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Sylvia D. Turner

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Date

Thy Kingdom Come: The Intersection of King Cotton and  
Immigration Policy

By

Sylvia D. Turner  
Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

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Delores P. Aldridge  
Advisor

---

Irene Browne  
Committee Member

---

Joseph Crespino  
Committee Member

---

Dennis J. Condron  
Committee Member

---

Richard Rubinson  
Committee Member

Accepted:

---

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

---

Date

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By

Sylvia D. Turner  
B.A., Agnes Scott College  
M.A., Emory University

Advisor: Delores P. Aldridge, Ph.D.

An abstract of  
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University  
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2010

## Abstract

### Thy Kingdom Come: The Intersection of King Cotton and Immigration Policy

By

Sylvia D. Turner

In terms of legal immigration, President Obama has advocated that the United States increase the number of documented immigrants in order to meet the demand for labor and to keep families together. Although addressing illegal immigration in its party platform, his Democratic Party has remained relatively silent on the issue of legal immigration. Political pundits have argued that while the issue of illegal immigration is problematic and contentious, the implications of legal immigration have made policy debates even more divisive. Some scholars have long maintained that immigration policies have reflected the country's labor needs. For example, Southern Democrats considered immigration measures as a way to secure enough workers for the South's agriculturally-based economy. Steinberg suggests that immigration policy becomes less restrictive when demand for low-wage labor is high; and more restrictive when demand is low (Steinberg 2001). Given the South's need for cheap labor and its tenuous race relations, what role did the region play in the passage of immigration policy? After all, many of the immigrant groups that arrived served as sources of cheap labor, on which the southern cotton economy was desperately reliant. This research project examines immigration legislation passed between 1865 and 1952: The Chinese Exclusion Act, The Geary Act, The 1917 Immigration Act, The 1924 Immigration Act and The McCarran-Walter Act. This period represents the end of the Civil War through the demise of hand-picked cotton in the South. Using qualitative methods, my research will address two inter-related questions. *First, how did the regional politics of cotton within the South influence federal immigration policy between 1865 and 1952? Second, what is the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends?*

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## **Introduction**

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

*A ruler who oppresses the poor is like a  
driving rain that leaves no crops.*  
Proverbs 28:3

In terms of legal immigration, President Obama has advocated that the United States increase the number of documented immigrants in order to meet the demand for labor and to keep families together.<sup>1</sup> Although addressing illegal immigration in its party platform, his Democratic Party has remained relatively silent on the issue of legal immigration. However, while the issue of illegal immigration is problematic and contentious, the implications of legal immigration have made policy debates even more divisive. We can situate the immigration policy debate squarely within the sociological literature.

Some scholars argue that immigration policies reflect nativists' ideals of restriction or complete exclusion of various racial and ethnic groups. Lee's examination of the Chinese exclusion act lends support for this claim. According to Lee, from the legislation of the Chinese Exclusion Act, race was the primary consideration on which Chinese exclusion and subsequent immigration policy was based (Lee 2002).

Still other scholars have maintained that U.S. immigration policies have reflected the country's labor needs (Steinberg 2001). At first glance, there appears to be solid evidence to support this claim. For example, Southern Democrats considered immigration measures as a way to secure enough workers for the South's agriculturally-based economy after slavery. Specifically, Southern planters were able to lure Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Demand may be questionable in the 2009 economy.

immigrants to the Mississippi Delta in an attempt to replace former slaves on cotton plantations (Loewen 1988). In addition to Chinese immigrants, Mexican immigrants served as a source of cheap labor for agriculture under the Bracero program between 1917 and 1920 and again from 1942-1964. Steinberg suggests that immigration policy becomes less restrictive when demand for low-wage labor is high, and more restrictive when demand is low (Steinberg 2001). Given the South's dominance in labor and race relations, what role did the region play in the passage of immigration policy? After all, many of the immigrant groups that arrived served as sources of cheap labor, on which the Southern cotton economy was desperately reliant.

Some scholars have traditionally viewed the South as separate from the rest of the nation. For example, Quadagno argues that the South was its own nation within the U.S. The South differed from the rest of the nation because of the region's dependence on agriculture; the political and economic disfranchisement of Blacks, and its one-party political system (Quadagno 1994). However, according to Cobb, historical sociologists,

need to look outward and re-examine the South's socio-economic and cultural characteristics within the context of its interactions with, rather than its isolation from, the larger national and global setting. Approached in this fashion, the Delta became a part of the world, rather than a world apart, a place where questions about the heart and soul of a region often produced answers about the conscience and character of a nation as well (Cobb 1992:xi).

In other words, the relationship between the South and the rest of the nation proves more dynamic than scholars have previously theorized. Cobb's assertion does not minimize the South's influence on national politics, but instead situates the South in the middle of it.

In the classic work of V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key helps us understand the source of that Southern influence. Key asserts that the South's

influence was rooted in Black-belt Whites<sup>2</sup> who were successful in imposing their will on their states and who also exerted a significant amount of influence throughout the region (Key 1949). Historians Alston and Ferrie note that southern planters were not directly involved in policymaking but instead used Congressmen as their political agents (1999). The Southern Democratic Party was run by planters and merchants from counties dominated by cotton production (Alston and Ferrie 1999). The relationship between Southern Democrats and cotton elites should result in support for policies that reflect their interests. The centrality of cotton to the southern economy and national economy, the need for low wage labor as well as the growing influence of Southern Democrats in the region and nation, led me to further consider, what is the relationship between the politics of cotton and the passage of federal immigration policy?

### **Research Questions**

This research project examines five major pieces of immigration legislation passed between 1865 and 1952<sup>3</sup>. This period represents the end of the Civil War through the demise of hand-picked cotton in the South. Using qualitative methods, my research will address two inter-related questions. *First, how did the regional politics of cotton within the South influence federal immigration policy between 1865 and 1952? Second, what is the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends?* For the purpose of my study, the South can be conceptualized as those states which seceded from the Union to form the Confederacy. These 11 states include: Alabama, Arkansas,

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<sup>2</sup> The Black-belt consists of those counties in which the percentage of Blacks exceeds 50%.

<sup>3</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), The Geary Act (1892), The 1917 Immigration Act, The 1924 Immigration Act and The McCarran-Walter Act (1952).

Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The politics of cotton can be conceptualized as cotton production and the political and social relations in which it was embedded.

The legend of King Cotton is not without substantive merit. Although my study begins after the end of the Civil War, the legacy of King Cotton can be traced back to the pre-Civil War era. Prior to the War, cotton fueled the southern economy, and structured race relations in the South. Nationally, the West, Midwest and the Northeast were also dependent on the Southern cotton economy as manufacturers and consumers. Both the West and Midwest sold over \$30 million of food supplies to southern cotton planters each year. The Northwest relied on southern cotton to maintain its \$100 million a year textile industry. The Northern economy also reaped the benefits from a robust southern cotton economy because the region profited from selling over \$150 million of manufactured goods to the South annually. The centrality of cotton extended beyond the borders of the U.S. The South supplied over two-thirds of all cotton globally (Wright 1986).

The lack of crop diversification also contributed to the rise of King Cotton. Planters believed that diversification would undermine the cotton economy. As a result, landowners discouraged and sometimes actively prevented sharecroppers and tenants from growing their own food since this undermined cotton production (Fite 1984). Southern farmers became more dependent on the cotton economy. Food often had to be bought on credit. The primary reason for the specialization in cotton was that cotton was far more valuable per acre than any other crop (Wright 1986).

After the war and the economic depression of 1878, the cotton economy rebounded and expanded eastward. Previously depleted cotton-producing areas within

the southern Piedmont region were revitalized and up-country areas not previously associated with slavery were pulled into the cotton economy of the post-Civil War (Wright 1986:35). In 1879 the region produced close to 5.7 million bales of cotton. This figure exceeded a prewar production high by over one million bales of cotton. This level of production made the South the dominant world cotton producer. However, the cost to produce cotton also increased because of the growing exportation of cotton to Great Britain, the leader in cotton manufacturing. In addition to the increasing exportation of cotton globally, domestically, the consumption of southern cotton also increased. By 1880, local cotton mills consumed over 30 percent of the cotton grown in the south. From 1878 to 1880, the consumption of raw cotton increased from 186,489 bales to 221,337 bales. This sharp increase in cotton consumption was the result of the South's entry into the cotton spinning industry (Brandfon 1967).

The legacy of King Cotton also shaped race and labor relations in the South. To ensure a sufficient supply of Black labor and reconstitute the system of White supremacy, southern states enacted Black Codes of 1865 and 1866. These codes imposed work requirements that effectively forced many Blacks back into the cotton fields (Cohen 1968). However, simply seeing Blacks on one side of the color line and Whites on the other is shortsighted because Chinese and Mexican immigrants, as well as Mexican Americans also worked as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. In addition, some scholars also erroneously identify the newly reconstituted "color line" for a property line dichotomized by those who own the plantation and those who work in the fields, because of the existence of poor Whites and European immigrants who worked in the cotton

fields. However, according to Foley, by virtue of their class status, poor Whites lost their whiteness, as well as, the status and benefits which accompanied it (1997).

For example, in black-belt counties, strict suffrage laws were passed which disenfranchised Blacks and poor Whites. Many scholars treat poor Whites as simply collateral damage – the unintended victims of restrictive suffrage laws enacted to politically undermine Blacks and safeguard the system of White supremacy. However, Foley provides an alternative perspective which would make poor Whites a target of cotton planters. According to Foley, “poor whites in the cotton south came not only to be seen as a social problem but also to be located in the racial hierarchy as the trash of whiteness”(6). In this light, the disenfranchisement of poor Whites can be viewed not as unintentional but as a direct consequence of their place in the racial hierarchy. Their political disenfranchisement contributed to their economic disenfranchisement just as it did with Blacks. Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans also found themselves on the side of the color line with Blacks and poor Whites. In the South, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans were primarily concentrated in Texas and were recruited to work in the cotton fields after the Civil War and competed with both Black and White sharecroppers and tenant farmers (Foley 1997). Italian and Mexican immigrants were imported to the Mississippi Delta also to work as sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Because cotton planters increasingly came to rely on immigrant labor after the Civil War, they could not afford to remain silent on the immigration question.

Below I provide an examination of the intersection of King Cotton and immigration policy. Chapter One, *Framing the Politics of Cotton*, lays out the three theoretical perspectives structuring this research: minority group threat (also referred to



as the ethno-racial perspective), class-based theory, and the state-centered perspective. I also explore the concept of sectionalism which provides further context within which to examine the South's political culture in contrast to the rest of the nation. Instead of arguing that one perspective can be used to explain immigration policy, I suggest all of the theories are useful in explaining various aspects of the laws highlighted in my study.

In Chapter Two, *Methodology*, I describe the methodology used to examine immigration policy. The qualitative portion of my study includes a content analysis of the Congressional Record for the five years immediately preceding the passage of the policies under study. More specifically, I focus on the position of Congressmen from the 11 states that formerly made up the Confederacy during policy debates on the issue of immigration policy. Quantitatively, using roll call votes, I measure the level of Southern support at the state level for immigration policies. Because I am interested in examining the extent to which the South acted as a region, I also employ the concept of sectionalism to my analysis of roll call votes.

Chapter Three, *King Cotton and Immigration Policy from 1878 to 1892*, focuses on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Geary Act of 1892. The Chinese Exclusion Act was one of the first restrictive immigration laws passed in the U.S. For the first time, the act served to restrict, exclude and deport undesirable immigrants based on race (Lee 2002). The Chinese Exclusion Act suspended all Chinese immigration for ten years including the immigration from higher income groups, not just those who would be employed in low wage occupations (Lee 2002; Daniels 1993). The 1892 Geary Act extended Chinese exclusion for an additional ten years.

The next major piece of immigration legislation was passed in 1917 and is the focus of Chapter Four, *King Cotton and Immigration Policy from 1892-1917*. The Immigration Act of 1917 was passed after Asian Indians began to arrive in the U.S. in greater numbers after the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. The total number of Asian Indians increased from a total of 500 between 1871 and 1899 to slightly over 2,000 in 1900. About 7,000 immigrants arrived between 1905 and 1917 (Reimers 2005). The number of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans also increased. Between 1900 and 1910, approximately 9,300 Mexican immigrants arrived in the U.S., between 1911 and 1914, the total number of immigrants arriving from Mexico decreased to approximately 1,900. However, by the time the 1917 legislation was passed immigration from Mexico was on the upswing. The 1917 Immigration Act established an Asiatic barred zone which covered South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Chapter Five, *King Cotton and Immigration Policy from 1919-1924*, focuses on The Immigration Act of 1924 as passed after Senators unsuccessfully moved to severely limit immigration from African countries. Although not codified into law, between 1914 and 1915, several southern senators moved to restrict all members of the African race, with one senator – Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi – explicitly arguing that Africans were even less desirable than Asian immigrants. The result was the imposition of quotas which limited immigration to 100 individuals from a few African countries (Reimers 2005)

In 1924, the U.S. established a quota system for immigration from each country, which was largely based on the extant racial hierarchy in the U.S. – a significant number of Europeans were allowed entry while entry was cut off completely for individuals from

Asian countries. Congress legally excluded all individuals ineligible for citizenship from entering the U.S. The effect of the law was that all Asian immigrants were barred from entering the U.S. because the 1870 naturalization act allowed only individuals of European and African descent to become citizens (Reimers 2005).

In the final substantive chapter, *King Cotton and Immigration Policy from 1947-1952*, I examine both the Bracero Program and the McCarran-Walter Act. Immigration law remained fairly unchanged until the U.S. entered World War II although the U.S. reinstated the Bracero Program in which Mexico would supply labor for agriculture. Between 1942 and 1964, the Bracero Program attracted nearly five million Mexicans and the number of undocumented Mexican workers was parallel. The McCarran Walter Act was passed in 1952 and called for a ban on issuing visas to anyone suspected of communism, yet allowed entry of refugees fleeing communism.

I conclude my research by summarizing my theoretical and methodological findings. Although this research provides a historical analysis of immigration policy from 1865-1952, I also look at some implications for current and future immigration policies.

## Chapter One

### Thy Kingdom Come: Framing The Politics of Cotton

*Come unto me all ye that labor*  
Matthew 11:28

Some scholars have traditionally viewed the South as separate from the rest of the nation. For example, Quadagno argues that the South was its own nation within the U.S. The South differed from the rest of the nation because of the region's dependence on agriculture; the political and economic disfranchisement of Blacks, and its one-party political system (Quadagno 1994). Others such as Key have challenged the notion of the one-party political system. According to Key, the Democratic Party of the South was comprised of factional groups that were the equivalent of political parties in other regions. The factional nature of the Democratic Party left it lacking a solid, unified base. Nonetheless, in national affairs, the south acted more cohesively (Key 1949), supporting the notion that the South was disconnected from the rest of the nation.

The South's regional political solidarity should not be viewed simply as Southern loyalty. Rather the south's cohesion represents voters' shared interests and policy objectives (Key 1949:42). The cohesive nature of the South described by both Key and Quadagno highlights the fundamental component of sectionalism. According to Bensel, sectionalism occurs when a "nation is divided into two or more regions each of which is internally cohesive and externally opposed to the other" (Bensel 1982:658). This kind of sectional competition has its foundation in a geographical division of labor that situates an advanced industrialized northern region against an agriculturally-based south (Bensel 1986). Bensel examined congressional roll-call votes from 1880 to 1980 and found the existence of a sectional alignment between the northern and southern regions. Bensel

further found the political contention between the North and South is influenced by the regional dynamics of the party system (Bensel 1986). As a result, the influence of sectionalism on the policy decisions must include an examination of states' shared "interests, institutions, and cultural and behavior patterns" (Mason 1978:270).

Maintaining a strong cotton economy and White supremacy were two of the interests shared by southern states and influenced policy outcomes including immigration legislation.

Using sectionalism as a backdrop, this research project addresses two inter-related questions. *First, how did the regional politics of cotton within the South influence federal immigration policy between 1865 and 1952? Second, what was the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends?* During the period between 1865 and 1952, various political, economic and social factors differentially influenced policy outcomes. Since this investigation will evaluate five separate time periods over the course of 87 years, I expect to uncover multiple factors influencing immigration policy. As a result, it is necessary for me to utilize more than one theoretical approach to fully examine the variation in immigration policy. Therefore, the study's research questions will be examined using minority group threat (ethno-racial), class-based and state-centered perspectives.

### ***Minority Group Threat (Ethno-Racial Perspective)***

In the classic work, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, V. O. Key, examined the political underpinnings of the eleven states that made up the confederacy. Key found each of the 11 states of the confederacy had its own unique political culture. However, across the 11 states Key consistently noted a division between Whites in black belt

counties (areas in the southern region where the percentage of African Americans exceeded 50%) and Whites in non-black belt counties within states in terms of the political candidates they supported. More specifically, using spatial data, Key noted that Whites were more concerned about the maintenance of White supremacy in black-belt counties than in areas where the percentage of African Americans was smaller. In these black-belt counties, Whites consistently supported legislation to restrict the voting rights of African Americans for fear of losing power (Key 1949). Key concluded that “black-belt Whites succeeded in imposing their will on their states and thereby presented a solid regional front in national politics on the race question” (Key 1949: 11).

Key’s examination focused specifically on the relationship of Blacks and Whites in the South. However, to get a fuller picture, we must broaden Key’s analysis to account for the changing demographics of the region. Between 1910 and 1970 more than 6.5 million African Americans migrated from the South.<sup>4</sup> The mass exodus of Blacks from the South presented a challenge for the flourishing cotton economy.<sup>5</sup> In response to the

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<sup>4</sup> The first great migration occurred between 1910-1940 during which over a million and a half African Americans migrated out of the South. During the second great migration, from 1940-1970, over 5 million African Americans left the South.

<sup>5</sup> After the war and the economic depression of 1878, the cotton economy rebounded and expanded eastward. Previously depleted cotton-producing areas within the southern Piedmont region were revitalized and up-country areas not previously associated with slavery were pulled into the cotton economy of the post-Civil War (Wright 1986:35). In 1879 the region produced close to 5.7 million bales of cotton. This figure exceeded a prewar production high by over one million bales of cotton. This level of production made the South the dominant world cotton producer. However, the cost to produce cotton also increased because of the growing exportation of cotton to Great Britain, the leader in cotton manufacturing. In addition to the increasing exportation of cotton globally, domestically, the consumption of southern cotton also increased. By 1880, local cotton mills consumed over 30 percent of the cotton grown in the south. From 1878 to 1880, the consumption of raw cotton increased from 186,489 bales to

out-migration of Blacks, plantation owners sought to recruit immigrants to work the cotton fields and cotton mills (Berthoff 1951). In other words, as Blacks left the cotton fields, immigrants were recruited to replace them. Because black-belt Whites were able to exert their authority on their states over questions of race, it is possible that they were also able to aggregate that authority at the national level on race-related policy matters, including immigration policy.

Following Key, Blalock attempted to provide a systematic theoretical approach for explaining inter-group relations. Blalock's analysis included several variables which fell into four broad categories: socio-economic status, competition, power and minority group size. Blalock's analysis yielded nearly 100 macro- and micro-level propositions. According to Blalock, as groups compete with each other for dominance, their position is influenced by each group's available resources, group size and cohesiveness. Furthermore, as the minority group increases its size and resources, the dominant group increases its efforts to maintain its position (Blalock 1967) through measures to minimize the threat to the dominant group. Generally, scholars have found Blalock's models useful, although flawed. For example, Blalock argues that the relationship between the percentage of Blacks in the population and discrimination is nonlinear – as the percentage of Blacks increases, measures to maintain control by Whites also increases, at an increasing rate. In other words, control exerted by Whites increases faster than the increase in the Black population (“nonlinear with a positive increasing slope”) (Giles and Evans 1986:478). There is a fair amount of consensus in the literature that the relationship between the percentage of Blacks in the population and the control measures

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221,337 bales. This sharp increase in cotton consumption was the result of the South's entry into the cotton spinning industry (Brandfon 1967).

used by Whites is nonlinear (Key 1949, Blalock 1967, Bullock 1976, and Longshore 1982). However, using a power analysis approach, scholars such as Bullock and Longshore argue that the imposition of control measures will peak when the percentage of Blacks reach between 40 and 60 percent. According to Bullock and Longshore, after the population exceeds 40-60%, Whites accept their loss of power (Giles and Evans 1986) and measures to control the Black population decrease.

Relying on Blalock, Giles and Evans examined Whites' racial tolerance and support for government policies favorable towards Blacks. Using regression models they found the "level of racial tolerance and opposition to government race policies increases with the level of Black concentration up to 40% Black, levels off and then decreases in counties over 60% Black" (Giles and Evans 1986:479).

The findings of Giles and Evans raise questions involving the percentage of other ethnic groups in the population. Blalock's model positions racial and ethnic groups against each other in an ongoing struggle over social, economic and political dominance (Levine and Campbell 1972, Giles and Evans 1986). As a result of that struggle, the dominant group works to maintain its position and confine minority groups to a subordinated status. However, the percentage of immigrants in the U.S., and in the South at the time of this study was significantly smaller than the percentage of African Americans. As a result, it was initially unclear whether the percentage of immigrants would influence the passage of immigration policy and, if so, whether there would be a leveling off effect as predicated by Bullock, Longshore, Giles and Evans (Giles and Evans 1986).



Giles and Evans narrow their focus to government policies only. They argue that although competition among racial and ethnic groups can occur in the political, social and economic arenas, competition will be most acute in the political arena. Furthermore, political gains can translate into economic and social gains (1986). However, Jackson disagrees. She sought to further clarify Blalock's model beyond just the size of the minority group and examines the cultural and economic threat posed by subordinated groups. According to Jackson,

Regional subpopulations of cities differ from each other not only in demographic and economic traits, but also in the historical context within which funding decisions are made. In the Southwest, for example, persistent tension between Anglos and Hispanics may influence the degree of threat triggered by the presence of a large Hispanic population, while in the South, the history of conflict between blacks and whites can be expected to influence the extent to which blacks are perceived as threatening. Similarly, the passage of time and events affect the social and economic expectations of minority and majority individuals, thereby influencing their patterns of behavior and the level of intergroup hostility (Jackson 1989:11).

