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A Comparative Analysis of Bohemian and Irish Immigration during the Antebellum Period

EMILY SUCHAN

ADVISERS: EDGAR LANDGRAF AND NEAL JESSE

I. Introduction

As an Economics major, I have received many questions as to how I became interested in this topic. After the natural surprise that comes when I describe the specificity of my essay comparing and contrasting Irish and Czech immigration during the nineteenth century, I am hit with the question; “Well what does that have to do with Economics and Data Analysis?” At first, defensively, I would answer that it does not nor does it need to. Upon further completion of my research, I have concluded that this was in fact the incorrect answer.

It might be surprising that many sources in this essay were written by economists and were found in economic journals. Some even incorporated considerable amounts of data. Economics is a social science studying how people assign value to different experiences, goods, and services and how they use that value to make decisions. No doubt a broad field of study, economists could study literally anything. It might be Marxist of me to imply that people make decisions based on money or a cost-benefit analysis of value; however, one can without a doubt conclude that economic stressors are a major motivating factor in an immigrant’s journey. Perhaps I was naturally drawn to sources written by economists because their lines of reasoning made the most sense to me, but regardless, I believe this answers the question: What does the study of nineteenth century immigrants have to do with economics? —Everything!

Nevertheless, this essay will focus on more than economic stressors motivating Bohemian and Irish immigration. Throughout this essay, I will analyze both the individual Bohemian and Irish immigration journeys, comparing and contrasting their motivations for emigrating as well as their lives in the United States. My goal is to show that, despite the varying situations of the immigrant populations, important commonalities connect them.

II. Bohemian Immigration

Bohemia is a region in central Europe bordered by Germany, Austria, the Slavic nations, Poland, and Hungary. Today this region is a part of the Czech Republic. During the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Bohemia and her capital city Prague were influential players in the power dynamics of central Europe. The region has a long, rich history of fighting for independent rule. This history provides context to better understand one of the main motivating factors for Bohemian immigration during the late nineteenth century.

The kingdom was a monarchy, and for many years the King of Bohemia also held the title of Holy Roman Emperor. Given the proximity, the Hapsburg family-famous for their multiple ruling dynasties throughout Europe-married into the Bohemian kingdom during the 1300s AD, thus intertwining their histories and governments. There were many disputes during the middle ages between the Bohemian nobility and the Hapsburgs over their claim to the Bohemian throne. These disputes were put to rest after the Thirty Years' War which allowed the Hapsburgs to consolidate their holdings throughout Europe. This is when King Ferdinand coronated himself King of Bohemia. So, while Bohemia held its legitimacy as its own kingdom, it was, from this point forward, ruled by the Hapsburgs out of Vienna.

Under Hapsburg control, Catholicism was the mandated religion, public affairs were to be conducted in German, and two-thirds of the privately held lands in Bohemia were confiscated and retained for use by the church or for members of the Hapsburg family (Capek 30). The Thirty Years War significantly decreased the Bohemian population from 1.7 million people to 950,000 (Agnew 72). As a result, many estates were left empty and much of the farmland was left uncultivated. Thus, land was given to members of the Hapsburg family who were granted Bohemian titles of nobility. This would become problematic for the Bohemians as they would retain less bureaucratic power.

For most of its existence, Bohemia was a Czech land ruled by the minority German-speaking population. In 1627, emperor Ferdinand gave German equal status to Bohemian as the national language. In 1774, Maria Theresa endorsed the Germanization of the school system, allowing the Bohemian language only at the primary level. Ferdinand Kindermann, the director of schooling for Bohemia, reformed the Southern Bohemian schools by introducing a wider variety of subjects into the main schools of the larger towns such as Geometry, History and Drawing in addition to further schooling in the German language (Agnew 89).

The Austrian Empire was created on August 11, 1804 and Francis I was named Emperor in a move to unify the Hapsburg holdings to fight the Napoleonic wars. It was at this point that Bohemia lost its status as an “independent” kingdom and was officially absorbed into the Austrian Empire (Agnew 96). What this meant for Bohemia was that it lost its elector votes for the Holy Roman Emperor and therefore the King of Bohemia (Panek and Tuma 213). Put succinctly, this took away the Bohemian’s ability to elect their own leader. Soon after that, the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved by Napoleon.

During the end of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, Enlightenment ideals moved throughout Bohemia. Scholarship, as well as the desire to learn and use the Czech language increased. Simultaneously, the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars strengthened the Austrian police authority, led to a stricter surveillance of population movement and behavior, and Bohemian censorship (Panek and Tuma 316). Despite the high level of censorship and the educational reforms of Maria Theresa, books and newspapers were printed in Czech and it became the language of the commoners. This would later ignite the nationalistic fervor felt by many Bohemians (Agnew 100).

The enlightenment catapulted the German language into the intellectual sphere of central Europe. As industrialization coursed through the region, German was used to identify and describe new processes. It was the language of research and was overtaking Latin in importance in the humanities (Panek and Tuma 330). “It became socially serious when a Czech applicant with equal intellectual and language qualities had no chance to succeed in the competition for social and professional achievement,” (Panek and Tuma 329). Essentially, this highlights the devaluation of the Czech language in the Czech lands, which indicates how mandated the use of German was. Studying at a Czech university, the use of Czech in an intellectual setting should not have been an impediment to these scholars. This led to a renewed interest in Czech language and revitalization efforts by Czech scholars. The Czech language became a form of expression of national identity (Panek and Tuma 331). This was significant in its ability to stir nationalist sentiment and made the language issue prevalent to the average person. Czech was the common language of the small farming villages. Many of the Czech scholars of this time were proponents of a nationalistic state. They introduced Czech into academia to make it more accessible to the people. They wrote their history in favor of an independent Czech nation state, and were fighting for existence among the Germans (Panek and Tuma 337). This awareness of second-class status was a motivating factor for many when deciding to emigrate.

