettled in 47 countries; 110, 566 came to the United States (Jaroszynska-Kirchmann 108). Because their inability to return to Poland was caused by the political situation, they did not consider themselves to be immigrants, but refugees. The post-1980 Polish immigrants have come as a result of economic and political changes in Poland that were

encouraged by the Solidarity movement. Many of the earlier Solidarity-era immigrants were forced to leave because of their political activities. The immigrants from each group are much better educated than the earlier Polish immigrants and their educational level is higher than many other groups (Portes 59). Of the post-Solidarity immigrants, many have come for improved economic opportunities. Most were from urban areas in Poland and, once in this country, they do not live in exclusively Polish areas. There is another group of Polish immigrants who are in this country without valid documentation. These people are called “wakacjusze” or “vacationers.” They entered the country on a temporary visitor’s visa and overstayed their time. Erdmans estimates that there were 12,000 wakacjusze in the late 1960s, 24,000 in the 1970s, and over a quarter of a million in 1991 (Erdmans 60, 64). These “visitors” come because they can earn in a week what it would take a year to earn in Poland. They generally live urban areas where there are large Polish communities and find jobs in occupations where a knowledge of English is not a requirement. They are typical “target” immigrants because with little fluency in English, they take whatever jobs they can get. Many of the female workers find employment in child-care or housekeeping. They do not have extensive associations with the social organizations of the Polish-American community and plan to return to Poland when their financial goals are met.

There are cultural differences between these two later groups and the Polish-American community of descendants of people who came in the first immigrations. These differences have caused difficulties between the groups. The culture of Polonia, as the Polish-American community is called, was based on the peasant rural culture of the late 19th and early 20th century. The Polish used in much of Polonia dates from this earlier period and is based on rural usage, not the urban, literary Polish of the newcomers. If a language is used by a group that is isolated from its source, archaic forms will be preserved and loan words from the host country will be incorporated. The resulting amalgam will seem barbaric to a recently arrived native speaker. In addition to language, the 20th century immigrants were familiar with the Polish national culture, whereas the earlier groups were familiar only with regional rural cultures. One example is the polka which is a very popular dance in Polonia. Polish polka bands are found throughout the country, and there are annual week-long polka conventions in Chicago and New London, CT. Many Roman Catholic churches have Polka Masses. In contemporary Poland, this dance has been superseded by other ballroom dances that are popular all over the globe.

Political views and feelings are also different. The World War II immigrants had grown up in a country, Poland, that was a sovereign nation and had its own government. They were very distressed by Poland’s status as a satellite of the Soviet Union. They were also angered by the reassignment of Polish territory to the Soviet Union and were not mollified by the addition of German territory on the west. Consequently, this group was very eager to work for Poland’s freedom from Soviet control. They did not consider themselves to be immigrants or refugees, but more like Poles living abroad, because they had chosen not to return to a Soviet controlled country (Jaroszynska-Kirchmann 146). The Solidarity generation had spent their formative years in a Socialist state. Some of this group had been forced out of the country and had feelings of guilt about deserting Poland. Each of these groups was very interested in political developments in Poland. Polish-Americans were generally not as interested in Polish domestic politics and were sometimes uneasy admitting people who had lived, although unwillingly, under a communist system. American Poles also felt that the new arrivals considered members of Polonia to be inferior. They were angered by what were interpreted to be attempts to control Polonia’s organizations.

The twentieth century immigrants had a great interest in the political situation in Poland and maintained close contact with people in Poland. They were interested in advancing the national interests of the country. The American Polish community thought of themselves as Americans who were of Polish descent. This group was more interested in matters that affected them

directly. Consequently they were more worried about the insulting use of “Polish jokes” in the 1960s and 1970s.

The popularity of Polish jokes was one of the last instances of widespread ethnic prejudice against Poles. The frequency of these jokes seemed to decrease after the election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla as Pope John Paul II (1978). Polish immigrants of the late nineteenth century had faced strong ethnic and racial prejudice. Poles and especially Polish Jews were, like Mexicans today, considered to be a different non-white race (Foner 144). Living and working in ethnic neighborhoods protected both groups from unpleasant interactions with other groups.