Here, Jackson links social disorganization; differential cultural orientation; and competition between dominant and subordinated groups over economic resources and political power to the threat that minority group members pose to the dominant group, which, in turn, leads to the implementation of social control measures through legislation and policing. The effect of these theoretical links varies with a region's social context, which she broadly defines as a region's history, tradition and demographic composition (Jackson 1989). Using Jackson's expanded model will provide a stronger link between immigrants and immigration policy. This expansion is particularly helpful given the small percentage of immigrants migrating to the South during the period under study, 1865-1952.

More specifically, in her analysis, Jackson examined the extent to which social context within the region influences the relationship between minority group size and support for social control through policing (Jackson 1989). Using quantitative data, Jackson focused on the impact of the percentage of Hispanics on the level of spending for policing in cities in the South and West in comparison to cities in the northeast and north central. She also included the impact of the percentage of Blacks on police expenditures in Southern cities (Jackson 1989). Jackson's analysis revealed that "region, as a sociohistorical construct influencing the relationships between racial and ethnic groups, is a filter through which minority groups are viewed and thereby important in determining the level of threat engendered by racial and ethnic minorities" (Jackson 1989:62) For African Americans and Hispanics, where their relative size has the greatest impact in those areas in which their relationship with Whites has been the most contentious (Jackson 1989). At first glance, Jackson's analysis would seem to undermine the basic premise of my study since the percentage of immigrants in the South is negligible. However, this is not necessarily the case. Instead, we should find that the small number of immigrants in the region should have the opposite effect – in other words, no influence on policy outcomes.

Jackson's analysis further allows me to disaggregate the social, cultural, economic and political factors that influence immigration policy not only within the region but also within the context of King Cotton. Considering the South's social context, a growing immigrant population could also threaten the system of White supremacy. For example, Lieberman suggests that a minority group's political arrival is in part related to its population growth through immigration and rising birth rates. A demographic base is

essential. Furthermore, success in the political arena tends to help advance a group's interest as well as lead to success in other areas (Liebersohn 1980). As it relates to this study, as the immigrant population increases, immigration policies will become more restrictive to minimize the threat immigrants pose politically and socially. In addition, given the region's rigid color line, we can further expect that fear of miscegenation would lead the South to press for more restrictive immigration policy.

Giles and Buckner also examined the political threat posed by Blacks. Like Key and Blalock, Giles and Buckner linked the size of the Black population to the number of registered White voters using the racist threat hypothesis. Giles and Buckner found "the percentage of voting age whites... who actually register to vote is positively linked to the level of Black concentration among registered voters" (Giles and Buckner 1993:707). In other words, when African Americans threaten the white power structure, the proportion of registered White voters increases. Thus, Whites are more likely to support restrictive and punitive legislation to maintain control over African Americans because of their fear of losing power. To protect the white power structure, Whites also had to undermine the voting strength of immigrants arriving in the U.S. One way of keeping immigrants locked out of the political process was by limiting their access to U.S. citizenship. Perhaps, more effective, however, was to restrict their entry through the passage of restrictive immigration policy. In this regard, the South had to perform a balancing act. Was it possible for the South to meet the demands of cotton production through immigration policy and not undermine the White power structure?

Tolnay and Beck examine another mechanism employed to maintain the White power structure in the South: lynchings. Specifically, Tolnay and Beck rely on Key and

Blalock to examine the factors that accounted for the rise and decline of Black lynchings in the south between 1882 and 1930. However they point out that relying on the size of the minority group population as theorized by Blalock et al., simply misses the significance of heterogeneity within the dominant White group. Tolnay and Beck further suggest that the dominant group will be stratified along class lines. It then becomes necessary for scholars to consider while a minority group may be threatening to one stratum within the dominant group, that same minority group maybe beneficial to another stratum within the dominant group. Thus, similar to Key, Tolnay and Beck recognized two groups of Whites -- poor Whites who worked primarily as tenant farmers or sharecroppers; and White cotton elites (Tolnay and Beck 1995).

Focusing on ten Southern states, Tolnay and Beck use regression analysis to examine the more common explanations to explain lynchings, including that lynchings served as a way to intimidate and control Blacks and minimize the threat they posed to Whites, as a form of justice to punish Black criminals, and as a way to keep Blacks in their place. Tolnay and Beck make several key findings. The authors found no support for the justice and political competition explanations. More importantly, they found lynchings were more common in Southern counties dominated by cotton agriculture than in counties less dependent on King Cotton. In addition, between the early 1890s and the mid 1910s, there was a broad downward trend in the number of Black lynch victims, that corresponded with a general upward swing in the market price of cotton. When the constant price was climbing the likelihood of Black lynchings declined. When the price of cotton stagnated, or when inflation was a significant problem, Black lynchings were more frequent. In addition, changes in the racial composition of the population influence

the likelihood of lethal mob action. Excluding price factors, increases in percent Black are associated with more frequent Black lynchings. Excluding price shifts, cotton productivity had a negative relationship with Black lynchings. The link between the deflated price of cotton and the frequency of Black lynchings was strongest during periods of slowed cotton production (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Tolnay and Beck's final analysis showed a negative relationship between the out-migration of Blacks and the number of lynchings in the 1910s and the 1920s. In other words, as the number of Blacks migrating out of the South increased, the number of lynchings decreased. "Black migration played a critical role in transforming southern culture because it threatened economically the most influential segments of the white society" (Tolnay and Beck 1995:232).

The significance of Tolnay and Beck's work is that they link cotton production to efforts to minimize political and economic threats. Their analysis allows me to link cotton production to another effective measure to minimize political and economic threats -- immigration legislation. If changes in the cotton economy and the out-migration of Blacks can influence the change in the number of lynchings, it is possible that these same changes can also influence immigration policy.

Immigration policy may be an attempt to minimize the numerical, political and economic threat posed by immigrant groups<sup>6</sup> to Americans. In her study of U.S. immigration policy, Seller examined the major arguments advanced during immigration policy debates and the effects on actual policy outcomes. Seller's historical analysis

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<sup>6</sup> For purposes of my research, immigrant groups are comprised of only documented individuals entering the country since the number of undocumented immigrants cannot be accurately ascertained.

implicates political and economic threat as two prevalent factors in the immigration policy debate. Proponents of strict immigration policy argue that immigrants threaten U.S. political institutions because of their “ignorance of the American political system, their ethnic or religious backgrounds, or their ideological affiliations” making the U.S. vulnerable to subversion (Seller 1982:139). Immigrants pose an economic threat because they take jobs from U.S. workers and apply downward pressure on American wages. According to Seller, these arguments had little effect on policy debates during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and U.S. immigration policy remained fairly liberal. However beginning in 1882, the open-door policy of the U.S. changed with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and continued through the 1950s with limits on Asian, African and Southern and Eastern European immigrants (Seller1982). During this period, restrictionists argued that the accumulation of wealth by Americans was further restricted by the influx of immigrants. Furthermore, immigrants took jobs from American workers, worked as strikebreakers and worked for lower wages. Politically, restrictionists cited fear of immigrants becoming potential saboteurs during time of war.

In Seller’s account, the debate over immigration policy primarily situated labor on one side and American business, representing agricultural and manufacturing sectors, on the other. Given the interests of the agricultural sector in promoting open immigration, it is likely that Southern agricultural interests had similar interests in immigration policy.

Although theoretically appropriate to examine the intersection of King Cotton and immigration policy, the applicability of minority group threat here is limited methodologically. Minority group threat posits that as the minority population increases as a percentage of the overall population, the dominant group implements control

measures to minimize the numerical, political and economic threat posed by the minority group. However, this conceptualization implies that, in small numbers, minority groups pose no threat. This is not the case. A more reasonable conclusion is that the threat posed by minority groups may prove to be statistically insignificant because their percentage is numerically insignificant; not because they are not perceived as a threat to the dominant group.

To address this shortcoming, I rely on a gatekeeping framework, which I borrow from historians such as Lee. According to Lee, similar to minority group threat, a gatekeeping analysis focuses on the relationship between Americans in general and immigrant groups seeking admission into the U.S. To minimize the threat posed by immigrants, exclusionary immigration policy, or gatekeeping, became the primary tool “of exerting social control over immigrant communities and protecting the American nation at large” (Lee 2002:39).

Using qualitative methods, Lee performed a content analysis of *The Congressional Record* to examine the factors that contributed to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Lee found that Chinese immigrants were excluded based on race. Lee also found that the racialization of Chinese immigrants necessarily depended on establishing the Chinese as not only different but also inferior in terms of their race, intelligence, culture and social status making them inassimilable and a threat to Americans. Although Lee’s analysis focused specifically on Chinese immigrants and the Chinese Exclusion Act, she argues that the racialization process allows the framework to be applied to other immigrant groups as well. The gatekeeping framework also allows me to examine the influence of the King Cotton on immigration policy qualitatively.

### *Class-Based Perspective*

According to Marx, a social class consists of those who stand in a common position with regard to the productive process – as either owners of the means of production or as workers. Marx theorized that these two competing classes would become more polarized as economic crises pull more and more people into the proletariat, reducing the size of the middle class. Business owners are threatened by the organization of workers for higher wages or better working conditions, which undermine profits. As a result, business elites employ divide-and-conquer strategies to prevent the formation of class consciousness among workers, as groups are often pitted against each other. Race and ethnicity are simply tools used to divide workers. This lack of cohesiveness minimizes the threat labor poses to the profits of capital elites.

Marxists view immigration as a structural component of capitalism which primarily benefits the capitalist class. As a result capitalists have supported immigration from less developed countries. Because capitalists expect to see long-term growth, immigration is also expected to increase over the long-term. However, in the short run, immigration rates are tied to changes in the economic cycle and unemployment rates (Meyers 2000).

Scholars generally accept the relationship between the short-term economic cycle and immigration policies. In other words, immigration policy tightens during periods of economic decline. Restrictive immigration policy helps prevent economic recession or, in the least, lessen further economic decline. During periods of economic growth, immigration policy restrictions loosen. While the relationship between the short-term



economic cycle and immigration policy is fairly convincing, the Marxist approach is often criticized for its failure to satisfactorily link long-term economic growth and immigration rates. Meyers points out that immigration in the U.S. has steadily increased since the mid-1960s, although it is still less than immigration at the turn of the century. This decline in immigration does not correspond with the theoretical assumptions (Meyers 2000).

The Marxist perspective also fails to explain policies which allow the immigration of refugees because of war or religious persecution. Perhaps even more problematic is the underlying claim that immigrants should be racially dissimilar to prevent the formation of class consciousness. However, this generally is not the case. Exclusionary immigration policy against Chinese, Japanese and African immigrants underscore the fallacy of this claim since, if admitted, Chinese, Japanese and African immigrants had little in common with White and primarily Black agricultural workers.

Blauner took issue with the class analysis which he argued could not explain race and racism in America. As a result he developed the concept of internal colonialism to help address the shortcomings of the Marxist perspective (Blauner 1969). Colonialism involves the “establishment of domination over a geographically external political unit, most often inhabited by people of a different race and culture, where this domination is political and economic, and the colony exists subordinated to and dependent upon the mother country” (Blauner 1969:395). According to Blauner, colonialism and the racism found in America emanate from unequal power relations between groups and economic subordination (Blauner 1969).

Four elements are common to the colonial experience. First, the way in which the subordinated group becomes part of the dominant society is involuntary, such as in the case of slavery. Second, the culture and social organization of the subordinated group is systematically destroyed. Third, colonizers exert a significant amount of control over the lives of the subordinated group. And, fourth, racism is used to exploit and control the subordinated group (Blauner 1969). Because immigrants enter the U.S. voluntarily, their experience does not fit within the internal colonialism model. And although I do not directly rely on Blauner's model, the concept of internal colonialism informs both Bonacich and Barrera, both of whom I discuss below.

Like Blauner, Bonacich also criticizes the Marxist approach for its failure to explain exclusion movements. According to Bonacich, exclusion movements based on ethnic antagonism originates in a labor market split along ethnic lines. According to Bonacich, in a split labor market, three key classes develop. The first class includes business or employers whose primary goal is to secure a cheap and docile labor force. If labor costs are too high, employers may turn to cheaper sources, importing groups from overseas or using indigenous conquered populations. Cheaper labor may be used by employers to create a new industry or as strikebreakers or replacements for a labor force trying to improve its bargaining position. The second group, higher paid labor, is threatened by the introduction of cheaper labor into the market, fearing that their own labor price will be reduced to that of the subordinated group. Finally the third group is cheaper labor, who may lack the resources to resist a lower wage offer or who may be forced or coerced to working for a lower wage. Bonacich argues that if the labor market

is split ethnically, then the class antagonism will take the form of ethnic antagonism (Bonacich 1972).

Similar to Bonacich, Barrera also examines class divisions in a split labor market. Barrera examined the link between race and class in his examination of the factors that accounted for the unequal experiences of Chicanos in the U.S. and further introduced the concept of the colonial labor system. Under a colonial labor system, the labor force is divided along racial or ethnic lines and one group of labor is systematically maintained in a subordinated position (1979). According to Barrera, the racially segmented labor force gave the employers greater control over the workers. Employers maintained a surplus of workers thereby weakening the bargaining power of all workers. More importantly, however, a segmented labor force created built-in divisions among workers, and helped prevent the emergence of class consciousness among them (Barrera 1979). Barrera limits his analysis to Chicanos in Texas, New Mexico and California. He found that Chicano and Anglo workers were often segregated into separate housing communities. Anglo workers received higher wages, which created tension between the two groups. In addition, the abundance of Chicano laborers further drove down the wages for all workers (Barrera 1979). Barrera also found that Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the southwest made up a reserve pool of cheap labor, which employers were able to use as “strike insurance.” As a result, there were increased antagonisms between working-class Mexicans and working class Anglos (Estrada et al 1981).

Scholars highlight several shortcomings with Barrera’s analysis. First Barrera’s analysis assumes that class relations were static over time. However, over the course of Barrera’s study the means of production underwent a significant change – the spread of

mechanization in the agricultural and mining sectors decreased the need for labor over time. It is unclear how these changes may have restructured class relations in the Southwest.

Secondly, Barrera touts his research as “an extended historical and interdisciplinary case study” that “allows us to see the persistence of patterns as well as change over time” (Barrera 1979:3). While Barrera provides a thorough historical account of race and class relations in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California over the course of several decades, his analysis is viewed through one theoretical lens – the colonial labor system. The uni-dimensional focus of Barrera’s analysis severely minimizes the role of the state in immigration policy outcomes. Furthermore, Barrera, like other Marxists, treats race solely as a bi-product of class relations. The shortcomings of Barrera’s analysis do not minimize the usefulness of his framework on my research agenda. Instead, Barrera’s link between race, class and the agricultural economy help inform my study since this study examines the intersection of the Southern agricultural economy and immigration policy as a potential source of agricultural labor.

Immigration policy is one mechanism used to either increase or decrease the flow of immigrants into the U.S. One consequence of immigration policy is the manipulation of the size of the reserve pool of cheap labor. A large pool of cheap labor allowed cotton planters more control over labor. Because cotton production was labor intensive, cotton planters depended on a reserve pool of cheap labor to keep wages down, while maximizing profits. The racial hierarchy of the region, language and other cultural differences served as barriers to prevent immigrant groups from organizing with Blacks

and poor Whites. Cotton elites further established a segmented labor force further eroding relations among groups.

A class-based analysis will help answer whether immigration policy was driven by the South's need for low-wage labor to maintain cotton production. In order to maintain cotton profits, cotton production required a cheap and docile labor force. One way cotton planters could secure a large reserve of cheap labor was by manipulating immigration policy. In addition to relying on cheap immigrant labor to maximize profits, cotton planters created a segmented labor force which ensured that immigrants were disparate from Blacks and poor Whites to maintain ethnic antagonism to prevent organization of the labor pool.

### *State-Centered Theory*

While class theory focuses on capitalist and workers, a state-centered approach puts the state at the center of the analysis. The state-centered approach has been used to examine various policy outcomes and is appropriate to examine immigration policy. A statist approach posits that the state functions autonomously.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the state acts in its own interest, independent of social classes and interests groups. Accordingly, the formation of public policy necessarily reflects the interest of the state. State interest is influenced by the formal structure of the state, state legacies and state managers who are interested in building up or maintaining the state bureaucracy (Skocpol 1985). More specifically, the state's interest can be defined as national security and economic stability

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<sup>7</sup> The state can be defined as “a set of roles and institutions having peculiar drives, compulsions and aims of their own that are separate and distinct from the interests of any particular societal group. These goals are associated either with general material objectives or with ambitious ideological goals related to beliefs about how societies should be ordered. They can be labeled the national interest” (Krasner 1981:10).

(Hooks 1990). Citing Prechel's research on the steel industry, Hooks argued that the state's heavy reliance on steel, made it vulnerable to the demands of an organized class segment within the steel industry.

State autonomy and state capacity shape all aspects of state policies. State autonomy refers to a state's ability to develop and implement policies to achieve its own interests, namely to expand its own power and influence in order to avoid being captured by various classes or special interest groups. States expand their power through the expropriation of authority and material resources of various groups by levying tariffs or regulating fees and laws. A state's interests emerge and are reinforced as state managers pursue policies that promote their own interests. This is not to suggest that projects reflect the goals of bureaucrats. However, policy outcomes reflect contested political deliberations. The outcome of these debates defines what the state wants or state interest (Skocpol 1985; Evans 1995; Jacobs and Carmichael 2002). At times, the state's interest may mirror the interests of various interest groups such as business elites or labor. However, mirror interests do not mean the state has been captured. For example, during the debate over New Deal policies, the state and capitalists shared an interest in disuniting workers; but for different reasons. Capitalists employed divide and conquer strategies to prevent the organization of labor which would raise labor costs and undermine profits. The state also worked to disunite workers because collectively they posed a threat to capitalism (Skocpol 1985). The state will make minor co-optive concessions to small businesses and workers, when necessary to preserve order and maintain conditions necessary for capitalist economic activities. For example, by 1924 Congress had passed legislation that significantly curtailed immigration into the U.S.

However, immigration from Mexico remained unchecked since Mexico supplied cheap labor for agriculture.

The state can also legitimize certain groups and stigmatize others, creating a continuum of elites and non-elites. This illustration implies that not only does the state often pit one group against another; the state can also make certain immigrant groups more or less desirable over time. The arrival of Mexican immigrants during the 1920s when immigration by other groups had been restricted also illustrates this point.

State capacity is defined as a state's ability to implement state interests given the resources available. Brown (1999) argues that policy choices are governed in part by money. Political leaders consider state budgets and revenue prior to making policy decisions. Immigration schemes may become more or less restrictive given a state's budget and the availability (or scarcity) of resources.

Theoretical differences within the statist approach primarily focuses on the degree of autonomy afforded to the state. For example, some scholars argue that the state is completely autonomous and implements policies in its best interests. However, other scholars suggest that agencies within the state become captured and act on behalf of interest groups or other societal interests (Meyers 2000). Katzenstein offers a similar analysis of state involvement in the formation of public policy. However, he suggests that states can be characterized as strong states or weak states. Strong states are those in which institutions are immune from pressure from outside interests. Contrastingly, weak states are those which fall prey to various outside interests. These outside interests are able to influence policy outcomes (Meyers 2000).

Critics of the statist approach find the “strong state” versus “weak state” conceptualization vague which limits its explanatory power. Models that focus on state autonomy are similarly criticized. Further, the approach tends to see state power and autonomy as static over time.

Examinations of immigration policy using the statist approach try to address these weaknesses. For example, Calavita argues that the state and its agencies are imbued with a great deal of autonomy and policies reflect the interest of the state. However, she acknowledges the relationship between the state and outside interests, which she refers to as “clienteles.” Fitzgerald’s improvisational institutionalist approach argues that “state power and autonomy vary from one type of immigration to another: it is strongest with regard to refugee policy, weaker with regards to ‘front-gate’ immigration policy, and weakest with regard to ‘back-door’ policy (i.e. illegal immigrants)” (Meyers 2000:1262).

Many studies utilize one theoretical perspective to explain changes in specific phenomena over time. Implicit in this practice is the assumption that changes in the relationship between dependent and independent variables are static. However, long term changes may be better explained by employing one or more theoretical frameworks. Because this study extends over the course of several decades, using the group threat, class-based and statist theoretical perspectives will help provide a clearer picture of the influence of the South on immigration policy. I expect to find that the percentage of immigrants in the South will have little or no effect on the South’s support for restrictive immigration policy given the small number of immigrants living in the South during the period between 1865 and 1952. However the economic and political threat posed by immigrants should yield positive results. Because the South had to weigh nativists’



concerns against the need for labor, particularly during the periods of the migration of Blacks to the industrialized North, the expected outcome from a class-based analysis is less clear. Finally, I expect to find the non-monolithic state in which state agencies may have competing and conflicting goals. In this regard, I expect to find that some state agencies may support restrictive immigration while other state agencies may lobby against it.

In sum, this research is grounded in three theoretical approaches, minority group threat (also referred to as the ethno racial perspective), the class-based perspective, and the state-centered approach. Using these theoretical approaches, I will examine how the regional politics of cotton within the South influenced federal immigration policy as well as examine the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends. In the next chapter I will detail the methods used to answer these questions. More specifically I explain why I chose the period under study, why I focus on the South, the immigration policies themselves, as well as my data collection techniques.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology**

The literature reviewed in the previous chapters highlights the necessity of incorporating multiple theoretical approaches to help explain how the regional politics of cotton within the South influenced federal immigration policy between 1865 and 1952, as well as the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends. More specifically, this research includes an examination of The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the Geary Act (1892), The 1917 Immigration Act, the Immigration Act of 1924, and the Immigration and Nationality Act (also known as the McCarran-Walter Act) (1952). Scholars have long recognized these pieces of legislation because they reflect a change in the goals of immigration policy (Passel and Fix 1999), and because they significantly increased or decreased the number of immigrants from various racial and ethnic groups allowed to enter the U.S.