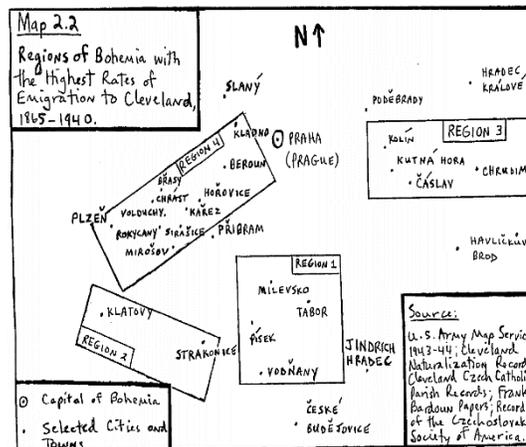
In 1861, a new electoral system was created, effectively limiting the Bohemian presence in parliament. “How the electoral law worked in Bohemia one can perceive from the fact that in 1873, 2,500,000 Bohemians were able to elect only 34 deputies, while 1,500,000 Germans contrived to return 56 deputies,” (Capek 64). This representation was unfair, and it sparked every Bohemian in parliament to walk out as a sign of protest on June 17, 1863. The protest lasted for sixteen years. That is sixteen years of no representation in the government of the

Austrian empire. In 1867, the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary was established. Budapest and Prague were similar in size and value to the monarchy, and according to Capek, the Bohemians felt it was unfair that Hungary was granted equal status to Austria, while they were still under minority rule. These acts in the mid-1800s led to the rising nationalist sentiments among the Bohemian countrymen. The lack of independence and opportunity for Czechs in their homeland led them to seek opportunity elsewhere, most popularly, America.

We also see a loosening of emigration restrictions by the Austrian officials during this time (Stone 17). This presented the opportunity to emigrate. Another motivating factor was the financial structure of the region. Catherine Albrecht analyzed the effect of Czech/German competition in municipal savings banks. According to Albrecht, Czechs found it difficult to obtain credit from the Austrian National Bank. Therefore, the small businessmen, farmers, or homeowners in small villages in Bohemia lacked the financial support for upward mobility. Additionally, the Napoleonic wars had devalued the currency by a fifth of its original value leading to inflation (Panek and Tuma 316). High inflation indicates to me—a student of economics—that the empire was likely experiencing a recession. Bohemians in the lower and middle class wanted to better themselves financially and found migration to be a promising vehicle towards prosperity. This became possible after 1848 when the state economic policy changed releasing a majority of the Czech population from their subject duties (Panek and Tuma 325). Subsequently, the Czech farmers were no longer tied to one estate; they could farm independently if they chose, or they could pick up and move somewhere else.

The typical Bohemian immigrants were middle class agricultural families. The southern Bohemian countryside experienced the highest volume of immigration to the United States. Stone indicates that up to half of the Czech immigrants to Cleveland—as displayed through

naturalization, church and mutual aid society records—came from the counties surrounding the towns of Pisek and Tabor in south central Bohemia. He estimates that as many as one third of Czech immigrants to the United States came from small villages in one county of south-central Bohemia (19). This is just one example of the extent that chain migration was used by Bohemians choosing to emigrate to the United States.



Bohemian immigrants arrived in the United States in-between two major immigration periods to the United States. The uniqueness of this group resulted in very little research being published about them. As an immigrant group, people from Czech lands arrived to the United States between the classically defined “old” and “new” immigration periods. The “old” immigration period, according to Stone, is defined as 1865-1890 while the “new” immigration period is 1890-1914 (10). For the sake of continuity, this essay will focus on the immigrants during the “old” period since in later sections, I will be discussing the Irish immigrants during the same period (after the Famine).

As an immigrant group, the Bohemians were known to be highly literate. This can be attributed to the educational reforms of Maria Theresa. Maria Theresa was the empress of the Hapsburg monarchy from 1740-1780 and therefore also served as the sovereign leader of

Bohemia. Her educational reforms allowed the study of the Czech language in the primary schools with higher levels of education conducted in German. Her reforms made education more widely available to the farming villages and communities throughout the Bohemian countryside. The caveat to this, was that many of the Bohemians did not speak English. So, while they were literate, they were not literate in the language of the United States: English. Another characteristic of the Bohemian immigrant group was that they immigrated as a family unit. This is different from many other immigrant populations who mainly saw working-age single men emigrating to find employment. The Bohemians immigrants were often in a better financial position than other immigrants of the time. They did not have a major economic pressure motivating their emigration, which would have allowed them time to order their affairs and save for the journey. According to Stone, twenty-one percent of first-generation Czechs and thirty-five percent of second-generation Czechs were classified as middle class (62). For nearly a quarter of an immigrant population to arrive already in the middle class was not common and signifies that they must have arrived with some money behind them, especially since they experienced a language barrier which made it difficult for them to find employment right away.

As stated by Michael Kukral in an article in the *Eastern European Quarterly*, there were many similarities between life in Bohemia and life in America which led this immigrant group to a quicker acclimation to American culture than other Eastern-European immigrant groups. Evidence that the Czech settlers assimilated quickly into American life is offered by the lack of sources describing them as an immigrant group, and the lack of cultural identifiers of Czechs immigrant communities despite their high numbers. I believe this is due to the group's experience during the last two centuries changing their identity to conform to the standards of the Austrian Hapsburg monarchy. As previously mentioned, the Hapsburgs put a lot of effort into

Germanizing Prague. All street signs were in German, all education was conducted in German, and public affairs were conducted in German (Capek 44). As a result, the Bohemian people had practice accommodating foreign rule, thereby making their transition to America easier.

Another reason for their speed of assimilation is that many immigrants found it undesirable to stand out by way of their native customs. The peak of Czech migration was when the word “immigrant” began to have a negative connotation. Kukral cites this personal anecdote from an interview during his research: “Americans looked upon us with distrust or rather aversion. Later I learned it was only our customs-bare feet and handkerchiefs over our heads-that they objected to,” (477). Cleveland librarian and author Eleanor Ledbetter included the following testimony in her 1919 pamphlet about Czech immigrants in Cleveland, Ohio:

“One of the pioneer women of that district is reported as saying that at first the Americans looked at them as if they were some strange kind of animal. They could not understand why this was so, but later learned that it was because of their strange dress, particularly the shawls on their heads. When they learned the reason, they began to dress like Americans.” (9).

These personal stories offer some evidence that there were motivating factors from society, i.e., social pressures that contributed to their embracing of American customs. The speed with which they conformed to American standards could explain the lack of research on the Bohemian immigrants as a population because it was more difficult to single them out as a group. They embraced being American instead of being Bohemian-American immigrants.

