EAST AND WEST COAST PORTS OF ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES
DURING THE NEW IMMIGRATION ERA – 1900 – 1925:
A SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

by

Gwen L. Neu

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ABSTRACT

EAST AND WEST COAST PORTS OF ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES DURING THE NEW IMMIGRATION ERA – 1900 – 1925: A SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

GWEN L. NEU

Due to curricular limitations, students typically learn about immigration from one limited source, the standardized text book. The curriculum in this project blends the traditional lecture model of instruction with a new history lab model, which includes extensive primary source analysis and thesis development. Because many students have little experience with analyzing and evaluating historical documents, this curriculum is teacher-directed to provide the modeling and practice students need to develop a working thesis and the skills needed to support that thesis through document analysis.

As students develop their analysis skills, they learn about immigration law in the United States at the turn of the 20th century and how it was implemented at two ports of entry – Ellis Island in New York City, New York and Angel Island in San Francisco, California. They learn about the impact of these laws on a little-known group of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent as well as the impact this group of immigrants had on immigration and naturalization law in the United States.

Students also learn about three common immigration myths and use these myths as the basis for their thesis development. They analyze historical documents relating to the South Asian immigrant experience to determine what parts of the
myths held true for these people. The curriculum concludes with the students presenting a written and an oral presentation using primary source analysis to defend their thesis statements.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late grandfather, Lewis Heinzman. Thank you for paying it forward, Lew. You are always with me in my heart.

I also dedicate this project to the South Asian immigrants whose story I hope I honored.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... iii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. v  
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1  
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................... 7  
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .......................................................................................... 67  
CHAPTER 4: CONTENT ................................................................................................... 79  
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS ......................................................................................... 80  
REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 85
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Immigration to the United States in the early years of the 21st century is a highly emotional topic covered on the nightly news and on daily talk shows, in social media settings, and around the dinner table. In the classroom, students learn about immigration as one specific historical topic integrated into the larger story of the United States’ development. Due to curricular limitations, students typically learn about immigration from one limited source, the standardized text book with one instructional style – the traditional lecture.

One goal of history teachers should be to share their knowledge with a minimal amount of personal interpretation, particularly when a topic is as highly controversial as immigration (Smith, 2007). Another goal should be to help students develop the skills necessary to think analytically, so they can engage in rational debates about divisive subjects (Smith, 2007). Teachers should help students learn to question respectfully the stories passed down through the ages, whether those stories are told by their families’ elders or read in an authoritative text, and to investigate for themselves the truths contained within them. They should learn to apply past experiences to present circumstances. They need a new way of doing history.

In California, fifth grade students learn about the effects of European immigration between 1789 and 1850 on the physical, political, and economic
systems of American society (History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, 2000). As eighth graders, students identify new sources of immigration and the contributions those immigrants made to the expanding economy of the United States. They learn how those already settled in the United States encouraged the newcomers to assimilate into the dominant culture (History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, 2000). In the 11th grade students learn about the effects of the Americanization movement (History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools, 2000). Much of the discussion contained within the standardized text books centers on immigration from Europe with a few pages given to Chinese and Japanese immigration. Through the lessons in the text books, students learn very little about immigration law and policy and their effects on the very real lives of the immigrants or the effects immigrants had on immigration law and policy. Despite representing a small fraction of the total immigrant population, immigrants from South Asia between 1900 and 1925 had a dramatic impact on immigration and naturalization law, yet theirs is a little-known story. The curriculum contained within this master’s project serves to tell that story and provide an opportunity for students to analyze and evaluate it for themselves.

The story of South Asian immigration grew out of an attempt to compare federal immigration policy implementation at the ports of entry in New York and San Francisco. Very little in the academic literature does that, so the literature review that follows in Chapter Two provides an overview of immigration law as it evolved
and the ways in which immigration officials implemented those constantly changing laws at the two main ports of entry: Ellis Island and Angel Island. While I researched the history of Angel Island, the South Asian immigrant story emerged. In a table located in the appendix of one of the Angel Island books, I noticed an interesting statistic. During a 21 year period, a quarter of the South Asian immigrants attempting to enter the United States were turned away. This was more than twice the percentage of any other immigrant group. I was compelled to find out why. The final section of the literature review focuses on that story with an attempt to compare entry experiences for these immigrants at the two ports of entry. Many gaps in this story occur in the academic literature, but a study of the historical documents, particularly those found through the National Archives, helped fill in some of the missing pieces.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology by which I created the curriculum found in Chapter Four. The curriculum uses many primary documents to help students learn to pull the truth out of three basic immigration myths: immigrants sought and found religious and political freedom in the United States, the United States welcomed with open arms all of the world’s poor and downtrodden, and all immigrants happily assimilated into the dominant culture established by the northern and western Protestant Europeans who settled the United States before them. The students learn about these myths as they compare the East and West coast ports of entry from the perspective of the South Asian immigrants. They learn about
the influence this group of immigrants had on the creation of a geographic boundary that defined part of the 1917 Immigration Act and the Supreme Court’s 1923 definition of White for the purposes of naturalization.

Each lesson in the curriculum is designed to build students’ background knowledge on the topic and to provide them with the opportunity to analyze primary sources directly tied to the story, engage in open-ended discussions about the information provided in selected documents, and observe as the teacher models using primary sources to support the development of an historical story. The objective is for students to develop their own theories about the South Asian experience in the context of an immigration myth. They combine their analysis of primary sources with the knowledge acquired from secondary sources to write a brief essay that defends their theses and then share their discoveries with the whole class.

The concluding chapter contains an examination of the limitations of the curriculum and recommendations for future research.

Finally, the historical literature uses many outdated or confusing terms. Immigrants and immigration are the basic terms used in this study to note people who came to the United States for the purpose of finding a life better than the one they left behind. Migrants and migration are occasionally used when the discussion revolves around “circular, transnational migration across borders or within an empire” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. xxi). The term alien has taken on a negative connotation, but government records frequently refer to non-naturalized residents as
aliens. This term is used sparingly and always within an historical context. Race and ethnicity are two words that appear to be synonymous but are not. The historical literature, particularly regarding Angel Island’s story, uses the term race almost exclusively. This word has been used to create human divisions based on imprecise physical attributes that have been discredited by scientists and so is highly discouraged in current literature (Wilcoxen, 2005). Most of the immigration fights during the time frame covered by this thesis explicitly revolved around race. The primary source documents use the word as do the historians who analyzed those documents. The word ethnicity still divides humans into groups, but this word is more inclusive of characteristics such as culture, religion, and linguistics (Wilcoxen, 2005). This thesis uses these words in an attempt to retain the historical context while being inoffensive to modern readers.

During the peak immigration period, the U. S. government labeled all people from South Asia as “Indian,” “East Indian,” or with the exceptionally derogatory term, “Hindoo” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. xxiii). The term South Asia refers to countries within the Indian subcontinent (Lee & Yung, 2010). The majority of immigrants from this region who passed through Angel Island were from the Punjab region which was split in two in 1947, the eastern part now belonging to India and the western portion now belonging to Pakistan (Lee & Yung, 2010). The immigrant community in the U. S. urged federal officials to switch from using East Indian to the term Asian Indian for the 1980 census (Daniels, 1991/2002). For the purpose of this
study, the term South Asian is used unless a specific designation is needed or was used in a direct quote. The term Indian refers specifically to people involved in the nationalistic movement for India’s independence from the British Empire.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The focus of this research is a comparison of immigration law and policy implemented at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century and how such laws were variously applied on the east coast and west coast points of debarkation to the United States. Particular attention is paid to the effects of these laws and methods of implementation on a relatively unknown group of immigrants – the South Asians.

This review of relevant literature focuses on several topics: the evolution of U.S. immigration and naturalization laws, a definition of new immigration and its effects on U.S. society, the eastern and western ports of entry to the U.S. for immigrants during the wave of new immigration (people who arrived after 1890), and, finally, the South Asian immigrant experience.

Immigration to the United States

Most Americans believe three immigration myths to be true (Daniels, 1991/2002). Through the Plymouth Rock myth, Americans think that immigrants came to the United States for political and/or religious freedom (Daniels, 1991/2002). A second myth posits the idea that the Statue of Liberty symbolizes an America that welcomed the poorest of the world’s poor through its so-called open door (Daniels, 1991/2002). The third myth is of the Melting Pot, which puts forth the
idea that the various nationalities and ethnic groups assimilated into the dominant American culture and as a result became new people (Daniels, 1991/2002). Historically, “the myths do not square with the actual American experience” (Daniels, 1991/2002, p. 18). An examination of authentic immigration experiences in historical literature provides evidence for the reality that lies within the myths: Catholic immigrants became targets for restriction; Eastern European immigrants became targets for deportation on the basis of being communist sympathizers during the years surrounding World War I; inspection processes filtered out poor immigrants who were likely to become public charges; and many immigrant groups held tightly to the cultures and traditions they brought with them from their homelands.

For the majority of South Asian immigrants, a harsh reality met them on the shores of the United States instead of the “myth of Western abundance and opportunity” (Dinnerstein, Nichols & Reimers, 2003, p. 169). Their story shows that they did not find political freedom; instead, they unsuccessfully fought for their home country’s independence from a powerful empire with little protection from the U.S. government (Hess, 1976; Jensen, 1988). They did not lose themselves through the process of assimilation; instead, they participated actively in recreating their home customs and cultures in the U.S. despite the intense discrimination they faced (Hess, 1976; Jensen, 1988).
The first section that follows provides an analysis of U.S. immigration and naturalization law in order to place in context the misconceptions of these myths from the perspective of the broad immigrant community and the South Asian immigrants in particular.

_U.S. immigration and naturalization laws._

“Law is one of the most powerful mechanisms by which any society creates, defines, and regulates itself” (Haney Lopez, 1996, p. 9). U.S. immigration policy produced a “conflict between abstract law and the individual tragedies those laws sometimes created” (Cannato, 2009, p. 179). It involved a mix of factors that contributed to the encouragement and acceptance of migrants deemed valuable while working to keep out those considered undesirable, including the development of methods for sending those already admitted back from whence they came (Zolberg, 2006). This created a clash of ideals: the concept that a self-governing people should be able to decide who could enter versus the notion that the rights in the U.S. Constitution were universal, so all who wished to come should be welcome (Cannato, 2009).

This open door myth must be countered by the fact that long before the federal government took control of immigration regulation, individual states regulated it (Cannato, 2009). After declaring itself an independent country, the United States classified newcomers as desirable and undesirable in terms of naturalization (Zolberg, 2006). In 1790, Congress passed the first U.S. naturalization
law, which limited citizenship to free, white persons of a moral character – eliminating the voices of criminals, paupers, and non-Europeans (Zolberg, 2006).

Although a name for it had yet to be created, nativism first appeared during President Washington’s second term (Zolberg, 2006). In 1795, Washington publicly prayed for America to become a refuge for the world’s downtrodden and then signed a naturalization law that doubled the residency requirement previously set in 1790 (Zolberg, 2006). Subsequent supporters of strict immigrant laws often cited this precedent (Zolberg, 2006).

In 1819, the federal government implemented a law regulating immigration, the significance of which has been miscalculated (Zolberg, 2006). The Passenger Act of that year required that the captain of each ship transporting immigrants to the United States provide specific, detailed information about each passenger before leaving the port of embarkation (Zolberg, 2006). This “remote control” of immigrants was in effect during ocean passage only; it left immigration regulation to the states once the passengers landed (Zolberg, 2006, p. 99).

Between 1835 and 1860, pro-immigration Democrats controlled Congress for all but a few scattered years (Zolberg, 2006). Despite the growing nativist attitudes, this control of federal legislation prevented anti-immigration bills from becoming law (Zolberg, 2006). Along the West Coast, California created laws hostile to Chinese workers, such as an 1852 foreign miner’s tax and an 1862 monthly tax for all Chinese not involved in growing specific commodities (Elinson & Yogi, 2009).
The Supreme Court ruled that many of these laws violated foreign commerce regulation, a federal issue (Garis, 1927). This action on the part of the federal court system provoked an intense anti-Chinese fervor that expanded across the country resulting in a demand for federal control of immigration (Zolberg, 2006).

In 1868, America and China concluded The Burlingame Treaty, in which the two countries agreed that humans have an inalienable freedom to move from one country to another and an inalienable right to make allegiance to a new homeland (Garis, 1927). A mass migration from China to America began shortly after the signing of this treaty (Garis, 1927). The Burlingame Treaty produced a “contradiction between economic reality and racial exclusiveness” (Zolberg, 2006, p. 181). It created a distinct class of human beings – laborers – based on nationality and the policies established for their entry into the United States (Zolberg, 2006). With the mass arrival of Chinese laborers, hostility toward Chinese immigrants intensified, and the prejudice against these people grew into discrimination, which was then translated into law (Garis, 1927).