My research relies on group threat, class-based and state centered approaches. Each of these perspectives implicates a different methodological approach. Therefore, my examination will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative analyses. In this chapter I explain why I focus on the South, the relevance of the period under study, data collection methods and analysis.

#### Why the South: Sectionalism

The legacy of the cotton economy and Southern politics, particularly the role of Southern Democrats in shaping social and public policy continues to reverberate throughout the South and on the nation. In addition, the South's role in structuring race relations also left an indelible imprint not only on Black-White relations but on ethnic

relations more broadly. A considerable amount of research has been done on both immigration policy (LeMay and Barkan 1999; Passel and Fix 1999; Hagan and Rodriguez 2002) as well as the role of southern elites on social and public policy formation (Quadagno 1984; Skocpol 1985; Neubeck and Cazenave 2001). But, with the importation of African slaves (Franklin and Moss 1994), very little research has integrated these two agendas. Using the concept of sectionalism, this research will bridge that divide by linking the South to federal immigration policy.

Sectionalism is an essential and enduring element of American politics which is driven by economic and political motives of the industrial north and agrarian south<sup>8</sup>. Each "...region evolved in its own way and each had its own type of people, its own geographic and economic basis, its own particular economic and social interests" (Bartley 1976:241). The social, cultural and economic uniqueness of the South has been attributed to "'a common resolve indomitably maintained' by white citizens 'that it shall be and remain a white man's country,' ...'the hold of orthodox Protestantism upon Southerners'" (Bartley 1976:241), the slave labor system and the cotton economy. Paradoxically, these factors have also contributed to sectional conflict.

The extent to which legislation reflects sectional conflict and alignment is shown by an analysis of Congressional roll call votes and Congressional debates (Roach 1925; Bensel 1984). The influence of sectional interest is most pronounced on policy issues related to currency and banking, tariffs, public lands and immigration. Sectional

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<sup>8</sup> Roach argues that the effect of personal factors on national policy is negligible (1925).

competition is most evident during periods of economic decline; and less so during years of economic prosperity (Roach 1925).

To determine the extent to which the 11 Southern states voted as a section on the immigration policies under examination, I divide the number of roll call votes cast by members of the Democratic Party into two groups – Southern Democrats and Northern Democrats. The degree to which Southern Democrats vote with or in opposition to their Northern Democratic counterparts indicates sectionalism.<sup>9</sup> Below I show the percentage of Democrats in the House of Representatives by state.

<b>Percentage of Democrats in the House of Representatives By State</b>					
State	Percentage Democrats in 1880	Percentage Democrats in 1892	Percentage Democrats in 1917	Percentage Democrats in 1924	Percentage Democrats in 1952
Alabama	88.8	100	100	100	100
Arkansas	100	100	100	100	100
Florida	66.7	100	100	100	100
Georgia	100	100	100	100	100
Louisiana	83.3	100	87.5	100	100
Mississippi	85.7	100	100	100	100
North Carolina	87.5	90	90	100	100
South Carolina	75	100	100	100	100
Tennessee	70	72.7	80	80	80
Texas	83.3	100	100	94.4	100
Virginia	55.5	100	91	100	100

Source: VoteView

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<sup>9</sup> The Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report as well as the Congressional Quarterly Almanac utilize this method of identifying sectionalism within Congress. Bensel criticized this method because it cannot be extrapolated to other regions or countries. However, because my research focuses on Southern states, particularly the extent to which the South acted as a region, I find this methodology appropriate for this project. Bensel also criticized the North-South sectional dichotomy. He argued that this false dichotomy masks the social, economic and political context of other regions which influences Congressional voting behavior. However, because my research focuses on the social, economic and political forces that united the Southern states from the time of formation of the Confederacy until the mid 1900s, I also find this conceptualization appropriate.

I collect this roll call data from Vote View, a clearinghouse of roll call data from both the House and Senate from 1789 to 2000. For purposes of this research, Vote View allows me to disaggregate Congressional roll call votes by state, party and region. Over the course of my study, Democrats consolidated and maintained their power in the South. As a result, sectionalism is an appropriate concept to use to examine immigration policy outcomes.

*Period of Study: 1865-1952*

The period under study reflects three critical points in U.S. history. First, scholars agree that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 marked the first major piece of legislation that restricted the entry of immigrants into the U.S. solely on the basis of ethnicity. However, including the 20-year period prior to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act helps contextualize the Act politically, socially and economically. In the roughly 20 years prior to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Civil War ended and Reconstruction began. During this time, Southern plantation elites considered importing foreign labor to replace slave labor, which had been abolished in 1863. Establishing 1865 as one bookend of my research allows me to examine the influence of southern elites on the passage of the first major piece of immigration legislation passed in the U.S.

The other bookend, the 1952, represents the year in which the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed. While the Act called for a ban on issuing visas to anyone suspected of communism, it also lifted the ban on immigration from Japan and Korea. Equally significant, with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, the goal of immigration legislation shifted from one primarily of exclusion based on ethnicity since 1882 to one of family reunification. By the time the Act was passed, hand-picked cotton

production in the South had been severely curtailed (Heinicke and Grove 2005). Fite suggests that more than anything else, mechanization led to the demise of cotton production which, in turn, produced the greatest degree of change to the southern political economy. Mechanization also destroyed sharecropping and reduced the South's need for agricultural labor (Fite 1984). In sum, the period under study encompasses significant periods during which cotton production and its salience to the national economy underwent major changes, the rise and fall of southern Democrats and Jim Crow, as well as the period of ethnically based immigration policies.

### Case Selection

The units of analysis are the 11 states that formerly made up the Confederacy of the U.S. These states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Cotton production among each of these states varied considerably. However, Texas, Georgia and Mississippi consistently ranked as the top three cotton producers overall.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### Data Collection

I began my data collection by searching the indices of *The Congressional Record*. In the index I search for terms such as "immigration," or "immigrant." I also searched for references to specific immigrant groups. For example, leading up to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act, I searched for terms such as "Chinese," or "Coolie." The index search provided a list of petitions, memorials as well as the legislative bills that referenced my search terms. In *The Congressional Record*, each legislative bill is assigned a number which allowed me to look up the legislative history

of each bill. From the legislative history, I was able to determine the outcome of each bill. For example, I was able to determine whether a bill was referred to a committee, if it was debated, if it was voted on, passed, defeated and signed or vetoed by the President. The legislative history also contained the page numbers in *The Congressional Record* for each action taken on the bill. I also examined the petitions submitted in reference to the bills, which listed the names of groups or organizations advocating for the passage or defeat of specific bills.

Next, I performed a content analysis on the debates, testimony and extended remarks made by congressmen contained in *The Congressional Record* on immigration legislation. I focus on the House of Representatives because each representative “supports his district’s immediate interest. This may or may not be compatible with his chosen party, ideological allegiance, or other characteristics which define his position within the House of Representatives” (Bensel 1984:27). I limit my analysis to the five years preceding the passage of all immigration legislation within my study.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, I focus on the testimony and remarks of Southern Congressmen and other individuals representing Southern interests, organizations and agencies. Congressmen were identified with their state either in the *Record* before their remarks began and at the beginning of the first volume of each legislative session of *The Congressional Record*. The interests of most of the organizations and agencies that testified before Congress were easily identified by their name or it was stated in the *Record*. For the few

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<sup>10</sup> There is no consensus among scholars regarding the temporal boundaries when conducting content analysis. However, I establish a five-year time frame preceding the passage of each of the pieces of immigration legislation included in my study within which to conduct my analysis. This five-year period allows me to expand the scope of my research to beyond the presidential and congressional grandstanding that occur leading up to general elections.

organizations whose names or interests were vague or ambiguous, I conducted an internet search to determine their significance to the Southern region and the immigration debate.

I coded *The Congressional Record* using a conceptual analysis in which I categorized passages of the debate into three broad theoretical perspectives: minority group threat, class-based, and state-centered approaches. My coding schema emerged from each theoretical perspective as well as from the data.

There were occurrences when the data were coded with more than one concept because more than one theme was presented in the data. In these cases, I allow the data to speak for itself and do not give rank or priority to either theme. For example, in one case a Congressman expressed his support for restrictive legislation because of the threat immigrants posed to American institutions and because they depress wages. However, I made no determination as to which factor weighed more heavily on his vote; and, when necessary, cited both references. Although many congressmen expressed the same positions, I only include those who give particular clarity, definition or context to the data (Gonzalez 2007).

The threat posed by immigrants is disaggregated into three types of threat: racial, economic and political. In terms of immigration policy, racial threat involves excluding immigrants who are racially dissimilar. By race, I mean the socially constructed category “that uses physical features such as skin color and facial features as visible markers of organizational, behavioral and cultural differences among individuals” (Aguirre 2007:2). This dissimilarity can be real or perceived. Combining minority group threat with a gatekeeping framework allows me to expand my conceptual analysis to also include the



racialization of immigrants by further characterizing them as “criminal,” “unassimilable,” and “undesireable” (Lee 2002:41).

The second area of threat involves political threat. In large enough numbers, racial and ethnic groups provide the foundation for developing a political base of support. The racial and ethnic demographics of voters are a primary factor for electing racial and ethnic candidates (Liebersohn 1980). In this context, political threat is characterized by a growing immigrant population. Reference to a loss of political power or the growing number of naturalized citizens registered to vote signal exclusion based on political threat.

The last category of threat involves the threat immigrants pose to the economic stability of the dominant group. Economic threat is conceptualized as competition from immigrants in the labor market, depression of wages and overall decrease in the standard of living.

In addition to minority group threat, I also examine *The Congressional Record* for data supporting a class based analysis. More specifically, I utilize Bonacich’s split labor market conceptualization. A split labor market consists of three primary classes: (1) capital; (2) higher paid labor and (3) lower paid labor. In the post-Civil War South, these classes corresponded to (1) the planter elite; (2) White laborers and (3) Black laborers. I expect a fourth group of labor – immigrants – to either join one of the laboring classes or to replace one of the laboring classes. Implicit in class theory, and more specifically, in a split labor market, is that the state is complicit in maintaining this labor structure. In the case of immigration legislation, policymakers would have to be captured by the planter elite. It is important to point out that because Congress legislate policies

that benefit the planter elite does not necessarily indicate that it has been captured. Certainly at times what is in the best interest of the state can mirror the interests of the planter elite. However, one primary way of discerning whether a state has been captured or whether its interests correspond to those of the planter elite is by determining with whom regulatory control wrests.

The final theoretical framework I examine is the state-centered approach. The state's interest can be defined as national security and economic stability (Hooks 1990). Citing Prechel's research on the steel industry, Hooks argued that the state's heavy dependence on steel made it susceptible to the pressure from an organized class segment within the steel industry. Furthermore, when the dependence is not reciprocated, the state also becomes susceptible to outside influence (Hooks 1990). I use Prechel's conceptualization of autonomy by examining the state's dependence on cotton and the cotton economy. One-sided dependence by the state on the cotton industry exposes the state's vulnerability to capture by the cotton segment. However, a relationship between the state and southern cotton based on reciprocity or one in which the "state brings its own resources and perspective to ... [immigration] policy disputes" (Hooks 1991). In addition to examining the direction of dependence between the state and the southern cotton industry, statist theory posits that the state, including state agencies, pursues its own policy agenda that is separate from farm organizations or other interests groups or class interests (Hooks 1990:31).

In addition, because statist theory posits that the policy agenda is defined by the state via state officials who further act on behalf of the state, my research will further examine whether the state has pursued its own policy agenda that is separate from farm

organizations, other interest groups or class interests. Specifically, I will examine *The Congressional Record* to determine whether – and to what extent – the state introduced, promoted, supported or objected to the major pieces of immigration legislation. Finally, state-centered theorists often assert that “politics frequently involves a struggle over institutions and rules of process” (Hooks 1990:31). Policymakers do not base their agendas primarily on external demands, rather prior state actions shape future agendas. Thus, state activity is not merely a reflection of socioeconomically rooted demands, needs and preferences but rather an inherently historical process in which all actors consciously build upon or react against, previous governmental efforts dealing with the same sorts of problems.” In other words, I will examine to what extent new immigration policy reflects past immigration legislation.

Traditionally, minority group threat empirically relies on quantitative data (See Jackson (1989), Beck and Tolnay (1990), and Giles and Buckner (1993)). However, the qualitative data collected from *The Congressional Record* provide a more direct measure of “threat” that is assumed in quantitative studies. In addition, class-based theorists such as Quadagno and state-centered theorists such as Skocpol and Hooks also utilize qualitative methods to examine policy outcomes. As a result, I find a qualitative methodology appropriate to examine immigration policy outcomes. A qualitative analysis will also allow me to center the legislation within the social and political context in which the policy was debated and passed. An analysis *The Congressional Record* will further help me identify the key actors such as racial and ethnic groups and labor groups involved in shaping immigration legislation. Shown below is a list of the theoretical concepts used in my examination of *The Congressional Record*.

<b>Theoretical Concepts Used in Analysis of Congressional Record</b>	
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Themes in the Debates among Southern Congressmen over Specific Immigration Bills</b>
<b>Minority Group Threat</b>	
Race	Black, White, Chinese, African, colored
Racial Threat	Threat to white supremacy; threat to American way of life; threat to southern way of life; threat to good citizens of America
Economic threat	Threat to employment, threat to economy; threat to jobs of working Americans
Political threat	Immigrants gaining the right to vote; threat to white supremacy
<b>Class-Based Theory</b>	
Labor, cheap labor	Workers, working class
Business interests	Southern business interests, capital interests, southern planters, plantation elites,
Planters	Plantation owners
<b>State-Centered Approach</b>	
Security	National security; safety, power, dominance
Americanism	Capitalism, democracy
Anti-Americanism	Communism, socialism
Capitalism	Stable economic system

Overall, including the immigration acts, I examined over 3,500 pages of *The Congressional Record*.

Finally, I collected population data from the United States Census and cotton production data from the National Agricultural Statistics Service, which is a division of the United States Department of Agriculture.

## Chapter Three

### The Chinese Exclusion Act and The Geary Act

*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*  
Matthew 9:37

I began my examination of how the regional politics of cotton influenced immigration policy by looking at two of the earliest pieces of immigration legislation passed after the end of the slave era in the South: The Chinese Exclusion Act and The Geary Act. I examine these policies within the framework of minority group threat, class and the state-centered perspectives. In addition, I examine the debates within the Congressional Record on the two immigration bills that led to the implementation of these two policies. Finally, I also examine the roll call votes of Southern Congressmen on these policies.

The Chinese Exclusion Act suspended immigration of both skilled and unskilled Chinese laborers for a period of ten years. The Act also provided that Chinese laborers who were already residing in the U.S. register with customs agents for the purpose of re-entering the country if they traveled outside the U.S. For registration purposes, immigrants had to provide their name, age, occupation, last place of residence, birthmark or other physical marks or other peculiarities and any other information that would help U.S. officials identify them. In return, a certificate would be issued to the laborer which would allow him to re-enter the country.<sup>11</sup> The Act further allowed the Secretary of State to waive immigration requirements if labor became scarce.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1888, Congress rescinded the provision of the Chinese Exclusion Act which had previously allowed Chinese immigrants to re-enter the country under the Scott Act. Certificates that had been previously issued were declared null and void. In addition, the

The Geary Act of 1892 extended the period for Chinese exclusion for an additional ten years. The law further required all Chinese immigrants already residing in the U.S. to apply for a certificate which would include the name, age, place of residence and occupation of the applicant. Unlike the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Geary Act did not allow the Secretary of State to waive immigration requirements to address labor shortages.

On the record, Southern Congressmen were virtually silent in the debate on the issue of Chinese immigration. An examination of the Congressional Record shows that between 1877 and 1882, Southern Congressmen expressed no position on the issue of exclusion; however, Congressman Reagan of Texas introduced a substitute bill in which he sought to collect 50¢ from all immigrants entering the U.S. for the care they received once they arrived at U.S. immigration embarkation centers. Congressman Reagan's proposed substitution was rejected by the House. Although relatively silent during the debates, Southern Congressmen voted in favor of Chinese exclusion. The three theoretical perspectives framing this research will provide further explanations to help clarify the Southern position on Chinese exclusion.

### ***Minority Group Threat***

Minority group threat posits a relationship between the dominant group and minority groups. As minority groups increase their size relative to the overall population, gain political power, and increase their economic resources, the dominant group tries to minimize the threat of the minority group by imposing greater control. Based on the

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1888 legislation permitted Chinese government officials, teachers and students, merchants and travelers to enter the United States.

propositions of minority group threat, we should expect that the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act were in response to a growing Chinese population. Furthermore, the population should have continued to increase after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act since the Geary Act was passed to extend Chinese Exclusion for an additional ten years. This increase in the Chinese population could have occurred through rising birth rates, or, in the case of the South, in-migration from other regions.

According to the U.S. Census, the number of foreign born in the U.S. had reached approximately 6.7 million by 1880. This figure accounted for roughly 13.3% of the population. More specifically, .52% of foreign born immigrants resided in the South – that's less than 1%<sup>12</sup>. Of the number of overall immigrants that arrived between 1871 and 1880, approximately 50% were from Northern and Western Europe; with almost half of that percentage arriving from Germany; 7% from other parts of Europe. However, only 5% of immigrants migrated from Asia. (Lemay 1987). Numerically, this accounted for 5.5 million Northern and Western Europeans, including the almost 2 million from Germany. Irish immigrants also arrived in significant numbers. Almost 2 million Irish immigrants arrived during this same period. Asian immigrants accounted for only 107,630, with 104,468 arriving directly from China. The greatest numerical threat was not posed by Chinese immigrants but by Northern and Western Europeans. However, in terms of the Chinese immigrant population in the South, nine out of eleven states saw an increase between 1880 and 1890. Although the actual numbers are relatively small, the percentage of change is significant.

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<sup>12</sup> 261,354 foreign born resided in the South out of a total U.S. population of over 50 million.

<b>Number of Chinese Immigrants by State 1880 and 1890</b>			
	Number of Chinese Immigrants By State in the South		
State	1880	1890	% Change
Alabama	4	48	+1100%
Arkansas	133	92	-30.82%
Florida	18	108	+500%
Georgia	17	108	+535.29%
Louisiana	489	333	-31.90%
Mississippi	51	147	+188.23%
North Carolina	1	32	+3100%
South Carolina	9	34	+277.78%
Tennessee	25	51	+104%
Texas	136	710	+422.06%
Virginia	6	55	+816.67%
Total	889	1,718	

Source: United States Census  
 (+) denotes increase in population  
 (-) denotes decrease in population

In addition, as early as Reconstruction, Southern planters met to address labor shortage concerns. Chinese immigrants were viewed as ideal candidates for field work primarily because they had a history of not engaging in the political process. More specifically, Chinese immigrants had not voted in California and, it was believed, they would not vote in the South (Loewen 1988). The lack of political engagement by Chinese immigrants would only serve to strengthen the political power of Whites since they would also replace newly enfranchised Blacks in the South.

The Geary Act was passed just ten years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted and immediately before the provision of exclusion was about to expire. The Geary Act extended the provision of Chinese exclusion for an additional ten years (through 1902). From 1880 to 1890, the overall percentage of foreign born in the United



States increased from 13.3% to 14.8%. In the South, the percentage of foreign born remained constant at .52%. Still, nine out of the 11 Southern states voted in favor of the measure, with only South and North Carolina voting against the legislation. At the time, South Carolina and North Carolina ranked 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> in average cotton production between 1877 and 1882. The percentage of Chinese immigrants residing in these states increased by 3200% and 377.77%, respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The lack of support for numerical, economic or political threat from Chinese immigrants and the unrestricted admission of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe in greater numbers show that the exclusion of Chinese immigrants was based on race. In addition, the support for Chinese exclusion by most of the Southern states would appear to undermine the theoretical propositions for a class analysis, namely, the exclusion of Chinese immigrants would minimize the size of the pool of low wage workers. I explore this supposition in greater detail below.

### ***Class-Based Theory***

Class theory posits that planters import low wage labor to maintain a pool of cheap labor and to keep the cost of wages low. When the economy is strong, planters use the surplus laborers as strikebreakers or as leverage against workers to keep them in line. When the economy is in a downturn, planters are able to maintain their source of labor. The data simply does not support this supposition.

According to Wright, the increase in cotton production came at the expense of crop diversification. After all, cotton was “more valuable per acre than alternative uses

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<sup>13</sup> North Carolina’s Chinese immigrant population increased from 1 in 1880 to 32 in 1890; and, South Carolina’s population increased from 9 in 1880 to 34 in 1890 (United States Census).

of land” (34). Cotton production also resulted in greater intensification in terms of both labor and land use. More land and labor were needed for the production process. However, Blacks began their exodus from the fields. More specifically, the departure of a segment of women and children out of the fields after emancipation is estimated by Ransom and Sutch to have been between a 28-37% reduction in “man-hours” per person (Wright 278, n 34). The departure of Blacks did not end with the fields. Blacks were also leaving the South. After Reconstruction ended, ex-Confederates reclaimed political power. White redemption and the reconstitution of White supremacy as well as the agricultural depression of 1877 motivated the migration of Blacks from the South to the North. It is estimated that almost 100,000 Blacks left Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi for industrial centers in the North and West (Franklin and Moss 1994) creating a demand for additional labor.

Arguably the most significant portion of this legislation is the provision excluding *both* skilled and unskilled Chinese immigrants. This portion of the legislation undermines class theory. More specifically, the exclusion of unskilled Chinese immigrants potentially limited the pool of low-wage laborers.

After the war and the economic depression of 1878, the cotton economy rebounded and continued to expand. Previously depleted cotton-producing areas in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama were revitalized and many areas of the South that had not been a part of the slave-based economy were lured into cotton production after the Civil War (Wright 1986). In 1879 the region produced close to 5.7 million bales of cotton. This figure exceeded a prewar production high by over one million bales of cotton. This level of production made the South the dominant world cotton producer.

