Ellis Island: The public and personal representations of the immigrant experience

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ELLIS ISLAND: THE PUBLIC AND PERSONAL REPRESENTATIONS
OF THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

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by

Tara Maras

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Between 1892 and 1954, more than 12 million immigrants arrived at Ellis Island’s shores for the promise of a new beginning in America. During this period of immigrant influx and in the decades to follow, anti-immigrant sentiment remained at the forefront of the collective American conscious, varying in severity, though ever present. This study compares the relationship between the personal stories of immigrants and the print media’s account of immigration in Ellis Island’s peak year, 1907, in an attempt to understand how storytelling, as communication, helped shape the collective immigrant experience. It also examines how the relationship contributes to U.S. perceptions of immigrants. The study is informed by Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory and was accomplished through a qualitative narrative analysis of both immigrant related articles published in 1907 New York Times articles and the archival artifacts on record at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Between the watchful green goddess Liberty and the towers of Wall Street, Ellis Island's turreted immigrant station rises above New York Harbor's Upper Bay like a place in a fairy tale." – Cynthia Philip 1990

The fairy tale of Ellis Island, like the topic of U.S. immigration, is one of twists, turns, shining glories, and horrific dark hours. The island has had nearly as many nomenclatures as the countries from which its temporary guests hailed, known at different periods as Gull Island, Kioshk Island, Oyster Island, Government Island, Gibbers Island, and Bedloe's Island (Corsi 59; Pitkin 1). But the story of Ellis Island stretches far beyond its diminutive shores and half-dozen nicknames. While the Island sits as the centerpiece of U.S. immigration history, the topic cannot be adequately reviewed without juxtaposing it against the nation's sentiments regarding immigrants and immigration, much of which has been played out in the press since the arrival of New York City's earliest immigrants in 1855 at Castle Garden in the Battery (Pitkin 9).

Purpose of the Study

At the height of U.S. immigration, more than 12 million immigrants arrived at Ellis Island's shores and were granted access to what promised to be a new beginning in
America. In fact, “Ellis Island was the major federal immigration facility in America between January 1, 1892 and November 12, 1954. During those years, more than 24 million people were processed for immigration in the United States, of whom more than 12 million came through Ellis Island” (Coan xviii). During this period of heightened immigrant influx and in the decades to follow, anti-immigrant sentiment remained at the forefront of the collective American conscious, varying in severity, though ever present. The two distinct though related phenomena, of the massive influx of immigrants into the United States and the historically negative sentiment for immigrants, prompted an examination of the relationship between the personal and public representations of U.S. immigration at the height of Ellis Island’s function as an immigration station in 1907.

This comparison was accomplished through a qualitative narrative analysis of both immigrant related articles published in 1907 in a selected New York City newspaper and the written archival artifacts on record at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, marrying the two bodies of discourse to understand how the public and personal representations of 1907 immigration compare. The succeeding pages provide further insight on the topic, explain personal motivations for pursuing this research, discuss how a contribution of scholarship in this area enhances the communication literature, and explain why a qualitative narrative analysis was the most appropriate methodology for this study.

The subject of immigration has historically received widespread media attention, both in print and broadcast forums. The personal tales of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island have been captured through cinematic presentations (Ellis Island), in popular books and film (The Gangs of New York), in historical reference books (Coan; Corsi), and in the archival records available at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. I have juxtaposed the
two bodies of literature for the first time in an effort to provide a snapshot of immigration history through the lens of Ellis Island and to examine the similarities and differences that surface in the public and personal representations—stories and accounts—on the subject. The research questions that guided this study were: What is the relationship between the personal experience of immigrants and the print media’s portrayal of immigration in Ellis Island’s peak immigration year, 1907? How did this relationship contribute to U.S. perceptions of immigrants? These research questions were answered through field research and a qualitative narrative analysis of both immigrant related articles published in a 1907 New York City newspaper and archival artifacts. But the qualitative methodology and conclusions would make little sense without placing them into the historical context of Ellis Island and of America’s relationship with and perspectives about immigrants. Thus much of the rest of Chapter 1 includes the story of Ellis Island that helps to provide some of the historical validity of memoirs and journalism.

Background of Ellis Island

A picnicker enjoying a clambake on Oyster Island in colonial times would no doubt have found irony in the fact that the island’s eventual mark on history would be as an immigration station, not a resort for the privileged. According to the historian Pitkin, the largest of the Oyster Islands was commonly referred to as Bedloe’s Island (1). For a century and a half, Oyster Island, the earliest known name of Ellis Island, was the site of picnics and fishing parties until it “passed finally into the hands of Samuel Ellis, a farmer of Bergen County New Jersey” (Corsi 57). Ellis willed the Island and its structures to the son of his daughter, Catherine Westervelt (Corsi 58; Pitkin 3). Catherine’s son died in
infancy and the island was passed to New York State and renamed Bucking Island (Coan xxxx). In 1808 New York relinquished the island to the federal government. It briefly functioned as a powder magazine and arsenal, “[...] doubtless because of the recent experience of the colonies with the British” (Corsi 58). In 1813, the notorious pirate Gibbs was led to Bucking Island after his conviction and was “plunged through the trap door of a rudely constructed hangman’s gibbet” (Corsi 58). For the next 28 years, the island was known as Gibbet’s Island.

In 1841, the federal government erected Fort Gibson on Gibbet’s island (Corsi 58). Two years later, Fort Gibson was deemed “armed and equipped” and eventually grew to accommodate several additional magazines during the Civil War years (Pitkin 7). Ellis Island was also commonly known as Gull Island after its inhabitants, and was later named Dyre’s Island – all before it gained esteem as Ellis Island, “after its only known eighteenth-century owner” (Pitkin 1). In his autobiography, Edward Corsi, former Commissioner of Ellis Island, surmises that because the records of Governor Tompkins show “that Samuel Ellis actually conveyed the Island to the state of New York, it must be assumed that the name Ellis was chosen in legal manner for that reason” (59).

Ellis Island’s Revival

The scandal that marked Ellis Island’s peak immigration years did not end with the metaphorical closing of the gates in 1954. In fact, for some the controversy was just beginning as heated debates about the landmark’s fate stirred political and social storms at all levels of the government for nearly a decade. In 1955, Ellis Island was designated as surplus land and sat in virtual abandonment for the next 30 years (Philip 46).
According to the historian Coan, the federal government handed jurisdiction of Ellis Island to the General Services Administration (GSA) with the charge of upkeep and the order to sell the island (xxx). At the time, New York City showed interest in purchasing the site to erect a home for the elderly, an international trade center, an alcoholic clinic, a home for the mentally retarded, and a liberal arts college, among other possibilities (Pitkin 179, 193). In the early 1960s Congress passed a joint resolution "[... ] authorizing a maximum of $6 million to be appropriated for the development of Ellis Island as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument" (Pitkin 1988) and "on May 11, 1965 President Lyndon Johnson attached Ellis Island as a national monument to the Statue of Liberty, and turned maintenance of the island over to the National Park Service" (Coan xxx). A team of architects, engineers, archaeologists, and technicians conceived the blueprint for what would lead to the largest and most expensive restoration project in U.S. history ("Historic," 14; Pitkin 1988). By its 1990 completion, the price tag of Ellis Island's makeover had soared to $161 million (Wallace 1029). Civil Engineering reported the combined Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty rehabilitation at $345 million (14).

The restoration project presented unique challenges. When the project commenced in 1982, the Main Building had smashed windows and rooms filled with "vines and scrub and harbor jetsam" (Philip 46). Philip, an archaeologist, described the scene as "a haven for vandals, rats, pigeons, and cats" (46). According to Civil Engineering, "saturation was so severe" in the corridors and rooms of the Main Building that engineers worked nearly two years to get it dry enough for restoration (14). The project was complicated by the island's archaeological value. According to Philip, Ellis Island's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places called for preservation under the supervision of
archaeologists (46). Despite obstacles, restoration prevailed, though the involved parties continually made concessions for the integrity of the project. For example, the canopy that connected the pier with the Main Building was demolished in the 1930s and a modern steel and glass version now “interprets the original” (“Historic,” 14).

After eight years of restoration, the Main Building opened to the public in September 1990 as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. According to Coan, Ellis Island’s visitors perceived the surroundings with “great romanticism” as “wistful feelings” were stirred when seeing exhibits (xxvii). Wallace, a historian, suggests that the Immigration Museum is anything but ordinary, as “the place is charged with massive significance” (1024). Visitors are “unusually reflective” as they are touched and confused by the exhibits that confirm their notions of the immigrant experience (Wallace 1032). The reception of the newly restored Main Building by the American public is testimony to its historical significance. According to the scholar Smith, the National Park Service is impressed with the flood of visitors, which averages 10,000 to 15,000 a day, “more than the number of immigrants processed on one day in the peak year of 1907” (82). Historians marvel at the impact the Immigration Museum has on its visitors. “Looking at the exhibitions at the Immigration Museum as a whole, I am struck by how much they accomplish” (Smith 97). There is much praise for what is arguably an unfinished project. Despite the Main Building’s revival, Ellis Island is home to 24 inaccessible, rotting buildings. According to Coan, Ellis Island was recently named one of the world’s most endangered landmarks by the World Monument Fund (xxxii).
Overview of Procedures

I proposed an examination of 1907 records because it was the year of highest immigrant processing in Ellis Island’s 62-year run as an immigration station (Coan, Pitkin). I believed that the large influx of immigrants would be reflected in the print media’s reporting on the topic in 1907. An examination of newspaper articles published during this period lent credence to this assumption. Because of its proximity to Ellis Island, a New York City newspaper of the era was examined. While the New York Times, New York Herald, and New York Tribune were all considered, articles in the New York Times were chosen for analysis because of my accessibility to the Lied Library’s ProQuest Historical Newspapers database, which contains a complete collection of full text articles for 1907, the year under review.

The personal representation of turn-of-the-century immigration was distilled through an analysis of archival materials at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. I also considered memoirs in historical books. Thanks to grant funding from UNLV’s Graduate Professional and Student Association, I conducted three days of field research at Ellis Island in summer 2004. The research trip allowed me to comb through the Ellis Island Immigration Museum’s five permanent exhibits containing 5,000 artifacts tracing Ellis Island’s history and the American immigrant story. This experience provided a rich perspective of the personal story, or representations, of immigration. This firsthand perspective was a necessary component for the successful completion of my thesis work.

While accounts from Ellis Island’s arriving immigrants exist alongside studies related to immigration, there is a void of comparative studies of this nature. By fusing the prevalent themes presented in both bodies of immigrant-focused literature (newspaper...
accounts and personal recollections) and examining the frequency with which those themes appear, I drew conclusions about the story of 1907 immigration by analyzing the similarities and differences of the public and personal representations of immigration.

Significance of the Study

My desire to gain a rich insight into the immigrant experiences, and to contribute original research to the communication discipline prompted me to examine and compare the personal and public representations of U.S. Immigration at the height of Ellis Island’s function as an immigration station. This is an intriguing topic for important reasons. First, personal and public stories, or representations, of U.S. immigration can come together to help us understand how media and immigrant representations compare. Second, the communication literature is almost completely void of references to Ellis Island and immigration. Because scholarship on Ellis Island is virtually nonexistent in the communication literature, it is especially important to advance this research into the field to stimulate further discussion and provide insight for scholars contemplating similar research. While this study is based in the communication discipline, my literature review reflects scholarship from the sociology, history, and anthropology disciplines, simply because of the unavailability of relevant scholarship in the communication literature. Being forced to borrow from the sister disciplines in an effort to capture the essence of Ellis Island and 1907 immigration further underscores the necessity of this study. I examined how immigrants and the media constructed their stories, or representations, of immigration to create a reality of the immigrant experience. Finally, paving the foundation for this research with cross-disciplinary literature on the topic is a necessary
first step to advancing first-time research on the topic, and demonstrating how stories are communicated to construct our shared realities. It is my hope that future scholars will build upon this analysis and that a body of literature will develop on the public and personal representations of the immigrant experience.

In addition to academic motivation, personal curiosity prompted my inquiry. Since relocating to Nevada from Pennsylvania, I’ve become keenly aware of the presence of anti-immigrant sentiment. The proximity of Nevada to Border States and Mexico has given me a new perspective on immigration, and the increased need for cultural sensitivity in our culture. This notion has prompted self-reflexive exercises, and forced me to recall the many instances of anti-immigrant sentiment that I witnessed in Pennsylvania, despite my lack of awareness. While the issues and ethnicities that fall victim to discrimination are no doubt products of regional populations, the anti-immigrant sentiments that I have personally witnessed in the diametrically opposed cultures of Pennsylvania and Nevada are more similar than they are different. This awareness, and my own assimilation into the southern Nevada culture spurred my interest in immigration and its historical implications.

The decision to tie my immigration interests to Ellis Island and turn-of-the-century immigrants is a product of my genealogy. As a third-generation American, I had the fortune of knowing my Italian maternal great-grandmother. Though she migrated through the St. Lawrence Seaway, the stories she shared have undeniable similarities to the chronicles of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. Additionally, my maternal great grandfather, Joseph DeDad, who did pass through Ellis Island, was the victim of surname truncation, as his Italian name DeDado was shortened to DeDad for ease of processing.
According to Coan, immigrant names were frequently “Anglicized” and “[...] last names like Wallik became Wallace,” (xxv).

Although qualitative narrative analyses of bodies of literature are often conducted to examine the frequencies of thematic representations, this particular research measure has never been used to appraise the representation of immigration in newspapers, although other newspaper-based narrative analyses examining the hobby of collecting artifacts (Bishop), AIDS/HIV (Bardhan), and racism in Harlem (Parisi) have relied on the methodology. The uniqueness and validity of this research is heightened because of the methodological void that exists in unpacking and comparing the personal and public representations of immigration at the turn-of-the-century.

Through this research, I hope to have augmented the seemingly nonexistent body of literature on this topic with the hope that my findings serve as a catalyst for future scholarship on Ellis Island and immigrant representations within the communication discipline. By marrying the personal and public representations through a qualitative narrative analysis, this study offers a first-time perspective of a subject woven through the fabric of our national history even until today.

Chapter Preview

The succeeding chapters explore the topics introduced in this chapter as follows. Chapter 2 reviews related literature. Chapter 3 discusses the qualitative methodology used in this study. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of immigrant stories and newspaper articles. Chapter 5 summarizes the study’s findings, discusses its relevance for the communication discipline, and suggests future research opportunities.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review reflects the thoughts and historical dimensions of Ellis Island as an immigration station presented by scholars and journalists in the past century. While this review draws from the scholarly literature on the topic, many of the references are derived from historical books. Given the nature of this research and the scant availability of relevant peer-reviewed journal articles related to Ellis Island in the communication discipline, a multi-disciplinary approach was employed to explain how Ellis Island became an immigration station, how immigrants were processed, the historical development of anti-immigrant sentiments, and its portrayal in the media. The synthesis of this literature provides insight into the interlaced topics that help tell the story of American immigration and of American perspectives about immigration. Special emphasis is given to the events during and leading up to 1907, the year in which immigration reached its record height, "[...] when the incoming tide brought to America 1,285,349 aliens" (Corsi 3).

Ellis Island Becomes an Immigration Station

In the years preceding 1890, individual states oversaw immigration at their respective ports. "Except for the counting of immigrants as they arrived, and some limitation on the packing to which they could be subjected on shipboard, the federal government left the
control of immigration largely in the hands of the states” (Pitkin 9). The historian Coan’s
description of pre-1855 immigration supports that notion: “[. . .] anybody who came to
America got off a boat and took their chances,” (xx). Sometimes double counting
occurred, because no one asked immigrants if they had been to the United States before
(Pitkin 22). Historian Marion T. Bennet observed that it was only in 1820 that record­
keeping of immigrant nationalities began (Dorsey and Harlow 59). That changed in 1890
with a Supreme Court ruling that granted the federal government jurisdiction over
immigration. With a bang of the gavel, immigration and Ellis Island started a fresh
chapter in American history.

When the Secretary of the Treasury was looking for an isolated site for the first
federal immigration station, Congress presented him—to his disappointment—with Ellis
Island, a tiny island so low that it barely rose above the tide and which would come to
house an immigration station built of wood in 1892 and later a fireproof station which
would replace the original which burned to the ground (Pitkin x; Coan xiii). Despite the
Secretary’s disappointment, Ellis Island became an immigration station and was placed
under the watch of the United States Treasury Department on May 25, 1890 (Corsi 59).
States welcomed the change because much of immigration’s financial burden was
transferred to the federal government. New York State arguably reaped the benefits of the
mandate more so than any other state, as nine million immigrants had already been
processed at the lower end of Manhattan when, “From August 1855 to April 1890, Castle
Garden, or Castle Clinton, named after New York’s first governor,” served as the first
immigration station (Corsi). Swift changes in immigration policy followed the federal
government’s takeover of immigrant processing in 1890. The 1891 law not only placed
immigration entirely under federal jurisdiction, it established "[...] a practical method of enforcement of exclusion regulations by compelling steamship companies to carry back to Europe all passengers rejected by U.S. inspectors" (Pitkin 15).

According to the archeologist Philip, Ellis Island was little more than a "three-acre bank of mud, sand, and oyster shells" peeking five feet out the water (46). Ellis Island’s one-time commissioner, Corsi, concurs, adding that Ellis Island grew to 21 acres as the government filled the shallow surrounding waters (58). Much symbolism lives within the 17 acres created by the federal government, as it was "built of soil from all parts of the world, since much of it was formerly the ballast dumped from foreign ships" (Corsi 58). While some may view this fact as little more than trivia, it is representative of what Ellis Island stands for despite its closure as an immigration station in 1954. While ballast from ships can hardly be traced back to a country of origin, the symbolism that exists in the tangible mixing of soils in Ellis Island’s unique acreage cannot be overlooked.

The physical makeup of Ellis Island in those early days is worth noting. According to Coan, passengers to Ellis Island typically found themselves docking at a West Side Manhattan pier and then being transported by crowded ferry directly to Ellis Island (xv). Corsi and Coan provide the most detailed descriptions of Ellis Island’s facilities, explaining that after waiting in long lines, immigrants entered the Registry Room, which was adjacent to the Barge Office. In his description of Ellis Island, Corsi describes the Administration Building as a huge structure, “rather Oriental in appearance” which was originally erected to process thousands of immigrants each day, with the first floor dedicated to handling arriving “aliens’” baggage (64). At the time of Ellis Island’s opening, Harper’s Weekly offered a review: “The new main building looked like ‘a
latter-day watering place hotel,’ presenting to the view a great many-windowed expanse of buff-painted wooden walls, of blue-slate roofing and of light and picturesque towers’ (Pitkin 17). The article went on to describe the building in detail: “It was 400 feet long, 150 feet wide, and two stories high, and would permit the handling of 10,000 immigrants a day” (Pitkin 17). Philip suggests that some considered the buildings a “seaside resort” while others described it “as a row of ramshackle tinderboxes” (47). Corsi described the Administration Building as having “interminable white-tiled hallways, spotlessly clean but somewhat awe-inspiring and unnecessarily institutional” (65). In his study on the rhetoric of architecture, communication scholar Hattenhauer argues that the symbolic meaning of a structure sometimes has more relevance than its actual function (73). Based on that notion, the institutional feel of Ellis Island’s buildings were perhaps intended to promote order and to infuse a sense of seriousness into what scholars have recalled as a somewhat chaotic bunch of immigrants. An enclosure where “aliens were taking exercise” by boxing and playing basketball, a well-equipped hospital, dental clinic, and insane ward were also features of the immigration station at Ellis Island (Corsi 65). While touring Ellis Island, Corsi’s greatest delight came with the realization that a school existed for children whose parents were being detained:

In the course of our inspection, the Commissioner General and I visited the impressive little schoolroom where Mrs. Jean Pratt, a social worker, was teaching a class of tiny tots of many races whose parents were in detention. In the huge detention room we saw men doing various kinds of handiwork under the auspices of the D.A.R. Some were weaving belts from leather thongs, some making pillowcases from bright-colored cloth, others making shirts. (65)
Coan likewise argues that the infrastructure was impressive. In 1911, the three small islands comprising Ellis Island each had a function. Contagious disease wards operated by the U.S. Public Health Service occupied Island Three, while Island Two housed hospital buildings for immigrants. Coan writes, “Island One had the main ferry slip, which still exists, and the main building, plus a powerhouse, laundry, bakery, carpenter’s shop, kitchen, greenhouse, railroad ticket office, money exchange, detention building, incinerators, and a post office” (Coan xxiii). Ellis Island’s facilities were surely modest when juxtaposed against their counterparts in bustling New York, yet the new surroundings—better than those left behind by most immigrants—represented the promise of America. Despite the sanitized institutionalism described here, the literature reveals that Ellis Island’s busiest years presented quite the contrary picture.