An immigration act signed into law in 1875 outlawed the transportation of “Orientals” as contract laborers (Garis, 1927, p. 292). In 1870, the federal government changed its naturalization law for the first time since 1795 (Daniels, 1997). The new law explicitly excluded Chinese and other persons of Asian descent from citizenship (Daniels, 1997). In 1874, President Grant suggested the need for a strict regulation of Chinese immigrants in his message to Congress, thus beginning a
long line of presidents (until Franklin D. Roosevelt) who made statements against Chinese immigration (Daniels, 1997).

In 1882, Congress passed two important pieces of legislation. One placed the power to regulate immigration at the federal level, imposed a head tax on each immigrant transported to the U.S., and expanded the exclusionary categories (Cannato, 2009). The other, now commonly known as The Chinese Exclusion Act, barred entry to almost all Chinese immigrants (Cannato, 2009). President Chester A. Arthur signed the bill into law after an initial veto, which he based on a conviction that the original bill was in violation of the Burlingame Treaty’s declaration of an inalienable freedom for human migration (Zolberg, 2006). These two laws were the federal government’s first successful effort to legalize discrimination against aliens perceived to be threats against U.S. society (Lee and Yung, 2010). After 1882, many Chinese became the first illegal immigrants to the U.S. (Daniels, 1997).

This exclusionary law focused on less than three percent of the total immigrants but was a result of Congress responding to the West Coast protests against Chinese competition with native-born workers (Cannato, 2009). The federal government took only timid control of immigration because the opposition to immigration restriction was louder than the clamor to constrain migration to the U.S. (Handlin, 1951/2002). Despite the hesitant attempt made by Congress, this law put a definitive end to the United States’ lax approach toward immigration (Bennett, 1963). Historians typically treat this particular act as a minor incident in the
progression of immigration regulation, but “it became the hinge on which all American immigration policy turned” (Daniels, 1997, p. 17). It set a standard for all succeeding law (Daniels, 1997), “demonstrating how restrictions on the rights of one group can become a precedent for infringing on the rights of others” (Foner, 2009, p. 619).

Immigration law passed by Congress in 1891 once again expanded the list of undesirables (Cannato, 2009). This new rule empowered immigration inspectors to make all decisions regarding an immigrant’s ability to enter the country (Cannato, 2009). Immigrants lost their right to challenge exclusion in court; all appeals were made to the Commissioner of Immigration in Washington, D.C. (Cannato, 2009).

In 1895 U.S. Representative Henry Cabot Lodge introduced the idea of a literacy test while testifying in support of the federalization of immigration regulation on the House floor (Zolberg, 2006). While his idea did not become law immediately, it became a major part of the immigration debate for about 25 years (Zolberg, 2006). Proponents argued that a literacy test was the best way to restrict immigration without resorting to more extreme measures (Daniels, 1997). Immigrants who could read would be more likely to care for themselves by being more employable (Kraut, 1982). In 1895, an explicit statement on the floor of the House of Representatives made clear the idea that a literacy test would separate Anglo-Saxon immigrants from those of Southern Europe (Higham, 1955/2008). Opponents argued that industrialization stimulated a need for cheap, unskilled labor
and that it represented a fundamental retreat from American ideas of being a welcoming nation (Zolberg, 2006). Influential immigrant groups in the country vocally denounced the bill forcing their representatives to oppose it (Higham, 1955/2008).

The literacy test reappeared in laws passed by Congress in 1897, 1913, 1915, and 1917 (Daniels, 1991/2002). The first attempt to restrict immigration based on literacy passed Congress in 1897. President Grover Cleveland “dismissed the test as an unsuitable device” (Zolberg, 2006, p. 227). In his veto message, Cleveland also claimed that the literacy requirement was a “radical departure” from national policy on immigration (Cleveland as cited in Daniels, 1991/2002, p. 277). President Taft based his veto of the 1913 bill on economic grounds, telling Congress that the U.S. needed immigrants to do the work not wanted by the native-born (Daniels, 1991/2002). In 1915 and 1917, President Wilson took a moral stance when he vetoed other versions of this restrictive law, claiming that the bill would deny immigrants the main opportunity they sought from the U.S. – an education (Daniels, 1991/2002).

After a native-born anarchist of Eastern European descent assassinated President McKinley, President Theodore Roosevelt recognized the urgent need for a stricter immigration law (Zolberg, 2006). “We cannot have too much immigration of the right kind, and we should have none at all of the wrong kind,” President Roosevelt told Congressional leaders during his annual address to Congress in 1903 (Roosevelt, 1904, p. 387).
That same year, Congress enacted a law that excluded anarchists, increased head taxes, and contained stricter health standards, but it left out the test of mental fitness President Roosevelt encouraged in his address (Zolberg, 2006). The additional restrictions became law just as Emma Lazarus’ poem was placed on the Statue of Liberty (Zolberg, 2006). “…Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore” (Lazarus, as cited in Shapiro, 1986, p. 8).

Three years later, in response to ethnic problems in San Francisco, President Roosevelt and Japan entered into a Gentleman’s Agreement in which Japan agreed to restrict immigration in return for a commitment from the United States not to implement an exclusionary law against Japanese immigrants (Zolberg, 2006). Although this executive arrangement restricted immigration of unskilled Japanese laborers, it did not end the “legal, economic, and social abuse” of Japanese residents (Daniels, 1997, p. 75). At this time, the South Asian immigrants joined the Japanese as targets of immigration restriction fights (Lee & Yung, 2010).

In 1907, Congress furthered its remote control of immigration by enacting a new law that moved administration of some required examinations to the ports of embarkation (Zolberg, 2009). Although immigration restrictionists pushed for inclusion of a literacy test, that requirement went down in defeat, leaving immigration supporters feeling a bit victorious (Zolberg, 2009). Restrictionists shared that victory, though, by gaining new excludable categories, which included
people determined by a medical doctor to be mentally and/or physically defective to a degree that they would likely become public charges (Zolberg, 2009).

Though World War I brought about the severe constraints on immigration envisioned by the Restrictionists, supporters of the literacy test continued their struggle (Higham, 1955/2008). Backing of such a requirement grew stronger from fears that uneducated immigrants would flood the U.S. at the end of the war (Kraut, 1991/2002).

Restrictionists finally won their battle in 1917 after more than 25 years and four presidential vetoes (Higham, 1955/2008). This law is significant in American immigration policy because it was the first to restrict all immigration (Daniels, 1991/2002). Those excluded from the United States were immigrants who couldn’t pass a reading test in their native language and all Asians (Daniels, 1991/2002) as were people with a “psychopathic inferiority” (Higham, 1955/2008, p. 204). Also added to the list were criminals, immoral persons, those with transmittable diseases, those likely to become public charges retroactively to five years from the time of admission, and those who espoused radical ideas, also retroactively to five years from admission (Daniels, 1991/2002). “Ironically, the literacy test…did little to restrict immigration” (Daniels, 1991/2002, p. 278). It failed to keep out the undesirable groups because most of Europe’s immigrants received free education in their home countries by the time it was passed (Shapiro, 1986).
In addition to a literacy test, this 1917 legislative act established an Asiatic Barred Zone specifically meant to exclude “Hindus and East Indian laborers” (Higham, 1955/2008, p. 204). This bill affected people living in a geographic region that covered approximately all of Asia (Jensen, 1988). It closed the door against immigration from the Asian continent and its many islands specifically as a block against immigration of South Asians (Garis, 1927). The final product passed over President Wilson’s veto was actually a compromise between extreme exclusionists who wanted to stop all Asian immigration and President Wilson who struggled to keep positive diplomatic ties with Japan (Jensen, 1988). Wilson successfully forced legislators to continue honoring the Gentleman’s Agreement with Japan through an exception for Japanese in the Asian exclusion (Higham, 1955/2008). The South Asian exclusion was a win for nativists who claimed this group of people was the most objectionable group of immigrants in California (Garis, 1927). Although entrance to the U.S. became next to impossible, some South Asians found their way into the U.S. through the few allowances built into the law (Daniels, 1991/2002).

With the end of World War I, Congress caused immigration to basically vanish “with two waves of its magic wand” first in 1921 and then again in 1924 (Zolberg, 2006, p. 251). The aftermath of the war created a crisis of uprooting in Europe to such a degree that the U.S. “political establishment kept a sharp lookout for the resumption of immigration” (Zolberg, 2006, p. 246). The prewar nativist attitudes not only continued, they gathered strength and remained focused on this
renewed influx of new immigrants with particular attention paid to those coming from communist Russia (Higham, 1955/2008). “Never before had anti-radical nativism stirred the public mind so profoundly” than during the end of the first decade of the 20th century (Higham, 1955/2008, p. 227). During the height of the so-called Red scare, every level of government worked to defeat the communists and their sympathizers (Higham, 1955/2008). Government agents rounded up thousands of suspected alien radicals across the country and processed them for deportation, deporting less than a thousand in the end (Cannato, 2009).

In 1920, Senator William Dillingham resuscitated his nine-year-old idea to create a national quota system that limited numbers of immigrants from each country (Kraut, 1982). In May 1921, President Harding signed the bill that President Wilson had pocket vetoed in the waning days of his presidency (Higham, 1955/208). This law, expected to be in force for one year, “initiated a quota system which in one form or another was the ruling principle of American immigration legislation for forty-four years” (Daniels, 1997, p. 132). While the main purpose of this law was to limit immigration from eastern and southern Europe, it retained all existing Asian exclusion acts (Daniels, 1997). The bill directed that quotas be set at 3% “of the foreign-born of each nationality resident in the U.S.” according to the 1910 census (Zolberg, 2006, p. 253). It levied such a sharp numerical limit on immigration that within one generation, those born outside of the U.S. were no longer a major factor in American history (Higham, 1955/2008).
This quota system caused major problems for those involved with its enforcement (Zolberg, 2006). Monthly allocations of each country’s quotas set up a regular race for steamships to disembark their passengers before the close of each month (Zolberg, 2006). Immigrants suffered increased duress not knowing if they would reach the U.S. before their country’s quota was filled (Zolberg, 2006). A new system was needed. For several years a debate regarding the means to restrict immigration raged in Congress (Daniels, 1997). By 1924, the debate revolved around four central questions: which census should be used to determine quotas; should immigration from within the Western Hemisphere be restricted or unrestricted; should Japan be subject to quotas; and what permanent system of control should be put into place (Daniels, 1997).

In the final bill passed in 1924, the European quota fell to 2% of each nation’s representative population according to the 1890 U.S. census (Zolberg, 2006). It explicitly excluded any person prevented from naturalization by earlier acts, which meant complete Asian exclusion (Zolberg, 2006). This act also expanded the United States Congressional remote control of immigration by mandating that all immigrants acquire a visa prior to departure from their homeland (Zolberg, 2006). This eliminated the rush to ports created by the 1921 law through a denial of visas as quotas were filled (Zolberg, 2006).

The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 marked the end of a chapter in United States history (Higham, 1955/2008). It did not specify desirable immigrant qualities;
instead, it favored the countries whose populations were most like those in the early United States – white, western Europeans (Garis, 1927). The federal government was now officially committed to an ideology that promoted homogeneous communities (Jensen, 1988). The law remained in force until 1952 (Kraut, 1982).

As the numbers and composition of immigrants knocking at the gates of the United States changed, the federal government took control of immigration regulation and gradually narrowed the definition of who was worthy of entering. The desired effect of the 1924 immigration law was a return to the days of old immigration by severely restricting the numbers of new immigrants. Who were the old immigrants, and who were the new immigrants? The next section defines the differences.

*Old vs. new immigration.*

One of the “great shibboleths [out-of-date arguments] of American immigration history” is the division between old and new immigration (Daniels, 1991/2002, p. 121). Typically, historians refer to the immigration of White Anglo Saxon Protestants between the late 1600s and the mid-1800s as old immigration (Garis, 1927). These people easily assimilated into the established norms during America’s first two centuries (Daniels, 1991/2002).

The term new immigration commonly refers to the immigration of peoples from Southern and Eastern Europe to the U.S. beginning around 1890, but it also applies to people from communist countries and Asian immigrants – especially those
from Asia landing on the West Coast because their cultural differences provoked intense negative reactions from the native-born (Kraut, 1982). “A line drawn down across the continent of Europe from northeast to southwest” separates old immigrants from new immigrants (Garis, 1927, p. 216). Existing on either side of the line are distinct ethnicities, distinct religions (Protestants and Catholics), distinct forms of government (popular rule and absolute monarchies), educated and illiterate peoples, and skilled and unskilled laborers (Garis, 1927).