However, the cost to produce cotton also increased because of the growing exportation of cotton to Great Britain, the leader in cotton manufacturing. In addition to the increasing exportation of cotton globally, domestically, the consumption of southern cotton also increased. By 1880, local cotton mills consumed over 30 percent of the cotton grown in the south. From 1878 to 1880, the consumption of raw cotton increased from 186,489 bales to 221,337 bales and the South produced an average of 5,917,000 bales of cotton annually. This sharp increase in cotton consumption was the result of the South's entry into the cotton spinning industry (Brandfon 1967).

This unprecedented growth was led by Texas, Mississippi and Georgia (National Agricultural Statistics Service 2008). As cotton production increased, Blacks branched out beyond the cotton fields into other sectors such as cotton mills, phosphate and saw mills, railroads and levees. The opening of these sectors of the economy also concerned Southern planters who already believed Blacks were taking advantage of their newly freed status and the new system of sharecropping (Brandfon 1967). To minimize the demands of Southern Blacks and to meet the growing demands of agricultural labor, Southern planters convened regional conferences specifically to address recruiting Chinese immigrants to supplement as well as substitute Black labor (Loewen 1988). That Southern planters looked to Chinese immigrants as a source of labor to keep wages low and as a way to help them maintain some degree of bargaining power against newly-freed Black workers, undoubtedly supports a class analysis. However, the vote to exclude Chinese immigrants by the majority of Southern Congressmen ignored the needs of Southern planters and further violates one of the basic tenets of Bonacich's split labor market analysis. According to Bonacich, there are three classes in her analysis:

capitalists, higher paid workers and lower paid workers. However in this instance, the interests of the planter elites were divergent from the interests of Southern Congressmen with supporting Chinese exclusion based on race; and planter elites opposing it because of their need for labor.

Contrastingly, leading up to the passage of the Geary Act in 1892, cotton production fluctuated, experiencing its lowest level of production in 1888 at 6,913,000 bales of cotton and its highest level of production at 9,017,000 bales in 1891.<sup>14</sup> In 1892, the year the Geary Act was passed, cotton production was at its lowest in six years at 6,683,000 bales. In relative terms, average production for the years preceding the passage of the Geary Act<sup>15</sup> exceeded average production for the years preceding the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act<sup>16</sup> by a total of 2,314,000 bales. The increased production of cotton leading up to the passage of the Geary Act did not see a corresponding increase in additional labor. Instead, the 1892 legislation extended Chinese exclusion for an additional ten years. What also proves problematic for class theorists is that both Chinese skilled and unskilled laborers were prohibited from entering the United States.

### *State-Centered Perspective*

Arguably, all immigration legislation fits within a statist perspective because its broader purpose is to regulate who enters the United States. However, for purposes of

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<sup>14</sup> Although the Geary Act was passed in 1892, annual cotton production for that year was incomplete at the time the Act was passed. As a result, it is necessary to look at the years leading up to the passage of the Geary Act, particularly 1891.

<sup>15</sup> From 1887 to 1891

<sup>16</sup> From 1877 to 1881

this research we need to go beyond the broad regulatory function immigration legislation serves and take a more focused look at how the terms of the legislation fit within a statist framework. Because statist theory suggests policies are implemented in order to maintain capitalism and to preserve national security, including national ideals, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act should be in response to a threat to capitalism or national security.

When we look again at the Census data, of the 13.3% of foreign born residing in the U.S. in 1880, 6.7% lived in the South. At the time the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, Irish immigrants made up one of the largest groups entering the U.S. Although previously considered below the status of Black slaves in terms of work ethic, education and social status by Southern planters, Irish immigrants escaped exclusion by immigration policy. The explanation for this intentional oversight was that Irish immigrants had begun to assert their own whiteness. However, Chinese immigrants were not afforded that opportunity. Instead, Chinese immigrants were viewed as unassimilable. So, although Chinese immigrants did not pose a direct threat to national security, they did pose a threat to the Southern region's way of life and the long-standing institution of White supremacy. To counter this potential challenge to White supremacy, Southern states supported Chinese exclusion.

On the record, Southern opposition to the Geary Act came from Mississippi Congressman Hooker. Hooker's opposition was two-pronged. First, Hooker objected to the extension of Chinese exclusion because the Geary Act abrogated all other existing treaties with China. Second, the Geary Act suspended habeas corpus for Chinese immigrants arrested in the U.S. (Cong. Rec 1892, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess, 2913). From Congressman Hooker's objections, it appears he was concerned about protecting the image of the U.S.

and protecting constitutional rights, not with the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. With the exception of 1889, Mississippi was the second highest cotton producer between 1883 and 1892, behind Texas and in front of Georgia. In 1889, Mississippi was ranked third. Texas and Georgia also supported Chinese exclusion at 75 and 60% respectively. The mean level of support for Southern states (64%) was higher than the mean level of support for all states in the U.S. (57%), but lower than Southern support of the 1882 legislation.

My examination of the roll call votes on the Chinese Exclusion Act reveals that out of 299 members of the House of Representatives, 228 members voted on this legislation. Out of the 228 members who voted, 192 voted in favor of Chinese exclusion. This accounts for 84.2% of all voting House members. By party, out of the 105 votes cast by Democrats, 102 votes or 97.1% were in favor of Chinese exclusion, while only 88 out of 122 Republicans, or 72.1%, supported the legislation. Unanimous Democratic support from the eleven former Confederate states was slightly higher than the support from their Northern Democratic counterparts. One hundred percent of voting Southern Democrats favored Chinese exclusion, while 94.4% of voting Northern Democrats supported the legislation. That Southern Democratic support is only slightly higher than Northern Democratic support indicates that sectionalism was not a factor in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Geary Act reflects a larger Democratic Party majority. Out of 347 members, 222 voted on the Geary Act. Out of the 222 members who voted, 179 voted to extend Chinese exclusion for 10 additional years. This figure reflects 80.6% of all voting members. When I examine the votes by party, I find that 86.1% of Democrats supported

the extension of Chinese exclusion and 54.8% of Republicans supported extending the exclusion legislation. My examination further shows that 85.1% of Democrats from the 11 Southern states supported Chinese exclusion. Similarly, 86.8% of Northern Democrats supported the legislation. Again, like the Chinese Exclusion Act, this data indicate that sectionalism was not a factor in the passage of the Geary Act.

Breakdown of support for the Geary Act by political party was bi-partisan. In other words, both parties supported an extension of Chinese exclusion. However, Democrat support was substantially higher than their Republican counterparts. Sixty percent (60%) of democrats supported extending Chinese exclusion versus 26% of Republicans. What is even more striking, however, is that as cotton production continued to increase, Southern Democrats supported the legislation by 87%, which represents an increase in overall Democrat and Republican support. To gauge the degree of sectionalism, I examine the level of support for both the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act for Southern Democrats relative to Northern Democrats. With respect to both pieces of legislation, both Southern and Northern democrats were fairly unified in their support. With the Chinese Exclusion Act, the level of support by Southern Democrats was 100%. Northern Democrats supported the legislation at 94.4%. Similarly, with the Geary Act, Southern Democrats supported the legislation at 85.1%. Northern Democrats were slightly higher at 86.8%.

In this chapter I examined the influence of the politics of cotton on the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act. Although Southern Congressmen were silent on the record in terms of the Chinese Exclusion Act, they nonetheless voted for the exclusion of

Chinese immigrants. Southern Congressmen also supported a 10-year extension of exclusion with the Geary Act.

I found support for minority group threat, class and the state-centered approaches in the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. First, although the percentage of Chinese immigrants residing in the South was minimal, the support for Chinese exclusion by the majority of Southern Congressmen was based on race. Because of the distinct phenotypical characteristics and unfamiliar cultural practices of Chinese immigrants, they were viewed as a threat to the White majority. Unlike minority group threat where Chinese immigrants posed a threat to the dominant group, with class analysis, Chinese immigrants as lower paid workers, posed a threat to higher paid workers. In turn, higher paid workers posed a threat to the profits of plantation elites. To minimize the threat of higher paid workers, plantation elites recruited Chinese immigrants to work in the cotton field to replace Black field workers and to keep the cost of wages low. The triangular relationship between planters, field workers and Chinese immigrants can be superimposed directly onto the relationship theorized by class analysts. Finally, I also found support for the state-centered approach as well. State theorists argue that policies are implemented to protect the country against threats to capitalism, national security and Americanism, including American institutions and ideals. At the Southern regional level, these threats manifested themselves as threats against Southern ideals and the Southern way of life. In the next chapter I will utilize these two approaches as well as class-based theory to examine the influence of the politics of cotton on the Immigration Act of 1917.



## Chapter Four

### The Immigration Act of 1917

*He gave their crops to the grasshopper,  
their produce to the locust.*  
Psalm 78:46

Between the time that the Geary Act was enacted in 1893 and the 1917 Immigration Act was passed, the immigration picture became more dynamic with the entry of new players weighing in on the immigration debate and with the growing number of ethnic groups caught up in the pool of exclusion. Weighing in were planters, railroad and business leaders and legislators with shifting alliances, depending on the financial interest of each group. Before I examine the influence and interest of these groups, I will first highlight the major provisions of the 1917 legislation.

The Immigration Act of 1917 established the “Asiatic Barred Zone.” In addition to those already excluded, this new legislation further provided for the exclusion of,

...persons who are natives of islands not possessed by the United States adjacent to the continent of Asia, situated south of the twentieth parallel latitude north, west of the one hundred and sixtieth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich, and north of the tenth parallel of latitude south, or who are natives of any country, province, or dependency situate on the Continent of Asia west of the one hundred and tenth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich and east of the fiftieth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich and south of the fiftieth parallel of latitude north, except that portion of said territory situate between the fiftieth of sixty-fourth and thirty-eighth parallels of latitude north... (Immigration Act 1917)<sup>17</sup>

The Act provided two additional clauses worthy of note. First, the Act excluded those immigrants over 16 years of age who could not read English or some other language.

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<sup>17</sup> The Asiatic Barred Zone included India, Burma, Siam, the Malay states of Southeast Asia, the East Indian Islands, Asiatic Russia, the Polynesian Island and Arabia and Afghanistan.

However, the law did allow fathers over 55 years of age, mothers, grandparents and unmarried daughters of eligible immigrants to enter the U.S. even if they could not read. Second, the Act provided that skill labor could be imported if there were no unemployed laborers of that particular skill already in the country provided they were not criminal, or mentally or physically defective (Immigration Act of 1917).

Before the Act was passed, the economic depression of 1893-1897 temporarily tempered planters' enthusiasm for immigrant labor. However, by 1899, domestic and global demand for raw cotton put the cotton economy on an upward trend (Brandfon 1964).

According to the planters, only the insufficiency of labor stood in the way of capitalizing fully on their opportunities. The demands for more Negro labor for the Delta's cotton fields were meeting stiff competition from other areas of the South's economy. Cotton mills, phosphate mines, double tracking of railroads, cotton oil mills, saw mills, and the increased building of roads and levees were drawing heavily upon the available labor supply and retarding the normal flow of Negro labor westward from the worn-outlands of the seaboard states.

(Brandfon 1964:593)

Southern planters looked to the legislature for assistance in satisfying its labor needs. More specifically, planters sought to promote and increase the flow of White immigrants into the South. Mississippi legislators resented the immigration schemes proposed by Delta planters, primarily because of the potential for race-mixing between "native Americans" and the foreign immigrants. The Southern Farmers' Alliance which began in Texas in the late 1870s and spread throughout the Northeast, boasted a membership of three million White yeomen farmers, and promoted the interests of small farm owners and laborers. Although The Southern Farmers' Alliance did not allow Black

members, it supported the establishment of the Colored Farmer's Alliance. By 1890, The Alliance had grown into the South's strongest agricultural agency (Holmes 1984).

Leaders of The Alliance specifically accused capitalists of exploiting farmers and "...spoke of the power of the wealthy, who lobbied to secure legislation favoring their interests to the detriment of farmers and the public in general. Farmers could control this power only if they themselves united and made their own political demands" (Barnes 1987:582). One such demand entailed limiting immigration. Immigrant labor would compete directly with the members of the Alliance. As a result, The Alliance supported immigration restriction and tied their political fate to the Democratic Party<sup>18</sup>, which also supported restricting immigration. Not coincidentally, in 1890, out of 175 House members and 44 Senate members, the Georgia legislature seated 102 known Alliance members in the House and 21 known Alliance members in the Senate (Holmes 1984).<sup>19</sup> By contrast, Southern planters formed a coalition with the railroads to further their political interests, although this relationship would prove to be quite tenuous.

Southern planters and railroad officials agreed on the need to encourage immigration to the southern region. However, they diverged in their objectives for bringing immigrants to the South. The railroad's primary goal for recruiting immigrants to the South was to raise the level of freight volume. They believed that immigrants

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<sup>18</sup> The lack of support from the Democratic Party for the Alliance's demand for an expansion in the supply of currency eventually led the Alliance to migrate to the newly-formed political party, the People's Party, although the majority of individual Alliance members retained their ties to the Democratic Party. The People's Party adopted the platform of The Alliance in its entirety although it eventually reneged on key issues of The Alliance. This rift between the two organizations led The Alliance to become disenchanted and unsupportive of the People's Party.

<sup>19</sup> The Alliance membership was unknown for 36 House members and 15 Senate members (Holmes 1984).

could buy small pieces of uncultivated and abandoned farmland. Not only would the new immigrant farmer help increase freight volume, immigrants would also increase revenue from transporting passengers. Southern planters wanted to supplement their supply of cheap labor, not create new landowners. Southern business leaders also favored an increase in immigration, arguing that a significant increase in cotton production would lead to more rapid industrialization of the South; and, as a result, lose the industrialization gap between the South and the rest of the nation (Brandfon 1964).

In 1905, representatives from planters, railroads and industry hosted the Italian ambassador throughout the South to encourage Italian immigration. The April 1905 edition of "Southern Farm Magazine" printed on its cover "Bringing in Settlers," a strong appeal for immigrants to consider locating to the southern region,

The Southern railroads, by actively endeavoring to stimulate immigration to the South, are performing a conspicuous service not alone to that section, but also to the congested localities of the North that at present are perplexing themselves as to how to employ or else to care for the many thousands of foreigners who are dumped into New York and other Atlantic ports each year. The southern roads are adopting the same methods that have long been used with marked success by the great trunk lines of the West, assisted by the steamship lines which bring over the foreigners. These steamship companies maintain agencies in the emigration centers of Europe at which they sell tickets not only for the ocean transportation, but also from New York and other ports of entry here to any place to which the immigrants may desire to go.

During the past few years the Southern railroads have begun to compete for a share of this emigrant passenger traffic in order to build up population and industries in the territory through which they run. With this end in view they are now seeking to divert transatlantic immigration in a considerable measure to Southern ports, New Orleans and Galveston, for example, so that thence it may be distributed directly and easily throughout the South by their railroad systems.

According to the last census, less than 3 per cent of the country's foreign born population resided in the south; but if the efforts that are now being made to stimulate immigration to that section meet with the success they

deserve this proportion will be very materially increased by 1910, when the next census is taken. The South, with its millions of acres of virgin soil and its yet undeveloped resources, presents today an opportunity to the immigrant who is willing to work that cannot be matched elsewhere in the United States (Southern Farm Magazine, April 1905).

The U.S. Census estimates the percentage of foreign born residing in the South to be 2.3%. By 1910, there was only a slight increase to 2.5% in the percentage of foreign born. Efforts to attract immigrants were being directly challenged.

### **The Dillingham Commission**

The United States Immigration Commission was established to examine the political and economic impact of immigration in the U.S. Members of the Commission included Vermont Senator Paul Dillingham, after whom the report is referred, Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, South Carolina Senator Asbury Latimer, who was replaced by Mississippi Senator Leroy Percy, New Jersey Representative Benjamin Howell, New York Representative William S. Bennett, Alabama Representative John L. Burnett, California Commissioner of Immigration William R. Wheeler, Jeremiah Jenks of Cornell University and Charles P. Neill of the Department of Labor.

The Commission proposed that future immigration legislation consider the quantity and quality of immigrants that would ease the process of assimilation, the economic well-being of the American people, whether an incoming supply of labor contributes to a slow and steady expansion of industry which would allow the immigrants to assimilate and not undermine American wages or working conditions. The Commission further recommended deporting aliens convicted of serious crimes, protecting immigrants against exploitation, discouraging aliens from sending their savings abroad, encouraging residency and naturalization and distributing aliens

throughout the United States. In addition, the Commission suggested allowing the Secretary of Commerce and Labor to override previous legislation banning the importation of skilled labor unless that type of skilled labor could not be found, if necessary. The exclusion of Chinese laborers and the restriction of Japanese and Korean immigration should be continued. Finally, the Commission recommended restricting unskilled labor (Dillingham Commission Report 1911, LeMay and Barkin 1999). The Dillingham Commission made a number of suggestions to meet the proposed stipulations which included excluding aliens who could not read or write, limiting the number of members of each race coming into the country, excluding unskilled laborers without wives or families, increasing the amount of money required in one's possession to come into the U.S. (LeMay and Barkin 1999).

Some scholars such as LeMay and Barkin argue that the findings of the Dillingham commission became the foundation for the Quota Act of 1921. However, some of the elements of the Commission's report appear in earlier legislation including the Immigration Act of 1917 and proposed legislation from 1915 and 1913. Not coincidentally, Alabama Representative and member of the Dillingham Commission, John Burnett,<sup>20</sup> was the most vocal proponent of restricting immigration.

Passage of the 1917 legislation occurred after President McKinley vetoed the bill because it included literacy tests. This bill was vetoed by three presidents beginning in

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<sup>20</sup> The New York Times reported Congressman Burnett became a target of a bomb attack in response to his strong anti-immigration position, which included sponsoring the legislation highlighted in this chapter.

1897 by President Cleveland, President Taft in 1918 and President Wilson in 1917.<sup>21</sup> In all three cases, each of the presidents vetoed the legislation because of the inclusion of literacy tests. All three pieces of legislation excluded all aliens over 16 years of age who were unable to read at least 30 ordinary words of English or some other language or dialect, including Hebrew or Yiddish. The effect of the literacy requirement was the exclusion of unskilled labor. The U.S. Department of Labor which housed the Immigration Service as well as the Department of Commerce and Labor also opposed the bill. Support for the bill came from not only the Southern region, but also the American Federation of Labor and the “workingmen of the North, where they feel the effect of pauper competition. Three millions of the American Federation of Labor, 1,000,000 farmers in the National Grange...a million or two in the Farmers’ Congress” (Congressional Record 1917). The interests of Southern planters, railroad officials and the Southern Farmers’ Alliance help contextualize the immigration legislation and, along with the data from The Congressional Record, can further be viewed within the framework of the three theoretical perspectives.

### ***Threat Perspective***

Under the threat perspective, racial threat should occur as the percentage of minorities increase within the population. The threat stems from the dissimilarities that exist between the minority group and the dominant group. From the Congressional Record, Southern House members touted those differences in support of immigration restriction. Representative Abercrombie of Alabama argued,

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<sup>21</sup> President Taft vetoed the bill in 1913 and again in 1915. Both times, the House failed to pass the bill over the President’s veto. The 1917 bill passed the House by a vote of 307 to 87, and it passed the Senate by 64 to 7 (LeMay and Barkin 1999).

Practically all of the earlier immigrants came of the same race, or branches of the same race, and were therefore easily welded into a homogenous body, while many of those who are now coming in a mighty stream are dissimilar from the first settlers in race, in language, in customs, in ideals, and in possibilities of development and assimilation.... To complicate the situation, our negro population is increasing rapidly, the number having grown within a half century from four to ten millions, most of whom are located in the same section....

But when we take into consideration the tremendous influx of newcomers whose birth rate is large, the constantly and rapidly increasing negro population, and the declining birth rate among native Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin, there seems to be reason for the fear that the time may come when this country will be made up, if not of a mongrel race, then of groups of peoples of dissimilar races and nationalities. ...for in the South, we have solved our problem, partially at least, by decreeing that there shall be no blood amalgamation (Congressional Record, January 30, 1914:2623).

Representative Abercrombie's remarks on the Record reflect several related concerns which have implications for the racial threat framework. First, Representative Abercrombie was concerned not only about the growing number of immigrants; he was also concerned about their inability to assimilate. Representative Abercrombie also expressed concern for the rapid growth of the Black population. Together, the growth of the immigrant population and the rapid growth of the Black population in the South threatened an already declining White population. As a result, it was necessary to pass immigration legislation that would minimize this threat.

The importance of Southern Congressional support on the immigration bill becomes more apparent when California representatives sought to exclude all Asians from entering the U.S. To gain Southern support, Representative Raker of California proposed an amendment that would link Asiatic exclusion to the exclusion of Africans. The proposed inclusion of Africans received a mixed response from Southern Congressmen. Mr. Burnett of Alabama asserted,



I hope that none of my friends from the South will be swept off their feet by the provision in regard to excluding Africans. There were only 6,000 Africans who came last year and 1,600 of them came to the East Coast Railroad in Florida and more than 800 went back. Most of the others went to the States of the North. Not a single one went to Louisiana, only two or three went to Mississippi; and when there is so much involved in this bill, where there is so much at stake, when the head of the State Department himself has expressed his desire that this question should be separated from the bill that is now under consideration, I hope that none of my friends from the Southern States will be swept away by reason of the fact that this amendment would exclude Africans, when scarcely any of them are coming to this country at all, except those that have come to the Panama Canal and those that came to the East Coast Railroad and have returned, and when none of them are coming to the South (Congressional Record February 3, 1914:2820).