**Processing Immigrants**

During Ellis Island’s busiest years, the scene was nothing short of chaos and disorder. Corsi, Ellis Island’s past commissioner, describes, “I thought it was a stream that would never end. Every twenty-four hours from three to five thousand people came before us, and I myself examined from four to five hundred a day” (77). The swell of immigrants on each steamship, the language barriers, and the primitive pencil and pad documentation procedures evoked frustration both on the part of immigrants and inspectors.

With the dawn of steamships, ocean crossing lasted an average of six days in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Dinnerstein and Reimers 20). The historian Olsen likewise notes the improved conditions, suggesting that in 1907, less than 250 of the 1.2 million immigrants seeking passage to America died at sea (209). But the passage
remained anything but pleasant, testing the physical and mental will of most foreigners. On shore, men were separated from women and children and the flurry of inspections came without delay (Coan xv). In an attempt to allay the chaos, “poor, bewildered immigrants” were tagged with numbers that matched the numbers on their ship manifest (Corsi 73). (Further in this discussion, the literature reveals that this was not the only time that immigrants were subject to such taggings.) First and second class passengers were examined hastily in their cabins. Steerage passengers were subjected to medical inspections and interrogations in the Examination Hall, since they were stereotyped by INS to be poor, illiterate, and in failing health (Richardson 146; Coan xv). Immigrants were shuffled to the Main Building and within its 200-foot long and 56-foot high cavernous interior, young and old marched through “narrow alleys” divided by railings on the massive floor space to begin examinations (Pitkin 33). Despite its gargantuan interior, the building was designed to inspect only half the number of steerage passengers that it saw in the early years, though it swelled to accommodate each day’s lot (Philip 47). Though guidelines were in place, the decision of who gained admission and who returned to the steamships was subjective and haphazard. As the psychologist Richardson explains, officials from the Department of Commerce and Labor determined the fate of arrivals (146). Grounds for deportation included contagious disease, criminal history, and yearly quotas for countries-of-origin (Philip 47). Quota laws were based on the notion that “millions of war-torn Europeans were about to descend on the United States—a veritable flood which would completely subvert the traditional American way of life” (Divine 6).
The literature about Ellis Island varies in content; however, a striking commonality exists in each scholar’s description of the medical examination that no steerage passenger escaped. The 60-second medical exam took place atop the stairs in the Examination Hall ("Historic," 14; Smith 89; Pitkin 68). As immigrants climbed the stairs, they were observed for weakness of heart, limb, mind, eyes, hands, and throat by medical officers who scrutinized them at a distance, and then in close proximity (Smith 89; Pitkin 68). Today, one might be appalled to think of the limitations imposed by the cursory exam, not to mention the system’s disregard for those with disabilities who couldn’t manage the stairs. But the unfortunate standards of the day predicated the procedures, and helped to eliminate those very travelers. The historian Pitkin acknowledges the “rapid, hasty procedure” that took place on the stairs, but suggests that time limits were not imposed for those subject to subsequent medical examination in detainment (68).

Albeit primitive, the examination process was somewhat clever. Inspectors were highly suspicious of eye disorders, and “eye men” looked for symptoms of cataracts, pink eye, or trachoma that if found, would result in a ticket back to the steamships (Coan xv). Trachoma, the most feared eye disease, was a contagious bacterial conjunctivitis caused by chlamydia ("Trachoma," 1245). It frequently resulted in blindness. According to Pitkin, eyesight was tested by having the immigrant hold his or her identification card after it was stamped. The immigrant always looked at the card closely to examine its new markings, often revealing poor eyesight (70). Immigrants were also checked for signs of mental disorder, physical defects, pregnancy, scalp diseases, and goiter (Pitkin 70; Coan xv). It was believed that “feebleminded” individuals were immoral and posed a threat to the nation’s “biological fitness” (Richardson 147). The procedures used during medical
inspections were questionable; however, they paled in comparison to the subsequent series of actions with immigrants who showed signs of uncertain health. When a case aroused suspicion, "[. . .] the alien was set aside in a cage apart from the rest, for all the world like a segregated animal, and his shirt marked with colored chalk, the color indicating why he had been isolated" (Pitkin 71; Coan 73). Pitkin argues that no other means were feasible, as the volume of immigrants and language complexities prohibited alternative procedures (71). Each condition was assigned a letter, "[. . .] H was for heart, K for hernia, Pg for pregnant, X for mental illness" (Coan xv). The procedure gives new meaning to the modern-day concept of labeling, or stereotyping individuals with medical conditions. As Tan suggests, stereotypes are more difficult to change than they are to maintain but they provide for an "efficient and effortless processing of information" (173). While Ellis Island’s labeling system afforded efficiency, an undeniable link exists between those processing practices and the stereotypes that have proliferated for decades.

Following line inspection, immigrants faced an interrogation that was complicated by the dimensions of culture and language. They were asked 32 basic questions, including age, sex, name, marital status, occupation, destination, literacy, known U.S. relatives, and amount of money, among others (Coan xv; Pitkin 71; Corsi 88). Corsi suggests that immigrants were often asked if they practiced polygamy or had ever been in an almshouse or insane institution (88). For the eighty percent that passed the medical exam and interrogation, the process lasted approximately five hours and resulted in a rewarding visit to the bathhouse, capable of providing 8,000 showers a day (Pitkin 33; Philip 47). The immigrants granted admittance to the United States exited the Examination Hall and typically met friends, boarded ferries to New York City, or awaited barges to New
Jersey’s railroad station (Pitkin 71). Communication scholars Dinnerstein and Reimers suggest that foreigners dispersed quickly, with the poor remaining in New York and the more financially stable purchasing rail or canal tickets to the “fertile prairies of the Midwest” (21).

The story was less optimistic for the remaining twenty percent who faced detainment. Corsi writes that seventeen hundred detainees were often stuffed into a room built for six hundred (77). The noise and languages converging on the room made distributing detention cards an improbable task. According to Corsi, four inspectors took the corners and shouted names at the top of their lungs: “When they answered we threw the cards as near to them as we could and let them scramble” (77).

For every hour that Ellis Island functioned as an immigration station, there was scandal. According to Coan, from 1892 to 1954, Ellis Island “was the scene of more human dramas than one can imagine” (xiii). A representative sampling of the scandalous activities will be offered to demonstrate the overarching troubles that faced Ellis Island workers. In doing so, I am heeding the advice of Corsi, who argued that each scandal was “[. . .] a modified version of the same old story—employees of the government accepting, even demanding, tips and bribes” (284).

Pitkin suggests that from its incarnation in 1900, Ellis Island was poorly run, “corruption was rampant,” and the commissioner in charge “was seemingly powerless to discharge dishonest employees” (31). The corruption took its toll on immigrants. Coan refers to this phenomenon as Ellis Island’s “dark side” as scores of immigrants “still in shock, trauma, or depression from the long boat ride” fell victim to physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual violence from swaggering guards, hospital personnel, and other
immigrants (xxvii). The list of abuses ranged from obscenities to electroshock treatment. Immigrants were forced to pay bribes, provide sexual favors, turn over money for fabricated currency rates, and eat out of unwashed bowls (Pitkin 38; Coan xxiv). Impatient officials had the task of dealing with stowaways pulled from barrels and haystacks on steamships. Paupers were smuggled in droves from Europe (Corsi 147).

Steamship manifests presented another outlet for corruption; captains sometimes fraudulently prepared manifests. Immigrants “constituted a highly profitable self-loading cargo” and ship owners “took chances” on deportations, as they were primarily concerned about their bottom line profits (Pitkin 23). In 1901, commissioners learned that American citizens’ certificates were being illegally sold to steerage passengers, permitting them entrance at piers, while fees for the illegal exchange lined the pockets of ship officers and immigrant boarding inspectors (Pitkin 33). According to Coan, the news traveled quickly. “The atmosphere of graft and sin became so overt and untenable that the news reached President Theodore Roosevelt [...]” and in 1901, he mandated a cleanup of not only the island, but also of the administration (xxiv).

Ellis Island’s problems multiplied with time. In the 1940s, Ellis Island became the place where “long denied” electroshock treatments were administered to immigrants and merchant seamen until the U.S. Public Health Service closed the hospital wards in 1951 (Coan xxiii). Ellis Island was a lab for experimental medicine, as immigrants were subjected to cognitive and physical tests that defied medical practices. Coan describes the immigrants as “guinea pigs” for mental and physical testing (xxviii). Under the direction of the U.S. Public Health Service, tests were developed to examine the comparative intelligence of races. As assistant surgeon at Ellis Island, Howard Knox pioneered
performance studies in the detection of “feeblemindedness” (Richardson 148, 151). In his four-year tenure at Ellis Island, he developed thirteen “psychometric tests” that included the “moron test” and the “ink-blot imagination test” (Richardson 161). While Knox is widely hailed as a mental health pioneer, the fact that his playground for prodding the mentally ill was Ellis Island speaks to the issues outlined in the preceding passages.

Historical Perspective of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

Coan writes: “The first thirty-two years of Ellis Island’s history, from 1892 to 1924, were the classic years when the ‘golden door’ was open with few restrictive laws. The second period, 1924 to 1931, was different. Quota laws were introduced in 1924, which greatly restricted the number of immigrants who could enter the United States annually” (xvi). The anti-immigrant sentiment that seems to have heightened in America in recent years is not a new phenomenon, nor was it conceived when the Twin Towers collapsed on September 11, 2001. According to Dorsey and Harlow, for decades scores of Americans have frowned upon the U.S. government granting foreigner’s entrance into this country (55). Streitmatter, a communication scholar, argues that frequent adjectives have been applied to immigrants through the years—ignorant, vicious, troublesome, undesirable, immoral, filthy, and stenchful being among the most popular (676).

The negative sentiments don’t appear to be going away. In a 1993 Newsweek poll, 60 percent of Americans said that immigrants are a “bad thing” for this country (Miller 21). Research conducted by communication scholars Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw, and Yang likewise confirms the sentiment as they report that while public opinion has been somewhat split on legal immigration, an overwhelming majority of Americans are uneasy
with illegal immigrants and would prefer to close the borders (356). In spite of anti-immigrant sentiment, immigration rates remain high. According to Miller, the current influx of foreigners practically mirrors the wave of immigrants that landed on Ellis Island in the early 1900s, with approximately 800,000 immigrants entering legally each year and 300,000 of those settling permanently in the States (28). Despite the collective perception of the so-called “browning” of America, Miller confirms that less than half of the 300,000 immigrants that settle in this country arrive from Mexico; in sharp contrast to the demographic makeup of turn-of-the-century immigrants, Europeans account for less than one-fifth of the total who arrive in the United States today (28). In recent years, the west coast has become a haven for immigrants. According to Waldinger, the 1980 census showed that New York had just over ten percent of the undocumented population, while Los Angeles had thirty-three percent of the undocumented population (1079-1080).

While hefty amounts of research and even more anecdotal evidence suggests that Americans have traditionally been anxious about immigration, it is well documented that these feelings rooted themselves in the American conscience centuries ago. According to Streitmatter, the latter half of the 1800s saw America’s “social, political, and economic landscape” reshaped by the immigration experience (673). Streitmatter argues, “The economic downturn that struck the country in the late 1880s transformed the glowing ‘Welcome’ sign that previously had stood at the points of entry into a foreboding one reading ‘No Vacancy’” (673).

Throughout history, federal legislation has responded to concerns of American citizens and enacted immigration policies, some categorically prejudiced. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1892 is one example since “in the enactment of the Chinese exclusion
policy, Congress displayed a total disregard for the sensibilities and treaty rights of the Chinese" (Divine 20). According to Coan, Chinese immigrants were barred at all costs (xxvii). He suggests, "Historians, in retrospect, surmise that their large numbers, and their reputation for honesty, obedience, and hard work did them in. They worked for little pay. They were not drunkards. They were family people. In short, they were an employment threat to white people" (xxvii). According to communication scholars Dorsey and Harlow, between 1880 and 1920 the influx of immigrants and their changing demographics spurred legislation that gave the government authority to regulate country-of-origin quotas (59). The historian Divine suggests that Americans held firm in the belief that Europe’s downtrodden economy would result in a mass departure to U.S. shores by its population (6). The quota laws of 1921 and 1924 were enacted to control immigration, however, quotas were established on complex statistical formulas based on outdated census information. They were created to admit immigrants to the melting pot in proportion to those who had come before (Divine 29-32). According to Divine:

In previous immigration legislation the standard for judging immigrants had been individual tests of mental, moral, and physical fitness. With the quota system these standards were overthrown in favor of group criteria. Instead of judging men by their character and ability, the new law selected immigrants on the ground of their racial and national affiliations. This application of group criteria to individuals ignored the wide range of individual difference in a nation’s population and reduced all the people of a country to a generalized stereotype. (18)
Corsi, former commissioner at Ellis Island, put the notion of immigration in clear perspective: “What we are prone to call the great ‘wave’ of immigration in the latter half of the nineteenth century is only the final one of a series of waves that populated our country with representatives of nearly every race on the face of the earth. Each race in turn grafted on to the developing America a layer of its unique social customs, mental and physical traits, and weak or strong moral propensities” (39).

Media Portrayal of Immigration

Why so much hatred? Why the rejection of the melting pot phenomenon on which this country has prided itself—and by which it has defined itself—for decades? Why a contradiction between the ideograph of America as the land of opportunity and the true sentiment residing in the hearts of towns across the nation? The answers are not simple and speak to issues of discrimination, but a thread of stereotypic consistency has been woven throughout generations of Americans. Chastising the press for the cause of this negative effect is an old tradition. In fact, by 1895, more than 100 publications in circulation had been founded for the primary purpose of demonizing “intruders” who were “so callously destroying the American way of life” (Streitmatter 673). While mainstream American press sometimes posed hard questions about the implication of immigrants in the country, “[. . .] the anti-immigrant attacks became so hostile and so widespread that they spawned what became known as the nativist press” (Streitmatter 673). Although mainstream publications discussed immigration in 1895, the press was driven to feed popular demand. Divine suggests that even conventional publications in the 1900s covered issues of immigration. “Kenneth Roberts, writing a series of articles in
the Saturday Evening Post, claimed that all Europe was on the move and that the only limiting factor on immigration would be the amount of available steamship space" (Divine 6). But what mainstream publications started, the nativist press finished. The communication scholar Olson suggests that the conspiracies of the 1890s suggesting Jewish bankers were positioned to take over were rumored by such groups as the American Protective Association and the American Super-Race Foundation, the same groups who helped form the nativist press (212; Streitmatter). There was a groundswell of support for the nativist press in the early twentieth century. “The discordant messages rumbling from the nativist press clearly struck a chord in the hearts and minds of a substantial number of the American people, influencing public policy as well as the national consciousness both in the 1890s and in the century that was to follow” (Streitmatter 674).

Arguably, present anti-immigrant sentiment seen in mainstream media is a result of media trends that developed in the early 1900s. The most common stereotype surrounding immigrants—“more common than welfare and job worries” is that the immigration policy in this country has spun out of control (Miller 27). Miller suggests that he’d be hard pressed to find an American who hasn’t turned on the television and witnessed, “a herd of poor Mexicans swiftly weaving their way through the borderline traffic jams near San Diego” (27). Miller argues that this trend is a marketing strategy—one that knows the public doesn’t like immigrants, and thereby feeds into the notion by showing the public “how bad they are” without letting facts interfere (21).

The media have also helped shape public opinion about other ethnicities. Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw, and Yang argue that noticeable differences exist between opinions of
European immigrants and those from Asian and Latin America (357). “Available data from the period 1984-95 show that about half of Americans agreed European immigration was at about the right level, while the majority felt that the number of Asian and Latin American immigrants was too high” (357). Again, because the media hold and help shape an awareness of this perception, they tend to cultivate these feelings and fuel negativity. Despite these media portrayals then and now, Miller argues that immigrants are no more prone to crime in this country than the native population (21). But, there’s more at work than mere media influence. Miller, the same scholar who chastises the media for feeding into the immigrant stereotype, likewise suggests that the media are not solely responsible for the environment that has been prevalent since the first immigrants arrived in this country. “Immigrants have always made Americans uneasy, and most of the traditional complaints still make the rounds today: Immigrants cost more than they’re worth, they ruin neighborhoods, they drain welfare, they steal jobs” (Miller 21).

Miller described the underlying assumptions of the perception that immigrants poison the U.S. Other studies followed suit. In the immigration literature, the same issues were mentioned time and again. Lapinksi, Peltola, Shaw, and Yang suggest that overwhelming majorities have believed immigrants are responsible for U.S. worker job loss (357). At the same time, “stable majorities have also believed that immigrants mostly take jobs that Americans do not want” (357). According to Streitmatter, because immigrants have traditionally been accustomed to earning low wages in their mother countries, they have always been more likely than Americans to accept low wages and thereby have been the cause of American workers losing their jobs (676). Dorsey and Harlow likewise argue that immigrants are, in fact, a cheap source of good labor and that the men, women, and
children who flood the unskilled labor market displace American laborers, drive wages down and increase the demand on charities catering to the new population’s health and human services needs (61). Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw, and Yang argue that several reasons exist for the country’s negative view of immigrants, but at the forefront is the concern for caring for an expanding population with fewer and fewer resources (356).