These old and new immigration distinctions lose their sharp edges when historians look at immigration from new angles (Daniels, 1991/2002). For example, Catholic Irish began their migration to the U.S. during the old immigration period, but historians tend to place Catholics into the new immigration box (Daniels, 1991/2002). Other discrepancies occur when historians look at life circumstances, such as education, family structure, occupations (Daniels, 1991/2002). Implicitly understood within most discussions of old and new immigration is the fact that the immigrants involved were Europeans (Daniels, 1991/2002).

Thus, Asian immigration has often been discussed outside of the usual European boundaries. For instance, the Chinese originally arrived during the old immigration period; the Japanese began their migration to the U.S. during the more recent period, yet both groups of immigrants find themselves in a class of their own (Daniels, 1991/2002). Only approximately 10,000 South Asians arrived in the United
States during the peak immigration period, so discussion of South Asian immigration is limited (A. Kraut, personal communication, June 19, 2011).

For the purpose of this thesis, old immigration refers to people who arrived in the U.S. prior to 1890, and new immigration refers to all immigration to the U.S. that took place between 1890, when a massive influx of migrants first reached the Eastern shores and 1925, when the quota acts put an official end to unlimited immigration. Both the timeframe 1890 – 1925 and the subject South Asian immigrants fall into the new immigration category. The next section explores the effects of new immigration on the United States of America.

Effects of new immigration on society.

During the years 1860 to 1920, one in seven Americans was foreign born; despite the “dizzying changes that took place in every other phase of American life,” this statistic remained constant during the sixty-year period (Daniels, 1991/2002, p. 25). As substantial numbers of immigrants strained immigration facilities and processes, governmental procedures shifted from protecting the immigrants from the hardships of starting over in the U.S. to protecting the U.S. from the immigrants (Kraut, 1982).

Through these peak years of immigration, Americans grew increasingly concerned about assimilation and the impact that foreign cultures would have on American society (Kraut, 1982). Native-born Americans grew fearful of the growing immigrant population believing that dangerous people were among the large crowds
of foreign-born people (Kraut, 1982). Americans who believed these new immigrants posed a threat to society and were willing to act against the newcomers in speech or behavior came to be known as nativists (Kraut, 1982). Nativists began to voice their unhappiness with lenient immigration laws (Handlin, 1951/2002). At the very end of the 19th century, an increasing number of nativists in Boston and New York became terrified by what they read in the popular press and heard at historical and philosophical meetings: the masses of “inferior breeds” would cause the demise of the superior Anglo-Saxon stocks by mingling promiscuously with the Aryan race (Handlin, 1951/2002, p. 257). These meetings morphed into the Immigration Restriction League whose purpose was to lobby for the confinement of immigration to those deemed worthy (Kraut, 1982). Over time, Restrictionists became most concerned with preserving the purity of Anglo-Saxons as a way to protect American democracy and its individual liberties (Kraut, 1982).

The immigrants faced attack from nativists for three basic reasons: ethnicity, anti-Catholic attitudes, and fear of radical thought (Higham, 1955/2008). A fourth reason has been added: anti-Semitic attitudes (Kraut, 1982). Nativists blamed the increasing numbers of foreigners for the rising unemployment and crime rates and suppressed wages (Higham, 1955/2008; Kraut, 1982).

During the late 1800s, the superintendent of the U.S. Census noticed the rate of native population growth in the U.S. was declining (Daniels, 1955/2008). He became concerned that immigrants were “replacing the native stock, not reinforcing
it” (Daniels, 1955/2008, p. 143). In 1901, social scientists first discussed the idea that unregulated Asiatic immigration could lead to the elimination of American people (Higham, 1955/2008). Around this same time, MIT’s Francis Amasa Walker, among others, argued that the immigrants caused a decline in the fertility rate of native-born Americans, but today historians no longer believe this (Daniels, 1991/2002).

Racial intolerance advanced during the height of the new immigration as a response to disturbances within American society (Higham, 1955/2008). At the same time that Anglo-Saxon native-born Americans welcomed immigrants to the country, they also began to develop an ideal of nationality related to skin color (Higham, 1955/2008). America’s global imperialism during this time strengthened the Anglo-Saxon nativists’ attitude of racial superiority, which they began to transfer to the waves of immigrants coming to America (Higham, 1955/2008).

In order to justify the logic of this mindset and to defend the emotions displayed, the nativists needed a scientific explanation (Higham, 1955/2008). In response to this need, Sir Francis Galton launched the Eugenics movement (Higham, 1955/2008). The new genetic theories of Eugenics excited biologists and physicians (Higham, 1955/2008). Between 1910 and 1914, writings by Eugenicists received more publication than investigative journalists received for their reports on the living conditions of the poor, American- and foreign-born alike (Higham, 1955/2008).

After 1910, the decades-long efforts of the Immigration Restriction League of New England began to show results (Handlin, 1951/2002). Racist thinking found its
way into more and more minds and changed the way those minds thought about the new immigrants landing on American shores (Handlin, 1951/2002). Restrictionists claimed that the Eugenics report of 1922 and others like it established that certain groups of people were not as assimilable as those of the old immigrant stock (Garis, 1927). Restriction seemed to be the best answer to the problems they personally faced (Handlin, 1951/2002).

Between 1900 and 1916 (the Progressive Era), many Americans participated in a widespread political movement working for positive change in a variety of social and political conditions (Foner, 2009). Reformers of this time behaved in contradictory ways in which ideals once again clashed (Foner, 2009). While some of these people, known as Progressives, worked for an expansion of rights for all those living in the U.S., others attempted to limit access to American freedoms only to those they deemed capable of employing those liberties properly (Foner, 2009). The immigration restriction movement grew in strength through the later years of the Progressive period (Higham, 1955/2008). Restrictionists believed that immigrants needed to shed their old-world ways and fully assimilate into American society (Higham, 1955/2008).

During this period, industrial leaders in several southern states had set up commissions to replace African-American laborers with workers from southern and eastern Europe. In the southern United States, attitudes toward these new immigrants changed in 1907 when the federal government voided their contracts for labor
(Handlin, 1951/2002). Suddenly, they became targets of fear, and Southerners became some of the most vocal immigration restrictionists (Handlin, 1951/2002).

“The most remarkable aspect of the restrictionist movement was its repeated failure” (Higham, 1955/2008, p. 187). During the early decades of new immigration, the arrival of newcomers did not severely impact the nation as a whole. With societal impact confined to specific regional centers, active immigrant groups were able to stop both political parties from committing to restrictionist ideology (Higham, 1955/2008). Not only did the immigrants fight restrictionist policy, U.S. citizens themselves challenged the idea that specific groups of people were unfit to live in the United States and enjoy its freedoms (Foner, 2009). This initially prevented restrictionist attitudes from becoming federal law (Higham, 1955/2008).

Restrictionist rhetoric became more heated as Asian immigrants began arriving. California’s addition to the nation opened a new port of entry for a new group of immigrants – the Chinese (Zolberg, 2006). Visionary leaders saw Asia as a major source of workers to build the railroad and till the fertile farmlands of the new state (Zolberg, 2006). The Chinese population in California grew from a few hundred in 1849 to an estimated 40,000 by 1860 (Zolberg, 2006). During these early years, Chinese immigrants typically came to the United States as contract laborers (Zolberg, 2006).

Cultural issues based on the extreme differences in skin color, dress, language, and customs intensified nativist hostility against this group of immigrants
(Garis, 1927). American-born workers on the Pacific Coast habitually used violence against Chinese workers which sometimes ended in “wholesale slaughter” (Wilson, 1901, p. 185). “Capable white persons” on the East coast understood the competition with Chinese laborers in California’s agricultural regions, so they opted not to migrate west (Benham, 1908, p. 5). American workers felt they could not compete with the Chinese who were willing and able to live on very little income (Wilson, 1901). The intelligence and skills of the Chinese and their willingness to work harder than any other laborers “made them feared and hated” (Wilson, 1901, p. 213). The immigrants on the East coast, however, filled the lowest rungs of the labor ladder, so they were more easily tolerated than the Chinese, thus behavior toward the new European immigrants was less hostile, Woodrow Wilson wrote in his history of the United States (Wilson, 1901). He changed this disparaging assessment of the new European immigrants as his political star rose, and he needed the immigrant vote (Zolberg, 2006).

Overall, the new immigrants played a prominent role in the development of the United States (Handlin, 1951/2002). The importance of immigrant contributions cannot be overestimated (Nash, Jeffrey, Howe, Frederick, Davis, & Winkler 2006). The newcomers added to the American character by bringing with them the world’s values, attitudes, and beliefs (Kraut, 1982). Their contribution to America’s economic development has been taken for granted, so historians rarely argue the point (Zolberg, 2006). On the balance, immigration was a positive gain not only for
the immigrants but for America, despite the fears of the Eugenicists and nativists (Daniels, 1991/2002). Industrial expansion occurred without the native workers falling into poverty (Handlin, 1951/2002). The social system remained intact and afforded each new group the opportunity to climb the ladder to prosperity, which in turn allowed the capacity for consumption of American products to grow (Handlin, 1951/2002).

The fears of the nativists, however, had indeed come to pass; the United States’ society and its culture lost some of its original appearance and flavor (Cannato, 2009). By the end of the new immigration period, America had become more heterogeneous than any other industrialized country (Nash, Jeffrey, Howe, Frederick, Davis, & Winkler, 2006). On the other hand, the fears about the quality of these newcomers were unfounded (Cannato, 2009). By 1924, the term cultural pluralism was used to discuss a society that chose to embrace diversity (Foner, 2009). But if pluralism was good for the United States, was it good for the immigrants?

*Effects of pluralism on the immigrants.*

Most of the new immigrants were individuals who could no longer take the abuse or neglect experienced in their homelands, so they chose to uproot their lives and replant them in a foreign land (Kraut, 1982). Once settled into their new world, the immigrants found themselves in social roles foreign to their histories (Handlin,
1951/2002). Because of this, they needed to recreate their world views to fit their new experiences (Handlin, 1951/2002).

Additionally, immigrants had to deal with prejudice from native-born people as well as from other immigrant groups (Kraut, 1982). Despite the often hostile environment, most immigrants chose to stay and fight, even as the American legal system built additional barriers against them (Kraut, 1982). As immigration restriction increased, immigrant groups fought back, resulting in an expanded idea of freedom for all Americans (Foner, 2009).

Through fighting the system, they changed America even as America changed them (Kraut, 1982). They compromised with American society to become successful in their new lives (Kraut, 1982). Through the process, the immigrants developed a stronger character (Kraut, 1982). In the face of adversity, they chose not to give up and return to their homelands; instead, they chose to stay in the United States and compete for the opportunities and resources the country offered its residents (Kraut, 1982). “Those who didn’t find what they were looking for…worked to create the America of their dreams” (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 293).

The migration of people from one country to another inevitably changes both the migrants and the country that receives them. In the United States, immigration provoked a clash of ideas regarding inalienable freedoms and to whom those inalienable freedoms belonged. Immigrants in the United States strengthened their
character by struggling for their right to those freedoms and in the process
strengthened the character of the United States through the addition of new beliefs
and values. However, before they could settle into new lives in the United States,
you had to pass through its entrance gates.

After harrowing travels across their homeland and over wide oceans, the
immigrants’ first experience in the United States was at one of several immigration
inspection stations where they first met the interpretation of immigration law. The
two major ports for the landing of steamships were on the eastern and western coasts
of the country. Most immigrants from Europe landed at the port in New York, and
most immigrants from Asia landed at the port in San Francisco. The next section
explores the similarities and differences between the eastern and western ports of
entry, administration of federal law at each port, and the ways the immigrants viewed
the inspection process at each immigration center.

Ports of Entry

During the mid-19th century, 70% of immigrants entered the U.S. through
New York’s Castle Garden which was located in the United States’ busiest port
(Cannato, 2009). A report from an investigation of immigration at the end of the
1880s described how immigrant inspection at Castle Garden did not comply with
existing law (Cannato, 2009). Corruption and immigrant abuse scandalized the
nation’s most important point of entry (Shapiro, 1986). Critics of operations at Castle
Garden grew more vocal and clamored for a centralized regulation of immigration
(Cannato, 2009). Thus, according to most historians, Ellis Island was created to protect immigrants from corrupt inspectors, but the truth is that the federal government wanted to take over the inspection process (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979; Cannato, 2009).

