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Making Americans

Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy

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CHAPTER THREE

A Less Intelligent Class?

The Dillingham Commission and the New Immigrants

The political initiative systematically to restrict immigration into the United States began in the 1880s-quickly symbolized by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Law and the specification of certain categories of excludables such as paupers and "idiots"-and culminated almost five decades later in the implementation of the national origins scheme in 1929. Between these dates, immigration policy was a salient issue in domestic American politics, as restrictionists mobilized support for new limits on immigration in terms of both overall numbers and "type" of immigrant. These restrictionist efforts included the promotion of a literacy test, stringent specifications of the eugenic or racial grounds for admission, and the establishment of quotas allocated to different nations. The period also included a highly detailed study of immigrants and immigration in the United States, undertaken by the Dillingham Commission, which is the focus of this chapter. Its conclusions and recommendations structured the subsequent debate about immigration policy and embodied the dominant assumption of the principal policy-makers.

Although the effects of immigrants on the composition of the U.S. population were apparent by the census of 1870,[1] it was the dramatic shift, between the 1880s and 1900s, in the sources of European immigration to the United States from northwestern countries to southeastern ones that excited sustained public debate and comment. In 1882, 648,186 European immigrants arrived in the United States, of whom 13.1 percent came from southern and eastern European countries, comprising Austria-Hungary, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, and Turkey. In 1907 these countries supplied 81 percent of a total of 1,207,619 European immigrants. In 1882 the principal sources for European immigrants were Belgium, Britain and Ireland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Switzerland. For the period 1819 to 1910, 62.9 percent of European immigrants came from northern and western countries, 37.1 percent from southern and eastern Europe and Turkey in Asia.[2]

The restrictionist turn in American immigration policy rested on assumptions about the types of immigrants and their suitability for citizenship. It is not without irony that restrictionist politics often consisted of the most recently accepted immigrants mobilizing to delay a new generation (a point that President Grover Cleveland made especially in his statement in March 1897, when he vetoed the Lodge literacy bill: observing that the argument for restriction turned on the immigrants' "undesirability," he remarked that "the time is quite within recent memory when the same thing was said of immigrants who, with their descendants now are amongst our best citizens").[3] This phenomenon is most obviously illustrated by the rejection of European migrants from the southern and eastern countries: their admission was most keenly resisted by Americans whose own ancestors had journeyed from northern ana western European countries. Illiteracy was one common deficiency imputed to the new arrivals. Thus, Archdeacon reports that "among immigrants who were at least fourteen years of age and who arrived between 1899 and 1909, the Germans, the Scandinavians, the English, and the Irish had illiteracy rates of 5.1 percent, .4 percent, 1.1 percent, and 2.7 percent, respectively. By contrast, the Italians, the Jews, the Poles, and the Slovaks had rates of 46.9 percent, 25.7 percent, 35.4 percent, and 24.3 percent, respectively."[4] Racist and prejudiced stereotypes of the new immigrants increasingly defined the post-1900 discourse employed by restrictionist organizations. In his *A History of the American People,* Woodrow Wilson, then a political scientist at Princeton University, alerted readers to the new source of immigrants manifest in the 1890 census, an alteration which "students of affairs marked with uneasiness." Overtaking the "sturdy stocks of the north of Europe" were "multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence."

To Wilson's watchful eye, it was as if "the countries of the south of Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population."[5] The Massachusetts Senator, Henry Cabot Lodge, characterized this wave of immigration as one bringing the "greatest relative increase from races most alien to the body of the American people." He added, "the shifting of the sources of the immigration is unfavorable, and is bringing to the country people whom it is very difficult to assimilate and who do not promise well for the standard of civilization in the United States-a matter as serious as the effect on the labor market."[6]

Following a brief review of some of the arguments of restrictionists, the bulk of the chapter provides a detailed analysis of the findings of the Dillingham Commission. Particular attention is paid to the importance of eugenic and anthropological research in the commission's report. The report's recommendations and conceptual categories influenced the immigration debate for the two decades after its publication.

Restrictionist Advocates

The American Protection Association, which was founded in 1887 and boasted a membership of over two million by the mid-1890s, was an energetic exponent of the need to limit the number and type of immigrants to the United States. In May 1894, it was joined by the Immigration Restriction League. The league was founded by three Harvard graduates, Prescott Hall, Charles Warren, and Robert DeC. Ward. The group was led by Ward, who was a professor at his alma mater and was destined to play a central role in restrictionist circles until the 1930s.[7] The league's self-proclaimed aims were the "limitation of immigration and a more careful selection, to the end that we shall receive no more aliens than can be properly assimilated."[8] The league was active until the 1920s, and the historian Barbara Solomon characterizes its role as one of creating an "ideology of restriction."[9] Its national committee included the economist John Commons; the eugenist Madison Grant (author of the grandiloquently titled *The Passing of the Great Race);* Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard; and Franklin MacVeagh, who served as secretary of the treasury under President Taft between 1909 and 1913. It was enthusiastically restrictionist, warning against the "dangerous flood of immigrants" and advocating legislation for the "selection of those only who will make the most valuable citizens."[10] The league's members defined their task

as raising consciousness about the level of immigration and the problem it posed, as its constitution stated: public opinion "must be made to recognize 'the necessity of a further exclusion of elements undesirable for citizenship or injurious to our national character.'"[11] In contrast to other restrictionist groups, such as organized labor, from its beginning, the Immigration Restriction League laid particular stress on the "racial" dimension of immigration, over and above the economic arguments in which the issue of immigrants was commonly discussed. Rather, the league's publications and arguments advanced what was to become a celebrated distinction between the "old" immigrants, of which their members' forebears were exemplary instances, and "new" immigrants. League secretary Prescott Hall posed the question starkly: did Americans "'want this country to be peopled by British, German, and Scandinavian stock, historically free, energetic, progressive, or by Slav, Latin, and Asiatic races, historically downtrodden, atavistic, and stagnant?'"[12]

The league's early years were concentrated on the literacy test that was pursued, at first unsuccessfully, in Congress by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, whose congressional speeches contained plenty of racial language echoing the developing views of the league's members.[13] The latter's continued commitment to restriction fostered an alliance with the Junior Order of Mechanics, a descendant of the Know-Nothing party and virulendy anti-Catholic. This "quiet entente" was, in Barbara Solomon's estimation, kept extremely quiet: "(l]n its own publications the League never referred to this questionable consorting. Anti-Catholic sentiment was at low ebb at the time the League cultivated relations with ignorant anti-Romanist groups. At home, Brahmin restrictionists never stooped to religious discrimination, but to aid restriction they willingly co-operated with Know-Nothing nativists elsewhere."[14] Solomon also documents how the league's concerns about the undesirability of the new immigrants increasingly converged with opinions and arguments profferred by social scientists such as John Commons, William Zipley, or Edward Ross, all of whom concurred in these views. Despite advancing economic theses about immigration, for "all these social scientists," Solomon remarks, "whatever their rational emphasis, immigration became a matter of the survival of the Anglo-Saxon stock."[15] The relatively few members of the Brahmins, such as Charles Eliot, onetime president of Harvard, who disagreed with the restrictionist approach to immigration did not capture the public debate, and indeed their views appeared increas-

ingly exotic in the anti-immigrant tide: "as New Englanders shrank from the presence of immigrants in each successive decade, the older symbolic view of immigration vanished, until the exponents of an open, diverse world seemed strange and almost incomprehensible."[16]