While concern for employment rates have been at the heart of American’s discomfort about immigrants, the perception that a continued influx of immigrants will cause America’s social fabric to disintegrate has likewise been a cause of prejudices. In their examination of the rhetoric of President Theodore Roosevelt, Dorsey and Harlow note that even in the office of the presidency, immigration has been the focus of controversy. Dorsey and Harlow discuss a speech delivered by Roosevelt in which he proclaimed that a mixing of European and Asian cultures into American society “would introduce cultural elements—‘ideas, traditions, sentiments, modes of thought’—that would destroy the American national character” (60). While President Roosevelt “welcomed the clash of alien cultures” he continually reiterated that America’s primary responsibility “was to its literate, native-born, working poor” and that immigrants could learn to become “full-fledged Americans” (Dorsey and Harlow, 56). A strong contradiction exists between Roosevelt’s open arms for foreigners and his proclamation that the country is first responsible to its natives. This is one more example of the disregard for the notion of America as a melting pot and another example of the anomaly that is Ellis Island. Dorsey and Harlow argue that for Roosevelt, it was imperative for immigrants to disregard their cultures and “become what he considered true Americans” (57).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

While numerous methodological options were available for a study of this nature, one better than the rest lent itself to producing the study’s two-dimensional story of immigration. From both a pragmatic and theoretical perspective, a qualitative narrative analysis was the most appropriate methodology for my research. This analysis was informed by Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory. Fisher’s theory begins with the notion that humans are storytellers by nature and moves forward to offer pragmatic tests of probability and fidelity to test stories. Fisher presumes that we construct our realities through stories, and that those stories create shared meaning. With Fisher’s theory as a backbone for the research, a narrative analysis captured the essence of the documents under scrutiny. According to Manning and Cullum-Swan, “[...] content analysis has been unable to capture the context within which a written text has meaning” (464).

Because a primary goal of my research was to capture the meaning of the immigrant experience – both from the public and personal perspectives – the study demanded the methodological flexibility that qualitative narrative analysis offered and that Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory supports. According to Fisher, “In theme, if not in every detail, narrative, then, is meaningful for persons in particular and in general, across communities as well as cultures, across time and place” (Fisher 65).
In this study, I analyzed both immigrant related articles published in 1907 in the New York Times and the written archival artifacts of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island representative of the time period. A comparison of these representations of the immigrant experience, using a qualitative narrative analysis, led to a more comprehensive understanding of both the public and personal story of immigration. The assessment highlights the commonalities and opposing perspectives on immigration. Kraeauer argues that the ability of a qualitative analysis to "use non-quantifiable frequencies" permits the analyst to penetrate "[. . .] textual dimensions which are completely inaccessible to quantitative techniques" (639). Narrative analysis can have many forms, however, the various approaches are similar in that they are loosely structured and rely on the intuition of the analyst charged with defining the terms of analysis (Manning and Cullum-Swan 465). My goal was to unearth the constructs accessible through narrative analysis, in an effort to gain new understanding of discourses that have been at rest for nearly a century and to gain insight into the immigrant experience. An explanation of narrative analysis, discussion of prior research conducted using the method, and the process of gathering data and conducting a narrative analysis are offered in the succeeding pages.

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research method that attempts to make inferences about cultures through an examination of various stories which people use to describe their worlds. "This narrative approach claims that, by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents' accounts as potentially 'true' pictures of 'reality,' we open up for analysis the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world" (Denzin & Lincoln 823). Although not overly abundant, research relying on narrative analysis to tell stories about particular topics is
available in the communication literature. Communication scholars have used the methodology to examine sexual etiquette in teen magazines (Garner, Sterk, & Adams), Southern women's Civil War diaries (Schwerdt & Keaveney), a Harlem neighborhood as portrayed in the New York Times (Parisi), and public relations efforts tied to the epidemic of HIV/AIDS (Bardhan). Schwerdt and Keaveney's analysis of white, Southern women's Civil War diaries used the narrative characteristics of structure, character, peripeteia, style, and theme to explain how women framed war (1). Garner, Sterk, and Adams mapped the narrative of appropriate sexual conduct among teens by looking for metaphors, phrases, and settings relative to the topic in an effort to determine their relationship to setting, character, or action (64). Each article moves forward to examine the themes and patterns that emerge out of the texts. Kracauer suggests that qualitative analysis allows the researcher to explore the entirety of the content in search of relevant themes and categories (638). The goal of narrative analysis is to understand the storytellers' categories of language and themes and to understand how they use those concepts to make sense of the world or their situation (Denzin and Lincoln 826). This concept is important for the cultural communication discipline because communication is a shared reality that is complicated by culture and language usage. A systematic approach to data gathering and narrative analysis was critical to my study. I determined the most appropriate data set for analysis after orienting myself with the bodies of work that told the personal and public story of immigration. The steps are explored in this chapter.
Theoretical Implications

This narrative analysis of the public and personal representations of U.S. immigration was informed by the scholarship of Walter Fisher. His theoretical foundation, the narrative paradigm, is grounded in the notion that humans are storytellers by nature, what Fisher terms “homo narrans” (62). The narrative paradigm suggests human choices and communication activities derive from “good reasons” and good values, that the ability of human beings to reason “is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character,” and that human beings use tests of “narrative probability” and “narrative fidelity” to determine “whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (Fisher 64). The paradigm also suggests that human beings have the inherent ability to rationally and completely tell their own life stories versus journalists who tell others’ stories. According to Fisher, symbols are produced and communicated through the stories that human beings share in an attempt to establish meaning in the world and to institute rules for living and sharing communities (63). The stories provide a framework for our experience as human beings and give “sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (Fisher 65). Human beings, by their very nature, have the capacity to invent and pass on stories. Fisher argues that human beings need not be competent or skilled in the ways of methodological tests to produce stories since storytelling is a “capacity we all share” (66). This capacity is demonstrated in the collective immigrant experience as recounted in memoirs, oral histories, and autobiographies. Narrative paradigm theory foresees “narration not as an art, genre, or activity, but as paradigmatic of human discourse” (Fisher 98).
Fisher offers practical tests as a means for assessing narratives. His narrative paradigm theory suggests that narratives have a structure that can be examined and evaluated through tests of probability (coherence), and fidelity (truth). According to Fisher, “Narrative coherence refers to formal features of a story conceived as a discrete sequence of thought and/or action in life or literature (any recorded or written form of discourse); that is, it concerns whether the story coheres or ‘hangs together,’ whether or not a story is free of contradictions. Narrative fidelity concerns the ‘truth qualities’ of a story, the degree to which it accords with the logic of good reasons: the soundness of its reasoning and the value of its values” (88). The formal features of a person’s life story serve as an example of coherence. Those features include the formal elements that we would expect to constitute one’s story, including hometown, year of birth, family background, and perhaps aspects of religion or education. Using the example of a person’s life story again, fidelity is exemplified through the less formal features and experiences that the person includes as part of his story, including anecdotes and features that are unique to his personal story, yet seem probable to us as a culture.

In analyzing a narrative’s coherent qualities, it is critical to consider how well its elements work together by considering the structure, substance, and the underlying values that the narrative communicates (Fisher 47). Tests of fidelity hold more stringent criteria. Fisher suggests that to assess fidelity:

one considers questions of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and transcendent issue. These questions involve determination of what the values are; whether or not they are pertinent to the story or case at hand; whether or not their impact on one’s concept of self, one’s relationship with others, and the process of
rhetorical transaction is desirable; what would follow from their confirmation or
disconfirmation in one’s life, the lives of those whom one admires, and the best
life that one can conceive; and evaluation of their effects on the quality of life
generally. (89).

The recollections of immigrations, as discussed in Chapter 4, are told in different
ways, though they have the same elements (coherence) as demonstrated by themes
extracted from immigrant stories. Examples of coherence found in immigrants’ stories
include: country of origin, year of passage, and situation in the homeland. Fidelity is
demonstrated through the consistency between immigrant recollections and the historical
facts as reported by scholars. Narrative analysts relying on Fisher’s theory must consider
if the components of a story are representative of what is already considered by social
standards to be accurate. According to Fisher, “The character of narrator(s), the conflicts,
the resolutions, and the style will vary, but each mode of recounting and accounting for is
but a way of relating a ‘truth’ about the human condition” (63). Fidelity is assessed by a
series of critical contexts (biological, cultural, moral) meant to reveal the role of values in
practical reasoning and to provide a basis on which one can begin to assess them (Fisher
106). Regardless of narrative vehicle, Fisher’s tests of probability and fidelity are the
tools that the researcher can use to arrive at conclusions about the story under review.

According to communication scholar Scott, the means by which people represent
themselves “[…] illustrates their commonsense assumptions about the broader social
context” (207). In addition to drawing from archival data, I used the stories and memoirs
of immigrants published in historical books for inclusion in the final analysis to
determine fidelity by checking consistency among accounts (Coan). In the early 1900s,
social science scholars attempted to study people through their written documents, trying
to extrapolate "[...] the patterns, orders, senses, and meanings of their life experiences"
(Manning and Cullum-Swan 463). Ironically, the 1918 classic study by W. I. Thomas and
Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant* "relied upon diaries, letters, and other personal
documents to characterize the impact of immigration to the United States upon Polish
immigrants" (Manning and Cullum-Swan 463). Eighty-six years later, the widely
accepted qualitative method of narrative analysis will be the tool that I use to assess the
personal and public stories of immigration through Ellis Island.

**Procedures**

The public story of immigration was assessed through a narrative analysis of
immigrant-related articles appearing in 1907 *New York Times* articles. Parish suggests
that journalistic narration "involves political assumptions, ideology, social values,
cultural, and racial stereotypes" and literary techniques "profoundly aligned with
viewpoints and values of particular social and economic interests" (239). The *New York
Times* was selected because of my accessibility to its full text articles in the ProQuest
Historical Newspapers database at the UNLV Lied Library. Notably, the approximate
145 ethnic publications available in turn-of-the-century New York City had higher
circulation rates than the ethnic papers of today, with some of the Yiddish and Italian
papers having more than a million readers (www.gothamgazzette.com). While
consideration of the immigration story told by the ethnic press would have added further
dimension to this study, it was outside the scope of this research.
Two obvious questions arise about choices of medium and year. The first is: Why a New York City newspaper? Because of New York City's close proximity to Ellis Island, a newspaper from the area arguably tells the story of Ellis Island immigration through a local lens better than any other city newspaper of the day. Following processing at Ellis Island, many immigrants had little choice but to settle in the boroughs of New York City or pass through en route to other destinations. According to Dinnerstein and Reimers, foreigners passing through Ellis Island dispersed quickly, but those too poor to settle in other parts of the country remained in New York (21). Immigrants filled jobs requiring little skill, and in New York, "immigrants composed the bulk of the unskilled laborers, porters, street cleaners, bartenders, waiters, draymen, cabmen, Carmen, livery workers, and domestics" (Dinnerstein and Reimers 25). According to 1910 census records, about three-quarters of the population of New York consisted of immigrants and their families (Dinnerstein and Reimers 35).

The second question is: Why 1907? Ellis Island's busiest period was from 1901 to 1914, "when immigrant arrivals at the Port of New York rose from just under 400,000 in the first year to over 1,000,000 in 1907" (Pitkin 67). According to the statistics based on Annual Reports of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1892-1924, and data supplied by the U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Washington, D.C., 1,004,756 immigrants passed through the Port of New York at Ellis Island in 1907 (Coan 413). Total U.S. immigration for 1907 is the highest on record, as 1,285,349 immigrants entered the country that year, seventy-eight percent gaining entrance through Ellis Island (Coan 413). The unprecedented immigration statistic of 1907 is the determining factor in selecting that particular year for narrative analysis.
While the preceding paragraphs offer a broad concept of the process I used to orient myself to the texts, it is useful to describe the specific methodological steps that helped me analyze and make comparisons between the works under review. It was important to limit data so as to make it manageable and meaningful so I examined oral histories and memoirs written between 1902 and 1927. While my research question specifically seeks to understand the story of U.S. immigration in 1907, a pragmatic approach to data gathering was necessary and letters written within the window proved more representative of the era under review. While at Ellis Island, I gathered information on a minimum of fifty personal accounts of the immigrant experience. During the research trip, I was surprised to learn that limited data were available for the year 1907 specifically. In an effort to return to Las Vegas with enough data and a rich representation of immigrant stories, I began examining oral histories and memoirs outside of the target year, 1907. My sample grew to include immigrant accounts from the years 1902 to 1927. Upon return, I read the stories created by particular recollections of being processed at Ellis Island to discern what elements were consistent across stories (Fisher's coherence) and how these stories measured against other accounts of the experience, especially media and scholarly research (Fisher's fidelity).

A similar, though tidier approach was employed to gather data from newspapers as follows: combing through 1907 issues of the New York Times searching for immigrant-related articles and developing a summary of news and feature stories. A random sample of articles was produced by searching for the term “Ellis Island.” A random sample was appropriate because selecting a day or date from each month could have skewed the story of immigration because of the possibility of regularly published features or the
prevalence of a reporter with a specific agenda. The texts were then subjected to a process similar to that described for analysis of the personal texts. Using tests of coherence and fidelity, I found common elements and assessed the journalistic accounts. After this process was completed with both sets of representations I compared personal and public accounts of immigration. All data collection was completed prior to analysis.

Scott suggests that researchers utilizing narrative analysis might be under the misassumption that the texts under review are completely truthful, when in fact the texts might bear the markings of emotional or cathartic writing (206). But since both emotions and the need for catharsis are human “truths,” it is possible to argue that Scott’s argument is not sufficient to limit narrative analysis.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of Immigrant Stories

During a three-day June 2004 research trip to Ellis Island, oral histories, memoirs, diary entries, and immigrant recollections were collected from the library and exhibits at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Because this project focuses primarily on 1907, the height of immigration at Ellis Island, special emphasis was given to accounts from immigrants arriving in that year. During data collection, however, few accounts surfaced from immigrants who arrived in 1907. The scope was expanded to include accounts from immigrants who arrived between 1902 and 1927 in an effort to capture a rich sampling of stories. In addition to accounts collected at Ellis Island, Peter Morton Coan’s *Ellis Island Interviews* also proved an invaluable resource. His book offers accounts from more than 100 immigrants and is an excellent supplement to data collected at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Coan worked with the staff at the National Park Service, who operate the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island monument. In its preface, Coan’s book acknowledges Dr. Janet Levine, Barry Moreno, and Jeff Dosik for their assistance in compiling immigrant accounts. Notably, these same individuals made my research efforts possible and were integral to my understanding and accessibility of records at the Ellis Island Research Library. Coan’s book offers access to the accounts that time limitations
prohibited me from collecting at the Ellis Island Research Library. Because the conditions and procedural aspects of processing immigrants at Ellis Island were similar from the turn-of-the-century into the 1920s, I considered stories throughout the era in an attempt to capture the essence of the immigrant experience. The earliest accounts in my sample are from immigrants who arrived in 1902. In all, 51 accounts—a combination of my own data collection and accounts referenced from Coan’s book—are included in the final sample.

Of the 51 accounts, 17 are from Coan’s Ellis Island Interviews. The remaining 35 accounts were collected during my research trip. Of those, 11 are oral histories, 16 are from exhibits at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, three are immigrant autobiographies, two are memoirs, one is an autobiography, and one is an immigrant’s congressional hearing testimony. Of note are the 16 accounts taken directly from the museum’s exhibits. I devoted my first day of research to experiencing the exhibits that were open to the general public. Many of the exhibits were accompanied by supporting background information and recollections from immigrants. The text of these recollections appeared on the museum walls. I verbally read the reflections into a hand-held recording device and later transcribed them.

While no effort was made to include an equal number of male and female accounts, 23 accounts in the sample are from males, 24 from females. The sex of the immigrants in four accounts could not be distinguished. Twenty-three of the immigrants represented in the sample were born between 1885 and 1909. Birth dates for the remaining 28 immigrants in the sample could not be derived. The breakdown for those with known birth dates follows: one immigrant was born between 1885 and 1889, five immigrants
were born between 1890 and 1894, 11 immigrants were born between 1895 and 1899, eight immigrants were born between 1900 and 1904, and five immigrants were born between 1905 and 1909. The year of arrival in the United States was available for all of the immigrants included in the sample. The breakdown follows: one arrived in 1902, six arrived in 1905, five arrived in 1906, two arrived in 1907, four arrived in 1908, six arrived in 1909, four arrived in 1910, four arrived in 1911, six arrived in 1913, two arrived in 1914, three arrived in 1916, three arrived in 1921, and two arrived in 1923. One immigrant arrived in each of the following years: 1924, 1925 and 1927.

The immigrants in the sample arrived from 20 different countries. The countries-of-origin follow: eight each from Italy and Russia, five each from England and Poland, four from Austria, two from Germany, and two each from Wales, Romania, Ukraine, and Greece. One immigrant arrived from each of the following countries: Slovenia, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Holland, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The home country of one immigrant in the sample could not be determined.

Among the remaining accounts were autobiographies, memoirs, biographies, and the testimony from a congressional hearing. None of the accounts were handwritten. They were all typed and a few appeared to be self-published. Others were extracted from larger books related to immigration and four were derived from a proprietary report compiled by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

While combing through data at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, it became apparent that the vast majority of immigrant accounts, especially oral histories, were the product of interviews with individuals in their eighties and nineties. These individuals had contacted the library requesting to tell their stories. When possible, oral interviews
were arranged with the former immigrants. The 11 oral histories included in this sample were the product of interviews conducted through the National Park Service. Online transcripts accompanied the oral histories. While it was my original intent to obtain transcripts, the excessive cost was prohibitive and an alternative means of data collection was employed. After listening to oral histories available in the target years, I verbally read the online transcripts into my personal recording device. The audio recordings were later transcribed. Numerous historians conducted the interviews, but a pattern of questions was apparent. While variations existed and many of the interview questions were prompted by the individual responses of each immigrant, the immigrants were typically asked to remark on the following: recollections of their homeland, the name of the boat, on-ship accommodations, food on board, reaction to the boat, feelings upon departure, length of the trip, recollections from Ellis Island, and events that followed acceptance or rejection into the United States. Of the oral histories reviewed, three were deemed unusable because of the interviewees' inability to articulate and recollect anything from their immigrant experience. Whether the cause was old age or forms of dementia, the interviews were nonsensical and were removed from the sampling.

A categorization of story components followed data collection. A matrix was created, and each story was carefully reviewed for 16 elements: name, data source, year of arrival, age upon arrival, country-of-origin, motive for leaving, perceptions of U.S., material things brought, on-ship experience, sickness, language, treatment on boat, experience at Ellis Island, food, medical, and other. These 16 categories resulted from reading the records and capturing the elements of each account. The accounts are varied, some short, others exceedingly verbose. For many of the accounts, only a few matrix categories could
be completed; however, others lent themselves to categorization for all 16 elements. Of the 51 accounts, six accounts were categorized for one to five elements, 25 accounts were categorized for six to ten elements, and 20 accounts were categorized for 11 to 16 elements. One of the reasons that all 16 elements could not be completed for most of the accounts is because some accounts were displayed as excerpts among the Ellis Island Immigration Museum exhibits. Others accounts only focused on a few of the 16 elements, thus lending themselves to categorization for less elements. Within the “other” category are story elements that I found intriguing and that I believe add to the overall immigrant story. Although many of the elements listed in this category were not mentioned by other immigrants and are not the basis for thematic comparison, I believe they help to color the American immigrant experience.

Very distinct thematic patterns emerged among the stories. The initial intent was to only analyze the immigrants’ recollections of Ellis Island, and to narrowly focus on the immigrant experience as it occurred upon arrival and during processing. However, the parameters were expanded as it became apparent that the stories corroborated with each another and with what the scholars Coan, Corsi, Dinnerstein, Divine, Pitkin, and Reimers have reported as factual. Patterns emerged in the immigrants’ recollections of what took place at Ellis Island, in their situations prior to embarkation in their homelands, and as they settled in cities across the United States. By expanding the parameters for analysis, there is further credibility for defending the notion of a collective immigrant experience.