Many Czechs that immigrated to America followed similar immigration paths. One path that was often utilized by the early Czech settlers, was to go out west and establish farmsteads. These settlers came before the American Industrial Revolution, during the period of

Manifest Destiny, so land in the Western United States was affordable due to the Homestead act. This enticed many new immigrants, especially immigrants who came from agricultural countries as did the Czechs, to become homesteaders. They also could have been motivated to pursue westward migration due to the pre-established German immigrant communities in the Midwest. Given their familiarity with the language, it might have felt more comfortable for the immigrants to settle among people they could converse with upon arrival. Another path that many Czech immigrants took was to settle in developing urban areas. Many included in this group were skilled workers who added to the flourishing development of America's early cities, one of which, was Cleveland, Ohio.

The city of Cleveland, Ohio experienced intense growth during the late nineteenth century. The access to Lake Erie and the Erie Canal allowed the city to become an industrial hub, which attracted many jobs and immigrants to the area. In fact, "by the year 1910, Cleveland, Ohio was one of the largest Czech cities in the world. Only the cities of Chicago, Vienna, and Prague had a larger population of citizens of Czech nativity and heritage than Cleveland" (Kukral 473). In terms of numbers, it is estimated that "by 1910, Cleveland was the home of approximately 40,000 first- and second-generation Czech immigrants, living in six neighborhoods of the city," (Stone 26). This spotlights the tendency of the Bohemian immigrants to settle among themselves and further supports claims of chain migration.

Passenger lists indicate that many of the immigrants arriving in the United States had been skilled or semi-skilled workers in Bohemia, so it makes sense that the Czech-American settlers often held these trades. In 1869, according to nationally circulated Czech-language newspaper *Slavie*, half of all adult male Czechs in the city were listed as skilled workers. This is a significant portion of the Bohemian immigrant population. "Masons, carpenters, tailors,

shoemakers, coopers, and machinists were the most common skilled occupations appearing in the census” (Stone 52). According to Kukral, “Many industries, such as Cleveland John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil, would locate along the Cuyahoga in the last quarter of the 19th century and employ many Bohemian immigrants as skilled barrel makers” (477). By 1880, Czechs in Cleveland owned 90 grocery stores, 14 butcher shops, 86 taverns or saloons, and many worked as coopers, carpenters, tailors, teachers, and musicians (Kukral 479). The fact that in a short period of time, these immigrants were able to be small-business owners speaks to their ability to achieve upward social mobility. Generationally, the Czechs experienced upward social mobility. According to Stone, 53% of employed second generation male household heads were skilled workers in 1910, while only 41% of the first-generation immigrants were (57). Typically, skilled labor jobs paid more than unskilled which corresponds to the population’s ability to enter the middle class shortly after arrival to the United States.

Most Bohemian immigrants identified as Catholic when leaving Bohemia due the Catholic Austrian monarchy. Life in American promised religious freedom to many Czechs, however, around fifty percent is estimated to have remained Catholic (Kukral 478). As a predominantly Catholic population of immigrants, the Czechs of Cleveland created the first of many parishes in 1867 at St. Vaclavs, later renamed St. Wenceslas (Ledbetter 19). The creation of parishes in the Catholic church system documents evidence of chain migration from Bohemia to Cleveland, Ohio. For example, St. Wenceslas had evidence of five or more families from seven different villages, one of those being Okrouhla. The catholic church was the center of social life for the Bohemian immigrants as it was a unifying belief system among the immigrants. Our Lady of Lourdes had a parish of 6000 people with 900 students and forty-five

different clubs and organizations out of the church in the year 1919 (Ledbetter 23). This shows the high level of involvement the Bohemian had with their Catholic faith in the United States.

III. Irish Immigration

The Irish immigration journey is perhaps one of the most documented immigration processes of the nineteenth century. For the scope of this comparative essay, I will be focusing on Irish immigration during the second half of the nineteenth century, including most notably, the famine immigrants. The famine immigrants were a unique population within the Irish immigrant group because most of them were followers of the Roman Catholic faith. This differs from the earlier Irish immigrants (who later referred to themselves as the Scotch-Irish) who were mainly members of the Protestant church.

In 1845, a blight wiped out the Irish potato crop, leading to one of the most devastating famines in modern history. The potato was a substantial component of both the Irish diet and economy. For reference, a family farm potato crop could yield 6 tons, and sufficient food for a household of 6 over the course of the year (M. Kelly, 7). So, naturally, the devastation of the potato crop had severe consequences—around 1 million people died because of the famine that ensued. The Great Irish Famine was the leading cause of Irish immigration during the second half of the nineteenth century. It is estimated that 1.8 million people left Ireland between the years of 1846 and 1855 (Doyle, 213). Due to a recession in United States and the rise of the Know Nothing anti-immigrant group, 1855 marks the end of the famine emigrant era (Anbinder and McCaffrey, 624).

The western provinces were most affected by the destruction of the potato crop, and as such saw the highest emigration rates. “Analysis for the period 1876-95 shows that the American-Irish

