

**The Political Regulation of Immigration in the United States, 1894-
1924**

Robert Júlio Decker

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the role of the Immigration Restriction League in the political regulation of immigration in United States between 1894 and 1924. The League promoted the exclusion of the so-called new immigrants, assumed to be not ‘fully white’ and therefore inferior to Anglo-Saxons. Similar to other progressive movements, the League’s activities included the scientific investigation of a problem, the creation of public awareness and, eventually, the implementation of solution through legislation and government agencies. Based on a wide range of source material, the thesis investigates the IRL’s engagement in the racialization of the new immigrants, its interaction with eugenicists, other progressive reformers and state agencies involved in research on immigrants and border control.

The League’s activities are interpreted as a biopolitical and governmental project at the intersection of political self-regulation, the construction of racial identities and the increasing power of the modern nation-state to control and regulate the population. The thesis argues that the IRL can be understood as an example for a changing mode of power in the progressive era that relied on its citizens’ participation in the optimization of the state. Since the League equated the American state with the supposedly superior Anglo-Saxon race, it concentrated on informing other white citizens of the putative racial threat posed by the new immigration. Compiling and interpreting statistical data, the IRL argued that new immigrants were more likely to be criminal, insane or paupers due to inherent racial characteristics. It thus appealed to citizens, educators, scientists, reformers and politicians to engage in the protection from this threat, resulting in stricter border controls, the passage of a literacy test and the establishment of the quota system.

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Part I:
The Racial Discourse and the Immigration Restriction League

1. Introduction

Writing in 1924, the year Congress imposed drastic and permanent restrictions on European immigration, Robert DeCourcy Ward was pleased to report the new legislation finally guaranteed to “maintain, as nearly as possible, our present racial *status quo*; to preserve, as best we can at this late date, something approaching racial homogeneity”. While the original desire to limit immigration had been economical, Ward explained, the “fundamental reason for its continuance is biological”. As a member of the executive committee of the Immigration Restriction League (IRL), an association formed in 1894 to lobby for a racially defined restriction of European immigration, he announced that the new legislation was based on the fact that the “great majority of our people has pronounced in favor of this great and vital change in our national policy”, marking “a turning point in American civilization”.¹

The passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act, did indeed mark a turning point in American history. The Act’s provisions and the incorporated quota system were to shape the composition of immigration, and, eventually, the American population, for almost the next forty years. Together with its 1921 predecessor, it ended the era of European mass immigration. Simultaneously, the quota system selected immigrants according to nationalities represented in the 1890 census to re-establish the composition of the American population of earlier years. The Johnson-Reed Act was the final step in a long series of restrictive immigration regulations enacted since the passage of the first comprehensive federal immigration act in 1882. While the focus on race had already been incorporated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, regulations affecting European immigrants first aimed at classes of ‘undesirable’ individuals before they

¹ Ward, To Members of the League, 14 June 1924, Boston, Boston Public Library, Robert DeCourcy Ward Papers, Box 81; Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Our New Immigration Policy’, *Foreign Affairs*, 3.1 (1924), 99–111 (p. 110); Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Higher Mental and Physical Standards for Immigrants’, *The Scientific Monthly*, 9.5 (1924), 533–47 (p. 538). In this thesis, the term racial is used to describe the contemporary interpretation of differences between European immigrant groups. While this usage does to some extent re-inscribe these categories, the explanation of the historical context enables the reader to comprehend the constructed nature of racial distinctions. The terms “ethnic” and “ethnicity” will not be applied since they are not used in the source material and are a projection of our current categories that actually obstructs historical analysis: Matthew F. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 6–7; David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White; the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), p. 18.

were transformed into the discrimination of racially defined groups. How was the Americans' consent on this drastic immigration restriction achieved? How did restrictionists overcome the American tradition of providing an asylum for the persecuted and oppressed? Which underlying mechanisms pushed for the establishment of an elaborate state apparatus of immigration control? The history of the IRL allows us to explore these questions in detail and enables a deeper understanding of progressive-era reform movements, the history of the eugenic movement and the construction of a modern apparatus of border control in the US.

Immigration and its effects on society were among the most hotly discussed topics of the progressive era. This can be attributed to two factors: the change in the immigrants' origin and their arrival in unprecedented numbers. While most of the mid-nineteenth century immigrants had come from the British Isles and Germany, the so-called new immigrants were of Eastern, South-eastern and Southern European origin. In the 1880s, 5.2 million immigrants had come to the US, nearly doubling the previous decade's number. While the figures decreased to 3.7 million in the 1890s due to economic crises, the first decade of the twentieth century saw a record high of almost 8.8 million immigrants arriving. These figures, however, only include the net immigration; emigration figures were not recorded until 1908. Thomas J. Archdeacon, projecting 1908 to 1924 remigration figures back onto the period between 1890 and 1920, has estimated that at least 30% of immigrants returned, at least temporarily, to their home countries. Regardless of these trends, foreign-born people never constituted less than 13.2% of the overall American population between 1860 and 1920.²

This jump of immigration has been attributed to a combination of push- and pull-factors. The increase in population growth in South-eastern Europe and the demand for labour in the rapidly industrializing US provided strong incentives for immigrants. Faster, more secure and cheaper means of transatlantic transportation were provided by steamships. In contrast to the family structures of the old

² Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: Free Press, 1983), pp. 115–17; Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), p. 5; Michael C. LeMay, *Guarding the Gates: Immigration and National Security* (London: Praeger, 2006), pp. 69–92. For some groups the remigration rate reached even sixty percent. For the history of remigration, see Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Home, 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

immigrants, these new groups' pioneers were mostly young males who intended to only stay for a limited time to earn money as unskilled workers. Due to their different region of origin, their religion (often Catholic, Orthodox or Jewish), and their destinations – mostly the urban industrial centres of the Northeast instead of the rural areas of the Mid-West – Americans regarded new immigrants as distinct from groups that had arrived earlier. While in 1870 new immigrants had only made up 2.5% of all immigrants, their proportion had risen to 35% in 1890; of the more than 14.5 million immigrants arriving between 1900 and 1920, 44% came from South-eastern Europe.³

The demand for the regulation of immigration became a permanent theme in progressive-era political debate. Before 1875, only scattered state regulations had existed.⁴ The 1875 Page Act excluded persons classified as convicts and prostitutes, the latter provision targeted Chinese women. In 1882, under pressure from Pacific and Western states and labour unions, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that limited their immigration drastically for the next ten years. The regulations were tightened further in the 1880s; in 1892, the Act was extended for another ten years before it was made permanent in 1902. Depicted as racially inferior to white Americans, the laws and the discussions regarding Chinese immigration shaped those concerning European immigration and provided “a powerful framework to be used to racialize other threatening, excludable, and undesirable aliens”.⁵ Regarding the exclusion of individual immigrants, the first comprehensive federal immigration act passed in 1882 excluded “any convict, lunatic, idiot or person unable to take care of himself or herself without a public charge”. Three years later, these regulations were augmented by the Foran Act. In prohibiting the importation of “contract labor”,

³ Archdeacon, pp. 117–20; Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 121–26; Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), pp. 202–05. This pattern only started to change in the 1920s due to the improved economic position of the new immigrants and the quota system: Donna R. Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820 - 1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 28.

⁴ Neuman argues that historians have wrongfully neglected state regulations, leading to an “open borders myth”, but admits that the “patchwork of immigration regulations was not very rigorously enforced”: Gerald L. Neuman, *Strangers to the Constitution: Immigrants, Borders, and Fundamental Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 42, more general: 19–44.

⁵ Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 1–46. For the model character of the Page Act, see also Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 31–54.

the Act excluded those travelling on prepaid tickets or having secured jobs in advance, targeting mostly Italian immigrants. The subsequent 1891 Immigration Act amended the categories of individual deviance by excluding

idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become public charges, persons suffering from loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, [and] polygamists.

The Act also created the Bureau of Immigration headed by the Superintendent of Immigration as part of the Treasury Department and established immigration stations.⁶

The legislative response to immigration thus defined ‘undesirable immigration’ in two different ways: while Chinese immigrants were excluded for their putative racial difference and inferiority, restrictions against European immigrants were limited to categories of individual behaviour. When the IRL was founded in 1894, it concentrated on the extension of restrictive legislation to the new immigrants as a racialized group. While a complete exclusion such as applied to the Chinese was far beyond political possibilities, the League wanted to at least diminish the number of new immigrants significantly by introducing a literacy test that would affect new immigrants disproportionately. This idea was rooted in the racial discourse that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century which assumed that groups living in or originating from North-western Europe were of ‘Teuton’ or ‘Anglo-Saxon’ descent, intrinsically superior not only to the ‘coloured races’, but also to the ‘Alpine’ and ‘Mediterranean races’. For the IRL, the regulation of immigration was therefore meant to maintain the supposedly superior racial quality of the American population.

⁶ Act of August 3, 1882 (22 Stat. 214); Act of February 26, 1885 (23 Stat. 332); Act of March 3, 1891 (26 Stat. 1084). The Contract Labor Law remained more of a gesture to the American labour movement than an effective instrument of exclusion. Due to problems in its enforcement, only about ten thousand of the seven million immigrants arriving between 1892 and 1905 were denied entry or deported under the law. See Donna Gabaccia, ‘The “Yellow Peril” and the “Chinese of Europe”’: Global Perspectives on Race and Labor, 1815-1930’, in *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, ed. by Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (Bern: Lang, 1997), 4: International and Comparative Social History, pp. 177–96; Luciano J. Iorizzo, *Italian Immigration and the Impact of the Padrone System* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), pp. 84–91; Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For federal immigration control, see Vincent J. Cannato, *American Passage: The History of Ellis Island* (New York: Harper, 2009), pp. 1–69; Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 3–26; Thomas M. Pitkin, *Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 9–29.