Places

The early Polish immigrants were helped in their adjustment to the United States by living in ethnic enclaves. In these areas were businesses, social and religious organizations that catered to the needs of the immigrants. Butcher shops, bakeries, and grocery stores would supply culinary needs. Banks, savings and loans, insurance groups carrying on business transactions in Polish would take care of financial needs. The parish church and school would take care of their spiritual needs. One aspect that differentiated Poles from other Roman Catholic groups was the method used to set up parishes. Frequently, lay people would buy the land, build the church and then ask for authorization of a parish (Pula 38). The number of Polish parishes grew from 15 in 1870 to 800 in the 1930s. Some of these parishes were “national parishes.” A national parish can be attended by people of a particular ethnic group who live in a wide geographical area (Pula 39,40). Today in Houston there is one national parish, Our Lady of Czestochowa, located in Spring Branch (1731 Blalock Drive). It is a relatively new parish that was first established as a mission in the 1980s; its parishioners live throughout the Houston area. Elsewhere in Texas, there are seven other ethnic parishes, two of which were established in the 19th century (Burlington in 1879 and Cameron in 1883). In 1991, according to the listing on Polhome, there were 336 parishes in the United States in which at least one Mass weekly is said in Polish. The parishes are in 27 states. The largest concentrations are in Pennsylvania (72); New York (52), only one of which is in Manhattan (established in 1872); 47 in Illinois, of which 32 are in the city of Chicago; 40 in New Jersey, of which 11 were founded before 1900; 20 in Massachusetts; and 18 in Connecticut.

Mexican immigrants first were concentrated in the states that border Mexico and were mostly engaged in agriculture. In the 1920s with increasing demand for workers in industry, Mexican immigrants went to Chicago, as the Polish immigrants had done, to obtain jobs in the many factories in the city. It is at this point that the Mexican community in Chicago was established. In the twenty-first century, the Mexican presence has grown and in many places, especially along Milwaukee Avenue in Chicago; it overlaps with places that were part of the original Polish enclaves. Another place where Polish and Mexican populations overlap is near San Antonio in Texas where the original Polish population was involved in agriculture.

For both Spanish speaking and Polish speaking immigrants, newspapers, and radio/TV have been important source of information and have provided ways to foster the culture of each group. Today, Spanish-language television is available nationwide and is a very important source of news about Mexico. The Spanish language press based in the United States is also important, as is the relatively easy access to newspapers from Mexico. The day of the Polish newspaper has passed. In 1893 there were over a hundred Polish language periodicals. (Pula 30) A few managed to survive into the 1960s by having many more articles in English. One of the last to cease publication (1996) was the Stevens Point (WI) *Gwiazda Polarna (Northern Star)* (Szumowski). The increase in the Polish population of Chicago in the 1980s led to an additional eight magazines and six radio programs. Another major difference between the Spanish and Polish media is the vast difference in the numbers of radio/TV stations. In major cities, there might be a

couple of hours of Polish language programming on a local radio station, as opposed to 24 hours of service for Spanish language stations.

Political Influence of Ethnic Blocs

The size of the voting bloc of Polish-American voters did not change United States policy toward Polish diplomatic problems. The reality of having to deal with larger and more powerful nations outweighed Polish interests. There are two clear instances of this. The first occurred in 1863 when Poles began an insurrection against Russia. At this point in the American Civil War, the United States government worried that England and France might come in on the side of the South. Russia also feared that these countries might support the Polish revolutionaries. The czar sent the Russian fleet to New York as a symbol of friendship and as a force to deter the English fleet from blockading Northern ports. Although there was considerable popular sympathy for the Polish revolt, the American government could do nothing (Pula 10-11).