And Mr. Harrison from Mississippi,

You have inserted the negro in your amendment for no other purpose than that you think it will draw support from southern Members. If you really are interested in our welfare, if you want to help us, why do not you assist us to repeal the fifteenth and modify the fourteenth amendments, and pass Jim Crow car laws and segregation laws for the District of Columbia? We do not have to worry about the number of negroes that are now being imported into the South. There are none. But the thing that interests us most now is how to deal with those we already have. I am in sympathy with the sentiments expressed in your amendments and I would be as glad as many man on the floor of this House to see such a bill reported out of the committee and enacted into law, but I remember the admonition, "Beware of Greeks bringing gifts." This bill should not be embarrassed by these amendments. (Congressional Record February 3, 1914:2820-1)

From the testimony it would appear that Congressmen Burnett and Harrison do not support restriction. However, they explained that amending the pending legislation to include Africans would guarantee its defeat. Specifically, Congressman Burnett stated,

...I am not arguing against the merits of this proposition. I am standing here as a man from the South who advocates this bill and the principles for which my people and I have been fighting for years, and appealing to my brethren from the Southland. I come from the State in which the first cradle of the Confederacy was rocked. I come from a State where we had the horrors of reconstruction that followed that terrific fratricidal strife, but I am not willing to jeopardize the bill and its provisions that I believe to be fundamentally right simply for the purpose of keeping out a few thousand

Jamaica negroes, when they are not coming to the South (Congressional Record January 7, 1915:1138).

The other side of the debate over African exclusion included Congressmen Eagle of Texas, Congressmen Aswell of Louisiana and Congressmen Small of North Carolina who summed up the issue,

...Every reason that applies to the exclusion of Chinese and Japanese applies to the exclusion of Africans.

...They can not assimilate with our people. In many of the States intermarriage is prohibited by law, and in all of the States it is prohibited by public opinion. There can be no assimilation between the White race and the black race socially. In the Southern States it is recognized that the very basis and maintenance of our civilization rests upon preserving plainly and unequivocally the social line of demarcation between these two races (Congressional Record January 7, 1915:1137).

More plainly, Congressmen Eagle stated emphatically that “America is White man’s country.” Furthermore, in the South, they had “sense enough to maintain White supremacy...” (Congressional Record January 7, 1915:1136).

Although the amendment to include Africans ultimately failed to pass the House, the debate exposed one critical element of the threat perspective. Like Blacks already in the U.S., or the recent immigrants from Africa, immigrants from China and Japan threatened the maintenance of White supremacy.

The testimony before Congress coupled with the fact that the 1917 legislation established an “Asiatic Barred Zone” from which immigrants were precluded from entering the U.S., certainly supports a racial threat hypothesis. Although significant, across-the-board exclusion is not proof positive of racial threat. Racial threat occurs in response to a growing minority population. In this case, the threat should be in response to a growing Asian population. There is Census data to support this hypothesis. Because

of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act, the number of foreign born from China between 1890 and 1910 decreased from 106,688 to 43,560. However, overall immigration from Asia increased from 113,383 to 237,950.

<b>Immigration from Asia for 1890, 1900 and 1910</b>			
<b>Region/Country</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>
Asia	113,383	120,248	191,484
China	106,688	81,534	56,756
India	2,143	2,031	4,664
Japan	2,292	24,788	67,744
Turkey in Asia	N/A	N/A	59,729
Other Asia	2,260	11,895	2,591

(U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table 4 Internet Release Date 1999)

Both Asian Indians and Turkish Asian immigrants experienced an increase in population in the United States. Not coincidentally, these groups were specifically excluded under the Immigration Act of 1917. While the presence of these two groups were non-existent in the South, the overall number of Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the South increased by 4.8%, even after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act. This data is illustrated below.

<b>Number of Chinese and Japanese Immigrants By State in the South</b>						
State	<b>Chinese Immigrants</b>			<b>Japanese Immigrants</b>		
	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1910</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Alabama	58	62	<b>+6.9</b>	3	4	<b>+33.33</b>
Arkansas	62	62	<b>0</b>	0	9	<b>+900</b>
Florida	120	191	<b>+59.17</b>	1	50	<b>+4900</b>
Georgia	204	233	<b>+14.22</b>	1	4	<b>+300</b>
Louisiana	599	507	<b>-15.36</b>	17	31	<b>+82.35</b>
Mississippi	257	237	<b>-7.</b>	2	0	<b>-100</b>
North Carolina	51	80	<b>+56.86</b>	0	2	<b>+200</b>
South Carolina	67	57	<b>-14.93</b>	0	8	<b>+800</b>
Tennessee	43	75	<b>+74.42</b>	8	4	<b>-50</b>
Texas	836	595	<b>-28.83</b>	13	340	<b>+2515.38</b>
Virginia	243	154	<b>-36.63</b>	10	14	<b>+40</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,540</b>	<b>2,253</b>	<b>-11.30</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>+747.27</b>

Source: United States Census

(+) denotes increase in population

(-) denotes decrease in population

The link between economic threat and immigration policy assumes restrictive legislation is passed during contractions in the economy. Because the 1917 immigration legislation imposed further restrictions, the assumption is that economic performance should have been on the decline. In the South, the most logical economic measure on which to focus is cotton production. Between 1893 and 1917, cotton production trends fluctuated, beginning with the economic depression which lasted from 1893-1898. During the depression cotton production averaged 9,012,000 bales of cotton per year. In the five years preceding the passage of the 1917 Immigration legislation cotton production averaged over 11,832,000 bales per year. With the increase in cotton production Southern Congressmen voted to restrict immigration.

The price of cotton follows a similar trend as cotton production. In the five years preceding the passage of the 1917 Immigration legislation, increases in cotton production corresponded to increases in the price of cotton. However, 1917 was the exception. In 1917, cotton production declined by 308,000 bales while cotton prices increased by almost \$6.00 per pound to \$18.37 (United States Department of Agriculture 1928). Given the upswing of cotton production and cotton prices, it cannot be convincingly argued that support for the Immigration Act of 1917 was related to the economic threat immigrants posed to the southern economy. It seems logical that the next questions to consider are, “How did the increased cotton production affect the supply of labor in the South?” And, “Did the increase or decrease in the demand for labor influence immigration policy?” I will examine these questions below.

### *Class Perspective*

The class perspective focuses on the three class groups: capitalists, higher paid workers and lower paid workers. In this case, planter elites favor the importation of surplus labor to keep the price of wages low and to minimize the demands of higher paid labor. In this scenario, lower paid labor pose a threat to higher paid labor. Understandably, higher paid labor and representative labor organizations sought to minimize the impact of immigration on wages. Much of the Southern Congressional support for the 1917 Immigration Act mimicked that of organized labor and focused on the effect of immigration on low-wage laborers. According to Alabama Representative Burnett,

Around Birmingham and Gadsen, Ala, the honest American laborer is being forced into competition with that low class of illiterate immigrants

from southern Europe who are brought here to beat down the price of the workingman's sweat and toil and thus take bread away from the mouths of his wife and children. A few years ago I asked a large mine operator in Alabama who were his poorest laborers. He replied, 'the South Italians.' I asked if they were poorer than the Negro. He said: 'Infinitely poorer.' I asked: 'Why then do you employ them?' He answered: 'To keep down the price of wages (Congressional Record 1917:2456).

Similarly, Representative Dies of Texas also argued that "...you let a million from the south and east of Europe dump themselves upon our shores every 12 months, to depress the wages of our labor, debase the standard of living, and complicate every political problem that vexes our statesmanship" (Congressional Record, Appendix 1912:1).

Still, another Tennessee Representative – Congressman Austin – highlighted additional organizations seeking protection under the proposed legislation,

The American Federation of Labor, with a membership of more than 2,000,000 wage earners, in ever national convention of recent years, with every State represented has asked for this legislation.... The Farmers' Union, with a membership of 3,000,000 men who till and cultivate the soil in the United States, demand it. The National Grange, the Farmers' National Congress, the Railway Trainmen's Association, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, Conductors, and firemen, and practically every patriotic organization of this country insists upon and demand this legislation (Congressional Record 1914:2665).

Burnett, a Democrat also articulated the platform of the Democratic Party. "The Democratic Party as far back as 1896 declared in its national platform in favor of the exclusion of pauper labor" (Congressional Record 1917:2454). Not coincidentally, the Southern position mimicked the platform of the Democratic Party. In 1917, of the 109 members of the House of Representatives from the 11 states that made up the Confederacy, 104 of them were Democrats. The Southern position as articulated by Rep. Burnett seem counterintuitive to the interest of Southern planters. Illinois Congressman Cannon pointed out that paradox.

I cannot understand why it is that that portion of our citizenship which comes from the South, with a large colored population, desire to exclude this immigration.... There was much talk... about the negroes [sic] coming north to vote the Republican ticket.... Those negroes [sic] were coming north to labor, because they got a better wage than they got down South (Congressional Record 1917:2449).

Congressman Cannon's remarks on the Record highlight one of the inherent flaws with class-theory; namely, capitalists do not always act as one unified class.

Southern congressional support of the exclusionary legislation occurred during a time when overall cotton production in the South was increasing. Between 1893 and 1917, there were mild fluctuations in cotton production; however, cotton production in the South increased from 7,390,000 bales to 10,198,000, an overall net increase of 2,808,000. Texas was the highest cotton producer during this period with Georgia, Mississippi alternating between second and third highest producers, with one exception. In 1916, Arkansas slipped into third place, out-producing Mississippi, which fell to fifth place.

My examination of the Congressional Record reveals that the target of exclusion centered on unskilled labor. It is important to note the countries such a provision would impact. Again, Representative Burnett from Alabama explained that under the proposed legislation, Chinese exclusion would be strengthened. The law would further,

keep out 40% of the South Italians, the Portuguese, the Turks and the Syrians; about 30 per cent of the Greeks, the Poles, the Magyars, and other races in Southern Europe, and about 80% of the Mexicans. It will not keep out one-half of 1 per cent of the English, Irish, Scotch, Germans, Bohemians, Swiss, French, Scandanavians, and other peoples of Northwestern Europe (Congressional Record 1917:2456).

Because the 1917 Immigration Act decreased the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S., one interpretation may assume that planters did not need excess labor.

However, this assumption falls outside of class theory. According to class theory, capitalists always have a need for a reserve labor pool. When the demand for labor is high, capitalists can tap into the reserve labor force to keep wages low. When the demand for labor is low, capitalists can use unemployed workers as leverage to keep employed workers from making too many demands. In other words, cutting off the supply of immigrant labor would not serve the needs of capitalists (Bonacich 1972).

However, this chapter in the immigration tale doesn't end with the passage of legislation. Although Congress voted to restrict immigration, Congress also allowed the Secretary of Labor to suspend the head tax, waive literacy requirements and to temporarily repeal the 1885 Prohibition of Contract Labor law<sup>22</sup> to allow Mexican workers to enter the U.S. to work in the agricultural sector.<sup>23</sup> U.S. officials also made it easier for Mexican workers to obtain visas. These relaxed standards seem to indicate a victory for agribusiness in general and Texas planters in particular since their labor force was primarily composed of Mexican and Mexican American laborers. These relaxed immigration measures also suggests a willingness by the state to relinquish some of its control over immigration and labor and may undermine the statist interpretation of the 1917 Immigration Act, which will be examined below.

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<sup>22</sup> The Prohibition of Contract Labor law made it unlawful for any person or business to prepay the transportation costs of immigrants going to the U.S. for the purpose of entering into a contract for labor or to encourage the immigration of individuals to enter into a labor contract.

<sup>23</sup> These relaxed standards have led some scholars to refer to the entry of Mexican workers during this period as the first Bracero Program.



### *Statist Theory*

Certainly, the suspension of the head tax, the waiver of the literacy requirement and the suspension of the 1885 Prohibition of Contract Labor law can be seen as a victory for agribusiness and thus support for class theory. However, these relaxed standards can also be viewed as concessions made by the state, which would in turn keep statist theory in play. It is important to examine more fully the 1917 Immigration Act within the context of the statist theoretical framework. I will begin with a review of the immigration debates found in the Congressional Record.

Two key elements of statist theory are issue of preserving American ideals and the protecting America's nationhood, including maintaining America's economic principle of a market economy. World War I, however, makes protecting America's nationhood more salient than protecting the market economy. Mr. Quin of Mississippi points out:

I do not believe that any man ought to be admitted into the United States who is not familiar with our Government, who has not all of the elements of patriotism in his heart. I think that none except white people ought to be allowed to come into this Republic. I do not believe that all the population of Southern Europe that is overrunning this Republic ought to be permitted to come into this country. I do not believe that this great Government ought to allow its institutions to be undermined by the foreigners who have brought anarchy into this country....

All of the land in this country should be preserved for the Americans. I believe in America for Americans. ...

I would love to see good Irishmen and good Germans and good Scandinavians come into this country now. ...but by this indiscriminate method of permitting immigration to come into this country you have admitted vampires to our citizenship.

*My principal reason is because the bringing in here of the class of citizens who do not love the American flag and who do not have the patriotism that would lead them to defend the country in time of war will, in the course of*

*time, undermine our Government, overthrow our ideals, destroy American institutions and kill prosperity* (Congressional Record 1914:2626)  
(Emphasis added).

In this case, although Congressman Quin invoked a racial basis for exclusion, taken on its face his testimony reveals that patriotism and security were of paramount importance.

Congressman Austin of Tennessee also questioned the ability of immigrants to become productive citizens, viewing their lack of education as an impediment to becoming industrious members of society and, as a result retard industrialization.

...The Civil War destroyed our southern homes and cities. The southern Union and Confederate soldiers returned to their homes possessing practically nothing but a brave and undaunted spirit and determination to rehabilitate the south. We had turned over to us 4,000,000 of slaves to educate and train for citizenship.... And we are opposed to illiterates entering the Southern States from Europe, Mexico, India, Japan, Turkey or any other portion of the world. We have sufficient burdens and responsibilities of this character (Congressional Record 1914:2665).

To reduce the potential number of illiterate immigrants entering the U.S. Congress included the literacy provision which required immigrants seeking admission to be able to read English or some other language. This provision had the effect of excluding primarily unskilled immigrants sought by agribusiness and other business interests reliant on low wage workers. Although Congress included a provision which would allow labor to be imported if the Attorney General determined that there was a shortage of labor that could be filled by immigrants who would otherwise be excluded, this provision applied to *skilled* labor only. This skilled labor provision would not benefit planter elites who necessarily relied on low wage, unskilled labor. In spite of the exclusion of low wage labor from the Immigration Act of 1917, Southern Congressmen voted overwhelmingly in favor of the legislation. Although President Wilson vetoed the legislation because of the inclusion of literacy tests, Congress voted to override his veto.

My examination of the roll-call votes reveals that 91 out of 104 Southern Democrats, or 87.5% voted for the 1917 Immigration Act. Congressional support from the 11 Confederate states was 87.5% (91 out of 104 Democrats).<sup>24</sup> Northern Democratic support was significantly less at 58%. The higher level of support of Southern Democrats relative to the overall support of Democrats in the North indicates sectionalism may have been a factor in the passage of 1917 Immigration Act.

House members from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida and North Carolina provided unanimous support for the legislation; Louisiana and South Carolina reluctantly supported the legislation at 63% and 56% respectively. The three states that ranked as the top cotton producers over for the period, Texas, Georgia and Mississippi, also showed a high level of support for the exclusionary legislation (90%, 92% and 89%, respectively).

<b>Average Cotton Production by State for 1893-1917 and Level of Support for the Immigration Act of 1917</b>		
State	Cotton Production* (1893-1917)	Level of Support (1917)
Texas	78,265	83%
Georgia	41,462	92%
Mississippi	31,162	89%
Alabama	27,625	100%
South Carolina	25,974	56%
Arkansas	20,935	100%
North Carolina	15,582	100%
Louisiana	15,085	63%
Tennessee	7,306	90%
Florida	1,396	100%
Virginia	383	91%

\* Per 1,000 bales

<sup>24</sup> Overall support from both parties was at 87.1%.

<b>Cotton Production by State in 1916 and Level of Support for Immigration Act of 1917</b>		
State	Cotton Production* (1916) <sup>25</sup>	Level of Support (1917)
Texas	3,125	83%
Georgia	1821	92%
Arkansas	1134	100%
South Carolina	932	56%
Mississippi	812	89%
North Carolina	654	100%
Alabama	530	100%
Louisiana	443	63%
Tennessee	382	90%
Florida	44	100%
Virginia	28	91%

\* Per 1,000 bales

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

In concluding the examination of the Immigration Act of 1917, it is important to note that the significance of this piece of legislation was not only that it increased the number of groups legally excluded from entering the United States by establishing the Asiatic Barred Zone; but this was also the first major piece of immigration legislation that included literacy tests for individuals eligible for admission to the country. Each theoretical perspective provides a different explanation for the inclusion of these provisions.

The underlying premise of minority group threat is that as minority groups gain numerically, politically and economically, the majority group responds by imposing harsh measures on the minority group to minimize the threat and maintain their power and control. Some scholars have played up the significance of social context when examining minority threat. Jackson argues “The strength of the theoretical links

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<sup>25</sup> This is the amount of cotton produced the year immediately preceding the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act.

specified in the model varies with the region's social context, city size and temporal proximity to racial strife. The degree to which each influences public perceptions of ... minority groups depends on historical and cultural tradition, variations in sociodemographic characteristics, and experience" (Jackson 1989:5). In other words, context matters. A logical implication of this theory is that in small numbers, minority groups pose little threat evoking little or no penalty from the majority group. My findings belie this assumption. Although the number of immigrants in the South was numerically insignificant, the majority of Southern Congressmen voted for restrictive immigration policy. On the Record, Southern Congressmen perceived the immigrant groups to be a threat to Southern Whites. The threat posed by immigrants was further punctuated by the growth of the Black population in the South.

The South's social context was largely influenced by an agricultural economy which relied on Black labor. Much of the racial tension was between newly-freed Blacks and Whites. The changing dynamics of race relations focused on the out-migration of Blacks from the South, the upward mobility of Blacks, and the downward mobility of some Whites into sharecropping and, subsequently, into direct competition with Blacks. With the exception of Texas, immigrants have remained outside of this impermeable theoretical framework.

In terms of the political threat posed by immigrants, Congressman Heflin of Alabama provided the theoretical backdrop in which to situate my findings. According to Heflin, because the immigrant population in his district, as well as in the South more broadly, was small, he was free to vote for a restrictive immigration policy because immigrants did not constitute a viable voting constituency. This reasoning suggests that

the predictive power is greatest only after a significant concentration of minorities is in one area. The data also suggest that the dominant group does not necessarily become more resigned to their declining status but may utilize other measures to retain or regain their diminishing status (e.g. English only laws and loss of citizenship for citizens who marry immigrants).

There was also support for class-theory as well. When I examined the triangular relationship between capitalists, higher paid labor and lower paid labor hypothesized by class theorists, I found a similar relationship between planters, the higher paid Black and White laborers and lower-paid immigrant laborers. Prior to the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917, cotton planters sought to enlarge the pool of available low wage labor to help keep down the cost of labor by promoting liberal immigration laws. On the surface, congressional lawmakers acted to protect the American working class against the threat of possible wage depression as a result of the entry of surplus workers into the labor pool. The majority of Southern Congressmen voted in favor of continuing to restrict the flow of immigrants into the U.S. At the same time, however, Congress also supported the suspension of the head tax, waived literacy requirements and suspended the Prohibition of Contract Labor law under which employers were fined for hiring undocumented immigrants.

For Congress, the threat to nationhood and national ideals should be particularly salient during times of war. Immigration policy becomes one mechanism utilized to minimize that threat. At the Southern regional level, although immigrants and miscegenation were still a threat, the record shows they were outweighed by the threat to nationhood.

The degree of sectionalism makes these latter findings somewhat specious. Out of 104 Southern Democrats, 87.5% voted in favor of the 1917 Immigration Act. Contrastingly, only 58% of Northern Democrats supported the legislation. It is unlikely that the gap between Southern and Northern Democrats is simply a reflection in differences over national security. Instead, this difference may reflect differences on race and ethnicity or the need for low wage labor on which the South was more reliant. More specifically, the gap in the level of support between Southern and Northern Democrats may be attributed to the profound differences in the degree of industrialization and mechanization between the two regions.

In the next chapter I will continue to examine the influence of minority threat, class-based theory and the state-centered approach on immigration policy. My analysis will focus on the Immigration Act of 1924, which continued the U.S. policy of exclusion.

## Chapter Five

### The Immigration Act of 1924

*Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns.*  
Deuteronomy 24:14

In this chapter I will continue my analysis of immigration policy by examining the influence of King Cotton on the 1924 Immigration Act.<sup>26</sup> However, before I proceed, it is necessary to provide some background leading up to the 1924 legislation. As a result, the first part of this chapter will briefly examine the 1921 Immigration Act, the basis of which laid the foundation for the Immigration Act of 1924.

In 1921, Congress passed the 1921 Emergency Quota Act.<sup>27</sup> As the name suggests, the 1921 legislation established quotas that limited the number of immigrants admitted from countries to 3% of the total number of immigrants that arrived from that country in 1910. The idea of the quota system was recommended by the Dillingham Commission. The Congressional Record reveals that although the 1920 Census Report would be available to use as a basis from which to calculate the total number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States from each country based on the three percent ceiling, the 1910 Census report recorded fewer immigrants than 1920, and would

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<sup>26</sup> The Immigration Act of 1924 is also known as the Johnson-Reed Act after Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania and Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington.

<sup>27</sup> The House voted to agree to the conference report on H.R. 14461, a bill limiting the immigration of aliens into the U.S. The House initially proposed to suspend immigration for 15 months. However, the Senate proposed to limit immigration to three percent of the immigrants recorded by the 1910 U.S. Census.



subsequently yield even fewer immigrants in the coming years.<sup>28</sup> While the 1921 legislation significantly reduced the number of immigrants arriving to the United States, the 1924 Immigration Act made the quotas permanent and, as a result, had a greater effect on reducing immigration to the United States.

The 1924 Immigration Act further reduced the percentage of immigrants admitted into the country from 3% to 2% from each country with the minimum quota set at 100 immigrants per country, as well as established the 1890 Census as the basis by which to calculate the total number of immigrants allowed into the country. In addition, the Act divided immigrants into two broad categories: quota immigrants and non quota immigrants. Quota immigrants included individuals who counted against a nation's number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. as established by the legislation. Non-quota immigrants included immigrants who were allowed entry into the U.S. but did not count against a nation's share. Half of the quotas for each nationality were allocated to the parents of citizens, the husbands of citizens, and those who were skilled in agriculture and their wives and children. The other half of quota immigrants were the children and wives of lawfully admitted alien residents already permanently residing in the U.S. Non-quota immigrants included the wife and child of a citizen already living in the United States; an immigrant born in Canada, Newfoundland, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the Canal Zone or countries in south and Central America; an immigrant who worked as a minister or professor and his wife and children; and, an immigrant who was a "bona fide student" who wanted to study at an accredited school or university (Congressional Record House Testimony 1924).