In American historiography, negative reactions to European immigration have mostly been interpreted in terms of nativism, or, more precisely, different waves of nativism. Following John Higham's influential *Strangers in the Land*, most historians have not questioned his definition of nativism as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections". According to Higham, three different types of nativism coexisted and sometimes intersected between 1860 and 1925: anti-Catholic, anti-radical and racist nativism, the latter gaining momentum from the last decade of the nineteenth century. Inspired by psychological models, Higham interpreted Americans' reactions to immigration as discontent and frustration with domestic conditions projected onto immigrants in form of prejudice and resentment, arguing that new immigrants "symbolized vividly the social and economic ills with which nativists identified the immigrants generally".⁷ As part of a revisionist school of historians of the 1950s, Higham and colleagues such as Oscar Handlin and Richard Hofstadter for the first time investigated new immigrants as historical subjects. These scholars examined American reactions to immigration against the backdrop of McCarthyism, segregation and the revision of the immigration law to oppose the remnants of nativism and to uncover its underlying structures; Handlin's focus also extended to the assimilation of immigrants.⁸ Succeeding generations of immigration historians moved beyond the depiction of immigrants as passive victims of discrimination by incorporating social history and ethnic groups' agency, but generally accepted the model of nativism.⁹

⁷ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 1955 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), pp. 3-11, 88. For an overview of the historiography on nativism, see Tyler Anbinder, 'Nativism and Prejudice Against Immigrants', in *A Companion to American Immigration*, ed. by Reed Ueda (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 177-201. Higham built on the work of Billington: Ray A. Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938).

⁸ William S. Bernard, Carolin Zeleny and Henry Miller (eds), *American Immigration Policy: A Reappraisal* (New York: Harper, 1950); Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1973); Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957); Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955). Higham lists these factors as his personal motivation: Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 4, 332. Hofstadter, on the other hand, emphasized how the US had overcome these traditions and was criticized by Higham and others as "consensus historian".

⁹ For early criticisms of Handlin's interpretation see Frank Thistlewaite, Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: XIe Congress International des Sciences Historiques, Uppsala, *Rapports*, V (1960); Rudolph J. Vecoli, 'Contadini in Chicago: A Critique of *The Uprooted*', *Journal of American History*, 5.December (1964), 404-17; for later examples see John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana

Higham criticized the shortcomings of his own work for a variety of reasons: by concentrating on coercive reactions to immigration supposedly rooted in social and economic problems, he neglected inclusive tendencies and the potential for liberal policies. Additionally, he disregarded relations between ethnic groups and the context of nation-building in his analysis.¹⁰ More recent histories of non-European immigration that focused on questions of race, gender and class widened this criticism to the negligence of the reactions to Chinese immigration as predecessor to anti-European nativism, of immigrants' identity concepts, and of the organizational dynamics of nativist groups.¹¹

The advent of whiteness studies in the 1990s shifted historians' focus again, this time from the social history of ethnic groups to the investigation of race as a social construct that changed over time and place. In several studies, authors such as David Roediger, Noel Ignatiev and Matthew Jacobson traced how different immigrant groups of the nineteenth and twentieth century were regarded as non-white and inferior to native Americans and only slowly "became white" over time, often by adopting the prevalent discrimination of African Americans and other groups in American society.¹² Consequently, Jacobson criticized Higham's

University Press, 1987); Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977). For recent overviews of research on immigration, see David A. Gerber, 'Immigration Historiography at the Crossroads', *Reviews in American History*, 39.1 (2011), 74–86; Mae M. Ngai, 'Immigration and Ethnic History', in *American History Now*, ed. by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), pp. 358–75.

¹⁰ John Higham, 'Another Look at Nativism', *Catholic Historical Review*, 44 (1958), 147–58; John Higham, 'Instead of a Sequel, or how I Lost my Subject', *Reviews in American History*, 28.2 (2000), 327–39, the latter was incorporated in the new edition of *Strangers in the Land*: Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 331–45.

¹¹ Dale T. Knobel, *"America for the Americans": The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: Twayne, 1996), p. XVI; Lee, *America's Gates*, p. 32; Walter B. Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 2. For a criticism that stresses that Higham neglected questions of class over race and ethnicity, see Amy L. Fairchild, *Science at the Borders: Immigrant Medical Inspection and the Shaping of the Modern Industrial Labor Force* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 8–9.

¹² Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and what that Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Jennifer Guglielmo, *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Jacobson, *Different Color*; Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); David A. J. Richards, *Italian American: The Racialization of an Ethnic Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*. For a counterargument which uses the same theoretical assumptions, see Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). For a broader criticism of whiteness studies, see Eric Arnesen, 'Whiteness and Historians' Imagination', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60.Fall

assumption that nativism shifted towards racism at the end of the nineteenth century, stating that the shift rather occurred “from one brand of bedrock racism to another”.¹³ More recently, historians have criticized the concept of nativism for its “indeterminate” definitions.¹⁴ Aristide Zolberg argued that Higham’s conception of nativism, inspired by contemporary psychological theories, as rooted in a vague “frustration” with domestic affairs projected onto immigrants leads to a tautology that blurs the distinction between cause and effect. Zolberg and scholars such as Patrick W. Ettinger, Keith Fitzgerald and Dorothee Schneider have taken up Higham’s plea for a contextualization of immigration restriction with the “thickening matrix of national institutions and national culture”, centring their work on the extension of state control.¹⁵ These publications have been augmented by recent histories of the Public Health Service’s (PHS) role in controlling the border, continuing Alan Kraut’s pioneering work.¹⁶

The history of the IRL has predominantly been interpreted in the framework of nativism. Most historians of the 1950s stressed the IRL members’ and executives’ social background. As part of the New England and Boston elite, the so-called Brahmins, the League’s agitation against new immigrants was interpreted as a reaction of “a group which was itself losing political power within its own section”

(2001), 3–32. For an overview of whiteness studies in American and Australian immigration historiography, see Georgia Shiells, ‘Immigration History and Whiteness Studies: American and Australian Approaches Compared’, *History Compass*, 8.8 (2010), 790–804. In this thesis, the term “native American” is used in the contemporary sense; “Native American” indicates that descendants of the first nations are addressed.

¹³ Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 42, 69.

¹⁴ Linda S. Bosniak, “‘Nativism’ the Concept: Some Reflections”, in *Immigrants Out! The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States*, ed. by Juan F. Perea (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 279–99 (pp. 281–82).

¹⁵ Higham, *Strangers*, p. 339; Patrick W. Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Keith Fitzgerald, *The Face of the Nation: Immigration, the State, and the National Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 96–125; Dorothee Schneider, *Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 61–70; Zolberg, pp. 6–9; see also Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 88–89; John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 93–103. For a criticism of the concept of nativism, see also Otis L. Graham, *Unguarded Gates: A History of America’s Immigration Crisis* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp. 28–35.

¹⁶ Fairchild; Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the “Immigrant Menace”* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Lee, *America’s Gates*, pp. 47–74; Barbara Lüthi, *Invading Bodies: Medizin und Immigration in den USA 1880 - 1920* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009); Alexandra M. Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 57–81.

due to the growing political influence of Irish-Americans, to quote Handlin. Hofstadter described nativist progressives as a “small fraction of academic progressives who expressed the feeling of larger masses” which gained support due to reformers’ frustration with the perceived immunity of immigrants to their efforts for assimilation and stressed the continuity from Populist thought to the restrictionists’ agenda. Higham also identified the IRL as “blue bloods” and “practical-minded intellectuals from well-to-do, long-established families”. In his opinion, the IRL articulated the broader nativist feeling rooted in “the social and economic problems of an urban-industrial society”.¹⁷ The only monograph published on the IRL’s history was written by Barbara Miller Solomon, one of Handlin’s students. In her analysis, she concentrated on the “ideology of restriction as a vantage point from which to examine Brahmin attitudes toward themselves in their local society, in the nation at large and in the world beyond”. Dedicating a third of her book to the history of the Boston elite before 1890, she argued that the growing animosity towards new immigrants resulted from the Brahmins’ loss of political power and the “Anglo-Saxon complex”, the idea that Anglo-Saxons were superior to other Europeans. In her opinion, IRL members had forsaken the older generation’s ideal of assimilation because of their eroding social status and the rise of eugenics.¹⁸

Succeeding histories of immigration mostly accepted Solomon’s and Higham’s interpretations of the IRL as an “upper-class, even patrician movement”, supposedly attracting “the allegiance of racists and Yahoos of all stripes”.¹⁹

¹⁷ Handlin, *The Uprooted*, p. 257; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 98, 102-103; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, pp. 175–84. For a similar argumentation, see also Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). He erroneously attributed the founding of the League to Henry Cabot Lodge, John Fiske and Nathaniel Shaler, a mistake perpetuated by other historians, see for example Michael C. LeMay, *From Open Door to Dutch Door: An Analysis of U.S. Immigration Policy Since 1820* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 59. For a recent take on this interpretation, see Bluford Adams, ‘World Conquerors or Dying People? Racial Theory, Regional Anxiety, and the Brahmin Anglo-Saxonists’, *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 8.2 (2009), 189–216.

¹⁸ Barbara M. Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition, 1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. VII-VIII, 1-81, 150-151. For the earliest overview of the IRL’s history, see Joseph H. Taylor, ‘The Immigration Restriction League (1894-1924)’, *Midwestern Journal*, 1. Summer (1949).

¹⁹ Knobel, p. 219; Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 113. For the adoption of Solomon’s interpretation, see for example Cannato, pp. 98–100; Bill O. Hing, *Defining America through Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), pp. 58–61; Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 52–54; Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1972), pp. 20–33; Lüthi, p. 64; Jeanne D. Petit, *The Men and Women We Want: Gender, Race, and the Progressive Era Literacy Test Debate* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010), pp. 14–30.