From the fin de siecle, rationalization of hostility to the new immigrants was integrated with the pseudoscience of eugenists. It proved a successful alliance, which restrictionists such as the Immigration Restriction League promoted: "from 1890 to 1914, the racial ideology of the restrictionists built upon the older stereotypes, which New Englanders had shared, and imparted new meaning to them."[17] The application of biological principles of evolution to social development, so-called Social Darwinism, was hugely popular.[18] It not only reified the assumptions of racial calibrations within American society (including in respect to the marginalized African American population) but also provided explanations for social differences and for the United States's relative economic success compared with other countries. These ideas, expounded, for instance, in Herbert Spencer's writings, were valuable sources of belief for the well-off. Social Darwinism "could be used to defend cutthroat competition as natural, to condemn governmental interference in the economy as contrary to the more efficient action of natural laws, and to dismiss radical efforts to ameliorate social conditions as inconsistent with the inevitably slow improvement inherent in an evolutionary scheme."[19]

The diffusion of a Social Darwinian sociological pecking order coalesced with the stress, advanced by eugenists, on inherited sources of intelligence and ability. The scientific aim of eugenists was the determination of genetic sources of "feeble-mindedness" (associated with "racial degeneracy"), principles for its eradication, and the bases of selective breeding. Such concerns were widespread amongst academics, reformers, and politicians in the two decades before the First World War.[20] These concerns were strengthened by perceptions of immigrants: "[B]y 1900, one out of every seven Americans was foreign born. In the great cities of the east, this ratio was even narrower."[21] That President William McKinley was assassinated in 1901 by a naturalized immigrant who had a foreign-sounding name seemed merely to confirm burgeoning alarm about the scale of the problem posed by the new settlers. Political radicalism was frequently imputed to the new immigrants. By the end of the nineteenth century, many Americans doubted the ease with which immigrants could be assimilated with the existing (white) population, a point that Pole notes, if somewhat elliptically: "the intuition that men were equal and interchangeable ... ran counter to the accumulating body of ethnic and religious prejudice, not to mention a good deal of social observation,"[22] though quite how "prejudice" and "social observation" coincided is not explained. One measure of political radicalism commonly cited by critics of immigration was radical newspapers in foreign languages. The numbers of these publications increased throughout the 1900s and 1910s; a survey in 1922 found that the number doubled after 1918 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Number of Radical Publications in Foreign Languages, 1922

Language	Number
Armenian	1
Bohemian	9
Bulgarian	3
Croatian	4
Danish	4
Estonian	1
Finnish	11
French	1
German	21
Greek	2
Hungarian	23
Italian	27
Jewish	20
Lettish	11
Lithuanian	15
Polish	7
Portuguese	1
Romanian	16
Slovenian	8
Spanish	8
Swedish	6
Ukranian	8
Yiddish	15
Total	222
Papers published in foreign countries	144
English papers in the United States	105
Grand coral	471

Source: Derived from R. E. Park, *Americanization Studies: The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), p. 436.

Of the radical press, the sociologist Robert Park observed, "its object is to make its readers class-conscious."[23] Generally hostile to the United States and to capitalism, radical immigrant newspapers indicted their readers' new country, an approach that reached its fullest version in the anarchist press.

Thinly controlled intellectual disdain for the new immigrants was obvious in many petitions favoring the legislation. Thus, the Washington-based Waugh Chautaugua Literary and Scientific Circle's lament that "one of the gravest menaces to our country's welfare is the free and unrestricted admission of illiterate, incapable, and pauper immigrants within our borders"[24] mirrored the American Purity Federation's objection to "thousands of undeniably undesirable persons" arriving as immigrants.[25] Ecclesiastical support for the proposed restrictions came from some Protestant churches: the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in St. Louis rounded on "illiterate immigrants."[26]

Opponents of Restriction

Political and social pressure to limit immigration was marked by the 1890s; it did not abate as a political issue until 1930. The issue was intensely disputed, with the congressional committees on immigration subject to immense lobbying by both restrictionists and opponents of limits. Thus, the proposal, for a literacy test which was advanced in the Lodge Bill in 1897, provoked petitions both of support and of opposition. Any systematic educational test was likely to affect potential European immigrants. The German-American Society protested that demarcations between immigrants would deter the "better" migrants: "as provided by the bill, the fact that an immigrant, male or female, is able to read and to transcribe a passage from the Federal Constitution is to determine whether said immigrant shall be permitted to land." This mechanism would produce false economies: "[P]erhaps the half-educated foreigner who has nothing to lose in his own land will readily submit to such humiliating conditions. The conservative farmer, the sturdy laborer, will shrink from the same, however, and thus the country will be deprived of the most desirable class of immigrants."[27] Immigrants were also necessary to the expansion of the consumer market and to the creation of a set of distinct American values.

Another organization opposing the educational test wondered how

many of the "founders" of the United States, themselves immigrants, would have been able to satisfy the new "illiberal" criterion.[28] The German Roman Catholic Central Society organized to have hundreds of petitions, which resolved opposition to the Lodge Bill, sent to Congress (some even in German, hardly a persuasive medium with the restrictionists).[29] The League of German-American Societies lambasted the bill for depriving America of "brawny arms and willing hands so very necessary for the development of our boundless resources." It added that "nothing in our estimation will harm our political, social, business and religious standing more than further restrictive legislation in the spirit of the proposed Lodge Bill, which we regard as wholly unamerican and unpatriotic." Employing a rather strained medical analogy, the petition's signatories declared that "the Nation's pulsation will grow weaker and weaker, as long as we resist the infusion of new blood into the arteries of public life and refuse to free ourselves from the shackles of knownothingism, which are hindering the restitution of the former progressive economic conditions of this country."[30] The Union of Free Communities of North America argued that restrictions on immigration contradicted "our country's history which, from its beginning until a short time ago, proves on every page, that one of our nation's most laudable virtues has been the hospitality offered to all comers."[31] It was joined by the New York City-based Arion Society, whose members resolved that immigration restriction abridged the "spirit of toleration and love of liberty bequeathed to us by the founders of this Republic."[32] The Polish National Alliance emphatically opposed the Lodge literacy scheme, claiming, not unreasonably, that the bill was principally "directed against the Slavonic nations." It cited distinguished immigrants (such as the composer Antonin Dvorak) in support of its interests, as well as the averred antisocialism of the Slavonic people: "[A]narchy forms no part of their character. Ultra-socialistic doctrines are not countenanced by them. They will compare favorably with the emigrants from other nations in Europe. We insist that it is not fair to judge the whole race by the condition of a limited number of unfortunate recent arrivals, whom stern necessity forced to live in hovels and work at starvation wages in coal mines."[33]

These opposing claims about the immigrants convey some of the emotions prompted by their arrival at the end of the nineteenth century.

The debates of the 189Os set the terms for those of the twentieth century: immigration was a source of intense controversy and often of vituperative opinion in the new century's first three decades. The arguments that were marshaled during passage of the Lodge Act continued to be rehearsed but were increasingly expressed in terms of racist and "scientific" claim ; and indeed, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge himself anticipated this propensity in his attempt statistically to determine the distribution of ability among the American population according to national origin (a study that singled out the English racial heritage).34 The connection between scientific arguments about race and patrician alarm about the new "hordes" received its first explicit formulation in the 1911 Dillingham Commission, whose report set the terms for the restrictionist measures incorporated in the 1924 law and favored by eugenists such as Charles Davenport, who zealously propagated eugenic arguments in the United States.