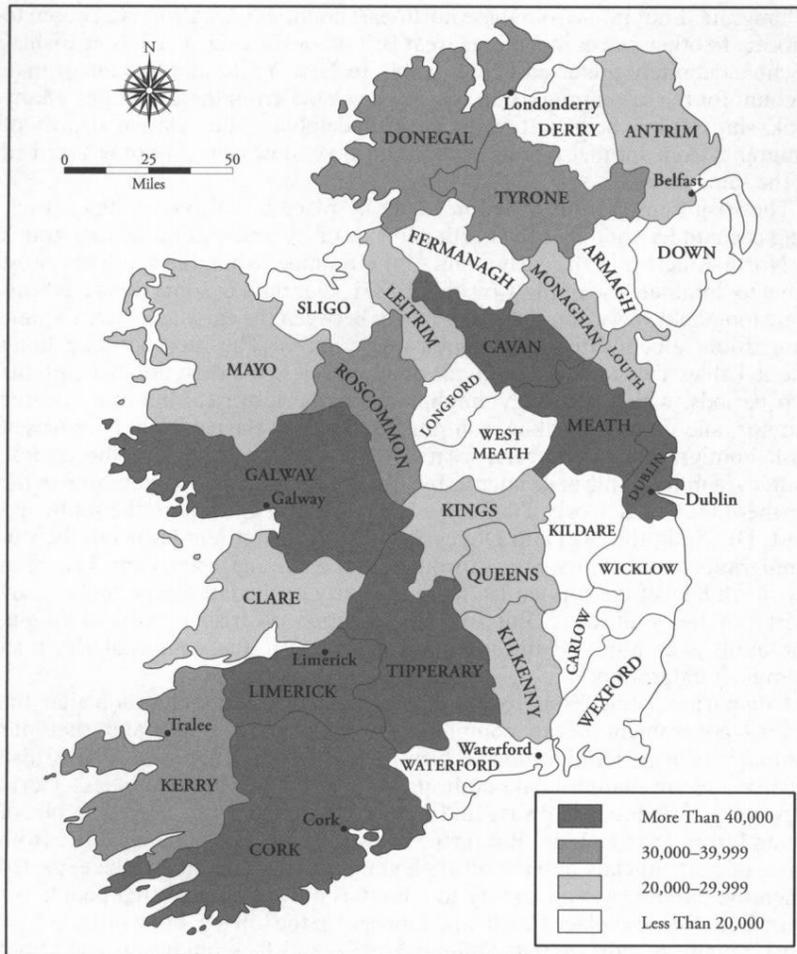
tended to come from counties which might be termed 'backward'. These counties had many Irish-speakers, few protestants, large agricultural populations and low farm value per capita," (Fitzpatrick, 129). In his article, Fitzpatrick analyzes the count of immigrants from each county in Ireland, beginning in 1851. He specifically compared and contrasted immigration to England, Australia, and the United States. He notes that the count became more accurate following the most immediate effects of the famine during the 1870s. His data shows a correlation between the rate of disappearance of agricultural laborers in a region and the propensity of an immigrant to emigrate. In areas where agricultural society had been most disrupted, there were higher rates of emigration because there were less job prospects (Fitzpatrick, 129). The poorer, more rural immigrants from these regions were able to emigrate across the Atlantic by taking advantage of "cut-price passages in savage conditions (perhaps on cargo boats or 'short ships' which saved expenses by evading the purview of the Passenger Acts)," (Fitzgerald, 129). The Eastern counties of Ireland, who were less affected by the famine due to their more diversified, industrial economy, saw higher levels of temporary immigration to England, which makes sense given the proximity.

"As many contemporaries believed, emigration was a palliative drug to which Irish society had grown dangerously addicted," (Fitzpatrick)

Due to the unprecedented number of arrivals to the U.S., the immigrant ships did not go unnoticed as the other immigrant groups of the time arrived in significantly smaller groups and were quieter (M. Kelly, 15). This early conspicuousness began the feelings of negative sentiment among the locals. "Famine followed by a rough passage and migratory insecurity, was accompanied for many by culture shock, disease, poverty, hardship, and unemployment. American Coldness, if not obloquy, hurt more," (Doyle, 218). As unwelcoming as the Americans

were, the Irish immigrants continued to flock to the eastern seaboard. Seventy-four percent of famine immigrants landed in the port of New York, or 1,025, 424 immigrants during the nine-year period (Anbinder and McCaffrey, 624). Though the influx of Irish immigrants was on par with other immigrant groups during the early 1800s, Irish immigration hit its peak following the famine, leading to a whole new class of immigrants. This can be attributed largely to chain migration (Fitzpatrick 130). Chain migration is the process in which immigrants who had come to America, sponsored their neighbors and family members back in Ireland which allowed them to emigrate as well. This meant that the famine immigrant population was largely homogenous. Immigrants came from the same areas in Ireland and settled into the same regions in the United States. According to intake surveys given to famine immigrants around their arrival to the U.S., seventy-one percent of the immigrants that landed in New York planned to stay there long-term (Anbinder and McCaffrey, 634). Data from a New York City emigrant savings bank provides evidence that further supports the tendency towards chain migration. Over twenty-five percent of account holders with the occupation of peddler came from 3 of the 52 parishes of the county Donegal, and--upon arrival to the U.S.-- these immigrants settled into four distinct Manhattan enclaves within the seventh, fourteenth and seventeenth wards (Wegge). This indicates not only that immigrants were moving from the same regions, but also that they held similar occupations. For immigrants to hail from such a small concentrate area as 3 parishes within a county to then

settle into just three wards of New York City infers that the immigrants knew each-other in Ireland before immigrating to America.



Anbinder and
McCaffrey, pg
629

Map One: Irish immigrants landing in New York, 1846–1854 by county of birth

“The Irish... were usually among the largest immigrant groups and won recognition, often notoriety, out of proportion to their number. Many factors contributed to Irish ‘visibility’, including the unprecedented squalor, ignorance, and ill-health of the Famine emigrants;... conspicuous piety and conspicuous insobriety in droll juxtaposition,” (Fitzpatrick, 134). As Fitzpatrick alludes to, the Irish immigrants were not especially popular upon arrival to America. Americans saw them arrive after a long journey, they were filthy and hungry. This image of suffering would have been hard to forget. Where the natives could have seen them as a

population in need of assistance, they were instead seen as an inconvenience. In his data analysis, Fitzpatrick found a strong negative association between the Irish immigrant population density of a region and their avoidance of agricultural districts in addition to their tendency to remain in homogenous ethnic neighborhoods (Fitzgerald, 135). Meaning, they were likely to cluster around familiar enclaves of people.

Typically, immigrants self-select, and choose to emigrate as working adults to find work, thus the new country gains a life cycle of workers. Generally, the prospect of an influx of cheap labor, is seen favorably by the host country, and can help to lessen nativist sentiment. In the case of the famine, where emigration was an act of desperation and necessary for survival, the average age of the Irish immigrants to the United States dropped, thus the U.S. had less to gain from the new population (O'Grada and O'Rourke, 11). This factor could have contributed to the unpopularity of the large immigrant group. The apparent presence of hunger and destitute poverty only further accentuated this.

Table 6. Provincial excess mortality and emigration rates, 1841–51.