A preview of the themes follows. After analyzing each account and comparing recollections of the immigrant experience, six themes emerged. The first is the theme of separation. This theme is evidenced through the multiple accounts that told of fathers
leaving their families in their respective homelands in search of a better life in America. The second theme, continuity, is threaded throughout the accounts. Examples are rampant of families who brought treasures from their homelands to the new country. A third prominent theme is the lure of America’s riches. The various examples show that immigrants were drawn to America for its perceived riches, and not necessarily the freedom it offered. Chaos is a fourth theme. Recollections of the thousands of bustling families at Ellis Island, immigrants’ inability to communicate, and the fear of what lay ahead support the chaos theme. A fifth theme, culture shock, is widely represented in the accounts. In America, immigrants were awestruck about everything from bananas and African Americans to elevated trains and clotheslines. The sixth and final theme stands alone. While the other themes are from the perspective of immigrants, “Fit for America?” is a theme anchored in both the perspectives of Ellis Island’s inspectors and of the immigrants often manifested in physical pain felt by immigrants. An analysis follows.

Separation

While the immigrants whose stories are included in the sample arrived from places as diverse as Italy, Poland, Wales, Austria, and Hungary, the elements of their stories bear a striking resemblance. A few immigrants recall making the trip to America accompanied by their siblings, parents, and even extended families; however, most recall their fathers moving to America first, in search of work or as a means of escape. The theme of separation is evidenced through William Reinhart’s account. Reinhart, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1910, recalled that his father was an engraver who came to America a year before sending for him, his mother, and seven siblings (Coan 181).
Thomas Rogen, a Polish immigrant who arrived in 1909, had a similar story. “My father decided to come to America when he was offered a job by a cousin who owned a cigar factory in New York. He became a cigar packer, not very skilled labor” (Coan 81). Rogen’s father sent for him and his mother after establishing employment in the United States. Esther Gidiwicz’s father moved to America and worked as a furrier while living with his uncle (Coan 323). Gidiwicz recalled her father’s story of sleeping on the kitchen floor while working to save enough to send for his family. After working for two years as a furrier, he sent for his eldest son. “The two of them worked very hard and they saved every penny they could, and they sent for my mother, my other brother, my sister, and I” (Coan 324). Bob Hope, a famous Ellis Island immigrant, had a similar story. His father’s journey preceded the family’s by a year. Hope’s father, a mason, had a job opportunity in Cleveland (Coan 78). Carla Weichel, an Austrian immigrant, had a vague memory of her father’s departure because she was only four years old when he left. Weichel’s father worked in a New Jersey factory and lived in a boardinghouse (Coan 216). Notably, the boardinghouse landlords lent Weichel the money to send for his family.

Other immigrants told of their fathers fleeing to America because they were wanted by the law, or were under surveillance, but the stories always ended with the family being reunited at a later date in America. Jake Kreider, who arrived in 1911 at age of 11 from Austria, offered a typical example of such an instance. There was a warrant out for his father’s arrest so he fled to America. Kreider’s father was wanted for harboring seven of his Jewish friends so they would not be served with a court summons for allegedly not paying interest on a loan. Kreider’s father fled successfully (Coan 222). Five years later, Jake Kreider and the rest of his family were united with his father in America. Abraham
Beame, who arrived in 1906 from England as an infant, had a similar story. His father, a Russian-born liberal Socialist, opposed the czar. After learning that he was under surveillance for his political opposition, Beame’s father fled to America. Beame recalled, “So he packed up to go to America and told my mother, who was pregnant with me, to go to her sister in London with my two brothers, and that when he got to America he would send for her. That’s how I was born in London” (Coan 76). Albertina di Grazia, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1913 at age five, joined her father after he made the journey on borrowed money (Morrison). The theme of separation demonstrates each family’s willingness to endure sacrifice, financial hardship, and even the possibility of not being reunited. The separation theme represents courage and the extreme sacrifices families were willing to make for improving their life conditions. Frequently, years passed before families were reunited with their patriarchs and/or male siblings in America.

Continuity

In addition to separation, the theme of continuity emerged as immigrants repeatedly described the treasures that their mothers packed to make the voyage. Because many of the immigrants whose stories are included in the sample were children during passage, they offer a child’s perspective of the items that were prepared for the trip. Those who recalled what was packed typically described a trunk, the clothes on their back, or bundles. The bundles usually included clothing, food, money, and treasured items like candlesticks or a homemade tablecloth. Mario Vina, who arrived from Southern Italy in 1909 at age 11, had a story not unlike most. The recollections were simplistic and childlike: “I remember my mother had a big box, like a trunk, and she packed a lot of
stuffed’ (Coan 38). Carla Weichel arrived from Austria in 1905 at age five with a little bag with papers that hung around her neck and her doll (Coan 216). Estelle Miller, who arrived in 1909 from Austria at age 13, was given charge of a treasured family item. Miller recalled carrying her mother’s china bowl in her hands all the way from Austria (Coan 219). Sonya Kevar, a Russian immigrant who arrived in 1911 at age 13, remembered bringing books, towels, sheets, and tablecloths (Coan 247). Sadie Kaplan, another Russian immigrant, arrived in 1905 at age 12. She told of arriving in a little dress, like she wore in Europe (Kaplan). Clare Conrick arrived from Scotland in 1902 at age six. She recalled her clothing, describing the long hand-knit stockings that saw her through the ocean voyage (Coan 132) Esther Gidiwicz, a Romanian immigrant who arrived in 1905 at age five, recalled her mother bringing candlesticks and a samovar, a metal urn used to boil water for tea (Coan 324). Jake Kreider, an Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1911 at age 11, remembered, “My mother had a pair of boots made to order for my father. We brought that with us. I wore a special suit my mother had made to order for me. My mother took along a lot of dry fruits and things, so that we wouldn’t have to eat the ship’s food” (Coan 223). Immigrants carried various treasures to hold on to their heritages while recreating life in America. Regardless of value, the items symbolized the immigrants’ cultural identities and were the foundation for building a new life. The treasures, though sometimes insignificant, symbolize a connection to the immigrants’ heritage and represent their courageous journey. The various treasures connect the old with the new and offer a continuation, though small, of their former lives.
The Lure of Riches, Not Freedom

An unexpected theme emerged as immigrants mentioned seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time. While many of the immigrants did not have familiarity with the Statue of Liberty, the vast majority recalled excitement upon seeing it for the first time. Throughout history, the statue has symbolized freedom; however, for the arriving immigrants, it typified America’s riches and the wealth that they perceived existed beyond New York harbor. Clare Conrick, a Scottish immigrant who arrived in 1902 at age six recalled, “To think, I came to America! I had never seen tall buildings in Scotland, and when I saw the Statue of Liberty I thought it was the most wonderful thing. I took pictures of it” (Coan 134). While others knew the Statue of Liberty held significance, two immigrants’ recollections of seeing the statue demonstrated their unfamiliarity with it. Estelle Miller, who arrived in 1909 at age 13 from Austria, recalled, “When we arrived in New York Harbor, my brothers and I ran out to see the Statue of Liberty. But nobody knew what it was. One man said, ‘Don’t you know? That's Columbus.’ So we thought it was Columbus. For years I thought that” (Coan 219). In 1911, Theodore Spako, a 16-year-old Greek immigrant, had a similar experience. His recollection also supports the notion that it was common for immigrants to be excited upon viewing the Statue of Liberty, though its significance was often unclear. Spako recalled, “I remember we see Statue of Liberty. Gus ask me, ‘What's the statue?’ And then we're looking at the statue, and his father say, 'That's Christopher Columbus.' And I put my two cents out. I say, 'Listen, this don't look like Christopher Columbus. That's a lady there’” (Coan 277). These examples demonstrate the immigrants’ awe upon seeing the statue, and their lack of understanding about its meaning. Multiple immigrants
recalled that their families were drawn to America for its riches. George Kramer, who arrived from Holland in 1913 at age five, said his family believed America's rooftops were painted with gold. Carla Martinelli, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1913 at age 16 was excited for the journey because she believed America was rich. "There was nothing in Italy, nothing in Italy. That's why we came. To find work, because Italy didn't have no work. Mama used to say, 'America is rich, America is rich.'" (Coan 63). Another Italian, Rocco Morelli, was certain that his family would at least eat if they went to America (Morelli). Louise Nagy, a Polish immigrant who arrived in 1913, believed that America's streets were gold and that people in America had the opportunity to earn $1 a day (Nagy). Victor Tartarini arrived from Italy in 1921 with the perception that America would be gold (Tartarini). An unnamed Bulgarian immigrant who arrived in 1921 even went so far as to skip breakfast on the ship because sight of the Statue of Liberty provided enough nourishment (Nizamoff). For the immigrants, the Statue of Liberty embodied America's perceived riches. While it signified the end of their ocean journey, anecdotal evidence suggests that it represented the beginning of a promise of America's gold, a belief held common by many immigrants. One might speculate that the wave of immigrants at this time represented a second-generation gold rush, on the heels of the 49ers. The metaphor of America as instant wealth no doubt had some roots in the California gold rush.

Chaos

Like the scholarly references to the chaos of Ellis Island's Registry Hall, immigrants whose stories are included in the sample likewise recalled the frenzy. The accounts detail
endless hours of waiting, frustration, and in most instances, the recollection of being one among thousands of weary travelers. Immigrants most often recalled confusion, officials in uniform, the enormity of the Registry Hall, the inspection process, noise, pushing, shoving, and crying. These examples all point to the chaotic nature of the larger immigrant story. The emotional aspects of the experience were best told through the following examples. Esther Gidiwicz, a Romanian immigrant who arrived in 1905 at age five recalled, “It was a very big room. You were always with a lot of people. Everybody was pushing and shoving and we were examined again” (Coan 326). Barbara Garongess, a Russian Jew who arrived in 1921, recalled a similar experience, “The time I spent on Ellis Island seemed like the longest waiting period for me because of the regimen. Actually, there had to be a regimen. It was the only way that they could handle that many people. I realize it now in retrospect, but at the time it was a nightmare” (Garongess). An unnamed Bulgarian immigrant’s account of his or her 1921 arrival lent further support to the disorder. The Bulgarian recalled the island being extremely crowded because thousands had landed before their boat. They had to wait in lines for hours before even setting foot in the long corridors (Nizamoff). Randall Peat, a Welsh immigrant who arrived in 1914 at age 19, recalled being searched by officials before being asked about his money (Coan 144). Thomas Rogen arrived in 1909 at age seven from Poland and specifically recalled confusion, people running and lots of babushkas (Coan 82). Jake Kreider recalled: “When we got off the boat, got to Ellis Island, people were sitting on the benches scratching from the lice. They were loaded with lice. Ellis Island looked like a great barn with benches. We all sat on benches. Driven in there like a bunch of cattle” (Coan 223). Stephen Graham arrived in 1913 from England and recalled being hurried
from ferry to ferry: “All the officials were running and hustling, shouting out, ‘Come on! Hurry! Move along!’ and clapping their hands. Our trunks were examined and chalk-marked on the run—no delving for diamonds—and then we were quick-marched further to a waiting ferry-boat” (Unrau 1112). Sydney Bass, an Englishman who arrived in 1911, recalled his objection of being herded with the filthiest people (Unrau). Paul Knaplund’s recollection offered further credibility for the chaos theme. In New York harbor, enormous crowds forced his boat to wait for two days before unloading (Unrau).

Fit For America?

Into the mix of chaotic frenzy and culture shock was introduced the medical exam. This theme is somewhat different because it is from the perspective of both inspectors and immigrants. Immigrants were exposed to medical exams, sometimes painful, because Americans and immigration inspectors feared foreign diseases and perceived many immigrants to be unfit for entrance into America. This fear was largely based in the stereotypical perception that with immigrants came disease. The historical maltreatment of immigrants corroborates this theme. Scholars have documented numerous accounts where immigrants were treated as less than human, and were therefore afforded accommodations and sanitary conditions unfit for humans. Immigrants’ recollections of traveling via steerage corroborate the inhumane treatment. Immigrants in this sample either recalled being sick or recalled their mother or a sibling being sick. Ersie Gelzin, an immigrant who arrived in 1923 from Ireland at an unknown age, shared a recollection that best exemplifies this theme: “Oh God, I was sick. Everybody was sick. I don’t ever want to remember anything about that old boat” (Gelzin). Thomas Rogen’s account adds
further credibility to sickness that was synonymous with steerage passage: “I had seasickness every day, throwing up into a jar so as not to disgust the other passengers” (Coan 81). The sickness came as a result of thousands of immigrants sharing cramped, unsanitary quarters with little ventilation in the bottom portion of ocean vessels.

The poor treatment of immigrants continued at Ellis Island. Several immigrants recounted the highly-documented eye examinations that took place in the Registry Hall. The sometimes-abusive eye exams were born out of inspectors’ fear of trachoma. At the time, trachoma was a highly contagious disease that often resulted in blindness; however, its incidence was disproportionate to the fear it incited. Many immigrants recalled being subjected to exams designed to prove their fitness for America. Jessie Riegleman, a Russian immigrant who arrived in 1905 at age 12, recalled, “They examine us. Your eyes, especially, and they ask you questions. Have you had any disease? Were you sick? Were you this, were you that? If your answers are all right, they put you in another room until we were ready” (Coan 245). Esther Gidiwicz, a Romanian immigrant who arrived in 1905 at age five, remembered her eye exam, “They examined mostly your hair, your head, your eyes” (Coan 325). Estelle Miller, an Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1909 at age 13, remembered the doctor was rough when examining her eyes (Coan 220). Harry Pappahs, who arrived in 1908 at age 18 from Greece, also recalled Ellis Island officials’ emphasis on the eye exam, “When we came off the boat they took me to Ellis Island, New York. They examined me there, my eyes. Sooner they found out my eyes was okay” (Pappahs). Dora Heller Rich, an Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1909 at age 13, recalled the pain she felt when the doctor ripped up both of her eyes with an instrument (Heller Rich). Paul Knaplund, a Norwegian immigrant who arrived in 1906 at age 21,
was surprised that despite most immigrants appearing healthy, their eyelids were upturned nonetheless (Unrau). In her oral interview, Dora Gats bemoaned the fact that everything was related to the eyes at Ellis Island. She passed the exams (Gats). Stephen Graham arrived from England in 1913 and recalled, “Once more it was ‘Quick march!’ and hurrying about with bags and baskets in our hands, we were put into lines. Then we slowly filed up to a doctor who turned our eyelids inside out with a metal instrument” (Unrau 1112). No wonder immigrants feared the eye exam—some learned of the procedure before Ellis Island was even in view. Amelia Giacomo, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1916 at age five, recalled her on-ship conversation with a man. “Well, one day, we took a walk on the boat. I was only five years old. And he said, ‘You know what? When you get over to Ellis Island they’re going to examine your eyes with a hook,’ and he says, ‘Don’t let them do it because you know what? They did it to me—one eye fell in my pocket’” (Coan 65).

The details of the eye exams are corroborated by factual evidence articulated in historical and academic accounts of the procedures (“Historic,” Coan, Smith, Pitkin). Recollections of the roughness with which eyes were examined took on new relevance after hearing Andrea Boney, supervising park ranger at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, describe the experience. Boney demonstrated how a non-sterilized buttonhook was used to “flip up” each immigrant’s eyelids during line inspection (Boney). The medical examiners were looking for traces of trachoma, an incurable eye disease that if detected, would undoubtedly result in a return ticket to the homeland. The buttonhook eye exam was painful and unsanitary, and is substantiated in the recollections of those who experienced it firsthand.
Culture Shock

Numerous examples of culture shock exist in the accounts. Upon arrival in America, immigrants recalled being awestruck about such things as oranges, bananas, elevated trains, clotheslines, and even African Americans. Immigrants’ vivid memories of food came as a surprise, as academic sources did not provide nearly the insight into this as personal accounts offered. Much of the food that the immigrants received at Ellis Island was foreign to them. Recollections of bananas and pastries appeared repeatedly in the accounts. Jacob Potofsky, a Polish immigrant, remembered receiving bananas and blueberry pie, both of which he had never seen (Potofsky). They were given to him in a package from the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society). Orenge Geglia, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1916, saw oranges and bananas for the first time aboard ship (Geglia). Signe Bergman, a Swedish immigrant who arrived in 1916 recalled, “When I arrived at Ellis Island they served us coffee and donuts. That was the first time I ever ate or saw a donut and I thought it was great” (Bergman). Carla Weichel, an Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1905 at age five, recalled bananas, “The first thing my father did was buy me bananas. I had never had bananas, and I didn't like them” (Coan 218).

In addition to new food, immigrants articulated their shock at seeing African Americans for the first time. Jacob Potofsky, a Polish immigrant, recalled, “I had seen Negroes for the first time on the train, probably porters” (Potofsky). Jake Kreider, an Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1911 at age 11, was surprised at seeing people with dark skin: “And what surprised me was seeing so many black people. In our country the only black people we knew were Gypsies” (Coan 224). Estelle Miller, the Austrian immigrant who arrived in 1909 carrying her mother’s china bowl, recalled the moment
when the bowl met its fate; she dropped it out of fear at seeing a black man: “I got so frightened. I never saw a black man before. I was so scared I dropped the antique china bowl, and it broke in pieces. My mother almost died. I almost killed myself” (Coan 220).

Other occurrences that were common in America shocked the immigrants. Louise Nagy arrived from Poland in 1913 and recalled how unusual New York City’s “trains up high” appeared to her (Nagy). The trains likewise affected William Reinhart, an Italian immigrant who arrived in 1910 at the age of four: “Here we were twenty-one days on the water, and now we were sailing through the sky with water underneath us, which was the East River” (Coan 181). Clotheslines impressed both Dora Gats of England and Esther Gidiwicz of Romania. Gidiwicz recalled, “When my mother sat by the window, she looked out and saws people having lines of clothing, you know, wash, out—and she looked down and she says to my father, ‘In America, they have such big ladders that they climb up to hang the wash?’ And, of course, people started laughing and that shut her up for a while” (Coan 327). The American media likewise had an impact on immigrants. Clare Conrick, who arrived at age six from Scotland, recalled the fuss reporters made over their native dress: “There were a lot of reporters. And we said, ‘Why are the reporters here?’ The newspaper was called the World Telegram, I think. That was the name of an old newspaper. They took pictures of us, especially the Scottish men from the boat. They were wearing kilts, you know. And the men [the reporters] laughed at that costume when they came here” (Coan 134). Stephen Graham, an Englishman in 1913, described the Registry Hall: “The walls of the hall were booking-offices, bank counters, inspectors’ tables, stools of statisticians. Up above was a visitors’ gallery where journalists and the curious might promenade and talk about the melting-pot, and America,
‘the refuge of the oppressed’” (Unrau 1113). This is ironic given the oppressive treatment immigrants received at Ellis Island.