The Dillingham Commission

Data about American immigrants was provided by the comprehensive Dillingham Commission, which issued its forty-two-volume report in 1911 after four years of endeavor. The nine-member commission[35] was headed by Senator William P. Dillingham (Vermont), chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee. The bulk of the report presented valuable statistical and demographic data about immigrants. The scale of its undertaking and documentation, funded with a $1,000,000 appropriation from the U.S. Senate, was formidable. The huge project was a response to the 1907 immigration law whose drafters complained about the paucity of available reliable data regarding immigrants. The commission's two secretaries-who coordinated and completed the bulk of this vast project-were W. W. Husband and C. S. Atkinson, clerks of the Senate and the House Committees on Immigration respectively. Husband became an influential figure in U. S. immigration policy, later joining the U. S. Department of Labor and rising to the position of Commissioner General of Immigration.[36]

The study was corpulent because the Commission resolved on undertaking "an original investigation which, it was perfectly apparent, would necessarily be made far reaching and involve more work than any inquiry of a similar nature, except the census alone, than had ever been undertaken by the Government."37 This is a good description. The commissioners examined a myriad of phenomena including patterns of immigration from Europe; conditions in the European countries from which the immigrants were drawn; the position and economic status of recent immigrants in the United States, including their occupations, residential patterns, levels of assimilation, and incidences of incarceration for pauperism, insanity, or criminality; the fecundity of immigrant women; and conditions in cities. The commission obtained original data about 3,200,000 individuals.

Old versus New Immigration

The commission advanced a conceptual dichotomy that had a profound influence on ensuing debate. It characterized northern and western European immigrants as constitutive of "old immigration,"38 reserving the appellation "new immigration" for migrants from southern and eastern Europe; these categories were grounded in the significant shift in the source of immigrants from the nineteenth century. The dichotomy rested on a set of differences identified by the commission. The former group "was largely a movement of settlers who came from the most progressive sections of Europe for the purpose of making themselves homes in the New World." They entered a range of occupations, settled throughout the United States, and integrated with the existing population: "[T]hey mingled freely with the native Americans and were quickly assimilated, although a large proportion of them, particularly in later years, belonged to non-English-speaking races. This natural bar to assimilation, however, was soon overcome by them, while the racial identity of their children was almost entirely lost and forgotten."39 For these immigrants, about whom the commission confidently described their "racial identity," America was the promised beau monde.

The character and experience of the recent arrivals was contrasted unfavorably to this model: "the new immigration has been largely a movement of unskilled laboring men who have come, in large part temporarily, from the less progressive and advanced countries of Europe in response to the call for industrial workers in the eastern and middle western States." The implication of this temporary status was inferred to be a reduced political commitment to the United States. The new immigrants rarely worked in agriculture.40 They lived in ethnically concentrated communities in large cities, thereby evading sys-

tematic assimilation, a judgment retained in a 1920 Americanization study by John Daniels: "the great mass of immigrants who come to America settle first in urban 'colonies' of their own race." Such colonies "are looked upon as 'foreign' quarters, which cut the immigrant off from American influences and thus constitute a serious menace to the community. There is slight acquaintance with their inner workings and little comprehension of their real significance."[41] From a meticulous study of seven cities (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee), in which the commission's investigators visited 10,206 households comprising 51,006 individuals, the report anticipated Daniels's finding that the new "immigrant races live largely in colonies, many of whose characteristics are determined by the predominance of a foreign population";[42] the ability to speak English was often confined to school-age immigrants (a characteristic subsequently addressed by many employers who established English classes for their workers).[43]

The critical judgment that immigrants confined themselves unduly to particular neighborhoods and occupations overlooked the bars that were enacted by state legislatures to exclude immigrants from certain activities and occupations in the United States. From his study of immigrants and industry for the Carnegie Corporation Americanization series, William Leiserson castigated the federal government for failing to overturn state restrictions on immigrants' choices. Leiserson outlined an inventory of such impediments:

> In Michigan an alien cannot get a barber's license. The labor law of New York requires that stationary engineers, moving picture machine operators, master pilots, and marine engineers shall be licensed, and non-citizens are disqualified by the license laws. Florida, Oregon, Texas and Washington prohibit aliens from catching and selling fish and oysters, while in Arizona, California, and Idaho license fees for fishing and hunting are from two and a half to ten times as high for the alien as for the citizen. Virginia prohibits aliens from planting oysters in certain river beds; and game laws, either placing prohibitions entirely on aliens or charging them higher license fees than citizens, are common in many states. In Louisiana an alien printer may receive no public printing to do. Virginia requires licenses for junk dealing and no non-citizen may receive such a license. In Georgia a person must have declared his intention of becoming a citizen before he can secure a peddler's license; and in Delaware a discriminating fee of a hundred dollars is charged to aliens for traveling peddler's licenses in addition to the fee charged for citizens. In pre-prohibition days liquor licenses were issued to citizens only in many states, such as Ohio, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Texas, Florida, and Washington.[44]

These barriers were preceded by measures precluding immigrants' taking up unskilled jobs. The restriction of aliens' rights was applied in particular to the Chinese and Japanese, with some states, such as California, limiting the economic opportunities of Chinese aliens.[45] California barred aliens ineligible to acquire citizenship from purchasing commercial agricultural land, which, as noted in Chapter 2, excluded all nonwhites. The common defense of these measures and of licensing restrictions-that they were intended to encourage rapid naturalization by immigrants-failed to prevent the development of discrimination toward immigrants and consequently the resentment of the immigrants. These policies had the obverse effect of their stated rationale. As Leiserson concluded, "not by exclusion from American industrial opportunities and privileges will the immigrant be adjusted to American economic life. Such a policy, whatever its purpose, can result only in making it more difficult for him to establish himself on a basis of self-support and well-being."[46]

The new arrivals had a further, plainly debilitating characteristic. According to the Dillingham Commission, they were intellectually inferior:

> [T]he new immigration as a class is far less intelligent than the old, approximately one-third of all those over 14 years of age when admitted being illiterate. Racially they are for the most part essentially unlike the British, German and other peoples who came during the period prior to 1880, and generally speaking they are actuated in coming for different ideals, for the old immigration came to be a part of the country, while the new, in a large measure, comes with the intention of profiting, in a pecuniary way, by the superior advantages of the new world and then returning to the old country.[47]

This characterization of the new immigrants' low intelligence was periodically marshaled in debates in the ensuing two decades. It was anticipated in the attitudes and arguments of restrictionist groups such as the elitist Immigration Restriction League, which was based in the Brahmin community in Boston. From the league's foundation in 1894, its leading lights, including Prescott Hall, criticized the inferiority and undesirability of the new immigrants. As New England elite

opinion became more accommodating of Irish and German immigrants, who previously had been the subject of considerable bile and prejudice, so its worries were transferred to the new arrivals, as Barbara Solomon notes: "by 1900, Yankee stereotypes of the old immigrant groups had become more sympathetic; but those of new immigrant groups, whom restrictionists wished to exclude, steadily deteriorated."[48] It was particularly southern Italians who were characterized so adversely. Anti-Semitism also developed, toward Russian Jews in particular, a tendency that aligned all too easily with eugenic categorizations. Thus, the eugenist Charles Davenport wrote of Russian and southern European Jews that "with their intense individualism and ideals of gain at the cost of any interest," they stood at the "opposite extreme from the English and the Scandinavian immigration with their ideals of community life in the open country, advancement by the sweat of the brow, and the uprearing of families in the fear of God and the love of country."[49] This was hardly impartial or scientific language.

