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Under the Schengen Sun: Cultural and Socioeconomic
Motivation of American Migrants to Italy and Poland
through Dual Citizenship

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Abstract

The United States is home to many diasporas that began during the early 20th century as part of the Age of Mass Migration. As the number of generational descendants grew over time, many became less connected with their parents' culture. Many of these countries, like Italy and Poland, have opened up to dual citizenship by *jus sanguinis*, so many Americans with familial and cultural ties to those countries apply for it in order to take advantage of the benefits that it offers. Cultural ties depend largely on family and the childhood environment, specifically on acquisition of a heritage language, involvement in community activities, and traditional recipes, but also depends on how the political situation in that country has changed over time. Emigrants often left their homes due to war, poverty, or to work abroad, whereas modern pursuit of dual citizenship can be a result of positive portrayal in media may not be interested in emigrating at all, but rather treating their second passport as a physical symbol of connection with their ancestors' homeland. The results of a questionnaire sent to Italian and Polish Americans show that within the population surveyed there is a direct correlation between the amount of connection that an individual feels with Italy or Poland and their interest or motivation to pursue dual citizenship.

Introduction

It is inherently human to search for a better life. The circumstances that put forth the motivation to establish a new home in search of it have changed over time, but the conditions remain largely the same. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, transatlantic immigration was made more difficult by bureaucracy, stricter border controls, and negative diplomatic relations between states. In contrast, immigration at this time could also have been an easier process, due to less exchange of information and a higher level of trust between the immigrants and the receiving country, but as the number of immigrants increased, so did the bureaucratic barriers and security checks. Permanent immigration in these cases also required a blind leap of faith and courage that could ultimately be rewarding or disappointing with little chance of returning home. Now, globalization through access to information by the internet, expanded commercial air travel, and improvements in diplomatic relations have made immigration easier for many. While many immigrants today still take a blind leap of faith to escape poverty, war, or a natural disaster, a privileged few can make an intentional choice determined by a personal connection or intentional investment. Nevertheless, the deep-rooted desire to seek a new home with better opportunities remains the same.

The United States was built on the labor of these immigrants who left their home countries and decided to stay to take advantage of the opportunities found there, leading to its multicultural “melting pot” reputation. As a result of this, their descendants often grew up with a dual or multicultural identity, most often a combination of their ancestor’s culture and American culture. As generations passed, there was often more intermixing between cultures, leading to more complex identities that enriched their understanding of the world. At the same time this complexity led to a loss of a true understanding of their ancestors’ cultures due to a lack of a direct connection. Many people grew up hearing stories from their ancestors about living in “the old country” and continuing traditions that they brought with them, especially during significant holidays. These diverse experiences, linguistic, and generational knowledge shaped how the youngest generation of descendants see the world around them, including the modern forms of the countries their ancestors came from. In cases where the only connection with the country of their ancestors comes from their stories, there tends to develop a kind of cultural dissonance in which the idea of the “old country” remains the same but is in fact as changing and dynamic as any other. The geographical distance between the United States and the ancestor’s country is also a major factor in maintaining a direct connection because of the high cost of transatlantic travel and limited time available. A connection between both countries through frequent travel or other forms of exposure to the modern country can reduce the likelihood of this dissonance happening. It can also lead to a stronger cultural connection to that country which in turn creates a higher likelihood to seek dual citizenship.

The increasingly positive diplomatic relations between the United States and between European countries caused a rise in popularity of dual citizenship overall. In the 20th century, many people gained the ability to travel freely between the United States and the second country, even with barriers like an ETIAS or long-term visa. Even so, many of the reasons to immigrate or seek dual citizenship are similar to those of the ancestors who came to the United States: a search for opportunity through a leap of faith, but now with the desire to reconnect with familial roots in a foreign land. Italy and Poland have rigorous legal processes and requirements for obtaining dual citizenship through *jus sanguinis* from abroad, but both are open to applicants for citizenship by descent. Additionally, Poland has a scheme for dual citizenship in which applicants of any national descent can apply directly to the President of

Poland to be granted citizenship. Easier obtainment of citizenship by descent combined with benefits that include reconnecting with ancestors' heritage, a physical manifestation of a secondary cultural identity, and access to the Schengen Zone through European Union membership reflect an increasing desire to take advantage of the new opportunities available there.

My research question "What are the cultural and socioeconomic patterns of American Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X descendants who pursue dual citizenship with Italy or Poland?" reflects my personal experience with a country I have called home for two years and a country I could one day call home thanks to its dual citizenship policies. The objective of this study is to increase the data available in this up-and-coming field of research through using Italy and Poland as two case studies that represent some of the most common ancestry groups in the United States. Additionally, both Italy and Poland's political regimes and economies have become increasingly similar since the early 20th century, reflecting both the logistical possibility and expectation of positive results from emigration more likely. As the global economic situation continues to change, many more Americans will feel like they can have a better life in Europe, much in the same way that their ancestors did, but with modern benefits that make life easier.

The methodology I have chosen to conduct this study is a questionnaire with 30 questions relating to the participants' personal experiences growing up in the United States with influence from Italian and Polish culture. The next part of the questionnaire relates to their retelling of their ancestors' experiences and motivations for moving to the United States. The third part of the questionnaire reveals their childhood influences and how they translate to adulthood. These include travel to Italy or Poland with family, holiday traditions, or any significant events in their lives that could lead them to take such a decision. The final part contains questions about modern cultural phenomena in each place to ensure that potential citizens are keeping up with the current news of the country rather than keeping the same image that their ancestors created for them.

In the first chapter, I will conduct a literature review of the historical context of the experiences of immigrants from Italy and Poland from the 19th and early 20th centuries and how they managed to keep their own cultures while at the same time assimilating into American culture. I will also explain some of the historical processes that caused the ancestors to move to the United States. Both Italy and Poland witnessed tumultuous historical events throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries including the rise of dictatorships, widespread poverty, and territorial changes to their countries. Many diaspora groups remained connected to their homelands through political activism, newspapers in their own language, and through education of younger generations through Cultural Institutes and religious organizations.

In the second chapter, I will continue the Literature Review and introduce the first of two main categories of motivation for the descendants of those immigrants to return to Italy and Poland: a dual cultural identity. These are often created in childhood through various influences, creating a sense of association with their country and culture. We are more likely to choose a place where we feel a sense of familiarity and loyalty, leading to the final step of seeking dual citizenship. The third chapter will discuss the political and legal reforms in each country that have allowed the concept of dual citizenship to exist through positive diplomatic relations with the United States and the European Union. Dual citizenship also allows for a

physical manifestation of that connection through a passport, further compounded by access to the Schengen zone and other benefits that European Union membership offers.

The fourth chapter will explain my methodology and the questionnaire I wrote to gain responses to answer my research question. The fifth chapter will discuss the results of both questionnaires and highlight significant statistical data and remarkable circumstances in the pursuit of citizenship. Responses from members of different generations reflect significant similarities and differences that show how increasing access to the modern state through travel, language classes, and access to Italian and Polish media strengthened their personal affinity and connection to the culture, rather than relying solely on the word of their ancestors. Finally, I will conclude my research.

Chapter 1: Conditions of Migration from Italy and Poland to The United States

Immigration from around the world towards the United States is still ongoing as people turn to the “American Dream” as an opportunity for a better life. The first immigrants to the United States were from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia. From the 1840s on, during the “Age of Mass Migration” the number of countries of origin increased to include those in East Asia, in addition to other European countries like Italy and Poland.¹ The diversity of new citizens arriving in the United States contributed to its reputation as a “melting pot” of cultures, both through immigration and through the combination of that culture with the American one. Immigrants have many motivations for making the decision to move to another country, but one of the most common causes for mass migration is political turmoil.

1.1 Political Turmoil

1.1.1 Italy

Mass emigration from Italy, starting from the Unification of Italy in 1861 to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, occurred due to increasing levels of poverty from an economic downturn as well as internal political tension between Northern and Southern Italy. According to Statista, the number of emigrants in this period peaked at around 350,000 in 1906 and 1913,² but there was still a significant number in subsequent years. In the post-Unification period, the territory of the former Kingdom of Two Sicilies faced problems like continued military oppression from Garibaldi’s army as well as economic repression and prejudice against them from the people in Northern Italy.³ Other issues such as more reliance on agriculture compared to the industrialized North⁴, mass unemployment⁵, and low literacy rates⁶ were also great contributors to this tension. Discussions of these issues led to *La Questione Meridionale*⁷ and the best way to resolve it.

Attempts by the new Italian government were made to try to relieve the economic problems in the South by using emigration to its advantage. One way was “Italianization” similarly to Italy’s former colonies in what is now Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. This would occur through a plan presented by Leopoldo Franchetti, the Special Deputy to Eritrea, in 1891.⁸ This plan would both reduce the strain on resources in Southern Italy as well as aid

¹ "History of Migration to the U.S." Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/11693/history-of-migration-to-the-us/#topFacts>.

² "Number of Italian migrants to the United States from 1881 to 1931." Chart. November 25, 2019. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1074911/number-of-italian-migrants-to-the-united-states/>.

³ Bruner, Stephen C. "Leopoldo Franchetti and Italian Settlement in Eritrea: Emigration, welfare colonialism and the Southern question." *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2009): 74.

⁴ Gabbuti, Giacomo, and Salvatore Morelli. "Wealth, Inheritance, and Concentration: Italy and Its Regions From the Unification to the Great War." *Review of Income and Wealth*, no. 3 (2025). 71.

⁵ Lorella 2023, 4

⁶ Cunsolo, Ronald S. "Italian Emigration and Its Effect on the Rise of Nationalism." *Italian Americana* 12, no. 1 (1993): 66.

⁷ Lorella Viola, "Narratives of Italian Transatlantic (Re)migration, 1897–1936," *Frontiers in Sociology* 8 (November 22, 2023): 4.

⁸ Welch, Rhiannon Noel. "Colonial (Re)Productivity." In *Vital Subjects: Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860–1920*. Liverpool University Press (2016). 39.

in colonizing these territories by taking farmland from the indigenous people and giving it to Italians.⁹ Increasing the Italian population in those countries would also increase the number of Italian citizens there through citizenship by descent if at least one parent, usually the father, was Italian.¹⁰ This was one of the first examples of legalizing citizenship by descent but at the same time represented the government's desire to implement a policy to fit their agenda to "civilize" people in Eritrea by slowly erasing their culture through colonization.



*Map of Italy and its Colonies in 1939*¹¹

Another notable solution to *La Questione Meridionale* was Francesco Saverio Nitti's *Leggi del Mezzogiorno* enacted from 1904-1907 under Prime Minister Giolitti.¹² These laws were meant to ensure that the financial remittances sent back to Italy by emigrants went to the government to help prop up the economy through industrialization of places like Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia. These laws failed due to the sentiment against them by many emigrants and their families left behind as well as a lack of commitment to implementing the policies within them from the Italian government.¹³ As a result, the government started to encourage emigration in an effort to relieve the strain on resources and unemployment that occurs with a concentrated population.¹⁴ In comparison to Franchetti's plan, this was not meant to "civilize" the people in Southern Italy but rather to encourage them to return with their money earned abroad. The United States government also encouraged it, as they felt that the

⁹ Bruner 2009, 81

¹⁰ Welch 2016, 67

¹¹ Wikimedia Commons contributors, "File: Colonie italiane.jpg," *Wikimedia Commons*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Colonie_italiane.jpg&oldid=805282846

¹² Verrastro, Donato. "Nitti e gli interventi speciali per il Mezzogiorno del 1904. Per una comparazione tra il caso napoletano e quello lucano." *Democrazia e Diritti Sociali* 2-2021 (2022): 43.

¹³ Cunsolo 1993, 64

¹⁴ Lorella 2023, 4

Southern Italians' experience in agriculture would be useful in rebuilding the agriculture industry in the American South.¹⁵ In addition to the laws enacted to control this money entering Italy, many emigrants within Europe were forced to return to Italy as a result of compulsory military enlistment¹⁶ whereas many who lived outside of Europe either evaded the draft through lost records, or were forced to return to enlist.¹⁷ Others instead felt a sense of loyalty to their new country rather than Italy as in the case of those in the United States. Many children of at least one Italian immigrant parent were automatically considered to be citizens and eligible to be drafted, but preferred to enlist in the United States Army instead.¹⁸ This shows another way that the government used emigration to gain more citizens, but in order to strengthen its own territory rather than its colonies.

The beginning of World War II and the Fascist period also created economic issues that were not solved as well as expected by remittances sent from abroad. In contrast, the Fascist government denounced emigration as "unpatriotic."¹⁹ They wanted to renew Franchetti's plan to resettle the African colonies to prevent emigration abroad but at the same time prevented internal migration through increasing the difficulty of officially registering residence in a new city without employment there.²⁰ They still acknowledged people that had already emigrated, calling them "Italians working abroad" and managed remittances through the Istituto Nazionale di Credito per il Lavoro Italiano all'Estero (ICLE), redirected the money received towards advancing the government's objectives in Africa,²¹ like Franchetti's plan. Political oppression, including deportation of intellectuals, communist,²² or generally anti-fascist leaders of the Resistance²³, and others who did not fit the government's definition of the ideal Italian were deported, including Italian Jews, in line with their alliance with the German Nazi Party.²⁴ This oppression also led to a high number of voluntary emigration, especially to escape political persecution. Many intellectuals like Professor Gaetano Salvemini went to the United States, not only for its educational freedom but also gaining access to influential universities like Harvard.²⁵ Others left to avoid arrest by the Special Tribunal and sentences such as arbitrary imprisonment, surveillance, or exile to a remote area of Italy.²⁶ Most of these arrests occurred in Northern and Central Italy but still affected the

¹⁵ Mazzoli, Gilberto. "Italianness in the United States between migrants' informal gardening practices and agricultural diplomacy (1880–1912)." *Modern Italy* 26, no. 2 (2021): 200.

¹⁶ Daly, Selena. "Emigrant Draft Evasion in the First World War: Decision-Making and Emotional Consequences in the Transatlantic Italian Family." *European History Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2021): 174.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 176

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 179

¹⁹ Viola 2023, 5

²⁰ Stokes, Lauren. "'Emigration is Not Inevitable': The Critique of Free Circulation and the Italian Federation of Migrant Workers and Their Families." *Journal of Modern European History* 23, no. 1 (2025): 85.

²¹ Soresina, Marco. "Italian emigration policy during the Great Migration Age, 1888–1919: the interaction of emigration and foreign policy." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 21, no. 5 (2016): 735.

²² Brogi, Alessandro. "Taming dissent: the United States and the Italian centre-left, 1948–1978." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 14, no. 3 (2016): 228.

²³ Osti Guerrazzi, Amedeo. "Fascist Violence. History and Historiography." In *Rethinking Fascism. The Italian and German Dictatorship*, De Gruyter Oldenburg, (2022). 180.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 181

²⁵ Camurri, Renato, and Alice Gussoni. "Gaetano Salvemini: profile of a transnational intellectual." *Modern Italy* 28, no. 4 (2023): 279.

²⁶ Barocci, Antonio. "A geography of repression: the first years of the fascist special tribunal in Italy, 1926–1928." *Journal of Historical Geography* 78 (2022): 154.

South.²⁷ While this period of Italian history falls outside of the period of Great Migration from Italy, it still represents the motivation for a large number of emigrants to seek a new life abroad.

The Italian economy was able to recover partially by way of the Marshall Plan after World War II, but the funds were distributed more in the North rather than in the South,²⁸ maintaining the previous economic inequality between the regions. The Plan also encouraged the beginning of a tourism partnership between Italy and the United States, which encouraged people on both sides to contribute to the developing post-war economic boom. The Marshall Plan also led to the creation of the European Travel Commission between the other countries receiving funds as a way to improve diplomatic relations with the US as well as within Western Europe.²⁹ The signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 also partially relieved unemployment since workers would now also be able to migrate between signatory countries in order to work and send money home.³⁰ With these improvements, it became less necessary to emigrate to the United States for financial gain, but it still remained a desirable option for those who already had family or those who still preferred to leave Europe for a new life.

1.1.2 Poland

Unlike Italy, the territory of what is now the Republic of Poland evolved throughout its history, having been conquered and annexed by many of the rulers of the surrounding nations. The Kingdom of Poland was officially recognized by other medieval European states in 1025 and became the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania in 1569.³¹ At this time, the Polish economy was based on agriculture, and many farmers could move freely between the Kingdom and other nearby territories to work or trade. Additionally, attempts to control migration by local authorities were usually ineffective due to a lack of legal consequences and poorly kept records.³² Starting from 1772, the Kingdom of Poland was partitioned between Prussia, the Russian Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire through a series of treaties.³³ All of these Empires set their own laws on migration, and absorbed the Polish citizens of that territory by giving them a new citizenship.³⁴ Poland was partitioned for the final time between 1795 and 1918, again between Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.³⁵ In the Prussian case, they had a liberal approach to migration within territories but

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 156

²⁸ Ricciardo, Traci Michelle. "Not only the poor! A closer look at regional differences in Italian emigration (1946-2019)." *The Journal of European Economic History (JEEH)* 53, no. 1 (2024): 112.

²⁹ Valenzani, Giuliano Santangeli. "Picturing Italy: Cold War Perspectives in American Travel Writing on Italy, 1948-1960." *RSA Journal* 34 (2023). 200.

³⁰ Ricciardo 2024, 200-201

³¹ Wandycz, P.S., Jasiewicz, K. "History of Poland." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 25, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Poland>.

³² Wyżga, Michał. "Women's Labour Migration and Serfdom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries)." In *Gender and Migration in Historical Perspective*, edited by Beatrice Zucca Micheletto. Palgrave Studies in Economic History. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. (2022). 189.

³³ Kattan, Victor. "To Consent or Revolt-European Public Law, the Three Partitions of Poland (1772,1793,and 1795) and the Birth of National Self-Determination," *Journal of the History of International Law* 17, no. 2 (2015): 263.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 274

³⁵ Ciechanowski, Hadrian Michał. "The Kingdom of Prussia and the migration of Poles at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries." *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej* 18 (2023): 186.

later became strict due to increasing Germanization policies³⁶ meant to expand the Empire. Eventually, all movement between partitions was restricted, even on the grounds of marriage. Marrying a citizen of the Russian partition, for example, even if both were originally Polish, resulted in a loss of German citizenship.³⁷ Consideration as a Polish “citizen” also came with a strict ethnoreligious criteria that helped classify “Poles” within the partitions.³⁸ Despite these restrictions, many working-class residents of all three partitions found a way to emigrate to the United States.

Although there is a record of people of Polish descent living in the United States as early as 1608, most emigrated between 1870 and 1914.³⁹ Their records show that they emigrated as citizens of the partition rather than Poland, so the exact number is difficult to determine.⁴⁰ The majority of them came from the Prussian partition due to economic issues that were faced there, which came to be known as “the Galician Misery” named after the Polish region taken by the Empire. Like in Italy, these emigrants sent remittances back to their families, which were used to help improve the economy.⁴¹ The main cause of this misery was caused by the Germanization policies of the expansion of the Empire led by Otto Von Bismarck in this period. In addition to forced resettlement of Polish land by German farmers, many Polish residents of the Empire were also conscripted into the German military and preferred to emigrate in order to escape it.⁴² In the Austro-Hungarian partition, Polish residents had some political autonomy through the Galician Diet, which sent representatives to Vienna on behalf of the Polish residents there.⁴³ The Polish cause for further autonomy and positive diplomatic relations with the Empire was also championed by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski in Europe and Russia⁴⁴ and US Ambassador to Poland Hugh Gibson.⁴⁵ This positive representation of independent Poland was especially important as the lowest number of Polish emigrants came from the Russian partition. Many found a better economic opportunity in moving East to take advantage of the factories and industrial economy rather than staying in the Polish agrarian one. This ended in the beginning of the 20th century with various uprisings, wars, and persecution of Roman Catholics that made it difficult to leave.⁴⁶

A study by Bukowski and Novokmet found that the levels of income taxes that were taken from laborers increased with the level of economic prosperity in each partition, demonstrating the upturn from industrialization through factories and through agriculture.⁴⁷

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 187

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 190

³⁸ Mazur, Zachary “Nationality,” *International Law, and Jewish Emigration to the United States, 1918–1921.* *Ethnicizing Europe* (2025): 72.

³⁹ Folwarski, John, and P. P. Marganoff. “Polish families.” *Ethnicity and family therapy* (2005): 743.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 744

⁴¹ Pacyga, Dominic A. “Polish Emigration to the United States before World War One and Capitalist Development.” *Polish American Studies* (1989): 15.

⁴² Greene 1961, 52

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 54

⁴⁴ Zajac, Oliver. “First Steps in Emigration and the Treaty of Münchengrätz 1833.” In *Hôtel Lambert and the Austrian Empire, 1831–1846: The Political Discourse and Activities of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski* (2024): 86-87

⁴⁵ Gibson, Hugh. *An American in Warsaw: Selected Writings of Hugh S. Gibson, US Minister to Poland, 1919–1924.* Edited by Vivian H. Reed, M. B. Biskupski, Jochen Böhrer, and Jan-Roman Potocki. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2021. 527.

⁴⁶ Greene 1961, 58

⁴⁷ Bukowski, Paweł, and Filip Novokmet. “Between communism and capitalism: long-term inequality in Poland, 1892–2015.” *Journal of Economic Growth* 26, no. 2 (2021): 201.

The United States government also worked closely with the Prussian and Austro-Hungarian partitions against Russia, especially against the Bolshevik Revolution, which helped increase the number of immigrants from those partitions.⁴⁸ The war also caused environmental destruction in many parts of Polish territory⁴⁹ making it more difficult to resettle there. Destruction of the population also came in the form of massacres, including the high number that occurred during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944⁵⁰ and famine created by a lack of available rations.⁵¹ Despite these challenges, the highest number of Polish emigrants went to the United States during this period,⁵² especially as many people found opportunities there that were not possible in any of the partitions.

World War II was also a major cause of political turmoil for Poland, as it was occupied by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union according to terms set by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the German-Soviet Border Friendship Treaty in 1939.⁵³ Both again tried to erase Polish culture by incorporating it into their own using more dictatorial methods like repression of the Resistance and forced deportation.⁵⁴ Many political dissidents on both sides as well as Jewish residents were sent to concentration camps in the occupied territory.⁵⁵ Anti-Jewish sentiment had already existed in Poland before the war,⁵⁶ but the attitude of Nazi Germany and other powers within Europe amplified them throughout the war.⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Pease, Neal. *Poland, the United States, and the stabilization of Europe, 1919-1933*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 5.

⁴⁹ Bukowski and Novokmet 2021, 190.

⁵⁰ Przeszowski, Kazimierz. "Population Losses in the Wola Area During the Warsaw Uprising 1944. A Review of Research and an Attempt at Balance." *Faces of War* 1 (2024): 110.

⁵¹ Tönsmeier, Tatjana. "War, occupation and the politics of causing and fighting hunger in World War II." In *The Politics of Famine in European History and Memory*. Routledge, 2025. 43

⁵² Pacyga 2005, 17

⁵³ Pulvermacher, Alexandra. "Poland under German and Soviet Occupation 1939-1941: Approaches to a Comparison." *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 72, no. 4 (2023): 542.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 544

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 558

⁵⁶ Trębacz, Zofia. "Polish Governments' Plans Toward Jewish Mass Emigration." *Ethnicizing Europe* (2025): 99.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.



Map of Poland in 1939⁵⁸

Many escaped first through Displaced Person refugee zones in American-occupied zones in Germany, before going on to safer countries including the United States. These zones were also instrumental in providing humanitarian aid to occupied territory as well as assisting the United States in collaborating with the Polish government in exile towards independence.⁵⁹ This was done through the establishment of diplomatic relations through embassies in Warsaw and Washington that became the first for independent Poland.⁶⁰ The government of the USSR had a similar system by restarting diplomatic relations with the same exiled government and building institutions for helping Polish refugees that preferred to move East within the Union rather than West. The annexation of German territory of Poland by the Soviet Union in 1945 led to the foundation of the Polish People's Republic in 1945, which remained until 1989.

The displacement of people by the partitions and occupation of Polish territory also contributed largely to the number of emigrants that went to the United States. In contrast to Italy, many could not return until decades later but stayed in contact with their families. This created a complicated definition of what it means to be Polish and affected the emigrants' relationship with other people from Polish territory as well as their sentiments towards their

⁵⁸ "German Invasion of Poland, September 1939." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/map/german-invasion-of-poland-september-1939>

⁵⁹ Friedla, Katharina. "'From Nazi Inferno to Soviet Hell': Polish-Jewish children and youth and their trajectories of survival during and after World War II." *Journal of Modern European History* 19, no. 3 (2021): 275.

⁶⁰ Ceranka, Paweł, and Helena Szlajfer. *My naród--: 90 lat stosunków dyplomatycznych między Polską a USA = We the People--: 90 Years of Polish-US Diplomatic Ties*. Warsaw: Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych / United States Embassy, 2009. 23.

homeland after arrival in the United States. Unlike Italy, Poland was originally part of the Marshall Plan but withdrew after pressure from the USSR⁶¹ It did not withdraw from the European Travel Commission, which made it one of the first Eastern Bloc countries to partially open to the West.⁶² In the same way as Italy, willingness to improve diplomatic relations with the US and Western Europe allowed for freer movement between states as well as ease in emigration.