Historians such as Daniel Tichenor, Hans Vought and Robert Zeidel, interested in the details of the political history of restriction, augmented Solomon's view with research on the organizational history of the League but mostly adhered to the nativism paradigm.²⁰ Scholars influenced by whiteness studies mostly focus on the immigrants' reaction to discrimination and only mention the League's significance in the racialization of the new immigrants briefly, also relying on Solomon's research.²¹ Publications on the history of scientific racism and eugenics refer to the League in scattered paragraphs but often fail to notice the IRL's influence on eugenicists. Concentrating on the years immediately predating the passage of the 1921 and 1924 quota acts, these histories portray the eugenic rationale for the quotas, but neglect to point out that Harry H. Laughlin and other influential eugenicists adopted the line of argument the IRL had propagated for almost thirty years.²² The League's significance as "right-wing think tank", an "unusually intellectual and professional organization", as "prime mover in the shaping of both public opinion and legislation" and one of the "premier anti-immigration pressure groups for three decades" whose assumptions were eventually codified is regularly acknowledged. Apart from Jeanne Petit's contributions which focus on discussions about gender, immigration and race suicide, however, no comprehensive work dealing exclusively with the League has been published since Solomon's book.²³

²⁰ Tichenor; Hans P. Vought, *The Bully Pulpit and the Melting Pot: American Presidents and the Immigrant, 1897-1933* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004); Robert F. Zeidel, *Immigrants, Progressives, and Exclusion Politics: The Dillingham Commission, 1900-1927* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

²¹ Brodtkin, p. 100; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 77-78; Matthew F. Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), pp. 156, 196-200. In *Whiteness of a Different Color*, Jacobson erroneously cites 1893 as date of the League's founding.

²² See for example Chase, pp. 111-114, 139-144; Kenneth M. Ludmerer, 'Genetics, Eugenics, and the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 46.1 (1972), 59-81 (pp. 60-68). For an extended critique, see Part II.

²³ Thomas J. Curran, *Xenophobia and Immigration, 1820-1930* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), p. 119; Roger Daniels, 'Two Cheers for Immigration', in *Debating American Immigration, 1882-present*, ed. by Roger Daniels, Otis L. Graham and James T. Patterson (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 5-69 (p. 14); Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 31, 55; Ronald M. Pavalko, 'Racism and the New Immigration: A Reinterpretation of the Assimilation of White Ethnics in American Society', *Sociology & Social Research*, 65.1 (1980), 56-77 (p. 58); Tichenor, p. 76; Jeanne D. Petit, 'Breeders, Workers, and Mothers: Gender and the Congressional Literacy Test Debate, 1896-1897', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 3.1 (2004), 35-58; Petit, *Men and Women. A Masters thesis on the IRL focuses on its rhetoric: Eileen C. Gilchrist, 'The Rhetorical Tactics of the Immigration Restriction League: An Anti-immigration Social Movement Organization, 1894 to 1924'* (Master Thesis, University of Houston, 1997).

As this study demonstrates, the history of the IRL allows for an understanding of the progressive era beyond the nativism paradigm. Nativism as defined by Higham presupposes an ahistorical human adversity to outside groups that obscures historical specificity. As Zolberg has pointed out, this “psychopathology-inspired approach is inadequate because it cannot account for particular policy outcomes at specific times”.²⁴ Focussing on this psychological approach and the IRL’s social background, Solomon and her contemporaries also overlooked a logical flaw in their explanation: if the League and its allies were really motivated by a loss of political power in their local setting, their most logical inference would have been to defend or reclaim the territory lost to Irish-Americans. In addition, the wide support from social scientists, educators, middle- and upper-class professionals and labour unions indicates that the League addressed a perceived problem that stretched beyond local conditions.

An analysis that concentrates on the IRL’s role as a nodal point for some of the progressive era’s most fundamental themes rather than on its supporters’ social background thus helps us to shed light on the very logic of the progressive zeal. Between 1894 and 1924, I argue, the IRL framed discourses on American racial identity in such ways that citizens interpreted it to be their civic duty to urge the state to exert control over the population’s biological composition and to restrict the immigration of racially defined groups. To elaborate this argument, my analysis comprises four dimensions of power in the interplay between the federal state, its citizens and the shaping of regulatory policies that determined the boundaries of belonging, building on Michel Foucault’s recently published lectures. Interpreted as limiting subjects’ fields of possible actions by its “infinitesimal mechanisms”, power occurs in the specific forms of knowledge, subjectivity, biopolitics and governmentality. In contrast to the whiteness studies paradigm of the historical mutability of racial concepts, this theoretical model can disclose the effects of racial formations on subjects.²⁵

In the analysis of the power dimension of knowledge, the thesis focuses on the ways in which the IRL generated and disseminated findings about the new

²⁴ Zolberg, p. 8.

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 29–30; Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics: With an Afterword by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 216–20.

immigrants. The construction of the new immigrants had implications for the American subject-citizens' conceptions of racial identity and civic duty, for the necessity and scope of state intervention, and, lastly, the racial composition of the American population. This shift in focus allows for understanding immigration restriction beyond the assumed 'natural reaction' of xenophobia or nativism. In addition, it also enables us to focus on a discourse that redefined the boundaries of citizenship and belonging instead of discounting the idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority as a mere "pseudo-science" or analyzing it in the imprecise term of "ideology" as historians have previously done.²⁶

Comprising both cultural and biological characteristics, racial identities were constructed beyond the nationally defined "imagined communities" and affected the lived experience of those racially marked as Anglo-Saxon and those categorized as not white or not fully white.²⁷ The IRL perpetuated, modified and transferred ideas of race regarded as valid scientific knowledge by contemporaries to the public discussions about immigration. Explaining the putatively detrimental effects on the country's racial composition, the League appealed directly to other citizens to identify as Anglo-Saxons and to engage in debates about immigration policies, thus linking the abstract scientific discourse to their mode of subjectivation. Subjectivation is the process in which subjects continually are constituted and (re-) constitute themselves by disciplinary subjugations and acts of resistance, both depending on surrounding power-relations and discourses.

In contrast to this micro-level of power, biopower relates to the techniques applied to gain control over the population to enhance desirable trends, building on bureaucratic innovations such as statistics and the growing complexity of the census. Biopower's coercive side, state racism, allowed for the actual or symbolic elimination of groups regarded as potential social or biological threats. While internally, eugenic policies were applied to the so-called defectives, immigration laws defined the standards that had to be fulfilled to be allowed entry and,

²⁶ Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 108; Maldwyn A. Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 228; Knobel, p. XXVI; Solomon, p. VIII; Zeidel, p. 100. For the methodological problems of the term ideology, see Michel Foucault, 'The Confession of the Flesh: A Conversation with Alain Grosrichard, Gerard Wajeman, Jacques-Alain Miller, Guy Le Gaufey, Dominique Celas, Gerard Miller, Catherine Millot, Jocelyne Livi and Judith Miller', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), pp. 194–228 (p. 118).

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

eventually, to become an American citizen, reflecting and mutually reinforcing scientific and public ideas about racial hierarchies and concerns about class, gender and sexuality. The IRL actively used and extended the statistical knowledge of the census and immigration agencies to influence admission policies of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the PHS.²⁸ Simultaneously, it tried to convince politicians and the public that deviance and delinquency were more common among new immigrants, necessitating a racial restriction of immigration.

Lastly, this thesis argues that the IRL embodied a new form of power representative of progressive era reform efforts: governmentality. This mode of power relied on its citizens' willingness to contribute to the optimization of the state apparatus by applying new forms of knowledge and mobilizing others, eventually resulting in the extension of state control. Governmentality ties the other three aspects of power together: it uses specific forms of subjectivation which encourage subjects to apply particular technologies of the self to improve and govern themselves and others. It produces and requires a specific power-knowledge of the population to discern trends and enable new modes of rule and, lastly, it relies on biopower's disciplinary techniques and regulatory controls to optimize the population.²⁹

The IRL is thus best understood as part of the larger dispositif of population control comprising discursive as well as non-discursive elements, "a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral,

²⁸ Until the creation of the PHS in 1912 and the INS in 1933, a number of different agencies existed. Throughout the thesis, these services will be addressed consistently as PHS and INS to avoid confusion. For details of the services' history, see the chapter on regulation at the border.

²⁹ On governmentality and biopower, see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Fragments of the work have been circulating; some of his earlier works also featured related issues, for the most important see Michel Foucault, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 1: *The History of Sexuality*; Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 2: *The History of Sexuality*; Foucault, *Society*. Many scholars have already drawn on these fragments, leading to an impressive number of works. For the two most renowned see: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality; with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, (London: SAGE, 2010). For a recent overview of the implications of governmentality on historiography, see Martin Saar, 'Relocating the Modern State: Governmentality and the History of Political Ideas', in *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*, ed. by Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke (New York: Routledge, 2011), 71: Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, pp. 34–55.

and philanthropic propositions”. The dispotif is the “system of relations that can be established between these heterogeneous elements” that appears at the intersection of power relations and knowledge and has strategic functions that respond “to an *urgent need*” at a particular moment in time.³⁰

This interpretation of the IRL as a nodal point of the dispotif of immigration and population control allows me to move beyond a perspective limited to a classic discourse analysis. Instead, this perspective enables me to uncover the League’s agency and its active role in the shaping of public discussions and actual policy outcomes. Manufacturing consent for the drastic departure from the open-door policy towards European immigrants, the IRL was able to transfer scientific findings to public debate, establishing racialized identities of both Anglo-Saxons and new immigrants as accepted knowledge. Incorporating references to a transnational Anglo-Saxonness and white settler colonies’ systems of immigration regulation, the League’s history also provides an insight into the process resulting in the “vast expansion of the American state’s capacity to regulate movement across its borders”. In contrast to conventional research concentrating on an organizational or political history, this perspective only includes the details of the political processes necessary for understanding the League’s strategic decisions. Instead, it focuses on the role of these non-state actors, “typically the first and most persistent advocates” in the establishment of modern systems of immigration and population control.³¹ Interpreted as a point of intersection between science, state agencies and citizens, this focus provides a new account of the complex links between racial ideas, civic commitment and governmental regulation in the progressive era. In contrast to Solomon’s interpretation limited to the time period before 1910, this analysis demonstrates that the League remained an important factor in the debates up to the passage of the test in 1917. The quota system will only be discussed briefly since many historians have already investigated the significance of racial arguments in its establishment.