	Population	Emigration	Deaths	Emigration rate (%)	Death rate (%)
Ulster	2,386,373	290,970	184,123	12.2	7.7
Munster	2,396,161	332,936	382,951	13.9	16.0
Leinster	1,973,731	171,287	193,397	8.7	9.8
Connaught	1,418,859	245,624	239,529	17.3	16.9
Ireland	8,175,124	1,040,816	1,000,000	12.7	12.2

This table shows emigration and death data from four counties in Ireland as well as for the country. Listed numerically and as a percentage. (Anbinder and McCaffrey)

The Irish immigrants that could afford to emigrate were already in a poor financial position due to the famine. This poverty was exacerbated by the rising cost of transatlantic passage. Given the increase in demand, fare prices were as high as three or four pounds in 1847, but at one point was as high as seven pounds or 700 U.S. dollars today (M. Kelly, 14). Though the Irish

who were fortunate enough to immigrate were poor, the truly unfortunate victims of the famine were those left behind. “As Sir William Wilde put it in 1864, the emigration was leaving behind it, ‘as a legacy upon our charity, the caput mortuum of the population—the poor, the weak, the old, the lame, the sick...’” (Fitzpatrick, 126). The Irish who were fortunate enough often sent portions of their wages home to help those left behind. These immigrants remitted \$808,000 in 1847 (M. Kelly, 9). That would be \$25,916,501.46 U.S. dollars today. The readiness of the Irish immigrants to give back to those suffering more than them lead to high levels of charity, especially in New England from both Protestant and Catholic religious groups. It is estimated that over \$250,000 was raised in addition to a contribution of \$20,000 raised by Bishop Fitzpatrick (M. Kelly, 22). These are significant sums to be raised by an immigrant group characterized by their collective poverty. Perhaps they were seen as poorer than they actually were because of their generosity. The amount of money raised also highlights the severity of the situation in Ireland.

The Irish immigrants settled almost exclusively into cities. According to Doyle, 1.68 out of the 1.8 million Irish-American immigrants settled in the eighteen states in the northern, more developed core of the U.S (Doyle, 225). This can be attributed to the differing job markets of the United States at the time. There were more job opportunities in the north due to industrialization. As previously mentioned, the Irish were very poor, this meant in most households, both the women and men worked. New York City had two women’s jobs for every three men’s jobs, meanwhile the ratio of job availability in California was 1 to 25 (Doyle, 230). Moving out west would have been too high of a cost with small returns. It was more economical to settle along the Eastern seaboard where they had arrived. There were also opportunities for the children to work,

and sometimes multiple incomes were necessary for survival. If not essential, it certainly made the immigrants' life slightly more comfortable.

The Irish immigrants often obtained the best of the worst jobs (Fitzgerald, 134). They also experienced the lowest prospect of economic mobility compared to other immigrant groups of the time (Ferrie, 304). Between an Irish immigrant's arrival to the United States and 1860, 62.5 percent of immigrants who had worked in white collar careers in Ireland worked as unskilled laborers in the United States. Comparatively, the British and German immigrants during the same period experienced only between 22-23 percent downward social mobility. Similar trends ensue when analyzing the drop from skilled to unskilled labor, 51.5% for the Irish, versus 15.5 and 22.3 percent respectively for the British and Germans. Conversely, an immigrants' likelihood of moving from an unskilled labor role up to a skilled labor role or likewise upward mobility was only 41.9% for the Irish immigrants. For the British and German immigrants respectively, it was 71.6% and 81.1% (Ferrie, 304). This drastic difference in opportunity for social advancement signifies the hindrance of being Irish in the job market. All other variables aside, the biggest predictor in Ferrie's data for social mobility was nationality which means an applicant's status as an Irish immigrant would have made it more difficult for them to find employment. Ferrie suggests that this could be attributed to the lower literacy levels. Literacy was a top indicator of whether an immigrant would experience occupational mobility (Ferrie, 321). Interestingly enough, the negative effects of being Irish on job prospects was large enough for the Irish immigrants that it off-set the positive effect of literacy. This indicated just how much country of origin played into the job prospects of an immigrant, and racist sentiment that hindered Irish immigrants.

⁴² The partial effects for literacy, the literacy–Irish origin interaction, and Irish origin are shown below:

	White collar, skilled, and semiskilled at arrival	Farmers and laborers at arrival
Literate	0.170	0.091
Literate × Irish	0.364	0.269
Irish	−0.626***	−0.553***

Source: Ferrie

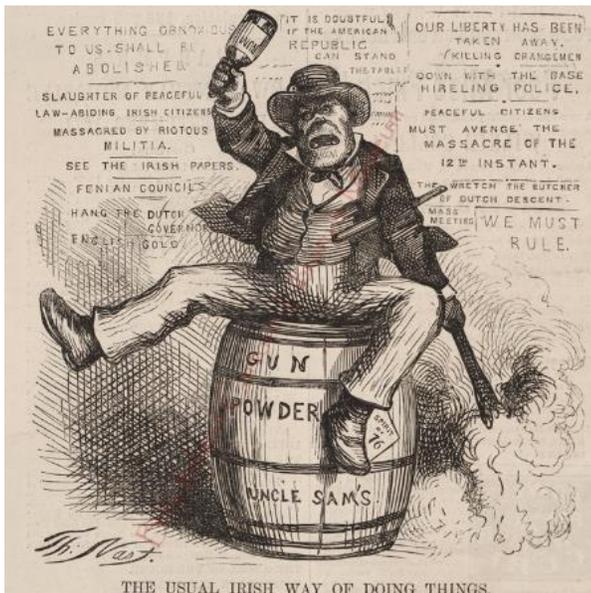
***Significant at the 1% level.

A database created from records of the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank in New York City, founded by Irish immigrants, gives some insight into the money and savings habits of the Irish immigrant population. Generally, these trends are helpful in understanding the lifestyle of the immigrant's indicative of their money and spending habits. This database contains cross-sectional data of the financial position of the famine immigrants upon arrival to the United States. A large majority of the EISB depositors were Irish famine immigrants (Wegge). One of Wegge's most interesting findings from analyzing the savings banks data was that the immigrants tended to save and accumulate sums in the bank despite arriving to the United States with very little money. The median initial deposit was 60 dollars and the median sum accumulated was 190 dollars, valued today at just over \$2000 and \$6300 respectively. This amount of money paints a different picture of the true poverty level of the Irish immigrant, meaning they were not all as destitute as their stereotype depicts. Their ability to put money away means that they were able to make ends meet financially and still have some money left over. As previously mentioned, some chose to remit wages back home to Ireland and sponsor new immigrants, but still others were able to save their money for the future.