1.2 Arrival and Construction of Ethnic Neighborhoods

Many immigrants from Europe during the Age of Mass Migration arrived by ship at the Ellis Island port in New York City,⁶³ so they settled there or in nearby cities before traveling farther West. Their arrival and settlement in areas populated by other members of the same ethnic group contributed to the territorial expansion⁶⁴ and industrialization of those cities. These ethnic enclaves were given names like “Little Italy” that reflect their origins and create a sense of proximity to home in a brand-new environment,⁶⁵ especially considering the shared trauma from their homelands that brought them together. These efforts to maintain a connection to the homeland are not unique to Italian and Polish migrants, but this desire resulted in some of the strongest immigrant and ethnic communities, and it is evident in cities like New York and Chicago.

In both Polish and Italian ethnic neighborhoods, there were similar collective struggles with discrimination through perpetuation of negative stereotypes from the American public encouraged by the United States government.⁶⁶ Similarly to modern times, some immigrants were considered to be “good” while others were considered to be “bad.”⁶⁷ Due to negative stereotypes about some of the “bad” immigrants, housing for them was often only available to them in certain less desirable areas of cities⁶⁸ and were often unsanitary because of a lack of resources.⁶⁹ Neighborhoods for immigrants from both countries were partially built through a combination of placement of the ethnic group to the specific area and voluntary association⁷⁰ but others were created with a specific purpose. In the case of Italy, immigrants carried a reputation of being skilled in agriculture, so the US and Italian governments created a program to send immigrants to areas like California and the South in order to build up the industry there and to prevent overcrowding in cities. This project in turn

⁶¹ Ceranka and Szlajfer 2009, 55

⁶² European Travel Commission. “The History of the European Travel Commission.” <https://etc-corporate.org/uploads/ETC%20History%20Book%20-%20HD.pdf>.

⁶³ Library of Congress. *Immigration to the United States, 1851–1900*. Rise of Industrial America (1876–1900). <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/rise-of-industrial-america-1876-1900/immigration-to-united-states-1851-1900/>.

⁶⁴ Asghari Alayi, S., F. Nourian, and B. Aminzadeh Goharrizi. “The Process of Formation and Transformations of Spatial Form and Structure in Multi-Ethnic Enclaves and the Factors Affecting It.” *International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability* 5, no. 2 (2024): 107.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 103

⁶⁶ Mazzoli, Gilberto. “Italianness in the United States between migrants’ informal gardening practices and agricultural diplomacy (1880–1912).” *Modern Italy* 26, no. 2 (2021): 202

⁶⁷ Hackl, Andreas. “Good immigrants, permitted outsiders: conditional inclusion and citizenship in comparison.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 6 (2022): 995.

⁶⁸ Conzen, Kathleen Neils. “Immigrants, immigrant neighborhoods, and ethnic identity: Historical issues.” *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 3 (1979): 604.

⁶⁹ Mazzoli 2021, 202

⁷⁰ Asghari Alayi, Nourian, and Aminzadeh Goharrizi 2024, 105

would create positive results for the Italian-American community by providing a niche in which to change the narrative that had been created about them.⁷¹ Polish immigrants had a vastly different experience as Poland in its modern form did not exist at this time, so immigrants were usually classified as German, Austrian, or Russian depending on which of the three partitions they came from. The “Germans” from Poland tended to have the best experience out of the three since they were considered the most “Westernized.”⁷²

The construction of ethnic neighborhoods, especially in these larger cities, helped resolve some of these problems that the immigrant communities were facing after their arrival in the United States. Many new immigrants also had difficulties with integration into American society where they had to learn a new language and cultural norms in order to build a new life.⁷³ Thanks to the construction of these neighborhoods, immigrants were able to build a social sphere in which they could establish schools, businesses, and places of worship in their own language,⁷⁴ some of which included small shrines that were built by hand for the neighborhood’s benefit.⁷⁵ Social networks allowed for greater employment within local businesses, which in turn makes the neighborhood more welcoming to immigrants who arrived later.⁷⁶ This helps the neighborhood grow in relative size in terms of population and territory, but also in the level of economic prosperity.

A study by Conzen (1979) found that ethnic neighborhoods were essential to building these connections that allowed immigrants to maintain their language, culture, and other connections to their home country and in turn slowing down the process of assimilation into American society.⁷⁷ Another study by Bauer et al (2005) found that many immigrants with little English skills are more likely to move to an established ethnic neighborhood in order to better benefit through connections made in their own language⁷⁸ which can improve their ability to settle in the neighborhoods. The importance of the social network created by these connections is also affirmed by Vasey (2016) in that immigrants can use these networks in order to diversify their potential for economic and social activities in the future either within the neighborhood or through assimilation into the host country.⁷⁹ The future implications of these social networks within communities was also studied by Dziekońska (2009), who demonstrates that voluntary association with other immigrants from a similar background can significantly help individuals in the workplace when there are other members of the network

⁷¹ Mazzoli 2021, 203

⁷² Pula, James S. "Remembering Poland, but not Polonia: The Development of Polish American Historical Memory." *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 40, no. 1 (151) (2014): 107-108.

⁷³ Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, Anna D. *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939–1956*, 119. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004.

⁷⁴ Dai, Tianran, and Nathan Schiff. "The structure and growth of ethnic neighborhoods." *Journal of Urban Economics* 137 (2023): 6

⁷⁵ Ruberto, Laura, and Joseph Sciorra. "Italian American stuff: A survey of material culture, migration, and ethnicity." *SOAR: Society of Americanists Review* (2022). 29.

⁷⁶ Asghari Alayi, Nourian, and Aminzadeh Goharrizi 2024, 106

⁷⁷ Conzen 1979, 612.

⁷⁸ Bauer, Thomas, Gil S. Epstein, and Ira N. Gang. "Enclaves, Language, and the Location Choice of Migrants." *Journal of Population Economics* 18 (2005): 660.

⁷⁹ Vasey, Huw. "Trajectories of Migration, Social Networks and Emergent Landscapes of Migrant Work." *Migration Studies* 4, no. 1 (2016): 80.

present because of the feeling of safety and bonding due to the shared background.⁸⁰ Overall, the development of ethnic neighborhoods was essential to building and maintaining connections between people and their home country through their language and social networks that created the conditions for economic prosperity.

1.3 Foundation of Cultural and Political Associations in the United States

In the face of struggles faced by immigrants upon arrival in the United States, a solution was also found in the creation of cultural or political associations that allowed members of the same cultural or national background to discuss common issues in their home countries, provide religious services in their native language, and to preserve aspects of their culture from the influence of Americanization. The major groups of immigrants from both Italy and Poland came from collectivist Roman Catholic agrarian societies with a strong focus on nationalism, which later developed into nationalism for both their home countries and the United States.⁸¹ This was especially important as every immigrant was forced to renounce their former citizenship upon naturalization as a US citizen.⁸² Many of these associations existed since the first arrival of immigrants and some continue to exist today for the same purpose of connecting immigrants and their descendants to their homelands through education, press, diplomacy, and advancement of domestic political goals for the community.

1.3.1 Italy

Italian-Americans had a close but still rocky relationship with their homeland. Easier access to travel within Italy due to encouragement by both governments throughout the early 20th century made it easier to stay updated on current events by relaying information back and forth. The high level of interference by the United States in Italian politics, especially relating to the rise and fall of Mussolini's government, led to more involvement in politics on both sides by the immigrant community. They were often seen as a strong influence in lobbying due to their unity in opinion. As a result, official propaganda from diplomats representing Mussolini⁸³ as well as community leaders encouraged them to naturalize as American citizens in order to fully take advantage of this power, although Mussolini himself discouraged it.⁸⁴ These actions of interfering with US politics caused suspicion and a widening variety of attitudes towards the fascist regime,⁸⁵ which in turn increased action from these associations.

⁸⁰ Dziekońska, Magdalena. "Connections in the Workplace as a Way of Accumulating Social Capital by Polish Immigrants in the USA." In *The United States and the World: From Imitation to Challenge*, Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, (2009): 21.

⁸¹ Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, Anna D. *Introduction*. In *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939–1956*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. 3.

⁸² "History of the Declaration of Intention (1795–1952)," The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/naturalization/history-dec-of-intent>.

⁸³ Luconi, Stefano. "The Italian Americans' Pro-Fascist Lobby in the United States: Continuities and Discontinuities with the Liberal Regime." *Forum Italicum* 57, no. 3 (2023): 774.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 773

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 774

There were many different types of associations, some with membership limited to those of Italian descent,⁸⁶ and others like the Società Dante Alighieri which focused on spreading education and interest in Italian culture.⁸⁷ Associations like these still exist today, but most of the ones that began in the early 20th century had political foundations like the Fascist League of America which was run directly by the *Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'Estero* in Rome and supported by the *prominenti* in the Italian-American community.⁸⁸ It gave direct support to other associations with similar ideologies like the Order of Sons and Daughters of Italy in order to help them fulfill their missions.⁸⁹ This association became directly involved in the passing of a controversial bill in the US Congress that would help Italy reduce its debt from World War I. Many Italian-Americans wrote letters to politicians encouraging, and sometimes threatening, them to vote in favor of the bill in order to help the Italian economy rebound and it ultimately passed in 1926.⁹⁰ The power gained by this lobbying continued to affect US politics and ultimately influenced the dynamic diplomatic relations between the US and Italy.

As the war progressed, many Italian-Americans continued to associate fascism with a sense of national pride, but others considered it a national disgrace. Some counter associations were anti-fascist, but with varying ideologies. One of the most important leaders of the anti-fascist movement in the United States was Count Carlo Sforza, who had been exiled in the United States along with others like Giacomo Matteotti and Alberto Tarchiani in the beginning of the war.⁹¹ Much like the fascism, the anti-fascist movement also spread to the United States through letters and publications from Italy.⁹² Many of these exiles were able to spread ideas through their personal influence as university professors and former politicians, leading to an increase in anti-fascist sentiment to counter the fascist one.⁹³ Count Carlo Sforza published many anti-fascist articles in English, including about his *Italia Libera* movement, encouraging support of a liberal democracy that will make a good international diplomatic ally rather than an enemy.⁹⁴ There was also a small representation of members of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), as some of their leaders were also exiled. To promote strength in numbers, many of these groups syndicated in order to promote the Resistance⁹⁵ through the Anti-Fascist Alliance of North America.⁹⁶ Within the US, they also worked to improve domestic issues like labor rights and social equality,⁹⁷ which helped the movement

⁸⁶ Sons of Italy Columbus Lodge No. 1419. "Membership." *Sons of Italy in Omaha*. Accessed August 10, 2025. <https://sonsofitaly.org/membership/>.

⁸⁷ Società Dante Alighieri. "History of Società Dante Alighieri." *Dante.global*, accessed August 10 2025. <https://www.dante.global/en/la-dante/history>.

⁸⁸ Cannistraro, Philip V. "Luigi Antonini and the Italian anti-Fascist movement in the United States, 1940-1943." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 5, no. 1 (1985): 23.

⁸⁹ Hanighen, Frank C. "Foreign Political Movements in the United States." *Foreign Affairs, New York Times* 16 (1937): 11-12.

⁹⁰ Luconi 2023, 775

⁹¹ Cannistraro 1985, 27.

⁹² King, Amy. "The battle for influence: Commemoration of transnational martyrs in the Italian diaspora of the US under fascism." *Memory Studies* 16, no. 4 (2023): 744.

⁹³ Cannistraro 1985, 23

⁹⁴ Sforza, Carlo. "The International Significance of the Free Italian Movement." *Free World* 4 (1942): 131.

⁹⁵ Salvadori-Paleotti, Massimo. "Patriot Movement in Italy." *Foreign Affairs, New York Times*, 24 (1945): 540.

⁹⁶ Diggins, John P. "The Italo-American Anti-Fascist Opposition." *The Journal of American History* 54, no. 3 (1967): 580.

⁹⁷ King 2023, 743

gain more traction within the Italian-American community, especially as the war shifted in favor of the Allies.⁹⁸

Some of these associations like the Order of Sons and Daughters of Italy and the Società Dante Alighieri still exist in the same way that they did at their initial foundation, but updated to include modern benefits that encourage membership and education of Italian culture for non-Italians. Many associations including The Order of Sons and Daughters of Italy offer scholarships to their young members with Italian descent that help them with university tuition expenses.⁹⁹ The Società Dante Alighieri is one of three organizations that offers Italian language exams, which helps encourage Italian's consideration as a valuable professional skill and helps those who want to live or study in Italy obtain the necessary result through classes.¹⁰⁰ There are also many Sister City Associations, like one between Seattle and Perugia, that serve to promote economic and educational exchange between the US and Italy.¹⁰¹ Associations such as these, in addition to language and study abroad programs at American universities, provide structured education of Italian history, language, and culture that inspires both people with Italian ancestry and others to become fascinated with Italian culture in an accessible way. These also provide a way of maintaining positive diplomatic relations between the US and Italy, both through Italian-Americans and through anyone inspired to learn Italian to study in Italy.

1.3.2 Poland

The Polish-American community, also known as *Polonia* often referred to themselves as the fourth partition of Poland due to their large number and proximity¹⁰² despite internal divisions. The ever-changing political structure of Polish territory had a great impact on the activities of well-known political associations such as the *Komitet Centralny Polski* (Polish Central Committee) which was formed after the January Insurrection in 1863.¹⁰³ It served as the main umbrella association for the Polish-American community¹⁰⁴ and later became the Polish American Congress, New York Downstate division.¹⁰⁵ These others, like the Polish National Alliance (PNA), Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, and the Polish Women's Alliance have branches in cities with a high number of Polish residents like Chicago.¹⁰⁶ Another umbrella association, The Polish American Congress, became directly involved in US politics relating to foreign policy towards Poland starting from the Yalta Conference in 1945, through the Solidarność movement in 1982 that ultimately led to the end of the Communist period in Poland, and continues today to lobby with the US government and

⁹⁸ Cannistraro 1985, 29

⁹⁹ Order Sons and Daughters of Italy in America. "Scholarships." *OSDIA.org*.

<https://www.osdia.org/initiatives/scholarships/>.

¹⁰⁰ Società Dante Alighieri. "PLIDA – Progetto Lingua Italiana Dante Alighieri." *Dante.global*.

<https://plida.dante.global/it>.

¹⁰¹ Seattle-Perugia Sister City Association. "About Sister Cities." *Seattle-Perugia Sister City Association*.

<https://seattle-perugia.org/about/about-sister-cities/>.

¹⁰² Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann 2004, 2.

¹⁰³ Ceranka and Szlajfer 2009, 13

¹⁰⁴ Duker, Abraham G. "Polish Political Émigrés in the United States and the Jews, 1833-1865." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 39, no. 2 (1949): 152.

¹⁰⁵ Polish American Congress, New York Downstate Division. "About Us." *Polish American Congress*.

<https://www.pacdny.org/about-us>.

¹⁰⁶ McLees, Bożena Nowicka, and Katarzyna Dziwirek. "Polish in the USA." Chapter. In *Language Diversity in the USA*, edited by Kim Potowski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 239.

NATO.¹⁰⁷ Its membership includes important community leaders like university professors that help to educate further generations about the importance of Polish issues.¹⁰⁸

The political aspect of these organizations, especially during the 20th century, were focused on campaigning in favor of Polish independence and later in improving the national economy after the devastation from wars. The relations between Poland and the United States fluctuated between positive and negative throughout the 20th century as Poland gained and lost independence to the Soviet Union. During times of positive relations, many associations encouraged the US government to give humanitarian aid to victims of conflicts like the Warsaw Uprising and to work towards Polish independence. President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) played a significant role in the discussions of the Treaty of Versailles with his 14 points policy.¹⁰⁹ The 13th directly favored Polish independence and he was granted honorary Polish citizenship for these efforts on their behalf.¹¹⁰ Other notable events such as the election of St. Pope John Paul II to the papacy in 1973, Poland's accession to NATO in 1997, and to the European Union in 2004 also contributed greatly to positive diplomatic relations.

Negative relations between Poland and the US started after the total occupation of Poland by the Soviet Union in 1945. Although the US preferred to work with the Polish government in exile during the period of partition between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, their relation with the Soviet Union was unstable¹¹¹ This ultimately led to Poland's ascension to the Warsaw Pact instead of NATO¹¹², which combined with anti-communist propaganda in the US and anti-US propaganda from the Soviet Union, made diplomatic relations difficult to maintain.¹¹³ The efforts of Polish American associations helped mitigate these issues, as many emigrants still felt a sense of nostalgic nationalism towards the idea of an independent Poland, which then became pride¹¹⁴ when relations reopened officially after the end of the Communist period. The continuation of education and exposure of the general public to Polish culture is essential to maintaining the current state of these relations, especially considering Poland's strategic location in Central-East Europe and the state of its relations with NATO and the European Union as one of the United States' major allies.

In addition to international issues, these associations also focused on *Polonia's* domestic relations with the United States and in many cities, there was a public celebration of Poland's constitution day on 3 May.¹¹⁵ Unlike Columbus Day, 3 May does not have any other significance as a holiday in the US, only as a day to celebrate within each community. In the present day, there are many festivals celebrating Polish culture, Sister City Associations between Polish and American cities, and education through Polish schools, university

¹⁰⁷ Polish American Congress. "Polish American Congress History." *Pac1944.org*. Accessed August 7, 2025. <https://pac1944.org/polish-american-history/>.

¹⁰⁸ Pienkos, Donald E., and Edward J. Moskal. *For Your Freedom Through Ours: Polish-American Efforts on Poland's Behalf, 1863–1991*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991. 243.

¹⁰⁹ *President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points (1918)*, The U.S. National Archives and Records Division. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-woodrow-wilsons-14-points>.

¹¹⁰ Ceranka and Szlajfer 2009, 27

¹¹¹ Ceranka and Szlajfer 2009, 41

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 59

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 61

¹¹⁴ Pienkos 1991, 241

¹¹⁵ Pienkos 1991, 229

courses,¹¹⁶ or by organizing short educational trips to Poland.¹¹⁷ These events serve both to educate the public about Polish culture and as fundraisers for cultural associations. There are also many Polish Institutes run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs around the world, including New York City, that promote Polish culture and language.¹¹⁸ These Institutes and public displays of Polish culture help to increase interest in it from those outside of the community, but also to remind Polish-Americans to be proud of their heritage.

1.4 The Immigrant Press and Media

One of the main methods of local and national communication to members of cultural associations such as these and wider immigrant communities was through newspapers. These could be written in English, the language of the home country, or a combination of both. As many people who had recently arrived in the United States had trouble learning English, or were not literate at all, these newspapers provided access to relevant information that kept them updated on national or international events involving members of their community. They often included gossip and news about social events such as births, marriages, arrests, and obituaries.¹¹⁹ In some cases they also helped spread propaganda or increased literacy through easier access to print media, especially as information was previously passed orally.¹²⁰ The immigrant press also created an alternate narrative when American newspapers like *The New York Times* published articles that contributed to negative stereotypes about immigrants, including those from Italy and Poland.¹²¹ The demand for these newspapers and publications decreased over time as many descendants of immigrants preferred to read in English,¹²² but archives of these publications provide valuable insight into this time period.

1.4.1 Italy

There were between 150 and 264 Italian newspapers published in the United States¹²³ starting from the late 19th century that were split into two categories. The first were the mainstream *prominenti*, published or funded by the community leaders with the same title and the second were the underground or less available *sovversivi* that provided an outlet for the counterculture in the community.¹²⁴ One of the first of the *prominenti* newspapers, *L'Italia*, was first published in 1868 and the earliest *sovversivo* was *Cronaca Sovversiva* from 1903. These newspapers were published entirely in Italian and focused on sharing political

¹¹⁶ Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Seattle. "Polish Community." *Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Seattle*. <https://polishconsulseattle.com/polish-community/>.

¹¹⁷ Folwarski 2005, 744

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, "Polish Institutes," accessed August 8, 2025, *Gov.pl*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/polish-institutes>.

¹¹⁹ Shea, Jonathan D. *Going Home: A guide to Polish-American family history research*. New Britain, Conn: Language & Lineage Press, 2008. 81.

¹²⁰ Sañudo, Eva Pelayo. *Spatialities in Italian American Women's Literature: Beyond the Mean Streets*. Routledge, 2021.6

¹²¹ Mazzoli 2021, 203

¹²² Zubrzycki, Jerzy. "The role of the foreign-language press in migrant integration." *Population studies* 12, no. 1 (1958): 76.

¹²³ Viola 2023, 5

¹²⁴ Viola, Lorella. "ChroniclItaly and ChroniclItaly 2.0: Digital Heritage to Access Narratives of Migration." *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*. 15, no. 1–2 (2021): 174.

propaganda in favor of either fascism or socialism depending on the publisher.¹²⁵ Others published later from 1926 like *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* also spread fascist propaganda through working with associations like the Orders of Sons and Daughters of Italy,¹²⁶ and continued to act as one of the voices of the community in influencing how they vote¹²⁷ and interact in the wider American society as a marginalized group.¹²⁸ This was especially true for the large number of Italian-Americans that lived in New York City and *L'Italo-Americano*'s publication nation-wide as one of the largest ethnic newspapers in the country.¹²⁹ The Anti-Fascist Alliance of North America had similar tactics in the media, through newspapers like *Il Nuovo Mondo* and by gaining support from national workers' unions, even those without Italian members.¹³⁰

Some newspapers like *The Lantern* from Boston, were published in English and focused on the same political issues affecting the community.¹³¹ It became increasingly valuable to publish newspapers in English as well as Italian since the descendants of immigrants had better access to education and could help Americanize their communities through exposure to English media or by repeating the same ideas as other newspapers in translation.¹³² In addition to politics, newspapers such as these also provide insight into the personal lives of many emigrants through the social context of the time period.¹³³ A study by Viola (2023) found that some of these newspapers encouraged repatriation of emigrants by invoking a sense of social pride. One issue of *L'Italia* is quoted as saying "*L'italiano ritornato in patria, di regola è praticamente male avvezzato. Egli ha perduto le sue buone qualità italiane, guadagnando le cattive americane.*"¹³⁴¹³⁵ This quote also invites self-reflection that reminds the emigrant in question that in living in the United States they have strayed too far from home, and it becomes evident in their habits when trying to fit in again. The combination of education, local information, and political influence given by these newspapers allowed Italian-Americans all over the country to remain connected and updated on events both within the US and in Italy.

In modern times, some of these newspapers continue to publish today in a manner that best fits our digital society. *L'Italo-Americano* is now published in print and online through a website and social media in English and Italian. It still accepts subsidies from the Italian government but now focuses more on promoting Italian culture and sharing updates on political events both in Italy and the United States¹³⁶ with notably neutral language compared to its past. Other region-specific newspapers like *The Delaware Valley Italian-American Herald* appear to target an older, non-political audience, with articles written in a simple

¹²⁵ Viola 2021, 176-177

¹²⁶ Luconi 2023, 774

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 772

¹²⁸ Viola 2023, 10

¹²⁹ Cannistraro 1985, 23

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 26

¹³¹ Diggins 1967, 581

¹³² Stanciu, Cristina. "“I Tell Heem Nothing!”: Education and the Americanization of Italian Immigrants at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century." *Italian American Review* 11, no. 1 (2021): 39.

¹³³ Viola 2023, 3

¹³⁴ "Italians who return home normally have bad habits. They have lost their good Italian qualities and learned the bad American ones"

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 12

¹³⁶ Seattle-based *L'Italo-Americano* Newspaper. "About Us." *L'Italo-Americano*. Accessed August 11, 2025. <https://italoamericano.org/about-us/>.

register, and even offer paid announcements for weddings.¹³⁷ This change in dynamic could show that the priorities of the Italian-American community have changed over time in favor of Americanization and a lesser sense of connection with modern Italy, relying heavily on cohesion with the immediate community rather than the global diaspora.

1.4.2 Poland

Like Italy, the Polish-American community also relied heavily on Polish-language media in order to spread political ideas and help people assimilate into American culture. *Polonia* was politically divided as well, which is evident in their newspapers, either directly funded by cultural and political associations or published independently through private companies. More freedom of the press from private publishers contributed to a wider variety of opinions expressed through these newspapers, creating a more detailed narrative of the time. These newspapers often fell on different sides of the political spectrum, which created some controversy in publishing letters sent to and received from Poland¹³⁸ as they often contained different ideas about current events.¹³⁹ The majority took an anti-socialist view in the face of both Russian occupation of Poland and increasing Anti-Semitism,¹⁴⁰ and went as far as saying that people who hold these opinions are not really Polish.¹⁴¹ In this way, associations could also make an attempt to gatekeep the identity of its supporting community, in order to ensure that ideas of patriotism followed their own vision without interference.¹⁴² In 1920, *Ameryka-Echo* and *Zgoda* were the highest-circulating Polish immigrant newspapers¹⁴³ but *Zgoda* still remains popular today.¹⁴⁴

One of the most prominent independent national Polish newspapers was *Ameryka-Echo*, published from 1889 in Ohio before expanding to the rest of the country through the Paryski Publishing Company that came to be known as the “Polish Hearst.”¹⁴⁵ It was especially known for its “Corner for Everybody” section in which anyone could send in an article for publication so that the newspaper could publish writing in order to best represent the opinions of the community.¹⁴⁶ During Poland’s struggle for independence in the early 20th century, an article called upon the community to donate to the war effort and show loyalty, which was in line with the same opinions being published by mainstream newspapers

¹³⁷ Italian American Herald. “Contact Us.” *Italian American Herald*. Accessed August 12, 2025. <https://italianamericanherald.com/contact-us/>.