Aside from intellectual inferiority, the assimilability of the new immigrants was questionable, causing a grave concern. The commission discovered that as much as 40 percent of the new immigration movement consisted of migrants returned to Europe, of whom about two-thirds remained in Europe, and so the commission contrasted this pattern unfavorably to that of earlier migrants, who had settled permanently. The "old immigration" group was judged by the Dillingham Commission to be assimilated and merged with native American stock. Of the new immigrants, the vast majority, as a corollary of their concentration in large urban centers, were employed in manufacturing and mining. They predominated in unskilled jobs, attaining, in effect, a monopoly of "unskilled labor activities in many of the more important industries." The commission argued that such unskilled labor did not affect skilled positions but, by forming a regular supply of cheap unskilled labor, had "kept conditions in the semiskilled and unskilled occupations from advancing."[50] New immigrants avoided trade unions (a disposition fostered by the consistent unenthusiasm of unions to organize immigrants, as Leiserson reported: "more unions have failed or neglected to organize the recent immigrants than have succeeded, and with the exception of the recent efforts in the stock yards and in the steel industry, the national headquarters of the American Federation of Labor have not stepped in to do the work which

the constituent unions have left undone"}.[51] Such workers concentrated on making wages to send to their native country, kept close links with their fellow nationals, and eschewed assimilation. This latter blemish became a rallying point for restrictionists, who doubted their suitability to naturalize anyway. Barbara Solomon correctly emphasizes the extent to which the Dillingham Commission's report advanr.ed and legitimated the types of ethnic distinctions and racial hierarchies privileged by the anti-immigrant, prorestriction movement, and its intellectual accolades: "[S]eemingly restrained in its ethnic judgments, the Report really fulfilled the restrictionist tradition initiated by [Francis] Walker and extended by the Immigration Restriction League and sympathetic sociologists. As a result, intellectuals and reformers associated ethnic and economic liabilities of the latest immigrants so loosely that the one set of impressions inevitably suggested and complemented the other."[52] The commission strengthened the notion that a vast array of new "racial" groups had landed in the United States.

There were voices of skepticism about these alleged flaws of the new immigrants. The settlement movement (designed to help immigrants adjust to American life), of whom a leading light was Jane Addams, assumed that the newcomers' differences arose from culture, not from "race." Addams and others attempted benevolently to assist immigrants to learn English and to adjust to their new country, aims submerged in the wartime and post-1918 Americanization movement when instilling Americanism was primary. In congressional hearings held a year after the publication of the Dillingham Commission, Grace Abbott, director of the Immigrants' Protective League (Chicago) and a defender of immigrants' interests, told congressmen of her organization's efforts to aid the "Americanization" of immigrants. She threw cold water on the ahistorical notion that the older immigrants had been perceived at the time of their arrival as any less assimilable than the new immigrants were now judged in 1912. Abbott reported that "when you come in close daily contact with the newer arrivals, you find that they are men and women just like the rest of us, some good and some bad, and it is impossible to discriminate against them as a whole." But, she added, "I am sure in the background of the minds of many who have visited the immigrant quarters is that feeling that the immigration has changed and that the present races of immigrants can not be assimilated and should not be admit-

ted."[53] Abbott was skeptical about assimilation, querying both the precise content of "fundamental American ideals" and the time it took to absorb them. It was the resilience and determination of the new immigrants, often living in penury, that impressed Abbott, and not their threat to the American family or way of life. She argued that most immigrants arriving in the United States had a clear notion of the nation's distinct values and ideals and had been motivated to migrate partly as a consequence of this knowledge; this view was not widely shared. Abbott's humane reflections did not become the mainstream view. Indeed, such sentiments were outrightly derided and disregarded.

To assess assimilation, three measures were employed by the Dillingham Commission:[54] learning English, acquiring U.S. citizenship, and more nebulously, the abandoning of native customs. On all three criteria, the new immigrants were found wanting. In addition, patterns of home ownership were contrasted between new and old immigrants, with the Commission concluding that "as a rule the races of older immigration from Great Britain and northern Europe are more extensive home owners as a whole than the members of races of recent immigration."[55] The failure of new immigrants to assimilate was explained by the absence of families and the predominance of single men: "it is common practice for men of this class in industrial communities to live in boarding or rooming groups, and as they are also usually associated with each other in their work they do not come in contact with Americans, and consequently have little or no incentive to learn the English language, become acquainted with American institutions or adopt American standards." Immigrants with families, however, achieved a much fuller participation in American life, principally by their children attending school; children acted as "unconscious agents in the uplift of their parents."[56] Those immigrants who did assimilate were still looked on askance by the commission and other critics of immigration because of the allegedly harmful biological effects of intermarriage and interbreeding on the native American "stock."

The commission undertook meticulous research into the so-called racial composition of the new immigration. It devoted one of its forty-two volumes to the production of a "dictionary of races or peoples," which was prepared by Dr. Daniel Folkmar[57] (a volume that the eugenist Dr. Harry Laughlin praised for laying "the foundation for future biological work")[58] and a precursor to U.S. Education Commissioner Philander Claxton's "calendar of racial incidents." In Robert Carlson's view, the dictionary "translated Anglo-Saxonism into a scientific classification system";[59] its political character was implied by the classification of the Irish as Anglo-Saxon rather than as Celt ("the race which originally spoke Irish, one of the Celtic group of Aryan tongues"),[60] a move reflecting this group's pivotal role in the restrictionist alliance opposing eastern and southern European immigration. This strategic importance was apparent in the dictionary's description of Irish attitudes to American democracy: "like the English, the Irish come to the United States speaking our own language and imbued with sympathy for our ideals and our democratic institutions."[61] This democratic commitment would have surprised many nineteenth-century critics of Irish immigrants who rejected them precisely for their lack of fitness to govern.[62] The commission mostly utilized the racial categories already employed by the Bureau of Immigration:[63] "the Commission uses the term 'race' in a broad sense, the distinction being largely a matter of language and geography, rather than one of color or physical characteristics such as determines the various more restricted racial classifications in use, the most common of which divides mankind into only five races."[64] These were Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, Ethiopian, and American Indian. Despite commissioning this scholarly dictionary, the Dillingham commission focused principally on the traits of immigrants from southeastern Europe. These traits were addressed explicitly by the commission's anthropological study.