The second episode was the betrayal of Polish interests at the Yalta Conference (1945). Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill allowed the Soviets to have a bloc of Eastern European countries as a buffer on the western Russian frontier. Although the American and British leaders gave lip service to the establishment of a free and independent Poland, and, although the Yalta agreements promised that there would be open and democratic elections, secret arrangements with Stalin and the Russians allowed the Soviets to install a Russian-friendly government in Poland and to incorporate Poland into the Eastern bloc. Fear that Communism might spread throughout Western Europe and, perhaps, into the Western Hemisphere made it appear to be more practical to the British and Americans to sacrifice some land in Europe to Russia. Polish immigrants of the post-World War II group expressed especially strong demands to repudiate the Yalta agreements. In addition to the political demands, they pointed out that Poland was the only one of the Allies to lose territory in the World War II settlements and that Polish territory had been given to the Soviet Union, a country that had not only invaded Poland, but had massacred most of the military officer corps in the Katyn Forest and had passively ignored the Warsaw uprising at the end of the War, thereby allowing many Polish citizens to be killed. Abrogating Yalta agreements was not a realistic political or diplomatic possibility, but in 1985 a Congressional Resolution did ask that the provisions of the Yalta agreements be met (Erdmans 184).

Poles have had little success in electing Poles to office. The community is frequently split and candidates run against each other or split the Polish vote. Chicago, which has the second largest number of Poles after Warsaw, has elected Polish Aldermen, but never a Polish mayor. There had been Polish Congressmen, but never a Polish U.S. Senator until the election of Edmund Muskie (D-Maine) and, more recently, Barbara Mikulski (D-MD).

The influence of Mexican Americans at the polls has some similarities to the Poles. Although there are many Mexican-American voters concentrated in the border-states, with the exception of Los Angeles, there has been little success in electing Hispanic mayors. In Houston the City Council has Hispanic members, but so far there has not been a successful mayoral candidate. The huge interest in the Immigration legislation that was before Congress in 2006 might indicate a change in the effectiveness of the potential of the Hispanic vote. A demographic factor working against increased Hispanic representation is that the Hispanic population in Houston is young and younger citizens tend to have lower voting participation. To participate actively in politics, it also is necessary to register and vote and to do this, citizenship is required.

Some Statistical Comparisons

The following percentages refer to people who were born in Poland and Mexico, not the United States-born children of immigrants.

The rate of attaining citizenship differs greatly between immigrants from Poland and Mexico. Among immigrants who entered the United States before 1980, 34.2 % of Poles and 12.2 % of Mexicans had become citizens. For 1980 to 1989 and 1990 to 1999, the Polish percentage of naturalization was about double that of the Mexican rate: 13.6 and 6.7 (Polish) to 6.9 and 3.4 (Mexican). The percentage of the total immigrant population that was naturalized is 54.4 of Poles and 22.5 of Mexicans (U.S. Census Table FPB1). The larger percentage of naturalized Poles in the earliest group is not surprising because the factors that caused them to come, such as war or political oppression, made it clearer that the United States would be their permanent home and, therefore, they were more inclined to become actively involved in their new country. In contrast, Mexican immigrants were physically closer to Mexico, had more of an opportunity to return and were less eager to give up all ties to their native country. Portes estimates that 17.4% of Mexican immigrants who were admitted between 1970 and 1979 were naturalized by 1993 (120). The same reasons are at work in the differences in naturalization of the more recent immigrants. It is clearly in the interests of community organizers to help legal immigrants overcome the barriers that deter them from becoming citizens and then registering to vote. Latino rights groups increased their efforts to register Latino citizens in the summer of 2006. The potential political impact of the Latino vote is huge. It is estimated that in Texas about 910,000 immigrants, the majority of whom are Latino, will become eligible for naturalization in 2006. Furthermore, by 2008, 133,800 United States-born children will be eligible to vote. Of the current 18 to 24-year-old Latino citizens, less than half, 208,443, are registered to vote; 260,000 are unregistered. A conservative estimate of the total of unregistered voters is three-quarters of a million (Coker).

There are several barriers to citizenship. One is education, both in familiarity with English and in the amount of formal education. Higher language skills and increased educational levels will enable a person to be more comfortable in participating in the political process. Of Polish immigrants 13.1 % speak English only at home in comparison to 5.6% of Mexican. This difference is again due to the earlier arrival of the Poles and the loss of the native language after the second generation. The grandmother might have spoken Polish to her American-born children; if she lives with her grandchildren, she will speak English. A more significant statistic is the percentage of people who feel that they speak English "less than 'very well.'" 50.3 % of Poles and 71.5% of Mexicans think they do not speak English at a high level of proficiency. It is interesting that 2,565 Polish immigrants speak Spanish at home. Of these only 0.2% think they do not speak English very well (U.S. Census 2000 table FBP-1).