¹³⁸ Wojdon, Joanna. “The Impact of US Immigration Laws on the Polish Ethnic Group in the United States.” *Legal Norms and Political Action in Multi-Ethnic Societies: Cohesion in Multi-Ethnic Societies in Europe from c. 1000 to the Present, III*. 2023. 300.

¹³⁹ Walaszek, Adam. “Polish immigrants in the USA and their homeland 1914-1923.” *Društvena istraživanja-Časopis za opća društvena pitanja* 7, no. 33 and 34 (1998): 100.

¹⁴⁰ Bekken, Jon. “Negotiating Class and Ethnicity: The Polish-Language Press in Chicago.” *Polish American Studies* 57, no. 2 (2000): 10.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴² Pula 2014, 109

¹⁴³ Urbanski, Adam. “Immigration Restriction and the Polish American Press: The Response of *Wiadomości Codzienne*, 1921-1924.” *Polish American Studies* (1971): 7.

¹⁴⁴ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library. *Zgoda* (Chicago, Ill.).

¹⁴⁵ Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, Anna D. *The Polish Hearst: Ameryka-Echo and the Public Role of the Immigrant Press*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11

from political associations like the Polish National Alliance.¹⁴⁷ The last issue of *Ameryka-Echo* was published in 1971.¹⁴⁸

The Polish National Alliance published a newspaper called *Zgoda*, or “Harmony,”¹⁴⁹ in Chicago from 1881, which was sent directly by mail to the homes of its subscribers, making access to its contents convenient to many readers.¹⁵⁰ It promoted the Alliance’s mission of preserving Polish culture despite the actions from the partitions that tried to erase it. As the newspaper grew it separated into various editions meant for different audiences. The women’s edition focused more on culture, offering advice to housewives, and some reports on feminist rallies in the city. The men’s edition contained information on politics in the US and in Poland.¹⁵¹ Their secondary newspaper, *Dziennik Związkowy*, was a daily publication focused exclusively on the local politics of defending its views from other publications,¹⁵² but also in supporting labor unions as its employees and other laborers in the community were highly involved members.¹⁵³ As it was released daily, it could be used to quickly mobilize support for causes as it was during the beginning of the war for Polish independence through its Board of Directors and by creating a national-level Department of Independence in order to oversee it.¹⁵⁴

Zgoda is still published today by the Polish National Alliance, with some of the same content as before. Instead of acting solely as a political organization, the Alliance sells life insurance to its members, so many of its advertisements and articles relate to relevant topics¹⁵⁵ in addition to local cultural events. Like *The Delaware Valley Italian-American Herald* it seems to target an older, English-speaking audience that is connected to the Polish community by ancestry. *Dziennik Związkowy* is also still published today with the majority of articles in Polish. Its homepage organizes articles into sections relating to local, national, international, and news specifically from Poland, with less emphasis on cultural events,¹⁵⁶ similarly to its earliest issues. The evolutions of these publications over time show responses to the individual needs of the community, rather than uniform transitions in the same way as single-language newspapers in their modern form. It is possible that there was a much higher need for a majority Polish-language newspaper like *Dziennik Związkowy* as the major political events that led to a higher number of emigrants continued for decades longer than they did in Italy. This reflects the inherent need of a community to have news written by the people that understand them the best, making publications such as these more trustworthy instead of relying on large national newspapers.

¹⁴⁷ Pula, James S. "Our Sacred Duty": Poland’s Diaspora Fights for Polish Independence, 1894–1921." *Studia Historica Gedanensia* 1, no. 12 (2021): 332.

¹⁴⁸ Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann 2015, 12

¹⁴⁹ “PNA *Zgoda* Magazine.” *Polish National Alliance*. Accessed August 13, 2025. <https://pna-znp.org/fraternal-benefits/zgoda-magazine-for-members-of-pna-and-more/>

¹⁵⁰ Bekken 2000, 6

¹⁵¹ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library. *Zgoda (Chicago, Ill.)*. Accessed August 13, 2025. <https://digital.library.illinois.edu/collections/ed85dde0-5874-0136-5073-0050569601ca-9>.

¹⁵² Bekken 2000, 15

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16-17

¹⁵⁴ Pula 2021, 337

¹⁵⁵ “Protecting Your Family’s Future.” *Zgoda* 184, no. 2 (Summer 2025): 11.

¹⁵⁶ “*Strona Główna*” *Dziennik Związkowy* | Polish Daily News, accessed August 13, 2025, <https://www.dziennikzwiazkowy.com/>.

1.5 Connection with Descendants

The political turmoil that emigrants left in their home countries in order to find safety in America created a sense of solidarity with those who had a similar background, despite the differences that they may have had previously. The simultaneous development of diverse cultural identities on both sides created a separation in which the emigrant group's descendants developed a dual identity rather than a singular one. This dual identity comes from belonging to both countries at once - Italy or Poland through exposure from familial proximity and America through education. Thanks to the improvements in the political situations in these countries, positive diplomatic relations with the United States, and access to cultural associations, many descendants of these emigrants are able to increase their personal connection with their ancestors' home country. In the next chapters, I will discuss the impact of this stronger connection on the desire and possibility to seek dual citizenship within those countries.

Chapter 2: Building of a Dual Cultural Identity

Thanks to the United States' reputation as a "melting pot" of cultures, it is increasingly rare to grow up with a singular cultural identity within European-American social circles. The immigrants who lived in ethnic neighborhoods such as "Little Italies" tended to stay close together due to factors like a common language, political trauma, or membership in similar social organizations, but their descendants were less likely to do the same. Access to public education was important to the US government when considering the needs of immigrants as the common curriculum taught them patriotism and how to better integrate into American society.¹⁵⁷ As a result, many immigrant communities founded their own schools where their children could learn both about the United States and their parents' culture and language in addition to the standard subjects. Social interactions in English in culturally-mixed public schools became an equalizer, giving children of diverse backgrounds the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences rather than continuing the conflicts found in the community, which contributed to the American melting pot rather than maintaining separate ethnic communities.¹⁵⁸ In this way there was some cultural exchange that allowed both an "American" and a Polish or Italian personal identity to develop at the same time. In addition to education in childhood, an individual's fundamental cultural identity is developed through many factors like exposure to language, traditions, and shared trauma through marginalization or political turmoil. It is also important to note that if a child grew up with both parents from the same country, they would only have a dual identity, but as many immigrant groups mixed together, they could grow up with a triple cultural identity, depending on the individual's family history.

2.1 Theories of Identity Development

There are many theories that dive into other aspects of the development of cultural identity. One of the earliest, Social Identity Theory, was first developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. In an individual's point of view, they categorize the people they identify with, and how others identify them, through common characteristics as the "in-group" and those outside of it as the "out-group." Within these categorizations, people tend to express an affinity with their in-group and prejudice towards the out-group.¹⁵⁹ These groups can be based on many categories that dictate social interactions, like race, culture, political affiliation, and many others that are determined by voluntary or involuntary association. Despite this, strong favorable sentiments towards the in-group, in this case self-identification between Italian or Polish and the United States, are also determined by "positive distinctiveness" within the in-group, which leads to higher self-esteem in consideration of association with that category, especially if it makes up a large part of their identity.¹⁶⁰ In applying this theory to an immigrant's self-identification with a cultural group, we can determine that the creation of ethnic neighborhoods and political associations when they first arrived in the United States, is partially due to a positive association with others from their home country, leading to the economic and social benefits that come from such an environment as described in Chapter 1.2.

¹⁵⁷ Stanciu 2021, 28

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 30

¹⁵⁹ Trepte, Sabine. "Social identity theory." In *Psychology of entertainment*. Routledge, 2013. 256.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 259-260

Since membership in an in-group becomes fundamental to an individual's identity, Social Identity Theory can also determine political leanings and voting choice. Identification with the characteristics of an in-group creates a sense of pride and self-esteem from membership, which then leads to behavioral conformity in order to protect the group's needs.¹⁶¹ Bornschier et al. (2021) found that when identities that are structurally essential to the individual, most tend to influence voting preferences in favor of those of the in-group with similar identity markers. These include social class, level of education, and residence in similar environments,¹⁶² all of which can be considered when studying residents of ethnic or immigrant neighborhoods that united in the early 20th century to form political associations to support the needs of their community in the larger society, especially considering their "shared fate" in being affected by the outcome of their voting. They also found that fitting into multiple categories of any of these identity markers led to an increase in political polarization,¹⁶³ as could have occurred within the Italian immigrant communities due to an increase in the arrival of educated professors over illiterate farmers during the Fascist period as described in Chapters 1.1.1 and 1.3.1. As at this time period, both pro and anti-fascist political organizations' members included intellectuals that had been exiled or dispatched in addition to average community residents, it can be argued that activists looked past more fundamental in-group categories like occupation and social class when considering the effects of policies enacted by the Fascist government in favor of the "shared fate" of the community or country as a whole.

As the descendants of earlier immigrants became more "Americanized" through their education, the necessity of learning English, and exposure to the "melting pot" through the proximity of other immigrant communities, the definition of an in-group and an out-group changed as these individuals felt that they could be members of multiple cultural in-groups. According to Marcia (1966) an individual's processing of cultural identity comes down to two factors: crisis and commitment. Crisis is defined as the choice between different types of life decisions set by a group and commitment is defined as the amount of devotion expressed by the individual towards one choice or another. A high level of commitment from the individual towards certain ideas set by their environment like mechanisms to cope with stress and pressure for academic performance from parents, etc. determines their "identity-achievement," whereas a low level of commitment gives them "identity-diffusion."¹⁶⁴ In his study, Marcia found that individuals with higher identity-achievement performed better under stressful conditions and maintained a higher amount of self-esteem in the face of challenges.¹⁶⁵ This theory can be applied to the descendants of immigrants through arguing that those with more confidence in their cultural background, which could determine the level of academic pressure given from parents, or even the way that the individuals handle stressful situations, would be much better at coping with the difficulties of life.

Configuration and management of a cultural identity is an important part of the identity-building process that everyone experiences as adolescents, but is especially difficult for first and second-generation immigrants. The development of a dual cultural identity that

¹⁶¹ Bornschier, Simon, Silja Häusermann, Delia Zollinger, and Céline Colombo. "How "us" and "them" relates to voting behavior—social structure, social identities, and electoral choice." *Comparative Political Studies* 54, no. 12 (2021): 2092.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 2113

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2114

¹⁶⁴ Marcia, James E. "Development and validation of ego-identity status." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 3, no. 5 (1966): 551-552.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 557

includes both American and foreign cultural influences creates a unique expression¹⁶⁶ that can be categorized in a similar way to Marcia's theory of identity-achievement. Smith et al. (2025) found that identities commonly develop through hybridization of assimilation into the culture through community involvement in addition to the contextualization of the culture in the wider American society with a positive or negative view. The positive view of the culture includes encouragement of development of the culture through interest groups and specialized services like translation, and negative views include stereotypes, discrimination, or anti-immigrant rhetoric.¹⁶⁷ The results of their study show that the population of first- and second-generation adolescents varied in their connections to their American identity and their home country identity. Those that had joined or had grown up within a community with the same culture felt an equal amount of connection or favored the home country's culture over the American one. The opposite is true as well: second-generation immigrants who grew up disconnected from their cultural roots showed more favor towards an American identity. Positive rhetoric towards immigration as well as towards the community in general also had a profound effect on the adolescents' desire to learn more about their family's culture. When the wider society encourages it through normalizing multiculturalism, many more develop such an identity rather than one in favor of American culture.¹⁶⁸ Positive rhetoric towards immigration and access to institutions such as cultural centers, language schools, and other community resources help to ensure that the legacy of an immigrant community is able to continue, especially within the later generations that tend to become more Americanized. The next sections will discuss the most common ways for the descendants of Italian and Polish immigrants to have access to their culture, and how it helped them develop a dual cultural identity.

2.2 Languages and Traditions through Family and Nostalgia

Arrival in the United States, most often through the port at Ellis Island, New York, represented a monumental shift in the lives of immigrants, starting sometimes with their identity. The border agents at Ellis Island confirmed their ability to enter the United States by comparing their names from the passenger manifests on the ships,¹⁶⁹ but they often changed their names to new "American" ones that were either the English version of their name or something completely different. As many came from countries where alphabets or spelling conventions were different from English, changing their first or last names helped them assimilate better into American society. As a result, it can be difficult to trace ancestry if the previous names aren't known.¹⁷⁰ This information can sometimes be found as an added note on official documents, but for others it is not. In modern times, it is much more difficult to change a legal name at will, but the idea of taking on a simpler nickname or "English name" is still prevalent. This tends to make discrimination in public spaces less likely compared to those with a name that is uncommon to the place in which they live.¹⁷¹ As immigrants from

¹⁶⁶ Smith, Naila A., Barbara Thelamour, Devin Freeman-Robinson, and E. Skye Snider. "US Immigrants' Multicultural Identities: Implications of Immigration Policy, State Immigrant Concentration, and Public Perceptions." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 35, no. 3 (2025): 1.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2-3

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-11

¹⁶⁹ "Connect With Your Heritage - A Note on Names." Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island. Ellis Island Foundation. July 12, 2023. <https://www.statueofliberty.org/discover/passenger-ship-search/>.

¹⁷⁰ Shea 2008, 371.

¹⁷¹ Tuppat, Julia, and Jürgen Gerhards. "Immigrants' first names and perceived discrimination: A contribution to understanding the integration paradox." *European Sociological Review* 37, no. 1 (2021): 131.

Italy and Poland already faced discrimination in the United States, it's possible that the choice of an "American" name that was similar to their own helped them when interacting with people outside of their community. This is especially true for Polish names, as their typical length and spelling is less similar to English¹⁷² compared to common Italian names. Even though all of these aspects factor into an individual's sentiments towards the culture of their relatives, their connection to Italy or Poland through relationship with their family is one of the most important in determining whether someone would decide to pursue dual citizenship.

2.2.1 Language Exposure

Many children of immigrants that grew up in the United States in the early to mid-20th century were bilingual with their parents' language and English from school and American society. In this way, they were able to help their parents and relatives navigate in English, despite cultural differences that sometimes made it difficult. The same cannot always be said for later generations, because as time passed and access to their parents' and grandparents' culture became more difficult, some descendants broke even farther away from it. Some were deliberately not taught the language in order to help them feel more "American." Those that continued to learn often only had a limited understanding of the language, such as that of the level of a child, usually because they were never able to advance by learning it within a formal education program or by attending school in that language as the children who grew up in the home country did. Those who were fortunate enough to attend these schools could become literate in both their parents' language and English. Others only had a partial education through Saturday schools.¹⁷³ Many language learning programs still exist today as evening or Saturday classes as secondary learning to the common American curriculum.

While descendants today tend to learn the standard form of Italian or Polish, some of their immigrant ancestors were illiterate, so they didn't have the opportunity to learn the same standardization. This is especially the case for immigrants from the Mezzogiorno, who spoke Sicilian and dialects as well as those from Poland who arrived during the years of partition when learning Polish was banned, and because of this learned Russian or German instead. In the case of Italian-Americans, they developed their own form of pidgin that became the spoken language of the community.¹⁷⁴ As many of the Southern Italian dialects contained elements such as simplification of grammatical structure, shortening of sounds, and changes in vowel sounds,¹⁷⁵ these also became apparent in the new Italian-American dialect along with American English and standard Italian phrases. Words like *prosciutto* became "brosciutt"¹⁷⁶ and *biscotto* became "bisgott."¹⁷⁷ Others were made up of English words, such as "bada bing," further made famous in Italian-American pop culture references,¹⁷⁸ along

¹⁷² Shea 2008, 318

¹⁷³ Shea 2008, 34

¹⁷⁴ Haller, Hermann W. "Italian speech varieties in the United States and the Italian-American lingua franca." *Italica* 64, no. 3 (1987): 396.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 399-400

¹⁷⁶ Longo, Anthony. *American Italian slang: The definitive cultural glossary*. United States: Anthony Longo, 2018. 35.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 33

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22

with the most famous interjection “fuggedaboutit” (forget about it).¹⁷⁹ Regular use of phrases such as these that are unique to a small community reinforces its legitimacy since the phrases are easily recognizable to outsiders. They also served as a method of introducing Italian phrases to descendants of immigrants who may not have needed to be very fluent in order to communicate with their families.

When the descendants of Italian and Polish immigrants began to rely more on English, Italian and Polish became “heritage languages,” as defined by Seretny and Lipińska (2016). They are defined as languages that arrive in a place by immigration rather than colonization or developed as an indigenous language. They maintain their status as a heritage language when they are regularly used within the social network of a community¹⁸⁰ but instead become a “foreign language” once the community disappears.¹⁸¹ Since there was limited access to schools that immersively taught either of these languages and communities in which to use them realistically, learning them through school or classes sometimes felt forced and led to negative associations with it as opposed to positive associations that came from being part of a community.¹⁸² Through their research, they also found that it was much easier to learn a language during childhood as a heritage language, especially as more difficult aspects of language-learning like grammar become intrinsic knowledge rather than something to be memorized.¹⁸³ On the other hand, adult learners who choose to learn or re-learn the language often find it useful in connecting with their relatives, when conducting business,¹⁸⁴ or when traveling in Italy or Poland, therefore contributing strongly to the individual’s sense of connection and identification with their ancestors’ home country.

2.2.2 Food and Recipes

Another cultural aspect common to all immigrant groups in the United States is recipes that were brought with them and then passed down to descendants, as many ingredients were unavailable or difficult to obtain, these recipes often changed slightly. Italy and Poland have widely varying climates and cuisines that lend themselves to preferences for different staples such as butter or olive oil, but immigrants from both countries found many of the essentials that were needed. Many of her interviewees felt that the flavors of ingredients like tomatoes and bread had a duller taste than those in Europe, and that typical Anglo-Saxon cuisine like meat and potatoes in a single course was strange.¹⁸⁵ While culture shock such as this is common when moving to any new place, food became an important aspect of maintaining the cultural identity. Some of the immigrant-owned publishing companies published cookbooks full of recipes in their own language that helped women navigate the changes in ingredients in order to make familiar recipes or create new ones.¹⁸⁶ Making familiar recipes was one of the few ways in which immigrants could reconnect with

¹⁷⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, “fuhgeddaboutit (int.),” July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2194888933>.

¹⁸⁰ Seretny, Anna, and Ewa Lipińska. "Polish as a heritage language—somewhere in between." *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 42, no. 2 (160 (2016): 180

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 181

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 183

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 192

¹⁸⁴ McLees and Dziwirek 2010, 240.

¹⁸⁵ Tarantino, Giulia. "Dining with the Authors: Food and Cultural Identity in Italian American Literature." *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 60 (2023): 46.

¹⁸⁶ Mętrak-Ruda, Natalia. “Barszcz, Catsup & Curry Powder: Polish American Cuisine in 1917 .” *culture.pl*, June 29, 2021. <https://culture.pl/en/article/barszcz-catsup-curry-powder-polish-american-cuisine-in-1917>.

their homelands and slow down the process of assimilation into American society.¹⁸⁷ The availability of these books also helped standardize the cuisine from each country as it made them unique from each other in their preparation methods and ingredients.¹⁸⁸ The familiarity of the recipes within them contributed to the growing popularity of these foods and the diversification of “American” cuisine.

Some of the most popular recipes came to represent their communities, like the Italian-American “spaghetti and meatballs,” created when meat was suddenly widely available and affordable so it could be combined with the pasta.¹⁸⁹ A later example is pizza, which was first described by the New York Times in 1944. A recipe was published in an article in 1947, helping to bring it to people outside of the Italian-American community. In modern times, New York City is well-known for its pizza.¹⁹⁰ The popularity of these foods led to the rise of food-related businesses such as produce markets, butcher shops, bakeries,¹⁹¹ and restaurants that served Italian cuisine, first according to the chefs’ original recipes, that catered to the local community and became a popular third space in which to make dining out accessible.¹⁹² Restaurants allowed chefs from different regions to make recipes according to their own traditions, with notable differences such as the use of polenta, toppings on pizza, and the consistency of pasta sauce so that customers from the same regions felt that they were eating familiar foods.¹⁹³ As these restaurants became more popular outside of the Italian-American community, they tended to standardize and simplify their recipes so that they would be more palatable to a wider audience. At the same time, the development of canned and boxed food aided in the increase of popularity as ingredients could be changed in order to become shelf-stable. Pasta was dried and boxed instead of fresh, and tomatoes and other vegetables were frozen or sealed in cans to last longer. This made meals like these more accessible since they were easy to purchase and did not require extra kitchen equipment or preparation time. As a result, Americans started to create Italian-inspired foods like Caesar salad¹⁹⁴ and served them in chain restaurants like Olive Garden.¹⁹⁵ Simultaneously, Italian companies like the *Gruppo Ristoratori Italiani* (GRI) invested in truly authentic restaurants and educational programs¹⁹⁶ in order to show Italian cuisine as modern and prestigious rather than only the product of immigrants.

Polish cuisine is also commonly found in the United States, but did not become as popular as Italian food. Many ingredients that are common to Polish dishes like potatoes, butter, cabbage, and beets were also readily available. Certain varieties of mushrooms that were less common could be dried and found in stores, usually owned by Polish families

¹⁸⁷ Tarantino 2023, 45

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 47

¹⁸⁹ Cozzi, Annette. "Now," That's Italian": Food, Culture, and the Gendering of Italian-American Identity." *Italian American Review* 5, no. 2 (2015). 81.

¹⁹⁰ Bulik, Mark. "1944: The Times Discovers Pizza." *The New York Times*, April 13, 2015. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/times-insider/2015/04/13/1944-the-times-discovers-pizza/>.

¹⁹¹ Tarantino 2023, 47

¹⁹² Costantini, Giovanna. "Italian Food in USA: It's Fashion and into the Spotlight." *Tasting Cultures* (2019): 5.

¹⁹³ Luconi, Stefano. "Food and Ethnic Identity in Italian-American Narrative." (2004). 209.

¹⁹⁴ Costantini 2019, 6-7

¹⁹⁵ Nowak, Zachary. "Café au Lait to Latte: Charting the Acquisition of Culinary Capital by Italian Food in the United States." *Italian American Review* 5, no. 2 (2015): 114-115. .

¹⁹⁶ Costantini 2019, 8

within a neighborhood. Some prepared foods such as powdered soups, *pierogi*,¹⁹⁷ *kielbasa*, sour cream, and Polish candy were also available in these stores.¹⁹⁸ Having access to these foods helped families feel closer to their homeland, especially after the influence of new American foods. In many cases, food from both cultures was served in Polish households, with special foods like handmade rather than store-bought *pierogi* served during holidays. These also included bread, pastries, and dyed eggs called *pisanki* in a *Święconka* basket for Easter. Some of these foods also gained popularity outside of the Polish-American community, typically meat products like *kielbasa*, which was imitated by American-owned companies with nation-wide distribution like Hillshire Farms.¹⁹⁹ Many Polish families found that it was much easier to start and run an independent business in the United States compared to Poland,²⁰⁰ and because of the low barrier of entry of ethnic food-related businesses, many became successful.²⁰¹ Many restaurants that served Polish food within the neighborhoods opened too, but were much less common compared to Italian restaurants.²⁰² As a result, Polish cuisine became more associated with home and family, and those who did open restaurants did so in a way that resembled home-cooked meals rather than higher-class experiences in the same way that Italians did.

As food is such an important aspect to both Italian and Polish culture, many of the subsequent generations of those families associated the food that their parents cooked as an important part of their identity. As such, when faced with influences from American culture, many of the second and third generations' perception of this food changed. Access to different flavor profiles from the cuisines of other ethnic groups that were available in America, expanded their palates so they associated Italian and Polish food with boredom rather than excitement.²⁰³ Others associated their family's cooking as nostalgic and stuck in the past rather than futuristic as is the case with the diverse experiences and ingredients available in the United States.²⁰⁴ In some cases, they were associated with the "shame" of being considered as "un-American" and ostracization from peers²⁰⁵ or fear of it.²⁰⁶ This commonly occurred in childhood, in the context of bringing cultural food to school to eat for lunch²⁰⁷ or any other in which the children had not been taught to be respectful of differences. This led to a rejection of the culture and often personal identification with it, especially in the face of prejudice and rejection by the wider society.²⁰⁸

Gunkel (2005) argues that the renegotiation of a cultural identity depends highly on personal perception of material aspects such as food and religious traditions as true

¹⁹⁷ Hauck, Annie. "The food voice: before, during and after." *Food, Culture & Society* 27, no. 5 (2024): 1274-1275.

¹⁹⁸ Brown, Lorraine, and Irena Paszkiewicz. "The role of food in the Polish migrant adjustment journey." *Appetite* 109 (2017): 63.

¹⁹⁹ Hauck 2024, 1271

²⁰⁰ Glinka, Beata. "Strategies of Development of Polish Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the USA." *International business from the Central European perspective* (2014): 103-104.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 101

²⁰² Kruse, Jerome. "Polish and Italian Vernacular Landscapes in Brooklyn." *Polish American Studies* 54, no. 1 (1997): 26.