At the same time in California, the federal government was busy establishing new inspection processes under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Lee & Yung, 2010). Because the law did not specify what to do with detainees, administrators scrambled to find housing for hundreds of immigrants from Asia (Lee & Yung, 2010). In 1898, an unsanitary “detention shed” located dockside and designed to hold 200 people began its life securing more than 400 Asian immigrants, mostly Chinese (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 10). In the early 1900s, even the Commissioner-General of Immigration admitted the need for an improved processing center (Lee & Yung, 2010). Isolated in San Francisco Bay, immigration officials saw Angel Island as a mirror to Ellis Island (Lee & Yung, 2010). An architect visited the East Coast center to draw on its successes for the West Coast station’s design (Lee & Yung, 2010). Even though only a half-million people passed through Angel Island, its diversity “allows us to best understand how U.S. immigration policies...played out in daily practices at the nation’s borders” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 24).

Ellis Island.

“The story of Ellis Island is the story of the new immigration” (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 4). Immigrants were thrust directly into the conflict
between the American ideals of freedom and equality and the reality of American
digotry (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). They were introduced to the
cflict between U.S. business’s desire for abundantly cheap labor and organized
abor’s continual fight for fair treatment of native-born workers (Brownstone,
Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Ellis Island was a gate through which desirable
migrants passed, but all others received only a peek at the land of opportunity
(Cannato, 2009).

In an attempt to redeem the reputation of an immigration service tattered by
the inspector and business corruption that resulted in immigrant abuse at Castle
Garden, Ellis Island opened in January 1897 (Shapiro, 1986). Almost immediately,
controversy swept over the station along with the tide of immigrants (Cannato,
2009). Only two months in operation, authorities began an investigation, focusing on
allegations of fraud, a waste of federal funds, and lax enforcement of the new
migration laws (Cannato, 2009). This was the first of many investigations into the
“chasm between immigration law as written and immigration law as enforced”
(Cannato, 2009).

In June 1897, six months after it began operations, a fire broke out in the
central wooden building (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979; Cannato,
2009). Burning quickly, the fire destroyed immigration records dating back to the
beginning of the Castle Garden era (Cannato, 2009). Miraculously, no one suffered
fatal injuries (Tifft, 1990).
Designed to accommodate 5,000 immigrants per day, the station reopened in December 1900 (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979; Zolberg, 2006). Not only was the new building constructed to withstand fire, upgrades were made to the entire installation; included were a restaurant, bathhouse, laundry facilities, dormitory, powerhouse, and a hospital (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

Between 1900 and 1917, almost 10 million of the world’s people entered the United States through Ellis Island (Tifft, 1990). To accommodate the growing number of arrivals, Ellis Island continually evolved to include construction of new buildings, creating landfill space, and then adding more buildings in the new space (Tifft, 1990).

The impressive set of structures represented the magnificence of the United States (Cannato, 2009). Unfortunately, the building improvement did not represent an improved inspection system (Cannato, 2009). The status quo of corruption, immigrant abuse, and political infighting continued unabated (Cannato, 2009).

Before the tidal wave of immigration completely overwhelmed the entire infrastructure at Ellis Island, WWI broke out and slowed the surge of immigration (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). During the early years of the war, an “antialien hysteria” arose resulting in massive arrests of foreigners who were sent to Ellis Island (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 233). Upon President Wilson’s war proclamation, Ellis Island immediately transformed into a detention center (Cannato, 2009). Enemy aliens were rounded up across the country and sent to
Ellis Island by the thousands (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

Throughout the war, over 1,500 German noncitizens spent weeks and even months at Ellis Island waiting for actions on their cases (Cannato, 2009). During these years, immigrants denied entry to the U.S. remained on Ellis Island because they could not be sent home (Cannato, 2009). Commissioner Howe felt more like a jailer than an immigration official (Howe, 1925; Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

Immigration numbers actually fell during these years due to a combination of the war and the 1917 immigration law, and the War Department gradually took over the island (Shapiro, 1986). By 1918, the immigration service had a very small role on the island (Tifft, 1990). After the war ended, hysteria shifted to the Communists among the immigrants, and thousands of alleged anarchists and Communists ended up at Ellis Island with little or no due process afforded them (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

In 1920, war refugees headed in droves for the U.S. (Shapiro, 1986). This rush to the country overwhelmed Ellis Island (Shapiro, 1986). A New York Times editorial claimed that Ellis Island was in utter chaos (Cannato, 2009). Despite increased restrictions put on immigration in 1917, the arrivals at Ellis Island more than doubled between 1920 and 1921 (Bell & Abrams, 1984). This caused an extreme burden on the entire staff and the facilities at the immigration station (Bell & Abrams, 1984).
Upon pressure from English immigrants, British Ambassador Sir Auckland Geddes inspected the island in 1922; he reported a sad state of affairs and expressed a belief that U.S. immigration laws made administering any immigration station without tragedy impossible (Shapiro, 1986).

With enactment of the 1924 National Origins Act, the immigration wave over the island evaporated to a trickle (Bell & Abrams, 1984). By 1927, Ellis Island had lost its place in the immigration process (Tifft, 1990). Immigrants only landed at Ellis Island if they had not received a medical examination before embarkation, experienced some issue with their immigration papers, or were waiting for deportation (Shapiro, 1986). The reduction of people to process provided time to complete much-needed repairs which included upgrading the plumbing system and the dormitory facilities (Bell & Abrams, 1984).

By 1931, deportations were the main business at the immigration station (Shapiro, 1986). Departures outnumbered arrivals (Tifft, 1990). Ellis Island briefly came back to life after WWII (Tifft, 1990). Yet, in November 1954, Attorney General Herbert Brownell told a group of newly naturalized citizens that Ellis Island would close (Shapiro, 1986).

For most immigrants, the brief moment of time spent at Ellis Island was a “marvelously sunny experience” making Ellis Island an island of hope that represented the door to a new world (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 163). Statistics show that 80% of the people processed daily found no difficulty in
gaining admittance to the U.S. (Kraut, 1982). Flipping that statistic around, 20 of each 100 were detained in wire cages open to the view of all other immigrants (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). “If the Statue of Liberty embodied [the immigrants’] dreams of a new life with a bright future, then Ellis Island represented some of their darkest fears – of separation, rejection, and deportation” (Tifft, 1990, p. 1). Thus, Ellis Island developed a reputation as an island of tears where hope was destroyed for those denied entry (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). “The crying epidemic” was brought about by a combination of fear and fatigue, confusion and calamity, and the personnel charged with running the inspection station (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 166). A few fortunate immigrants arriving in New York were spared the Ellis Island experience altogether; first class passengers disembarked directly onto ferries that took them to ports along the New York coastline (Cannato, 2009).

Immigration officials denied that Ellis Island was “a cross between Alcatraz and Devil’s Island” and attempted to frame the immigrant experience at Ellis Island as a positive one (Kraut, 1982, p. 55). They claimed the immigrants exaggerated their negative experiences, but an overwhelming number of comments made during the peak immigration period coupled with immigrant remembrances years later give credence to the sad stories (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

Many immigrants felt a severe shock once they disembarked the crowded transfer barges and waited to enter the main building on the island (Brownstone,
“Unfairness, rudeness, and dishonesty” filled the air (Bell, 1984, p. 84). Many immigrants encountered unfriendly and disrespectful inspectors (Shapiro, 1986).

Politics at Ellis Island caused as many problems as did overcrowding (Tifft, 1990). Interpretation of the rapidly changing laws was left to the employees of the individual immigration ports (Cannato, 2009). Ellis Island, being the busiest port, became the leader in administration of immigration law (Cannato, 2009). Making decisions based on abstract law was difficult for those confronted with real human beings (Cannato, 2009). Each employee of the immigration commission, from the Commissioner-General to the doctor and the inspector held an individual interpretation of who was desirable and who was not (Cannato, 2009).

Inspectors working at Ellis Island during the busy immigration years endured long hours examining up to five hundred new arrivals each day (Tifft, 1990). “The exercise of good judgment and a sound discretion based upon knowledge of all relevant facts” was required of all involved with the inspection process (Williams, 1912, p. 7). Yet, each immigration inspector had a set of tricks that helped him not terminate an investigation too readily (Corsi, 1935).

Immigrants dressed in their native attire waited in line wondering what would happen (Corsi, 1935). They suffered the indignity of having to strip off their clothes in front of inspectors and other immigrants for invasive medical inspections (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). One by one, the doctors would conduct
their medical inspections, pulling aside any immigrant who provoked the slightest suspicion (Corsi, 1935). “These methods, crude as they seem, had to be used, because of the great numbers and the language difficulties” (Corsi, 1935, p. 72).

The initial medical inspection took only about three minutes (Shapiro, 1986). The medical examiners certified all mental and physical defects observed during this brief encounter (Williams, 1912). Some inspectors believed that this was enough to determine who needed further examinations, but the observation method was not applied evenly (Shapiro, 1986). Doctors had their own methods for determining which immigrants to pull aside (Shapiro, 1986).

The phrase likely to become a public charge reflected an American attitude that individuals, particularly immigrants, should be able to support themselves (Cannato, 2009). This classification became a wide net that caught immigrants whose character inspectors questioned on sight (Cannato, 2009). When Ellis Island Commissioner William Williams implemented a $25 pocket money requirement in 1909, immigrants grew frustrated and angry (Cannato, 2009). They assumed that the rule was a law (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). In fact, it was not a law, and it was not fairly applied (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). The result of the requirement was an “intentional gross discrimination against poor immigrants from southern and eastern Europe” (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 190). Immigrants protested by taking it up with the court system (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Williams was eventually forced to abandon the idea
and eliminate it from his regulation book, although he continued to enforce it until he left office in 1913 (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

Immigration officials at Ellis Island tended to apply American “middle-class ideas of sexual morality” (Cannato, 2009, p. 264). Landing in a new world, exhausted, unable to speak the language, and unsure of procedures left single women vulnerable to predators, so they experienced an extra layer of discriminatory bureaucracy (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). They were held in detention until a family member, fiancée, or a sponsor came to vouch for them (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Married women and pregnant women also received rigorous inspections, mainly conducted by men (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). With the immigration service predominantly a man’s world, attempts to add female inspectors met with fierce opposition, particularly under Commissioner William Williams, so women continued to face the indignity of invasive inspections by men (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

When Boards of Special Inquiry became part of the inspection process in 1903, immigration officials had more tools with which to exclude travelers (Cannato, 209). Immigration inspectors used their discretion to send questionable immigrants to one of the boards (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). The immigrants had no one to represent them and rarely had time to prepare for the questioning (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Although the immigrants could appeal their case to the Commissioner-in-General located in Washington, D.C., most could
not afford to do so (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Typically, the three immigration officials sitting on the special boards “act[ed] as judge and jury” (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 213). No other governmental department, including the Department of Justice, was “permitted to hang a man without trial” (Corsi, 1935, p. 178). Yet, immigration officials had the power to “arrest aliens, put them in jail, and expel them from the country without ‘due process of law’” (Corsi, 1935, p. 178).

Some immigrants relied on resourcefulness to bypass the Board of Special Inquiry (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Others received the “benevolent blindness” from certain inspectors (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979, p. 216). The speed with which some families of new arrivals were able to enlist political help to reverse an exclusion order exasperated immigration officials (Shapiro, 1986).

Newcomers received the assistance of earlier immigrants and social aid groups as they navigated Ellis Island’s bewildering maze (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). Almost every nation from which immigrants hailed was represented by these aid societies (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979). They made Ellis Island a more welcoming place to land (Brownstone, Franck, & Brownstone, 1979).

“Whether Ellis Island is a story of uplift and success or harrowing tragedies, it has evolved into something akin to a national shrine” (Cannato, 2009, p. 408). For
many, it has come to symbolize 400 years of immigration to what is known as the United States of America (Cannato, 2009). Its memory is debated continually with greatly varying ideas of what the nation should remember about the period of history the island and its building represent (Cannato, 2009). Does the story of the Angel Island Immigration Station hold the same interpretations of immigration law? What memories did those who landed at the West Coast port of entry retain?

Angel Island.

Those who know Angel Island’s history have an improved understanding of America because Angel Island is “American history” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. xx). Contrary to common belief, it was not the Ellis Island of the West (Lee & Yung, 2010). Angel Island did not “extend welcoming hands to all who came” like its sister station on the Eastern Seaboard (Lai, 1978, p. 100). Unlike Ellis Island’s enforcement of restrictive immigration law, Angel Island’s purpose was to administer exclusionary immigration law (Lee & Yung, 2010). At best, it was a partially open door that symbolized “racist immigration policy” (Lai, 1978, p. 100). The story of Angel Island explains how the U.S. transformed into a “gatekeeping” nation (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. xix).