Another difficulty is lack of formal education. The difference between the median age of the Polish (47) and the Mexican (31.5) immigrant should be kept in mind. Younger immigrants will have more foreign-born children of elementary and high school age. Of the population three years and older enrolled in school, the percentages of Mexican immigrants are 2 1/2 times higher than that of Polish immigrants in nursery school and kindergarten. The comparative differences in percentages change for grades one through eight (24.7 5 Polish and 43.3% Mexican) and for high school (26.5% for Poles and 32.4% for Mexicans). This is also explained by the difference in the median ages of the immigrant groups. There is a significant difference in the percentage of students enrolled in college or graduate school with 46.7% of the Poles and only 18.7% of Mexican immigrants studying at this level.

The educational gap is more easily seen by the highest attainment levels of people twenty-five years and older in the two groups. 48.35% of Mexican immigrants have less than a 9th grade education; 13.5% of the Polish immigrants report this level. Over a quarter (29.4%) of the Polish immigrants and 15.7% of the Mexican immigrants have a high school diploma or its equivalent. The presence of Mexican immigrants in colleges and universities is low. Only 2.6% have a bachelor's degree, and 1.6% have a graduate or professional degree. The Polish percentages for these two levels are 9.5% for a bachelor's degree and 12.4% for a professional or graduate degree

(U.S. Census 2000. Table FBP-1). One of the challenges for teachers of immigrant children is to help the students become aware of opportunities for higher education and to convince them of the necessity to complete high school and to pursue advanced studies. Because students are more easily persuaded by financial benefits, the average income of households can be compared. The mean total earnings of a Mexican immigrant household is \$40,877 and a Polish household \$58,294. Polish households have a greater percentage of two working parents (44.4%) than Mexican households (35.1%), a situation that adds to the total earnings. Numbers that better reflect the education gap are the mean annual incomes for full time male and female workers. Male workers earn \$20,814 (Mexican) and \$38,669 (Polish); female workers earn \$16,518 (Mexican) and \$26,324 (Polish) (U.S. Census Table FBP-2).

There are differences in educational level among groups at the time of immigration. Statistics for 1990 list 77% of native-born United States residents as high school graduates. 20.3% have completed four years or more of college. The same year, Indian immigrants surpassed the United States average by having 87.2% high school graduates and 64.9% with four years or more of college. Polish immigrants were slightly below the United States average in both percentage of high school graduates (58.1) and those with four years or more of college (16.3). Mexican immigrants had significantly less education with 24.3% having graduated from high school and only 3.5% with four or more years of college (Portes 58).

Occupation also reflected the educational differences. In a study done in 1993, Indian immigrants, who had one of the highest educational levels in 1990, were also most likely to be classified as professionals or managers (72.9%). Polish immigrants were both managers and professionals (38.9%) and also operators and laborers (13.3%). Almost half of Mexican immigrants were operators and laborers (45.5%) (Portes 70). This difference in employment at entry continues in the occupations of individuals listed in the 2000 census. Mexican and Polish immigrants are employed in manufacturing to a similar extent (21.4% and 23.0%, respectively). There are similar percentages in construction work (15.2% and 11.4%). However, there is a major difference in agricultural/forestry/fishing workers, with 7% of Mexicans and 0.4% of Polish immigrants working in these categories. Polish immigrants are more likely to be employed in management positions (26.4%) and sales and office jobs (17.0%). Mexican immigrants are less likely to be in management positions (8.1%) or in sales occupations (12.5%). There is less of a difference in service occupations with 25.3% of Mexican immigrants and 17.0% of Polish immigrants having this type of job (U.S. Census 2000 table FBP-2).

Education levels and lack of familiarity with English are factors that discourage registered voters from going to the polls. Also, those who work long hours in service jobs have difficulty getting time off to go vote. The main block to increased Latino voting power is the low number of eligible citizens who have registered to vote.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1: Where Did Polish Immigrants Settle?