The Anthropological Research

Professor Franz Boas, an eminent anthropologist at Columbia University,[65] produced a study for the Dillingham Commission on "Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants."[66] This undertaking reflected in large part the prevailing ideas in biology, eugenics, and anthropology about the plausibility of specifying races and the belief in the ability to measure physical changes over time.[67] The focus here was the obverse of assimilation: rather than concentrating on how immigrants were assimilated into or affected by the new culture, the question posed was how immigrants and their descendants shaped the dominant population. Boas was a keen advocate of the effect of culture as a determinant of different societies, according it greater

significance than race.[68] Applying anthropometric studies to subjects in New York City, Boas's findings were "much more far-reaching than was anticipated" and in the commission's judgment indicated "a discovery in anthropological science that is fundamental in importance." The findings had "awakened the liveliest interest in scientific circles here and abroad," and the commission urged continued investigation. The result exciting this scientific awakening was summarized thus:

> [T]he report indicates that the descendant of the European immigrant changes his type even in the first generation almost entirely, children born not more than a few years after the arrival of the immigrant parents in America developing in such a way that they differ in type essentially from their foreign-born parents. These differences seem to develop during the earliest childhood and persist throughout life. It seems that every part of the body is influenced in this way, and that even the form of the head, which has always been considered one of the most permanent hereditary features, undergoes considerable change.[69]

Boas's study is a vivid document. It is generously illustrated with cephalic indexes of head sizes and other measurements of different nationalities (a plan to assess the condition of subjects' teeth as the main indicator of changes in bodily form had to be abandoned because of a shortage of trained researchers). Boas's key premise was that the "form of the body seems to be the most suitable characteristic of any given race"[70] and hence is ripe for measurement. Boas cited evidence that "under a more favorable environment the physical development of a race may improve," and he wanted to determine whether the United States provided such a propitious context.[71]

Boas's investigations, in fact, did apparently unearth significant changes to immigrants' descendants. The head proved to be the crucial indicator of change:

> (I]n most of the European types that have been investigated the head form, which has always been considered one of the most stable and permanent characteristics of human races, undergoes far-reaching changes due to the transfer of people from European to American soil. For instance, the east European Hebrew, who has a very round head, becomes more long-headed; the south Italian, who in Italy has an exceedingly long head, becomes more short-headed; so that in this country both approach a uniform type, as far as the roundness of the head is concerned.[72]

The longer that immigrants lived in the United States before having children, the "better" the results for their offspring, a conclusion reached by comparing measurable features of individuals of a similar "race" who were either born abroad or born in the United States within ten years of the mother's arrival, or who were born ten years after the mother had migrated to the United States. A comparison of Hebrew and Sicilian cases seemed to provide overwhelming evidence.

Boas emphasized the cultural rather than the biological determinants of these results, though his analysis provided a framework for others to stress racial dissimilarities and to use this language of race. In this sense, the framework contributed to the legitimacy of eugenic-type research in debates about immigration.[73]

The study was carried further with a detailed examination of selected Bohemians, Slovaks and Hungarians, Poles, Hebrews, Sicilians, Neapolitans, and Scots, selected "because they represent a number of the most distinct European types"[74] and because they predominated among the new immigrants. All these groups evinced significant changes with both the stature increasing and the length and width of the head decreasing (Table 3.2). Boas observed that the data "show that the changes in the dimensions of the head do not depend by any means upon the absolute or relative measurements which are found among the foreign-born, but that heads which are nearly of the same length, like those of the Bohemians and of the Hebrews, behave quite differently in this country, the length of the one increasing, while the length of the other decreases."[75] Such conclusions naturally appear dubious to the modern reader.

These differences between the American-born descendants of immigrants and the European-born immigrants were traced by Boas and his colleagues to early childhood (the features of which continued throughout adult life). Weighing up the evidence regarding facial measurements, Boas leaned heavily toward environmental influences:

> the development of the width of the face seems to my mind to show most clearly that it is not the mechanical treatment of the infant that brings about the changes in question. The cephalic index suffers a very slight decrease from the fourth year to adult life. It is therefore evident that children who arrive in America very young can not be much affected by the American environment in regard to their cephalic index. On the other hand, if we consider a measurement that increases appreciably during the period of growth, we may expect that in children born

Table 3.2 Measurements of American-Born minus Measurements of Foreign-born, Weighted according to Number of Cases

Race and Sex	Length of Head (in mm)	Width of Head (in mm)	Cephalic Index	Width of Face (inmm)	Stature (in cm)	Weight (in lb)
Bohemian						
Males	-0.7	-2.3	-1.0	-2.1	+2.9	170
Females	-.6	-1.5	-.6	-1.7	+2.2	180
Hungarians and Slovaks						
Males	-.5	-1.1	-.7	-1.0	+5.9	54
Females	-.3	-.9	-1.0	-2.2	+1.0	38
Poles						
Males	-.3	+.2	+.2	+.7	+4.2	22
Females	+.9	-1.6	-1.4	-1.3	+1.7	27
Hebrews						
Males	+2.2	-1.8	-2.0	-1.1	+1.7	654
Females	+1.9	-2.0	-2.0	-1.3	+1.5	259
Sicilians						
Males	-2.4	+.7	+1.3	-1.2	-0.1	188
Females	-3.0	+.8	+1.8	-2.0	-0.5	144
Neapolitans						
Males	-.9	+.9	+.9	-1.2	+0.6	248
Females	-1.7	+1.0	+1.4	-6	-1.8	126
Scottish						
Males	+1.4	-0.5	-0.8	-1.5	+1.8	39
Females	-0.3	+0.3	+0.2	+1.9	+3.9	33

Source: Derived from U.S. Immigration Commission, *Abstract of the Report on Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), p. 28.

> abroad but removed to America when young, the total growth may be modified by American environment. The best material for this study is presented by the Bohemians, among whom there are relatively many full-grown American-born individuals. The width of face of Bohemians, when arranged according to their age at the time of immigration, shows that there is a loss among those who came here as young children-the greater the younger they were. Continuing this comparison with the American-born, born one, two, etc years after the arrival of their mothers, the width of face is seen to decrease still further. It appears therefore that the American environment causes a retardation of the growth of the width of face at a period when mechanical influences are no longer possible.[76]

Boas concluded that settlement in large American cities and intermarriage patterns probably accounted for these trends.

Politically, Boas's findings, although hailed as startling and of scientific importance by the Dillingham Commission, in fact contradicted the burgeoning focus on hereditary factors in determining national characteristics.[77] Such factors were certainly given greater prominence by eugenists; indeed, skeptics of eugenics cited Boas's research.[78] If the U.S. environment had a positive effect on its residents, including recent immigrants, then agitation about the baneful consequences of the new immigration appeared misplaced and even pernicious. Indeed, Boas's own scholarly work was highly critical of race as a category for comparative analysis. His cultural anthropological framework eschewed the common assumption of the researcher's superiority over the investigated culture, an approach methodologically attained by acquiring the language of the studied group. This approach permitted an appreciation of culture-rather than simply of mental aptitudes and abilities-as a contributor to behavior and skills, a point that Thomas Gossett stresses: "when Boas speaks of race theories it is generally with the reluctance of a man who feels torn away from his essential task of examining the effects of a given culture upon a given people."[79]

Consequently, eugenists and others interested in such questions made little effort to build on or to incorporate Boas's results, though as Pole pertinently remarks, Boas's "methods did not contribute much toward liberating the popular mind from the notion that head forms and physical structure had something to do with what was inside the head."[80] The claims of Madison Grant in his book *The Passing of the Great* Race-forewarning of the end of the "great white race" because of interracial mixing-had greater influence than did the research of Boas in reinforcing the latent racial concerns of restrictionists. Such grand claims were comfortably wedded with the Mendelian laws of inheritance studied by eugenists. Boas's research contributed indirectly to eugenic debates because, by employing measurements of cephalic indexes, it could be engaged with in those terms. In Pole's phrase, it was "susceptible to attack by arguments based on his own continued respect for measurements of the cephalic index."[81] This judgment is in danger, however, of belittling the importance of Boas's research in the 1920s in laying to rest assumptions of

scientific racism (even if advocates of restriction choose to ignore this implication).