Analysis of Newspaper Articles

A search of the phrase “Ellis Island” in the New York Times ProQuest Historical Newspapers database at the UNLV Lied Library produced 219 results. The database was queried for documents containing the words “Ellis Island” between January 1, 1907 and December 31, 1907. The year 1907 was chosen because it is the focus of this research—the year of highest immigrant traffic at Ellis Island. Of the 219 results, 48 entries were proposals soliciting laborers to submit sealed bids for various tasks to be performed on Ellis Island. Three were display adds, and there was one each of the following: a poem, a public notice, a classified advertisement, and an amusement note advertising a play by the name “At Ellis Island.” The remaining 164 articles, not in the aforementioned categories, were printed and reviewed. Because the focus of this research was on the American immigrant experience, I considered several articles to be outside the scope of this study. For example, one article was about a policeman who lost his badge on his way to work at Ellis Island. Others told of dignitaries visiting Ellis Island, pay increases for Ellis Island’s Commissioner Watchorn, administrative and procedural changes on the island, and news about already-settled immigrants who had passed through Ellis Island. I carefully chose articles based on the criteria that they provided an overview of the immigration process, that they recounted the passage of immigrants, or that they described the immigrant experience as seen through the perspective of the media at the time. It was quickly evident that the journalistic perspective of the immigrant experience

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began where the immigrant perspective ended. The earliest account in the final sample is
dated January 14, 1907, the latest November 5, 1907. In all, 50 articles are included in the
sample, all of which are news briefs or feature-length articles. None are editorials.

To begin, articles with similar topics were grouped for future analysis. Ten topics
stood out to me as significant, as evidenced by wide coverage received in the New York
Times. The topics and the number of articles represented follow: boat reports (6), Ellis
Island inspections (5), arrival of massive number of immigrants (10), religious
accommodations (5), detained immigrants (4), marriages (4), deportation (4), reunions
(6), and smuggling (3). Another grouping, which I labeled other, contained miscellaneous
stories that I felt merited attention and analysis. They had value in helping to tell the
immigrant story. Three articles in the other category were chosen for the final sample.

After the 50 articles were catalogued into the aforementioned topics, an analysis was
begun. Not only did the articles corroborate what the scholars Coan, Corsi, Dinnerstein,
Divine, Pitkin, and Reimers have reported as factual, but many of the articles reflect what
was revealed in the analysis of immigrant stories.

A preview of the themes follows. After considering the ten topical categories and the
stories told by the articles contained within each, six themes emerged. While thematic
overlaps occur in some places, I believe an articulation of these six themes is appropriate
for elaborating on the immigrant experience. The first is the theme of passage issues. This
theme is evidenced through the six articles that provided accounts of steamship and
ferryboat news. The second theme, straining the system, is represented by 13 articles.
Widespread coverage of a taxed Ellis Island, infrastructure, and staff commingle with
frequent articles on the record-breaking immigrant levels. These articles point to the
systems involved with processing immigrants. A third theme is religious sensitivity. Six articles exemplified inspectors' and missionaries' efforts to accommodate immigrants' religious practices. The fourth theme, reunions, surfaced with multiple dimensions in ten articles. Three categories of articles described immigrant reunions. While some Ellis Island reunions ended in marriage and family joy, others ended in tragedy. Seven articles represent a fifth theme, determination. The articles are related to deportation and feature children who made successful ocean passage in pursuit of parents or relatives. The determination theme is also present in articles of stowaway passengers, and the hardships they incurred for a chance in America. Articles describing deportation situations support the final theme, scandal/misfortune. This theme also considers coverage of immigrant misgivings. Eight articles represent this theme. An analysis of the six themes follows.

Passage Issues

The theme of passage issues is exemplified through the newspaper articles related to ferryboat and steamship reports. Articles related to immigration passage issues, or transportation complications, were plentiful. The reports quantifiably state damage as a result of weather, and describe downed ferryboats in terms of inoperable days. This theme is evidenced in the January 14, 1907 article that described the rough weather experienced by the French ocean liner La Savoie. According to the article, "A section of the iron railing of the promenade deck was carried away, and two of the heavy iron supports to the boat deck were snapped off" ("Great," 18). Further damage was reported: "For twenty feet the planks were torn up, leaving a space three feet wide" ("Great," 18). The article provided little description regarding the passengers' reactions to the damage:
"The shock was so violent that some of the passengers got up to see what had happened" ("Great," 18). On June 3, 1907, a fire was discovered in an unoccupied steerage section of the White Star liner Oceanic, resulting in $10,000 damage. According to the article, "Officials were summoned to the pier said while the firemen were at work that they could not determine whether the steamship would be able to sail next Wednesday, when scheduled to do so" ("Liner," 1). According to the article, no passengers were aboard; however, officials were concerned with protecting cargo: "The officials of the company took immediate steps to prevent the spread of the fire to the pier, where much valuable cargo was stored" ("Liner," 1). On June 10, 1907 the Ellis Island ferryboat was disabled for four hours. The article stated, "When the boat finally arrived at the Battery she was loaded to the limit, and there was such a rush of persons to the ferry entrance that the policemen had all they could do for about ten minutes keeping the crowd back and making way for those who came ashore" ("Ellis Island Boat," 16). On June 24, 1907, an article reported that the Russian steamer Livonia would make its return trip to Europe under the Danish—not Russian—flag. The article reported, "The Livonia was one of Admiral Rojestvensky’s fleet, and she had escaped capture by the Japanese because she had been ordered to Shanghai" ("Last," 5). Another article exemplifying passage issues appeared on September 23, 1907. The Adelaide, which was serving as a substitute for the Ellis Island ferry, was being packed to double capacity: "The Adelaide is not really a Government boat, but since the immigration ferryboat Ellis Island was laid off for repairs she has been running as a substitute" ("Adelaide’s," 6). The captain was warned for transporting more passengers than he was licensed to carry. "The Inspectors warned the Captain that he was taking more than the 600 persons for which he is licensed. On the
particular trip on which the warning was given, there is said to have been 1,000 persons on the boat” (“Adelaide’s,” 6). Inadequate ferry transportation also caused complications with baggage processing: “The baggage cannot be brought over quick enough, and yesterday a barge brought over 1,500 pieces” (“Adelaide’s,” 6). In an October 1, 1907 follow-up article on The Adelaide, it was reported that a fire drill turned chaotic when hoses erupted and pipes burst, drenching the crew. According to the article, “The break was tied up with a rag” (“Steamboat,” 11). Of note in this article is the mention of Adelaide’s bad luck—being shut down because of a drunken crew, narrowly escaping an ocean liner its captain tried to run down, and an incidence where an English woman fell overboard because “she had lost a draft for $175” (“Steamboat,” 11).

These examples speak to the larger observation that reporters intently covered steamship news, while paying little—if any—attention to the human toll. While the articles primarily focus on the damage incurred by the ships and resulting crew struggles, immigrants were no doubt impacted by these troubles, yet reporters did not detail human hardships. Destruction to steamships was certainly an inconvenience to transportation companies; however, it was the passengers who were most intimately affected by poor weather and mechanical failures. Perhaps the coverage reflected readers’ perceived interests in transportation hardships and complications, but the glaring omission of the human impact points to the notion that immigrants were regarded as less than important.

Straining the System

In the historical literature of Coan, Corsi, Pitkin, and others, the strain on Ellis Island’s systems at the hands of 1907’s capacity crowds is well documented. Coverage in
the New York Times strongly corroborates the notion that the immigrant station, its infrastructure, and staff were working at capacity levels. The multiple articles describing the massive influx of more than 5,000 immigrants per day evidence the theme of a strained system. On February 22 and February 24, 1907, Secretary Straus of the Department of Commerce and Labor made inspections of Ellis Island's methods. Straus visited Board of Special Inquiry rooms, observed immigrants, and planned a hospital inspection because a $500,000 contagious disease unit was planned. According to the February 24, 1907 report, “To-day Mr. Straus will inspect the island hospital and look into the plan for the care of the sick. In view of the fact that the contract has been let and the contractors are about to begin work on a five-hundred-thousand-dollar hospital for contagious diseases, the Secretary desires to study the subject for himself” (“Straus at Ellis,” 4). One June 18, 1907 Senator Lodge from Massachusetts inspected Ellis Island and “found conditions generally satisfactory,” though he suggested, “New York should also have more doctors” (“Ellis Island’s Needs,” 12). These articles suggested solutions to the strain. Others told of record immigrant numbers arriving at Ellis Island.

Ten articles were included in the sample to demonstrate reporting of the massive influx of immigrants. On March 19, 1907, it was reported that 11,200 steerage passengers had arrived the day prior. According to the article, “Commissioner Watchorn predicted from the rush of yesterday that immigrants will soon be arriving in a greater volume than ever before” (“Increase,” 5). On April 19, a new immigration record was established with 9,874 immigrants waiting for inspection procedures. The article stated, “The flood of immigration which has been pouring through this port since the coming of Spring, reached such proportions yesterday, that there was much congestion on Ellis Island”
One April 26, 1907, the New York Times reported that 100,000 immigrants had arrived in April and that 10,496 steerage passengers were awaiting inspection in the harbor. The article reported, “So strong has the tide already set in that a majority of those who arrived yesterday in the steerage of incoming liners will not be landed at Ellis Island until Saturday” (“1,000 Immigrants,” 3). A May 2, 1907 article reported the arrival of 15,397 immigrants, a one-day record: “The Customs Men and Immigration Inspectors had all they could do to handle this flood of arrivals. The immigration station on Ellis Island has been taxed to its utmost capacity for the last two weeks, and it is more than probable that many of those who got in yesterday will have to remain nearly forty-eight hours on shipboard before they can pass through the gates of Ellis Island and officially land in this country” (“15,397 Immigrants,” 7). The next day, it was reported that it could take days to examine the “army of arrivals” (“25,000 Immigrants,” 5). A May 4, 1907 article reported the continuing strain: “The entire force of officials at the immigration station are working with might and main to land as soon as possible the many who seek entrance here, but at best it is slow work, for not only has each individual to be registered, but the Inspectors must pass upon the desirability of each to enter the country, and this separating the chaff from the wheat requires time” (“Unending,” 3). A May 5, 1907 article reported, “The machinery at the immigration station on Ellis Island is working to its utmost capacity” (“Alien,” 6). On August 4, 1907, the New York Times reported yet another record-breaking day, as 7,799 passengers arrived the day prior, the greatest in the port’s history. According to the article, “Never before, so the customs men say, has there been so many passengers landed at this port in a day” (“Ocean,” 12). An article of a different nature appeared on October 17, 1907. The
article, "Liners Race For Piers" told of the Caronia, the Oceanic, and the Barbarossa arriving at the piers within minutes of each other. The article stated, "When the steamers came up the bay together there was keen competition between the respective skippers to see who could reach the pier first, because it made a difference in getting their steerage passengers to Ellis Island" ("Liners," 11). Each of these examples articulates the sheer overflow of passengers into the nation's busiest immigration station and point to the theme of straining the system.

Religious Sensitivity

Missionaries and agents whose job it was to distribute religious literature often greeted arriving immigrants at Ellis Island. While some might subjectively consider this self-serving on the part of the denomination representatives, the New York Times devoted several articles to disseminating the statistics reported by such groups. These statistics demonstrate the theme of religious sensitivity for arriving immigrants. On February 24, 1907, it was reported that the American Tract Society distributed Bohemian and Christian literature in 30 languages at Ellis Island and in large cities. According to the article, "Its colporteurs did good work at Ellis Island, in the large cities, and even in Western mining camps. Since the time of its inception, says the report, the society has expanded $763,713 in creating and disseminating Christian publications on foreign mission fields in 173 languages, dialects, and characters" ("The Gospel," 2). Several months after this report ran, Ellis Island's Commissioner Watchorn criticized the work of missionaries. The May 9, 1907 article explained Watchorn's position—that immigrants who immediately received religious materials upon landing might question the motives of
the U.S. government. In the article, Watchorn was quoted saying, "A great many of our immigrants are Hebrews, who are on their way from persecution by one style of Christians, and when they have Christian tracts—printed in Hebrew—put in their hands, apparently with the approval of the United States Government, they wonder what is going to happen to them here" ("Tracts," 6). Despite Watchorn's warning, a July 1, 1907 article told of plans for wider Bible distribution on Ellis Island. According to the article, "Last year, 93,000 Bibles in 34 languages were distributed. Of these, 45,000 went to immigrants, the others to inmates of hospitals and prisons" ("More," 7). Another example was published on September 9, 1907, when arrangements were made for detained Jewish immigrants to have a special dinner in honor of the Rosh Hashanah holiday and a special room arranged for hours of prayer. The article described accommodations: "On the request of I. Irving Lipsitch, representing the United Hebrew-Charities at the island, Acting Commissioner Joseph Murray has issued orders that no Jewish immigrants be deported on the holidays, and none is forced to proceed to his destination at the time if unwilling then to travel" ("Thousands," 7). On September 17, 1907 the Hebrew Aid Society reported that the Jewish holidays would bring a slow-down to Russian arrivals. The article told of Alexander Harkarvy of the Hebrew Aid Society's prediction that Jewish people of devout faith would stay in Russia for the holidays despite the risk of persecution. According to the article, Harkarvy said, "I believe at the risk of their lives they would stay at home in order to celebrate those days. Of course, people who have no religion cannot understand that—can they" ("Fast," 7). A final example was published on October 17, 1907. The story told of Secretary Straus of the Department of Commerce and Labor's upcoming trip to inspect conditions of Hebrew immigrants. According to the
article, "Mr. Straus is anxious, it is said, to learn more about the details of the Hebrew immigration to this country" ("Straus Coming," 17).

Reunions

Stories of Ellis Island reunions filled the articles under review. In an effort to provide a snapshot of such events, I selected several to demonstrate the nature of the reunions that took place following immigrants’ arrival. These stories are equally indicative of the emotion and situations experienced by anxious fathers, longing fiancés, and other family members awaiting loved ones on piers and at the Battery.

The New York Times frequently covered reunions resulting in marriage. On February 25, 1907, an English girl, Miss Margaret Emily Coutts, was married in the ship’s saloon as soon as it arrived at its pier. The article told of the young suitor, D.A. Davies of San Francisco, who was waiting for the boat long before its arrival: “The young man was waiting long before the vessel reached her pier, and he was one of the first to go on board” ("Married," 6). Ship officers and immigration officials were present at the ceremony, though it was unclear from the article whether they were on hand for security or celebratory purposes. A June 1, 1907 article titled “Cupid on the Pretoria” told of three weddings that followed the German liner’s arrival in port. Two weddings took place on board, another at Ellis Island. According to the article, “Pauline Siedel, who came on the Pretoria, was eagerly awaited by John Bosbenhell of East New York, who had come some time ago ‘to get a start’ before sending for the sweetheart he had left in Austria” ("Cupid," 9). The article further stated that the second bride, Gazella Silberdrath of Vienna, “eagerly watched those awaiting the arrival of the vessel until she made out her
intended husband" ("Cupid," 9). A July 28, 1907 article told the story of Herr Bernhardt Harms from Hanover, who anxiously wed his 15-year-old fiancée, Fraulein Mina Schult, at Ellis Island. He professed his love in a song five years prior and she vowed to bring her dressmaking skills to America to wed and settle with him. According to the article, “So five years ago began the romance of the pair which ended yesterday in a marriage on Ellis Island” ("Ellis Island Bride," 3). On September 22, 1907, the New York Times reported the marriage ceremony of three brothers who married three young women.

According to the article, “A romance in which the principal roles were played by three brothers and three other fellows’ sisters was brought to its conclusion yesterday afternoon by the triple wedding of John, James, and Oliver Johnson to their English sweethearts in the First Baptist Church of Union Hill” (“One,” C5). The wedding took place after the mother of the three sons arrived with the fiancés, seven years after the boys arrived: “They were all brought together again, however, last Saturday, when Mrs. Alice M. Johnson, the mother of the brothers, arrived in the second cabin of the Lucania, with the three fiancés of her sons” (“One,” C5).

Another group of reunion stories had happy outcomes for families. An April 22, 1907 article told of 15-year-old Selma Carlsen who cared for her nine-week-old sister, Hilda, during ocean passage. Their father, Jan Carsen, was waiting for the girl and the baby in the basket. His wife had died in Sweden when the baby was just six-weeks old. The article reported, “Baby Hilda smiled yesterday on the friends she had made in the steerage of the big liner, and there was quite a reception before the father and his daughter could depart for the train which is to bear them to the West, carrying between them the basket, from the depths of which smiled the baby” ("Helps," 18). A July 21,
1907 article reported that a Colorado town banded around Thomas Leek as he fought to have his “crippled” and “undesirable” mother, Mrs. Wheeler, released on $1,000 bond (“A Whole,” 7). The article stated, “It took the united efforts of the Lieutenant Governor of Colorado, the Mayor of Denver, Mayor Edward G. Smith of Aurora, Col.; the Town Trustees and Treasurer of Aurora, as well as about a third of the population of the place to obtain the woman’s admission into the country” (“A Whole,” 7). A petition was signed that Mrs. Wheeler would never become a public charge, and authorities released her to her son. On October 19, 1907, ten-year-old Maria d’Amore was released after nine months in an Ellis Island hospital. She was being held for a mild case of trachoma. According to the article, “As her father was an American citizen she could not be deported. He asked that she be kept there until cured. He paid 75 cents a day for treatment” (“Leaves,” 7). Maria d’Amore happily returned home to her father.

The harsh realities of 1907 life mixed with the harrowing passage experienced by steerage immigrants led to the tragic reunions of other families. On January 18, 1907, the New York Times reported that Ireland’s Mary Carrol arrived to visit her daughter, Margaret, and was instead informed of the girl’s upcoming funeral. According to the article, “The girl had been in this country some time, and she had saved $1 a week to bring her mother to this country” (“Arrives,” 15). Margaret died of pneumonia three days before her mother’s arrival. On March 16, 1907, it was heartsickness that drove Anna Weissenbach to insanity. When she arrived with her three children she learned of her husband’s new wife. The article reported, “The woman brooded over the disclosure, and yesterday, when taken before the board, she became suddenly insane” (“A Day,” 4). On May 19, 1907, a grieving German mother, Mrs. Joseph Gorda, threw herself into the bay
after her baby died on Ellis Island. The article reported, “The immigration officials on Ellis Island, the setting for many sad scenes, saw the last act yesterday of one of the most pitiful human tragedies which they say they ever had come to their attention” (“Grieving,” 3). The woman’s husband, Joseph Gorda, arrived at Ellis Island to claim the corpses. The extremes of the human condition are evidenced through multiple articles describing the reunions of lovers and families, and families and corpses.

Determination

Determination marked much of the collective immigrant story. A select group of articles best exemplifies the sheer will of individuals resolved to make a life in America. Many of the reports profile stowaways or incidents of smuggling. On July 17, 1907 a Russian female stowaway arrived dressed in men’s clothing and answered to the male name “Alix.” The article reported, “The girl, who first answered to the name of Alix, but who on the discovery of her sex gave her name as Paulina Flaks of Kowno, Russia, tells an interesting story of her attempt to enter this country. She declared that no one helped her embark on the vessel, and her presence there was not discovered” (“Girl,” 12). On September 14, 1907, the Russian child Chain Shlome Kleinman fled to escape his father near Warsaw. According to the article, “Six weeks ago the child determined to run away. One night he crawled out of his bedroom window and headed on foot for the frontier” (“Little,” 18). He arrived at Ellis Island and told inspectors that he would find his mother, and die if he had to go home. On November 2, 1907, stowaway Mahommet Rachaul was found after being buried in a ship’s coal bunker for 18 hours. According to the article, “Rachaul was fairly comfortable until the vessel got away from port. Then he discovered
that the coal was shifting and his battle for life began” (“Stowaway,” 6). He emerged grimy, with ripped hands and missing fingernails. “He had been told many stories of this country and so he determined to come across the Atlantic and view it for himself” (“Stowaway,” 6). The determination of children was further corroborated by the story of nine-year-old Thomas Osborne. An October 20, 1907 article reported that he traveled alone from Liverpool to find his uncle in Chicago following his parents’ death. The young Osborne arrived with his uncle’s address pinned to his shirt and was quickly admitted. According to the article, “He declared that he was going to be a lawyer, and was sure that he would be a good American,” (“Arabic,” 16).