³⁰ Foucault, *Confession*, pp. 194–95. Original emphasis; see also Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 1–24. While dispotif is often translated as apparatus, this thesis will use the original term to distinguish it from the English meaning.

³¹ Zolberg, p. 9; Matthew Connelly, ‘Seeing beyond the State: The Population Control Movement and the Problem of Sovereignty’, *Past & Present*, 193 (2006), 197–233 (p. 201).

To unveil the links between political self-regulation, the construction of racial difference and the increasing power of the modern nation-state, a variety of source materials is analyzed in this thesis. IRL sources encompass the IRL Records and Publications, the Joseph Lee Papers and the Robert DeCourcy Ward Papers.³² The Ward Papers have only been utilized by Solomon herself and in Jonathan Spiro's biography of Madison Grant.³³ Apart from Tichenor and Zeidel, scholars have either relied on Solomon's and Higham's research or only consulted the IRL Records. The IRL records and the Ward papers contain a series of scrapbooks of newspaper clippings that have hardly been used by other scholars but shed light on the League's campaigns for the literacy test. To investigate the connections between the IRL and eugenic researchers, the Charles B. Davenport Papers are included in the analysis.³⁴ The INS and PHS Records and the William Williams Papers (Commissioner of Immigration at Ellis Island) provide information on the interaction between the IRL and state agencies.³⁵ Since the IRL concentrated almost exclusively on the restriction of European immigration, questions of Asian exclusion, immigration from Latin America and the status of African Americans and Native Americans are not discussed.³⁶ The League also refrained from getting involved in discussions

³² Cambridge, Harvard University, Houghton Library, Immigration Restriction League (U.S.) Records (MS Am 2245); Cambridge, Harvard Repository, Widener Library, Publications of the Immigration Restriction League (US 10583.9); Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, Joseph Lee Papers, I, A, Carton 1 (hereafter: Lee Papers; Carton 1 if not indicated otherwise); Ward Papers.

³³ Solomon; Jonathan P. Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2009). Solomon accessed the collection through Ward's son; most scholars seem to have been unaware that it was later transferred to the Boston Public Library.

³⁴ Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, Charles B. Davenport Papers.

³⁵ Washington, D.C., National Archives, Record Group 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Washington, D.C., National Archives, Record Group 90, Records of the Public Health Service; New York, New York Public Library, William Williams Papers. The records of the Congressional Immigration Committees and the Dillingham Commission have been covered and are thus not considered here.

³⁶ For Asian immigration, see for example Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Race, Radicalism, Religion, and Restriction: Immigration in the Pacific Northwest, 1890 - 1924* (Westport: Praeger, 2003); Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Alexander P. Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1990). For immigration from Latin America, see for example Matt García, *A World of its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American:*

about naturalization requirements or the so-called white slavery.³⁷ Although race was the most important factor in shaping immigration laws, the intersection with questions of gender, sexuality and class will also be integrated in the analysis where they contributed to the definition of racial identities.

The focus on the history of the IRL as a nodal point between civic commitment and governmental regulation is reflected in the thesis's structure. It is divided into two parts: the first concentrates on common perceptions of race in the late nineteenth century and the League's first campaign for restriction to elucidate its role in the racialization of the new immigrants and Anglo-Saxons.

The first chapter explores the discursive framework that provided the argumentative pattern for the IRL. It analyzes the evolution of scientific racism in the nineteenth century and then focuses on the rise of a transnational Anglo-Saxon identity that was constructed by historians and political commentators. This racial formation is contrasted with the emergence of the new immigrants as putatively distinct and inferior European races in the American social sciences, augmented by census data which perpetuated this racial differentiation. The chapter ends on a discussion of the idea of race suicide which became a primary argument for the restriction of immigration.³⁸

The second chapter discusses common interpretations of progressive-era reform movement and the IRL's role. It argues that the distinction between reactionary and progressive forces in this period overlooks the similarities between these groups. Instead, my analysis of progressive movements centres on their

Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For Native Americans, see for example Tom Holm, *The Great Confusion in Indian Affairs: Native Americans and Whites in the Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005).

³⁷ For citizenship and naturalization, see Candice L. Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law of Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in US History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). For the white slavery discourse and prostitution, see for example Mark T. Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Barbara M. Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Mara L. Keire, 'The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907-1917', *Journal of Social History*, 35.1 (2001).

³⁸ While the idea of race suicide is discussed regarding its impact on the perception of new immigration, the limited scope of this thesis does not allow for exploring the links between immigration restriction and imperialism in detail. For this aspect, see Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*.

common denominator: the citizens' call for an extension of state power and regulation to optimize and improve society. Reformers' reactions to immigration are explored to explain how different racial rationales shaped attitudes and policies towards immigrants. The chapter introduces the League's main characters by analyzing their understanding of civic duty through personal sources and the League's publications, and is followed by a detailed discussion of the League's 1894-97 campaign for a literacy test, drawing on heretofore unexplored source material. The exploration of the IRL's argument propagated via publications and newspaper articles and taken up in Congress demonstrates how both new immigrants and Anglo-Saxons were racialized. The chapter finally lays out changes in the IRL's strategy and political focus after the turn of the century.

The second part of the thesis begins with an overview of the eugenic movement that gained momentum after the turn of the century and framed the debates about immigration. Investigating the links between the IRL's and eugenicists' biopolitical aspirations, this part focuses on the League's adoption of eugenic arguments and its attempts to interest eugenic organizations in immigration restriction.

Chapter three concentrates on the Immigration Commission created in 1907, commonly known as the Dillingham Commission, and its extensive three-year research efforts. In its empirical studies, the Commission perpetuated claims of the new immigration's supposed adverse effect, transferring them from the public and academic discourse to the realm of governmental knowledge. The chapter draws on a set of sources hitherto neglected in historical analysis: in preparation for its statement to the Commission, the IRL sent out thousands of questionnaires that induced respondents to reflect on their racial status and the future of the Anglo-Saxon race in relation to immigration. Additionally, statements submitted by pro-immigrant groups are analyzed which emphasized the immigrants' assimilation. The chapter also includes a transnational aspect: restrictionists and the Commission itself compared immigration regulations of white settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa that had adopted modified versions of the literacy test to exclude racially defined groups.

The fourth chapter focuses on the optimization of border controls to disclose how the IRL contributed to the optimization of the state apparatus by canvassing for tighter regulations regarding individual 'deficiencies'. Since the interpretation and

the enforcement of regulations depended on the personnel at immigration stations, especially at Ellis Island, the IRL interacted and cooperated closely with the INS and the PHS to 'improve' the inspection and medical examination of incoming immigrants. By analyzing the IRL's correspondence and its publications as well as INS and PHS case files and the medical discourse concerning immigration, this part reconstructs the League's attempts to instruct INS and PHS officers on how to interpret the legal requirements for admission and, on the other hand, its lobby work for the appointment of particular officers.

The final chapter first concentrates on the discussions about the literacy test bills vetoed in 1913 and 1915 by Presidents Taft and Wilson. The campaigns were influenced by the newly emerging Americanization movement that was incorporated into restrictionists' argumentations. Both presidents were inundated with letters preserved in the INS files arguing for and against the bills and held hearings where restrictionists and immigrant groups could make their case. Against the backdrop of the First World War, the IRL and its allies finally succeeded; the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act further excluded Asian immigrants and finally established the literacy test. An overview of the factors leading to the quota system is provided to demonstrate how eugenicists such as Harry H. Laughlin adopted the League's argumentation before the findings of the thesis are discussed.

Between the 1890s and the 1920s, a row of increasingly restrictive immigration regulations was passed by Congress, peaking in the drastic restriction ensured by the quota system. The passage of such acts was supported by a growing consensus among Americans that the number of arriving immigrants was too high and their characteristics threatened the country's future prospects. Writing to President Harding in 1923, Secretary of Labor James J. Davis claimed that a new system for the selection of immigration was needed to exclude "all individuals of all races who are physically, mentally, morally and spiritually undesirable, and who constitute a menace to our civilization". Such plans, he stated, were now supported by "many fraternal, social and economic associations", even pro-immigration associations approved of restrictive policies.³⁹ To understand how the IRL and its allies achieved this consensus on the necessity of immigration restriction, we must start by

³⁹ James J. Davis to Warren G. Harding, 12 April 1923, Lee Papers.

analyzing how ideas about race shifted during the second half of the nineteenth century.

2. The discursive framework

2.1 Scientific racism and racial differentiation

The notion that physical attributes correspond with mental or moral characteristics and capacities of certain, distinguishable groups identified as races is called racialism.¹ It is the presupposition for racism, which means the discrimination against groups or individuals because of their attribution to a certain race. Scientific racism is defined by Nancy Stepan as the

language, concepts, methods and authority of science [which] were used to support the belief that certain human groups were intrinsically inferior to others, as measured by some socially defined criterion, such as intelligence or ‘civilised’ behaviour.²

The application of scientific racism resulted in the racialization of groups of humans. Racialization, as defined by Omi and Winant, is understood as “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice and group”.³ The questions of how many different races existed, the characteristics to distinguished them, the biological markers allocated to particular groups and the latter’s place in a racial hierarchy were constantly debated by scientists. The nineteenth century saw the rise of numerous competing models to distinguish particular races and explain the differences between them. In the following paragraphs, the most important developments in this field will be explained to trace the growing significance of scientific racism in the US.⁴ The very flexibility, mutability and diversity of its elements were the foundation stones of its seminal impact.