²⁰³ Hauck 2024, 1274

²⁰⁴ Cozzi 2015, 82

²⁰⁵ Tarantino 2023, 53-54

²⁰⁶ Cozzi 2015, 80

²⁰⁷ Tarantino 2023, 52

²⁰⁸ Luconi (2004), 210

representations of the culture, rather than internalizing the imposition of negative stereotypes and trivialization of important family dynamics. She also argues that although the resulting lack of literature and studies relating to a rejected culture makes it difficult to study and understand for later generations, it is important that we value its importance, both to these communities and to wider American history.²⁰⁹ Hauck (2024)'s coinage of the term "food-voice" reflects her studies of the relationship between traditional foods and acceptance or rejection of a culture. She found that an individual's relationship with the cultural food that they grew up eating and their preferences for it later in life relates to their overall life experiences and how they express their identity.²¹⁰ This idea manifested itself in her interviews with Polish-American families, as members of different generations in each family had different relationships with Polish food. The elder first-generation immigrants put all of their energy into making Polish food exactly to their standards, in this example, making her own *pierogi* as opposed to buying the frozen ones from a store and being excited to use plastic wrap and hot water for *pisanki* eggs rather than drawing designs by hand with wax and onion-skin dye. The younger member of the family only ate Polish food at home, but preferred "spicy" American food and the diversity available through take-out restaurants.²¹¹ While the second generation in this example created a balanced cultural identity between Polish and American in terms of the food that he prefers to consume, there are many other cultural factors at play. The study did not say if the family spoke Polish together or if they had ever traveled to Poland after immigrating. From the descriptions as relayed from the interviews, it can be deduced that food from their cultural background is a significant part of the construction of an individual's identity. Italian and Polish culture each have their own unique traditions that were brought by immigrants to the United States. This uniqueness also can have a profound effect on childhood nostalgia for their descendants, and consequently create pride in that identity in its distinctiveness from others.

2.2.3 Italian Traditions

One of the most common features of an Italian-American home is a garden filled with vegetables and herbs that can be used for cooking. In the early 20th century, when certain produce was not available or not up to the standards of the cooks, some families decided to grow their own gardens in order to provide what was needed. Many of the first immigrants had very little space due to living in urban areas, so they used what little was available to them on rooftops or fire escapes in apartment buildings, or created community gardens. They were especially useful for growing herbs since they require less space, but were also used for vegetables like zucchini and tomatoes.²¹² For these families, planting a garden was not just a way to remind them of home since the plants that were grown came from Italian seeds and the act of gardening itself, but also to survive when it could have otherwise been difficult to obtain food.²¹³ These items could also be cooked and canned²¹⁴ for the winter when it would have been difficult for the plants to grow. As families moved away from the urban immigrant neighborhoods, many began to prefer grass lawns over vegetable gardens as a way to show

²⁰⁹ Gunkel, Ann Hetzel. "Of Polka, Pierogi and Ethnic Identity: Toward a Polish American Cultural Studies." *Polish American Studies* 62, no. 1 (2005): 34-35.

²¹⁰ Hauck 2024, 1266

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1274

²¹² Mazzoli 2021, 201

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 210

²¹⁴ Valisena, Daniele, and Gilberto Mazzoli. "Migrant Ecologies in the Press: Chicago Italians and The Tribune." *JAm It! (Journal of American Studies in Italy)* 3 (2020): 42.

off wealth²¹⁵ since they no longer needed them to survive. Any gardens that they did have would typically be in the backyard where it was less immediately visible,²¹⁶ but was still a common addition to many homes to carry on the tradition of canning vegetables and prepared foods like tomato sauce. Preparing the sauce and putting it in jars was also a common happy memory among Italian-Americans, as it normally took a long time and was a day spent with family. Although there is little literature relating to this topic, memories of gardens were a common topic discussed in the questionnaire intended for Italian-Americans as described in Chapter 5.

Those who lived in a supportive climate also grew fruits like grapes and lemons, which were used to make homemade wine and limoncello. In the early 20th century, it was difficult for the average family to obtain imported wine, so many resorted to making it themselves. This also led to the growth of the wine industry in California, as many immigrants who went there found a business opportunity to produce high-quality wines using their knowledge and techniques from Italy.²¹⁷ In contrast, many amateur hobbyist wine-makers produced it only for personal consumption.²¹⁸ This became useful in the years of Prohibition (1919-1933) where alcohol could only be bought through speakeasies or homemade.²¹⁹ This also helped Italian businesses like restaurants and specialty stores, as they were able to expand their customer base outside of their community.²²⁰ In contrast, limoncello did not see as much growth in popularity in the United States until much later. Some families, especially those from the coastal Mezzogiorno who were familiar with it, brought the same tradition with them. The process of making limoncello is much simpler than making wine so it was easier, but still required a delicate balance of the ingredients to produce a drinkable liquor, especially as it required a high proof alcohol base.²²¹ Each family often had their own recipe,²²² resulting in different flavor profiles, similar to the homemade wine.

2.2.4 Polish Traditions

While agriculture and homemade liquor were also common in the Polish-American community, many well-known cultural practices within the United States come from shared public spaces rather than the home. During the periods of partition, it was less possible to show off Polish culture in public, especially as there were attempts to erase it from all three sides, but especially from the Russian partition²²³ and under influence from the Soviet

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 44

²¹⁶ Krase 1997, 24

²¹⁷ Piñeiro, Manuel Vaquero, and Luciano Maffi. "The Diffusion of Italian Wine in the United States (1861-1914)." *Revista Iberoamericana de Viticultura, Agroindustria y Ruralidad* 5, no. 15 (2018): 179.

²¹⁸ Cozzi 2015, 80-81

²¹⁹ Nowak 2015, 99

²²⁰ Costantini 2019, 6

²²¹ Locatelli, Marcello, Giuseppe Carlucci, Salvatore Genovese, and Francesco Epifano. "Analytical methods and phytochemistry of the typical Italian liquor "Limoncello": A review." *Phytochemicals—A Global Perspective of Their Role in Nutrition and Health*; Venketeshwer, R., Ed (2012): 93.

²²² Prospero, Vincenzo. "Limoncello Recipe." Vincenzo's Plate, August 11, 2025.
<https://www.vincenzosplate.com/limoncello-recipe/>

²²³ Grosfeld, Irena, and Ekaterina Zhuravskaya. "Cultural vs. economic legacies of empires: Evidence from the partition of Poland." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 43, no. 1 (2015): 60.

Union.²²⁴ In the process of nation-building in Poland, it became important for certain aspects to be identified specifically as Polish, and a part of its centuries-long history, rather than of one of the partitions. After emigration to the United States, it became much easier to acknowledge and celebrate their culture in a public setting.²²⁵

Polish national costumes vary by region, but have some characteristics that identify them as “Polish.” Within Poland, a person’s costume could show many details about them including their village, marital status, and social class through the embroidery patterns and silver jewelry.²²⁶ The most well-known of these costumes outside of Poland come from the southern Małopolska (Lesser Poland) region, specifically from Podhale, near the border with Slovakia and from the area surrounding the city of Kraków.²²⁷ Other regions of Poland had their own variations of costumes, some more similar to German, Lithuanian, Russian, or Ukrainian due to their proximity.²²⁸ At their earliest, they were made by hand using wool from their own sheep or locally woven linen fabric, and the embroidered parts of costumes such as bodices or men’s vests were made and kept separately from more customizable parts like pants or a skirt.²²⁹ These were often brought with them to the United States as family heirlooms meant to be passed down to the women of later generations.²³⁰ The style of these costumes changed over time, especially during war, but as different fabrics became more available, they started to take on new elements such as patterns with ribbon rather than embroidery or embroidering the shirt rather than just the bodice.²³¹ Eventually, costumes were left only for special occasions since they were expensive to produce.²³² Modern women’s costumes available in the United States are still just as intricate but tend to be more standardized but still reflect different regions. The majority have a base color of black, red, green or blue but have embroidery and sequins in many colors including gold and silver. Women also wear headscarves. or flower crowns. Skirts also tend to be shorter than the older versions,²³³ which makes them ideal for performing traditional Polish dances.

In the United States, Polish culture is usually associated with the polka style of dance, which was created over time as a hybrid of traditional and modern dancing styles. However, there are still traditional dances such as the *polonaise*, *mazur*, and the *Krakowiak* that are still performed today. The *polonaise* is considered to be an intangible heritage by UNESCO.²³⁴ Many took place as the main event of balls and parties hosted by Polish Cultural associations in cities with large populations. Many children learned and continue to learn these dances through special schools hosted by the associations, which also served the purpose of teaching Polish language, music, and social customs as supplemental to what was learned while living

²²⁴ Trochimczyk, Maja. "The Impact of" Mazowsze" and Śląsk" on Polish Folk Dancing in California." *Polish American Studies* (2006): 5-6.

²²⁵ Zand, Helen Stankiewicz. "Polish Folkways in the United States." *Polish American Studies* (1955): 66.

²²⁶ Hermanowicz-Nowak, Krystyna. "The Costume." *Ethnologia Polona* 35 (2014): 103-104.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 72

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 106

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 102

²³⁰ Zand 1955, 71-72

²³¹ Hermanowicz-Nowak 2014, 109

²³² *Ibid.*, 112

²³³ *Ibid.*, 117

²³⁴ "Polonaise, Traditional Polish Dance ." UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2023. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/polonaise-traditional-polish-dance-01982>.

in the neighborhood.²³⁵ These balls also served as fundraisers for the associations.²³⁶ In modern times, some associations also sponsor traveling professional dance troupes that perform at various events, not just within the Polish community.²³⁷ Polish dancing is still a common hobby for Polish-American youth, and provides a meaningful cultural connection between the inhabitants of an immigrant community and their homeland. The Polish Folk and Dance Ensemble of Chicago was featured on the cover of *Vogue Polska* in October 2018,²³⁸ providing visibility of the Polish-American community both within Poland and on an international scale. This revitalizes the community through affirming its inherent value.

2.3 Italian and Polish Culture through Media

The mid to late 20th century was also known as the “Age of Mass Media” through the prevalence of films, radio shows, and TV shows. Access to this media through home radios and later televisions helped broaden their reach and audience throughout the country.²³⁹ Some of the most well-known programs and movies throughout this time period had main characters that were immigrants but at the time, many were caricatures of stereotypes, usually showing poverty, involvement in organized crime, or domestic violence. This was usually a stark contrast to the positive portrayals of white American characters, reflecting the social norms and typical behavior of the time. Countries outside of the United States were also often portrayed in a stereotypical way, according to the needs of the plot of the movie or TV show. Some of the largest immigrant communities had more representation in films, thereby increasing the prevalence of stereotypes, most notably the Italian-American, Irish-American, and later Jewish refugees after World War II.

One of the earliest examples is Charlie Chaplin’s silent film *The Immigrant* (1917), in which he plays an immigrant from an unnamed European country who arrives in America by ship at Ellis Island. The others on the ship appear to be from various other countries and included women wearing floral headscarves, common in Eastern Europe and a man wearing a tall wool hat, possibly from Türkiye or the Caucasus. The film was inspired by Chaplin’s own experiences as an immigrant and some of the struggles he faced in learning new social customs and finding camaraderie in difficult times.²⁴⁰ Films such as these and others set the stage for future works relating to immigration to America, especially as silent films were easy to understand despite language barriers in other forms of media. As immigration was a topic that many could relate to, it became popular even as descendants grew up since they could be exposed to their family’s culture through the media rather than just their family or neighborhood.

²³⁵ Zand, Helen Stankiewicz. "Polish Institutional Folkways in the United States." *Polish American Studies* (1957): 28.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 30

²³⁷ Jackson, David J. "Pushing Politics: Polka Music and Polonia." *Polish American Studies* 61, no. 2 (2004): 61-86.

²³⁸ Pogoda, Bart. "Polskie Chicago. Kulisy Sesji Okładkowej Październikowego Numeru „Vogue Polska”." *Vogue Polska*, September 27, 2018. <https://www.vogue.pl/a/polskie-chicago-kulisy-sesji-okladkowej-pazdziernikowego-numeru-vogue-polska>.

²³⁹ "Public Relations Through the Ages: A Timeline of Social Movements, Technology Milestones and the Rise of the Profession." The Museum of Public Relations. <https://www.prmuseum.org/pr-timeline>.

²⁴⁰ Vance, Jeffrey. "The Immigrant." United States Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-film-preservation-board/documents/immigrant.pdf>.

2.3.1 Negative Portrayal of Italian Immigrants

As the Italian-American community was so large by this time, there were many movies produced that related to their unique experiences. Some of these films relied heavily on stereotypes such as poverty, involvement in the mafia, or with exaggerated emotional reactions through loud voices and gestures. The continued trope of Italian-Americans through the media was especially harmful as it portrayed them as violent criminals. Although the mafia did exist in the United States at the time these films were being made, only 0.3% of the population was involved in organized crime,²⁴¹ making these movies a gross misrepresentation of the community that sometimes resulted in discrimination and prejudice, which also occurred within many immigrant communities at the time.²⁴² Nevertheless, these movies are a great source of entertainment and led to the production of franchises such as *The Godfather* trilogy (1972, 1974, 1990) and standalone movies such as *The Sicilian* (1987) and *Goodfellas* (1990). All of these movies portray the same negative stereotypes about Italian-Americans as criminals but at the same time show stories of wealth and power that would be unattainable in real life, but are appealing to audiences as fantasies²⁴³ and lead to legitimization of the real mafias that operate in both Italy and the United States.²⁴⁴ Representatives of the Italian-American community have mixed feelings towards movies such as these. The Order of Sons and Daughters of Italy criticizes them for perpetuating harmful stereotypes and a negative view of the community, especially as the real mafia became more active in the decades preceding the release of these movies.²⁴⁵ Due to this, the beginning of the movie includes a disclaimer in which it is explained that it does not represent any particular group.²⁴⁶ Some scholars like Maranzana (2019) argue instead that movies like these, even if they ultimately show Italian-Americans in a negative light, are beneficial to the community because it advances their narratives and improves their representation²⁴⁷ in an increasingly diversifying Hollywood.

As *The Godfather* is one of the most well-known and parodied mafia films, the portrayals of Italian-American characters within it became some of the most prominent. These movies were based on a book series written by Mario Puzo.²⁴⁸ Its plot is centered on the activities of “the Godfather” Vito Corleone (played by Marlon Brando) and his son Michael as they deal with the violence perpetrated by rival mafia families and the difficulties of regaining and maintaining their position above the other families in order to survive. This movie sets the stage for the rest of the trilogy’s success through its famous quotes that became part of Italian-American vernacular and clever plot devices,²⁴⁹ also contributing to the overall popularity of the genre. *The Godfather: Part II* reveals more about Vito

²⁴¹ Sañudo 2021, 1

²⁴² Pitroso, Giulio. "Mafia and the representation of Italians." *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association* 5, no. 1 (2020). 48

²⁴³ Tasso, Anthony F. "An Examination of Mafia Spectatorship Phenomena from a Psychological Perspective." *Italian American Review* 6, no. 1 (2016): 78-79.

²⁴⁴ Pitroso 2020, 49

²⁴⁵ Maranzana, Stefano. "Italian Americans and the Mythology of Crime: “The Godfather Paradox.”" *AATI Online Working Papers* (2019). 1-2.

²⁴⁶ Sañudo 2021, 2

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5

²⁴⁸ Joudeh, Jinan. “The Godfather Novel by Puzo.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 14, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Godfather-novel-by-Puzo>.

²⁴⁹ Bauer, Pat. “The Godfather Film by Coppola [1972].” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 9, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Godfather-film-by-Coppola>.

Corleone's origins, specifically his immigration story from Sicily in 1901 and beginning a life of crime due to poverty upon arrival in New York City. He ultimately immigrates to the United States in order to escape Sicily after the mafia there murders his family and targets him.²⁵⁰ While these scenes have been dramatized for the purpose of the movie, it's possible that many real-life immigrants had a similar family history of leaving Italy in order to escape violence, or otherwise witnessing it there, making Vito Corleone's story somewhat relatable to them and his perceived successes more valuable. This is especially true when considering that the idea of protecting the family and a strong sense of loyalty were common themes, both in the construction of ethnic neighborhoods and legitimate political organizations as well as in the structure of the mafia itself.

The second subplot in *The Godfather: Part II* includes a storyline in which Michael temporarily stays in Sicily as a fugitive in order to escape investigation of murders he committed in New York City. There is a strong juxtaposition of the modernity found in New York and the nostalgic traditions of Sicily. This is shown through the characteristics of Michael's modern and independent girlfriend in New York City and his wife in Sicily who can't drive and is entirely dependent on the men in her family. This is also shown in the background of the scenes, where Sicily is shown as extremely rural with farms and churches in contrast to the urban Little Italy neighborhood.²⁵¹ Getting married to a second woman while already having a girlfriend may not be the most relatable part of this movie, but many immigrants and their descendants who went back to the Mezzogiorno or another impoverished part of Italy may have experienced the same juxtaposition of environments and sentiments towards old traditions that they would not have experienced in the United States, leading to changing sentiments towards their Italian-American identity.

2.3.2 Negative Portrayal of Polish Immigrants

Not many films that were produced in the mid 20th century had characters who were Polish-Americans, but those who did also perpetuated the same stereotypes of violent, poverty-stricken immigrants although there were many actors of Polish descent.²⁵² The narratives surrounding Polish immigrants in the media at this time were usually about immigration after World War II like *Sophie's Choice* (1982) or later during the Communist period as in *Misplaced* (1989). Neither of these films show negative stereotypes, but rather emphasize the image of the poor, sad, and struggling immigrants who recently arrived.

An example of a film made in this era that perpetuates negative stereotypes about Polish immigrants to the United States is *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The movie is based on the play written by Tennessee Williams that was first performed in 1947 and was adapted for film in 1951 after a delay due to Hollywood's standards on sensitive material and the domestic violence perpetrated by Stanley Kowalski, who was also played by Marlon Brando.²⁵³ The play includes references to the idea that Stanley immigrated from Poland, but very little that can be identified as Polish rather than universal experiences of immigrants at

²⁵⁰ Bauer, Pat. "The Godfather: Part II." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 2, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Godfather-Part-II>.

²⁵¹ Amidon, Aurora. "The Godfather and Michael Corleone's Sicilian Dream." Paste Magazine, July 26, 2022. <https://www.pastemagazine.com/movies/the-godfather/the-godfather-michael-sicily-family>.

²⁵² Zurawski, Joseph W. "Out of Focus: The Polish American Image in Film." *Polish American Studies* 70, no. 1 (2013): 5.

²⁵³ "A Streetcar Named Desire." New York State Writers' Institute - State University of New York. <https://www.albany.edu/writers-inst/webpages4/filmnotes/fns04n5.html>.

the time. The character of Stanley is based on a real person of the same name that Tennessee Williams knew and showed a generalization of Eastern European immigrants from his own point of view,²⁵⁴ and was originally supposed to be Mexican but was changed to appeal to a wider audience,²⁵⁵ possibly to a whiter audience as well considering caricature representations of other immigrant characters and of the black population in the American South.²⁵⁶

Stanley Kowalski can be identified as Polish-American by his last name and through his declaration of pride in being American rather than “a Polack.” He is still shown as an outsider through his voice compared to the others. Brando used his own unique voice for the character rather than putting on a Polish accent. The other characters have accents characteristic of New Orleans and the American South that fits its setting there, so he still sounds different from the others.²⁵⁷ There is also polka music that plays in the background when he appears on screen.²⁵⁸ Since Stanley can be identified as both “Polish” and an outsider in the community, his actions in the story can be associated with others in the same position. Stanley can be seen as more middle than lower class as he appears to work in an office rather than as a skilled laborer.²⁵⁹ An analysis of the character by Walker (2022) suggests that he may have been suffering from PTSD as a result of being a soldier in World War II. Common symptoms were impulsive behaviors and high stress which are exhibited by Stanley. The violence towards his wife, Stella Kowalski became a consequence of the lack of mental health resources available at the time.²⁶⁰ The activities of associations like the Polish American Congress at the time were focused on creating a positive image of Poland in order to gain support from the American government and the public after World War II²⁶¹ but movies like these were detrimental to their cause. Consequently, this behavior was conflated with Stanley’s Polish background rather than the external influence of war, which perpetuated the negative stereotypes of Polish immigrants. This character likely was not commonly known enough to completely influence sentiments towards a Polish cultural identity, but still represents one of the few examples of Polish characters in media that existed at the time.

2.3.3 Positive Portrayal of Italy

Although mafia movies still exist, they tend to modernize and soften the old stereotypes while keeping the same ideals and violence that made the originals so popular. Some recent examples include *The Irishman* (2019) and *Mafia Mamma* (2023), both of which take place in the present day and include storylines around ties to a mafia family that directly places the main characters in danger. The cast also often includes many of the same actors as

²⁵⁴ Rea, Robert. "Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire: A Global Perspective." *South: a scholarly journal* 49, no. 2 (2017): 198.

²⁵⁵ Zurawski 2013, 11

²⁵⁶ Rea 2017, 193

²⁵⁷ Walker, Dave. "Local Actors Reveal the Power of 'A Streetcar Named Desire.'" The Historic New Orleans Collection, August 21, 2020. <https://hnoc.org/publishing/first-draft/local-actors-reveal-power-streetcar-named-desire>.

²⁵⁸ Zurawski 2013, 9

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 8

²⁶⁰ Walker, Dave. "Master Sergeant Stanley Kowalski, Tennessee Williams's Portrait in PTSD." The Historic New Orleans Collection, April 28, 2022. <https://hnoc.org/publishing/first-draft/master-sergeant-stanley-kowalski-tennessee-williamss-portrait-ptsd>.

²⁶¹ Zurawski 2013, 23

in mafia movies from the 70s and 80s, such as Robert De Niro and Al Pacino,²⁶² thus becoming a sort of homage to those movies and their legacy. Others take the genre and turn them into satirical comedies like *Mafia Mamma*. In this movie, the American main character returns to Sicily and takes over for her grandfather as the head of a mafia family while not being able to speak Italian and not knowing anything about Italian or Sicilian culture. The movie trivializes the violence perpetuated by the real mafia by having the main character make fun of the dangerous situations her new role places her in and by considering them part of a fun touristic adventure.²⁶³ This movie ultimately shows Italy in a positive, but stereotypical light, as many of the Italian characters close to the American are overly friendly but gesticulate while speaking, and there are many famous landmarks in Rome in the background of the scenes that take place there. Many movies about Americans in Italy show it in this way, but less often in a way that glorifies violence.

In contrast, many films portray Italy as a romantic and utopian destination that prioritizes tradition and slow life over fast-paced American consumerism²⁶⁴ or mafia violence. One of the most well-known of these films is *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003). It is based on a memoir published in 1996 by Frances Mayes, inspired by her own experience buying and renovating a villa in a small town in Tuscany after a divorce changes her life in San Francisco. The themes of self-discovery and a sense of home present both in the memoir and the movie inspired many visitors both to Italy as a whole and specifically to visit her villa in Cortona.²⁶⁵ Over the course of the movie, Frances buys the villa and renovates it, thanks to the help of Polish construction workers (another stereotype), and ultimately builds a new life there despite all of the challenges she faces.²⁶⁶ Many of the scenes in the movie that are set in Tuscany emphasize the rural nature of the countryside by showing vast spaces used for farms or left wild.²⁶⁷ The villa itself fits into the scenery as it had also been left to nature and it was emphasized that it was very old and very few functioning facilities.²⁶⁸ Central Italy has always been a popular destination for tourists and writers because of its beauty and cuisine, but *Under the Tuscan Sun* is one of the most popular success stories of building a home and staying rather than just traveling there.²⁶⁹ This movie was so instrumental in encouraging tourism to less popular areas outside of cities, that there are organized tours that use the name of the movie to advertise, even without a direct connection to its content or even a stop in Cortona.²⁷⁰ These tours can be beneficial as they often stop in towns that are not accessible by train and can encourage those with a personal connection to a remote place to visit. While

²⁶² "The Irishman." IMDb, November 27, 2019.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1302006/?ref=nr_sr_srg_0_tt_8_nm_0_in_0_q_the%2520irishman.

²⁶³ "Mafia Mamma." IMDb, April 14, 2023.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13923456/?ref=nr_sr_srg_0_tt_7_nm_1_in_0_q_mafia%2520mamma.

²⁶⁴ Cope, Suzanne. "The Italian Roots of the Artisanal Food Movement in the United States." *Italian American Review* 5, no. 2 (2015): 127.

²⁶⁵ Mayes, Frances. "Under the Tuscan Sun: What Writing the Book Taught Me about Taking Risks." *The Guardian*, October 18, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/18/under-the-tuscan-sun-20-frances-mayes>.

²⁶⁶ "Under the Tuscan Sun." IMDb. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0328589/plotsummary/>.

²⁶⁷ Beeton, Sue, and Alessio Cavicchi. "Not quite under the Tuscan Sun... the potential of film tourism in the Marche region." *Almatourism-Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development* 6, no. 4 (2015): 147.

²⁶⁸ "Under the Tuscan Sun." IMDb. Accessed September 4, 2025.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0328589/plotsummary/>.

²⁶⁹ Ross, Silvia. "Home and away: Tuscan abodes and Italian Others in contemporary travel writing." *Studies in Travel Writing* 13, no. 1 (2009): 45-60.

²⁷⁰ "Chianti & Tuscany Tours in Italy." Under The Tuscan Sun Tours. Accessed September 4, 2025.

<https://www.underthetuscansun.it/chianti-tuscany-tours/>.