Materials

- Large outline maps of individual states: Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois. Outline map of the northeast and upper mid-west.
- Graphing paper (optional)
- Atlas with physical/political maps of individual states.
- Web site: Polhome. <<http://www.polhome.com/church-p.html>>. This site lists Catholic churches that have one service in Polish. Twenty-seven states are listed. The establishment dates of some churches are given.

The purpose of this lesson is to see where Polish immigrants settled in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to use geographic characteristics of places to explain why immigrants would move to these locations.

Students may work in pairs. Each pair will take a different state.

Take one of the outline maps. Select one state from the Polhome site.

Use the atlas to find the towns or cities; then put the location on the outline map.

Indicate the size of the town or city.

What significant geographic features are in the vicinity? (Answers might be lakes, rivers)

Put these features on the outline map.

What type of transportation serves the town or city? (Railroads, canals, roads)

What transportation would have been most common in the nineteenth century?

Use the Internet to learn what industry was in the location in the late nineteenth century or at the time the church was established.

Put the locations on the large area map.

Can you see a pattern of settlement? (Do they follow railroad lines?)

Make a bar graph that shows the number of churches in each state.

(Arizona 2, California 7, Colorado 1, Connecticut 18, Delaware 2, Florida 11, Georgia 2, Illinois 47, Indiana 17, Iowa 1, Maine 1, Maryland 2, Massachusetts 20, Michigan 13, Minnesota 1, Missouri 1, New Hampshire 1, New Jersey 40, New York 52, Ohio 9, Oregon 1, Pennsylvania 72, Rhode Island 1, Texas 8, Utah 1, Washington 3, Wisconsin 1.)

Extension: For a particular town, list the 19th century industries or businesses. What industries have disappeared? What new industries are there? What has caused the change? (Example: Pittsburgh area steel. Today little steel). Does this change in the economy make it more difficult or easier for modern immigrants to find jobs?

Compare the industries for several cities in a state. Are there similarities or differences?

Lesson 2: Comparison of Numbers of Immigrants from Mexico and Poland

Materials: Graphing paper, colored pencils.

Make a bar graph that shows the numbers of immigrants from Mexico and Poland.

Use different colors for each country.

Year	Poland	Mexico
1891-1900	96,720	971
1901-1910	n/a	49,642
1911-1920	4,813	219,004
1921-1930	227,734	459,287
1931-1940	17,026	22,319
1941-1950	7,571	60,589
1951-1960	9,985	299,811
1961-1970	53,539	53,937
1971-1980	37,234	640,294
1981-1990	83,252	1,655,843
1991-2000	163,747	2,249,421
2001	12,355	204,844
2002	13,304	217,318
2003	11,016	114,984
2004	13,972	173,664

(Source: U.S. Census Bureau Table 2)

Questions on Graph

1. In what years were there more Polish than Mexican immigrants?
2. For each year, express the relationship of Polish and Mexican immigrants as a ratio.
3. In what decades/years are there the greatest changes in the ratios?
4. Why does immigration decrease between 1931 and 1940?
5. Why does Polish immigration decrease and Mexican immigration increase between 1911-1920 and 1941-1950?

Questions on Related United States History

1. What government restrictions on immigration were passed in the 1920s?
2. What is “Nativism”? How do large numbers of immigrants contribute to the growth of nativism?
3. What are current debates on immigration?

Extension

Read a current newspaper or magazine article on immigration.

- Summarize the article.
- Look at the words used. Are nouns such as “influx,” “rising tide,” or “flood” used to describe immigration? Are verbs such as “defend,” “protect,” “guard,” or “fortify” used to explain activity on the border?
- How does the choice of words convey the point of view or bias of the author?

Lesson 3: Comparison of Age, Education and Income of Immigrants

Materials

Graphing paper and colored pencils.

Procedure

Make bar graphs using the following statistics.