¹ Kwame A. Appiah, ‘Racisms’, in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. by David T. Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 3–17 (pp. 4–5).

² Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. IX. The term racism not introduced before the 1930s, in the early twentieth century “racialism” or “race prejudice” were used: Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 2–3. For the concept of racism in historical discourse see George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 151–70.

³ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 64.

⁴ Due to the limited volume this of thesis, only a cursory overview can be provided. This is not to deny the profound complexity of the different schools of thought within scientific racism.

Racialization was not limited to assumed biological characteristics, but also encompassed cultural traits. The variety of racial theories shared the assumption that evolution was synonymous with progress, the white race representing its most advanced outcome. All other races could be discerned from it by their negative difference or relative lack of white qualities – be it intelligence, particular bodily features, skin colour, or a certain level of civilization. Despite the models' indeterminacy and imprecision regarding the causes and courses of these racial differences, this new, empirically verifiable rationale took hold in the field of power/knowledge. Its profound flexibility enabled it to become the predominant template for theories about a wide range of political and social problems, which were increasingly interpreted in racial terms. Race evolved into a powerful interdisciplinary paradigm that produced a growing amount of 'evidence' of racial difference and white superiority not only in biology and anthropology, but also within correlating systems of knowledge.

Historians agree that pre-existing rudimentary concepts of racial differentiation became more elaborate during European colonial expansion. In a process of racialization, physical differences between white and 'discovered' peoples were interpreted as signs of white superiority. Justifications of slavery had mostly relied on religious explanations; scientific interpretations were introduced during the Enlightenment.⁵ While enlightenment ideals theoretically granted the same basic rights and capabilities to all men, the binaries of gender and race provided for the reintroduction of a hierarchical taxonomy that fragmented this formal equality.⁶ In the eighteenth century, Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus first applied a classification system to mankind that distinguished four human races. German physiologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach differentiated five races, using the term Caucasian for the first time.⁷ While most scientists agreed that races differed in their inherent

⁵ Rohit Barot and John Bird, 'Racialization: The Genealogy and Critique of a Concept', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24.4 (2001), 601–18 (pp. 607–08); Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), pp. 212–23.

⁶ Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989), p. 292; Ann L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 130–36; Patrick Wolfe, 'Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race', *American Historical Review*, 106.3 (2001), 866–905 (p. 876).

⁷ Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), pp. 202–19. Blumenbach's original meaning of species – zoologically distinguishable sorts of animals which cannot produce offspring outside their kind – was thus altered

qualities, the influence of environmental and hereditary factors remained contested.⁸ The conflict surrounding the relevance of these two factors would shape both evolutionary theories and the racial discourse. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, scholars agreed that a racial hierarchy existed and could be proven scientifically. Characterized by insurmountable biological differences between the races, the hierarchy entailed a “decidedly ethnocentric and racist” rationale, ranking the white race highest, followed by Asians, Native Americans and black people. Most of the empirical proof of Caucasians’ presumed superiority was provided by phrenology, craniometry and biometrics.⁹ These anthropometric methods formed key technologies in the racialization of human groups from the late eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century and were taught and practiced in both Europe and the US.

While anthropometrics provided the methods to distinguish between races, Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, concentrated on explaining differences between and within species. Darwin assumed that population growth leads to competition for natural resources. In this process, advantageous features are passed on to successive generations, resulting in the extinction of some species and the emergence of others – the process of natural selection. The mechanisms of how new features emerged still remained vague in Darwin’s theory, and were not disclosed until the discovery of genetics and mutation. Darwin forwarded the argument that natural selection promoted the hereditary transmission of beneficial features including acquired traits.¹⁰

when applied to man: John P. Jackson and Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science: Social Impact and Interaction* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2004), p. 36. Blumenbach assumed that the tribes settling in the Caucasus had suffered least from ‘climacteric deterioration’. For a genealogy of the term Caucasian, see Bruce D. Baum, *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

⁸ This debate was epitomized in the conflict about monogenism (all races developed out of a common origin) and polygenism (each race forms a single species). Monogenists emphasized environmental factors leading to differences between the races, polygenists believed in the existence of different human species. For more detail, see Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960); Smedley, pp. 235–62; William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes Towards Race in America, 1815-1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁹ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 43–61; Stepan, p. XI. The most influential craniological work was Samuel G. Morton, *Crania Americana* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1839).

¹⁰ Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860 - 1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 25–31; Howard L. Kaye, *The Social Meaning of Modern Biology: From Social Darwinism to Sociobiology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 11–22. Darwin thereby agreed with Jean-Baptist Lamarck’s

Darwin's conclusions were soon applied to humans beyond biology, commonly referred to as social Darwinism. Evolutionary theories were used to explain not only differences between animal species, but also physical, mental, moral, cultural or psychological human traits. Racial assumptions became *the* "great organizing principle of the late nineteenth century, applied across the board in sciences".¹¹ While historiographic interpretations often described this trend as a perversion of Darwin's purely biological theories, historians have emphasized that such a distinction is artificial.¹² Even prior to Darwin's publications on evolution, cultural observations as evidence for the status of particular races had already been incorporated in most theories to augment biological or physical attributes.¹³ Darwin's ideas "became within a few years during the nineteenth century not simply a way of transcribing a political discourse into biological terms [...] but a real way of thinking about the relations" between a whole series of phenomena, Foucault has argued, biopolitical knowledge encompassed colonization, war, criminality, madness and class. For Foucault, the paradigm's significance can be located in its incorporation in the "politics of truth" that opened new areas for political intervention – problems and their solutions now occurred, surfaced, were thought and articulated in biological terms.¹⁴

theory, the so-called (Neo-)Lamarckism, that assumed acquired characteristics such as learned skills are passed on to successive generations. Even though Darwin regarded all humans to be members of the same species, this model both explained the inferiority of certain races and allowed for the theoretical possibility of their gradual advancement.

¹¹ Jackson and Weidman, p. 62. Darwin had developed explanatory models but only published them in 1871 in *The Descent of Man* due to the expected opposition on religious grounds.

¹² See for example Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism.: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979); Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*; Stepan. Darwin himself enunciated in some of his works explicitly racist statements, but did not contextualize them with a broader social or political theory: Jim Moore, 'Socializing Darwinism: Historiography and the Fortunes of a Phrase', in *Science as Politics*, ed. by Les Levidow (London: Free Association Books, 1986), pp. 18–80; Robert Young, 'Darwinism is Social', in *The Darwinian Heritage*, ed. by David Kohn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 609–38 (pp. 617–22).

¹³ Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 89–103; Robert J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), p. 49. One of Darwin's most prominent predecessors was Gobineau: Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races* (New York: Fertig, 1999 [first publ. 1853]). Gobineau had extended Georges Cuvier's argument that physical nature determined culture stating that races did not exist anymore in their pure, but had been diluted by racial intermixture. According to Gobineau, Aryans had been preserved as the purest existing form of the white race, demonstrated by the fact that they represented the highest stage of cultural development: Gossett, pp. 57-58, 342-347; Spiro, pp. 103–07.

¹⁴ Foucault, *Society*, pp. 256–57; Foucault, *Security*, p. 5. See also Thomas Lemke, *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft: Foucaults Analysen der modernen Gouvernementalität* (Berlin: Argument, 2003), Neue Folge 251: Argument-Sonderband, pp. 224–28.

The term social Darwinism will thus not be applied here. Instead, evolutionary thought is analyzed as a discursive formation that also became prevalent in fields not primarily concerned with biological questions. Scientific racism provided the theoretical and empirical tools to construct a biological distinction between particular races and sub-races. The racial discourse included cultural characteristics and adopted the biological model to situate mankind in nature and time. The variety of racial explanations then allowed for the most diverse theoretical conclusions and justified calls for a wide range of concrete political measures. This broad definition, labelled racial discourse in this thesis, allows for the inclusion of all schools of thought that applied biological models in the explanation of social phenomena.¹⁵

One of the key figures in the transfer of Darwin's findings to the human species was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), who assumed that evolution did not only mean change, but also progress. Spencer coined the phrase "survival of the fittest"; in his publications (which sold especially well in the United States) he treated societies on a par with organisms, measuring degrees of complexity assumedly caused by innate biological and cultural features to situate them on a unilinear evolutionary hierarchy according to their respective stage of development.¹⁶ Another important scientist in applying evolutionary thought to humans was Francis Galton, Darwin's cousin, who published *Hereditary Genius* in 1869.¹⁷ Galton coined the phrase "nature versus nurture" and positioned himself on the side of inheritance. His studies concentrated on social merit, quantifying family histories and 'proving' by their achievements the hereditary transmission of natural ability or intelligence. He later focused on the transmission of single traits such as height, weight or lung power which were easier

¹⁵ For similar criticism of the application of social Darwinism, see Bowler, pp. 282–306; Hawkins, pp. 31–35.

¹⁶ Gossett, pp. 144–54; Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, pp. 31–50; Jackson and Weidman, pp. 76–84. This observation correlated with his scientific proof of white physical superiority consisting mostly of sequences of biometric data: John S. Haller, JR., *Outcasts from Evolution. Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority; 1859-1900* (London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), pp. 121–31.