Frances Mayes does not have Italian ancestry and ended up there by chance, she was awarded citizenship in July 2025 due to the impact of *Under the Tuscan Sun* and many of her other works about Italy that contributed to its positive representation.²⁷¹ While this is not a feasible option to obtain citizenship for the majority of immigrants who live in Italy, it could provide inspiration for more people to travel or move there to explore their Tuscan roots, especially for those who cannot speak Italian.

2.3.4 Positive Portrayal of Poland

There are much fewer movies that show Americans traveling to Poland than to Italy, because Poland has not been portrayed as a paradise where pipe dreams can be achieved easily. Instead, it is typically shown in the context of World War II due to the presence of the Auschwitz concentration camp near Kraków and famously in *Schindler's List* (1993).²⁷² Alternatively, in movies where the plot does not mention Poland at all, Polish-American characters are shown similarly to *A Streetcar Named Desire* since there is no real purpose to the character's Polish identity, and the only way they are recognizable as such are through their names. Examples of this include *The Big Lebowski* (1998)²⁷³ and *Gran Torino* (2008) in which the Polish character's name is Walter Kowalski.²⁷⁴ Maranzana (2009)'s argument that any representation is good representation²⁷⁵ can also be applied to these movies because it serves the purpose of educating people about World War II within Polish history as well as creating a sense of self-representation, even if only through a name or a generally recognizable figure.

Movies that take place in Poland during the Communist period like *Treasure* (2024) typically show run-down cities and farmland that had been devastated throughout the wars of the 20th century. This is especially true for this movie as it takes place at the very end of the Communist period. The two main characters, a Polish immigrant father and his American daughter, travel to Warsaw in 1991 to visit the places he grew up. The father represents a few stereotypes of Polish immigrants from after World War II, specifically through his heavy accent, reluctance to share emotions, and delight in Polish vodka, but the movie ends with an improved relationship with his daughter. She does not speak Polish and becomes frustrated that she cannot connect as well to the culture as her father at first, but ultimately comes to appreciate her father's history and its impact on both of their lives.²⁷⁶ This movie is based on a memoir called *Too Many Men* written by Lily Brett, who took a similar trip back to Poland with her immigrant father. The stories that she was told by her grandparents and parents about Poland also inspired her to write this book, as many people have very similar family histories of tragedy during the Holocaust.²⁷⁷ It's not known whether Brett applied for

²⁷¹ Mayes, Frances. "A Citizen of Italy." Proceed to the Route, July 9, 2025.

<https://francesmayes.substack.com/p/a-citizen-of-italy>.

²⁷² "Schindler's List." IMDb, February 4, 1994.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_0_tt_3_nm_5_in_0_q_schi.

²⁷³ "The Big Lebowski." IMDb, March 6, 1998. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118715/>.

²⁷⁴ "Gran Torino." IMDb, January 9, 2009. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1205489/>.

²⁷⁵ Maranzana 2019, 1-2.

²⁷⁶ "Treasure." IMDb, September 12, 2024. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9462944/>.

²⁷⁷ Scholfield-Peters, Tess. "Lily Brett's Trip to Poland with Her Holocaust Survivor Father Inspired Her Novel, *Too Many Men*. 25 Years Later, It's a Film: *Treasure*." *The Conversation*, July 31, 2025. <https://theconversation.com/lily-bretts-trip-to-poland-with-her-holocaust-survivor-father-inspired-her-novel-too-many-men-25-years-later-its-a-film-treasure-230412>.

citizenship in Poland, but it remains that publishing this memoir was a significant way for her to connect her own life with those of her relatives.

Other movies like *A Real Pain* (2024) show modern Poland in a positive light as a vibrant and modern country that has recovered economically after the devastation. Throughout the movie, the two main characters are American cousins with a Polish immigrant grandmother who decide to take a group tour to Poland in order to learn about its history and her life there. Neither of them speak Polish, but still manage to make a personal connection to the country by remembering the stories that their grandmother told them as they go through cities like Warsaw, Lublin, and visit the Majdanek concentration camp.²⁷⁸ At first, the characters are disrespectful of the monuments and their history by posing with finger guns in front of the Warsaw Uprising Memorial, saying “*gracias*” instead of “*dziękuję*” and by smoking joints even though it is illegal for recreational use in Poland.²⁷⁹ The characters ultimately reflect on the hardships that their families faced, and come to the realization that they are experiencing everything through the lens of privileged tourists who ride in first-class trains and stay in hotels in a modern country rather than actually seeing what they would have experienced. The movie also avoids the same stereotypes of Poland as in previous movies, by playing Chopin in the background rather than polka music, but almost none of the speaking characters are Polish, except at the end when they visit their grandmother’s house.²⁸⁰ The director and star, Jesse Eisenberg received Polish citizenship from President Duda after the release of this movie. He affirmed that he applied for the citizenship in order to reconnect with his Polish heritage and was moved by the experiences he had filming the movie there.²⁸¹ While this is also a very unique way to obtain Polish citizenship, it’s possible that Eisenberg used the Presidential Grant application process described in Chapter 3.4.2, using this film as justification through performing a great service for Poland.

²⁷⁸ “A Real Pain.” IMDb, November 15, 2024.

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt21823606/?ref=nm_sr_srg_0_tt_8_nm_0_in_0_q_a%2520real%2520pain.

²⁷⁹ Morris, Meagan. “Is Marijuana Legal in Poland.” Leafwell, May 5, 2025. <https://leafwell.com/blog/is-marijuana-legal-in-poland>.

²⁸⁰ Eisenberg, Jesse, Director. *A Real Pain*. 2024. Topic Studios. <https://www.hulu.com/movie/a-real-pain-62d4dbff-7de6-4940-9aba-d7acd6c96237>.

²⁸¹ Youngs, Ian. “Jesse Eisenberg Gets Polish Citizenship after Directing A Real Pain.” BBC News, March 5, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2kg17p2102o>.

Chapter 3: Political and Legal Reforms

While it is up to each country to determine its policies that dictate if citizenship can be granted through *jus sanguinis* to those who reside abroad, it is often heavily reliant on its global alliances. While some are confident in these partnerships and allow relative freedom in obtaining dual citizenship like the United States,²⁸² others like China, India, and Saudi Arabia don't allow it at all. The main motivations for this are to protect national interests by limiting access to social services given by the state and to maintain security of sensitive government information. Despite good alliances with other nations, some countries decide to limit access to dual citizenship to certain others. For example, Spain limits its dual citizenship only to people from former colonies with Spanish ancestry,²⁸³ leading to a prioritization of those with Spanish ancestry. As the United States is a common destination for many immigrants, they are generally open to dual citizenship with any country, especially as their immigrant population originates from so many countries. The exception to this is when the other does not allow it. While they may not outright ban it, they can discourage dual citizenship with other countries that they have an unstable relationship with, such as Russia.²⁸⁴ As Russia no longer recognizes dual citizenship with the United States,²⁸⁵ despite the high number of diaspora members there, this derecognition can leave some to have to choose between their two identities. In the majority of cases where there can be free travel between countries, members of the diaspora can return if they choose, especially if they were displaced rather than emigrated by choice. The level of difficulty of the application process for *jus sanguinis* applicants can also determine whether an individual decides to undertake it. The cost in hiring specialized lawyers, paying translators and notaries, travel to the nearest Embassy or Consulate, as well as the application costs also represent significant barriers to sending an application. In this way, dual citizenship policies are directly reflective of a state's diplomatic relations with others, and their changes over the 20th century.

3.1 Development of Democracy and European Integration

The latter half of the 20th century was a time of significant political change for both Italy and Poland. In the aftermath of World War II, both had difficulties in rebuilding their national infrastructure and consequently came under the political and economic influence of opposing sides of the Cold War: the United States and the Soviet Union. As a result, both countries had very different timelines in terms of their national development into their current form of democratic republics that are well known for cooperation with the rest of the world. The changes in each of their policies towards dual citizenship by descent show this transition through gradually opening to include more people. In the case of Poland, this also includes acceptance of applications from those with exceptional circumstances so that they can also benefit from the idea. Both Italy and Poland are members of the European Union, giving its citizens access to benefits like free movement and access to social services within the Schengen Zone in addition to protection of human rights through the European Court of

²⁸² "Dual Nationality." U.S. Department of State. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/travel-legal-considerations/Relinquishing-US-Nationality/Dual-Nationality.html>.

²⁸³ "Countries That Don't Allow Dual Citizenship - and Why It Matters." Henley & Partners Holdings Ltd., June 27, 2025. <https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/industry-insights/countries-dont-allow-dual-citizenship-and-why-it-matters>.

²⁸⁴ "U.S.-Russian Dual Nationals." U.S. Mission Russia. <https://ru.usembassy.gov/dual-nationals/>.

²⁸⁵ "Russia Travel Advisory." U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 6, 2025. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/russia-travel-advisory.html>.

Human Rights and the International Criminal Court, neither of which is possible to access with singular American citizenship.²⁸⁶

3.1.1 Italy

After recovery from World War II, aided by the Marshall Plan, Italy entered a “golden age” of economic prosperity along with many others in Western Europe that were also rebuilding after the war.²⁸⁷ The funds offered by the Plan helped Italy rebuild its factories to return to what was an increasingly diversifying industry-based economy. While originally beneficial only to the North, the Plan also eventually led to better industrial development and integration in the South thanks to new policies that focused on less prosperous areas. There is still a significant economic gap between Northern and Southern Italy, but it still worked to close the gap between them through industrialization²⁸⁸ and helped products from the South reach the rest of the continent. Italian products were very profitable in the new wider European market, and they became available throughout the continent thanks to trade liberalization.²⁸⁹ The consequential increase in growth of the GDP, domestic policies in favor of the reinforcement of capitalism, and the stabilization of the Italian lira thanks to participation in the Bretton Woods monetary system²⁹⁰ led Italy to become one of the more prosperous economies in Western Europe and consequently a political powerhouse.

Thanks to this new political influence within the continent, Italy gained a pivotal role as a foundational member of new organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) from 1947²⁹¹ as one of its 6 foundational members along with Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The Treaty of Paris, which outlined the structure and activities of the ECSC, also determined rules for each of its signatories to follow that would protect the free movement of coal and steel products within them. In this way, the treaty maintained the supply of economically necessary materials to build up the industries that required them in order to function properly. The treaty also called for the protection of workers’ rights, ensuring that they were paid fairly and allowed for the right of the workers to move to and live in any of the other six countries.²⁹² This was one of the first examples in which European citizens had the right to live and work in another European country. Agreements such as these were important in diplomatically establishing the intent to support cooperation among allies and to reject the idea of a return to fascism in favor of democracy.²⁹³ During this transition to democracy, many countries including Italy completely restructured their government in order to meet the changing needs of the people and of the country. The current Constitution

²⁸⁶ “Q&A: The International Criminal Court and the United States.” Human Rights Watch, February 8, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/02/qa-international-criminal-court-and-united-states>.

²⁸⁷ Crafts, Nicholas, and Marco Magnani. “The Golden Age and the Second Globalization in Italy.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the Italian Economy Since Unification*, edited by Gianni Toniolo. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Online edition, Oxford Academic, September 5, 2013. 73.

²⁸⁸ Felice, Emanuele, and Giovanni Vecchi. “Italy’s growth and decline, 1861–2011.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 45, no. 4 (2015): 530

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 527-528.

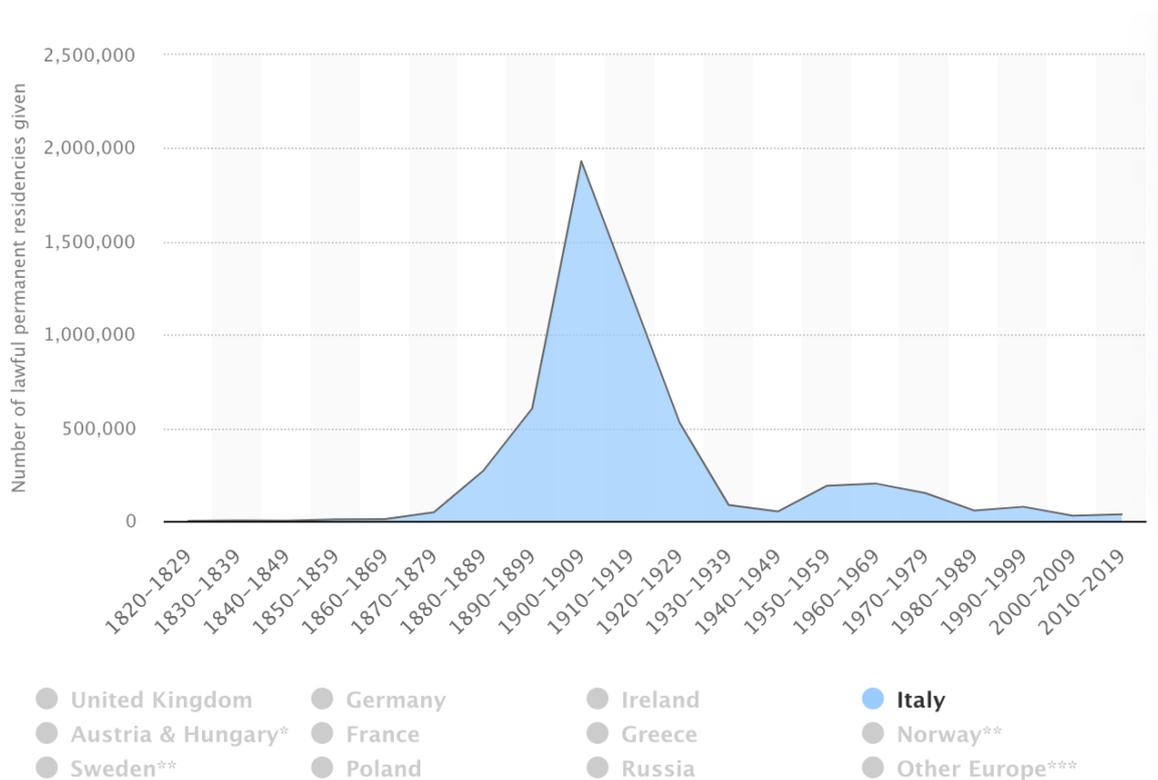
²⁹⁰ Crafts and Magnani 2013, 78-79

²⁹¹ Telò, Mario. “Italy’s interaction with the European project, from the First to the Second Republic: Continuity and change.” *Comparative European Politics* 11, no. 3 (2013): 298.

²⁹² “Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community.” EUR-Lex, December 11, 2017. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legisum%3Axy0022>.

²⁹³ Telò 2013, 305

specifies that anything relating to the Fascist party is no longer allowed,²⁹⁴ showing the government’s intent to impart these values in its future relations. These changes in political dynamics are reflected in the number of emigrants who left Italy in these years. The number of emigrants started to increase in 1860, around the Unification, but peaked at almost 2 million between 1900 and 1909 and sharply declined to only 200,000 between 1960 and 1969. The number has remained low through 2019,²⁹⁵ reflecting the results of positive democratic change through membership of the European Union.



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O’Neill, Aaron. “U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019.” Statista.

Italy has continued to be a strong power within the context of the European Union. As a founding member, its representatives including Alcide de Gasperi and Altiero Spinelli had major roles in the formation of other foundational documents, such as the writing of the Treaty of Rome (1958), and the Common Agricultural Policy included within it.²⁹⁶ The Treaty of Rome, later revised to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, called for the foundation of the European Economic Community and the EURATOM agreement, still between the original six member states. These agreements supplemented the original agreement set by the European Coal and Steel Community, by expanding the single market to products other than coal and steel and by creating a common policy for international trade,

²⁹⁴ Senato della Repubblica. 1948. “La Costituzione.” Disposizioni transitorie e finali, XII. 27 December 1947. <https://www.senato.it/istituzione/la-costituzione/disposizioni-transitorie-e-finali/xii>.

²⁹⁵ O’Neill, Aaron. “U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019.” Statista, July 4, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416529/united-states-permanent-residencies-granted-europe-country-historical/>.

²⁹⁶ “Rappresentanza Permanente d’Italia Presso L’Unione Europea Bruxelles.” Rappresentanza permanente d’Italia presso l’Unione Europea Bruxelles. <https://italiaue.esteri.it/en/litalia-e-lue/>.

including limits on tariffs. In addition to the free movement of goods and services, the treaty also called for the movement of people and capital, which set a precedent for the European Investment Bank and common European citizenship²⁹⁷ as found in later documents. Italians like Guido Carli also had a role in writing the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), later the Treaty of the European Union, and signed by 12 member states. While some of the contents within it needed to be negotiated individually to reach a consensus for some states, including Italy, they ultimately signed the final version.²⁹⁸ One of its main pillars was the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which reaffirmed the countries' desire to promote peace through cooperation on security and protecting the human rights of its citizens.²⁹⁹ This Treaty also included a clause on the idea of a European citizenship, where citizens of member states were granted rights in other member states, diplomatic protections abroad, and the right to vote in local elections of other countries if their residence is registered there.³⁰⁰ In this way, Italy had a significant role in the foundational documents that set a precedent for European citizenship, from which naturalized citizens could eventually benefit as well.

3.1.2 Poland

At the time of the foundation of the ECSC, Poland was still a member of the Eastern bloc along with the Soviet Union and other satellite states and hosted the conference for the signature of the foundational documents of the Warsaw Pact. It was organized in response to the foundation of NATO in 1949³⁰¹ so that the Soviet Union could increase its military power in the region under its influence.³⁰² Poland's Communist government was focused on maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union, both through the Pact and through crackdowns on dissidents in collaboration with the Soviet secret police, which led to the political turmoil and instability as described in Chapter 1.1.2. Emigration from Poland in this period was significantly higher at 225,000 between 1920 and 1929, even as compared to the 19th century. While the number did start to rise between 1870 to 1899, this was a significant statistical jump, which reflects the advent of the Communist period as a true political and economic crisis.³⁰³ The rise of the *Solidarność* (Solidarity) movement in 1980 was instrumental in Poland's transition to a democracy. After its revival in 1985, members of this new party favored the separation of Poland from Soviet influence thanks to reforms inspired by Gorbachev's ideas of *glasnost* and *perestroika* (openness and restructuring). Once officially elected to the Polish government from 1991, they worked towards opening the Polish economy towards the West and the final dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Although there was still some instability left through continued protests during the rest of the 1990s, a democratic compromise was reached, which resulted in the Constitution of 1997,³⁰⁴ that still

²⁹⁷ "Treaty of Rome (EEC)." EUR-Lex. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/treaty-of-rome-eeec.html>.

²⁹⁸ Lucarelli, Sonia. "Italy and the EU: From true love to disenchantment." *J. Common Mkt. Stud.* 53 (2015): 44.

²⁹⁹ "Treaty of Maastricht on European Union." EUR-Lex. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/treaty-of-maastricht-on-european-union.html>.

³⁰⁰ Bux, Udo, and Mariusz Maciejewski. "The Citizens of the Union and Their Rights." European Parliament, May 2025. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/145/the-citizens-of-the-union-and-their-rights>.

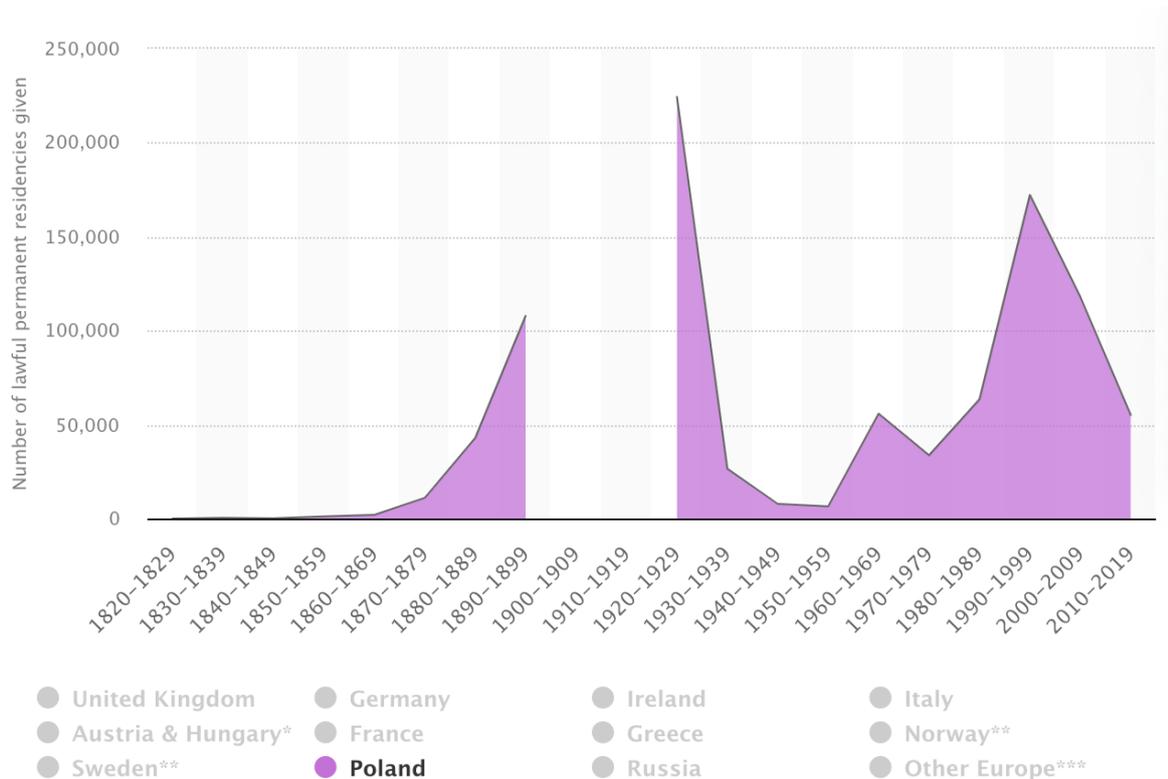
³⁰¹ "What Was the Warsaw Pact?" NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_138294.htm.

³⁰² "Warsaw Pact." Encyclopedia Britannica, August 22, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Warsaw-Pact>.

³⁰³ O'Neill, Aaron. "U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019." Statista, July 4, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416529/united-states-permanent-residencies-granted-europe-country-historical/>.

³⁰⁴ Kondracki, Jerzy A., Norman Davies, and Krzysztof Jasiewicz. "Communist Poland." Encyclopedia Britannica, September 7, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/Communist-Poland>.

remains today. The number of immigrants to the United States in this period is also reflected in its statistics. As visas and passports became more accessible in the 1960s, the number increased to 56,000 and continued to increase before peaking again between 1990 and 1999, likely reflecting the end of the Communist period, the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, and the ratification of the new Constitution.³⁰⁵



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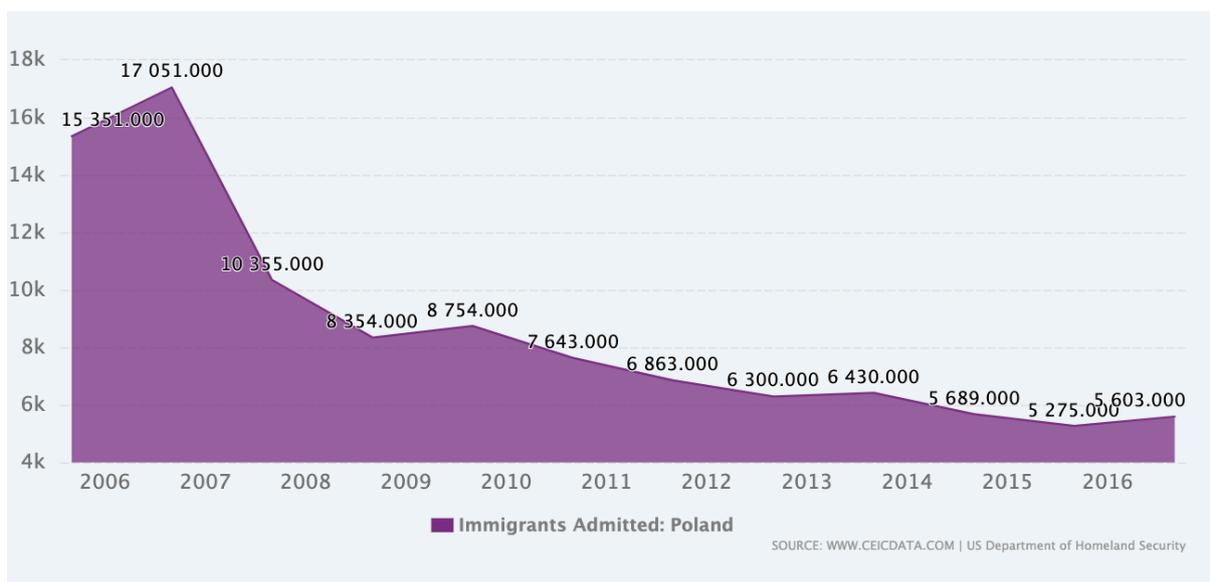
O’Neill, Aaron. “U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019.” Statista.

The newly established Republic of Poland had a very different entry into NATO and the European Union compared to Italy. It became geopolitically strategic for Poland to join NATO as many of its neighbors including unified Germany and other post-Soviet states were also in the process of joining and to take advantage of the protections given by Article 5 of the Charter in case of an attack by Russia. After a long process in which military activities were integrated together, their accession was unanimously approved by the other members, and it was approved by the Polish Sejm by vote, Poland officially joined NATO in 1999.³⁰⁶ The values of collaborative peace and diplomatic cooperation embodied by NATO became extremely important to Poland in order to ease the transition from the interim after the fall of the Communist government, as it offered protection and legitimacy for the new government that would have been much more difficult to obtain alone. As the United States had the most control within the structure of NATO, it also provided a strategic alliance with them in addition to the rest of Europe. Considering that many members of the Polish diaspora live in the United States, it became one of the first steps in reconciling the American *Polonia* with

³⁰⁵ O’Neill, Aaron. “U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019.” Statista, July 4, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416529/united-states-permanent-residencies-granted-europe-country-historical/>.

