Excerpts of a study by Charles Hirschman and Elizabeth Mogford on Immigration and the American Industrial Revolution From 1880 to 1920

... The size ... of the immigrant community, as well as their disproportionate residence in large cities, meant they were the mainstay of the American industrial workforce. Immigrants and their children comprised over half of manufacturing workers in 1920, and if the third generation (the grandchildren of immigrants) are included, then more than two-thirds of workers in the manufacturing sector were of recent immigrant stock. ... Without immigrant labor, it seems unlikely that the American industrial revolution would have been achieved at the same pace, scale, and profitability that it did. ... Within the span of a few decades from the late 19th to the early 20th century, the United States was transformed from a predominately rural agrarian society to an industrial economy centered in large metropolitan cities. ... The 1880s were the first decade in American history, with the exception of the Civil War decade, when the urban population increased more than the rural population (in absolute numbers). From 1880 to 1920, population growth was concentrated in cities—the urban fraction expanded from a little more than one quarter of the national population to more than one half (Carter et al. 2006: 1–105). ... From 1880 to 1920, the number of foreign born increased from almost 7 million to a little under 14 million (Gibson and Jung 2006: 26). These figures, however, underestimate the economic and demographic contribution of immigration (Kuznets 1971b). Immigrants inevitably lead to a second generation—the children of immigrants—whose social, cultural, and economic characteristics are heavily influenced by their origins. Counting the 23 million children of immigrants, in addition to the 14 million immigrants, means that over one-third of the 105 million Americans in the 1920 population belonged to the “immigrant community.” ... (Accessed on 8.21.14 at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2760060/)