¹⁷ Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Law and Consequences* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978 [first publ. 1869]); Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 155.

to measure.¹⁸ Obsessed with counting and measuring, Galton provided essential spadework for the emerging disciplines of statistics and biometrics. He discovered the standard variation and played a crucial role in establishing the ideas of normal distribution, correlation and the law of error in the social sciences.¹⁹ Assuming that traits are passed on unmodified from generation to generation, he feared that mankind would ultimately regress or degenerate by disadvantageous mating. In 1883, he hence developed the concept of eugenics;

the science of improving stock [...] [which] takes cognizance of all influences that tend in however remote degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had.²⁰

The main idea of the multiplication of desired, and the reduction of undesired, human traits was based upon the probabilities provided by his family studies and statistics. Galton confined himself to the promotion of public sponsorship for ‘gifted’ families and eugenic education, mentioning the possibility of forced sterilization only in passing.²¹ While eugenic thought did not immediately have a significant impact on science due to the assumed role of environmental factors, it would become a pivotal factor in discussions about race and immigration after the turn of the century. The racial discourse, however, provided the argumentative tools for the racialization of both Anglo-Saxons and new immigrants that was to take place in the second half of the nineteenth century.

2.2 The emergence of the Anglo-Saxon

Many academic disciplines contributed to the construction of racial difference within the Anglosphere, which includes Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand,

¹⁸ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 3–5; Donald A. MacKenzie, *Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp. 51–72.

¹⁹ These methodological innovations were later integrated into biometrics by Galton’s followers Karl Pearson and Walter Weldon: Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 13–40. Examples for Galton’s obsession with measurements include his empirical search for the preparation of the perfect cup of tea, his attempts to measure boredom in audiences, the distribution of beauty in Britain’s counties and his meticulous protocols of his bodily functions. He also discovered the singularity of human fingerprints: Nicholas W. Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), p. 17.

²¹ Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 80–85; William H. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), pp. 46–49.

South Africa, and the US.²² In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, political struggles had been explained by reputed racial differences between Saxons and Normans. This tradition, according to Reginald Horsman, rendered English and Americans “particularly susceptible to racial explanations of the course of history”. While American discourses on race centred on the white/non-white binary to justify slavery and westward expansion, an intense discussion about the character of the white race and, in particular, of the English, evolved in Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century. Philologists, political essayists, and historians first and foremost came to reinterpret the English ‘racial essence’. Their analyses provided a tautological mixture of both historical explanation and proof for the purported Anglo-Saxon superiority, explaining their purported ascent to the highest stage of civilization by genetic predisposition.²³

Historian Edward A. Freeman applied the comparative method to history on a racial basis, characterizing its course as one of continuity instilled by stable characteristics predetermining the history of particular races. In his interpretation, the roots of English political institutions could be found in “the Germany of Tacitus” where political institutions had already contained “the germs out of which every free constitution in the world has grown”. According to Freeman, the ability for self-government, institutional and constitutional traditions and the drive for expansion were rooted in “principles as old as the days when we got our first sight of our forefathers in their German forests”. These characteristics were shared among “the whole Aryan family of mankind”, a term he used to subsume Angles, Saxons, and Frisians. In Britain, he argued, they had preserved their racial purity and homogeneity even after the Norman Conquest. Freeman thus equated the history of democratic traditions with mankind’s evolutionary progress, Anglo-Saxons’ cultural and political characteristics formed his evidence for the continuity of racial qualities. This led him, in the words of Hugh Tulloch, to claim “history as a science which recorded the data of racial progress just as natural science tracked the laws of natural evolution”. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Freeman’s interpretation

²² The concept of the Anglosphere emerged out of political sciences. Despite its foundation on racial theories of the nineteenth century, it is a useful analytic tool: Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–21.

²³ Horsman, p. 24; Richard White, ‘Race Relations in the American West’, *American Quarterly*, 38.3 (1986), 396–416; Patrick Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8.4 (2006), 387–409.

would become an important point of reference for historical thinkers and political leaders throughout the Anglosphere. “Saxonism”, Robert Young argues, “was not invented by racial theorists but by historians”.²⁴

By the mid-nineteenth century, this discourse was also used in the racialization of the Irish. Against the backdrop of their struggle, political and historical commentators began to address differences between white races. Backed by phrenologists such as Robert Knox, the ‘Celtic race’ was described as morally, physically and mentally inferior. These depictions were soon adopted in the US, where Irish immigrants experienced profound discrimination and were frequently compared to or equated with the professedly inferior African Americans.²⁵ In the 1860s, the definition of Englishness slowly began to include all inhabitants of the British Isles. Oxford professor Matthew Arnold argued that the English actually were a hybrid of Saxon and Celtic races, claiming that this amalgamation had been beneficial to racial character. Although this argument only slowly gained ground, the term Anglo-Saxon replaced Saxon as the generic racial reference to the inhabitants of the British Isles. In the US, it had been used since the 1830s to stress similarities between Americans and Britons.²⁶ This new concept allowed for the inclusion of all white settler colonies in the Anglosphere, praising their drive for expansion and civilizing influence.

One of the examples for the new “Anglo-Saxon triumphalism” was English Liberal Charles Dilke. He published a travelogue with the telling title *Greater Britain* in 1868 after visiting English-speaking countries around the globe. Anglo-Saxons’ drive for expansion and their racial superiority, he argued, would inevitably lead to the ultimate destruction of the aboriginal peoples in North America, Australia and New Zealand since the former were “the only extirpating race on Earth”. In his opinion, the invigorating effect of colonization by “Saxon institutions and the English tongue” brought the Anglo-Saxon to the “full possession of his

²⁴ E. A. Freeman, *The Growth of the English Constitution from the Earliest Times* (London: Macmillan, 1873), pp. 10–23; Horsman, p. 75; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), pp. 50–53; Hugh Tulloch, *James Bryce's American Commonwealth: The Anglo-American Background* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1988), 54; Royal Historical Society Studies in History, p. 40; Young, p. 31.

²⁵ Ignatiev, pp. esp. 34–59; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 48–52; Knobel; Young, pp. 13, 71–139. For Freeman’s anti-Irish attitude see C. J. W. Parker, ‘The Failure of Liberal Racialism: The Racial Ideas of E. A. Freeman’, *The Historical Journal*, 24.4 (1981), 825–46.

²⁶ Young, pp. 140–87.

powers".²⁷ Dilke and authors such as John Seeley and James Bryce thus created an Anglo-Saxon identity that was no longer restricted to England itself, but included all white inhabitants of Britain and its colonies. Anglo-Saxon characteristics were described as a mixture of inherent inclinations, traditions of governmental institutions and cultural attributes that stretched beyond geographical boundaries and could potentially be extended indefinitely, eventually leading to a global Anglo federation.²⁸

The new racial discourse on Anglo-Saxon superiority circulated within the Anglosphere in publications, articles and correspondence. Many scholars also disseminated their findings in other countries through lectures, visits and personal contacts, especially in the US.²⁹ The theme of Anglo-Saxon identity as transnational racial brotherhood served different purposes in particular settings. In Britain, it was used as a justification for imperial expansion and domination of non-white races. In its white settler colonies, the trope of the innate capacity of Anglo-Saxon males for self-government was applied to canvass for more political autonomy from London. Simultaneously, the history of the US and the slave trade was used as a cautionary tale of the importation of inferior races to argue against non-white immigration and to justify discrimination against aboriginal people.³⁰ In the US itself, the racial

²⁷ Wentworth C. Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866-7* (London: Macmillan, 1869), p. 260; Lake and Reynolds, p. 76; Young, p. 203.

²⁸ Warwick Anderson, 'Traveling White', in *Re-Orienting Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the History of an Identity*, ed. by Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey and Katherine Ellinghaus (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 65–72 (p. 68); Leigh Boucher, "'Whiteness,'" Geopolitical Reconfiguration, and the Settler Empire in Nineteenth-Century Victorian Politics', in *Re-Orienting Whiteness*, ed. by Boucher, Carey and Ellinghaus, pp. 45–61 (p. 54); Young, pp. 196–207. For authors adhering to the theory of 'climacteric deterioration', this expansion was obviously limited to the temperate zones. The most prominent exception to these optimistic visions was Charles Pearson, who argued the Chinese and other "colored races" would eventually replace Anglo superiority in the world: Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (London: Macmillan, 1894). For Pearson's significance for political thought in the Anglosphere, see Lake and Reynolds, pp. 75–94.

²⁹ Freeman was invited to Johns Hopkins in 1881 by Herbert Baxter Adams: Edward N. Saveth, *American Historians and European Immigrants, 1875-1925* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 22. James Bryce, one of Freeman's scholars and expert on race relations, visited South Africa and Australia, corresponded with Charles Pearson and became British ambassador to the US in 1907: Tulloch, pp. 38–44; Lake and Reynolds, pp. 56-60, 75-77; David Walker, 'Race Building and the Disciplining of White Australia', in *The Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, ed. by Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), pp. 33–50 (pp. 46–47). For the exchange of racial knowledge between Australia and the US, see Marilyn Lake, 'White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Journal*, 34.122 (2003), 346–63; Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780s-1890s* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

³⁰ Horsman, p. 4; Lake and Reynolds, pp. 137–65; Jeremy Martens, 'A Transnational History of Immigration Restriction: Natal and New South Wales, 1896-97', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34.3 (2006), 323–44 (pp. 336–44).

discourse was picked up to lay out an argument against Radical Reconstruction and African-American equality.³¹

The adoption of the racial discourse in the US was accompanied by a fundamental transformation of academia that significantly increased the scientific output of the professionalizing and diversifying academic disciplines. According to Foucault, the validity of discursive statements depends on “enunciative modalities”, comprising the authority of the speaker, the cultural and institutional sites where statements are made and the relations between the speaking subjects and their objects of analysis. Matthew Hannah has argued that these modalities underwent basic alterations in the second half of the nineteenth century, leading to the new figure of the male scientific expert, the modernization of universities, and a governmental subjectivity.³²

American universities were radically transformed to meet international standards and expanded their research and teaching, reflecting the differentiation within the sciences, a more elaborate curriculum and increasing the number of awarded degrees. The scientific output was further increased by academic associations publishing their own journals. These were augmented by a rise in the numbers of popular magazines, providing academics with new opportunities to popularize their findings.³³

³¹ Norbert Finzsch, Lois E. Horton and James O. Horton, *Von Benin nach Baltimore: Die Geschichte der African Americans*, (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed, 1999), p. 338; see also Bruce R. Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

³² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 50–53; Matthew G. Hannah, *Governmentality and the Mastery of Territory in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32: *Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography*, pp. 60–83.