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<sup>28</sup> The 1921 Emergency Quota Act was extended for one year on May 19, 1922 (Congressional Record 1922).

The 1924 Immigration Act further demonstrated its intent of severely limiting immigration by the weight it gives to the enforcement of the legislation. According to the Act, visas are issued by consular officers, who must first document the nationality of the immigrant. Because the legislation established quotas for admission, visas must also state whether the immigrant is a quota or non-quota immigrant as well as the expiration date of the visa.

By establishing 1890 as the year from which to calculate the maximum number of quota-immigrants allowed entry into the U.S. Congress significantly curtailed immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, more than any other region. In 1890, the number of foreign-born from Southern and Eastern Europe totaled 728,851. By 1920, the number of foreign born had increased to 5,670,927. The number of foreign born from Northern and Western Europe actually decreased from 7,288,917 to 6,241,916 over that same period of time (Tolnay and Beck 1995).

My examination of roll call votes reveals that the majority of Congressmen from 10 Southern states voted in favor of additional immigration restriction. Florida was the exception with an equal number of Democrats supporting and opposing the legislation. Out of the 94 Southern Democrats who voted, 93 supported the 1924 legislation. To gauge the level of sectionalism, I looked at the level of support of Southern Democrats relative to the level of support of their Northern counterparts. I found that the level of support from Southern Democrats was almost unanimous at 99%. However, only 62% of Northern Democrats – 52 out of 84 – supported the legislation. This divide suggests sectionalism was a factor in the passage of the 1924 immigration legislation.

The Southern regional context in which the 1924 Immigration Act was debated and passed is of significant importance. Related to the movement of immigrants was the movement of Blacks out of the South. Between 1920 and 1930, over 675,000 Blacks migrated from the South to the North. The greatest out-migration of Blacks occurred in Georgia and South Carolina, which lost approximately 260,000 and 204,300 Blacks, respectively. More specifically, these states saw the greatest out-migration of Blacks within the Black Belt regions. Not coincidentally, these regions were heavily populated by cotton plantations and contributed significantly to the cotton economy (Tolnay and Beck 1995).

<b>Out-migration of Blacks by State, 1900-1930</b>			
State	1900-1910	1910-1920	1920-1930
Alabama	-22,100	-70,800	-80,700
Arkansas	22,500	-1,000	-46,300
Florida	40,700	3,200	54,200
Georgia	-16,200	-74,700	-260,000
Louisiana	-16,100	-51,200	-25,500
Mississippi	-30,900	-129,600	-68,800
North Carolina	-28,400	-28,900	-15,700
South Carolina	-72,000	-74,500	-204,300
Tennessee	-34,300	-29,300	-14,000
Texas	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Tolnay and Beck 1995) citing U.S. Bureau of Census (1975)<sup>29</sup>

To be sure, the relationship between the out-migration of Blacks from the South and immigration from outside the U.S. was complex and dynamic. As Southern Congressmen voted for restrictive immigration policies, Blacks were leaving the South in search of jobs in the North created by the shortage of labor that had been previously supplied by immigrants. In addition, Southern business owners and planters continued to

<sup>29</sup> Tolnay and Beck's analysis did not include out-migration figures for Texas or Virginia. However, according to Wintz, the out-migration of Blacks from Texas from 1900-1930 was 11,877 (Wintz 2008).

support liberal immigration and promote the migration of immigrants into the South to fill void left by Blacks as they left the agricultural sector and to keep up with the increase in cotton production.

<b>Cotton Production by State, 1919-1924</b>							
State	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	Total
Alabama	711	661	579	821	585	984	4,341
Arkansas	884	1,214	797	1,012	622	1,094	5,623
Florida	18	20	12	28	14	21	113
Georgia	1,659	1,415	787	715	588	1,004	6,168
Louisiana	298	388	279	343	368	493	2,169
Mississippi	961	895	813	989	604	1,099	5,361
North Carolina	828	923	774	849	1,015	821	5,210
South Carolina	1,426	1,623	755	492	770	807	5,873
Tennessee	310	325	302	391	226	354	1,908
Texas	3,099	4,345	2,198	3,222	4,340	4,949	22,153
Virginia	25	23	18	30	55	44	195
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,219</b>	<b>11,832</b>	<b>7,314</b>	<b>8,892</b>	<b>9,187</b>	<b>11,670</b>	<b>59,114</b>

Per 1,000 bales

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

The political landscape in the South was just as dynamic as its social landscape. Beginning in the early 1920s, the Democratic Party suffered a wide chasm over social and cultural issues. Not surprisingly, the Southern Ku Klux Klan played a prominent role in shaping the debate. The Klan movement sprang from small towns primarily in the South and responded to social, political and economic changes by targeting “outsiders,” including immigrants. While the Klan’s hostility toward immigrants is not debatable, the explanation for the hostility is mixed. One school of thought attributes the hostility of the Klan toward immigrants as a product of the post-World War I economic crisis in which the agricultural sector was hit particularly hard. The renewed immigration from southern and eastern Europe only exacerbated the economic crisis. Anglo-Saxonism and pro-Americanism became synonymous with nativism. Yet another school of thought

characterizes the hostility of the Klan as a result of technological gains, urban development and economic growth throughout the decade. Taken together, these three factors undermined rural life. The Klan turned their resentment and hostility toward that which they saw as a threat to their rural way of life: immigrants. (Moore 1990).

The debate in Congress over the actions of the Klan as well as the government's response to those actions created a rift in the Democratic Party. Nonetheless, the Klan became a major player in the immigration debate. Most notably, the Grand Dragon of the South Carolina chapter of the Ku Klux Klan weighed in on the immigration issue. The KKK saw an opportunity for the organization to take a more prominent role in the immigration debate in order to "prevent America from becoming the melting pot or dumping ground of the world for the millions of heterogeneous elements who are seeking admission to our shores" (LeMay and Barkan 1999:141-142 quoting "A Statement by the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, South Carolina, 1924"). The Grand Dragon further called for,

...a law [to be] enacted restricting immigration to the United states for a period of at least ten years, while we take an inventory of the human assets and liabilities within our borders, do a bit of house cleaning and set our domestic affairs in better order....

We must insist that a law be enacted prohibiting the printing of any newspaper or magazine not printed in the English language, and to require all aliens within our borders to speak English within a limited period of time.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan should adopt a policy and program for combating the influence of individuals or organizations who are endeavoring to open the gates of our ports to the admission of aliens. Therefore, the Imperial Wizard should appoint an Imperial Immigration and Naturalization Commission to make a thorough study and outline a program.... with a definite policy to handle this complex question. (LeMay and Barkan 1999:141-142 quoting "A Statement by the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, South Carolina, 1924").

Although the KKK was known for their antagonism toward racial and ethnic groups, their broader agenda in this case was to end all immigration into the U.S. regardless of race or nationality. However, the involvement of the KKK helps provide the context in which to examine the threat posed by immigrants to Whites in the U.S.

### ***Minority Group Threat***

When we disaggregate our threat analysis into the three broad categories of racial, economic and political threat the Congressional Record reveals mixed results. From a racial perspective, we should see support for immigration restriction as immigrants flow into the region. However, several Southern congressmen acknowledged the minimal amount of immigrants within their districts, states and the region.

Congressman Wilson of Louisiana argued that the problem wasn't about racial superiority. The problem stemmed from commingling of the races. He insisted that the stability of the country necessarily depended on the "homogeneity of its population – where ideals and aspirations go along the same lines; where the ideas in relation to government, in relation to social conditions and as to guarantees of property and personal rights are in harmony" (Congressional Record 1924:5673).

Congressman Wilson wanted all immigration to be suspended for a period of five years until the current immigrants could be assimilated and Americanized. He further recommended deportation for those who were not "in full sympathy with American institutions" (Congressional Record 1924:5673).

Congressman McReynolds of Tennessee further added that the older immigrants were of the same racial stock as the majority of people already in the U.S.

...the new immigrants are unlike this stock in environments, language, ideal and ideas of government. ...The governments from whence our new immigration came were more autocratic, less stable, and which resulted in formation of bodies or groups in defiance of law and order; and under these conditions disrespect and hatred for law officers – oftentimes resulting in anarchy and assassination of those in authority. Are we to continue to continue to develop and control the policies of this country, our social and economic conditions, according to American ideas and ideals? Or shall we permit our social and economic conditions to be controlled by the ideas and ideals of those who come from other countries; educated in a different school of thought, different in language, different in ideas and ideals; who come here restless and resentful from the iron hand of tyranny (Congressional Record 1924:5856-7)?

Although Congressman McReynolds appeared to have asserted a statist position however he equated race with environment, language ideal and ideas of government. He is referring to the broader concept of ethnicity. Accordingly, racial heterogeneity could not have been supported if the laws, institutions, social conditions and nationality were to be preserved (Congressional Record 1924).

While some of the testimony on the floor of the house reflects a mixture of positions, Congressman Tillman supported complete exclusion indefinitely based on racial motives: “We have admitted the dregs of Europe until America has been orientalized, Europeanized, Africanized and mongrelized to that insidious degree that our genius, stability, greatness and promise of advancement and achievement are actually menaced” (Congressional Record 1924:5865).

In addition to Southern and Eastern Europe, Congressman. Box of Texas also sought to keep out Mexicans, arguing for “an additional guard for the Mexican and Canadian borders to keep out these people under present law. The great problem there is enforcement. The Mexicans are coming in now...in violation of the law” (Congressional Record 1924:6131). While Congressman Wilson of Louisiana agreed with Congressman

Box on the threat posed by Mexican immigrants, he argued that including immigrants from South and Central America in the legislation would be offensive to the countries of those regions because there was little or no immigration from those areas (Congressional Record 1924:6134).

Congressman Steagall of Alabama concluded, “No economic development can compensate for the lowering of social standards or jeopardizing our racial integrity...” (Congressional Record 1924:6171). The arguments asserted by Congressmen Steagall, Tillman and others show a greater emphasis being placed on minimizing racial threat than any other threat. However, without directly challenging the validity of the racial threat claims made by their colleagues from the South, other Southern Congressmen pointed out the need to address other potential threats posed by immigrants.

To lessen the economic threat posed by immigrants, Congressman Aswell of Louisiana proposed an amendment in which immigrants would sign an agreement before leaving their home country to go to parts of the country where their skill was needed. If the immigrant violated the term of the agreement by leaving the area, he was subject to deportation. However, Aswell’s fellow Congressmen suggested this was akin to slavery and voted against the amendment (Congressional Record 1924)

Congressman McReynolds of Tennessee sounded the alarm that the voting strength rested in the hands of the foreign born. He questioned,

Can you imagine a more threatening condition to our institutions and our laws than to pick up foreigners by the thousands coming from Europe, with different environments, different teachings, different ideals and ideas of the form of government, and allow them to come to this country and, in the course of five years – as our naturalization laws now provide – be given the rights of citizenship and the right to vote and exercise the same privileges which we exercise? To my mind this is the most dangerous condition which can exist in our country, and it means the absolute



destruction of our form of government and our institutions if not stopped (Congressional Record 1924:5852).

Congressman Aswell and Congressman McReynolds point to the economic and political threat posed by immigrants for restricting immigration into the U.S.

On the record, Southern Congressmen acknowledged the small number of immigrants in the South. However, the majority of Congressmen from all of the Southern states supported limiting the number of immigrants based on racialized motives. The position of Southern Congressmen seems counterintuitive since they were all of European descent. However, Southern Congressmen made a distinction between the first wave of European immigrants who were primarily from Northern Europe and the Southern and Eastern European immigrants whose arrival prompted the passage of the 1924 legislation through the racialization of the latter group. Southern and Eastern Europeans were characterized as the “dregs of Europe” and their admission into the U.S would lower the social standards and jeopardize the racial integrity. Below I examine how the racial threat posed by immigrants weighed against Southern planter’s need for labor.

### ***Class-Based Perspective***

Examining the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act from a class-based perspective also provides a partial explanation. To be sure, certain elements regarding the passage of this legislation correspond to the class based perspective. For example, the triangular relationship between capitalists and competing groups of labor characteristic of class-based theory clearly emerged as agribusiness leaders lobbied for the defeat of the immigration bill. With the growing exodus of Blacks from the South in general and from

the cotton fields in particular, agribusiness leaders became increasingly concerned about having enough labor to meet the growing demand for cotton.

The American Cotton Manufacturers' Association<sup>30</sup> whose members came primarily from the South also opposed the immigration bill. The Association wanted a larger pool of labor to reduce wages (Congressional Record 1924:4268). In response, Representative Byrnes of South Carolina argued that having an "immigrant who does not speak English, placed upon a farm in an isolated section, separated from any of his countrymen, engaged in cultivating a crop he never saw before, unable to speak to the employing farmer or to understand him, would indeed be an unhappy creature" (Congressional Record 1924:5653). Those who favored unrestricted immigration argued that importing immigrant labor would result in Blacks returning to farms in the south (Congressional Record 1924:5653). This proposed arrangement mirrors basic class theory, in which capitalists use one group of workers to keep another group of workers in line.

Representing businessmen in Alabama, W.T. Sanders, an attorney for Louisville and Nashville Railway as well as Southern Railway, addressed the House of Representatives. Advocating for a more liberal immigration policy, he wrote

At a large and representative meeting of our business men, I have been requested to wire and urge you to use your strongest efforts for some measure of immediate relief of the farming interests of this section. The situation is really desperate. Unless the farmers can dispose of their remaining crop at a price approximating cost, debts can not be paid, merchants can not meet their obligations, and worst of all, practically no crop can be made in this section for the coming year. Can not the powers of the War finance Corporation be invoked for immediate relief?

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<sup>30</sup> The American Cotton Manufacturers' Association later consolidated with the American Textile Manufacturers Institute in 1949.

Something must be done to preserve the spirit and morale of a whole people (Congressional Record 1920:134).

Similarly, Southern businessmen in Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi also opposed the immigration ban. In a letter to the House of Representatives entitled “Fight Immigration Ban – Southern Business Interests to Oppose Action by Congress,” they opposed restricted immigration.

The general immigration committee, which was recently formed by representatives of various interests in Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi, met here to plan a vigorous fight on proposed congressional legislation restricting or barring immigration into the United States for the next few years.

Resolutions were adopted urging the board of directors of the New Orleans Association of Commerce to take prompt action in opposing the Johnson bill, which proposes to stop all immigration for two years. The committee also asked the board to take action in connection with any other bill which may at any time be introduced in Congress that will in any way limit or restrict the amount of farm labor that might be available for this country (Congressional Record 1920:186).

Although the effects of immigrant labor on the wages of Black laborers in the South cannot be determined, we can infer from the testimony in Congress that Southern agribusiness leaders wanted to minimize labor costs. In his opposition to capitalists’ demands for cheap labor, Congressman Quin of Mississippi recalled that immigrants “had been brought in by shipowners for the purpose of being put into the mines and factories to reduce the legitimate wages of our laboring people” (Congressional Record 1924:6161). He was supported by his fellow Mississippian, Congressman Busby who asserted that the “...labor conditions became seriously affected by business interests which employed much labor, importing great numbers of aliens to work in mines, build railroads, and to perform various other kinds of services” (Congressional Record 1924:6124). Congressman Black of Texas argued that it was shortsighted for business to

support lenient immigration policies. The greater profits gained from having cheaper labor would eventually be lost to the overall depressed standard of living. Furthermore,

[r]adicalism and discontent would stalk abroad and would fasten their tentacles to the vitals of American business and commerce and, Samsonlike, would pull down the pillars of our whole economic structure on our heads (Congressional Record 1924:6127).

Congressman Black's assertion exposes how the interests of capitalists do not always reflect the interest of capitalism. In the scenario described by Congressman Black, the interest of capital centered around lowering labor costs. However, in the broader scheme, the overall depressed standard of living hypothesized by Congressman Black would eventually undermine the health of the national economy.

In addition to the tri-party relationship between capitalists and competing groups of labor, other elements related to the passage of the 1924 legislation also fit within the class-based perspective. For example, Barrera argues that while the legislation was restrictive, agribusiness was able to tap other sources of labor such as that coming from Mexico. While the formal Bracero Program was not implemented until 1942, admission of temporary workers started as early as May of 1917 (Hearing before The Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 1920). These workers primarily worked in the agricultural sector. The admission of temporary workers also undermines claims that the state collaborated with agribusiness by not enforcing immigration restrictions particularly against Mexican workers.

Where class theory proves to be somewhat problematic involves the admission of quota immigrants. Under the provision half of the quota immigrants for each nationality were allocated to the parents of citizens, the husbands of citizens, and those who were *skilled in agriculture* and their wives and children. At first glance it appears that

agricultural workers were given preference over non-agricultural workers. However, this section of the provision referred to quota immigrants. In other words, skilled agricultural workers were one of several groups that counted against the total number of immigrants allowed from each country. Placing skilled agricultural workers within a larger pool of quota immigrants seems neither preferential nor beneficial to agribusiness. If this provision of the 1924 Immigration Act was not beneficial to agribusiness, the next question then is who benefited? Using a state-centered approach may provide more clarity. Keeping in mind the two primary responsibilities of the state -- preserving order and maintaining the conditions necessary for capitalist economic activities (Skocpol 1985) – we should first examine how a policy of immigrant exclusion satisfies a state-centered approach.

### *State Centered Approach*

Focusing on the regulatory function of statist theory, perhaps the most obvious mechanism by which the 1924 legislation seeks to regulate the entry of individuals entering the U.S. was establishing the 1890 Census to calculate the percentage of individuals from each country. Congressman Byrnes of South Carolina argued that it was appropriate to use the 1890 Census because later Census reports would discriminate against those who arrived at an earlier date, namely Northern Europeans. He pointed out that,

The effect of the bill will be to reduce the number of immigrants from 357,000 to 169,000. ...

The selective system will enable our Government to have some discretion in selecting those who are to be admitted and who may become citizens in the future (Congressional Record 1924:5653).

Congress drew a sharp distinction between various immigrants to justify the number of immigrants per country allowed into the U.S., often pitting older, more desirable immigrants against recent, less desirable immigrants. According to Tennessee Congressman McReynolds,

Up to 1890 nearly all of the immigrants who had come to this country, and who were responsible for the upbuilding of this country, for our laws and institutions, came from north and western Europe. For the past 40 years this immigration has fallen off to a great extent, and they have come by the millions from south and eastern Europe (Congressional Record 1924:5853).

...let us analyze to some extent the conditions, the characteristics and environment of what we call the old immigration and the new immigration. The old immigrants are the same stock as the majority of the people already in the United States, while the new immigrants are unlike this stock in environments, language, ideal and ideas of government. The old stock in this country came here under different conditions, different political histories, and these countries had limited monarchs during the period of their largest emigration, and their ideas and ideals form the basis of this great Government which we now have. The governments from whence our new immigration came were more autocratic, less stable, and which resulted in formation of bodies or groups, in defiance of law and order; and under these conditions, disrespect and hatred for law officers – oftentimes resulting in anarchy and assassination of those in authority. Naturally, people coming from countries of this character bring with them, to a great extent, Old World environments and social status; and this of itself raises serious social, economic, and political conditions (Congressional Record 1924:5856-57).

From Congress's perspective, these newer immigrants brought with them a belief system that challenged the core of American ideals and Government. This legislation was implemented, in part, to protect against a "reign of violence and terrorism" (Congressional Record 1924:6127) and to preserve American democracy. In addition to protecting American government, Congress sought to protect the American economy.

One of the most basic criteria by which to judge the performance of a capitalist economy involves minimizing fluctuations in the economic rate of growth while avoiding

excessive inflation and unemployment. An economy must grow in order to raise the standard of living of its citizens. The 1924 Immigration Act demonstrated Congress's intent to ward off potential long-term unemployment by significantly reducing the number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. Although immigration to the South was minimal, Southern Congressmen believed they nonetheless had ample reason to support a policy of exclusion, if not a reduction in the number of immigrants entering the U.S. Southern Congressmen expressed concern that their cities would come to resemble the overcrowded urban centers of the North. They also feared runaway unemployment, which they attributed largely to the unchecked immigration to Northern cities. As a result, several congressmen also argued that immigration lowered the standard of living for all citizens in general and workers in particular. For example, Congressman Black of Texas argued that he supported restriction for the "[p]rotection of American standards of living for American labor against the demoralization which would result from unrestricted immigration" (Congressional Record 1924:6127). Congressman Aswell of Louisiana went so far as to offering an amendment which would have required immigrants to go where their skill was needed. More specifically his amendment offered,

Consular officers...give preference in the issuance of immigration certificates to such immigrants as are of the class or occupation desired by any particular State or Territory...and who signify an intention to go to the designated place in such State or Territory where immigration of such class or occupation is desired for the purpose of engaging in the needed occupation, and who shall in writing agree to such conditions as may by regulations be prescribed to insure that the immigrant will in good faith engage I such occupation in such place in such state or Territory and otherwise carry out the intent and purpose of this...section (Congressional Record 1924:6157).

The amendment would minimize overcrowding and unemployment in urban cities and would protect the welfare of citizens and the American standard of living

(Congressional Record 1924).<sup>31</sup> Unemployment and overcrowding was a major sticking point for Southern congressmen particularly because of the schemes to distribute new immigrants to other parts of the United States, especially the South in which there was an under-representation of immigrants living in the region (Gompers 1911). Preventing overcrowding and high unemployment are not the only reasons for supporting restrictive immigration legislation; maintaining order is another major responsibility of the state.