At the beginning of the 20th century, immigration through San Francisco was a mess because no official immigration center existed (Angel Island Association [AIA], 1982). Instead, immigration officials climbed aboard docked steamships to inspect the passengers’ documents (AIA, 1982). Immigrants who needed further
examination either stayed on board or were crammed into unsanitary wooden sheds located dockside (AIA, 1982). Most of these detainees were Chinese held under the Chinese Exclusion Act (AIA, 1982). The Chinese grievances against the harsh treatment they received on San Francisco’s shores were loud and frequent (Lai, 1978). Escape from these holding sheds became commonplace (AIA, 1982). By 1905, immigration officials were able to convince Congress to appropriate funds to build a secure detention center on Angel Island (AIA, 1982).

The Angel Island Immigration Station officially opened on January 21, 1910 (AIA, 1982). Angel Island was chosen as the location of the station primarily because it would be “escape proof,” but its distance from the Chinese community also minimized the transmission of information and infectious diseases (Lai, 1978, p. 90). It “was the hub of a quarantine system that had been designed to handle commodities, not immigrants” (Mayne, 2008, p. 263). It was not built to accommodate the flow of human beings that passed through its doors for 30 years (Mayne, 2008).

The administration building and the detention center were connected with a covered stairway similar to Ellis Island’s entrance (Lee & Yung, 2010). Unlike Ellis Island’s grand staircase, the purpose for this covered stairway was to provide security against escaping detainees (Lee & Yung, 2010). Although the immigration station was not a prison, there were no fire escapes, and all the windows were locked...
and covered with bars (Lee & Yung, 2010). Barbed-wire fences made immigrants feel like they were prisoners (Fanning & Wong, 2006).

The separation of the immigration station from the mainland allowed scandals and corruption to plague the immigration service at Angel Island (Jensen, 1988). During the first decade of its life, Angel Island was wracked with administrative issues (Lai, 1978). Within a few months, the first commissioner, Hart North, was suspended on suspicion of being partial to Japanese and South Asian immigrants (Lai, 1978). Corruption of both United States immigration inspectors and Chinese interpreters was a problem at the station (Fanning & Wong, 2006). In 1917, authorities discovered a major graft ring involving the manipulation of Chinese records that allowed illegal entries to the U.S. (Lai, 1978). Eight immigration officials and 10 others were indicted; 7 of the 18 were found guilty (Lai, 1978).

Almost immediately after the first 400 immigrants arrived that first day, the complaints began (AIA, 1982). A Chinese-language newspaper published in San Francisco claimed it would provide no better treatment than the horrors of the wooden shed; the difference would be in the island’s isolation (Lai, 1978). Immigrants and their families complained that the station was too remote for witnesses to travel for deportation hearings (AIA, 1982). Immigration officials quickly experienced an increase in costs and time required to travel to the middle of San Francisco Bay (AIA, 1982). Immigrants and employees worried that the wooden buildings were firetraps (AIA, 1982). Complaints about the hospital’s sanitation
began less than a year after the immigration station opened (Lee & Yung, 2010). A major complaint was about the quality and variety of the food (Lai, 1978). Two food riots erupted on the island, one in 1919 and one in 1925 (Lee & Yung, 2010).

The beginning of World War I created a new set of problems due to overcrowding (Lee & Yung, 2010). Immigrants resented being forced into contact with others they deemed inferior, whether that inferiority was based on class or ethnicity (Lee & Yung, 2010). After passage of the 1921 Emergency Quota law, immigrants who arrived after their country’s monthly quota was filled had to be detained until the next month, adding more bodies to the overcrowded facilities (Lee & Yung, 2010).

By 1922, both the assistant secretary of labor and the commissioner-general of immigration declared the Angel Island facilities to be unfit for human habitation, yet immigrants continued to be processed through these unsanitary and unsafe buildings for almost 20 more years (Lai, 1978). An electrical fire broke out in the administration building on August 11, 1940 (Fanning & Wong, 2006). Although the fire burned all night, no one was seriously injured (Fanning & Wong, 2006). The fire hastened a planned closure for the immigration station (Fanning & Wong, 2006).

From its beginning, Asian immigrants saw Angel Island as a symbol of repression while across the continent Ellis Island stood as a symbol of entry to freedom (Jensen, 1988). The West Coast port of entry had “no glorious past rooted in the ideology of the open gate” (Jensen, 1988, p. 106). It came to represent a “bowl
full of tears” along the “great white wall” that kept Asian immigrants out of the U.S. (Jensen, 1988, p. 282).

Between 1910 and 1940, approximately half of all the steamship passengers who arrived in San Francisco ended up on Angel Island as opposed to the 20% detained at Ellis Island (Lee & Yung, 2010). This was about 500,000 people over its 30 years of operation (Lee & Yung, 2010). Typically, about 300 males and 50 females were detained at Angel Island on any given day (Lai, 1978). Some were admitted to the country in a few hours, some in a few days, but too many spent months in the detention center (Lee & Yung, 2010). A few stayed as long as two years (AIA, 1982).

Angel Island’s detention center was designed to maintain segregation along racial, class, and gender lines, and the various groups of immigrants were not treated equally (Lee & Yung, 2010). “Race was the most important factor shaping…immigrant experiences on the island” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 24). General agreement among immigration officials and the immigrants themselves maintained that the areas reserved for European and other white immigrants were much more comfortable than those used to hold immigrants from Asian countries (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Chinese immigrants were isolated from people originating in other parts of Asia who were segregated from non-Asians (Lee & Yung, 2010). Immigration policies aimed at specific nationalities greatly affected the treatment of immigrants in
terms of food allotment, sleeping arrangements, and time allowed outside (Lee & Yung, 2010). In fact, government policy required less money be spent on feeding detainees from Asian countries than Europeans (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Men and women received different treatment as did people from the same nation yet different classes (Lee & Yung, 2010). Entry to the U.S. was denied to many working class immigrants based on an assumption that they would likely become a public charge (Lee & Yung, 2010). Inspectors routinely denied admission to women traveling alone and working-class women under the likely to become a public charge clause (Lee & Yung, 2010). On the West Coast, first class travelers landed at Angel Island instead of bypassing the inspection process like their counterparts on the East Coast, but they received preferential treatment (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Despite the cultural diversity of the immigrants who passed through Angel Island, they shared similar experiences (Lee & Yung, 2010). All immigrants resented the caged-animal treatment they experienced no matter what country they called home or how long they stayed in the detention center (Lee & Yung, 2010). Families resented the forced separation they endured while waiting for their cases to be resolved (Lee & Yung, 2010).

They all wanted to enter the U.S. while immigration officials worked to determine who was undesirable or dangerous (Lee & Yung, 2010). The ways the two sides interpreted the law created conflict on the island (Lee & Yung, 2010). How
immigration officials interpreted federal law depended on a complex web of factors, particularly historical relationships between the U.S. and the immigrants’ homeland and U.S. immigration policies that differentiated among nation of origin, ethnicity, class, and gender (Lee & Yung, 2010).

A thorough examination of Angel Island immigration files exposed a blatant difference in inspection of specific groups of immigrants (Lee & Yung, 2010). European applicants received brief interviews that lasted two days at most regarding their current and potential financial situations and support beyond the island, while Chinese applicants suffered exhausting, detailed interrogations that lasted up to four days and several South Asian immigrants spent months detained on the island (Lee & Yung, 2010). Even immigration lawyers who represented immigrants on Angel Island held racial bias as evidenced in writings they left behind (Lee & Yung, 2010).

As steamships docked at San Francisco ports, passengers endured quick but painful medical examinations; suspicious symptoms of any kind sent the questionable immigrant to Angel Island (Mayne, 2008). Because public opinion and medical theory at the turn of the 20th century saw Asians as carriers of dangerous diseases, Angel Island’s operations were very different from other ports of entry (Lee & Yung, 2010). Medical examinations were much more invasive and thorough (Lee & Yung, 2010). Angel Island immigration officials kept a watch for the same mental and physical defects as their counterparts on Ellis Island, but many believed that Asian immigrants carried more diseases than European immigrants (Lee, 2003). The
medical staff looked for “dangerous or loathsome” infectious diseases in a process that historian Alan Kraut termed the “medicalization of preexisting nativist prejudices” (Lee, 2003, p. 81). Physicians were trained to be unbiased in their work, but some linked physical condition to an established idea about character and lifestyle of the group from which an immigrant came (Kraut, 1988). “Asian immigrants had higher rates of medical exclusion than their European counterparts” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 39). Statistics show that Asian immigrants were more frequently diagnosed with trachoma than European immigrants even though European immigrants were more susceptible to the highly contagious eye infection (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Immigrant reactions to invasive medical examinations at Angel Island were similar to those at Ellis Island (Kraut, 1988). Although not typically mentioned by historical sources, Asian immigrants continually fought the quarantine system they were forced to endure (Mayne, 2008). When their complaints went unheard, the Asian community developed other means of protest, such as a bribery system that secured a positive outcome of the medical examinations (Mayne, 2008). Loud public protests by the immigrant communities and fights within the court system resulted in changes to these harsh medical procedures (Lee & Yung, 2010). Eventually, the federal government officially changed parasitic classifications and lifted specific medical exclusions (Lee & Yung, 2010).
The 1907 immigration law required medical personnel to determine if a physical or mental diagnosis would cause an immigrant to become a public charge (Kraut, 1988). Despite this power, Public Health Service personnel “refused to be agents of exclusion,” and not one ever participated in a Board of Special Inquiry (Kraut, 1988, p. 385).

Angel Island’s immigration center was a major “bureaucratic apparatus” designed specifically to administer the Chinese Exclusion Act (Lai, 1978, p. 88). Enforcement of immigration laws at Angel Island had a profound effect nationally (Lee & Yung, 2010). Inspectors, interpreters, and clerks had the most frequent contact with the immigrants, including the daily task of interpreting and enforcing the often vague immigration laws (Lee & Yung, 2010). These officials were “lower-level government workers” and “street-level bureaucrats” who became policy makers (Lee, 2003, p. 48). They thought of themselves as the “keepers or guardians of the Western gate” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 40). As they sifted through the arrivals, they helped create classifications of who was fit to enter the U.S. and worthy of citizenship; those deemed unfit or unworthy were sent back to their homelands (Lee & Yung, 2010). Not only did these employees enforce federal immigration laws, they also helped with arrests and deportations of immigrants already admitted (Lee & Yung, 2010). Overwork and low morale of the front-line employees were common problems on the island (Lee & Yung, 2010). Nonetheless, social service agencies and community service organizations provided some relief for many of the immigrants.
The most well-loved and influential missionary to grace Angel Island was Katharine Maurer (Lee & Yung, 2010). She worked not only to comfort the immigrants but also to break down the barriers erected by policy implementation at the immigration station (Lee & Yung, 2010).

In another example of a clash of ideals, the two sides of immigration policy, one welcoming and one exclusionary, created “fascinating contradictions” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 22). Angel Island Commissioner North held a public disdain for the Chinese immigrants at the same time that he refused to exclude South Asians without a reasonable cause (Lee & Yung, 2010). Inspector Frank Ainsworth defended Korean students seeking refuge in the U.S. as he led a public fight to exclude the South Asians he deemed unassimilable (Lee & Yung, 2010). Asian laborers were excluded, but Asian merchants and students were allowed entrance (Lee & Yung, 2010). All women faced intense, embarrassing interrogations about their sexual histories, but men were rarely asked about these private and sensitive topics (Lee & Yung, 2010). Race and class relations and gender roles were debated daily in the enforcement of immigration laws at Angel Island (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Immigrants’ reactions to their Angel Island experience were as varied as the people who spent time there (Lee & Yung, 2010). Stress was common among the detainees as the monotony of long waits tried people’s nerves (Lee & Yung, 2010). Immigrants had nothing to do while they awaited the hearings that determined their fates, so many men “lolled about or laid on their bunks” while others gambled or
read (Lai, 1978). The women sewed and knitted (Lai, 1978). Recreation yards, such as they were, provided an opportunity for fresh air (Lai, 1978). Although male immigrants were frequently confined to the barracks and tiny yards, the female immigrants were allowed to roam around the facility grounds (Fanning & Wong, 2006).