Another characteristic of the immigrant group was that they were Catholic. It is estimated that 85 percent, nearly 1.6 million, of the Irish immigrants were Catholic (Doyle, 221). During this time, the United States was a predominately Protestant nation. Catholicism was not an

altogether popular religion, mainly attributed to the belief that Catholics would be more loyal to the Pope than they would to their democratic nation. “Perceptions of specific religious affiliations as unpatriotic and undemocratic that cemented in Colonial years and were stoked by republican currents in the early 1800s took on a fresh stridency with the Famine inflows (M. Kelly, 16). Coupled with undesirable personality aspects of the Irish immigrants, Catholicism was just another factor labelling the group as ‘other’. “European, yet demoted, and unworthy of civic power due to perceived incompatibilities with prescribed American norms, the Irish Catholic was considered undesirable, if not intolerable, in the minds of native-born Americans who insisted on preserving the Protestant bedrock of the republic” (M. Kelly, 16). In my opinion, it was not inherently the beliefs of Catholicism that the Protestant native-born citizens detested. I think it was just an easy excuse for many people to cite when discussing their distaste for the immigrants. Their faith led the group to behave differently and organize in different ways upon arrival to the United States, rather than assimilating into the existing neighborhoods, they created their own, along with their own churches and schools. This made the religion easier to antagonize.

The Irish immigrants as a group, experienced prejudice upon their arrival to America. Irish-immigrants and Irish Americans were one of the first groups in the United States to experience racial tensions. These tensions could be attributed to a wide variety of factors including but not limited to their economic status, their country of origin, their religion, and their perceived lifestyles in the United States. “Immigrants accounted for a higher proportion of the U.S population in the 1840s and 1850s than even before or since, and the Irish made up between one-third and one-half of the total flow... the American Irish came to symbolize immigrants and its attendant problems. They, and not the Germans, became the primary target of nativist, or anti-



immigrant sentiment,”(K. Kelly, 367). Common phrases such as “the Paddy wagon”, a phrase still used today, indicate a form of racism experienced by the Irish-Americans. The stereotype of the Irish immigrants was that they were notorious drinkers, and avid political spectators, who participated in organized crime (the mob), and were known to engage in bar fights. This was not all Irish immigrants, but merely the stereotype. These actions were depicted in the above political cartoons drawn by Thomas Nast that portrayed the Irish-American immigrants rather negatively. The cartoons depict similar themes of violence, alcoholism, and Democrat party politics. In the

cartoon on the left, the Irish American was depicted as a half-ape, half Irish character. This depiction was commonly used to derogatorily insist that Irish immigrants were not fully human and were more primitive than others.

The tendency of the Irish to work at low wages in unskilled labor, along with their use as strikebreakers, led to considerable hostility from native-born American workers (K. Kelly, 372). Generally, people are not fond of being replaced for cheaper labor, which would cause some tension between the native workers and the immigrants. This also led to racial tension between free blacks and Irish immigrants as they were competing for the same jobs. “Resonance evocative of the epithet “No Irish Need Apply” overshadowed midcentury Irish progress...” (M. Kelly 21). This phrase epitomizes the struggle of the Irish Americans in the labor force. Not only were they disliked, but they were also avidly rooted against/barred from applying for certain jobs. Ferrie suggests that the racism experienced by Irish immigrants led them to be overall less successful in moving up the social ladder in comparison to other immigrant groups of the time. “There is little evidence of a decline in the average quality of Irish arrivals after the start of the Famine that would have decreased the ability of the Irish to leave unskilled work shortly after arrival,” (Ferrie, 315). What this means is that it was not the skills of the Irish American immigrants that made them less suitable for employment, but just their identifier as Irish that hindered their job prospects. Ireland was not sending over less skilled workers, American’s just decided that the Irish were not ideal workers.

IV. Comparing and Contrasting the Czech and Irish immigrants

As immigrant populations, the Czechs and the Irish share many characteristics. Taken out of context, the groups have some definite similarities. However, these similarities affected each group’s actions and perceptions differently, and led to two very different experiences in the

United States. In this section I will be identifying and discussing the main commonalities between the Czech and Irish immigrants, and then discussing their differences and how these characteristics shaped their immigration stories.

The biggest similarity between the groups was their Catholic faith. The adherence to, and identity with the Catholic church in a predominately Protestant nation by these two groups is something worth mentioning. Following the arrival of the Irish famine immigrants, the Catholic church transformed from a small religious sect to the largest denomination in the US, and nativists worried that Catholics would only be loyal to Rome (K. Kelly, 367). Historically, the United States was colonized and settled by the English who followed a Protestant faith, and the largest religious identity in the nineteenth century was still Protestant. There are key differences between Catholics and Protestants, but that is not the focus of this point. What is more important to point out is that Catholics as a religious group have different practices and beliefs than Protestants. These differences led each group to form their own communities in the United States. The Irish and Czechs both created their own church parishes and schools surrounding their faith in the areas in which they settled.

Soon after their arrival to Cleveland, the Czechs created St. Wenceslaus church. These Bohemian immigrants structured many of their social engagements around the church. They created a Catholic school system and taught religious education classes. The church was one of the main things this group was able to retain and bring with them to America. However, it was not an outward identifier of the Czech immigrant group that they were Catholic. This can be attributed to the ideological split among the Czech immigrants. A few of the immigrants, known as the Free-Thinkers, emigrated to the United States to achieve religious freedom—a luxury not

granted to them by the Catholic Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. The ideological split prevented Catholicism from being applied as a blanket-adjective to describe the Bohemian immigrants.

With the Irish, their membership in the church was more noticeable. As previously mentioned, over 80 percent of the famine immigrants were Catholic. Since the Irish and their faith were already not popular among the British, the negative sentiment traveled with them to America. Since the ruling class in Ireland were the Protestant British, emigrating to the United States perhaps gave the Irish more freedom to pursue their religion, which may have led them to cling more tightly to it, especially when it became a grievance against them by the nativists. I think it was also the juxtaposition of their behavior with their piety that made them conspicuous and easy to hate. The famine immigrants were notorious for their heavy drinking habits and boisterous behavior, and yet were very quick to become involved in church groups and organizations.

