

# **Nostalgia And Immigration: A Study of The Italian American Communities in New York and Boston in The Early 20th Century**

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## **Abstract**

My aim is to explore nostalgia as a positive feeling that, though associated with melancholia, has energized community-making for Italians in the USA.

Nostalgia is crucial for an understanding of immigration in rural or tight-knit communities worldwide and my contribution would be to identify the specific motivations and needs of the Italian diaspora that settled in New York and Boston in the early twentieth century. Nostalgia is a feeling which stayed with the Italian immigrants all their new life long, as they felt strongly linked to their home country. It is a feeling which accompanies all the people with strong cultural identity who face migration, and which is relevant to facilitate integration into a foreign country.

My paper will therefore analyze some important aspects of the Italian American communities such as professions, food, religion and education following a historical and a sociological approach.

This study has also researched the reasons of the Italian diaspora and the areas where the migrants settled down in New York and Boston. The Italian migrants had a strong ethnic identity and shared values which were the basis of the Italian communities in American cities, towns and villages.

Home country culture has been examined as a strong bond for all the Italian immigrants, leading to isolation which they faced as a consequence of their strong ethnic identity and their values. The difficulty of the new language, a different lifestyle and poverty were the main obstacles to their integration into the new world.

Food was very important as a convivial time for the family. Religious festivals and food helped to strengthen the bonds among the immigrants and keep their memories alive. Work was a significant value for the Italian immigrants. It was a way to earn enough money to improve their lives and to educate their children to do better than them.

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Education was the reason to stay in their new country. In fact, the new generations went to school and started to integrate, by spontaneously acquiring the new language and the new culture.

In conclusion, this study confirms how nostalgia is not only a very strong feeling which affected all the process of migration and integration of the Italian people who arrived in America, but it can also be useful to better understand the process of integration in our contemporary societies and use this awareness in education in the reception of migrants with strong ethnic and cultural identity, to facilitate their integration in their new country.

**Keywords:** immigration; nostalgia; isolation; education; integration.