Table 1: Ages of Immigrants living in the United States

Age	Immigrants from Poland		Immigrants from Mexico	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
under 5 years	1,535	0.3	165,490	1.8
5-9	6,725	1.4	305,760	3.3
10-14	11,640	2.5	443,975	4.8
15-19	19,565	4.2	702,250	7.7
20-24	28,105	6.0	1,185,185	12.9
25-34	62,065	13.3	2,666,845	29.1
35-44	84,393	18.1	1,892,830	20.6
45-54	86,030	18.4	979,555	10.7
55-59	24,495	5.2	270,290	2.9
60-64	24,720	5.3	190,420	2.1
65-74	46,950	10.1	234,075	2.6
75-84	47,565	10.2	104,720	1.1
85 and over	22,950	4.9	36,090	0.4

(Source: U.S. Census 2000 table FBP-1)

Questions on Age Differences

1. a. Which two decades have the largest numbers of Mexican immigrants?
 b. Which two decades have the largest numbers of Polish immigrants?
 c. What does this tell you about the relative ages of Polish and Mexican immigrants?
2. What are the relative differences between the youngest and oldest groups?
3. How would this information be helpful to people who are planning to build schools?
 To supply services to senior citizens? To change Social Security laws?

Table 2a: Educational Attainment

	Polish Immigrants		Mexican Immigrants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 25 years and older	399,165		6,374,825	
Less than 9 th grade	53,775	13.5	3,081,310	48.3
9 th to 12 th , no diploma	55,150	13.8	1,396,175	21.9
High school graduate/equivalent	117,315	29.4	1,001,830	15.7
Some college, no degree	61,035	15.3	505,830	7.9
Associate degree	24,295	6.1	118,160	1.9
Bachelor's degree	38,075	9.5	166,960	2.6
Graduate/professional degree	49,520	12.4	104,560	1.6

(Source: U.S. Census 2000, Table FBP-1)

Table 2b: School Enrollment

	Polish Immigrants		Mexican Immigrants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 3 years and older enrolled in school	68,575		1,554,660	
Nursery school/preschool	420	0.6	28,805	1.9
Kindergarten	1,030	1.5	57,840	3.7
Grades 1-8	16,935	24.7	672,835	43.3
Grades 9-12	18,165	26.5	504,190	32.4
College/Graduate School	32,020	46.7	290,995	18.7

(Source: U.S. Census 2000, Table FBP-1)

Questions on Tables 2a and 2b

Note: It might be necessary to explain what associate's, bachelor's and graduate/professional degrees are.

1. How do the numbers of students in elementary school show that the Mexican immigrant population is younger?
2. How does the percentage of Polish immigrants in graduate show an older immigrant population?
3. What percentage of Polish and Mexican immigrants have high school diplomas?

Table 3: Income Family Income

	Polish Immigrants		Mexican Immigrants	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Families	147,905		2,681,035	
Less than \$10,000	5,330	3.6	273,915	10.2
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5,045	3.4	235,790	8.8
\$15,000 to \$24,999	15,035	10.2	540,010	20.1
\$25,000 to \$34,999	18,750	12.7	482,650	18.0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	27,150	18.4	495,285	18.5
\$50,000 to \$74,999	34,515	23.3	397,120	14.8
\$75,000 to \$99,999	19,380	13.1	144,230	5.4
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14,670	9.9	75,755	2.8
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4,015	2.7	15,930	0.6
Over \$200,000	4,020	2.7	20,350	0.8
Median Family Income (dollars)	51,373		30,689	
Per-capita income (dollars)	28,836		13,020	
Median Income (dollars)				
Male, full-time year-round	38,669		20,814	
Female, full-time, year-round	26,324		16,518	

(Source: U.S. Census 2000 Table FBP-2)

Questions on Table 3

1. What is per capita” income?
 2. What is a “median income”?
 3. What effect does education have on income?
 4. If two parents and a child in a family work, what effect does this have on the family income?
 5. What percentage of each family group earns less than \$25,000 a year?
 6. What percentage of each family group earns more than \$50,000 a year?
- A. Extension Questions/Project. Find this information and use it to make a poster.
1. What institutions in Houston offer associate degrees?
 2. Where are these places located?
 3. What institutions in Houston offer Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degrees?
 4. What are the requirements needed to enter each of these colleges/universities?
 5. How many years do you need to get a college degree?
 6. Do all colleges cost the same?
 7. What are some ways to pay for college?
- B. Use of Statistics to learn about other ethnic groups.
 The Census bureau has information on immigrants from all countries. Students could work either alone or in pairs to find this information. They could compare several countries or look at countries from different continents. Use the Census Bureau reference in the Bibliography.

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