It is no secret, even today, that the Catholic church and its' traditionalism are the object of criticism by members of the Protestant church community. What I think is interesting to consider is why the Czechs faced relatively no religious persecution as a predominately Catholic immigrant group while the Irish--who arrived during the same time period-- were especially hated for their Catholic beliefs? One of the reasons given for the hesitation to embrace Irish Catholic immigrants was the fear that they would be more loyal to Rome and the Pope than they would be to the republic. Why then, was this not a fear for the Czech immigrant group? Both demographics arrived in large amounts and established Catholic parishes and schools early upon their arrival. However, nowhere in my research did I find anti-Catholic sentiment to be a significant aspect of the Czech immigrant experience. To contrast, when describing the Irish

immigrants, specifically the Famine immigrants, Catholic is almost always mentioned as a second group identifier.

Another similarity is that a majority of the immigrants from each group emigrated from small country villages and farms and utilized chain migration. When studying the origins of both the Bohemian and Irish immigrants, it was often noted that the immigrants hailed from rural villages in the countryside. In the case of the Bohemians, they most commonly came from southern Bohemian villages while the Irish came from western counties since they were more agriculturally focused and were hardest hit by the famine. These similar origin stories mean that the immigrants could have lived very similar lives before immigrating. Living in a rural setting meant that the immigrant likely had experience cultivating land and tended to use their native tongue, so Gaelic or Bohemian instead of the more formal/ universal languages of the country, English or German.

Immigration records show the tendency of each group to originate in similar regions and then settle in similar regions in the United States. Catholic church, census, and ship passenger records provide strong evidence that chain migration was a prevalent means of securing immigration to the United States. Chain migration is the practice used when a previous immigrant sponsors a new immigrant. It was used commonly to achieve passage for extended family members. So, for example, if a family of four emigrates, once they arrive in America and establish a place there, they can issue a statement certifying that they would financially support and lodge their cousins who lived next door to them in the old country. The process would continue leading to many families from the same area immigrating to the same regions in the United States. In the case of the Bohemian immigrants, chain migration led to large Czech populations in Cleveland and Chicago. For the Irish, it led to large settlements in New York City and Boston.

Another similarity I found notable was that, in their home country, both the Irish and Czechs were ruled by a minority population and treated as second-class citizens. The Irish during this time were ruled by the British empire. This is one of the reasons the famine was as bad as it was for the Irish, the British had no interest in raising their own taxes to help the starving Irishmen and women because they believed that the Irish brought the famine upon themselves, and so were hesitant to help. According to Cormac O'Grada and Kevin O'Rourke, the British viewed Ireland's poverty as a result of overpopulation and saw the famine as a consequence of Ireland's failure to institute preventive checks (O'Grada and O'Rourke, 6). Emigration was the leading form of famine-relief for Ireland. But it was irreversible, and, they argue, an inefficient form of relief. They make the claim that while the death rate would have been higher without emigration as a form of relief, emigration did not help the poorest, and most susceptible to the consequences of famine (O'Grada and O'Rourke, 16) The famine was exacerbated by the English government's hesitance to provide relief.

The English government's hesitation to help the Irish, whom they ruled as a protectorate, signifies their belief that the Irish were second-class to the English. The story was similar for the Bohemians under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Bohemia was a protectorate of the Austro-Hungarian crown. As Austrian subjects, Bohemians conducted public affairs and received most of their education in German instead of their native language. In addition to this, they did not have much representation in parliament. They even staged a 16-year walk-out protest of parliament due to their feelings of unfairness in the representation. This displays the extremity of the frustration felt by the Bohemians about their situation. Though each group had this experience of being ruled by a minority population in their home country, it affected the Irish and the Czech immigrants differently.

It is recognizable that there are many similarities among the Bohemian and Irish immigrants. However, given their similar origin stories, it would be impossible to ignore the many differences in their immigration experiences. It was my assumption that due to the similarities in their native countries, their behavior and experience in the United States would be similar as well. This was not the case. Most of the differences had to do with their treatment in the United States. Despite arriving during similar time periods, the Irish were plagued with extreme anti-immigrant sentiment that was not as prevalent among the Bohemians. This main difference affected many aspects of each group's unique experience as an immigrant-American.

I believe the most notable difference is location. Ireland is an island in Western Europe that is a part of the United Kingdom, more specifically meaning that they were under British control. This meant official business, and likely many interactions in Ireland, were conducted in English, implying the immigrant's fluency in the language. So, upon arrival to the United States, the Irish immigrant would have been able adequately communicate their needs upon arrival and arrange for necessities such as food and housing. The only indicator of their immigrant status (ignoring some of the more obvious ones upon arrival) would have been their accent. This indicator was heavily cartoonized and labeled the Irish immigrant as other.

Bohemia, on the other hand, was an Eastern European kingdom ruled under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As such, Bohemia was under German influence as opposed to English influence. This meant that upon arrival to the United States, the Bohemian immigrant likely did not speak English, and would require a translator to express their needs upon arrival. It also means that they would have needed at least a little bit of time to become situated in America and learn the language in order to find work. Though the following quote is in regards to the German immigrants, given the proximity of Bohemia to Germany, I feel it is applicable in the context of

this discussion: “The success of the Germans who entered the United States with the handicap of not speaking English and the failure of the Irish who arrived without such a handicap are somewhat puzzling,” (Ferrie, 316). Relative to the amount of people who left the region, there is very little written and studied about the Bohemians, and many American likely were unaware of the existence of the kingdom. Even today, if I took an informal survey of my college classmates, I would assume that a good portion would have little to no clue what I was talking about if I asked them about the kingdom of Bohemia. It is my assumption that many of the Bohemians were placed under the German immigrant label upon arrival due to their knowledge of the language. As previously mentioned, public affairs and education were conducted in German in Bohemian which leads me to believe that the Bohemian immigrant would have been at least conversational, if not fluent, in the language. This meant, upon arrival to the United States and without knowledge of English, the Bohemian immigrant would have likely communicated their needs either through an already established Bohemian immigrant or a German immigrant. The average American could have recognized the use of German or similarity of Czech to German and assumed Bohemian immigrants to be German. The prevalence and pre-existence of German immigrants in the midwestern United States, where the Czech immigrants also often settled, may have made it easier for the Bohemian immigrant to assimilate into American society. Expressly, the Bohemian immigrant, though labeled as immigrant, may not have had the negatively connotated obvious tie to their homeland that was characteristic of the Irish immigrant.