Politically and intellectually, Boas fought racism both in politics and in scholarship, early championing the cause of African Americans' rights and subverting racist arguments: "it is very improbable that the majority of individuals composing the white race should possess greater ability than the Negro race." He recognized the dangers posed by pseudoscientific arguments for African Americans, warning that "the strong development of racial consciousness, which has been increasing during the last century ... is the gravest obstacle to the progress of the Negro race, as it is an obstacle to the progress of all strongly individualized social groups."[82] As Thomas Gossett comments: "Boas was no cloistered expert. He spoke out again and again in the 1920's against racists like Madison Grant, Henry Fairfield Osborn, and Lothrop Stoddard."[83] He was an early and vigorous opponent of Nazi racism. In the public debate about immigration, however, Boas's work was less significant than other parts of the Dillingham Commission. Nonetheless, eugenists were highly suspicious of his work for the commission. When his name was proposed to the Immigration Restriction League as a potential member of a eugenics study committee, it was quickly rejected by Prescott Hall in a letter to the eugenist Charles Davenport. Hall, secretary of the league, wrote: "I must confess to ... not very much confidence in Dr Boas. Of course, he has certain technical training for such work but I believe he is a relative of Emil Boas who was agent of the Hamburg-American line and was employed by the Immigration Commission as expert at the suggestion of Congressman Bennett to please the steamship companies and give him a fat job." He added, "while I am not of course competent to pass on the results of his work, and while his results are interesting, they seem to me far less important than investigation as to the mental traits-at least, if Dr Wood's theory is correct that the higher cellular lines modify last, and the lower ones, like the bones and muscular, modify first."[84]

Crime, Poverty, Mental Health, and the New Immigrants

The Dillingham Commission gave close attention to the immigration of criminals and the "mentally defective," as well as to the incidence of immigrants in receipt of charity or engaged in crime. These concerns resonated through immigration debates. In fact, it was the stories and claims about these features of southern and eastern European immigrants that had fueled the debate in the 1880s and 1890s, and indeed contributed to the founding of the commission. Exhaustive studies were undertaken by the commission's staff.

Few immigrants became charity seekers, despite commonplace assumptions to the contrary, a reflection, in the commission's view, of stringent immigration tests.[85] Of those with mental illnesses, the commission accepted that medical examinations already in force played a significant role in identifying sufferers but were less good at anticipating the development of such debilities. Legislation in 1882 and 1891, respectively, excluded the immigration of lunatics and of insane persons. A law passed in 1907 excluded "idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, persons insane within five years of the date of application of admission, persons having had two or more previous attacks of insanity, and persons suffering from mental defects, not otherwise specified, sufficiently serious to affect ability to earn a living."[86] These laws did not result, however, in increased number of exclusions, especially in the new century (Table 3.3). In a key section of its report, the commission claimed that immigrants were disproportionately represented in the asylum population: "[O]f the 150,151 insane persons enumerated in hospitals on December 31, 1903, 47,078 or 31.4 per cent, were foreign-born whites The proportion of native-born whites of native parentage was 33.6 per cent and the proportion of native-born whites of foreign parentage was 10 per cent. Only 6.6 per cent of all the insane persons enumerated were colored."[87] Combining the numbers for the insane with the "feeble minded" gave a total of 47,934 "mentally unsound persons of foreign birth" in U.S. hospitals and institutions. These data permitted the commission to conclude thar although significant numbers of hopeful immigrants were excluded on mental health grounds, nonetheless, "there are in the United States many thousands of insane or feeble-minded persons of foreign birth." From the commission's calculations, "it appears that insanity is relatively more prevalent among the foreign-born than among the native-born, and relatively more prevalent among certain immigrant races or nationalities than among others."[88] Of foreign nationalities' relative contribution to the insane population in hospitals in the United States, the descending rank ordering was Irish, Scandinavians, Germans, French, Scottish, Hungarians, English and Welsh, Italians, Russians and Poles, and Canadians. These sorts of conclu-

Table 3.3 Exclusion of Immigrants and Insanity, 1890-1909

Year	Lunacy	Insanity	Idiocy	Idiocy and Insanity	Imbecility	Feeble-mindedness	Total
1890	26		J				29
1891		36	2				38
1892		17	4				21
1893		8	3				11
1894		5	4				9
1895				6			6
1896		10	1				11
1897		6	1				7
1898		12	1				13
1899		19	1				20
1900		32	1				33
1901		16	6				22
1902		27	7				34
1903		23	1				24
1904		33	16				49
1905		92	38				130
1906		139	92				231
1907		189	29				218
1908		159	20		45	121	345
1909		141	18		42	121	322
Total							1,573

Source: Derived from U.S. Immigration Commission, *fmmigration and Insanity* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1911), p. 7.

sions were clearly likely to be taken as further grounds for restriction by proponents of this position, though the first three groups were not part of the so-called new immigration. In the 1920s, the allegedly disproportionate number of immigrants in insane institutions triggered part of the restrictionist movement.

The data on immigrants in charity hospitals suggested contrary inferences: "the proportion of patients of races of recent immigration from southern and eastern Europe was much smaller than is popularly believed to be the case."[89] Alcoholism was the commonest cause of hospitalization. In respect to immigrants and crime, the populist linkage was again less manifest in the data compiled. Although statistics did demonstrate that convictions for crimes were higher among foreign-born than native-born Americans, they did not imply a greater criminal tendency among the former. The commission added,

judiciously, that "it must be remembered that the proportion of persons of what may be termed the criminal age is greater among the foreign-born than among natives, and when due allowance is made fo this fact it appears that criminality, judged by convictions, is abou equally prevalent in each class."[90]

Such generosity was absent in its detailed discussion of Italian immigrants. The commission unequivocally argued-partly on the basi of results of a field trip to the country-that Italian criminals were gaining admittance to the United States. This assessment was interweaved with startling generalities about Italians: "an alarming feature of the Italian immigration movement to the U. S. is the fact that it admittedly includes many individuals belonging to the criminal classes, particularly of southern Italy and Sicily." Hence, the "prevailing alarm in this respect" did not rest simply on "the fact that a good many actual criminals come to the U. S. from Italy, but also by the not unfounded belief that certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race." Stereotyping of Italians was harsh: "in the popular mind, crimes of personal violence, robbery, blackmail, and extortion are peculiar to the people of Italy, and it can not be denied that the number of such offenses committed among Italians in this country warrants the prevalence of such a belief."[91] Such negative portraits of Italians were commo_n, as the historian Humbert Nelli summarizes: "to Americans the Italian immigrants who poured into the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ... appeared to be the dregs of a broken and defeated race,"[92] a view also informing Woodrow Wilson's *History of the American People.*

A related study comes four years after the Dillingham Commission, in an address to the NAACP's annual conference. An analysis of the women's penal institution in Bedford, New York, found no particular association between nationality and crime: "each race contributed in proportion to its numerical strength ... no one race can boast over another as to its moral character." However, the children of foreign-born parents did significantly outnumber native-born women confined at Bedford.[93]

Dillingham's Conclusions

The commission's copious data provided, in due course, grist to the eugenists' mill and others interested in differentiating between types of immigrants. Its analysis plainly distinguished new immigrants from

old and appeared unequivocably to demonstrate the unsuitability, as potential citizens, of the new arrivals. Politically, these conclusions set the stage for legislation.