³⁰⁶ “Poland and NATO .” NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_223582.htm.

their homeland as it transitioned to democracy. This is also evident in the number of immigrants from Poland that arrived in the United States during these years. While the largest number still arrived between 1990 and 1999, the number declined significantly from 172,000 to 118,000 between 2000 and 2009, and finally down to 55,000 between 2010 and 2019. As there were less major political shifts at this time, the country’s stability is reflected as many more felt safe enough to stay. Migration paths to the rest of Europe opened as well after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and many Polish emigrants went to other European countries, possibly due to geographic proximity rather than going as far as the United States.³⁰⁷ This is also reflected in statistics for countries like the Netherlands, which continues to welcome a significant number of immigrants from the former Eastern bloc, especially Ukraine and Poland.³⁰⁸ While Ukraine does not have access to the Schengen Zone, Polish citizens have been able to take advantage of its benefits since 2007,³⁰⁹ likely influencing emigrants’ decisions to decide not to go to the United States, as shown in the graph below.



“United States Immigrants Admitted: Poland.” *CEIC Data*.

Poland officially acceded to the European Union in 2004 along with seven other former Eastern bloc countries, Malta, and Cyprus. Enlargement of the European Union towards the East also had the benefit of expanding the single market through trade, thereby increasing the GDP per capita and net income of Poland together with the other member states. While Poland has not adopted the Euro as its currency, entry into the European Union provided many economic benefits, leading to its place among the rankings of the top economic performers in Europe.³¹⁰ Poland’s agricultural exports were particularly aided by the Common Agricultural Policy and access to the inter-Union market. Accession also provided Polish citizens with the right to live, work, and study in the rest of the member

³⁰⁷ O’Neill, Aaron. “U.S.: Green Cards Granted to Europeans by Country 1820-2019.” Statista, July 4, 2024. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1416529/united-states-permanent-residencies-granted-europe-country-historical/>.

³⁰⁸ “Netherlands Most Immigrants by Nationality 2022.” Statista, March 3, 2025. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/525804/netherlands-largest-groups-of-immigrants-by-nationality/>.

³⁰⁹ “Poland – EU Country Profile.” European Union. Accessed September 10, 2025. <https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-countries/poland-en>.

³¹⁰ “2004 Enlargement: Facts and Figures .” Council of the European Union. Accessed September 8, 2025. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/2004-enlargement-facts-and-figures/>.

states³¹¹ leading to greater access to education and work opportunities that were not attainable under the previous government due to censorship and oppression. Like all member states, Polish citizens participate in the European Union institutions through elected representatives to all branches, membership in Committees, and as part of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union.³¹² Poland's first Presidency was held from July to December 2011 and the second was held from January to July 2025. One of the main goals for both presidency terms was to promote the reinforcement of security measures both militarily on the borders of the Union, especially in the face of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and economically through removing barriers to trade. Poland also supported more economic sanctions for Russia³¹³ due to its continued presence in Ukraine and the threat it poses to other former Eastern bloc countries. It is interesting to note that the logo used by the office of the Polish presidency was designed by Jerzy Janiszewski, who also designed the logo for the *Solidarność* movement and has a similar image of the Polish flag.³¹⁴ This reflects the continued importance of the values of the movement such as economic freedom and democracy in Polish foreign policy, further solidifying its intent to remain a strong partner of the European Union, in addition to its partnership with NATO and the United States.

3.2 Citizenship at the European Union Level

As Italy and Poland are now members of equal standing within the European Union, citizenship from either country allows the holder to access the same benefits as any other member state. As described before, some of the main benefits include the ability to travel, study, and work freely within member states in addition to the social and economic protections offered by the structure of the Union. These protections can also be offered to non-citizen residents in some extraordinary cases, but the most important such as the right to work freely are only accessible through full citizenship, as opposed to the bureaucratic obstacles that are faced without it.

3.2.1 Access to the Schengen Zone and Free Movement

One of the cornerstones of the modern European Union that sets the foundation for its other major programs is the establishment of the Schengen Zone. The original Schengen Agreement was signed by five countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. It included compromises on visa procedures for residents outside the Zone and the removal of internal borders while traveling, in addition to improving inter-governmental cooperation among those states. In 1999 the Agreement entered into force as written into the Treaty of Amsterdam as a formal addition to the laws of the European Union. It eventually expanded to 29 countries, including some like Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and

³¹¹ "21 Years Together: Poland in the European Union." Polish Presidency - Council of the European Union, June 30, 2025. <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/21-years-together-poland-in-the-european-union/>.

³¹² "Poland in the EU ." Government of the Republic of Poland. <https://www.gov.pl/web/eu/poland-in-the-eu>.

³¹³ "End of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU: 'Security, Europe' Firmly Anchored in the EU Agenda." Polish Presidency - Council of the European Union, June 28, 2025. <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/end-of-the-polish-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-eu-security-europe-firmly-anchored-in-the-eu-agenda/>.

³¹⁴ "What Is Behind the Logo and Motto of the Polish Presidency?" Polish Presidency - Council of the European Union, June 28, 2025. <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/what-is-behind-the-logo-and-motto-of-the-polish-presidency/>.

Switzerland, which are not members of the Union. Others like Ireland, only have partial inclusion in the Agreement.³¹⁵ For average citizens of the European Union, residence in a Schengen Zone country has allowed greater freedom in conducting business, traveling, and working, allowing full access to the single market and benefits from the economic partnership.³¹⁶ For citizens of countries outside of the Union, it is also now possible to apply for a “Schengen visa” rather than a single-country visa in order to visit the continent for short periods of time. Due to the diplomatic collaborations between members, any Consulate of a member state can issue one of these visas.³¹⁷ Currently, citizens of certain countries like the United States can receive a 90 day short-term visa on arrival, but from 2026 will need to apply for an ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System) distinction before traveling.³¹⁸ The bureaucratic processes that are necessary to go through in order to get permission to travel to the Schengen Zone, or remain on a long-term basis after a temporary visa can be a major source of motivation to apply for citizenship by descent. In some cases, the process requires many of the same documents,³¹⁹ but often takes years rather than weeks and costs much more, but allows for travel to the Schengen Zone for life. In this way, sending an application for citizenship, only in cases of *jus sanguinis*, can be much more convenient for individuals or families.

3.2.2 European Conventions on Nationality

The idea of an additional European citizenship was controversial as early as 1963 with the Convention on the Reduction of Cases of Multiple Nationality and on Military Obligations in Cases of Multiple Nationality. This convention entered into force in 1968, and its purpose was to reduce the questioning of national loyalties in cases where individuals could have citizenship between multiple countries. Chapter 1 is the most important chapter, and it contains information relating to the renunciation of a former nationality upon receiving a new one through naturalization or “recovery,” likely referring to people displaced as a result of the World Wars, with the same applying to minor children unless they are exempt or one of the countries allows them to keep both nationalities. Chapter 2 discusses military obligations, and it stipulates that if an individual holds two nationalities they are only required to serve in one instead of both.³²⁰ In the case of dual American and Italian nationalities, it’s possible that the individual would only have to serve in the American military through the Selective Service System, as was required of all citizens at the time of ratification due to the Vietnam War,³²¹ and be exempt from the Italian military according to Chapter 2. Poland never signed this document. There is not a lot of information available on this Convention and its application other than what is written in the document, but this

³¹⁵ “History of Schengen.” Migration and Home Affairs. European Commission., March 24, 2025. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/schengen-area/history-schengen_en.

³¹⁶ “Schengen Area.” Migration and Home Affairs. European Commission., May 27, 2025. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/schengen-area_en.

³¹⁷ “Applying for a Schengen Visa.” Migration and Home Affairs. European Commission., May 29, 2024. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/visa-policy/applying-schengen-visa_en.

³¹⁸ “ETIAS in a Nutshell.” European Union. <https://travel-europe.europa.eu/etias/ltr/about-etias/what-is-etias#etias-in-a-nutshell>.

³¹⁹ “Applying for a Schengen Visa.” Migration and Home Affairs. European Commission., May 29, 2024. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/visa-policy/applying-schengen-visa_en.

³²⁰ “Convention on the Reduction of Cases of Multiple Nationality and on Military Obligations in Cases of Multiple Nationality.” Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/168006b659>.

³²¹ “History and Records.” Selective Service System. <https://www.sss.gov/history-and-records/>.

document represents the changing common opinion on post-war nation-building and the implications of the construction and partnerships of the Union.

The Council of Europe reversed its stance on multiple nationalities in 1997 with the signature of the European Convention on Nationality. Both Italy and Poland signed it in 1997 and 1999 respectively but neither ratified it,³²² giving them the ability to create and enforce their own laws on citizenship instead. This is allowed by Chapter 3, as it states that Members can create their own laws for nationality and that they should be accepted by its ratifiers, although the Convention also recommends common rules for its acquisition and loss. One of the most contentious clauses in this Convention is Chapter 2 Article 5, which states:

“The rules of a State Party on nationality shall not contain distinctions or include any practice which amount to discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, race, colour or national or ethnic origin.” and “Each State Party shall be guided by the principle of non-discrimination between its nationals, whether they are nationals by birth or have acquired its nationality subsequently.”³²³

This article has been the principal motivation for signatory states to reject the ratification of this Convention, as they often prefer to discourage immigration and naturalization through refugee status or asylum, even though discrimination on any basis is also discouraged through the Treaty of the European Union.³²⁴ As Italy is one of the first places that asylum seekers land on European soil from Africa and the Middle East, the motivation to prevent more people from arriving led to the passing of laws such as the *Decreto Cutro* (DL 20/2023) that prevent asylum seekers from converting their permits of stay into those allowing employment, an important first step in the process of obtaining citizenship by naturalization. According to Human Rights Watch, laws such as these are not only discriminatory, but also in violation of European Union law and condemned by the European Court of Human Rights.³²⁵ Poland has had a similar experience with a large influx of migrants from its neighbors to the East. The government has also enacted various laws against the acceptance of asylum seekers, most recently through fortifying the border with Belarus in an effort to prevent illegal migration as a threat to national security.³²⁶ These actions have also been criticized by Human Rights Watch as an affront to the values and human rights championed by the European Union. Overall, these national laws that directly promote discrimination against non-citizen residents in the country highlight the discrepancies between the processes between citizenship through residence and naturalization compared to citizenship by *jus sanguinis*.

³²² “Chart of Signatures and Ratifications of Treaty 166.” Council of Europe Treaty Office.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list>.

³²³ “CETS 166 - European Convention on Nationality.” Council of Europe . <https://rm.coe.int/168007f2c8>.

³²⁴ “Treaty of Maastricht on European Union.” EUR-Lex. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/treaty-of-maastricht-on-european-union.html>.

³²⁵ Hassan, Tirana. “World Report 2024: Rights Trends in Italy.” Human Rights Watch, January 11, 2024. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/italy>.

³²⁶ Easton, Adam. “Poland Suspends Migrants’ Right to Apply for Asylum.” BBC News, March 27, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8719dl587zo>.

3.3 Citizenship Laws at the National Level - Italy

After World War II, there was a shift in the definition of an Italian citizen. Many of the residents of former colonies also had a claim to Italian citizenship through Italian parents, as explained in Chapter 1.1.1, and due to the shifts in territorial boundaries such as those in Trieste and the Istrian peninsula.³²⁷ In contrast, the Italian diaspora, both inside and outside of the United States, had different levels of eligibility for citizenship, dependent on many factors including citizenship of their parents or grandparents, the year they emigrated, the year of application, and many other demographic characteristics that make each case in favor of the right of descendants to return to their ancestors' homeland unique.

3.3.1 Citizenship Law Reforms since 1912

The first major Italian law that dealt with the question of citizenship was Legge 555 of 13 June 1912, which entered into force on 1 July 1912 and continued until 15 August 1992. While the majority of the articles in this law pertain to Italian citizenship for those who reside in Italy, or those who were born to parents without Italian citizenship in Italy, Article 7 regards those who live abroad. It states that children of Italian citizens who are born abroad can retain their nationality, except if it is renounced. Conversely, Article 8 states that anyone who voluntarily acquires a foreign nationality and establishes residence abroad forfeits Italian citizenship. In this way, we can deduce that Article 7 applies more to temporary workers, such as those that left around this time with the intent to return home. Many of the individuals who are descendants of emigrants would likely have lost their citizenship according to Article 8 due to the required renunciation of prior citizenships before naturalization in the United States as described in Chapter 1.3. As a result, many people with Italian ancestry who lived in the diaspora were disqualified from receiving Italian citizenship through this law, but those who were born in the second generation or whose father had not naturalized as an American citizen would have been able to request it. Article 6 also notes that citizenship could be conferred upon those who had performed a great service for Italy,³²⁸ setting a precedent for cases such as Frances Mayes', due to her promotion of Italian culture and tourism by publishing *Under the Tuscan Sun* as mentioned in Chapter 2.3.3.

The second law that was passed in Italy about citizenship was Legge 91/1992, which entered into force on . There are many differences between these two laws, most notably the relaxation of many of the stricter clauses that reflect modern social norms and family life. For example, citizenship by descent was now open to both the maternal and paternal sides of a family, rather than just paternal (Article 1) and the removal of the clause that stated that Italian women lost their citizenship upon marriage to a foreigner. The most notable addition is from Article 11, permitting dual citizenship by letting those who naturalized in another country reacquire Italian citizenship without having to give up the new one, which let many people who would have otherwise qualified to keep their citizenship according to Legge 555/1912 send applications. This law also adds more requirements to be fulfilled in order to receive citizenship by descent: a minimum of B1 level of Italian according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Article 9.1) and a lack of a criminal record (Article 10-B). The law also outlines other methods to decrease the waiting time for

³²⁷ Ballinger, Pamela. "Borders of the nation, borders of citizenship: Italian repatriation and the redefinition of national identity after World War II." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 3 (2007): 717-718.

³²⁸ "LEGGE 13 Giugno 1912, n. 555 ." *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*. Accessed September 10, 2025. <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1912/06/30/012U0555/sg>.

the application, which include military service, working as a civil servant, or living in Italy for at least two years (Article 4).³²⁹ Many of these methods would be difficult to access without having a visa as they would require staying within the Schengen Zone for longer than the normally allotted 90 day limit, making them difficult to take advantage of if the individual does not someday want to move to Italy. As applicants for Italian citizenship by *jus sanguinis* can be of any age, marital status, or uninterested in moving to Italy, these requirements help to reduce the number of applicants and allows those who are truly intent on living in Italy with the new citizenship to have a faster processing time.

3.3.2 Current Laws

In May 2025, the Decreto Tajani (Legge 23/2025) entered into force on 27 March 2025 as a replacement for Legge 91/1992. It brought back some of the stricter requirements to obtain citizenship as described in Legge 555/1912, such as the requirement of a parent or grandparent that was born in Italy,³³⁰ rather than up to great-grandparents as allowed by Article 9. This makes the burden of proof in establishing Italian descent through relatives much more difficult, due to the number of generations that have passed since the earliest immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century to 2025, as well as the difficulty in maintaining or finding records of relevant family members. A press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation states that the law was passed to prevent too many people from applying for and receiving citizenship without giving anything back to the state in return, as well as to prevent “commercialization” of services to obtain citizenship or treating it as a status symbol rather than a lifelong commitment. The new law also states that upon award of citizenship, recipients should participate in Italian civic life at least once every 25 years,³³¹ which would call for at least a B1 level of Italian as required by Legge 91/1992 as well as knowledge of current events. While those who sent their applications before 27 March 2025 would still be able to obtain citizenship under the requirements set by the previous law, the new law makes the process much more difficult for many third and fourth-generation Italian-Americans who lost access to the language or any other meaningful connection with modern Italy and not the Italy that their ancestors left.

3.4 Citizenship Laws at the National Level - Poland

The idea of citizenship in Poland is deeply ingrained into the Constitutions that were ratified in the course of periods of Polish independence. The preamble of the current Constitution from 1997, refers to “the Polish Nation” as “all citizens of the Republic” by mentioning current citizens regardless of ethnic identity, ancestors and future generations.

³²⁹ “LEGGE 5 Febbraio 1992, n. 91.” Normattiva. Accessed September 10, 2025. <https://www.normattiva.it/atto/caricaDettaglioAtto?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1992-02-15&atto.codiceRedazionale=092G0162&atto.articolo.numero=0&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo=1&atto.articolo.sottoArticolo1=0&qId=634fda55-6268-4f78-b0b6-37b02928f31d&tabID=0.30568542341129445&title=lbl.dettaglioAtto>

³³⁰ “LEGGE 23 Maggio 2025, n. 74.” Normattiva. Accessed September 10, 2025.

<https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn%3Anir%3Astat%3Alegge%3A2025-05-23%3B74>.

³³¹ “Il Consiglio Dei Ministri Approva Modifiche Alla Legge Sulla Cittadinanza ‘Ius Sanguinis.’” Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, March 28, 2025.

https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/comunicati/2025/03/il-consiglio-dei-ministri-approva-modifiche-alla-legge-sulla-cittadinanza-ius-sanguinis/.

According to Zubrzycki (2001), this can also refer to the *Polonia* diaspora around the world.³³² The legal approach of including a clause such as this in a foundational document like a constitution reflects its importance within that society, as constitutions typically require a more robust process in order to officially recognize amendments. Considering Poland's tumultuous political history between partition, occupation, and independence, citizenship recognizes the legitimacy of the modern state as well as the connections of the diaspora abroad to their homeland.

3.4.1 Citizenship Law Reforms since 1920

The first law enacted in Poland to officially recognize citizenship was the Act of 1920 on Citizenship of the Polish State (Dz.U.1920.7.44). This law was established after the first Polish Republic in 1918 and any relatives used as justification for conventional citizenship by *jus sanguinis* have to meet the criteria set by this Act.³³³ Like Legge 555/1912, this law accounts for the citizenship of those who live in annexed territory such as Cieszyn Silesia, formerly part of Czechoslovakia (Article 2.1) but acknowledges those living in the territory of each of the three former partitions according to their respective laws (Article 2). Members of the diaspora living outside of Polish territory are acknowledged in Articles 3 and 8. Article 3 states that upon return to Poland from abroad can renounce their former citizenship in favor of the Polish one, which goes together with Article 1 which states expressly that dual citizenship is not allowed. In contrast, Article 8 allows for the conferment upon request despite ancestry as long as they meet criteria like ten years of permanent residence in Poland, a lack of a criminal record, financial resources, and knowledge of the Polish language, which allowed members of other ethnic groups who had established their residence there to stay.³³⁴ The clauses in these Articles allowed for the preservation of the current population of the new Polish territory, maintaining its previous ethnic diversity due to the partitions and encouraging many to return to the new Republic, while also giving many the choice to leave Poland and forfeit their citizenship if they chose to.

The next Act relating to Polish citizenship entered into force in 1951, and it related mostly to residents in former Polish territory that had been re-annexed by the Soviet Union and Germany during the course of World War II. Those who had left during the war maintained their right of return (Article 2) but Polish citizens who resided within the territory of the Soviet Union, for example Lithuania, Belarus, or Ukraine lost their rights to it.³³⁵ This created future complications for the modern Polish diaspora in this territory to attempt to regain citizenship, especially as it would be more desirable after joining the European Union. In 1962, another act was passed with minor changes: that women who lost citizenship after marriage to a foreigner could regain it upon request (Article 11)³³⁶ and that it became generally much more difficult for the government to take away citizenship in the future. It is

³³² Zubrzycki, Geneviève. "'We, the Polish Nation': Ethnic and civic visions of nationhood in Post-Communist constitutional debates." *Theory and Society* 30, no. 5 (2001): 635-636.

³³³ Gruda, Natalia. "Understanding Polish Citizenship Law ." Lexmotion, March 12, 2025. <https://lexmotion.eu/blog/polish-citizenship-law/>.

³³⁴ "Ustawa o Obywatelstwie Państwa Polskiego." Wolters Kluwer Lex, May 10, 1946. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/obywatelstwo-panstwa-polskiego-1677231>.

³³⁵ "Ustawa o Obywatelstwie Polskim." Wolters Kluwer Lex, January 19, 1951. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/obywatelstwo-polskie-16781381>.

³³⁶ "Ustawa z Dnia 15 Lutego 1962 R.O. Obywatelstwie Polskim." European Legislation Identifier - Poland. Accessed September 11, 2025. <https://eli.gov.pl/api/acts/DU/1962/49/text.html>.

also important to note that dual citizenship was still not allowed (Article 2).³³⁷ These provisions from this Act affected many people in the diaspora, especially those with ancestors who married someone who was not Polish after emigration, meaning that those with mixed ancestry could apply as long as the other conditions of ancestor's prior citizenship were met.

3.4.2 Conventional and Presidential Application

Currently, citizenship law in Poland is governed by the Act on Polish Citizenship of 2 April 2009 (Dz. U. z 2012 r., poz. 161), ratified after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004.³³⁸ This act lifts the restrictions on applications where citizenship was lost before 1999 (Article 38) and makes it easier for foreign residents in Poland to obtain with a shorter minimum time of legal residence in Poland, still dependent on individual circumstances, and a B1 language level (Article 30). It also explicitly allows dual citizenship (Article 3),³³⁹ now fully allowing members of the diaspora to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by citizenship in a country in the European Union.

There were also changes made to the wording of the descriptions of naturalization methods. In both the Act of 1962 and the Act of 2009 on Polish Citizenship, words like *nadanie* (granting) and *nabycie* (acquisition) are used regularly in regards to future citizens regardless of nationality who reside in Poland. In contrast the 2009 Act uses a third word to describe the conventional method of obtaining citizenship by descent: *przywrócenie* (restoration), implying a more welcoming stance to those with closer Polish ancestry and reserves the use of *nadanie* for citizenship granted upon request to the President of Poland (Chapter 3, Articles 18-29). The process of obtaining citizenship by Presidential Grant is also enshrined in Article 137 of the 1997 Constitution, emphasized by Article 34, which states that citizenship can be conferred by other methods according to the law and Article 52 which states that anyone with proof of Polish origins should be allowed to return to Poland.³⁴⁰ The processes described in these clauses of the Act on Citizenship of 2009 and the 1997 Constitution make it possible for anyone regardless of nationality to send an application for Polish citizenship.³⁴¹ Although the criteria otherwise appears to be the same as a conventional application, there is a much higher burden of proof to show a very strong connection to Poland in order to justify the granting of the citizenship. Despite these barriers, the number of foreigners applying for Polish citizenship continues to rise, with 16,342 successful applications in 2024.³⁴² Although many countries offer exceptional methods of obtaining citizenship besides naturalization or *jus sanguinis*, Poland is one of the few countries that offers it upon request.

³³⁷ Gruda, Natalia. "Understanding Polish Citizenship Law ." Lexmotion, March 12, 2025. <https://lexmotion.eu/blog/polish-citizenship-law/>.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ "Ustawa z Dnia 2 Kwietnia 2009 r. o Obywatelstwie Polskim ." Wolters Kluwer Lex, August 1, 2025. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/obywatelstwo-polskie-17773790>.

³⁴⁰ "Poland 1997 Constitution." Constitute. Accessed September 11, 2025. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Poland_1997.

³⁴¹ "Ustawa z Dnia 2 Kwietnia 2009 r. o Obywatelstwie Polskim ." Wolters Kluwer Lex, August 1, 2025. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/obywatelstwo-polskie-17773790>.

³⁴² Ptak, Alicja. "Record Number of Foreigners Granted Polish Citizenship in 2024." Notes From Poland, August 29, 2025. <https://notesfrompoland.com/2025/08/29/record-number-of-foreigners-granted-polish-citizenship-in-2024/>.

3.4.3 Karta Polaka

As an alternative to full citizenship, Polish law also allows for people with Polish ancestry to request the *Karta Polaka*, or Polish Card, which grants up to ten years of permanent residency. It provides many of the same benefits as citizenship, like access to the Schengen Zone and the ability to freely live and work within it, but only on a temporary basis. The burden of proof is also high, as it requires proof that two great grandparents were Polish rather than only one necessary for citizenship as well as proof of involvement with Polish institutes and language classes for at least three years.³⁴³ The *Karta Polaka* was established by the 2007 Act of the Karta Polaka³⁴⁴ while also being partially derived from Article 52 of the 1997 Constitution, allowing the right to return.³⁴⁵ At its conception, the *Karta* was only offered to citizens of the former Soviet Union, with the intent to encourage people of Polish descent to return to Poland, using the idea of a “moral duty” to return to support the homeland. It also represented a form of reparations for the previous harsh restrictions from the Act of 1951.³⁴⁶ Access to the *Karta* later opened to members of the diaspora outside of the former Soviet Union, provided that the same criteria are met. The other main benefit of the *Karta* is that it shortens the residence time for a citizenship application to a year as compared to 3-10 for a regular application. It also allows people to start to build lives in Poland with legal residency, without needing to apply for temporary visas.³⁴⁷ While individual cases and motivations to apply for dual citizenship vary across demographic lines, the variety of methods of obtaining Polish citizenship by *jus sanguinis* make it a unique case with many possible implications for the future of citizenship laws in Europe.