The Chinese detainees resented their long detentions as other immigrants came and went within much more reasonable amounts of time (Lai, 1978). They did not, however, sit idly by and allow inspectors to determine their fates (Lee & Yung, 2010). In 1922, male Chinese detainees formed an association designed to air grievances in one collective voice (Lai, 1978). Providing new detainees support and a sense of unity, the association continued for 30 years, even after the immigration station closed (Lai, 1978). Some groups, particularly the Chinese, hired U.S. lawyers to fight unfair exclusion while others developed strong, highly organized support networks and had supportive home countries (Lee & Yung, 2010). The South Asians had neither; their small numbers made networking difficult while the rulers in their home country encouraged U.S. exclusion (Lee & Yung, 2010).

Descendants of Chinese immigrants do not reflect on Angel Island with the same glossy memories as many descendants of European immigrants remember Ellis Island (Cannato, 2009). For this reason, Angel Island is a critically important historic site because the 20th century history it holds can help us understand the United States in the 21st century (Lee & Yung, 2010). The literature on Angel Island
focuses almost exclusively on the experience of the Chinese immigrants, but “there are many more immigration stories that need to be recovered and preserved” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 17). One of those stories belongs to the South Asian immigrants, the topic of the next section.

**South Asian Immigration to the United States**

The South Asian community in the U.S. has been largely ignored by historians both in the United States and in India (Hess, 1976). “Telescoped as it was into a few years, the South Asian migration to North America and the response of various groups to it provide a case study of immense importance, in which one can see the clash of interests of employer, immigrant worker, native worker, official, and politician gradually evolving into public policy” (Jensen, 1988, p. 1). The treatment South Asians received at Angel Island “reflected larger patterns of discrimination against the entire South Asian community in America” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 172). Even less is known about the treatment this group of immigrants received as they passed through Ellis Island, a “story [that] has yet to be told” (Jensen, 1988, p. 14). Those who received entry to the U.S. lived with humiliation and tragedy, but their history shows a group with perseverance and strength (Lee & Yung, 2010).

At the turn of the 20th century, British colonial practices caused severe suffering within the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent (Lee & Yung, 2010). Due to heavy tax burdens, small family farmers became seriously indebted to Great Britain (Lee & Yung, 2010). The region also suffered from overpopulation, drought,
and major health epidemics (Lee & Yung, 2010). Discontented with British rule and overcrowded conditions, many in the population became restless, some sought a better life elsewhere, while others became politically active in the struggle for independence (Lee & Yung, 2010). Three additional pushes were at work on immigration from the Indian subcontinent: steamship companies wanting passengers for their steerage compartment, railroad labor contractors, and Indian nationals contracting the labor of their fellow countrymen (Chan, 1991).

The South Asian group of immigrants was diverse with students, laborers, and former colonial soldiers all in the mix, the bulk being young, single men (Lee & Yung, 2010). The vast majority adhered to the Sikh faith; a few were Muslim and Hindu, but the number of Hindu was small, making “the derogatory term ‘Hindoo,’ by which Euro-American nativists referred to” all South Asians, a misnomer (Chan, 1991, p. 75).

Many of these migrants originally settled in Canada. When hostile labor conflicts caused South Asians to flee from Canada to the U.S., these British subjects brought with them complicated issues that linked immigration policy to foreign policy (Jensen, 1988). Traditionally, U.S. society regarded immigration policy as a domestic issue not a foreign policy issue, and the Constitution offered no solutions (Jensen, 1988). Diplomats helped shape the executive branch’s domestic policies that affected the treatment of South Asian immigrants which led to Congressional action against them in the form of legislation (Jensen, 1988).
The first of the 20th century immigrants from South Asia were laborers seeking work in the lumber mills (Hess, 1976). Native-born workers quickly developed a fear of competition with the South Asian immigrants (Hess, 1976). These immigrants became targets of the Asian exclusionists almost as soon as they started competing for jobs (Lee & Yung, 2010). They argued that the South Asians worked for low wages, exhibited unassimilable cultural habits, and participated in political radicalism (Lee & Yung, 2010). As South Asians confronted a growing hostility, they drifted more and more toward agricultural work for which there was little competition (Jensen, 1988). The land in central California was very similar to the Punjab region of the Indian sub-continent, so many South Asian immigrants headed there to make a life (Jensen, 1988).

The years 1907 to 1910 saw the most intensive South Asian immigration into the U.S. than during any other previous era (Chan, 1991). During this time period, between 1,000 and 2,000 South Asians entered the U.S. each year (Jensen, 1988). The South Asians became tough competitors who the native population saw as “black white” people (Jensen, 1988, p. 39). In 1907, an organization originally dedicated to opposing Japanese and Korean immigration changed its name to the Asiatic Exclusion League specifically to include South Asians in the fight; its stated goals included an influence of political officials through open hostility against South Asians (Jensen, 1988). It publicized a fear that because “Hindus” and the native-born exclusionists were members of same ethnological family, the South Asians would be
eligible for citizenship which would make their exclusion more difficult (Hess, 1976, p. 162). Nativist attitudes grew louder and more aggressive as the Asiatic Exclusion League argued that the U.S. needed to be maintained as a country for white men (Jensen, 1988). Not all native-born citizens bought into the racial conflict; some contended that the struggle was purely economic (Jensen, 1988).

The Angel Island Immigration Station opened in January 1910 just as the exclusionists intensified their fight against South Asians (Lee & Yung, 2010). The print media supported the exclusionists, publishing fear-based stories about the so-called South Asian threat with headlines such as “Hindu Cheap Labor” and “Menace to Prosperity of the Coast” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 149). Newspapers ran political cartoons and photographs to illustrate the “invasion” (Lee & Yung, 2010, p. 149).

Immigration inspector Hart North, known for strictly following immigration law, was promoted to commissioner of the new immigration station (Jensen, 1988). At the same time, exclusionist Frank Ainsworth transferred from Ellis Island to Angel Island (Jensen, 1988). Ainsworth denied entry to South Asians based on community antagonism (Jensen, 1988). He claimed that the level of hostility against the South Asian community was so high that none would be able to find work, thus they would become public charges (Jensen, 1988). Commissioner North disagreed with this assessment (Jensen, 1988). Ainsworth took the conflict straight to Washington, D.C. (Jensen, 1988). Commissioner-General Daniel Keefe sided with the exclusionist inspector and “committed the immigration bureau to a policy of
restriction based not on law but on the prejudices of the community” (Jensen, 1988). Commissioner North was forced out of office in October 1910 on charges that he admitted too many South Asian immigrants (Jensen, 1988; Lee & Yung, 2010).

Immigration officials denied admission to a large number of South Asians using the law that excluded people who were likely to become public charges (Hess, 1976). They made their own determinations regarding employability of South Asian immigrants (Lee & Yung, 2010). Typically, an inspector would note that these immigrants were of the laborer category for which there was no local demand (Lee & Yung, 2010). Samuel Backus, North’s replacement, claimed this group of immigrants would become public charges due to their inability to move up the economic ladder (Lee & Yung, 2010). In 1915, the U.S. Supreme Court put an end to this practice by ruling in favor of a Russian laborer that immigration officials could not use local labor conditions as a reason for exclusion (Lee & Yung, 2010).

To get around that disappointment, immigration inspectors used the prohibition against contract labor against the immigrants by trapping them in the Special Boards of Inquiry line of questioning (Lee & Yung, 2010). The South Asian immigrants were caught between two laws (Lee & Yung, 2010). If they admitted to having work ready for them, they would be excluded on suspicion of being a contract laborer; if they did not yet have employment, they would be excluded on the grounds they were likely to become public charges (Lee & Yung, 2010).
South Asian immigrants worked around exclusion at Angel Island by landing first in the Philippines or Hawaii, which were known for looser inspection processes. When California restrictionist Anthony Caminetti became the U.S. commissioner-general of immigration in 1912, he almost immediately changed the rules regarding immigration from U.S. territories (Jensen, 1988). He now required a second, more thorough examination of non-citizens coming from these regions (Jensen, 1988). The South Asians unsuccessfully fought this in court, but the judge’s ruling was not a clear win for Caminetti as the judge questioned the wide net cast by these new procedures (Jensen, 1988). On the East Coast, exclusionists worried about southern and eastern Europeans and saw no connection to the West Coast concerns about Asian immigration even though 60% of South Asians admitted to the U.S. between 1912 and 1914 arrived through Ellis Island, and others were attempting to enter through southern ports (Jensen, 1988). The immigration commissioner began to worry that judges in other parts of the country would also question his procedures (Jensen, 1988).

By 1913, Caminetti was tired of “depending on a policy without full legal authority” (Jensen, 1988, p. 151). He found a friend in California Representative John Raker who was working hard to get a complete Asian exclusion act passed (Jensen, 1988). Raker’s main argument for Asian exclusion was to prevent “Americans from becoming a ‘subjective race’ or a ‘bad hybrid’” (Jensen, 1988, p. 153). Secretary of Labor William Wilson suggested that Raker introduce a bill that
based exclusion on geography rather than race, one that carefully sketched out Asia while retaining the treaty with Japan (Jensen, 1988). In February 1913, Caminetti testified before a Congressional hearing on South Asian immigration stating that he needed legislation to stop the hordes that were imposing themselves on the people of the Pacific Coast (Jensen, 1988). He threatened that without prompt action, this group would soon inhabit the southern portion of the United States (Jensen, 1988). In his passionate testimony, he exaggerated the total numbers of South Asians in the United States, in an attempt to create an emergency (Jensen, 1988). The fight for a geographical exclusion bill continued unabated until 1917 when Congress passed the law containing an Asiatic Barred Zone (Jensen, 1988).

South Asians had the highest rate of denial and some of the longest detentions at Angel Island (Lee & Yung, 2010). Lacking community support and a strong home government protecting their interests, South Asians had a difficult time fighting discriminatory immigration policy implementation (Lee & Yung, 2010). They grew frustrated about their detentions and angry with the British government for not coming to their defense (Lee & Yung, 2010). Many students and laborers who entered the U.S. through Angel Island became active members of the drive for Indian Independence (the Ghadar movement) which began in 1913 as an informal meeting of Indian nationalists led by outspoken Har Dayal (Hess, 1976; Lee & Yung, 2010). For these immigrants, the Ghadar movement represented hope for both an independent India and improved treatment in the U.S. (Lee & Yung, 2010).
Evidence in the Angel Island files shows that immigration inspectors became monitoring agents watching the activities of those allowed to enter (Lee & Yung, 2010). Surveillance activities uncovered a connection between Indian nationalists and officials from the German consulate which became known as the “Hindu conspiracy” (Jensen, 1988, p. 213). A report by an immigration official stated that the revolutionary movement was achieving great success among most of the students and the laboring class (Hess, 1976). The movement to free India found support on the East Coast when a student turned radical, Taraknath Das, began to organize the South Asian community in New York City in 1909 (Jensen, 1988). One method of organization included printing a newspaper, Free Hindustan (Jensen, 1988). When copies of the publication reached Calcutta, British officials became alarmed (Jensen, 1988). British immigration investigator W. C. Hopkinson made a deal with Commissioner Caminetti in which the two secretly exchanged information on “Indian aliens landing at New York” (Jensen, 1988, p. 158). The clandestine exchanges of information also included the activities of Indians in California (Jensen, 1988). Having accomplished his goal in New York, Das slipped back to Vancouver and then to U. C. Berkeley in California, agitating for Indian independence along the way (Jensen, 1988).

In March, 1914, Har Dayal was arrested on charges of being an anarchist (Lee & Yung, 2010). Dayal’s highly publicized deportation hearing on Angel Island intensified the government’s case that more and more dangerous Indian radicals were
loose in the United States which in turn nationalized the movement to exclude all South Asians and led to the passage of the comprehensive immigration act of 1917 (Jensen, 1988; Lee & Yung, 2010). “Indian radical activities alone would probably not have turned the tide;” they combined with “pro-British and anti-German” attitudes to attract support on the East Coast (Jensen, 1988, p. 162).