Archdeacon argues that the commission's analysis was biased: not only did the commission romanticize the "old immigrants," but also "its main failing came in the heavy-handed use of current racial theories in the analysis of data."[94] Although this sort of interpretation is too crude a summary of the massive research and data compilation undertaken by the Dillingham Commission (and in employing "racial theory," the commission was in step with most of the intellectual establishment), nonetheless, the commission's report played an important role in reifying stereotypes about immigrants, notably sentimentalizing the distinction between "old" immigrants from northern and western Europe and "new" immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, the latter portrayed as undesirable and unassimilable migrants.[95] Congressman Albert Johnson, cosponsor of the 1924 legislation on immigration, remarked that the Dillingham Commission's study constituted the "great impetus" that culminated in the 1924 law.[96] However, the eugenist Harry Laughlin, adviser to the House Committee on Immigration in the 1920s, criticized the Dillingham Commission for framing its researches, despite their thoroughness, "exclusively as an economic problem"; consequently, he maintained, the "biology of the task received relatively little attention."[97] Laughlin's assessment contradicts the scholar Keith Fitzgerald's claim that "the intellectual influence running throughout the commission's policy recommendations is clearly that of eugenics."[98] In Laughlin's favor, it is notable that the dictionary of race, which he praised, was not systematically integrated into the commission's lengthy analyses, and the commission's case for restriction was advanced principally on economic grounds. Boas's findings were also incongruous with the commission's general approach and out of step with populist demands for restriction, though the commission's remarks about the "criminality" inherent to Italians were a measure in this direction. Furthermore, the historian Ian Dowbiggin judges that "the fact that the report paid scant attention to the biologic nature of immigrants greatly disappointed nativists, who considered race and eugenics to be the heart of the matter."[99] Such a view understates the presence of eugenic assumptions in the report. Indeed, in the year that Dillingham's report appeared, the eugenist Charles Davenport wrote

Prescott Hall at the Immigration Restriction League proposing the "formation of a committee of the Eugenics Section on family traits of recent immigrants" on the grounds that the "time is ripe."[100] Hall responded enthusiastically. By publishing Boas's study, a legitimacy was imparted to analysis in terms of racial types and categories, even if such use commonly distorted the anthropologist's careful research and disregarded his caveats.

The commission reprinted the prolix submissions of restrictionist groups. In fact, it was a significant outlet for their views, almost all of which celebrated an Anglo-American conception of U. S. nationality often combined with an unequivocal nativism. The staunchly restrictionist and traditionally anti-Catholic Junior Order of American Mechanics (10AM), whose membership was expanding dramatically during these years, told the Dillingham Commission that the "baleful influence of such a low type of immigration on our civilization, labor, morals, and citizenship is patent to every observer." The migrants were unassimilable: "[T]his country has wonderful assimilating powers and can assimilate and distribute through its body politic a great army of worthy and industrious people and those of the high moral type. But it can not assimilate the mass of lower Europe and protect its high standard of morality and good order."[101] It favored Celtic and Teutonic blood, representative of "that independent race of men of the Aryan blood."[102]

These sentiments were echoed by the Immigration Restriction League. Its secretary, Prescott Hall (a keen eugenist),[103] informed the Dillingham Commission that a literacy test was required urgently and that eugenic principles dictated the enactment of significant controls on immigrants. Hall advanced a crude eugenic framework, vitiated with the dangers of racial mixing:

> [R]ecent investigations in biology show that heredity is a far more important factor in the progress of any species than environment ... Assuming what is by no means proved, that a mixed race is a better race, we should do as we do in breeding any other species than the human, viz, secure the best specimens to breed from ... We should exercise at least as much care in admitting human beings as we exercise in relation to animals or insect pests or disease germs ... [T]here are certain parts of Europe from which all medical men and all biologists would agree that it would be better for the American race if no aliens at all were admitted.[104]

Hall unproblematically explained a country's "backwardness" as arising from inherent racial failings, which the United States could not be expected to absorb: "[I]f these immigrants 'have not had opportunities' it is because their races have not made the opportunities. There is no reason to suppose that a change of location will result in a change of inborn tendencies." [105] These caricatures, soon complemented by eugenist arguments about racial delineations, bolstered critics of immigration during the ensuing two decades.

Dillingham's Recommendations

The Dillingham Commission recommended that Congress enact restrictions on immigration, principally because of what it claimed to be the unassimilable character of recent migrants. This unassimilability differentiated them from the older type of immigrants. It wanted tougher assessment of potential immigrants in their country of origin, to find out about criminal records and mental aptitude. Immigrants who became public charges within three years of arriving in the United States were to be deported. It wanted reform of so-called "immigrant banks" and of employment agencies, both of which tended to exploit and encourage immigrants. The continued exclusion of Chinese kborers was endorsed. Its major recommendations addressed the position of single, unskilled males migrating from southern and eastern Europe, whom the Dillingham Commission judged both uninterested in assimilation and mostly unsuitable for naturalization. To effect this reduction, it proposed several measures: a literacy test, a measure already enjoying considerable support in Congress (though not in the White House); [106] a fixed quota by race "arriving each year to a certain percentage of the average of that race arriving during a given period of years"; [107] the exclusion of unskilled workers unaccompanied by dependents; annual limits on the number of immigrants admitted at each port; the specification of a fixed amount of money to be possessed by each immigrant on arrival; and an increase in the head tax, applied more leniently to men with families. Broadly, these recommendations both structured discussion and informed the detail of the immigration debate by 1929. They were a triumph for the arguments of restrictionists, salient in U.S. politics from the 1890s; indeed, Barbara Solomon suggests that these recommendations decisively "marked the advance of the [Immigration Restriction] League's cause." [108] Both the literacy test and the system of admission

based on nationality quotas were adopted, the latter a mechanism that effected selection by assessment of individual suitability. Later reforms favored skilled over unskilled immigrants.

There was a lone voice of dissent on the Dillingham Commission, that of Congressman William Bennet. From New York, Bennet argued strongly against a literacy test and maintained that the commission's own research revealed that the problems of criminality, insanity, and pauperism among the new immigrants had been exaggerated. (This view seems well-founded in the commission's data, and I would concur with Keith Fitzgerald's assessment that "what little interpretation of this data the reports offered tended to undercut racial distinctions among immigrants on the grounds that their economic circumstances explained their living conditions and economic pu suits more than any other characteristic"). [109] One probusiness lobby, the National Liberal Immigration League, was quick to stress the mixed picture painted in the Dillingham Commission (it had, in fact, strongly supported the commission's establishment [110]). It vigorously lobbied the executive to resist from enacting further restrictionist laws. Its president, Charles Eliot, gave several reasons for permitting generous immigration, including the abundance of land in the U. S. waiting to be settled and the need for labor to develop and expand industry, a process to which even unskilled workers contributed. The league opposed a literacy test "because ability to read is no proof of either health or character" and, in a telling phrase, observed that "in all races the most dangerous criminals come from classes that can read and write, and not from the illiterate." [111] The league argued that assimilation was a lengthy process that ought not to be judged or assessed prematurely: "experience during the nineteenth century shows at real assimilation will take centuries; and that amalgamation, or blending of races through intermarriage, is not only extraordinarily slow, but of doubtful issue as to the strength and viability of offspring." Eliot added that "the different races already in this country live beside each other, and all produce in time good citizens of the Republic; but they do not blend." [112] Behind such rhetoric, the league's principal motive was a liberal economic one. It opposed a literacy test because of the probable reduction of a regular labor supply. [113] The league proposed transporting unemployed workers from the large Eastern cities to points of employment throughout the country, particularly mill towns. Consequently, it found itself in conflict with

organized labor, criticizing the efforts of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) president, Samuel Gompers, to secure immigration restriction through a literacy test.[114] Organized labor's converse interests made it a strong supporter of restriction.[115]