³⁴³ “Karta Polaka – Informacje Ogólne.” Polska w USA. Accessed September 11, 2025. <https://www.gov.pl/web/usa/karta-polaka-informacje-ogolne>.

³⁴⁴ “Ustawa z Dnia 7 Września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka.” Wolters Kluwer Lex, June 1, 2025. <https://sip.lex.pl/akty-prawne/dzu-dziennik-ustaw/karta-polaka-17381682>.

³⁴⁵ Botha, Jade. “The Karta Polaka: Origins, Requirements, Rights and Implementation.” European University Institute Global Citizenship Observatory, November 13, 2024. <https://globalcit.eu/the-karta-polaka-origins-requirements-rights-and-implementation/>.

³⁴⁶ Caballero Vélez, Diego, and Jan Misiuna. “When exit policies determine entry policies: The case of the Karta Polaka.” *International Migration* 63, no. 1 (2022): 2.

³⁴⁷ Botha 2024

Chapter 4: Methodology

In order to best discover the effects of the development of a dual cultural identity and the legal opportunities on the number of Americans who want to pursue dual citizenship in Italy and Poland, I used a questionnaire with 30 questions, administered through Microsoft Forms. This questionnaire was split into three sections that asked multiple choice, open-ended questions, or asked participants to rank their sentiments about ideas relating to either Italy or Poland or about the idea of obtaining dual citizenship as well as whether or not they would move there. The questionnaires were exactly the same, except when referring to political events e.g. fascist and communist periods in the history of each country and the final cultural question at the end, which will be further explained in Section 4.4.

4.1 Population

The intended audience of this questionnaire was Americans in any location who were interested in pursuing, in the process of pursuing, or had already received dual citizenship by descent with either Italy or Poland according to the legal requirements set by that country. Since each audience was separate, I made two different questionnaires, with one for each country, in order to specifically target the intended group and avoid any confusion by mentioning the other. I started by sending the questionnaire to people I knew who wanted to become dual citizens and asking them to send it to others they know with the same goals. Some sent it to their parents, therefore giving a different generational perspective on the same familial history. I also reached out to as many Italian and Polish cultural centers as I could find in order to have a wider audience with varied geographic origins throughout the United States. Some responded positively and sent it in their e-newsletters to members of the organization, and others did not. I also posted the questionnaire in Facebook groups, specifically targeting American expatriates in Italy or Poland and enthusiasts of Italian and Polish culture in the United States. The majority of respondents by request to cultural associations came from the Polish Association of Ohio and Indiana, with a few from the Polish Home of Seattle when I advertised at one of their events in July. The Italian respondents were mainly other American students at LUISS and their families, or other friends from the United States who had obtained citizenship but had not yet had the opportunity to move to Italy. While it was not possible to protect the privacy of the people I asked directly to answer the survey, I gave the option of anonymity to respondents from cultural associations and Facebook groups. All left their full names and contact information.

At the end of the survey period, there were 20 respondents to the Italy survey and 20 respondents to the Poland survey. Some that came from the latter type of Facebook groups did not meet my criteria for this data and were removed from the analysis of responses. These included people who were not Italian or Polish, but would have liked to pursue dual citizenship with a European country had they been able to. Some respondents were family members of different generations, and these will be considered as case studies separately as well as in the general data analysis with single respondents. The rest of this chapter will discuss the questions I included as part of the survey and their significance in producing data that will ultimately answer my research question of "What are the cultural and socioeconomic patterns of American Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X descendants who pursue dual citizenship with Italy or Poland?"

4.2 Section 1

The first section of the questionnaire asked demographic questions relating to the respondent's ancestry and whether they were familiar with the concept of dual citizenship and whether or not they would be interested in pursuing it. I asked directly whether or not they had direct relatives that came from Italy or Poland as well as the amount of time they had spent in the United States during their childhood. I set the minimum amount at 50% of the years between birth and age 18 to account for Americans that may have grown up in a third country as a result of their parents' military enlistment or any other reason. Those who had spent more than 50% of their childhood outside the United States were removed from consideration. To account for the time spent abroad, there was a question relating to short-term travel to Italy or Poland for the reason of visiting family, a trip with a language school, or vacation. This question would generate data about childhood memories relating to traveling to the relevant country as well as a personal idea about the country that was not given directly by family members. This information is relevant to the correlation between a personal connection to Italy or Poland and the desire to pursue dual citizenship, possibly with the motivation to continue to travel there. The end of the section asked an open-ended question about how the respondent planned to benefit from dual citizenship, which could be answered whether they had already received it or were planning to apply. This question also could give information about the respondents' knowledge about the process and the benefits as described in Chapter 3.

Some of the questions that asked about any cultural influences from their family members other than the United States, Italy, or Poland asked about the role of each culture in the construction of their cultural identity, including a third culture if applicable. This was determined by asking respondents to rank their sentiments on a Likert scale of 1-5, with 0 representing "Not Applicable." The three scales asked, "To what extent do you consider yourself American?" and was repeated for "Italian," "Polish," and "Third Country." Two respondents had more than one cultural identity, but chose the second most significant after Italy and Poland in order to answer the question. The end of this section contained a block that prevented the respondent from responding to the other sections of the questionnaire. As a result, those who would not have been able to accurately respond to the subsequent questions, were prevented from skewing the data upon analysis.

4.3 Section 2

The second section of the questionnaire asked more detailed questions about the respondents' personal experiences growing up in the United States with influence from Italian or Polish culture, through stories from grandparents or other relatives. First, I asked where their relatives came from and what year in order to get an idea of the struggles that they may have faced due to the political situation at the time, both in Italy or Poland and the United States. I added another Likert Scale question, that asked respondents to rate their ancestors' motivations to emigrate to the United States on a scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and Not Applicable. I asked specifically for them to use their family stories as a guide rather than asking those relatives directly if they were still alive. The categories on this scale included common motivations such as better work or educational opportunities, family encouragement, disagreement with current political regimes or leaders, and a natural disaster that affected family finances. I also decided to include "Interest in American culture" and "Access to media that positively portrays the United States" to show why emigrants

would go to the United States rather than another country like Canada. This information could also be shown in the “Family Encouragement” section or in one of the open questions.

Another part of this section of the questionnaire asked respondents to remember the stories about the home country that they had been told, either about why their relatives came to the United States or about any struggles that they had after emigrating. These included questions like “What traditions did they bring with them to America?” and “Do you have any stories about special experiences that they told you about that you would be willing to share?” that invited reflection on formative childhood experiences that created a positive association with that culture. This also gave the opportunity to give information that was unique to each case that may not have been common enough to include in one of the thirty questions or any specific traditions such as those for Christmas or Hanukkah that were not included in Chapters 2.2.3 and 2.2.4. For many, a special story of triumph or overcoming adversity can be a source of pride in its uniqueness, so they can be valuable in terms of the historical information and context that they provide.

4.4 Section 3

The final section of the questionnaire asks about the respondents’ experiences with Italian or Polish culture as adults. It includes questions about how involved they are within the community through associations, whether they continued to learn the language outside of family dynamics, continued traveling there, or otherwise felt strongly that the culture made up a significant part of their identity. I also ask about any family traditions that were brought to the United States that are maintained in adulthood or in some cases taught to their own children. As a follow-up to the previous question about short-term travel in childhood, I ask about short-term travel in adulthood in order to ascertain if their view of the country changed. For those who obtained dual citizenship and moved to Italy or Poland, as was the case with the American expatriate Facebook groups and some students at LUISS, I asked if their current view of the country from living there had changed from their childhood point of view or from before they moved. This question can help determine if any cultural dissonance is present or if it changed after traveling as an adult, especially in cases with significant gaps between trips.

This section of the questionnaire also contained a Likert scale with the same categories as the previous section, but instead asked “To what extent do these factors represent your motivation for seeking dual citizenship in order to move to Italy or Poland?” Each section was left exactly the same for the continuity of the data, however since it is likely that there has not been a war, natural disaster, or mass poverty that would encourage emigration as it did for the ancestors, they may not be as relevant to answering the research question. Instead, it would more likely focus on the categories relating to a positive portrayal in media, educational opportunities, and interest in the culture.

The final part of this section had a third Likert scale that asked more detailed questions about the motivation behind seeking dual citizenship. It asked “To what extent do you agree with the following statements?,” which included “I feel a strong connection to Italian/Polish culture through my relatives,” “I feel that having Italian/Polish citizenship strengthens my claim to my Italian identity,” and “I feel that I will have an overall better quality of life in Italy/Poland,” among others. After this, I ask simple questions relating to aspects of Italian and Polish culture such as their perceived level of the language according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the current

President and Prime Minister of the country, and a culture question. Originally, the question for both was “What is the name of the competition in February in which Italy or Poland selects their Eurovision participants?” The questionnaire was written and sent out in January-April 2025 when there would have been publicity for both *Sanremo - Festival della canzone italiana* and *Wielki Final Polskich Kwalifikacji* as well as the Eurovision Song Contest itself. Questions such as these allowed the respondents to show their general knowledge of the modern form of Italy or Poland and helped to prove whether they truly knew the country in which they hoped to become a citizen.

Chapter 5: Results

The questionnaire that I wrote for this study invites a demographic analysis that answers my research question: “What are the cultural and socioeconomic patterns of American Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X descendants who pursue dual citizenship with Italy or Poland?” As Italy and Poland now allow similar methods of becoming a dual citizen (Chapters 3.3 and 3.4) and their diaspora populations in the United States have had similar experiences in terms of the development of ethnic neighborhoods (Chapter 1.2) and cultural associations around the country (Chapter 1.3), reflecting similar levels of individual connection with the culture due to childhood experiences. Other factors such as learning Italian, a dialect, or Polish in childhood (Chapter 2.2) as well as access to language classes increased the level of connection overall, despite Polish being much harder to learn for native English speakers. According to Rosetta Stone, Italian is one of the easiest as a Category I language and Polish is one of the hardest as a Category III.³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it has still become one of the most popular ways to stay connected with ancestors’ culture, especially as both Italy and Poland require a minimum level of understanding in order to fully participate in that country, should individuals decide to return on a long-term basis. As the scope of this questionnaire is limited, and demographic differences other than generation and makeup of ancestry are not accounted for, the research question requires further research in order to be answered to its fullest.

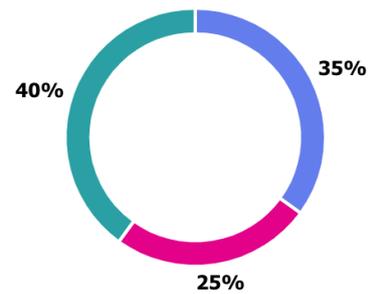
5.1 Italy

5.1.1 Section 1

The demographic data of the respondents to the questionnaire for Italian-Americans reflect an intergenerational desire to be connected with their Italian immigrant ancestors, no matter when they emigrated to the United States or whether they were personally known. The number of representatives from each generation are almost equal but there is still a comparatively higher number, 40%, of respondents from Generation Z compared to the others. This likely occurred because many of the respondents of this questionnaire came from my personal connections rather than from Facebook groups. In a few cases, some Generation X respondents were one of their parents that had the same connection to Italian culture, but provided a different perspective on the stories and experiences of the same immigrant ancestors. Those that came from Facebook groups made up the rest of the Millennial and the Generation X groups. 60% of respondents had 100% Italian ancestry and they mostly came from the Millennial and Generation X groups except for two Generation Z respondents. One of the Generation Z respondents who answered as having mixed ancestry’s mother was 100% Italian.

³⁴⁸ Lee, Madeleine. “The Complete List of Language Difficulty Rankings .” Rosetta Stone, July 31, 2024. <https://blog.rosettastone.com/the-complete-list-of-language-difficulty-rankings/>.

- Generation X (born 1965-1980) 7
- Millennials (born 1981-1996) 5
- Generation Z (born 1997-2012) 8



As the majority of respondents had mixed ancestry, I expected a variety of responses when analyzing the responses to the Likert Scales on sentiments towards a self-described identity as Italian. The average score was 3.9, compared to the average score of 4.8 for self-identification as American. Those with mixed ancestry tended to identify more with Italy than with the third country although one ranked them equally at 4. One respondent ranked her connection with Italy as low as 2 but upon asking for clarification, she said she did not understand the question and would have ranked herself a 3 considering that she had also learned some Italian words growing up. The third countries given by the respondents included Germany, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Argentina.

To what extent do you consider yourself "Italian"?



100% of the applicants answered that they had spent the majority of their childhood in the United States and 85% across generational lines said that they had traveled to Italy on a short-term basis throughout their childhood and adolescence. Out of these responses, most of them described going to Italy for vacations or for family events like weddings and funerals, but 20% of the respondents described spending semesters abroad in Rome and Sorrento and one described her dream to study fashion in Milan someday. This percentage does not account for the additional 15% that currently live in Italy full time. This could be due to the ease of travel to Italy in the latter part of the 20th century that was not possible for Poland due to the Iron Curtain. Three of the respondents currently live full-time in Italy as students with plans to work full-time after graduation.

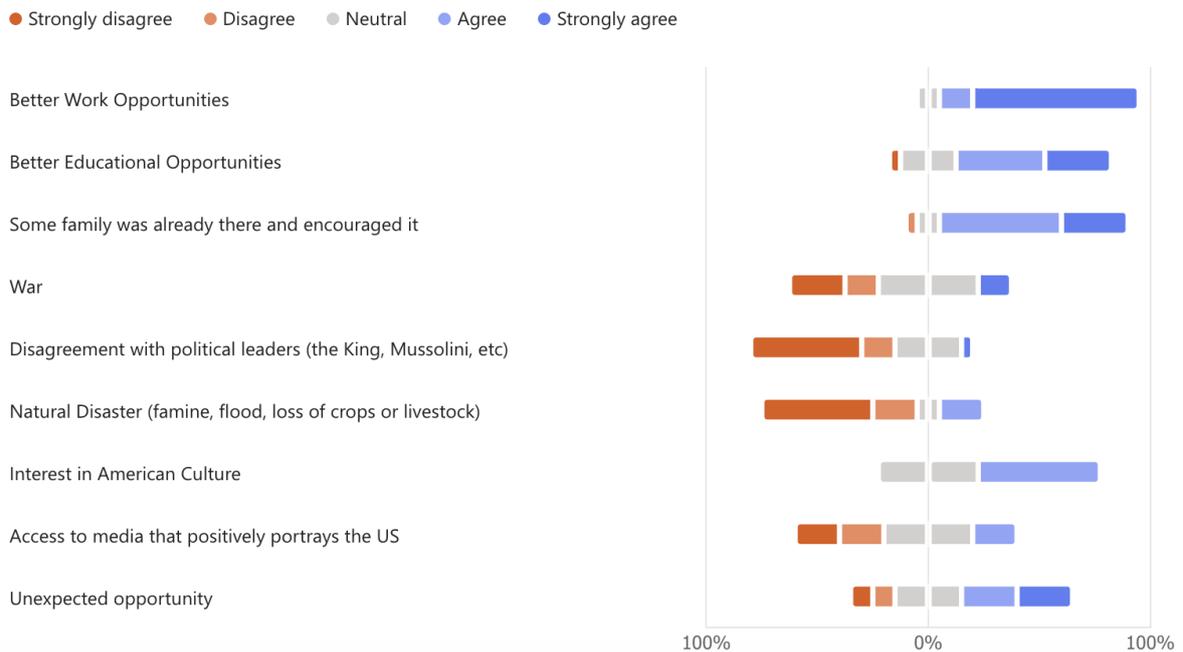
Out of the 85% of respondents who had traveled to Italy before, only one did not want to pursue dual citizenship. One said that he would have liked to but “Unfortunately, my grandfather renounced his citizenship, so I would have to apply through his mother's lineage. This requires that I obtain her birth certificate or baptismal records, which as far as I know were destroyed by a volcanic eruption. Given the complications, I consider it simpler to start life in Italy as a student.” All 15% of the respondents who had never traveled to Italy also did

not want to either. They cited reasons like the time it takes to send an application, the complicated nature of sending an application after the ancestor's renunciation of it, or a full-time job in the United States that does not allow the opportunity for travel that would acquire a visa. 45% of the other respondents who did or would like to pursue dual citizenship in the future responded that they would like to get it in order to maintain the connection that they gained through their families. One wrote "I was motivated by my pride in being Italian and because Italy was the home of my ancestors and I feel a deep connection to Palermo and Pretralia Sottana (in Sicily) where they came from." Emotional answers like these were typically provided by Generation X respondents whereas answers relating to the enjoyment of travel, studying, or working in the future were provided by the Millennial and Generation Z respondents of this questionnaire. They also show the importance of a strong familial connection to Italy as a motivator to apply for dual citizenship. The ability to travel was also important to these respondents but many of those respondents ranked themselves as a 3 or 4 on the scale as compared to the 4 or 5 responses of those with a stronger connection. It's possible that these answers around travel could reflect more of an interest in the benefits of convenience of obtaining citizenship rather than to maintain the connection with family.

5.1.2 Section 2

In describing their family's immigration story from Italy to the United States, they listed a variety of years and reasons for departure, with the majority arriving between 1947 and 1965. Out of those who answer with a specific year, 50% described immigrating as a direct result of World War II and the others described the desire to work or study in the United States in order to escape poverty. 20% of respondents did not list a year at all because they did not know. One stated that her relatives arrived as early as 1907 with the rest of her family following in the 1950s and 60s. She wrote "my great-uncle came to the US in 1907 to make a better life for himself. My grandfather came to the US in 1956 at the request of his brother with 2 kids. My parents came in 1967 at the request of my grandfather after telling them that we would have a better life here." A member of Generation X talked about their grandparents going to the United States to avoid getting drafted in World War I as well as disagreement with the King because of this, leading to the sole response of "Strongly Agree" for the prompt "Disagreement with political leaders (the King, Mussolini, etc.)." None of the respondents explicitly mentioned escape from fascism as motivation to leave Italy, which could require further clarification through additional research. Instead, one mentioned the prevalence of organized crime and the fear of violence and collateral damage to property. One respondent wrote "My mother would tell us how she would pretend she had a doll (she made it out of a rag). My dad often told us about the balcony of his home that was broken during the war, and his mom trying to keep him and his siblings away from the balcony. To this day, the church across the street from my dad's childhood home is still in ruins." The other rankings on this Likert Scale reflect interest in work, education at American universities, family presence in the United States, and unexpected opportunities as motivation for emigrating as affirmed by open-ended responses.

To what extent do these factors represent their motivations for immigrating to the US?



The impactful family traditions as indicated by respondents include many of the same ones that were described in Chapter 2.2, with 100% responding with Italian food. One described them in detail: “*Anelletti al forno, Pasta Con Le Sarde, Pasta al nero di seppia*, pasta with anchioves, *Ragu* (with sausage, braciola, meatballs, pig skin), *arancini, pannelli*, stuffed artichokes and so much more. *Pastiera Di Grano* (Easter), and *Struffoli* (Christmas).” Others described holiday traditions like *La Festa delle Sette Pesci*” and 15% of respondents celebrated the arrival of *La Befana*, with one’s grandmother crocheting small stockings for all of her grandchildren to put in their shoes to hold the gifts. Three respondents described eating homemade salami and sausages with their relatives. Two were sisters whose father learned how to do it while working in a sausage factory in the United States and the other from a grandfather who worked in an *alimentari* shop. Another described a grandfather who made homemade limoncello, but “Nonna made him stop.” “40% described their relatives that had a vegetable garden that the family used to grow tomatoes for sauce as well as raising chickens or rabbits for meat and eggs. Catholic traditions were also prevalent in these answers. One described a grandmother who was “very proud that she had a blessing certificate from every pope since Paul VI. [The respondent] ordered one for her for the jubilee with Pope Leo since she was so excited to watch the conclave and events of the Jubilee on TV.” Another grandmother from Naples was so devoted to San Gennaro that she named the respondent’s uncle Gennaro. The responses to this questionnaire show the prevalence of food, not only in maintaining familial connections, but also in keeping significant traditions of the culture in order to teach their descendants about their lives in Italy inspired a greater interest in Italian culture, but not necessarily the pursuit of dual citizenship.

5.1.3 Section 3

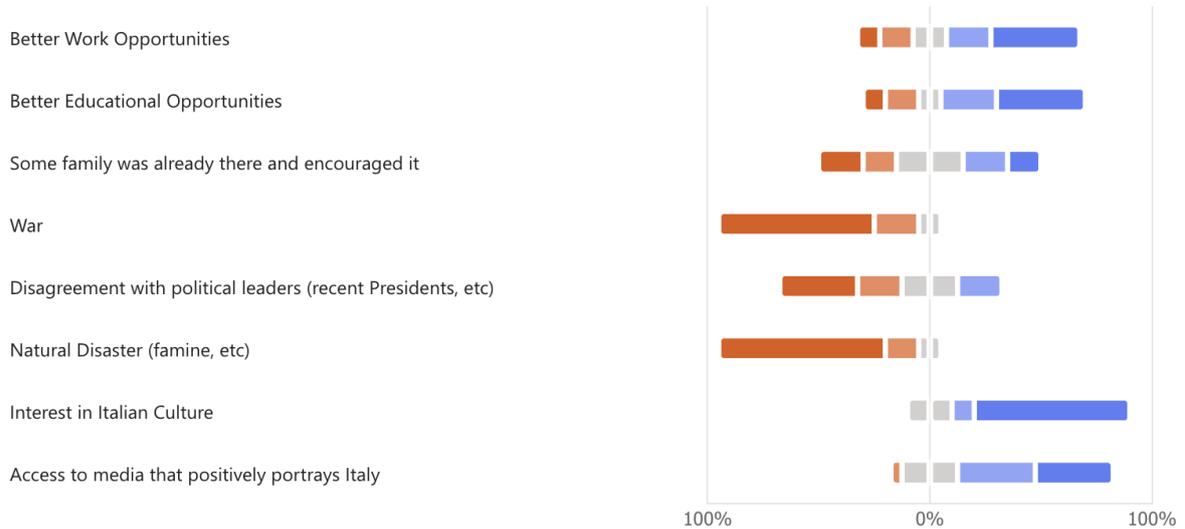
When asked about maintaining these traditions in adulthood, again 100% responded entirely or partially with an answer relating to food or cooking. One continues to cook with her grandmother, stating “I still like to make pasta and cookies with my grandma. She is

happy to have someone in the family who wants to learn how to make it rather than just eating it.” Another said, “I usually bake pastiera napoletana for Easter and I tried once to make sfogliatelle like [my grandma and aunts] did but they didn't come out right.” Others describe eating at their families' Christmas and Easter dinners, as well as leaving gifts as *La Befana* rather than receiving them. Not many became fluent in Italian until later in life, thanks to Italian TV shows like *L'Amica Geniale* and movies like *C'è Ancora Domani* which were set at the time that their ancestors would have lived in Italy and reflected some of the same conditions during and after World War II. The grandmother of one told a story of remembering that her mother went to vote for the first time in the same election in 1946 but was too young to remember any other details. These respondents tended to report a higher level of Italian, often B1-B2, gained through Duolingo and Instagram in addition to practicing with their relatives. Some of the respondents that had traveled to Italy or currently live there felt confident in their abilities when leaving the United States but upon arrival found that they were not as fluent as expected. They also tended to describe Italy as better than from their ancestors' point of view and were generally enthusiastic about the idea of traveling more or living there someday. None of the respondents mentioned exposure to the Italian-American dialect but this could likely be due to the geographic origins of the respondents. When they were asked about it in a follow-up interview, they said that they knew the words from American movies and TV shows but did not feel that the use of those words represented true Italian culture. Here we can also see that in this group of respondents, there is not as much of a connection between Italian culture and the desire to pursue dual citizenship.

In the Likert Scale that asks about their motivations to apply for dual citizenship, the results reflect similar observations as the open-ended questions. The highest number of “Strongly Agree” responses came from the “Interest in Italian Culture” prompt. Other strong positives include “Better Work” and “Better Educational Opportunities” as well as “Access to media that positively portrays Italian culture.” This could possibly reflect that interest in dual citizenship leads to more interest in Italian culture rather than occurring as a result of it. The strong negatives included immigration to escape war or a natural disaster, but one person answered negatively for “Access to media that positively portrays Italian culture.” When asked about this response, he responded by saying that he meant to choose “Neutral.”

To what extent do these factors represent your motivation for seeking dual citizenship in order to move to Italy?