By 1917, due to poor organization, excellent British surveillance activities, and minimal support in India, the Ghadar movement began to collapse (Hess, 1976). On the morning that President Wilson declared the U.S.’s entrance into World War I, federal officials issued arrest warrants for all the Indians involved in the “German-Hindu conspiracy” (Jensen, 1988, p. 222). The indictments came from a British and New York City police department investigation of C. K Chakravarty, whom the German government had sent to the U.S. for the purpose of conducting revolutionary work (Hess, 1976). Officials decided they did not have enough evidence against Indians in New York, but they indicted some men in Chicago to give credence to the conspiracy theory (Jensen, 1988). The Chicago defendants were “found guilty of violating the neutrality law against military expeditions and of conspiracy to violate the law” (Jensen, 1988, p. 223). In July 1917, a San Francisco grand jury indicted 124 men on conspiracy charges (Jensen, 1988). Only 35, including 17 Indians, were actually brought to trial (Hess, 1976). The “Hindus” became known as traitors since the U.S. and Great Britain were war allies (Hess, 1976, p. 167).
During the highly publicized trial in San Francisco, South Asians as a whole were branded as secretive and evil (Jensen, 1988). The trial had a terrible cost for them; the group did not know whom they could trust (Jensen, 1988). Tensions among the Indian residents increased, causing one defendant to develop a mental illness in jail and reaching a pinnacle when one Indian defendant shot and killed fellow defendant and movement leader Ram Chandra in the courtroom (Jensen, 1988). A marshal fired a shot across the room and killed the assailant (Jensen, 1988).

The conspiracy trial “made the United States less a land of liberty” (Jensen, 1988, p. 224). The U.S. government was now one that opposed movements for political liberation and made an official policy of disapproving citizen participation in such (Jensen, 1988). The U.S. turned against its tradition of providing political refuge and toward deporting political activists (Jensen, 1988). “As convicted aliens,” deportation based on immigration law was almost assured which was a death warrant for some of the men (Jensen, 1988, p. 226). South Asians in the U.S. immediately began a campaign to gather U.S. citizens on the side of those fighting for independence from Britain (Jensen, 1988). Eventually, former foes of South Asian labor, such as the California State Federation of Labor and the American Labor Party, joined the prisoners’ defense (Jensen, 1988). Their efforts were to no avail when a bill allowing for the deportation of “any alien convicted of violating or conspiring to violate the neutrality law” quietly passed through the halls of Congress and became law in 1920 (Jensen, 1988, p. 242).
While fighting for the right to enter and remain in the U.S., South Asians also fought for a political voice through citizenship (Chan, 1991). Anthropologists classified South Asians as Caucasians, but arguments abounded as to what that meant (Haney Lopez, 1991). From 1913 – 1923, the courts struggled with the concept of race in terms of naturalization (Jensen, 1988). In 1913, a judge in South Carolina declared that Caucasian and white were not synonymous; white, he said, clearly meant “white Europeans and their descendants,” such as those immigrating to the newly formed United States in 1790 (Jensen, 1988, p. 253). He declared that a South Asian applicant of such dark skin as to almost be black was obviously not white (Jensen, 1988). In 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against naturalization for a Japanese immigrant, Takao Ozawa, because he obviously was not of Caucasian stock, so he was not eligible for citizenship (Jensen, 1988). The South Asians felt it confirmed their claim to citizenship based on eligibility as Caucasians (Hess, 1976). However, three months later, the Supreme Court ruled against Bhagat Singh Thind’s naturalization granted in Oregon (Hess, 1976). While “the Court was willing to admit a technical link between Europeans and South Asians,” it insisted “on their separation in the popular imagination” (Haney Lopez, 1996, p. 89). The Court legalized the definition of white not based on science but by common knowledge of the common man (Haney Lopez, 1996; Hess, 1976; Jensen, 1988). “The Thind decision represented but one phase of a widespread effort, backed by popular consensus, to reduce non-Anglo-Saxon influence in America” (Hess, 1976, p. 170).
The ruling also set a precedent for rescinding citizenship since a federal court in Oregon had originally granted Thind’s citizenship, but the Supreme Court took it away (Hess, 1976). Another consequence was that the South Asians in California were suddenly subjected to the harsh California Alien Land Law, and many lost their land and their livelihoods (Hess, 1976).

Between 1920 and 1940, approximately 3,000 people returned to India with hundreds being formally deported (Hess, 1976). During this same period, an estimated 3,000 South Asians entered illegally through the Mexican border (Hess, 1976).

Despite the fact that this was a relatively small group of immigrants, it was possibly one of the most complex groups, and it may have had the greatest impact on the United State (Jensen, 1988). The struggle between Euro-American workers and Asian laborers was significant in the legal changes that resulted during the search for solutions (Jensen, 1988). Maybe the most significant result of the South Asian immigration experience was the discovery that fighting against discrimination whether on the job or through the court system created a sense of hope and dignity (Chan, 1919).

Conclusions

Ever since the founding of the United States, native-born citizens and established immigrants wrestled (and still struggle) with the question of who should be allowed to enter and plant their roots. The conflict between the principles stated in
the Declaration of Independence that all people are created equal and the belief in the sanctity of the country’s borders created a series of immigration laws open to interpretation (Cannato, 2009). The Ellis Island and Angel Island immigration stations have been preserved as a reminder of this conflict of ideals.

The end of the 19th century marked the beginning of a mass migration of the world’s people with millions flooding the shores of the United States. The large numbers of immigrants arriving with unfamiliar customs, languages, and appearances created fear in those who came to the continent before them. This wave of immigration caused, in 1917, a closing of the country’s gates to people from an entire geographic region encompassing most of Asia and severely limited, in 1924, admittance to others from Europe.

In response to the flood of immigrants landing at the ports in New York, the federal government seized control of immigration policy. Attempting to protect federal tax money from waste and fraud in the hands of immigration officials and immigrants from unscrupulous inspectors and contractors, the first federal immigration station was built at Ellis Island. This processing center was built to impress newcomers as they landed in the United States. Yet, not all immigrants were impressed by the physical structure as they navigated the emotional structure of immigration processing. Immigration law as written differed dramatically from immigration law as enforced. Port of entry administrators and the inspectors below them found their own ways to interpret immigration laws in determining who was a
desirable immigrant and who would not make a good citizen of the United States. Within months of its grand opening, the people running the new immigration station came under investigation for the same behaviors that caused the closing of its predecessor, Castle Garden.

The main purpose of Ellis Island’s sister station at the West Coast port of entry, Angel Island, was to administer an immigration law that excluded a whole group of people from the American dream. There was never an open door policy on the West Coast of the United States. The Statue of Liberty did not shine her beacon toward Asia’s teeming masses of tired and poor people. Instead, a ramshackle, prison-like detention center held immigrants until government agents determined their fates. Here, as in New York, immigration inspectors found loopholes in each law that came to pass. They acted as sentries protecting the United States from people who appeared to pose threats to an established way of life. These government agents even participated in rounding up and deporting those allowed entrance yet determined unacceptable after they spread across the country.

One purpose for studying history is to learn from past mistakes while honoring the achievement of those who rose above inequities and injustices and now provide examples of determination and hope (Jones, 2005). South Asian immigrants suffered some of the harshest inequities and injustices of all the people who came to the United States, yet their story has been buried within the larger story of Asian immigration, when it has been told at all. These immigrants did not simply accept
their fate at the hands of civil servants and legislators; they fought for their right to enter and participate in the United States through hard work, the United States court system, and an appeal to the sense of fairness that resides in most Americans. The story of the South Asian immigrants provides an opportunity for students to investigate and analyze immigration law and its implementation in the United States and through that analysis, make distinctions between the myths and realities of immigration.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology used to research the evolution of U.S. immigration and naturalization laws, the effects of immigration on U.S. society, the eastern and western ports of entry to the U.S., and the South Asian immigrant experience. It will also discuss the methods used to create a curriculum designed to help students develop critical thinking and analysis skills which they can use to make their own judgments about the immigration myths and the impact of immigration law and to apply those judgments to the current debates on immigration.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The United States is “a nation of immigrants, to be sure, but not just any immigrants” (Zolberg, 2006, p. 1). Immigration is a topic of concern to many people in and out of the country. Currently, as through its history, United States citizens argue who can and cannot live within the borders of our country. We can only rationally debate the issue when we understand what policies we have tried in the past and how those policies affected everyone involved. We can only rationally debate the issue when we can discern the truth within the myths of immigration history. I have spent the past two years attempting to gain just such an understanding in order to better lead my students to their own conclusions about this important historical subject.

Research Question

How did the immigration policies at Angel Island differ from those at Ellis Island? How did social pressures affect political immigration decisions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries? These were my original questions about immigration to the United States. I gradually refined these questions by placing them into a classroom context. What do these questions have to do with my students or those in any public school?
Ideally, students of American history would be able to critically examine the impact of United States immigration policies on both immigrants and people born in the country. They would be able to apply their analysis to current immigration issues. However, because of curricular limitations, students often do not investigate and analyze the impact of immigration policies on American society. Therefore, students do not develop the ability to critically assess the rationale for and impact of immigration policy on a broad range of members of United States society. With this in mind, I set out to create a curriculum that offers students the opportunity to examine immigration policy implementation. Along the way, I discovered the inspiring story of a little-known immigrant group that had an impact on immigration and naturalization laws in the United States. I decided to revolve the examination of immigration policy around the experience of the South Asian immigrants during the first 25 years of the 20th century because their story answers many of the questions about how immigration policy affects immigrants and native-born people alike.

The Research Process

Knowing that I wanted to explore the history of United States immigration with my students, I needed something concrete on which to pin such an abstract idea. Ellis Island is a prominent physical symbol of immigration, but it represents only part of the immigration story. In California, another physical symbol of immigration exists, one that is less known – Angel Island. My initial idea was to look at the
implementation of federal immigration law by comparing the immigrant experiences at the East Coast port of entry to those at the West Coast port of entry.

New questions arose. How were the experiences similar and how did they differ? Were federal policies evenly implemented? How did human nature affect implementation of abstract law?

My search for the answers to these questions began with a study of the history of immigration to the United States. I chose several books written by historians, political scientists, and sociologists who explored the topic of immigration from a variety of perspectives: those of the immigrants themselves; those whose communities experienced change due to the arrival of new and different languages, cultures, and behaviors; and the politicians who sought to control it all.

I first read the seminal works on immigration, particularly Roger Garis’ *Immigration Restriction: A Study of the Opposition to and Regulation of Immigration into the United States*, John Higham’s *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860 – 1925* and Oscar Handlin’s *The Uprooted*. Of the more recently published books that I read, Aristide Zolberg’s *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* proved to be the most valuable to me because Zolberg concentrated on the evolution of immigration laws and the consequences of their implementation. All of the general immigration books focused primarily on European immigration through Ellis Island. Several of the authors explored
immigration from other continents and through other ports of entry, but those discussions were limited.

Once I developed an outline of the general history of immigration and gained an understanding of the factors involved, I began to read the histories of Angel Island and Ellis Island to document the implementation of immigration policy as it evolved.

Reading Erika Lee and Judy Yung’s *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* drastically changed the direction of my research. While I skimmed through the various tables located in the appendix, one specific statistic jumped out at me: between 1911 and 1932, 25.08% of all East Indian immigrant applicants were debarred. This was by far the largest percentage of immigrants turned away from the United States out of the 41 specific groups listed in the table. The next highest percentage of denial went to the 42nd group, “Other Peoples,” at 7.81%. Knowing that there was a story behind those numbers, I set out to find it. I did not want to give up my original idea, so I decided to blend the two research goals by looking at the immigrant experience at both ports of entry through the perspective of the South Asians. Now I added the history of South Asian immigration to my list of reading material.

Lee and Yung’s book contained a chapter devoted to the South Asian immigrant experience at Angel Island, but Joan Jensen’s *Passage from India: Asian Indian Immigrants in North America* provided a fuller understanding of this remarkable story. Within Jensen’s doctoral dissertation was proof that these
immigrants passed through both ports of entry, although much more frequently through Angel Island. I felt encouraged to continue down this path.

In addition to reading books on immigration in general, Angel and Ellis Islands, and the South Asian immigrant experience, I toured both historical parks and searched the National Archives in San Bruno, California and Washington, D. C., the New York Public Library and the Ellis Island library for primary source documentation.