³³ Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976), pp. 287–331; John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), pp. 111-119, 193-197; Hannah, pp. 64–72; Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Jürgen Herbst, ‘Diversification in American Higher Education’, in *The Transformation of Higher Learning 1860-1930: Expansion, Diversification, Social Opening and Professionalization in England, Germany, Russia and the United States*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch (Stuttgart: Klett, 1983), 13: *Historisch-Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, pp. 196–206; Frank L. Mott, *1865-1885* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 3: *A History of American Magazines*, pp. 64–69; Dorothy Ross, ‘The Development of the Social Sciences’, in *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920*, ed. by Alexandra Oleson and John Voss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), pp. 107–38 (pp. 107–38); Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19: *Ideas in Context*, pp. 61–97. The number of graduate students multiplied from a mere eight students in 1850 to 5668 in 1900.

A new generation of intellectuals applied the Anglo-Saxon discourse to the US. One of the most prominent figures was John Fiske, the best-selling historian of his generation, “leading philosopher of Social Darwinism” and “the most important popularizer of the Anglo-Saxon legend”.³⁴ Fiske interpreted history as the progress of the “Aryan” race, while non-white races supposedly represented lower, but universal, stages of development. In his logic, this was the outcome of differing racial compositions since “the capability of progress [...] is by no means shared alike by all races of men”.³⁵ As an admirer of Freeman, Fiske extended the former’s approach to America, arguing that emigration and detrimental living conditions had further refined the race’s qualities. The natural selection occurring in the emigration of the “sturdiest part of the English stock” to the US and the “complete homogeneity of race”, he argued, had led to New England’s preponderance in American history. Fiske was convinced that North-western Europeans could be assimilated by white Americans since the latter possessed the “rare capacity for absorbing slightly foreign elements and moulding them into conformity with political type”. American history, Fiske argued, could be compared to “every land where English men have set their feet as masters”, since the Anglo-Saxons’ racial characteristics predetermined them to rule “every land on the earth’s surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization”.³⁶

Fiske was no exception in the application of Anglo triumphalism. Distinguished scholars such as William Graham Sumner, Francis Parkman, Herbert Baxter Adams and Hubert Howe Bancroft agreed with Fiske on innate Anglo-Saxon qualities purportedly demonstrated by the course of history.³⁷ The idea that Americans were meant to take up the civilizing mission because of their racial

³⁴ Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 16; Solomon, p. 62. For Fiske, see also Adams, pp. 202–06; Michael D. Clark, ‘The Empire of the Dead and the Empire of the Living: John Fiske and the Spatialization of Tradition’, *American Studies*, 38.3 (1997), 91–107 (p. 92); Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, pp. 19–24; Saveth, pp. 32–42.

³⁵ John Fiske, ‘The Progress from Brute to Man’, *North American Review*, October (1873), 251–319 (pp. 255, 260–261).

³⁶ John Fiske, *The Beginnings of New England or the Puritan Theocracy in its Relation to Civil and Religious Liberty* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), pp. 143–44; John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed From the Standpoint of Universal History: Three Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in May, 1880* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), pp. 97, 113, 135; Clark, pp. 98–99; Saveth, p. 41.

³⁷ Hannaford, pp. 336–37; Saveth, pp. 21–22, 95–111; Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 110. For Sumner’s role in modernizing Yale University, see Ross, *Origins*, p. 63.

identity was also put forward in 1890 by John W. Burgess, a renowned professor at Columbia University and founder of *Political Science Quarterly*. In his opinion, the US as a “Teutonic nation” was “particularly endowed with the capacity for establishing national states” and thus had to fulfil the “mission of conducting the political civilization of the modern world”. Within the US, however, the exercise of political power should not be regarded as a right of man, but only came with racial qualifications “based upon capacity”.³⁸ Another prominent historian who contributed to the racial knowledge was Nathaniel Shaler, teaching at Harvard. He frequently addressed the problems putatively caused by the multiracial composition of the US, as did his colleague Henry Adams.³⁹ Shaler stated that guidance provided by Anglo-Saxons could harness the “imitative faculties” of America’s “lower races” – which in his view included African Americans, Native Americans and Asians.⁴⁰ In an article published in 1893, Shaler extended his racial hierarchy to “European peasants” arriving in America “essentially in the same state as the Southern negro”. For Shaler, it was more than doubtful whether the new immigrants could ever rise to Anglo-Saxon standards. Therefore, immigration put nothing less than the future of country and race at stake:

Compare the origin and nurture of these freemen with those of the ordinary laborers of Europe [...]. The American commonwealth would have never been founded if the first European colonists had been of peasant stock. It is doubtful whether it can be maintained if its preservation comes to depend on such men.⁴¹

Shaler’s statement indicates that the racial discourse became increasingly important in discussions about new immigration and its consequences; it would provide the crucial tool for the racialization of new groups in the US.

³⁸ John W. Burgess, *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law: Volume 1: Sovereignty and Liberty* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1890), pp. 44–45. On Burgess’s influence on Bryce, see Marilyn Lake, ‘The White Man under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia’, *History Workshop Journal*, 58, Autumn (2004), 41–62 (pp. 53–57).

³⁹ Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 45–48. On Henry Adams, see George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture, 1880-1900* (New York: Twayne, 1992), pp. 132–34; Solomon, pp. 23–41; Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

⁴⁰ Nathaniel S. Shaler, *The Neighbor: The Natural History of Human Contacts* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1904), pp. 120-121, 185. Shaler’s paternalistic view followed Southern traditions of legitimizing slavery due to its allegedly civilizing effect on slaves.

⁴¹ Nathaniel S. Shaler, ‘European Peasants as Immigrants’, *Atlantic Monthly*, May (1893), 646–55 (pp. 649–55).

2.3 The emergence of the new immigrant and race suicide

By the late nineteenth century, the focus of racial discourse had evolved beyond the white/non-white binary to incorporate different groups within the white race. While the Irish were now regarded as Anglo-Saxon, the techniques of racialization were applied to other ‘European races’. The idea that Europe itself was inhabited by different races gained ground and led to a “variegated whiteness”, as Jacobson has pointed out. While the distinction between the so-called old and new immigrants had first been introduced by economist Richmond Mayo-Smith in the late 1880s, articles on the racial qualities of Southern Europeans had started to appear in academic journals and popular magazines a decade earlier.⁴² Similar to the racialization of non-European groups, authors claimed that Anglo-Saxons represented the purest form of whiteness since all other European races had suffered from degeneration or miscegenation.⁴³ William Z. Ripley, an educator at Columbia, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and, from 1901, professor of political economics at Harvard, subsumed earlier findings in his voluminous *The Races of Europe* when he distinguished between the “superior Teuton race” and the gradually inferior “Alpine and Mediterranean races”. In contrast to the Teutons, Ripley claimed, the latter were domestic, passive and “sedentary”, thus describing new immigrants as lacking manly Anglo-Saxon qualities. Although none of these three races existed in its pure form anymore, Ripley argued, anthropometric and craniometrical data demonstrated the predominance of the superior “Teutons” in North-western Europe.⁴⁴

The lack of easily discernible physical attributes for the racialization of the new immigrants led scholars involved in the racial discourse to rely on statistical evidence instead. Statistics became a sub-discipline integrated in the natural and emerging social sciences in the nineteenth century; their validity was rarely questioned at first. Early statistics predominantly dealt with questions regarding the

⁴² Jacobson, *Different Color*, p. 9. See for example Kathryn Defatta Barattini, *Academic Perceptions of Italian American Immigration as Seen in Scholarly Journals of the 1880s* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), pp. 7–39.

⁴³ Thomas A. Upchurch, *Legislating Racism: The Billion Dollar Congress and the Birth of Jim Crow* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p. 194.

⁴⁴ William Z. Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study*, 1899 (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1965), pp. 103-130, 537-559. For a contextualization of Ripley’s research see Stocking, pp. 61–65. For the gendering of immigrants, see Katrina Irving, *Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity, 1890 - 1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 19–35.

population such as birth rates, mortality, and deviant behaviour.⁴⁵ Empirical knowledge about society constituted the normal occurrence of particular phenomena and allowed for the deduction and prediction of probabilities. The bureaucratic apparatus gathered data to identify general trends within its population to formulate statements and prognoses about the natural and regular occurrence of phenomena within society. The data could then be used in governmental management to manipulate factors to attain required results.⁴⁶

New forms of knowledge such as statistics, Foucault argued, formed an essential part of biopower/biopolitics. In contrast to sovereign power which exerted the right “to *take* life or *let* live”, biopower is the productive power “to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die” and occurred in two different forms.⁴⁷ As disciplinary power, it aimed at the corporal subjugation of individuals through discipline and training in institutions such as prisons, hospitals, schools and factories. On the other hand, it tried to control biological processes within society through “*regulatory controls: a bio-politics of the population*”.⁴⁸ These controls relied on an “inflation of forms and bodies of knowledge, of discourse, a multiplication of authorities and decision-making elements” to identify deviant subjects.⁴⁹ The acquisition of data concerning the normal occurrence of phenomena led to a process of “normalization” in modern states, Foucault argued, which augmented the legal binary of the allowed and the forbidden.⁵⁰ Biopower, in turn, formed an essential part of the governmental mode of power which had “population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism”; the latter were needed to control “the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life”.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Patricia C. Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Robert C. Davis, ‘The Beginnings of American Social Research’, in *Nineteenth-Century American Science: A Reappraisal*, ed. by George H. Daniels (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 133–51 (pp. 133–51); Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17: Ideas in Context, pp. 35–54; Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). For the crucial role of eugenicists for the development of statistical methods in Britain, see MacKenzie.