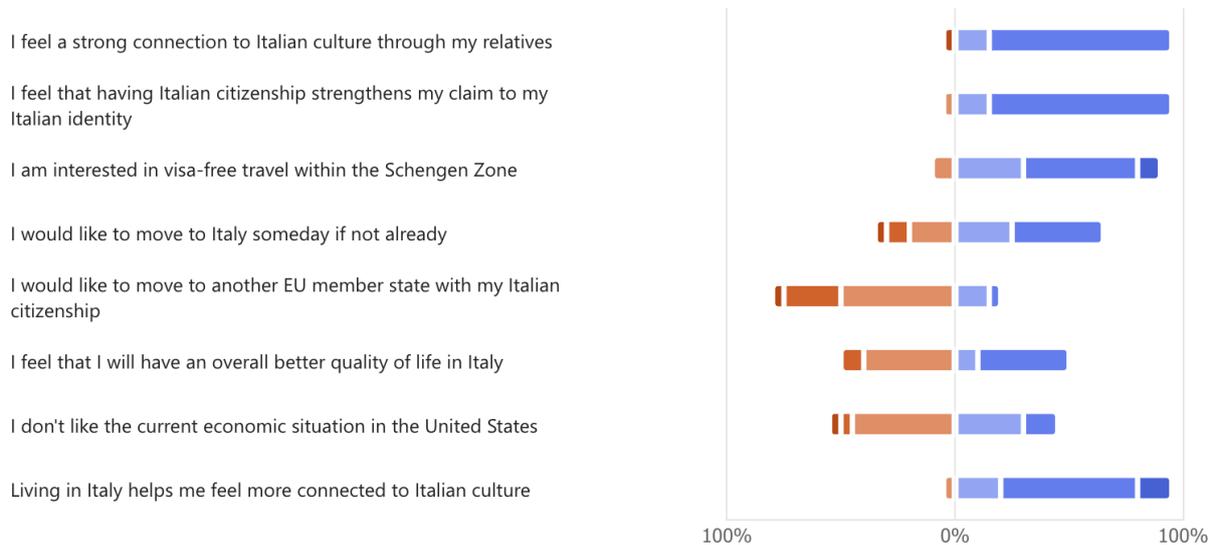
● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree



Similar responses can also be found in the second Likert scale, which asked respondents to express agreement or disagreement with more statements relating to the correlation between interest in the culture and the decision to apply for dual citizenship or move to Italy. As expected, there were many strong positive statements relating to the importance of their ancestors' in the respondents' self-identity as Italian. 95% of respondents agreed that having Italian citizenship strengthens their ties to Italian culture. One mentioned "I always hear about how Americans with a European cultural background get made fun of for not actually being from that country so having citizenship would help." This is also supported by the 80% of respondents who indicated that they would not be interested in moving to another Schengen country with their Italian citizenship, which could suggest either a lack of interest in other countries in Europe, or a strong enough sense of cultural pride to only want to move to Italy.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree ● N/A



In the final part of this questionnaire, I asked two culture questions: “Who are the current President and Prime Minister of Italy?” and “What is the name of the music competition that takes place every February to select the Eurovision participants?” In the responses to the first question, I counted both full names and only last names as correct. 60% of respondents gave both names correctly. 15% gave one name, including one who wrote “Giorgio Meloni” for Prime Minister. The final 25% responded with “I don’t know.” They also had a self-reported A1 level of Italian and were mixed along generational lines. These same respondents also responded with “I don’t know” for the second question. All of the respondents that only gave one name answered the second question correctly, possibly reflecting the information that is reflected in the Italian media that they consume or through Italian accounts on social media as these respondents had a slightly higher level of Italian between A2 and B1. The same person who wrote “Giorgio Meloni” wrote that the name of the contest was called the “Santino Festival,” possibly due to a typo, autocorrect, or a misunderstanding of the name when spoken aloud. Other than those who wrote “I don’t know,” most of the respondents answered correctly, either with “Sanremo” or a version of “Festival di Sanremo.” These answers could reflect the prevalence of Italian popular culture in the Italian-American community as opposed to Italian national news where the names of prominent politicians would be regularly mentioned. From the results of this questionnaire, it seems that there can be a correlation between an individual’s high sense of connection to Italian culture and their desire to pursue dual citizenship but other factors like language ability and knowledge of modern Italy other than its food would need to be researched more in order to prove a true correlation.

5.2 Poland

5.2.1 Section 1

The respondents to this questionnaire for Polish-Americans tended to be similar to the respondents to the Italian questionnaire in terms of connection to their ancestors’ culture,

however the generational makeup of respondents is different. As many more respondents to this survey came from Facebook groups, the majority were from Generation X (45%) and Millennials (40%) with only 15% of respondents coming from Generation Z.



Only 40% of these applicants had Polish ancestry on both the maternal and paternal sides of their family and they tended to rate their sentiments as identifying as more Polish than American at a 4 or 5. Those with multiple sources of ancestry - mostly German, British, and Irish with some outliers like Lebanon, rated themselves as feeling more connected to Polish culture than the third country, but more American than either, similarly to the survey for Italian-Americans. There are also more rankings of 2 and 3 compared to the Italian questionnaire. The graph below shows the average responses for all 20 respondents.

To what extent do you consider yourself "Polish"?

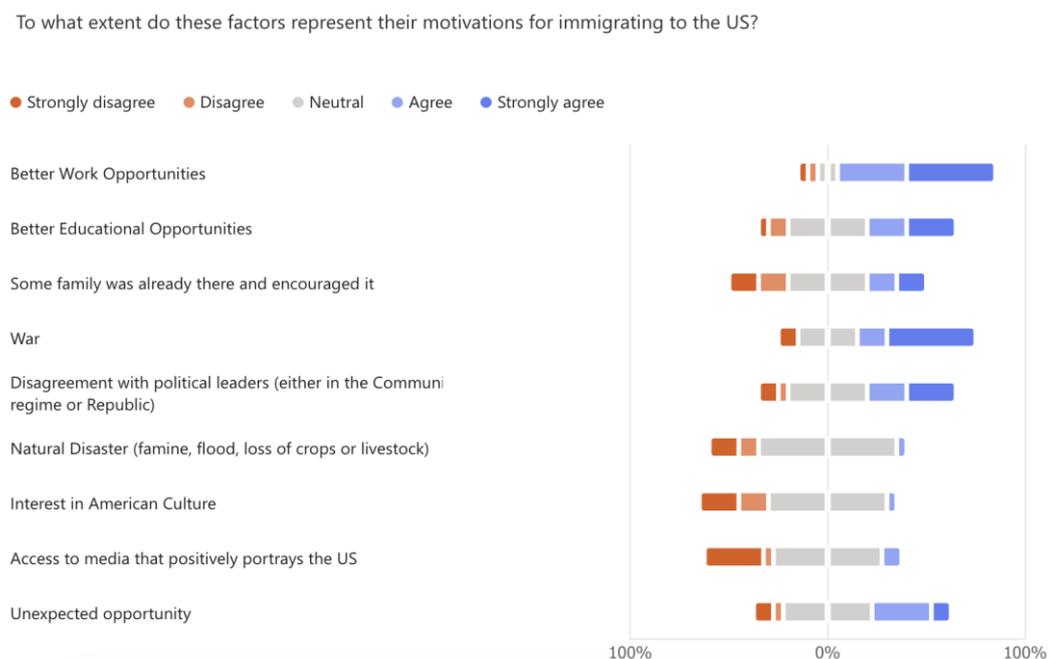


60% of respondents have already or plan to travel to Poland and out of these 20% visited at least once. Two respondents travel to Poland annually and one of them owns an apartment in Warsaw, self-identified only as “Wojciech.” Out of these respondents, all except one have already received dual citizenship and enjoy traveling there regularly to visit extended family, work, or to move outside of the United States for retirement. Wojciech wrote “I obtained dual citizenship so I would not be limited to the length of stay, and I wanted to feel like this too is my home as opposed to a tourist.” They also described inheritance of “potato fields, “a dream to one day own a farm or business, and the travel benefits as motivation to apply. Others described the importance of their family legacy in connecting with Poland. They responded by saying “I want to honor my grandfather and provide a legacy for my children to also experience the land of our ancestors” and “I feel an obligation to my ancestors who wanted nothing more than to be citizens of an independent Poland and were robbed of that by the war and Communism.” These powerful statements show a high correlation for these respondents between a strong personal connection to Poland and the desire to pursue dual citizenship as a manifestation of that connection. Like traveling to Italy, traveling to Poland as often as some of these respondents did would also have required significant financial resources in order to pay for the associated costs. As Poland

was farther away and a less touristic destination, it's likely that it would have been even more difficult to get there due to the cost of additional transportation to get to or through the border if needed.

5.2.2 Section 2

When asked to describe their family's origin story from Poland, 75% of respondents said that their relatives arrived in the United States before World War II, either for work opportunities or to escape political persecution as dissidents or to avoid conscription into the Russian military. Two described an escape from the pogroms that were common in the Russian partition and others described harsh working conditions in coal mines and refugee and concentration camps. The other 25% of respondents' parents came from Poland during or after the Communist period, ranging between 1985 and 1993. The latter group of emigrants also mostly left Poland due to political reasons, but one was described as having won the green card lottery in order to get the chance to move to the United States and another wanted to escape the fallout from the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. Due to the hardships that they faced there, the ancestors that the respondents knew personally did not always like to talk about it with them, especially if they were young. Others gave limited details about their lives there, but still felt that it was important that the stories were told. One grandfather told a story about his fear of crossing into Communist Poland from Germany in the 1960s but ultimately did not go because he was afraid that he would not be allowed to leave. The Likert Scale from this section also illustrates these results. The majority of responses reflect that some of the respondents' main motivations to immigrate to the United States include to search for better work and educational opportunities, as well as to escape from war or political persecution.



Like within the Italian-American community, passing down traditions from Poland, as well as Roman Catholic or Jewish traditions were encouraged by all of the respondents' ancestors. For this question, they were invited to list some of the traditions they experienced in their childhood. 90% responded generally with "food," "recipes," or described specific

foods such as *krupnik*, *barszcz biały*, *pierogi*, *kielbasa*, “*Świeconka* eggs”³⁴⁹ and holiday cookies as the most notable Polish foods from their childhood. 40% wrote about a tradition other than food. Most mentioned accordion music, lullabies, membership in a Polish dance troupe, as well as their grandmothers’ traditional costumes and jewelry. Some also described specific family traditions, by saying “we celebrate the first birthday with the one-year-old choosing a shot glass, coin, or rosary.” This tradition is called *Roczek*, and each item represents different personality traits that the child could show in the future.³⁵⁰ There was no notable difference in terms of the respondents’ generation or influence from a third culture. From these responses, we can see that exposure to nuances of Polish culture

5.2.3 Section 3

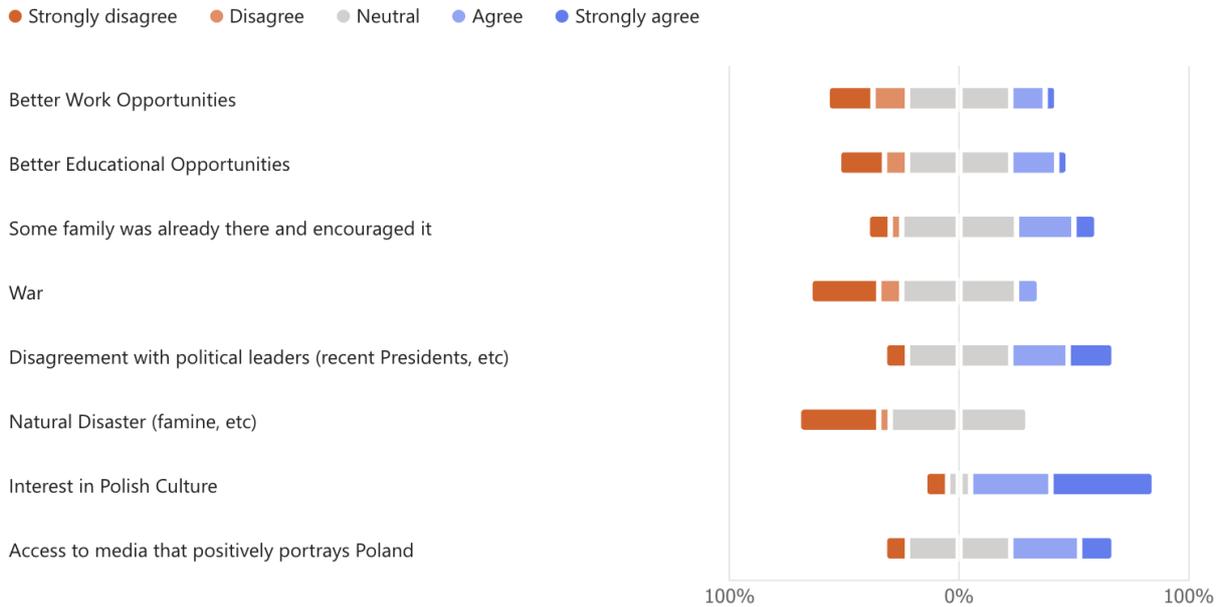
Analysis of responses relating to the maintenance of these childhood traditions also show a strong correlation between a connection to Poland and Polish culture and the desire to pursue dual citizenship. 75% of respondents across generational lines responded positively, but with much less detail than before. One described going to Polish cultural events while wearing a folk costume. The others described going to an Eastern European grocery store to buy pierogi, celebrating Christmas and Easter with the same family traditions, and a few of the Generation Z respondents described learning Polish through apps like Duolingo and Babbel as well as language-learning accounts on social media whereas the Generation X respondents prefer to attend in-person classes and participate through cultural association activities like dancing and cultural festivals. Those who actively watched TV shows, videos on social media, or were actively learning Polish reported a much higher level of understanding (B1-C1) as opposed to those who did not (“None” to A2). One respondent obtained a “Ph.D. in Eastern European Political Violence” and others described how they learn through immersion and visiting museums while traveling to Poland. Out of the 40% of respondents who confirmed that they had ever traveled to Poland, all of them expressed that the modern Poland that they visited was much better than how it was described by their ancestors and that they can better appreciate its complicated history even if they never experienced it themselves. Wojciech also confirmed that he is able to enjoy all the benefits of a modern European country thanks to its political and economic improvements. .

In this section, I repeated the same Likert Scale as in Section 2, but instead asked respondents to think about the prompts from their own point of view. The results show much more varied reasons for pursuing dual citizenship. As expected, “Interest in Polish Culture” was the highest here, whereas it was the lowest in the previous scale. The increase in “Access to Media that Positively Portrays Poland” is also significantly higher. The pursuit of work and educational opportunities in Poland remains high, as does “Disagreement with Political Leaders.”

³⁴⁹ See Chapter 2.2.2

³⁵⁰ Voran, Jaclyn. “Make It Special: 10 Sweet First Birthday Traditions You’ll Cherish Forever.” The Everymom, August 8, 2025. <https://theeverymom.com/babys-first-birthday-traditions/>.

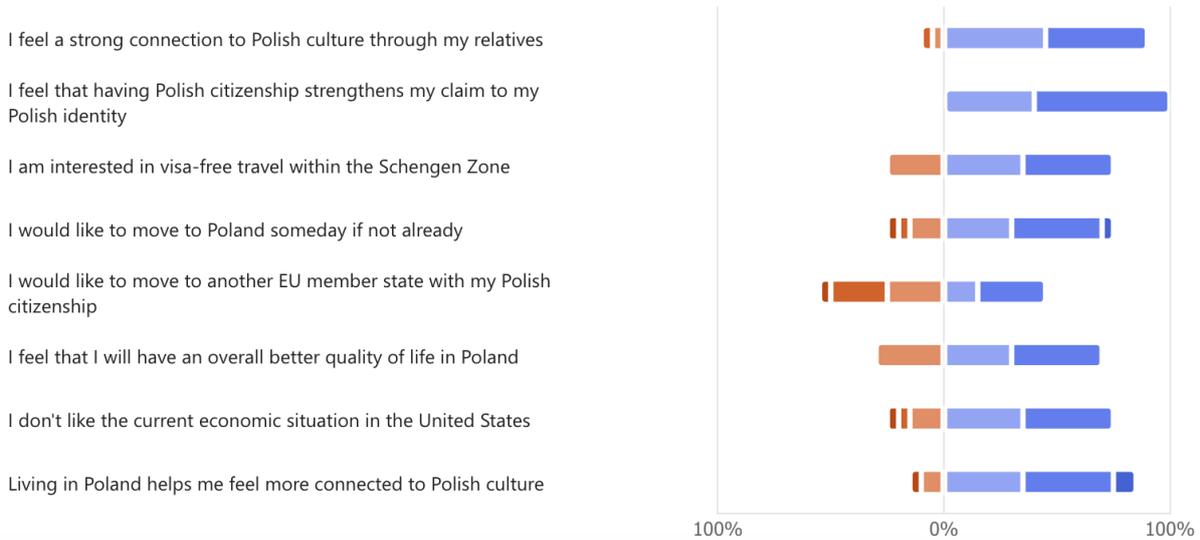
To what extent do these factors represent your motivation for seeking dual citizenship in order to move to Poland?



This is further confirmed by the third Likert scale, which also targets those who have not moved to Poland but would like to someday. High positive responses to statements like “I feel that having Polish citizenship strengthens my claim to my Polish identity” and “Living in Poland helps me feel more connected to Polish culture” further solidify the responses given in previous sections of the questionnaire. The effects of a high level of connection to Poland on the respondents are also evident in the responses to “I would like to move to another EU member state with my Polish citizenship,” as it is the statement with the largest number of negative responses like in the questionnaire for Italy. While Polish citizenship does give the holder access to free movement within the Schengen Zone, the responses to this statement could reflect the respondents’ sense of loyalty to Poland rather than that of another European country of ancestry such as Germany or Ireland.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly agree ● N/A



For the two cultural questions in the final section of this questionnaire, the outcome of the May 2025 Presidential elections created the possibility for multiple correct answers to the first questions depending on the time that the questionnaire was responded to. For the first question, 50% answered with both names - Andrzej Duda or Karol Nawrocki for President and Donald Tusk for Prime Minister. A few even responded with middle names. 10% only answered with one name, and the other 40% said “I don’t know.” This also demonstrates that understanding of modern Poland is important to obtaining dual citizenship in order to participate in civic life, but two of these respondents did not know what the Schengen Zone was. The second question was intended to be answered between February and June 2025 when there would have been a lot of publicity for both “*Wielki Finał Polskich Kwalifikacji*” and for the Eurovision Song Contest. Neither of these programs are widely known in the United States, however someone involved with modern Polish culture through social media or someone who had visited during that time would likely know about it. One person wrote the previous name of the contest: “*Tu bije serce Europy*” and was also considered as correct. Others misunderstood the question and wrote “Eurovision”, and the rest wrote “I don’t know.” As expected, Wojciech responded correctly to both questions but the others who responded correctly to this question did not know the names of one of the Presidents or the Prime Minister, reflecting gaps of knowledge that could be typical of members of a diaspora that live as far away as the United States.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Over the course of finding an answer to my research question, I found that there were many areas that could be improved, both in the Literature Review and the Questionnaire. For the Literature review, I would have also liked to add a section on the prevalence of culture in social media, as it becomes much more accessible even to those outside of the cultural community. What we see on social media is typically defined by algorithms and as we search for something, it often reinforces the idea by giving us similar recommendations. For example, following one language-learning account often leads to recommendations of other similar accounts, leading to passive language learning or absorption of the culture just by

scrolling as most people do every day. It would also be interesting to study content produced by descendants of immigrants about their culture. Some directly parody their relatives with accents and costumes, but others show history and culture in a way that is more educational. Others like Italian chefs or Polish dance troupes rely heavily on social media for advertising to the younger generations, with the aspiration of continuing the spread of traditional knowledge beyond the immediate community. For example, the cover of Polish Vogue with the dance troupe from Chicago (Chapter 2.2.4) was so important to maintain interest because it is such an honor to be featured on a cover of a magazine, and especially in acknowledgement of a passion project like dancing. I would also have liked to analyze the movies and tv shows from Italy and Poland that are watched by members of the diasporas as well as fictional movies that take place in Italy or Poland made by American directors and producers from a historical or dramatic point of view.

The population that responded to questionnaires that I wrote for this research was very limited in their scope, and the analysis of answers would have benefitted from a much higher number of respondents. I had some difficulty in obtaining responses as the circumstances that would allow someone to properly respond to this survey were very limited and they were difficult to find. Law offices that handle dual citizenship by *jus sanguinis* cases would not be able to share the questionnaire with their clients as it would violate privacy laws, so I had to rely on Facebook groups and cultural associations in addition to the people that I know from my current and previous universities. I also emailed Jesse Eisenberg to ask him to fill in the questionnaire and to give a statement about his motivation to use *A Real Pain* as part of the application process, but I did not receive a response.

I would have also used a different program to send out the survey, as it would have been easier to reorganize the data into more specific graphs that did not include the entire population without entering the data manually into a spreadsheet. I could also have structured interviews in order to prevent mistakes and typos that skew the data due to filling out the survey on a small screen such as a phone. For the questions themselves, I would have asked more about the influence of the third culture in respondents with mixed ancestry or made a third questionnaire for them. In cases such as Ireland and Germany that also offer dual citizenship, it would have been interesting to note why respondents chose to pursue dual citizenship with Italy or Poland as opposed to the other. It would also have been interesting to note the prevalence of childhood stories and traditions with those countries as additional justification. I ultimately did not in the interest of keeping the questionnaire a reasonable length. Most respondents took between 20 and 40 minutes to complete it. Finally, I would have tailored the cultural question to each country. Living in Italy, I understood that the Sanremo Festival of Music is called “*la settimana santa di Sanremo*” due to its popularity and prevalence in pop culture. This is not the case in Poland as it is much less culturally significant. I would instead likely have asked a question about the most popular items sold at the Żabka convenience stores, like its hot dogs and kiełbasa, which is well-known both in Poland and through social media. I could also ask about the recent success of famous athletes like Iga Świątek in international tennis tournaments,³⁵¹ which would be commonly found in international news, but might be of special note to someone with a connection to the country.

³⁵¹ “Iga Swiatek: Player Stats & More.” Women’s Tennis Association, September 10, 2025. <https://www.wtatennis.com/players/326408/iga-swiatek>

Conclusion

Even in the modern age, it is still inherently human to search for a better life. Although the circumstances of immigration to a new place often remain the same as before due to individual circumstances, many people choose to move to a place where they feel a sense of familiarity. In the case of the Italian and Polish-Americans included in this study, they chose to move back to the country where their ancestors came from, resulting in what can sometimes legally be considered repatriation or return migration. My research question “What are the cultural and socioeconomic patterns of American Generation Z, Millennial, and Generation X descendants who pursue dual citizenship with Italy or Poland?” explored the nuances associated with the impact of cultural connections made in childhood on personal identity development as adults and the resulting desire for dual citizenship. These nuances include proximity to an Italian or Polish ethnic community or neighborhood, learning Italian or Polish from relatives or classes, and the ability to travel there to get to know the real country rather than only understanding the history of the country as it was described by their families. Popular media like movies reinforces this cultural identity in the American cultural context through movies as described in Chapter 2. Positive portrayals of these countries such as those found in modern films like *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003) and *A Real Pain* (2024) can subconsciously influence an individual’s positive view of the modern country that may not have otherwise been available during an individual’s childhood, especially if they do not have the means or time to travel there.

Emigration of descendants of immigrants to their ancestors’ homeland is a relatively new phenomenon, due to increasing globalization of communication as well as better ease of travel. As our connection with our ancestors decreases over time, many people try to maintain that connection through cooking the same recipes or engaging in some of the same hobbies like dancing or playing an instrument in adolescence or adulthood. Knowledge of the ancestors’ national origin or being able to obtain documents can make this process easier, but it also depends on the country’s laws, especially when so many countries like Italy are now restricting access to dual citizenship, thereby limiting the number of people who can benefit from it. Even in cases where dual citizenship cannot be obtained, there still remains a desire to self-identify with that country even if there is no legal benefit, which can become a possible route for future research.

The decision to pursue dual citizenship between the United States and Italy or Poland at all is also heavily determined by each country’s laws that allow it to happen as described in Chapter 3. In the case of both Italy and Poland, these laws are a direct result of transitions from fascist or communist authoritarian governments, as described in Chapter 1, in favor of democracies that act as good diplomatic allies to the United States, the European Union, and the rest of the world. Holding dual citizenship implies a dual loyalty to two countries, which cannot be easily upheld if they are engaged in a conflict. Italy and Poland both require a minimum of B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which would allow them to contribute to Italian or Polish civic society to the extent allowed with residence abroad or to the fullest extent with residence inside those countries. Pursuit of dual citizenship within the United States is becoming more popular due to bureaucratic barriers in obtaining visas in the course of frequent travel, some countries like Italy find that there are too many applications from people who see it as a symbol of cultural identity rather than a profession of national loyalty. Others, like Poland, continue to encourage it in order to honor the struggles that its citizens faced when emigrating by allowing their descendants to be able to return.

The questionnaire used in the methodology of this research partially contributes to the answer to the research question by using real-life examples provided by individuals who are undertaking the process to become dual citizens or return to their ancestors' country. The limitations of the research due to the small sample size of the population and the specific inclusion criteria means that the research cannot be generalized to the general population, but rather represent only this small group. The open-ended questions and Likert Scales used to demonstrate their knowledge of the country, its culture, and their sentiments towards it all work together to represent its influence on their cultural identity. The emotional descriptions of their ancestors' hardships and how the respondents keep their traditions alive in modern times often reflect an intense connection that translates to the continuance of these traditions further to the respondent's descendants. As they may not have the opportunity to get to know their immigrant ancestors due to the passage of time, they will be able to keep their memory alive through getting to know modern Italy or Poland while remembering the historical context of their stories and traditions. The research performed through my questionnaire does not accurately reflect the current numbers of Americans who pursued or received dual citizenship with Italy or Poland but instead reflects some of the foundations of the preliminary steps that could eventually lead to emigration. It does not reflect more personal details such as the financial capability and time dedicated to handling citizenship applications, all of which factor into the ultimate decision to pursue it. In cases with the strongest connections to an ancestor's homeland, the desire to possess a physical manifestation of it and to take advantage of its benefits often triumphs over the inconvenience, leading to future dual citizens who are ready to take on the duties that it represents.

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