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Talk 1: The Economics of Mass Migration: Evidence from the Age of Mass Migration -1

We provide new estimates of migrant flows into and out of America during the Age of Mass Migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Our analysis is based on a novel data set of administrative records covering the universe of 24 million migrants who entered Ellis Island, New York between 1892 and 1924. We first use these records to measure inflows into New York, and then scale-up these figures to estimate migrant inflows into America as a whole. Combining these flow estimates with census data on the stock of foreign-born in America in 1900, 1910 and 1920, we conduct a demographic accounting exercise to estimate out-migration rates in aggregate and for each nationality-age-gender cohort. The accounting exercise overturns common wisdom on two fronts. First, we estimate flows into the US to be 20% and 170% higher than stated in official statistics for the 1900-10 and 1910-20 decades, respectively. Second, we estimate the rate of out-migration from the US to be 76% during 1900-10 and close to 100% during the turbulent 1910-20 decade. These figures are between two and three times larger the official statistics estimates of around 35% in each decade. That migration was effectively a two-way flow between the US and the sending countries has major implications for understanding the potential selection of immigrants that chose to permanently reside in the US at the turn of the twentieth century, their impact on Americans in labor markets, and institutional change both in America and sending country economies.

Talk 2: The Economics of Mass Migration: Evidence from the Age of Mass Migration -2

By the mid-19th century, America was the best educated nation on Earth: significant financial investments in education were being undertaken and the majority of children voluntarily attended public schools. So why did American states start introducing compulsory schooling laws at this point in time? We provide qualitative and quantitative evidence that compulsory schooling laws were used as a nation-building tool to homogenize the civic values held by the tens of millions of culturally diverse migrants who moved to America during the 'Age of Mass Migration' between 1850 and 1914. Using state level data, we show the adoption of compulsory schooling laws occurred significantly earlier in states that hosted a subgroup of European migrants with lower exposure to civic values in their home countries. We present IV estimates based on a Bartik-Card instrument to address concerns over endogenous location choices of migrants. We then use cross-county data to show that these same subgroup European migrant had significantly lower demand for American common schooling pre-compulsion, and so would have been less exposed to the kinds of civic value instilled by the American education system had compulsory schooling not been passed. By providing micro-foundations for schooling laws, our study highlights the link between mass migration and the endogenous policy responses of American-born median-voters in receiving states.