The fear of deportation stirred up strong feelings of determination in many immigrants. On April 23, 1907, a band of 42 Italian musicians was ordered to give a concert to prove their worth as artists. The Italians gave a concert and were promptly discharged (“Play,” 3). The New York Times reported another story of Italians on April 29, 1907. After droves of Italians arrived, an inspector urged the immigrants to shed their knives and guns. After no one moved, the inspector announced that the U.S. government said that no good citizen would carry weapons. According to the report, “There was a stir in the dense crowd, and then came a perfect rain of knives. All were eager to get rid of their weapons, for all wanted to enter the country” (“Immigrants Shed,” 1). Another story of determined Italian immigrants appeared on May 19, 1907. Giovali Allegra, a detainee, swapped his clothing with a visiting friend who desired passage back to Italy. Despite the friends’ attempt at disguise, both men were arrested and deported (“Prison,” 7 C4).
In 1907, the coverage of scandal and misfortune was nearly as plentiful as stories of reunion. This theme is highly supported in the review of literature, particularly in Corsi and Pitkin’s scholarship. As is evidenced by the following examples, it appears that there were as many reasons for deportation as there were immigrants deported. A September 21, 1907 article told of an Italian, Angelo Girelli, who fled with his maiden to America and left behind a wife and child. The teary couple was deported. According to the article, “The man asked that he be allowed to land at a port outside of Italy, but his request was not granted. The pair will be watched, to prevent their committing suicide” (“Banished,” 3). An October 3, 1907 article reported on Elizabeth Weissenbach, who became temporarily insane when she was deported because she was not legally married to her husband, whom she came to join in America. The article stated, “So the woman and her little brood arrived here in February only to admit after questioning by the Inspector of the Immigration Service that she was not legally married to the man who acknowledged her as his wife” (“Sane,” 7). An October 22, 1907 article told the story of Thomas Neary, who had lived in America for 24 years without filing the correct citizenship papers. Neary was deported when a varicose vein was discovered in his right leg (“Varicose,” 18). A similar story was published on September 8, 1907. Johann Menzel, a Brooklyn painter who lived in America 20 years prior to his return through Ellis Island after a trip to Europe to heal from consumption, was being held because he had never filed the correct papers (“Fears,” 6). Capriciousness exists when considering the causes for deportation. While authorities deported a man with a varicose vein, an illiterate Irishman was admitted despite the fact that other illiterate immigrants were labeled undesirable. A
March 4, 1907 article described the admittance of an Irishman who, when asked to read, looked at the book upside down. The Irishman prompted the guards to admit him by explaining that he'd play a flute if they provided one. According to the article, the Irishman said to the guards, "Oi can't rade it," he said, shaking his head. Then brightening up he added, "but, be gory, if Oi had me phlute Oi would play it for yes" ("They," 7). An April 9, 1907 article reported that Charles Stephens, a Haitian detainee, was being held on the accusation that he had robbed secret U.S. documents. A ship steward tipped off authorities when Stephens requested that the steward not mention the bundle of papers ("Held At," 7). An August 30, 1907 article outlined the Zasadny scandal. Zasady was charged with embezzlement from the U.S. Post Office. Authorities recovered approximately $5,000. According to the article, "They were unable to make an arrest because the man was protected by the German flag" ("Held Up," 2).

The Themes Offer Meaning

The themes that surfaced in the personal and public stories of immigration are diverse yet they intersect on multiple levels. The larger implications and meaning of the themes that developed within each sample will first be discussed, followed by a comparison of meanings between themes that emerged from the personal and public stories of the immigrant experience.

The personal stories, written or told by immigrants, recount different aspects of the experience, however, a common thread runs through the topics recalled by the immigrants. Academic research and historical accounts of the immigrant experience point to the complexities and bureaucracy of the system, the statistics of immigrants processed
at the height of Ellis Island's function as an immigration station, and the controversy that plagued the island. In contrast, individuals discussed what researchers might consider to be mundane details. However, there is a relevancy to the mundane nature of the themes—the continuity, the culture shock, the perception that America was paved in gold, the ordeal of the eye exam, the chaos that existed in the loud Registry Hall. While the accounts of the immigrant experience included in the sample might be considered childlike and marked by thin detail, there is poignancy to the simplistic recollections. After extracting the details of each account and analyzing the patterns that developed, it became clear that many of the details recalled by the immigrants were based in fear. To an immigrant, there must have been overwhelming anxiety associated with the concept of eating new foods, fear associated with a medical examination, fear of being just one person in a room of thousands, and fear of being rejected for admittance into the United States. Within the chaotic environment at Ellis Island, the small, seemingly mundane details of experiences like eating bananas and carrying a china bowl on the voyage helped the immigrants make sense of their experience. In the scholarly research consulted for the literature review, researchers typically didn't mention these small and ostensibly unimportant details; however, they bear a world of meaning when juxtaposed with Fisher's narrative theory. All of these small details, in combination, are the building blocks of a specific personal life story with elements common to other personal stories (coherence) and found to be true when measured against other factual accounts (fidelity).

Although scholars paid little attention to the details that surfaced in immigrants' personal accounts, their stories ring true to us as a culture. Our collective conscious tells us that the stories of our lives are often grounded in the small things, in the realities
experienced by the immigrants. The scholarly research did not suggest that European immigrants experienced anxiety or fear upon seeing a person with black skin, for example. However, this notion is substantiated in immigrants’ multiple references to the experience. Historical reports did not recount the individual stories of separation or the details of a father sleeping on the kitchen floor in his uncle’s American home while he saved money to send for his family. Nor did references to the pain of the eye exam, the treasures carried from homelands to bridge the old and the new, or the shock of seeing a clothesline appear in the academic literature. While historical references allude to the fact that immigrants perceived America as a land of riches, immigrants’ reflections, in their own words, tell the story in a much more profound way. The repetition and simplicity of such details as offered by the immigrants in the sample makes the immigrant story all the more understandable and endearing. Surprisingly, the personal accounts and scholarly literature lacked reference to Bibles and religious artifacts, however, journalists reported on the religious accommodations afforded immigrants. Perhaps scholars have omitted these seemingly mundane details from their research because they felt they lacked importance to the collective immigrant experience. Although it is difficult to speculate on individuals’ motives for omitting such details, it appears that one needs to marry the scholarly research with the stories told by those who lived the immigrant experience to gain a full, rich understanding of the experience.

In considering the public story of immigration as reported in the New York Times, six themes materialized from the journalistic perspective of immigration. With the exception of the passage issues theme, the themes shared a human storytelling approach that was quite unexpected. Curiosity for the immigrant experience and the human drama
that unfolded on Ellis Island’s piers appeared to be a motivator for reporters. The most prominent theme, by far, was reunions. These articles told of both joyous and pitiful human situations. While I had anticipated the reporting to have strong negative undertones, given the historical anti-immigrant sentiment as documented by the scholars Coan, Corsi, and Pitkin, I was surprised to find a fairly balanced representation of positive and negative coverage. There was an exception to my assessment of a balanced representation—the journalists’ lack of concern for the people who were inconvenienced by the inoperable and damaged boats. Also surprising, journalistic subjectivity was apparent throughout the articles. The themes that emerged from the sample suggest that journalists in the era covered stories almost as subjectively as the immigrants did in their personal accounts. Pieces of personal commentary were evident throughout the sample.

There is relevancy to the somewhat odd and sometimes bizarre nature of the content represented by the six themes. Together, the accounts demonstrate the unpredictability and chaos of the immigrant experience where nearly anything was plausible. Had I not examined the personal stories of immigrants first, I may have assumed the sensational nature of these articles to be products of journalism, however, the six themes examined here collide on levels of unpredictability and capriciousness. The chances of an immigrant being deported for a varicose vein were as likely as an illiterate immigrant bargaining his way into the country because of his ability to play the flute. Wayward judgment often guided the inspection and deportation process. The unpredictable and chaotic nature of the immigrant experience was heightened by the unreliable machinery of the day, which led to several boat situations, and the massive swell of immigrants that continually arrived in New York Harbor.
Although the scholars Coan, Corsi, Philip, Pitkin, and Richardson alluded to the unpredictability of the immigrant experience by detailing the scandal and irreverent procedures in place at Ellis Island, the overarching theme of unpredictability is strikingly evident in the 1907 newspaper articles. Furthermore, these accounts of unpredictability ring true to us as a culture. Parallels can be drawn between the seemingly odd immigrant accounts of 1907 and the accounts of our modern-day immigrants. While contexts may vary, the meanings behind the human experiences of immigrants and their struggles are much the same. The scholarly research led me to believe that the public story of immigration would be threaded with prejudice and hatred (Coan, Corsi, Philip, Pitkin, & Richardson.). I was delighted and somewhat disturbed to find the contrary. On one level, it was pleasing to see non-prejudicial coverage. However, it was disturbing that much of the historically-documented atrocity and scandal that plagued Ellis Island was not present in articles, which led me to question the credibility of overall coverage. While there was coverage of personal scandal, the emphasis was on individuals, rather than scandals surrounding immigrant processing, Ellis Island, or the nation. Perhaps news and lifestyle coverage was sanitized for public consumption, feeding readers’ beliefs that atrocities and scandal were not a component of the administrative aspects of immigration.

At face value, the public themes present a balanced view of immigration, reporting extremes of human emotion and tolerance. The content of the articles demonstrates a collective cultural curiosity for incoming groups. Reporters’ curiosity was manifested in both negative and positive coverage of the immigrant experience. The themes paint a fairly unbiased, balanced, and sometimes entertaining public story of immigration.
Comparison of Personal and Public Themes

The public and personal themes of the immigrant experience intersect on many levels. A review of interlacing themes from the two samples will be followed by a discussion of themes that lack connections. There is an obvious connection between the separation theme from the personal stories and the theme of reunions from the public accounts. While immigrants shared stories of their families being separated, and specifically of fathers making the trip to America first, the New York Times reported on the reunions that took place on this side of the ocean. This is a specific instance of public coverage completing events told in personal accounts. The personal stories of separation describe the emotional aspects of anxiety, heartache, and excitement often experienced by immigrants as they parted ways with loved ones in their homelands. Likewise, the journalistic perspective details the range of emotions felt by families rejoined with lovers, families, and corpses in articles related to reunions on American soil.

There is also a connection between the lure of riches theme from the personal stories and the determination theme of the public articles. In their personal accounts, immigrants shared the excitement they felt at the notion of enjoying the riches that America would offer. Memoirs told of the belief that rooftops were made of gold and that America was a land of riches for those willing to make the voyage. This theme carried forward as the New York Times covered stories of stowaways determined to land in America. The determination theme in the public story of immigration corroborates the lure of riches theme established in the personal accounts. Both provide startling examples of immigrants' willingness to endure extremely harsh and precarious situations for the chance to experience the opportunity of America.
The chaos theme of the personal stories is closely tied to the straining the system theme of the journalistic perspective of the immigrant experience. While the chaos theme is from the perspective of individuals who found themselves amidst Ellis Island’s confusion, the straining the system theme is from the administrative perspective of immigration processing and lends credibility to the chaotic nature of the immigrant experience as told by those who experienced it firsthand. The disorderly Registry Hall described by immigrants was supported by reporters’ coverage of the immigration station working at capacity levels. Immigrants’ stories of discomfort of being trapped in steerage while awaiting docking—sometimes for days—were corroborated by ongoing newspaper coverage of a congested harbor and steamships racing to unload passengers.

The “fit for America?” theme of personal immigrant stories bore resemblance to the scandal and misfortune theme of the public reports. While immigrants most often recalled the notorious Ellis Island line inspection and painful eye exams, coverage in the New York Times detailed the process of immigrant deportations for perceived medical abnormalities. Immigrants shared their recollections of being treated like cattle and being herded through medical routines, while the public story told of inspectors’ attempts to separate the desirable from the undesirable as quickly as possible. A strong connection exists between what immigrants said they felt and what journalists reported was imposed on them during processing.

A weaker link bonds the personal theme of continuity and the public theme of religious sensitivity, however, the connection merits discussion. The continuity theme points to the tangible items that immigrants brought to bridge life between their mother countries and the new life they sought in America. Such items included necessities like
clothing and blankets, and symbolic reminders of culture and heritage, like candlesticks and china bowls. The religious sensitivity theme examines the religious accommodations afforded immigrants, particularly Jewish immigrants. Journalists reported on the accommodations made at Ellis Island for Jewish immigrants during holy days, specifically a prayer room and special meals. These themes collide where the tangible items brought by immigrants, representative of continuity, meet the abstract element of Ellis Island’s religious accommodations—also a form of continuity.

The personal theme of culture shock offered no linkage with the public theme of passage issues. While both add value to the immigrant story, they stand on their own in this study. These remaining themes represent the elements of the immigrant story that perhaps could not adequately be told from the opposite perspective. The public theme of passage issues, which quantified financial damage to steamships and the operational troubles that plagued transportation companies, was likely irrelevant to immigrants. Likewise, the theme of culture shock, embodied by immigrants' amazement with everything from bananas to clotheslines, was probably of little importance to journalists.

Narrative Paradigm Theory

The scholarship of Walter Fisher informed this narrative analysis. His narrative paradigm theory is grounded in the notion that humans are storytellers by nature, what Fisher terms “homo narrans” (62). The narrative paradigm suggests human choices and communication activities derive from “good reasons” and good values, that the ability of human beings to reason “is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character,” and that human beings use tests of “narrative probability” and “narrative
fidelity” to determine “whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives” (Fisher 64). Fisher’s theory also proposes that stories provide a framework for our experience as human beings and give “sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them” (Fisher 65). During analysis, Fisher’s tests of narrative probability and narrative fidelity were imposed on the accounts. According to Fisher, narrative probability is present if a story is coherent, hangs together, and is free of contradictions. The theory assumes that the person who hears the story determines its probability.

The personal accounts, offered by senior individuals in most cases, appeared to be coherent and free of contradictions in all but one case. An example of a contradiction surfaced in Clare Conrick’s account. Conrick, a Scotish immigrant who arrived in 1902 at age six, recalled her medical exam, “They fingerprinted us and we had to take blood tests to see if we were in good enough health to be admitted” (Coan 134). While Conrick’s account exhibits coherence by today’s medical standards, no scholarly research and no other personal accounts discuss fingerprinting or blood tests given to immigrants at Ellis Island. This is a contradiction to what was told in other stories; however, this one small contradiction does not negate Conrick’s full account. While some of the interviewees had difficulty recalling their specific circumstances due to age or senility, I approached the stories with the understanding that these individuals were likely to have a greater grasp of their earliest experiences than their realities at the time of interview. This notion was supported by the fact that so many of the stories shared similar themes and details.

The accounts by journalists likewise appeared to be free of contradictions from what I know to ring true, except in the articles that detailed the distribution of religious
literature. It was unclear from the articles if the distribution of religious matter by missionaries was a product of proselytizing or a welcoming courtesy extended to newcomers. Furthermore, I used Fisher’s tests of narrative fidelity and narrative probability to examine the tone and style of 1907 journalism. From my own life experience, I know that “political correctness” was not a concern of journalists at the turn-of-the-century. In examining the articles, it became evident that the news-reporting style of 1907 differs greatly from today’s standards. It is noteworthy that many of the articles contain descriptive phrases that subjectively point to a news subject’s physical characteristics. This practice is uncommon by today’s journalistic standards, especially in news articles. However, there are multiple mentions in the sample of “pretty girls,” “handsome couples,” and “fat” individuals. While this detail is not significant to the story of the immigrant experience, it speaks to the antiquity of the articles under review and rings true with what I know to be true of reporting during the era.

Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory provides support for the notion of an immigrant story. The biographical, historical, cultural, and moral components of the immigrant accounts showed that there was no order to the immigrant experience, only chaos. The biographical component was captured in the statistical data of when immigrants arrived, their countries of origin, and their age upon arrival. The historical accounts provided by scholars, reporters, and by immigrants in the waves that came, demonstrated the regard for immigrants, from varying perspectives. The moral component, or lack thereof, was demonstrated through the immigration inspectors’ sometimes-cruel treatment of immigrants because of fear of disease in the personal stories, and the personal scandal that marked immigrants’ lives as told from the journalistic perspective. The immigrants
had to recreate their life stories, using the treasures they carried from their homelands as a bridge to their heritage.

Fisher’s narrative theory requires the researcher to test the fidelity of a story. Fidelity is tested when the researcher asks himself if the components of a story are representative of what is already considered to be accurate. The researcher applies his own degree of understanding to assess the fidelity. The theory assumes that the person hearing the story judges it for fact, relevance, consequence, consistency, and transcendent issues. A marriage exists between the majority of factual aspects of Ellis Island and the immigrant experience as offered by researchers, first person accounts of individuals arriving from different countries, and reporters who covered the immigrant experience. The factual and reported aspects of the chaotic nature of the Registry Hall, the eye exam, and the fact that fathers typically came to America in search of employment before sending for their families were authenticated by the first person accounts.

While this analysis of immigrant recollections provides rich insight into the immigrant experience, it likewise offers validity for Fisher’s narrative theory. Fisher’s tests of probability and fidelity not only allowed me to understand stories, but an analysis of the stories has allowed me to more fully understand Fisher’s theory. The theory was validated for me as I found connections between what scholars have said, what journalists reported, and what individuals have offered about the immigrant experience. Although the personal stories provide much richer insight into the details of the experience, the marriage of themes between the public and personal story of the immigrant experience were corroborated by factual information. Fisher’s narrative theory was continually validated as I read from personal and public accounts what scholars have said is true.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

At the height of U.S. immigration in 1907, more than 5,000 immigrants passed through the immigration station at Ellis Island each day. This study examined and compared the personal and public representations of the U.S. immigrant experience. A qualitative narrative analysis of immigrants’ personal accounts as told through autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories was compared to coverage of Ellis Island as reported in 1907 editions of the New York Times. Personal accounts of the immigrant experience were collected from the archives at The Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Peter Morton Coan’s book Ellis Island Stories provided the balance of immigrant accounts. The Proquest Historical Newspapers New York Times database was queried for the words “Ellis Island” and provided a rich sampling of journalistic representations of the immigrant experience. Following data collection, the personal and public samples were analyzed for topical categories and catalogued in two matrices.

Six prominent themes surfaced from each sample of accounts. The six themes that emerged from my analysis of the immigrant representations included separation, continuity, lure of riches, chaos, “fit for America?,” and culture shock. The emotion of fear was woven throughout these themes. The six prominent themes of the public, or
journalistic perspective, follows: passage issues, straining the system, religious sensitivity, reunions, determination, and scandal and misfortune. The overarching emotion of curiosity on the part of journalists was prevalent in these accounts. All of the themes pointed to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the immigrant experience.