In this chapter, I examined the influence of the politics of cotton on the Immigration Act of 1924. Based on the 1921 Emergency Quota Act, the 1924 legislation limited the number of immigrants eligible for admission to 2% of the number of immigrants per country based on the 1890 Census. The legislation also sub-divided immigrants into two broad categories: quota and non-quota immigrants. Quota immigrants counted against the overall number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. from each country and included the parents and husbands of U.S. citizens as well as immigrants skilled in agriculture. Non-quota immigrants were those immigrants who were admitted into the U.S. but did not count against a nation's allotted share of immigrants allowed. Non-quota immigrants included the wife and children of U.S. citizens, immigrants from Canada, Newfoundland, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and immigrants who worked as ministers, professors or were students at an accredited university. Under the Immigration Act of 1924, Southern and Eastern Europeans joined the list of immigrants excluded under U.S. immigration policy in spite of their

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<sup>31</sup> The amendment was defeated because it was argued that it represented another form of slavery (Congressional Record 1924).



phenotypical similarities to Northern Europeans who had been previously admitted and welcomed into the U.S. The exclusion of Southern and Eastern European immigrants highlights the racialization process by which similarities were overlooked and differences formed the basis of racial inferiority. In addition, the exclusion provides support for the minority group threat perspective which posits that the dominant group implements control measures to minimize the numerical, economic and political threat minority groups pose to the dominant group. The majority of Southern Congressmen voted in support of the 1924 legislation after arguing that Southern and Eastern Europeans were ethnically different because they did not share the same language, ideals or ideas of government as White Americans. According to *The Congressional Record*, the Europeanization of America was a menace to the stability, greatness and promise of the U.S.

There are mixed results for class theory. The triangular relationship between the planter elites with support from business owners and the two laboring classes mirrors the relationship theorized under the split labor market analysis. To minimize the threat to primarily White, Southern working class men, the majority of Southern Congressmen supported restricting immigration. Southern Congressmen argued that the interests of capitalists – in this case keeping Black workers in check and increasing profits – did not outweigh the interest of capitalism. However, in a separate vote Southern Congressmen also agreed to admit temporary workers from Mexico to work in the agricultural sector.

I also found support for the state-centered approach. Southern Congressmen argued that the newer immigrants brought with them a belief system that was inconsistent with American ideals and expressed great concern for maintaining the American standard

of living. Unrestricted immigration would undermine economic growth and could only be prevented by passing legislation that would decrease the number of immigrants entering the U.S. The irony of the South's support for restrictive immigration policy based on the threat immigrants posed to the American standard of living, was that the Southern way of life – segregation, its agricultural based economy, lagging substandard educational system – also stifled overall economic growth. In the next chapter I will examine whether this trend continues with the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act.

## Chapter Six

### The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952

*They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars  
of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of  
those who enslaved them.  
Ezekiel 34:37*

In the five years leading up to the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, Congress enacted another piece of legislation that often gets overlooked in the context of immigration law, The Agricultural Act of 1949. For purposes of this research, I will focus on Section V of the legislation which is commonly known as “The Bracero Program.”<sup>32</sup> The Bracero Program began as an agreement between the United States and Mexico in 1942 and was codified into law as an Amendment to the Agricultural Act of 1949.

The Bracero Program supplied agricultural workers from Mexico for the purpose of producing agricultural commodities. To accomplish this goal, the Secretary of Labor was authorized to provide transportation from “recruitment centers” in Mexico to “reception centers” in the United States. In addition to providing transportation, the Secretary of Labor also helped negotiate contracts between workers and employers under which workers were required to work in the agricultural sector unless a shortage of domestic workers existed in other sectors, which could be verified by the Secretary of Labor. Furthermore, the Bracero Program suspended the head tax imposed under the Immigration Act of 1917 (Agricultural Act of 1949). Below I examine the social,

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<sup>32</sup> The first four sections of the 1949 Agricultural Act focus on price support for basic and non-basic agricultural commodities.

political and economic context of the South under which the provisions of the Bracero Program were passed.

By the end of World War II, Southern farmers were experiencing higher prices and increased production. In addition, the Emergency Price Control Act guaranteed that farmers would receive income support by protecting farmers against surpluses for two years after the war for cotton and other crop on which the government relied to meet defense demands created by U.S. involvement in the war. The war also created growth outside the agricultural sector. The rise of the industrial sector created opportunities for work in the non-agricultural sector.

However, the cotton boom of the war years was met with great uncertainty about the future of the cotton economy. Georgia Congressman Stephen Pace convened The Special Committee on Cotton of the House Committee on Agriculture in 1944 and 1945. The Committee, made up of cotton producers, agribusiness leaders, politicians, USDA officials and farm organization leaders, was tasked with investigating the problems facing the cotton economy and commissioned an investigative study on the health of King Cotton. The Study of Agricultural and Economic Problems of the Cotton Belt was subsequently published in 1947<sup>33</sup> and highlighted the need for greater efficiency.

Broad consensus reflected that technological advances in agriculture in the region were slow, that overall cotton production per person was low and that capital investment was inadequate to support a profitable Southern economy. As a result, the strongest recommendation from both the meetings and the reports was that cotton farmers had to

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<sup>33</sup> The study was comprised of nine research projects including “Agricultural Adjustments toward an Efficient Agriculture in the South” which later became the seminal piece on the state of the agricultural economy.

rely more on mechanization and less on labor in order to prevent declining cotton production and the collapse of the Southern economy.

Despite the recommendation to trim the agricultural labor force, Southern Congressmen supported the passage of the Bracero Program. My examination of roll call votes shows that out of 448 House members, 240 members voted in favor of re-instituting the Bracero Program. The breakdown of votes by party shows that while 72.9% of all Republicans supported the Bracero Program, only 54.5% of all Democrats supported the legislation. Among Southern states, the level of support was significantly higher at 91.2%. To gauge the degree of sectionalism, I also examine the level of support among Southern Democrats relative to Northern Democrats. Within the context of this research, the concept of sectionalism cannot be more evident than with the passage of the Bracero Program. Out of 102 Northern Democrats, only 13, or 12.7%, supported the reinstatement of the Bracero Program. In stark contrast out of 96 Southern Democrats, 95 voted in favor of the Bracero Program. In other words, 99% of Southern Democrats supported this legislation. The re-institution of the Bracero Program occurred a year before the passage of the next major piece of immigration legislation, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 maintained the quota system established by the Immigration Act of 1924<sup>34</sup> and amended by President Herbert

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<sup>34</sup> The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the percentage of immigrants admitted into the country to 2% of the number of immigrants from each country residing in the U.S. at the time of the 1890 U.S. Census and set the minimum quota at 100 immigrants per country.

Hoover's Proclamation of 1929<sup>35</sup> with two notable exceptions. First, the Immigration and Naturalization Act established a separate quota for "independent countries, self governing dominions and territories under the international trusteeship of the United Nations..." situated within the Asia-Pacific Triangle (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 Sec 202(b)(1). Specifically included was the continuation of quotas issued for Chinese immigrants.<sup>36</sup> Second, and perhaps more important in terms of this research, the 1952 legislation also allowed half of the quotas to be reserved for "quota immigrants whose services are determined ...to be needed urgently in the United States because of the high education, technical training, specialized experience, or exceptional ability of such immigrants and to be substantially beneficial prospectively to the national economy, cultural interests, or welfare of the United States..." (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 Sec 203(a)(1)).<sup>37</sup> This was a significant change from the 1924 legislation which allowed half of the quotas to be reserved for immigrants who were skilled in agriculture along with their wives and dependent children.

The House passed the Immigration and Nationality Act over the president's veto. Out of the 404 House members who voted for the legislation, 278 members voted in favor of the Immigration Act. By party, 107 out of 197 Democrats, or 54.3%, voted in

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<sup>35</sup> President Hoover's Proclamation of 1929 established new quotas based on the 1920 Census and limited the overall total of immigrants from countries outside the western hemisphere to 150,000.

<sup>36</sup> All Chinese exclusion laws were repealed in 1943 after the United States and China formed an alliance against Japan during World War II. The quota established for Chinese immigration was 105 immigrants per year.

<sup>37</sup> Thirty percent of the visas to be issued were reserved for the parents of citizens and the remaining 20% of visas were reserved for the spouses and children of aliens lawfully admitted into the U.S.

favor of the legislation while 170 out of 193 Republicans, or 88.1%, supported the legislation. Among Southern states, the overall level of support was 84.7%. To gauge the degree of sectionalism, I also examine the level of support among Southern Democrats relative to Northern Democrats. Out of 92 Northern Democrats, only 23 of them supported the immigration legislation. This figure amounts to 25%. Contrastingly, 84 out of 105 Southern Democrats, or 80%, voted in favor of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Within the context of the theoretical frameworks, my examination of the Congressional Record may clarify the policy position of Southern Democrats driving the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

### *Class-Based Perspective*

The class perspective focuses on three class groups: capitalists, higher paid workers and lower paid workers. As class theory goes, capitalists work to maintain a reserve pool of cheap labor. However to keep workers from organizing, capitalists pit the two groups against each other. Although various segments exist within the larger group of capitalists, planter elites had a keen interest in immigration policy. Immigration policy is one mechanism used to supply capitalists with a stock of cheap labor. Consequently, ethnic or racial differences are tools used to promote antagonisms between groups. In the case of the Immigration and Nationality Act, lower paid workers were excluded. The legislation puts a premium on “immigrants with high education, technical training or specialized training” (Immigration and Nationality Act 1952).

It is unclear from a reading of the legislation if the shift from giving preference to immigrants with experience in agriculture to giving preference to immigrants with high education, technical training or specialized training was a result of the decline in

agricultural production, a move toward mechanization and/or because the need for agricultural labor had been satisfied when Congress re-instituted the Bracero Program. However, data suggest that the exclusion of low wage workers, and specifically agricultural workers had little to do with cotton production. With the exception of 1950, cotton production exceeded 10 million bales per year within the former Confederate states.

<b>Cotton Production by State, 1947-1952</b>							
State	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	Total
Alabama	931	1197	851	575	909	890	5,353
Arkansas	1276	1982	1632	1090	1249	1366	8,595
Florida	11	15	17	14	33	31	121
Georgia	653	751	604	490	935	731	4,164
Louisiana	505	756	650	426	760	756	3,853
Mississippi	1,569	2,353	1,487	1,332	1,608	1,906	10,255
North Carolina	452	678	466	181	542	569	2,888
South Carolina	651	871	554	405	871	657	4,009
Tennessee	519	669	633	409	534	638	3,402
Texas	3,437	3,153	6,040	2,946	4,074	3,808	23,458
Virginia	18	24	20	4	14	23	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,022</b>	<b>12,449</b>	<b>12,954</b>	<b>7,872</b>	<b>11,529</b>	<b>11,375</b>	<b>66,201</b>

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service

Although mechanization of cotton production wasn't completed until 1960, mechanization was on its way by the end of the 1940s. Congress also recognized the need for mechanization. In 1946, Congress passed the Research and Marketing Act which provided federal funds for research on mechanization. By this time, however, the plantation system, which was highly dependent on sharecroppers and tenant farmers, was slowly, but surely being replaced (Fite 1984). In six of the 11 states, the number of farms with one tractor doubled between 1945 and 1950.



<b>Mechanization Statistics (Number of One- and Two-Tractor Farms per State)</b>				
	<b>Farms with One Tractor</b>		<b>Farms with Two Tractors</b>	
	<b>1950</b>	<b>1945</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>1945</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	31,606	13,026	3,441	1,250
<b>Arkansas</b>	31,612	14,545	4,590	2,323
<b>Florida</b>	11,464	7,942	1,515	983
<b>Georgia</b>	39,262	17,870	5,536	1,964
<b>Louisiana</b>	17,129	8,386	3,160	1,886
<b>Mississippi</b>	25,689	11,713	3,477	1,540
<b>North Carolina</b>	53,547	26,380	5,633	1,724
<b>South Carolina</b>	18,547	8,894	2,840	1,115
<b>Tennessee</b>	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
<b>Texas</b>	115,901	109,748	29,657	16,031
<b>Virginia</b>	26,925	18,275	4,378	1,701

1950 Census of Agriculture

Yet another explanation for the support of Southern Congressmen for the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 hinges on the re-institution of the Bracero Program just one year earlier. Is it possible that the need for agricultural labor had been satisfied with the Bracero Program? Data seem to support this proposition. Between 1942 and 1964 an estimated 5 million Braceros entered the United States to supplement the country's agricultural labor force. The overwhelming majority of Bracero workers settled in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas and Arkansas. Of these five states, Texas received over 40% of all Braceros in the early 1950s (Grove 1996). Texas was also the biggest cotton producer leading up to the passage of the 1942 immigration legislation. Texas directly benefited from the re-institution of the Bracero Program.

In addition to directly benefiting from the Bracero Program, agribusiness was also successful for what they kept out of the immigration legislation. The Immigration and Nationality Act made it illegal for employers to "harbor" undocumented immigrants. However, the legislation included the "Texas Proviso," a provision which stipulated that

hiring an undocumented immigrant was not harboring and, therefore, did not violate the terms of the legislation.

The victories of agribusiness lend support to class-based theory in my examination of the intersection of King Cotton and immigration policy. However, it is important to consider other explanations as well. Below I highlight the influence of group threat on the passage of the 1952 legislation.

### ***Minority Group Threat***

The minority group threat perspective focuses on the relationship between the dominant group and minority groups. As minority groups increase their size and their available resources, the dominant group increases its efforts to maintain its dominance by minimizing the threat posed by the minority group. Immigration policy is one mechanism utilized to minimize the threat of a growing immigrant population.

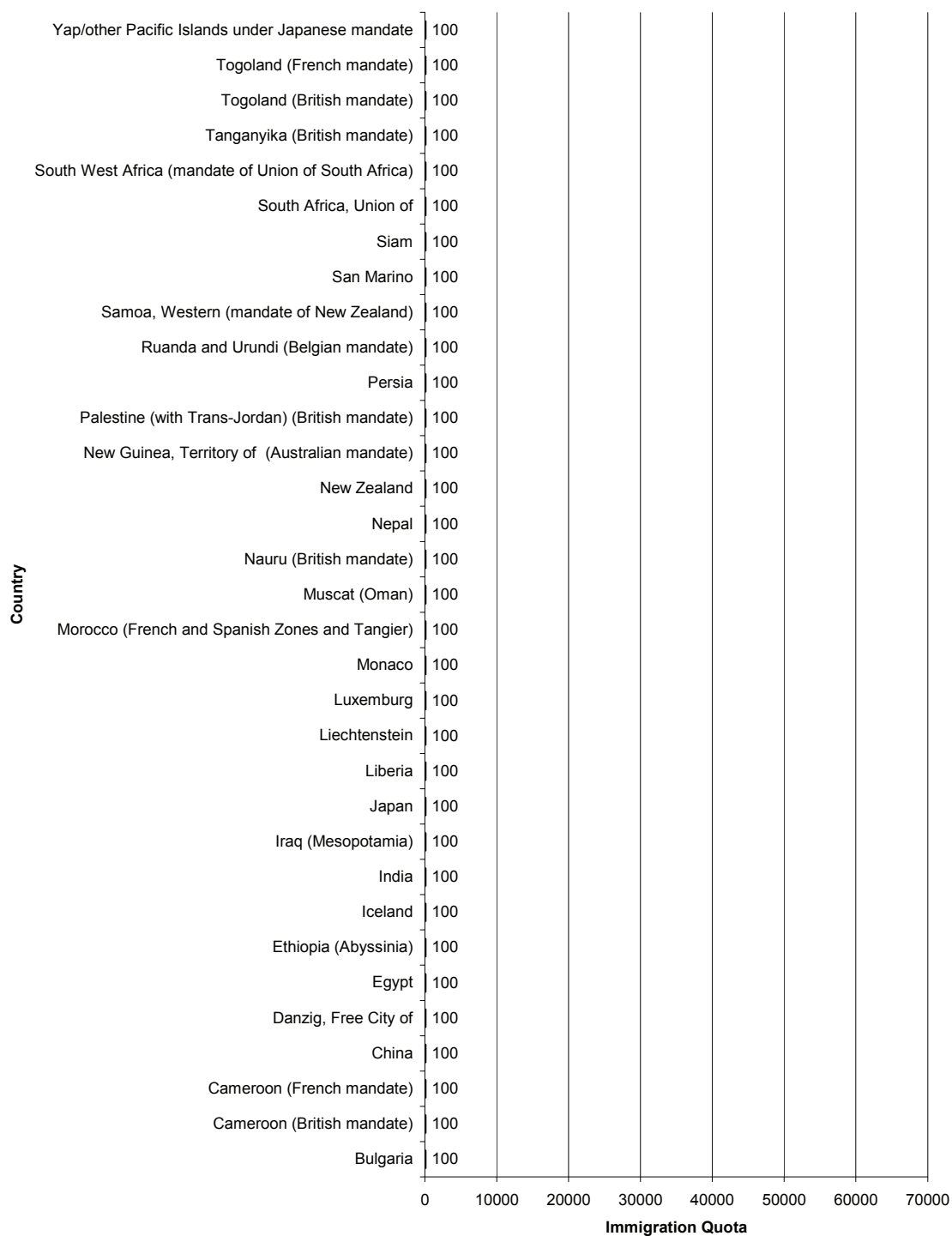
Although the focus of my research is on the entry of immigrants into the U.S., it is important to acknowledge that race was removed as a condition of citizenship with the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. However, in terms of immigration, quota's for admission for most non-European nations remained insignificant. For example, referring to immigration from the Asia-Pacific triangle, Texas Congressman Gossett argued that the bill did not make it easier for immigrants to enter the U.S., instead, "removes race as a bar to immigration and treats all people equally within the standards of the immigration laws." He further argued,

So there can be no flood of immigration from these small-quota countries. That is not discriminatory because minimum quotas are given to people who would have had practically no quota if the formula were applied to them literally. The formula is one-sixth of 1 percent of the people of a race who were in this country in 1920. ...they probably would not have over 10 or 15 if the one-sixth of 1 percent quota were applied to them,

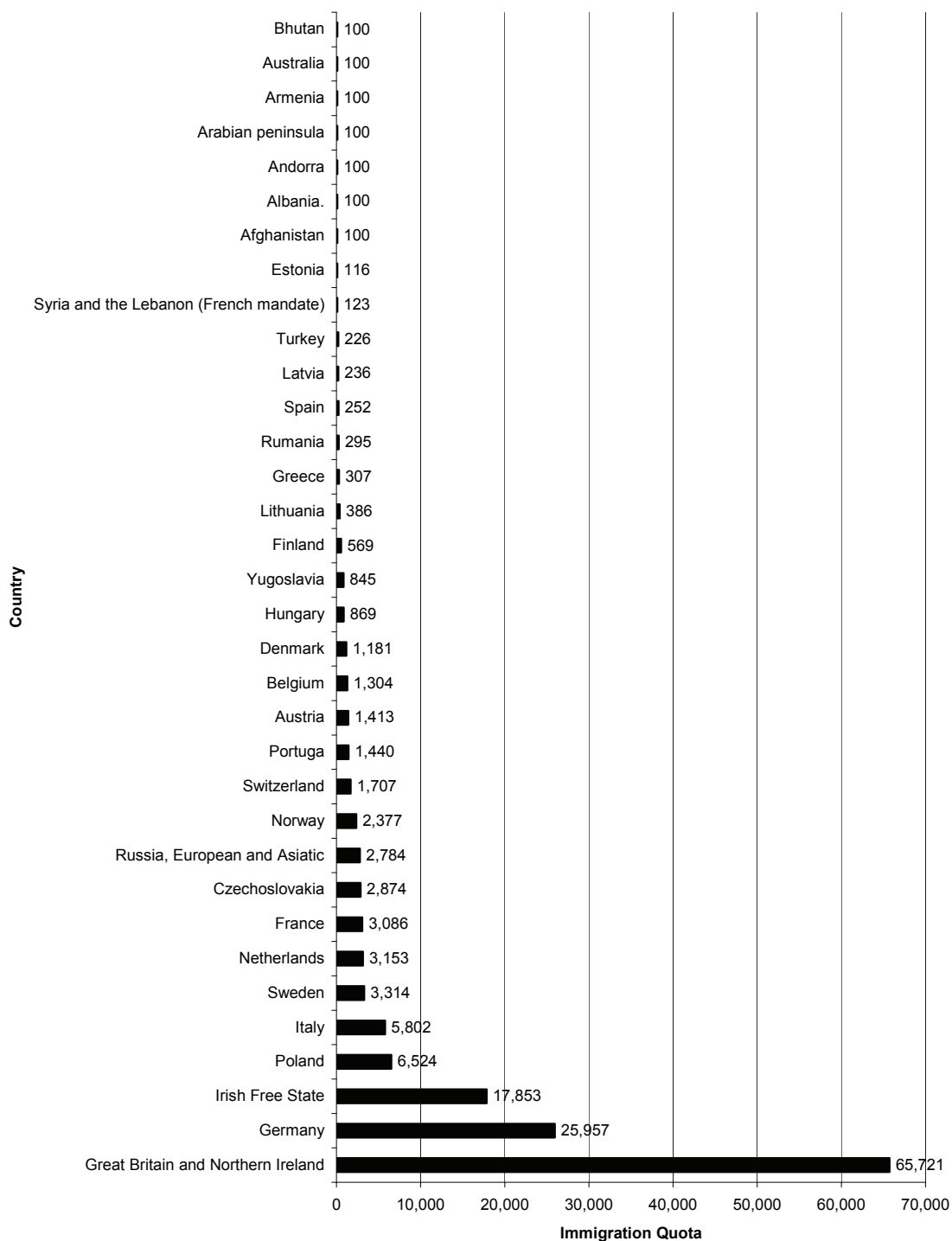
whereas under the Immigration Act they would have 100 (Congressional Record 1949:1681).

Gossett's some-is-better-than-none proposition still continued a racialized immigration policy.

### Immigration Quota By Country



### Immigration Quota By Country



In addition to failing to eliminate race from immigration policy, during the course of the immigration debates, Congressman Forrester of Georgia turned claims of discrimination on its head when he argued that that Yankees and Southerners were the victims of

discrimination. As a Southerner, Forrester lamented he had “to rub shoulders with that kind of thing” and that eliminating discrimination from past immigration laws was immaterial (Congressional Record 1952:4316). Like Forrester, Congressman Rankin of Mississippi also viewed immigration policy as discriminatory. “They whine about discrimination. Do you know who is being discriminated against? The White Christian people of America” (Congressional Record 1952:4320). Congressman Rankin took the immigration question a step farther. He linked the movement for a more open immigration policy to desegregation efforts of Blacks in the South.