The Dillingham Commission's support for a literacy test, together with the pressures from restrictionist interest groups and activists, bore fruit in 1917-aided by American entry to the Great War-when such a test was legislated. This criterion required prospective immigrants aged over sixteen to read a passage in a language of their choice at the point of entry to the United States. The test was supported by both organized labor[116] (fearful of cheap workers) and pressure groups such as the Immigration Restriction League.[117] The latter maintained that the "reading test calls for only the most rudimentary education. Italy has started to improve its school system every time this bill has been pending. The Russian Jews can certainly learn Yiddish if they are willing to take the trouble, even if not always able to learn Russian."[118] The Immigration Restriction League had favored the literacy test from the end of the nineteenth century, energetically lobbying the federal executive to enact it. The league received support from the Bureau of Immigration at the Commerce Department, whose Commissioner-General had endorsed a literacy test since 1900.[119]

The literacy test had been vetoed once by President Taft[120] and twice by President Wilson, the latter having wooed immigrant voters in the 1912 presidential election. As Higham astutely notes, this action had placed Wilson in an invidious position: "Woodrow Wilson labored throughout the campaign under the embarrassing handicap of having to repudiate over and over again the contemptuous phrases he had written about southern and eastern European immigrants in his *History of the American People* a decade before."[121] These vetoes prompted copious correspondence from both proliteracy- and antiliteracy-tests groups.[122] The International Association of Machinists complained bitterly about the presidential veto in February 1915, as did a host of other labor organizations, including the Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' Union; International Typographical Union; Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners; Tobacco Workers' Union; Pattern Makers' League; Paper Makers; Boot and Shoe Workers' Union; and Switchmen's Union.[123] Economic liberals supported the vetoes.

The political and electoral pressure for limits was too intense by

1917, and so Woodrow Wilson's veto of that year was overturned by Congress. For the scholar Robert Divine, the 1917 law marks a fundamental modification of the immigration law. It replaced the tenet of individual selection and suitability with one of group selection: "a new principle, group selection, was evident in such discrimination directed against the new immigration, and this concept of judging men by their national and racial affiliations rather than by their individual qualifications was to become the basic principle in the immigration legislation of the postwar period."[124] The literacy test exempted those who could demonstrate that they were escaping from religious persecution (designed principally for Russian Jews), and an immigrant's dependents were to be admitted regardless of their literacy. The 1917 Immigration Act formalized the Asia-Pacific Triangle, an Asiatic barred zone, which building on the previous restrictions in respect to Chinese and Japanese immigrants was intended completely to exclude Asian immigration to the United States.

The law's passage halted but did not end agitation for restriction. It is notable that the pressure for restriction by set nationality quotas, another recommendation of the Dillingham Commission, intensified. The clerk of the House Committee on Immigration speculated that "enactment of the first quota law was delayed because of the hectic and inflated prosperity which did not go to smash until the late summer of 1920. Immediately the lists of unemployed began to grow it was easy for restrictionists to have their way."[125] When the situation did "go to smash," the restrictionist pressure, reinforced by eugenic critiques, was unstoppable.

Conclusion

Three major conclusions arise from this consideration of the Dillingham Commission. First, the commission's report formalized and generalized the dichotomy between new and old immigrants, inflating the dangers of the former group and flattering Americans' depictions of the latter. Historically, such a dichotomy would have been observable in the mid-nineteenth-century with Irish and German immigrants constituting the dangerous category of new immigrant. This historical perspective was mostly lost in the political purpose of the Dillingham report, however, and it was the distinction proposed between northwestern and southeastern European immigrants that it

promoted. The dichotomy proved to be a pertinacious one. Three years after its publication, the magazine *Outlook's* editorial entitled "The Old Stock and the New" reproduced many of the assumptions of the Dillingham distinction and drew the inevitable conclusions: "with this widening of ideas and interests there has come another group of men and women from the Old World who are rapidly creating a 'new stock,' and many thoughtful Americans are asking whether in making the house so free to all who want to share its protection we are not endangering the ideas of the family and jeopardizing the spirit and faith which are the most precious possessions bequeathed by the men and women of the 'old stock.'" [126] Such distinctions and assumptions might also distort perceptions of the number of old and new groups, worried the sociologist Robert Park. Reflecting on efforts in the 1910s to make English the dominant language, Park observed that "possibly native-born Americans ... think that the bulk of our population is made up of descendants of the Colonial settlers. In so far as this illusion holds, native Americans are likely to think there is a much greater demand than actually exists in the United States for uniformity of language and ideas." [127] Park recognized the determination of the Americanizers to impose a standard identity and single language. Park's additional concerns proved both sensible and prescient:

> [T]he fact that human nature is subject to illusions of this sort may have practical consequences. It is conceivable, for example, that if it should come to be generally regarded as a mark of disloyalty or inferiority to speak a foreign language, we should reproduce in a mild form the racial animosities and conflicts which are resulting in the breaking up of the continental imperiums, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany. In all these countries the animosities appear to have been created very largely by efforts to suppress the mother tongues as literary languages. [128]

The distinction between old and new immigrants as a description of the trends between the 1890s and 1921 has proved durable, and one that scholars have had to employ. This initially political, and now academic, distinction influenced the Americanization process.

Second, the Dillingham Commission's exclusive concern with new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe by implication reinforced the political marginality of African Americans: conducting the debate in terms exclusively of white immigrants emphasized a vision of the United States's identity as a white one. This emphasis was

ironic, since, as Mary White Ovington pointed out in her study of African Americans in New York, they were more fully assimilated than most new immigrants. Ovington concluded that "few of New York's citizens are so American as the colored, few show so little that is unusual or picturesque. The educated Italian might have in his home some relic of his former country, the Jew might show some symbol of his religion; but the Negro, to the seeker of the unusual, would seem commonplace." This acculturation arose from the length of time African Americans had been present in the U.S.: "[T]he colored man in New York has no associations with his ancient African home, no African traditions, no folk lore ... He is ambitious to be conventional in his manners, his customs, striving as far as possible to be like his neighbor-a distinctly American ambition." [129] Yet the criteria of assimilability promoted by restrictionists seemed blind to these attributes because of the emphasis on an Anglo-Saxon Americanism, which was white. Here can be identified the origins of Toni Morrison's observation that "America means white."

Finally, and related to the second point, the Dillingham Commission's anxieties about the assimilability of the new immigrants rested on a model of the United States's dominant ethnic identity as an Anglo-Saxon one, traceable to the English settlers and subsequent northern European immigrants. It was not a melting-pot assimilationist model-despite rhetoric-to the contrary-since there were clear views about who should be assimilated and who not. Although the melting-pot rhetoric served obvious populist interests, in practice, the key policy-makers had a clear idea of how the pot should be constructed and what its outcome should approximate.

Published in 1911, the Dillingham Commission's report illustrates how the issues of whiteness, assimilation, and Americanization were central to the formulation of immigration policy in American political development. The next two chapters examine how these efforts determined the definition of "American" in the crucial decade of the 1920s.