The themes of the personal and public representations of the immigrant experience connect on many levels, which I had not originally anticipated. The separation theme from the personal stories connects with the theme of reunions from the public account of the immigration experience. There is also a link between the lure of riches theme from the personal stories and the determination theme of the public articles. The chaos theme of the personal stories strongly reflects the straining the system theme of the journalistic perspective. The “fit for America?” theme of personal stories shares similarities with the scandal and misfortune theme of the public reports. The data suggest that overall, the public and personal representations of the immigrant experience in 1907 were more alike than they were different. While many of the themes from each sample are strongly linked, it is notable that the public representation of the immigrant experience started where the personal representation of the immigrant experience left off. Though different motivators drove the representations of the immigrant experience—fear for the immigrants, curiosity for the journalists—the unpredictability and chaotic nature of the experience is clearly evident in both representations. Taken together, the representations help paint a broad picture of what life was like for immigrants in 1907. While the personal and public representations of the immigrants experience are valuable each in their own right, the fusing of representations gives communication scholars the opportunity to understand the many dimensions of the immigrant experience.
Meaning for the Communication Discipline

These findings are critical for the communication discipline given Walter Fisher’s notion that as human beings, we construct our realities through stories that have shared meaning. Communication can be defined as a shared reality, complicated by culture. This study epitomizes the powerful concept of shared reality. The immigrants whose stories and accounts were reviewed for this study arrived from 20 different countries over a span of 25 years. No data suggest that any of the immigrants in the sample knew one another, yet their representations of the immigrant experience corroborated on multiple levels. In many instances—saying goodbye to their fathers years in advance of their own departures, eating bananas for the first time, or having the perception that America was synonymous with riches—the immigrant accounts had eerie similarities. Though oceans, years, and cultural differences more vast than oceans separated the immigrants from each other, their realities were manifested in similar stories set apart only by the details of their ancestry. These findings offer credence for Walter Fisher’s notion that humans are storytellers by nature and make sense of the world through storytelling. The story of immigration serves as a pillar for Fisher’s theory and provides communication scholars the opportunity to see that human communication is storytelling, which helps to shape our concept of the world. From a cultural communication perspective, the findings suggest that in the case of immigrants, their individual cultures were secondary to the human culture that they relied upon to construct their stories.

The similar themes that emerged from the personal and public representations of the immigrant experience are also noteworthy for the communication discipline with regard to the media’s role of storytelling. These findings suggest that while immigrants created a
shared reality through their storytelling process, the print media likewise constructed a reality of the immigrant experience through its representation of the immigrant experience. Because the public representation of the immigrant experience aligned with the personal representation on so many levels, it becomes critical for communication scholars to realize media's role in storytelling and in constructing our realities. It is also critical for communication scholars in pursuit of media studies to realize that while media help shape our reality through stories, the full reality of situations cannot be adequately assessed without considering the reality constructed by the individuals whose lives are the subject of coverage. Though the public and personal representations may share themes, the intricacies of the topics cannot be fully understood until the shared realities—as communicated through stories—are considered.

Lastly, this study is significant because scholarship focused on Ellis Island and the immigrant experience is nonexistent in the communication literature. This study shows the usefulness of borrowing a topic, like immigration, from the sister disciplines of sociology and history to demonstrate the communication phenomena of storytelling.

Limitations

While this study compared the personal and public story of immigration, it was limited by the availability of first person immigrant accounts for the year under review, 1907. Because few accounts surfaced from immigrants who arrived in 1907, the scope had to be expanded to include accounts from immigrants who arrived between 1902 and 1927 in an effort to capture a rich sampling of stories; however, the scope of the public representation of immigration was not expanded. The newspaper accounts collected from
1907 were compared to the personal accounts collected from the range of years between
1902 and 1927. This comparison of accounts—one year to a range of years—is a
limitation of this study. While there is easier accessibility and a more organized system
for querying the public representation of immigration as told by newspaper reporters, it
was far more difficult to gain accessibility to the personal memoirs, oral histories, and
autobiographies of immigrants. A research trip to The Ellis Island Immigration Museum
afforded me an opportunity to collect data, however, the proximity of Las Vegas to New
York City prohibited investigation of immigrant accounts beyond the three-day research
trip. The study was further limited by the age of individuals whose oral histories were
included in the sample. Because elderly individuals with failing memories provided many
of the accounts, the personal recollections are from a childlike perspective, as the
interviewees were very young at the time of passage.

Future Research

This study provides a snapshot of the public and personal story of immigration during
the 1902 to 1927 era, however, more narrowly focused research might help
communication scholars further understand storytelling from a cultural communication
perspective. Because communication is a shared reality complicated by culture, the
shifting demographics in present-day America provide a rich fabric for future research.
While this study considered the stories of immigrants from 20 countries arriving over a
period of 26 years, future research might focus on the stories of immigrants arriving from
one country, during a narrow timeframe, in present day. Future researchers might
consider making a concerted effort to capture the immigration story from individuals grouped by age range, to get a wider perspective of the immigrant experience.

Additionally, future scholars might consider comparing the shared reality of immigrants with like ethnicities who have settled in different regions of the United States. A more defined approach might also be used to examine the public story of immigration as told by the print media, perhaps by considering just front-page stories or headlines related to the topic of immigration. This concept could likewise be expanded to include excerpts from online media, alternative media, or ethnic media.

The Value of Narrative Paradigm Theory

Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm and his notion that humans are storytellers proved both an appropriate and enlightening theoretical framework for this study. Narrative paradigm theory suggests that a researcher ask himself if the components of a story reflect what is already considered by social standards to be accurate. The researcher inserts himself into the equation by applying his own degree of understanding to analyze narratives for truth. While Fisher’s theory served as my tool for determining the probability and fidelity of immigrant stories, an examination of immigrant stories allowed me to see the value of Fisher’s theory. The theory was validated for me as I found repeated links between what scholars have said and what individuals and reporters told of the collective immigrant experiences. Further validation occurred as I found marriages between the themes of personal and public representations of immigration. My deep understanding and appreciation for Fisher’s theory is a byproduct of this study, as it was never my intention to attempt a validation of narrative paradigm theory.
APPENDIX

MATRIX OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIONS

Name: Adamic, Louis
Data source: 1932 Auto.
Arrived: 1913
Country: Slovenia
Motive for leaving: Witnessed killing of friend, imprisoned
Material things: $25 dollars sewed into jacket
On-Ship experience: Glanced at noisy, garlicky, steerage crowd
Language: Official spoke mix of Slavic
Treatment on boat: Scared might be sent back, paranoid of smallpox/measles
Experience at Ellis Island: Heard rumble of traffic, Brooklyn Bridge, Steel!, eternity
Other: Spent night at El, snores in a dozen languages, error on acceptance paper

Name: Aram, Kurt
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1910
Perceptions: When saw Statue of Liberty, Jew screamed, "America, I kiss your ground"

Name: Bass, Sydney
Data source: 1911 Hearing
Arrived: 1911
Country: England
Motive for leaving: College educated, came to be pastor
Material things: Had securities worth hundreds, $60 cash
Sickness: El, urinals better than room, breathed through floor
Language: Man in charge hit immigrants on head
Treatment on boat: Get up on stairs cattle, you'll have nice pen, black hole of Calcutta
Experience at Ellis Island: Magnificent building, herded w/ filthiest people, objected
Food: Disgusted by Italians eating garlic
Medical: Certificate showed infantile paralysis, begged, got hearing, detained
Other: Worst night of his life, heard screams from women, horrid

Name: Beame, Abraham
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1906
Age: <1
Country: England
Motive for leaving: Father went, under surveillance

Name: Belford, Estelle
Data source: Oral Interview 1991
Arrived: 1905
Age: 5
Country: Romania
Perceptions: Impressed at seeing boat for first time, at Statue of Liberty, hugging
On-Ship experience: Lots of cots, never saw boat, people gave candy
Sickness: Mother very sick, confined to bed, no eating
Treatment on boat: When Jewish ladies lit candles on Fri. nights, crew yelled
Experience at Ellis Island: Very big room, a lot of people, pushing, shoving
Food: Never saw banana or orange
Medical: Examined mostly your hair, your head, your eyes

Name: Bergman, Signe
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1916
Country: Sweden
Food: Coffee/donuts at El, though great, 1st time

Name: Birnbaum, Samuel
Data source: Oral Interview
Arrived: 1907
Age: 17
Country: Poland
Perceptions: Knew he'd made it knitting gloves/stockings, Saw Statue of Liberty on 5/7
Material things: Very little clothes
On-Ship experience: Food pretty good, nothing special, herring
Sickness: Uncle was sick as dog, husky guy
Language: Wasn't worried, knew he'd learn
Treatment on boat: Danced, sang, wrestled with friends on boat
Experience at Ellis Island: Crowded, very crowded, asked him how he'd make living
Food: Ate tomato for first time, yuck
Medical: Examined at place of embarkation and El, number pinned
Other: Saw black people for 1st time, knew he'd be okay b/c it was America

Name: Conrick, Clare
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1902
Age: 6
Country: Scotland
Motive for leaving: Whole family went together
Perceptions: Never saw tall buildings, took pictures, dreamed of it
Material things: wore long stockings knit by hand
On-Ship experience: Had good passage, 4 to cabin, good place
Treatment on boat: It was so much fun on the boat
Experience at Ellis Island: Reporters took photos of Scottish/kilts, laughed
Food: Plum pudding on ship, veggies, chicken
Medical: Fingerprinted and blood tests before admitted
Other: Thought funny that people at corn on the cob in street - strange land

Name: Cooper Klemens, Gertrude
Data source: Oral Interview, 1992
Arrived: 1906
Age: 5
Country: Poland
Sickness: Must have been sick, everyone puking
Language: Scared, crying, in room alone, didn't speak language
Treatment on boat: Mother couldn't see her while in hospital at EI
Experience at Ellis Island: Separated, measles, hospital, scared, no mother there
Other: Confused, didn't recall much in interview

Name: Deychok, Katherine
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1910
Country: Russia
Perceptions: Fearful/joyful b/c going to wonderful land
On-Ship experience: During storm, prayer shawls, crying/praying
Sickness: Sick 18 days

Name: di Grazia, Albertina
Data source: Autobiography
Arrived: 1913
Age: 5
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Father went, on borrowed money
Perceptions: Hugging grandpa, didn't want to go
On-Ship experience: The boat trip was an ordeal
Experience at Ellis Island: Had to stay on boat in NY b/c of complication
Food: Father threw oranges to her, new

Name: Garongess, Barbara
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1921
Country: Russia
Treatment on boat: No communication w/ crew, full of fright
Experience at Ellis Island: Longest time b/c of regimen, nightmare
Name: Gats, Dora
Data source: Oral Interview, 1994
Arrived: 1906
Age: 9
Country: England
Motive for leaving: Came with aunt and uncle
Perceptions: Saw Statue of Liberty from boat
Material things: Had money
On-Ship experience: Had a good time with aunt, bunks
Sickness: Uncle was sick the whole way
Language: Could speak English, not like foreigners
Treatment on boat: Good, had dancing, singing, entertainment
Experience at Ellis Island: Went through gate to exam room then to Battery Park
Medical: Everything was the eyes, we passed
Other: Saw clothes hanging on lines for first time

Name: Geglia, Orenge
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1916
Country: Italy
On-Ship experience: Lot of people sleeping in one room
Sickness: My mother was very sick
Experience at Ellis Island: Gave oatmeal/brown sugar to birds on windowsill
Food: Had never seen orange or banana

Name: Gelzin, Erse
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1923
Country: Ireland
On-Ship experience: Prayed they'd go down
Sickness: Oh God, I was sick, everybody was sick

Name: Giacomo, Amelia
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1916
Age: 5
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Dad tired of poverty, moved family
Perceptions: Disappointed, trip postponed, military waiver
On-Ship experience: The voyage was a harrowing experience
Treatment on boat: Let family do galley duty for 1st class food
Medical: Officer - examine eyes with hook, one fell out in pocket

Name: Gidiwicz, Esther
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1905
Age: 5
Country: Romania
Motive for leaving: Father/uncle went, family later
Perceptions: Impressed at boat for first time, hugging, crying, at Statue of Liberty
Material things: Candlesticks, samovar, clothes, bedding
On-Ship experience: Odor awful, people miserable, huddled, bad
Sickness: Mother sick, wouldn't let them eat food
Treatment on boat: 1st class threw food, never saw oranges/bananas
Experience at Ellis Island: Very big room, a lot of people, pushing, shoving
Food: At non-Kosher meat b/c so hungry
Medical: Examined mostly your hair, your head, your eyes
Other: She has never seen a mirror or clothes hanging on a line to dry

Name: Graham, Stephen
Data source: 1914 Autobiography
Arrived: 1913
Country: England
Perceptions: Arriving like final Judgment Day, thought Statue of Liberty Columbus' tomb
On-Ship experience: At end, people packed, washed bodies in sinks
Treatment on boat: After accepted, immigrants ready to help each other
Experience at Ellis Island: Ferry to ferry, waiting, HURRY!, trunks chalk-marked, hall of judgment, American flags
Medical: Turned eyelids inside out w/ metal instrument
Other: Gallery above hall where media gathered to talk of "melting pot"

Name: Gregot, F.G.
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1914
Country: Lithuania
On-Ship experience: Ate food out of buckets at bed

Name: Halpin, Irving
Data source: Oral Interview, 1989
Arrived: 1909
Age: 5
Country: Russia
On-Ship experience: As a kid, we'd run around no matter how bad
Experience at Ellis Island: Wire fenced off sections, remember going through
Food: Terrible food. On boat smelled herring/salami

Name: Heller Rich, Dora
Data source: Oral Interview, 1991
Arrived: 1909
Age: 13
Country: Austria
Perceptions: They missed the cows, though Statue of Liberty was Columbus
Material things: Mother had $40
On-Ship experience: Very bare, ate cake and cookies b/c meat not Kosher
Sickness: She and brothers were sick, mother wasn't
Treatment on boat: Upper classes threw food down, they had activities
Experience at Ellis Island: Spent first night at HIAF, mother was miserable
Medical: Doctor ripped up both eyes with instrument, it hurt
Other: Said they made in six days, first ship to do that

Name: Hope, Bob (Leslie Townes)
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1908
Age: 5
Country: England
Motive for leaving: Father went, mason, Cleveland
Perceptions: Scared, ran away from doc. at vaccination, At Statue of Liberty, knickers
Experience at Ellis Island: At EI few hours, smiled/kissed when admitted

Name: Kaplan, Sadie
Data source: Oral Interview, 1992
Arrived: 1905
Age: 12
Country: Russia
Perceptions: So crowded, but big deal, just statue
Material things: Dressed in a little dress, like in Europe
On-Ship experience: Took 4 weeks, awful, bunks terrible
Sickness: Mother/father sick. Boys/her made best
Language: Scared, crying, in room alone, didn't speak language
Other: Stayed w/ cousin and wife for a month

Name: Kevar, Sonya
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1991
Age: 13
Country: Russia
Motive for leaving: Father went, rest 5 years later
Perceptions: Though it would be wonderful, hated U.S.
Material things: Russian books, towels, sheets, tablecloths
On-Ship experience: I didn't like it because we got seasick
Sickness: Vomiting, no medicine/eggs, just meat/soup
Treatment on boat: Sailor stuffed sheet in leak, went on 5 days
Experience at Ellis Island: At EI 3 days before father came, double-checked him
Other: Air was different here - coal smoke, yuck. Russia better.

Name: Knaplund, Paul
Data source: Memoir 1963
Arrived: 1906
Age: 21
Country: Norway
Perceptions: Saw on May 16, hope, some silent, not as impressive as Alps
Treatment on boat: Saw mother w/ crippled kid, newcomers pushed, commodity
Experience at Ellis Island: So busy had to wait on boat 2 days to unload, removed shoes
Food: Tricked into buying package of food
Medical: Though most immigrants looked healthy, eyelids flicked
Other: Impressions so numerous cancelled each other out

Name: Knau Korshosur, Martha
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1927
Country: German
Motive for leaving: Papa notified to go NY
Experience at Ellis Island: Held Dad hand through fence, not permitted in room, told her
to take care of the children as best she could

Name: Kramer, George
Data source: 1983 Biography
Arrived: 1913
Age: 5
Country: Holland
Motive for leaving: Parents got letters encouraging them
Perceptions: Went b/c housetops gold, couldn’t read words on Statue of Liberty base
Sickness: Mother/kids sick, Mother couldn't nurse
Treatment on boat: Pa said "like a madhouse," open bags, sacks, benches
Experience at Ellis Island: Kids crying, gabbing of many language, madness, tags pinned
on coats
Medical: Checked face, neck, hands, hair, lungs,

Name: Kreider, Jake
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1911
Age: 11
Country: Austria
Motive for leaving: Warrant went out, wanted for arrest
Material things: Wore suit mom made, trunk/father's boots
On-Ship experience: Ship ride to America was miserable
Language: German crew didn't like Russian
Treatment on boat: Passengers gave him tips to shop at canteen
Experience at Ellis Island: People on benches scratching lice, like cattle in barn
Medical: We were examined by the eye doc, medical doc, passed
Other: Father late, could go b/c much S. Black people surprised him, Gypsies

Name: Kreitzberg, Sophia
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1908
Country: Russia
Perceptions:
On-Ship experience: Bunks smelly food, body odor, lice in hands
Sickness: 6 weeks of being sick from smell

Name: Kritzenberg, Sophia
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1908
Country: Russia
On-Ship experience: Bunks smelly food, body odor, lice in hands
Sickness: 6 weeks of being sick from smell

Name: Kritzenberg, Sophia
Data source: Oral Interview, 1985
Arrived: 1904
Age: 5
Country: Russia
Perceptions: She liked her stepsiblings and America
Language: When arrived, knew no English at all
Experience at Ellis Island: rich don't have to worry, poor have to prove alive
Medical: Inspected on board b/c not in steerage
Other: She came through twice somehow

Name: Martinelli, Carla
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1913
Age: 16
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Came when didn't marry Italian man
Perceptions: Excited b/c "America is rich"
Material things: Brought an old dress, this and that
On-Ship experience: Remembers water and waves
Medical: Passed exams, everything all right

Name: Metash, Carl
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1924
Country: Germany
Other: Salvation Army had X-Mas party, gave mother frosted beads

Name: Miller, Estelle
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1909
Age: 13
Country: Austria
Motive for leaving: Father/sister went, came w/ mother later
Perceptions: For years I thought Chris. Columbus
Material things: Carried mother's china bowl from Austria
Sickness: Seasick, first class tossed food down
Experience at Ellis Island: There was a lot of noise, and screaming and crying
Food: Didn't eat meat, not Kosher
Medical: Doctor rough when examined eyes
Other: When she saw a black man she got so scared she dropped it

Name: Morelli, Rocco
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1907
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Went to get out of poverty
Perceptions: At least they'll eat if they go to America

Name: Nagy, Louise
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1913
Country: Poland
Perceptions: Thought streets gold, could make $1/day
Experience at Ellis Island: Special boat that brought us from El to Battery Park
Other: Train up high very unusual

Name: Not Available
Data source: Memoir 1985
Arrived: 1921
Country: Bulgaria
Perceptions: No breakfast, Statue nourishing/fulfilling, rented binocs
On-Ship experience: On knees, praying, agonizing when left
Experience at Ellis Island: Crowded, thousands, hours in line, long corridors, officials, smocks
Medical: 2nd floor had 50 inspectors, various languages
Other: Freedom was magic magnet drawing us to America.