Despite the language barrier, Bohemian immigrants were more literate than Irish immigrants. It is estimated that Bohemian immigrants had a literacy rate of around 96%, a feat attributed to the educational reforms of Maria Theresa. Irish immigrants, however, were the least literate among the immigrant groups of the time (Ferrie, 318). Literacy was one of the biggest predictors

of class mobility for an immigrant group according to Ferrie's data on Entry into the Antebellum U.S. Labor market. This is because literacy would have qualified a person for a more skilled position in the labor market. This indicates that despite the language barrier, the Bohemians likely had a greater chance of improving their position in the labor market. By improving their labor market position, the Bohemian immigrants would have had an easier time entering the middle class.

This brings me to the next big difference which was the economic standing of the immigrants once they were in America. The classic view of the Irish immigrant was that they were destitute. The Irish immigrants were poor, but they were not even the poorest of the poor among the Irish. It took almost every penny they had to escape the famine, and while the immigrants did leave by choice, the alternative was starvation. In America, the stigma of the Irish immigrant prevented them, in most instances, from prosperity. The Irish were seen as the absolute bottom of the labor force, working the jobs that paid the least and were the most dangerous. This made it difficult for them to escape poverty and their poor living conditions. On the contrary, the Bohemian immigrant was, in most cases, positively self-selected. Meaning, they chose to emigrate. As a result, the Bohemian immigrant typically had more money coming to America. According to Stone, 21% of first-generation Czech immigrants were middle class, and generationally, the Czechs experienced upward social mobility, with 35% of second-generation Czechs attaining middle-class status (Stone 62). This could be attributed to the skilled nature of employment found by Czech immigrants, 41 and 53 percent respectively generationally employed in the skilled labor market (Stone 57). These are significant percentages difficult to match by other immigrant groups of the period. This made it easier for many Bohemian immigrants to become homeowners and move out into the suburbs. Suburban life and home-owner status was the goal,

the American Dream. It signified that the immigrant had successfully integrated into U.S. society and improved their life position from what they left behind in their native country.

Another locational difference is where the immigrants settled in the United States upon arrival. While both groups did flock to urban environments to find employment, the Irish most notably settled along the Eastern seaboard states, most commonly in New York City. While, many Czech immigrants also found their home in New York City, it was more popular among this group to travel a bit further west, with bigger Czech enclaves appearing in Chicago, Illinois and Cleveland, Ohio. Also characteristic of this group was to migrate outwards towards the suburbs rather than to remain in the city as did the Irish. This could be attributed to the presence of German immigrants in the Midwest. Perhaps the Czech immigrants felt more comfortable around the German immigrants since most of them had knowledge of the German language. It likely made it easier for them to combat the language barrier.

Another key difference in settlement patterns is that the Irish immigrants had a group identity. They settled among other Irish people and capitalized upon their collective identity in terms of the political machine. Irish Americans were notoriously involved in the mob machine politics of New York in the Democrat party. "In the United States by century's end, first-generation Irish-Americans (3,375,546) outnumbered Irish immigrants (1,615,459). The American-born, natural citizens with voting privileges, developed into an influential voting block and were a key demographic for politicians," (Brighton). Many Irish Americans were lifelong Democrats due to the amount of time and energy that was spent to win their vote. As a population, they represented a key demographic that could be very influential in winning elections. To contrast, the Bohemian-immigrants did not identify heavily with either end of the political spectrum and affiliation was individually ascertained. Furthermore, while the

Bohemians did experience a sense of nationalistic pride (most prominently leading up to and following the first world war), they did not always settle in entirely Czech enclaves and left behind very few cultural identifiers even in distinctly Czech areas. This would have made it difficult for them to be singled out as a significant voter demographic and as a result, it is not an important fact in their immigrant story.

V. Conclusion

Immigration is a fascinating field of study that lends itself naturally to a comparative analysis. Bohemia and Ireland, despite many surface level differences, each tell an interesting story that allows us to understand better the American immigration culture during the second half of the nineteenth century. The study of immigration is essential to understanding history and provides many interesting insights. Both the Irish and Bohemians began arriving to America when the word 'immigrant' began to have a negative connotation. Up to this point, America was a nation of immigrants, immediately following, there began the distinction between native-born citizens and immigrants.

This distinction was nothing new to either group as both had experience living as second-class citizens in their home countries. They had practice being excluded as 'other' and even sometimes embraced their differences creating their own communities, in many cases around their Catholic faith. The creation of Catholic churches and parishes shows the tendency of each group to partake in chain migration and led to relatively homogeneous immigrant populations.

Key differences did distinguish the immigrant groups as well. The Czechs had a myriad of different reasons to emigrate while the Irish were motivated almost solely out of necessity due to the famine. This led to key differences among the populations in terms of their economic

prosperity as immigrants. Also contributing to this were their differing literacy rates and the public perception of them as an immigrant group. While my essay is inclined towards economic variables relating to each group, there were many other factors and influences relating to each groups immigration journey that could be comparatively analyzed.

Immigrants are still perceived negatively today, and struggle with the same obstacles faced by the Irish and Bohemians in the 19th century. It would be interesting to study whether groups such as the Mexican or Middle Eastern immigrants experience similar prejudices entering the job market today as the Irish did in the 1850s, or if the language barrier affects their immigration experience similar to how it affected the Bohemians. Studying past immigration trends and experiences provides insights still relevant today. The Irish experienced discrimination and racism because they were poor. Surely, I could give a whole list of reasons why the Irish experienced prejudice as immigrants, but these are merely scapegoats for the larger issue at hand and explains why the Bohemians experienced relatively no prejudice despite coming from similar backgrounds and sharing many characteristics. Looking at immigration today, Mexican immigrants are facing many of the same challenges as faced by the Irish two hundred years ago. They also have become a hotly contested political topic, are typically of a lower socioeconomic status, and experience prejudice as an immigrant group. These similarities highlight the importance of studying history and immigration.

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