Never have I seen such beastly treatment as has been meted out to the white children here in the District of Columbia by this administration. The innocent white children here in Washington have been driven from their playgrounds, and their swimming pools.... The white women in the various departments of the Government are being subjected to the most beastly treatment ever imposed on the white women of this Country.

And the administration’s crazy order wiping out segregation in the Armed Forces has done more to lower the morale of our servicemen than anything else that has taken place....

This same element is trying to force the communistic FEPC onto the people of the various States. If you will go back and search the record, you will find that the FEPC is a part of the Communist platform. It is doing more to drive industry out of the States where it has been written into their laws than probably anything else that has ever happened.

They are trying to force this so-called antisegregation onto the people of the South. It is also Communist-inspired;....

The members of this communistic racial minority that is behind this drive to wipe out segregation in our public schools in the South are doing so in order to try to force amalgamation of the whites and Negroes and in that way destroy the white race.

Communism is racial. A racial minority seized control in Russia and in all her satellite countries, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and many other countries I could name....

They have been run out of practically every country in Europe in the years gone by, and if they keep stirring race trouble in this country and trying to force their communistic program on the Christian people of America, there is no telling what will happen to them (Congressional Record 1952:4320).

In his attempt to link immigration and race, Rankin argued that immigration and the subsequent influx of Communists would upset race relations in the South. In addition, he argued that communism, which he viewed as racial, posed a threat to White Christian people of America. In this case, Rankin clearly viewed immigration policy as a way to minimize the threat posed by immigrant groups as well as the growing social status of Blacks in the South.

So far, data have supported both minority group threat and class-based theoretical perspectives in my examination of the intersection between King Cotton and immigration policy. I now turn my attention to statist theory.

### ***State Centered Theory***

I began my examination of the Immigration and Nationality Act from a state-centered approach by looking at how the state acted in its own interest. In other words, how did the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 help the state preserve order or maintain capitalism.

One explanation focuses on the shift from giving preference to immigrants with agricultural experience to giving preference to immigrants who were highly educated or possessed specialized skill or training. Certainly this shift reflected the country's desire to maintain its technological and military dominance. Perhaps more important to this research, however, the shift signaled a push toward mechanization of the South.

In a 1938 report prepared for President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the National Emergency Council<sup>38</sup> identified the South as the nation's number one economic problem. The Council attributed the economic status of the South to its agricultural-based economy; and, more specifically, to the dominance to cotton production. The problem with the agricultural economy of the South was that it failed to provide full-time, year round employment for Southern workers.<sup>39</sup> The solutions proposed to the nation's number one economic problem were dynamic and complex:

...individual and group action designed to bring about a considerably higher level of education and enlightenment; more diversified agricultural enterprises with emphasis on efficiency of production and high production per worker; relatively fewer people engaged in primary production of raw materials with correspondingly larger numbers in processing, manufacturing, trade and service enterprises, and the professions;...and finally a more prosperous people with higher levels of living, greater purchasing power and increased ability to cope with the broad social and economic problems confronting a modern world (American Farm Economic Association 1946:354).

Implied in the proposed solutions was the need for the South to mechanize cotton production. Mechanization would lower labor costs, increase production and efficiency resulting in greater profit and a higher standard of living. By 1952, Congress had already signaled its intention to help the South move toward greater efficiency with the passage of the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 (United States Department of Agriculture Appropriations Act of 1946, Sec 2046). The Act provided funding for annual conferences on cotton mechanization and commissioned multiple reports including "Agricultural Adjustments toward an Efficient Agriculture in the South." With the move

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<sup>38</sup> The National Emergency Council was established in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act.

<sup>39</sup> The lack of crop diversification was also identified as another problem of an agricultural-based economy.



toward mechanization, the need for agricultural labor declined. As a result, immigration legislation shifted its preference from immigrants with agricultural experience to immigrants with high education, specialized skill or training. However, the legislation also included the Texas Proviso which made a distinction between hiring an undocumented immigrant and harboring an undocumented immigrant. According to the legislation, harboring undocumented immigrants was a punishable offense; hiring undocumented immigrants was not.

At first blush, that the immigration legislation allowed employers to import undocumented agricultural workers without penalty seems at odds with the move towards mechanization. However, state-centered theory posits that the state will make minor concessions when necessary. Viewed in this light, the Texas Proviso bolsters statist theory.

The debates within the Congressional Record revealed another function of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 that falls within the state-centered perspective: to preserve order and to maintain American ideals. Congressman Rankin argued that the U.S. “should put a stop to immigration for at least five years...until we get back to Americanism” (Congressional Record 1947:2143). Rankin later argued that “aliens ...will bring with them communism, atheism, anarchy, and infidelity.... [T]he Communists are dedicated to the overthrow of this government, they are dedicated to the destruction of the American way of life, they are dedicated to the destruction of Christianity throughout the world (Congressional Record 1947:6461). Restrictive immigration policy served to minimize the threat from those elements which undermined

the foundations on which the United States was founded: democracy, capitalism and religious freedom.

In this chapter I examined the influence of King Cotton on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. This legislation was passed during a time when evidence supported the need for the South to shift from hand-picked cotton production to mechanization. It can be argued that the 1952 legislation reflected this need. However, it is also important to consider the labor needs of cotton planters were satisfied with the re-institution of the Bracero program which was codified into law one year prior to the passage of the 1952 immigration policy.

Ironically, this legislation also sought to eliminate race as a barrier for entry into the U.S. However, with the maintenance of the quota system, the number of immigrant groups of color remained small. In order to eliminate racial disparities in the number of immigrants admitted, the quota system will have to be eliminated altogether.

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

*I sent you to reap what you have not worked for.  
Others have done the hard work and you  
have reaped the benefits of their labor.  
John 4:38*

This research examined the intersection of King Cotton and immigration policy. More specifically, I examined how the regional politics of cotton within the South influenced federal immigration policy between 1865 and 1952; and, the relationship between cotton production and immigration trends using minority group threat, class-based theory, and state centered theory. Utilizing qualitative research methods, my research examined The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), The Geary Act (1892), The 1917 Immigration Act, the 1924 Immigration Act and the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. This chapter will summarize my overall findings and examine the implications of my research.

Theoretically, minority group threat focuses on the relationship between dominant and minority groups. As the percentage of the minority group increases or as the minority group increases its political power and economic resources, the dominant group undertakes measures to minimize the threat from the minority group. Traditionally, scholars have relied on OLS regression analysis to empirically assess the merits of minority group hypothesis. However, because the percentage of many immigrant groups is relatively small, OLS would produce non-significant statistical findings. A more effective methodological approach for this study extended the minority group hypothesis to include a gatekeeping framework which utilizes a qualitative analysis to examine immigration policy. Similar to minority group threat, the gatekeeping framework

theorizes that immigration policy may be used to minimize the threat posed by immigrants based on race. The strength of the gatekeeping analysis is that it includes a racialization process that allows the framework to be applied to various racial and ethnic groups.

While minority group threat examines the relationship between dominant and minority groups, class-based theory looks at the relationship between capitalists and workers. More often in class theory, capitalists are treated as one monolithic group. However, my examination showed Southern capitalists included cotton planters, railroad and business owners, bankers and various other elites whose interests were sometimes at odds. Workers are subdivided into higher-paid and lower-paid workers who are pitted against each other by capitalists to keep the workers from organizing for higher wages or better working conditions. Liberal immigration policies may offer planter elites an additional source of cheap laborers; while cultural and language differences serve as mechanisms to keep groups of workers divided.

State-centered theory focuses on the role of the state in legislating immigration policy. Accordingly, the state acts in its own interest, independent of interests groups and social classes. Conceptually, we can think of the state's interest as national security and economic stability. In terms of immigration, statist theorists tend to focus on the regulatory function of immigration policy outcomes and the extent to which the state protects its statehood (sovereignty) and capitalists markets. Relying on these theoretical perspectives, I examined the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the Geary Act (1892), The Immigration Act of 1917, The Immigration Act of 1924 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

Using the minority group threat and gatekeeping frameworks, data revealed that race influenced the passage of all five major pieces of immigration policy on which I focused in the present study. Chinese immigrants were the first group targeted for exclusion under the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Geary Act (1892). Although Southern Congressmen remained silent on the issue of Chinese immigration on the record, the majority voted for passage of both pieces of legislation. Similar to the previously enacted legislation, the 1917 Immigration Act further extended exclusion by establishing the Asiatic Barred Zone. The passage of the 1917 legislation is also significant because it was the first piece of immigration legislation to include literacy tests for otherwise eligible immigrants. The significance of the south in the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act became apparent after Congressmen from California sought to gain Southern support for the legislation by proposing to close off immigration from African countries. Although the amendment failed, the debate linked the threat of African and Asian immigration to Blacks living in the South and the threat these groups posed to White supremacy. On the record, Southern Congressmen objected to including African immigrants in the legislation. However, they expressed their concern for a growing Asian immigrant population and the increase of the Black population in the South. In response to the threat of the growing number of groups of dissimilar races and nationalities, the majority of Southern Congressmen supported the exclusionary policies of the 1917 Immigration Act.

The next major piece of immigration legislation was passed in 1924. The Immigration Act of 1924 established the nation's first quota system under which the percentage of immigrants admitted into the U.S. was limited to 2% with a minimum

quota set at 100 immigrants per country. The number of immigrants from which to calculate the 2%-ceiling was established using the 1890 census. The Act further established two broad categories of immigrants: quota immigrants and non-quota immigrants. Quota immigrants, which included the parents and husbands of citizens, children and wives of alien residents already residing in the U.S., and those skilled in agriculture, counted against the overall number of immigrants allowed from each nation. Non-quota immigrants – wives and children of citizens living in the U.S. and immigrants who were ministers or students – did not count against a nation's share of immigrants allowed in the U.S. The 1924 legislation severely curtailed immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe more than any other region.

An overwhelming majority of Southern Democrats supported the 1924 legislation. At first glance, the near-unanimous support to exclude Southern and Eastern Europeans seems to undermine minority group threat. After all, phenotypically Southern and Eastern Europeans had been the most similar to those who had debated and ultimately decided on their exclusion. However, Southern Congressmen asserted Southern and Eastern Europeans were ethnically different from the Northern Europeans; and, as a result, they were also inferior. Southern Congressmen further linked Southern and Eastern Europeans to other undesirable racial groups, arguing that U.S. could no longer allow America to be Europeanized, Orientalized and Africanized at the expense of U.S. genius and greatness.

The final piece of immigration legislation on which I focused was the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. The passage of this legislation occurred after the Bracero Program was re-instituted in 1949. The Bracero Program was legislated at a

time when cotton producers, agribusiness leaders, politicians, USDA officials and farm organizations were debating the health of the Southern cotton economy. In spite of overwhelming evidence supporting the need for a shift from hand-picked cotton production to mechanization, Southern Congressmen overwhelmingly supported the re-institution of the Bracero Program which allowed Mexican laborers to temporarily enter the U.S. to work in the agricultural sector. The majority of Congressmen from all 11 Southern states supported passage of the Amended Agricultural Adjustment Act under which the Bracero Program was legislated.

A year after the Bracero Program was signed into law, Southern Democrats also supported immigration legislation to a much greater extent than their Northern Democratic counterparts. Southern support was high although the new legislation gave preference to immigrants who were highly educated and not agricultural workers. This newly preferred group received half of the quotas issued. Chinese immigrants also received a small number of quotas which was a result of race allegedly being removed as a barrier to immigration. However, the quotas for non-European immigrants remained extremely small.

The admission of an insignificant number of immigrants of color, is still consistent with the minority group threat perspective. In other words, although proclaiming to eliminate race, the quota system minimized the threat from immigrants of color and continued to produce racialized immigration policy outcomes.

While the support for minority group threat is incontrovertible, the results for class-based theory are a little more dubious. Although Southern Congressmen voted consistently for restrictive immigration policy, they also supported provisions that

allowed immigrants to enter the U.S. to meet labor demands. For example, the 1917 legislation expanded the number of groups excluded. In addition, the legislation imposed a head tax and established literacy tests which further reduced the number of immigrants eligible for admission into the U.S. However, agribusiness was successful in repealing the Contract Labor Law of 1885 in order for Mexican workers laborers could enter the U.S. to work in the agricultural sector. This arrangement was highly beneficial to Texas cotton growers and benefited the overall cotton economy.

In contrast to previously enacted immigration legislation, in the 1924 legislation skilled agricultural workers were no longer given preference for admission into the U.S. under the new quota system. In other words, because skilled agricultural workers were included in the total number of immigrants eligible for admission, their numbers were subsequently reduced to a fraction of the total number of immigrants admitted. While these conditions prove problematic for class theory, they do not completely undermine this theoretical approach. An examination of hearings on immigration highlighted Congress's willingness to admit temporary workers from Mexico to work primarily in the agricultural sector. Although Southern Congressmen supported limiting skilled agricultural workers under the 1924 Immigration legislation, they made provisions for Mexican laborers to continue to meet the needs of the agricultural economy. With both the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Acts, the Secretary of State was given the authority to suspend the legislation if labor demands could not be met by American workers. In addition, prior to the passage of the 1917 legislation, Congress agreed to allow admission of Mexican immigrants to work as temporary agricultural workers. Similarly, with the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, preference shifted from



agriculturally-skilled immigrants to immigrants who were highly educated. At face value this shift undermines capitalists' desires for low-wage labor. However, just prior to the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, Congress also passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act under which Mexican immigrants were recruited for the agricultural sector under the Bracero Program into law. In addition, the 1952 legislation further stipulated employers who hired undocumented immigrants would not be prosecuted. In other words, while immigration legislation closed the door on immigrants trained to work in the agricultural sector, other policy avenues were used to maintain the supply of low wage workers.

Like the two perspectives above, data also support the state-centered perspective. After an influx of Chinese immigrants to the South, the majority of Southern Congressmen supported The Chinese Exclusion Act. Chinese immigrants posed a threat to American and Southern ideals primarily because they were viewed as unassimilable and, as a result were perceived as unable to become American. Not only were Chinese immigrants viewed as un-American, their growing numbers further upset the extant racial hierarchy and undermined already tenuous race relations of the South.

The exclusion of Chinese immigrants began a pattern of exclusion through immigration policies. Certainly, the groups targeted for exclusion as well as the factors contributing to their exclusion varied across time. Similar to the Chinese Exclusion and Geary Acts, the Immigration Act of 1917 restricted immigration from the Asiatic Barred Zone. However, in contrast to the silent position taken by Southern congressmen on the earlier pieces of immigration legislation, Southern Congressmen expressed a variety of views that support the state-centered approach.

In the debate over the 1917 Immigration Act, one of the primary reasons for exclusion was based on the assumed lack of patriotism needed to defend the country during a war by potential immigrants. In addition Southern Congressmen feared illiterate immigrants, combined with the high population of illiterate Black southerners would slow industrialization. To address the consequences of illiteracy, the 1917 legislation required immigrants to pass literacy tests.

Another indicator of the state's control over immigration was the control given to the Attorney General. Although agribusiness leaders were successful in making sure the 1917 legislation allowed for the entry of immigrants above the established quotas to meet labor demands, the suspension of the quota system rested with the state vis-à-vis the Attorney General. This concession made by the state helped to keep the cotton economy profitable.

The Immigration Act of 1924 served to further protect American ideals and the institution of capitalism by guarding against those individuals who wanted to destabilize the government and undermine the democratic process. According to the debates in *The Congressional Record*, one position articulated by Southern Congressmen was that the newer immigrants brought with them a belief system that challenged the foundation of American ideals. In addition, congress also sought to protect the American economy. In particular, Southern Congressmen wanted to ensure Southern cities would not become overcrowded urban centers similar to those of the North. Although immigration to the South was relatively small, Southern Congressmen were aware of schemes to channel immigrants into the region.

Arguably, the state continued to make concessions in the passage of the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Although the 1952 legislation shifted its preference from immigrants with agricultural experience to immigrants who were highly educated, Congress also passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act under which the Bracero Program was re-instituted. The re-institution of the Bracero Program occurred even after the South, and specifically the region's agricultural-based economy, had been identified as the number one economic problem of the U.S. In addition, the Attorney General maintained his authority over immigration that fell outside of U.S. policy considerations.

While there was clear support for the minority threat perspective; not coincidentally, much of the data that supported the class-based analyses, also lent support for the state-centered approach. This latter paradox provides an opportunity for additional research in this area.

My research also examined sectionalism of the South using the five immigration policies. To gauge sectional interest, I examined the difference in the level of support by Southern Democrats and Northern Democrats for each of the immigration policies. The difference in support for the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Geary Act between Southern and Northern Democrats was relatively small. However, the difference in support significantly increases with the 1917 legislation and tapered off with the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act. This is visualized below.

<b>Level of Sectionalism</b>		
Legislation	Level of Support by Southern Democrats	Level of Support by Northern Democrats
1882 Chinese Exclusion Act	100%	94.4%
1892 Geary Act	85.1%	86.8%
1917 Immigration Act	81%	45%
1924 Immigration Act	98.9%	61.9%
1949 Agricultural Adjustment Act	98.95%	12.75%
1952 Immigration and Nationality Act	80%	25%

The implication of this data is two fold. First, this data suggests that when hand-picked cotton was at the core of the Southern economy, Southern states were more likely to support regional interests. Secondly, the data also suggests that the South's regional interests involved protecting White supremacy through the exclusion of minority groups through immigration policy.

### ***Implications***

In terms of the theoretical implications, the current research shows that the minority group threat framework is limited. This theoretical perspective cannot quantitatively account for majority-minority relations when minorities represent a small number and percentage of the population. The numerical insignificance does not mean a threat was not present; only that the model produces non-significant outcomes. A gatekeeping analysis utilizing qualitative methods provides a useful context in which to examine racial and ethnic groups whose numerical presence is small. Furthermore a qualitative analysis also provides richer data that a quantitative analysis misses.

Also within the context of threat, Piven and Cloward examined the factors that influence U.S. welfare policy and found that welfare policies are passed to maintain control over low-wage workers. As a result, the degree to which welfare policy becomes more or less restrictive is related to the prevailing economic trends. During periods of economic growth, welfare policies reduce benefits and impose stricter conditions under which recipients receive aid. These measures force more workers back into the labor force. During periods of economic slowdown, welfare policies become more generous to minimize the threat of civil unrest (Piven and Cloward 1971).

Piven and Cloward firmly established a relationship between labor policy and welfare policy. Given the relationship between immigration policy and labor policy, it is necessary to also consider the relationship between immigration policy and welfare policy. The extent to which this relationship exists and the strength of this relationship over time provide the foundation of my future research agenda.

This research adds to the literature on Southern race relations and immigration policy with its theoretical, methodological and policy implications. First of all, perhaps with the exception of Texas, Southern race relations typically focus on Black-White relations. However, my research shows that Southern race relations should be re-conceptualized to go beyond this dichotomy. In the South, immigrants have had a small but significant presence in Southern race relations since the end of the Civil War. More specifically, cotton planters recruited Chinese and Mexican immigrants to work in the cotton fields to supplement its agricultural workforce. In the South, much of the debate focused on the out-migration of Blacks from the fields as well as from the South. In addition, the debate also focused on the newly-acquired status of free Blacks. Less

restrictive immigration policies would lead to a growing immigrant population in the South and further threaten an increasingly complex racial dynamic.

The changing racial dynamic highlighted in my study also shows Key was correct in his assertion that “the major peculiarities of southern politics g back to the Negro. Whatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand, sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro” (Key 1949:5). Within the context of my research, immigration policy was debated, if not enacted with the *Negro* in mind. Whether it was to keep newly-freed Blacks from demanding higher wages and better working conditions or to keep from upsetting the racial dynamics of the South, immigration policy considerations included some consideration of the status of Blacks in the South.

My research also shows that DuBois was also correct in his assertion that “[t]he problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, - the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (DuBois 1905:54). The color line was very fluid within the context of the South. For example, over the course of my study, European immigrants came to be viewed as two distinct groups: Northern Europeans who were considered the foundation on which the U.S. was founded; and Eastern and Central Europeans who were viewed as inferior in terms of race, intellect, character and work ethic. In this case, arbitrary racial boundaries based on geography and their time of arrival were made and maintained through public policy.

Similar to the way in which Blacks are erroneously viewed as one monolithic group, we also typically think of Southern elites in the same way. However, we see a division between Southern congressmen, southern planters and other business elites. We

must conceptualize southern elites with more specificity. In this way, a more accurate account of Southern interests will emerge. Finally, minority group threat focuses on the threat minorities pose to the dominant group. However there is some degree of threat in both class-based and state- centered theories as well.

This research also yields several implications for current and future immigration policy debates. First, President Obama favors an immigration policy that will meet labor needs and keep families together. In terms of the South, it should be considered that the agricultural sector is still heavily dependent on low-wage laborers, many of whom are foreign-born. More specifically, “78% of the U.S. farm workforce in 2001-2002 was foreign born and 75% was from Mexico” (Boucher and Taylor 2007). The majority of these workers work in the Southwestern agricultural sector. Certainly, we should expect that Southern Congressmen will continue to support the admission of these workers through back door immigration provisions even as they call for tighter immigration measures.

Also, given the increase of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. and throughout the South, we should also expect more punitive immigration measures and laws targeting Mexicans immigrants and Mexican Americans. This visibility of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants will be particularly heightened given the weakened U.S. economy and the rising unemployment rate since these two factors have influenced previous restrictive immigration policy.

Finally, “From 1965 through 1970, the South experienced a net migration loss -- the number of people who moved into the region compared to the number of people who moved out -- of more than 287,000 African-Americans. Thirty years later, the numbers

were nearly the opposite. From 1995 through 2000, the South saw a gain of nearly 350,000 African-Americans (CNN July 20, 2009). Future studies should focus on the effect of this migration of Blacks back into the South and the region's growing immigration population on immigration policy.



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