Name: Pappahs, Harry
Data source: Oral Interview, 1973
Arrived: 1908
Age: 18
Country: Greece
Perceptions: Thought America was nice
Medical: Examined my eyes at El, okay, let me go with brother
Other: Streetcars were run by horse downtown and South Ferry

Name: Peat, Randall
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1914
Age: 19
Country: Wales
Motive for leaving: Saved money and went alone
Material things: small trunk with just my clothes
On-Ship experience: Paid an extra five pounds to go second class
Sickness: Seasick, better w/ whiskey, loaded
Treatment on boat: It was fine sharing cabin with Scotch and English
Experience at Ellis Island: Officials searched, examined, asked about $$

Name: Potofsky, Jacob
Data source: Oral Interview, 1974
Arrived: 1908
Country: Ukraine
Language: I knew how to say "give bread and change."
Experience at Ellis Island: Case processed well, had enough money to go to Hoboken
Food: Bananas/blueberry pie from HIAS, new
Other: I had seen Negroes for the first time on the train, probably porters

Name: Raczkowski, Adam
Data source: El Exhibit
Arrived: 1906
Country: Poland
Motive for leaving: Urged others to come, "live like a lord"
Perceptions: Misery and poverty at home, not here

Name: Reinhart, William
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1910
Age: 4
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Father went, engraver, sent money
On-Ship experience: 21 days, had bad weather crossing Big Pond
Sickness: Seasick from being cooped in steerage
Experience at Ellis Island: We docked, they told me we were at El
Medical: Health Department came aboard, vaccinated
Other: Elevated train, sailing through sky, cried till ground level, Brooklyn

Name: Riegelman, Jessie
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1905
Age: 12
Country: Russia
Motive for leaving: Whole family went together
Perceptions: Talked, didn't know, big deal - a statue
Sickness: Mother was sick
Experience at Ellis Island: They had no problem
Medical: Eyes especially, ask ? About disease, sickness

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Name: Robert, Donald
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1925
Country: Wales
Food: Warm milk for kids out of "Good Humor" cart

Name: Rogen, Thomas
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1909
Age: 7
Country: Poland
Motive for leaving: Father went, cigar factory, NY
Perceptions: America was just a name, knew nothing
Material things: frayed, rolled quilt, bundles/boxes
Sickness: Seasick every day, throwing up in jar
Experience at Ellis Island: Confusion, people running, babushkas, bundles, officials
Medical: Processed at EI in one day, no overnight

Name: Salvia, Ana
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1923
Country: Ukraine
Medical: Exam so thorough, thought all Americans very healthy

Name: Spako, Theodore
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1911
Age: 16
Country: Greece
Motive for leaving: Went alone, first in family
Perceptions: Gus told him Chris. Columbus, no, lady!
On-Ship experience: Floor would be wet when they served soup
Sickness: At sea for 22 days
Medical: Gus got chalk mark, went back to Greece
Other: Paid $75 for ticket

Name: Tartarini, Victor
Data source: EI Exhibit
Arrived: 1921
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Came b/c thought he'd be rich
Perceptions: America will be gold
Other:

Name: Thome, Mary
Data source: Oral Interview, 1989
Arrived: 1909
Age: 7
Country: Czechoslovakia
Material things: Wicker trunk, blanket with worldly goods
Food: Got crackers/bananas, both new
Medical: Tried to get son to stand up straight, boil on neck, separated
Other: Went to work as a maid

Name: Vina, Mario
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1909
Age: 11
Country: Italy
Motive for leaving: Father sent cash to mother
Perceptions: Glad to go, sorry to leave friends, Statue of Liberty most beautiful thing
Material things: Mother had big box, trunk, packed stuff
On-Ship experience: Separated from mother, put w/ men
Sickness: Mother sick whole time from Gibraltar
Language: No crew spoke Italian, all passengers Italian
Treatment on boat: Helped crew wash pans for food
Experience at Ellis Island: Ferried to El, got trunk, name tagged
Food: Ate sandwiches, new
Medical: Eyesight, eyes, with stethoscope

Name: Weichel, Carla
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1905
Age: 5
Country: Austria
Motive for leaving: Father went, sent tickets
Perceptions: Left behind, eczema forehead, went later, Didn’t know Statue of Liberty
Material things: Little bag with papers around neck, a doll
On-Ship experience: Scared to go to the toilet b/c fish would bite her bottom
Food: Oatmeal/prunes, picnic tables, father bought bananas, yuck
Other: She thought they’d steal her shoes so she slept in them

Name: Wertle, Margaret
Data source: Coan
Arrived: 1910
Age: 7
Country: Hungary
Motive for leaving: Mother went and came for her
Perceptions: When saw Statue of Liberty, Mother told her in German, "we are free"
Material things: skirt, midi-blouse, white/stripes/stars
Sickness: Mother was too sick to walk
Experience at Ellis Island: Put in fenced cage, recall looking out at people
MATRIX OF PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

Category: Boat Reports (6 total)

Jan. 14, 1907
“Ship Met a Series of Gales” Rough weather experienced by French liner La Savoie...a section of railing of the promenade deck was carried away, planks torn up, four died aboard. (Theme=Passage Issues)

June 3, 1907
“Liner Oceanic Afire At Her Pier” Fire discovered in steerage by crew, loss about $10,000, no passengers on board at time of fire, cause unknown (Theme=Passage Issues)

June 10, 1907
“Ellis Island Boat Disabled” Something malfunctioned on Ellis Island ferryboat on noon trip to Battery, when it resumed there was a rush of passengers, policemen had to hold back passengers (Theme=Passage Issues)

June 24, 1907
“Last Trip Under Blue Cross” Russian steamer Livonia is making last trip to this port under Russian flag, on return to Russia she’ll sail under Danish flag (Theme=Passage Issues)

September 23, 1907
“Adelaide’s Captain Warned: Ellis Island Immigrant Boat Overcrowded and Inspectors Act” steamship operating as ferryboat gets warned of breaking the law, it was running as substitute because El ferry laid off, warning given on trip with 1,000 passengers, only licensed to carry 600 (Theme=Passage Issues)

October 1, 1907
“Steamboat in Hard Luck” Fire drill and malfunctioning nozzles drench men, pipe bursts, onlookers laugh (Theme=Passage Issues)

Category: Ellis Island Inspections (5 total)

February 22, 1907
“Secretary Straus to See Ellis Island” Strass of Dept. of Commerce and Labor and Assistant Murray to make an inspection of methods (Theme=Straining the System)

February 24, 1907
“Straus at Ellis Island: Secretary Makes His First Inspection of Immigration Methods” They visited rooms of Boards of Special Inquiry, watched passing immigrants, inspected commissary, today he will inspect hospital because $500,000 contagious disease unit planned (Theme=Straining the System)
June 18, 1907
“Ellis Island’s Needs: Senator Lodge Says More Doctors Are Wanted to Examine Immigrants” He finds conditions generally acceptable but suggests more doctors because one doctor has to examine 1,000 immigrants a day (Straining the System)

August 30, 1907
“To Save Girl Immigrants: Miss Bullis Appointed an Inspector to Study the Situation” Inspection ordered to halt white slave traffic, Bullis appointed to develop information regarding traffic, many non-English speaking women being imported for immoral purpose (Theme=Scandal and Misfortune)

October 17, 1907
“Straus Coming to Study Immigrants” Straus informs United Hebrew Charities at EI that he will inspect conditions of Hebrew immigrants because he’s interested to learn more about Hebrew immigration to this country (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

Category: Massive Number of Immigrants Arrive (10 total)

March 19, 1907
“Increase of Immigration: 11,200 Europeans Arrive in the Steerage Over Sunday” Spring tide brings record numbers, 5,000 immigrants can be handled a day at Ellis Island, island almost overwhelmed with newcomers, Commissioner Watchhorn predicts greater volume than ever before (Theme=Straining the System)

April 19, 1907
“Ellis Island Congested: New Record Established for Immigration to This Port” Yesterday morning 9,874 immigrants were waiting at the Ellis Island station to be inspected (Theme=Straining the System)

April 26, 1907
“100,000 Immigrants This Month” Majority of those who arrived in steerage yesterday will not land at Ellis Island until Saturday, 10,496 steerage are waiting in the harbor (Theme=Straining the System)

May 2, 1907
“15,397 Immigrants Arrive: Record Made for One Day’s Unloading at This Port” It was all inspectors could do to handle the wave of newcomers, island taxed to capacity (Theme=Straining the System)

May 3, 1907
“25,000 Immigrants Arrive: Baltic Brings 723 Irish, Who Will Try Their Luck in America” In last 48 hours, 25,000 steerage passengers have arrived, many waiting their turn in harbor, will take days to examine army of arrivals (Theme=Straining the System)
May 4, 1907
"Unending Stream of Aliens Comes: Some 5,300 Passed in Yesterday and Thousands More Wait Their Turn" separating the chaff from the wheat takes time, those who remain on ship are cared for by steamship companies, peasants form a pleasant picture while babel of strange tongues and the shouts of inspectors forming them into groups on the main floor leads to interest of the scene (Theme=Straining the System)

May 5, 1907
"Alien Flood Keep Up: 5,000 Landed Yesterday—More Waiting Hard-Pushed Inspectors" no let up, serious congestion in the harbor is a threat, machinery at Ellis Island working to its utmost capacity (Theme=Straining the System)

August 4, 1907
"Ocean Travel Above Previous Records: 7,799 Passengers of All Classes Landed Yesterday, the Greatest in the Port’s History” inspectors say never before have so many landed in one day (Theme=Straining the System)

October 17, 1907
"Liners Race For Piers: The Caronia Beats the Oceanic and Barbarossa by a Few Minutes” three boats arrived at piers within minutes of each other, skippers race in competition to get their steerage off first, the one with gangway down first gets to unload (Theme=Straining the System)

October 19, 1907
"Fight in Rush Ashore: Dr. Kennard, Accused of Striking a Woman, Denies It" ship in harbor had incident on board. Dr. said to have struck woman when preparing to disembark because of the rush (Theme=Straining the System)

Category: Religious Accommodations (5 total)

February 24, 1907
"The Gospel in 30 Tongues: American Tract Society Disseminated Much New Literature Last Year" Society did good work in issuing Bohemian and Christian literature in 30 languages at Ellis Island and in large cities, spent $763,713 in creating and distributing publications (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

May 9, 1907
"Tracts For Jews No Help—Watchhorn: He Tells Tract Society Christian Arguments Make Immigrants Wonder” Commissioner Watchhorn criticizes work of missionaries at Ellis Island where they distributed materials to Jews, Christians and heathens immediately upon landing, immigrants think the materials are for the government and wonder what will happen to them in U.S. (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

July 1, 1907
"More To Get Free Bibles: New York Society Adopts a Plan for Wider Distribution” Society makes plans to develop even more Bibles at Ellis Island, two agents on Ellis
Island giving Bibles, last year 45,000 Bibles in 34 languages were distributed to immigrants (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

September 9, 1907
“Thousands Throng the Synagogues: Immigrants Detained at Ellis Island Have Services and a Special Dinner” orders instated that no Jewish immigrants could be deported on the holidays, none is forced to proceed to destination if unwilling to travel, special room arranged for hours of prayer (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

September 17, 1907
“Fast Halts Immigration: Devout Jews Stay in Their Native Countries to Celebrate” Hebrew Aid Society reports slow time for Jewish immigrants because of Rosh Ah Shanah and Yom Kippur, they’re staying in Russia in spite of prosecution, they risk lives to stay home for religion (Theme=Religious Sensitivity)

Category: Detained Immigrants (4 total)

March 4, 1907
“They Let Him In: Test of Pat’s Reading Ability That Satisfied Ellis Island” Irishman brought before Board of Inquiry to determine if he could make it, couldn’t read book, even after turning it upside down but told inspectors that if he had flute he’d play it for them, he was admitted (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

April 9, 1907
“Military Attaché Robbed: A Haitian Detained, Charged with Taking U.S. Government Papers” Charles Stephens, a Haitian, is being held, charged he robbed documents with government secrets, steward tipped off when Stephens told him to keep quiet about bundle of papers (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

August 30, 1907
“Held Up At Ellis Island: Zasadny Must Explain About a Charge of Embezzlement” Zasadny charged with stealing $2,000 of post office funds, authorities got about $5,00 from him on board, unable to make arrest because man protected by German flag, being held as undesirable (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

September 8, 1907
“Fears He May Be Deported: Portrait Painter, Who Lived Here 20 Years Ago, Held at Ellis Island” Johann Menzel is a Brooklyn portrait painter, lived here 20 years ago, but detained because he never took out papers, went to Europe to regain health after consumption scare and came back via Ellis Island (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

Category: Marriages (4 total)

February 25, 1907
“Married on the Etruria: English Girl Becomes a Bride as Soon as Vessel Gets to Her Pier” wedding in ship’s saloon, young man waiting long before ship arrived at pier, he
was one of first to go on board, she is a former schoolmate and arrived to fulfill promise of love, ship officers and inspectors present (Theme=Reunions)

June 1, 1907
“Cupid on the Pretoria: Three Weddings Follow the German Liner’s Arrival in Port” two weddings soon as vessel berthed, another on Ellis Island, two engagements will soon be announced as a result of voyage, men came first in these cases, women met up with them months/years later (Theme=Reunions)

July 28, 1907
“Ellis Island Bride Won By His Song: Romance Begun Five Years Ago in Hanover Ends Happily Here” Herr Harms was a performed in Hanover, he sang to 10 year old girl in audience five years prior, she came to America at 15 and married him, she was a dressmaker and they wanted to be where there was much to offer in America (Theme=Reunions)

September 22, 1907
“One Service Weds Three: John, James, and Oliver Johnson Married in Union Halls” Three brothers married three other fellow’s sisters, English sweethearts, fiancés were friends and vowed to wait for brothers, had been decided long ago that ceremony would be a triple one (Theme=Reunions)

Category: Deportation (4 total)

May 19, 1907
“Prison For Allegra: Plotted to Save Fellow-Countryman from Being Deported” In detention pen, Giovali Allegra received a visitor that swapped clothes with him, his visitor Tullo wanted to go home, they swapped clothes and Allegra left, Tullo & Allegra deported (Theme=Determination)

September 21, 1907
“Banished With ‘Affinity’: Italian Who Fled with Girl After Deserting Family Sent Back to Italy” Angelo Girelli and Eletra Berti sat tearfully under guard because man left behind wife and child for the maiden (Eletra), man asked to be allowed to port outside of Italy, request denied, both under suicide watch (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

October 3, 1907
“Sane Now; To Be Deported: Woman Barred by the Law That Let Maxim Gorky In” Elizabeth Weissenbach was rejected and became temporarily insane, she’s in sanitarium, son died of measles, she came here to join father of her children, scheduled to be deported because she was not legally married to “husband” (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)
October 22, 1907
"Varicose Vein Bars Him Out: Resident Here for 24 Years Ordered Deported for Slight Ailment" Thomas Neary lived 24 years in U.S., varicose vein discovered in his right leg, from Ireland and never did papers (Theme=Scandal & Misfortune)

Reunions (6 total)

January 18, 1907
"Arrives To Find Child Dead: Mother from Ireland Came to Visit Daughter—Will Attend Funeral" Mary Carrol from Ireland came to visit daughter, when landed on Ellis Island she learned Margaret had died three days ago of pneumonia, girl was here first, saved money to send for mother, after funeral mother to return to Ireland (Theme=Reunions)

March 6, 1907
"A Day of Tragedy at Ellis Island: Woman Goes Insane on Hearing Father of Her Children Had a Wife Living" Anna Weissenbach arrived with three small children, learned husband had new wife, he had come first, living in Buffalo and admitted to Board that he had been married and not been divorced before taking new wife, she became insane, now at Ward’s island, children in stranger’s care (Theme=Reunions)

April 22, 1907
"Helps Father Bring Baby Hilda Home: Jan Carsen’s Little Girl Cares for Her Sister on Long Ocean Trip" Nine-week old Hilda Carsen arrived in steerage in basket from Sweden, father Jan Carsen came nine years prior to make it in Northwest lumber industry, wife died in Sweden, sister Hilda packed up baby in basket to meet father (Theme=Reunions)

May 19, 1907
"Grieving Mother Commits Suicide: Throws Herself Into the Bay After Her Baby’s Death on Ellis Island" Officials saw most pitiful human tragedy on island yet, German man Joseph Gorda arrived here first, left his home in Chicago yesterday to claim bodies of wife and daughter Anna, who died in Ellis Island hospital, mother cast herself into bay over grief (Theme=Reunions)

July 31, 1907
"Whole Town Aids A Crippled Alien: Mrs. Wheeler Finally Allowed to Land and Start West with Her Children" Jane Wheeler, crippled and ”undesired” with two children weeps in detention room, found out she’ll be released on $1,000 bond to eldest son in Colorado, Thomas Leek, community came to love Leek and petitioned that his mother would never become a public charge (Theme=Reunions)

October 19, 1907
"Leaves Ellis Island After Nine Months" Maria d’Amore is 10 years old, held for case of trachoma, father was American citizen so she could not be deported, he paid 75 cents a
day for her care and she went home to father yesterday after learning how to speak
English (Theme=Reunions)

Category: Smuggling (3 total)

July 17, 1907
“Girl Stowaway Found: Came From Russia Dressed in Man’s Clothing” she arrived
dressed as a man and was preparing to make escape when found, she answered to Alix,
said no one helped her onto vessel, inspectors doubt story (Theme=Determination)

September 14, 1907
“Little Stowaway Fled From Russia: 12-Year-Old Son of Cruel Father Escaped Across
Frontier and Hid on Barbarosa” Chain Shlome Kleinman is 12 years old, he escaped
mean father in Poland, crawled out of bedroom window and set out for America,
determined to find his mother, he hid in steerage after convincing inspectors his father
was on board, says he will die if he has to go home, seeks relatives
(Theme=Determination)

November 2, 1907
“Stowaway Buried in Coal Avalanche: Rachaul Fought for Eighteen Hours to Save His
Life in the Umvoti’s Bunkers” grime of many days on his face, hands ripped, fingernails
missing, crossed North Atlantic as stowaway after almost being buried alive in a coal
bunker, where he stowed away (Theme=Determination)

Category: Other (3 total)

April 29, 1907
“Immigrants Shed Knives: All Kinds Surrendered Following Ellis Island Inspector’s
Warning” Hundreds arriving from Italy, Inspector made speech about dangers of carrying
knives and guns, this was without effect, then Inspector told them this government said
that no good citizen would carry a knife or gun and that they had better give them up, he
result was a perfect rain of knives, some threw knives openly, some dropped them at their
side, such a weaponless crowd of Italians has not entered in days (Theme=Determination)

August 23, 1907
“Play to Prove They’re Musicians” Inspector ordered band of 42 Italians to play because
he wasn’t satisfied with the line to be drawn between artists and laborers, discharged after
they gave Inspector a concert (Theme=Determination)

October 20, 1907
“Arabic and Lorraine In” Nine-year-old Thomas Osborne, traveling alone from Liverpool
to uncle in Chicago (his parents died) arrived with uncle’s address pinned to his blouse,
he was quickly admitted and headed west, declaring he was going to be a lawyer, and that
he knew he’d make a good one in America (Theme=Determination)
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