Touring the renovated immigration stations gave me an opportunity to physically experience the places so central to my story. I purposely participated in the official tour guided by a historical expert at Angel Island. The tour did not provide any useful information about South Asian immigrants, although the Angel Island museum contained artifacts from Indian immigrants within its dormitory exhibit. During the tour, I shared what I knew of the South Asian immigrant story with the tour guides and my fellow participants. The tour guide was genuinely surprised by the information I added to her knowledge. At Ellis Island, I took the self-guided audio tour and spoke at length with several officials on duty. I spent four hours in the library talking with the librarian and reading through a variety of papers kept on file. The only useful item I found regarding South Asian immigrants at this port of entry was a photograph. The librarian did ask me to submit my final project to the library for use by future researchers.
My searches at the various archives and the New York Public Library proved extremely productive. Reading documents that informed my authors was exciting. I had a difficult time containing a professional composure when I read a letter from the Commissioner-General to the Ellis Island commissioner in which Anthony Caminetti instructed, “It is important…that the fact that this reciprocal arrangement exists shall not become public.” This document supported the idea that the British and American governments had a secret agreement to spy on Indian nationals. I also found documents that enhanced my understanding of the situations that prompted changes in immigration policies at both ports of entry, many of which ended up as changes in immigration law, such as letters between immigration commissioners who were concerned about the number of South Asians entering the continental United States from the Philippines and Hawaii where immigrant inspection was more loosely conducted. After these immigration officials testified before Congress on this matter, inspection at all ports of entry was tightened and the struggle toward a complete Asiatic exclusion law began. Many of the documents I digitized provided support for the lessons in my two-week curriculum. Before I began to develop this curriculum, I needed to establish a purpose for teaching this subject.

*Justification for the Curriculum*

Students need to develop the ability to critically assess the rationale for and impact of immigration policy on a broad range of members of United States society. They need to learn to analyze the historical stories they read and hear to distinguish
fact from fiction, truth from myth. Patterns of discrimination against the entire South Asian community in the United States can be learned from studying the treatment they received at the Angel Island Immigration Station (Lee & Yung, 2010). The treatment this group of immigrants received at Ellis Island is a story that has not yet been told (Jensen, 1988). That particular part of the story still holds many mysteries. I hope that this lesson plan plants a seed of curiosity in at least one student who will seek to find the missing information.

Curriculum Development

During the first year of the search for answers to my questions, I created a 10-hour curriculum based on a history learning lab idea that I titled *Think like a Historian*. I used a group of eight middle school students to pilot the five assignments within the unit of study and took extensive notes to document the lesson successes and failures. These were independent study students participating in a distance learning model of instruction. This lesson plan included very rudimentary information on the South Asian immigrants because I implemented it early in the research process. It revolved around primary source analysis, and my first discovery was how little experience students have with this particular skill. My second discovery was how time consuming research is, especially when most of the information remains archived in libraries and research facilities, not located on the Internet. I concluded that my final curriculum needed to focus on thinking like a historian, not researching like one. I also needed to incorporate ideas from Russian
psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory. My original lesson plan included a lot of independent work which frustrated the inexperienced students. I needed to create a setting in which students would be led and supported by a skilled expert and yet would learn from each other. I wanted to create an analytical-based curriculum without assuming the students had experience with the pre-requisite skills. I also needed to build academic language throughout the process. Upon advice from Education professor, Tom Cook, I used Jeff Zwiers’ excellent guide *Building Academic Language: Essential Practices for Content Classroom* to outline the new version of my curriculum. The basic structure of the entire curriculum follows Zwiers’ sample lesson plan. To fit his many vocabulary development ideas into a lesson, Zwiers suggests following what appears to be a traditional structure with a lesson hook and connection to background knowledge followed by an explicit development of vocabulary. Here I based the verbal and visual vocabulary connections presented in the second lesson directly on Zwiers’ tested ideas. The verbal connections consist of having the students discuss times when they performed an action using an academic vocabulary word, such as “I was biased when I went to see that movie after hearing about it from my friends who loved it.” Traditional maps or Google Earth are used to create understanding of geographical terms. The students connect visual images to the content vocabulary extensively in this particular lesson, but they update their drawings or other pictorial representations of the words as their comprehension improves throughout the following lessons.
As I wrote my literature review, I began to notice a common thread throughout the collected works. Several authors used the word myth in discussions about immigration. In *Coming to America: A history of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, Roger Daniels explicitly discussed three immigration myths (Plymouth Rock, the Statue of Liberty, and the melting pot), which I eventually made the centerpiece of the new curriculum. This was a natural evolution from my lesson hook, viewing the first 20 minutes of Steven Spielberg’s *An American Tail* and a discussion of myths and symbols the movie director incorporated into his animated immigration tale. I used this hook in the original lesson plan and found it very appealing to the students. Not only were they capable of discerning myths from reality, 100% of the students participated in the discussion without pressure from the teacher. I decided that this was an angle that would create interest in students.

In addition to the hook, I incorporated two other successful lessons from the original curriculum plan: the SIGHT Power Point lesson and using primary sources to support or refute one’s thesis.

The SIGHT Power Point presentation was based on a lesson I learned from my history professor, Gayle Olson-Raymer. The students in my pilot program were actively engaged during the original presentation. In this lesson, students look at and analyze one image of Ellis Island and then one image of Angel Island through a structured process. They Scan the image, Identify the topic (while looking four quadrants of the image), Guess the artist’s intent, Hear the voices of the people
involved, and Talk about their interpretations. Students who participate in this lesson learn the importance of looking closely at documents to find details that are not immediately apparent. At the end of the lesson, they compare the images of Ellis and Angel Islands and interpret what the differences meant for immigrants passing through the ports of entry.

The original curriculum revolved around thesis development and primary source research. When I attempted to conduct the lessons with my middle school language arts class, I quickly came to realize that the lesson was not practical. The students did not have enough background knowledge nor the skill development necessary to conduct research on their own. However, I wanted to help my students hone thesis development and primary source analysis. The final curriculum provides students with extensive experience in primary source analysis. Throughout the following 11-day curriculum, the students practice, in a supportive and social environment, the analysis of a variety of primary sources while learning a part of the United States immigration story. Using teacher models and examples from their classmates, students learn skills that are useful in a variety of subjects, not just history. They practice looking closely at documents and answering questions like “Why do you think this document was written, and what evidence in the document helps you know why it was written?” Combining their analysis of primary sources with information learned from secondary sources, particularly the information provided by the teacher during each lesson, they shed their own light on the reality
South Asian immigrants faced and, in the culminating lessons, compare that reality to Daniels’ three immigration myths.

By the time they get to the lesson in which they work in small groups to develop a thesis statement and analyze three documents to support their theory, they have had experience answering the open-ended questions found on the National Archives primary source analysis worksheets. I incorporated a model lesson for thesis development, so that students with little or no experience with this skill can participate successfully, but I recommend that the teacher implementing this curriculum have prior experience with leading students in thesis development.

Overview of Instructional Delivery

The majority of my instruction is delivered through technology. I created these lessons with my personalized learning students in mind. I delivered the test lessons for both the original curriculum and the one provided in the next chapter with the use of the Elluminate platform for live instruction. CourseSites by Blackboard housed the original course resources and assignments. Google Sites holds the final product in a user-friendly format. The curriculum is all-inclusive. The user simply clicks on the link for a specific lesson within the curriculum and finds the scripted lesson plan complete with all the necessary appendices attached at the bottom. The most any teacher needs to do beyond reading the material thoroughly is print (or copy) the appendices and create a useful filing system for them. All the student materials are provided, including a wide variety of primary source documents for the
culminating activities. There is no need for outside research, which eliminates hours of student frustration because the majority of the documents included in this curriculum are not posted online.

**Conclusion**

Because immigration is a controversial topic discussed in the news on a daily basis and because many students belong to families of immigrants, it is important that they know the history of immigration to the United States. They cannot engage in logical and factual debates about the topic without analyzing and evaluating the way immigration has been handled in the past. The curriculum that follows in the next chapter provides the students with 11 days of varying experiences in which they investigate, analyze, and evaluate the impact of immigration policy on one particular group of immigrants as well as the larger United States society. I hope that as they engage in this curriculum about early 20th century immigration to the United States, they gain experience creating questions in general and finding answers to those questions. I hope students who engage in this curriculum apply the analysis skills they develop to the information they read and hear about the current immigration debates and to other topics of importance in their communities.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT

All of the material for the curriculum “Immigration: Myths and Realities” is located on the disk enclosed on the back cover. You can also access the entire curriculum at https://sites.google.com/site/mythsandrealitiesofimmigration/.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

The story of the South Asian immigrant experience deserves to be told. New generations of South Asian immigrants inhabit classrooms throughout the United States, particularly in California. Currently, when these students read the required social studies texts and engage in discussions about those readings, chances are high that they will learn nothing about their ancestors’ histories. Although they will learn the broader story of Asian immigration, it is typically separated from the discussion of European immigration. The story of South Asian immigration has been ignored by most historians both in the United States and in India, so students most likely will not hear it at all. Using the South Asian immigrant experience supplements the information they learn in the traditional texts rather than supplanting it.

Limitations of the Project

I designed the lessons that make up the Content chapter to work in a variety of classroom settings, but I piloted them in a distance learning format. I loved utilizing many of the tools technology offers. Elluminate allowed for real-time instruction with audio and visual aids. Google Docs worked well for having students share their ideas as they viewed their classmates’ thoughts while they wrote their own. Google Earth accentuated the geography portions of the lessons. Housing the
entire curriculum on Google Sites made accessing each lesson and all appendices as simple as a click of the mouse.

I tested each lesson and made changes in the daily lesson plan as necessary, but my pilot program was very small; a volunteer group of one 8th grade student and two 11th grade students helped me figure out which lessons were much too long and contained unclear directions. A classroom teacher with 30 students will have a completely different experience with this curriculum. I expect users to adapt it to their needs and abilities.

Teachers with limited technology might find this curriculum difficult to present. It involves two PowerPoint presentations, several video segments, and many digitized primary source documents. A teacher without access to a computer will not be able to view the curriculum because I chose to present it in digital format due to its length. Teachers without a digital projector and speakers will not be able to present the PowerPoint lessons or the videos. Instructors working with students without a computer lab will have to print all the student materials, including the 86 pages of primary source documents necessary for the culminating activity. Not all of these documents need to be printed since only three are needed for each group. A teacher could have the students choose which documents they need from the annotated bibliography and then print just the desired documents. This would be a time-consuming process, though.
Another problem a teacher might have to work around is the presentation of videos. Three videos are located on Youtube.com which many schools block. The curriculum hook, *An American Tail*, is not allowed on video sharing websites, so a teacher would need access to the DVD and capability of playing the first 22 minutes for the class.

**Implications for Future Research**

The story of the South Asian immigrants that I tell in this project comes entirely from the perspective of the United States. I used no documents from the South Asian immigrants themselves. I did make a phone call to and emailed a request for assistance from the Gurdwara in Stockton, California, but made contact with no one. I also attempted to find a source at the Sikh Temple in Lodi, California, but allowed my natural shyness to intimidate me during the Sunday gathering. A very important addition to this work would be the immigrants’ words in letters home to India or stories passed down from one generation to another. *Echoes of Freedom*, a U. C. Berkeley website (http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/SSEAL/echoes/) provides some of this information and would be a great place for a researcher to begin.

Very little information exists in the academic literature regarding the South Asian immigrant experience at Ellis Island. Between 1912 and 1914, 60% of the South Asians admitted to the U.S. arrived through Ellis Island, yet not much is known about their experience. My research did not reveal answers I had hoped to find. Did the evidence they left get washed away by the flood of European
immigrants? Why did these approximately 300 immigrants choose to enter through New York? How did they travel to the East Coast? What treatment did these immigrants receive at Ellis Island? How did that treatment compare to Angel Island? There are boxes upon boxes of materials archived in Washington, D.C., waiting to be analyzed. Despite my best efforts, I could not get to them all, and I did not find exactly what I was looking for in the files I requested. I had hoped to find interviews of South Asian detainees at Ellis Island to compare to those I found at Angel Island. Many of the documents I digitized and used for this project were the same ones found by my secondary sources. I hold out hope that there are more documents that will answer these questions once they are brought into the light. I want to continue the search myself.

Another area for further research concerns what happened to the South Asian immigrants who were fortunate enough to receive admittance to the United States. Where did they go, and how did they get there? What was life like for them once they settled into communities? The answers to these questions can be found in journal articles, book chapters, and anecdotal stories, but they deserve additional academic study to round out the South Asian immigrant experience.

Academic discussions of the inspectors and medical officers are couched in general terms. For example, San Francisco immigration officials were characterized as “lower-level government workers” (Lee, 2003, p. 48). Who were these government workers? What were their qualifications? How did they get their jobs?
Since the immigrant inspectors worked for the federal bureaucracy, looking at the immigrant stations from their perspective could provide a clearer comparison than the picture that emerges from the immigrant perspective. Again, I believe the archived materials hold answers to these questions.

All of these topics are of interest and would add important information to the story but are beyond the scope of this project, the ultimate goals of which are to help students develop a curiosity about social science topics and to introduce them to the idea of doing rather than memorizing history. It is my hope that the curriculum will inspire students to research one or more of these questions and add to the body of knowledge about United States immigration policies, with a specific focus on South Asian immigration.
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