⁴⁶ Hacking, pp. 95–124; Hannah, pp. 26–31; Poovey, pp. 304–05.

⁴⁷ Foucault, *An Introduction*, p. 136. Original emphasis; Foucault, *Society*, p. 241. Foucault used the terms biopower and biopolitics interchangeably.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *An Introduction*, p. 139. Original emphasis.

⁴⁹ Foucault, *Biopolitics*, p. 250.

⁵⁰ Foucault, *Biopolitics*, p. 63. See also Foucault, *Security*, pp. 55–63; Giovanna Procacci, ‘Social Economy and the Government of Poverty’, in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. by Burchell, Gordon and Miller, pp. 151–68 (pp. 156–57).

⁵¹ Foucault, *Security*, p. 108; Foucault, *Society*, p. 246.

Apparatuses of security then intervened on the basis of reality to change it; biopower was “a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized”.⁵² Since modern nation-state concentrated on general trends rather than on individual deviance, statistics and censuses in particular were the primary biopolitical tool to govern complex economic and social phenomena.⁵³ The census constructed the population as “a datum which depends on a set of variables”, “a set of elements in which we can note constants and regularities” to make it amenable to governmental management and biopolitical intervention and transformed social and political questions into technical problems, recasting them “in the neutral language of science”.⁵⁴

The superintendent of the census from 1870 to 1889, Francis Amasa Walker, expanded the census’s administrative apparatus and increased the quantity of gathered census data significantly. Walker was a highly regarded economist and president of the MIT, the American Statistical Association, the American Economic Association, and vice-president of the National Academy of Sciences, and was one of most prominent proponents of this argument. Simultaneously, through his work on higher relative rates of insanity, criminality and poverty among so-called Alpines and Mediterraneans, he became “the major theorist of immigration restriction in the 1880s and 1890s”.⁵⁵ During his tenure as superintendent, he combined technological, methodological and statistical innovations that transformed the census from a tool for apportioning electoral districts into a “full-fledged instrument to monitor the overall status of American society”.⁵⁶ The census combined statistics for administrative needs, vital statistics and so-called moral statistics. The data was

⁵² Foucault, *Society*, pp. 246–47; Foucault, *Biopolitics*, p. 250.

⁵³ John Marks, ‘Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biology’, in *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Rethinking Biopolitics and the Defence of Society*, ed. by Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 88–105.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *Security*, pp. 71, 74, 79; Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 196.

⁵⁵ Margo A. Conk, ‘The Census, Political Power, and Social Change: The Significance of Population Growth in American History’, *Social Science History*, 8.1 (1984), 81–106 (p. 88).

⁵⁶ Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 85. Among his innovations were a statistical atlas, the calculation of the so-called centre of population and the utilization of Hollerith’s tabulating machines in the census of 1890. Due to the increased efficiency, the number of questions in the census questionnaires grew from five in 1870 to 235 in 1900: Anderson, pp. 86–106; Conk, pp. 86–106.

organized by “grids of specification”, among them age, gender and place.⁵⁷ The most prominent distinction remained that of race, following the censal “tradition of [racial] differentiating”.⁵⁸

While initially the census had only distinguished between black, free black and white inhabitants of the US, Walker augmented the existing classifications black, white and Mulatto by including Chinese and Indian in the 1870 census. Moreover, census collectors asked for the parents’ descent, allowing the distinction between native, foreign-born and those of foreign parentage, thus enabling the identification of first- and second-generation immigrants in census data, thus creating “‘foreigners’ as a statistical ‘race’”.⁵⁹ As David Goldberg has pointed out, the census thus was one of the key technologies of the racial state, reflecting and reifying prevailing racial orders. Through the normalization and routinization of racial distinctions, Goldberg argues, race penetrates all aspects of the social, from abstract institutionalized racial distinctions in bureaucracy and law to the concrete practices of subject formation where the racial formations are already implicated. For the discussions about immigration restrictions, Walker’s statistical innovation indeed had major implications: all sub-categories of the census could now be broken down according to the new categories, enabling new forms of tabulation which distinguished categories of deviance by race.⁶⁰ Hence, the census constituted the

⁵⁷ Foucault, *Archaeology*, p. 42; Hannah, pp. 30, 56-59.

⁵⁸ Anderson, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Hannah, pp. 57, 209. In 1890, the category “Japanese” was created and “Mulatto” was further distinguished into “Quadroon” and “Octoroon”. The latter categories were dropped altogether ten years later, by that time, the notion that “one drop of black blood” already made a person non-white had prevailed: F. J. Davis, *Who Is Black? One Nation’s Definition* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 4–16; Christine Hickman, ‘The Devil and the One Drop Rule: Racial Categories, African Americans, and the U.S. Census’, *Michigan Law Review*, 95.5 (1997), 1161–265; Melissa Nobles, *Shades of Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 54–69.

⁶⁰ David T. Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 107–15. For the differentiation of the population by “general nativity” and “color”, see Census Office Department of the Interior, *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890: Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), pp. 378–92; for illiteracy differentiated by race: Census Office Department of the Interior, *Report on Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890: Part II* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), pp. 193–252; for criminality, pauperism and insanity by race: Census Office Department of the Interior, *Report on the Insane, Feeble-Minded, Deaf and Dumb, and Blind in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895); Census Office Department of the Interior, *Report on Crime, Pauperism, and Benevolence in the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890: Part I* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895). The process of the actual classification was left to the discretion of census collectors who often relied on information given by institutions to identify the race of inmates of almshouses, mental institutions and prisons. Statistical data could thereby often include determinations made on the basis of racial prejudice; individuals who were regarded to be non-white were more likely to be classified as pauper, insane or criminal:

population in its normality through governmental observation and “normalizing judgements”, including the ‘normal’ amount of deviance by race. Census data and the objectification of the population thus helped to provide a technology which made American society “at least partially susceptible to rational management”.⁶¹ The census’s practice of “counting by race” formalized alleged racial differences between native and foreign-born Americans in a “process of objectified nomination” and connected them to the statistical knowledge of the citizens’ lives. Thereby, the census helped “to draw racial lines around and within the society, reifying as it reflects prevailing racialized common sense” and formed a crucial administrative technology of the racial state.⁶² Demographic data, Mae Ngai has argued, thus became “to twentieth-century racists what craniometrics data had been to race scientists during the nineteenth” and serve as the backbone of restrictionist and eugenic argumentation.⁶³

Walker’s application of racial distinctions perpetuated the racial discourse and provided statistical evidence for the purported Anglo-Saxon superiority.⁶⁴ In his writings about immigration, Walker regarded new immigrants as biologically inferior to Anglo-Saxons, supposedly demonstrated by their racial predisposition for pauperism. For Walker, the lower quality of the immigrants was also partly a result of technological progress. According to him, modern “Pipe Line Immigration” had diminished the immigrants’ quality by suspending natural selection. The old immigrants, Walker pointed out, had been “the most enterprising, thrifty, alert,

Herbert Aptheker, ‘Heavenly Days in Dixie: Or, the Time of Their Lives [I]’, in *Racism, Imperialism, & Peace: Selected Essays by Herbert Aptheker*, ed. by Marvin J. Berlowitz and Carol E. Morgan (Minneapolis: MEP Publ., 1987), 21; Studies in Marxism, pp. 78–93 (pp. 88–91); David T. Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 35–40. For an account of the intricacies of gathering racialized census data see Martha Hodes, ‘Fractions and Fictions in the United States Census of 1890’, in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. by Ann L. Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 240–70.

⁶¹ Hannah, p. 111.

⁶² Goldberg, *Racial Subjects*, pp. 33–34; Goldberg, *The Racial State*, p. 190. In the first statement, Goldberg refers to African Americans and Chinese immigrants. Nevertheless, this conclusion can also be applied to all immigrants until they disappeared as a sub-category from the census in the third generation after arrival. Goldberg builds on Omi and Winant’s model of the racial state: Omi and Winant, pp. 70–86. For the dynamics of racial formations and the census, see also Sharon M. Lee, ‘Racial Classifications in the US Census: 1890-1990’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16.1 (1993), 75–94 (p. 76); Nobles.

⁶³ Mae M. Ngai, ‘The Architectures of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924’, *Journal of American History*, 86.1 (1999), 67–92 (p. 77).

⁶⁴ For Pearson’s and Bryce’s utilization of American census data see Lake, *White Man under Siege*, pp. 41–57. The first Australian census of 1911 adopted similar racial distinctions: David Dutton, *One of us? A Century of Australian Citizenship* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 25.

adventurous, and courageous” of their kind, displaying the superior Anglo-Saxon qualities of self-restraint and self-government. In contrast, the availability and comfort of modern steamship passages provided no reason “why every foul and stagnant pool of population in Europe, which no breath of intellectual or industrial life has stirred for ages, should not be decanted upon our soil”. Walker thus agreed with Shaler in considering the “ignorant and brutalized peasantry from the countries of eastern and southern Europe” a severe threat to the quality of the American population. In his opinion, new immigrants were not endowed with the racial capacities of the “Teuton race”, an argument he established by referring to history:

These people [the new immigrants] have no history behind them which is of a nature to give encouragement. They have none of the inherited instincts and tendencies which made it comparatively easy to deal with the immigration of the olden time. They are beaten men from beaten races; representing the worst failures in the struggle for existence. Centuries are against them, as centuries were on the side of those who formerly came to us. They have none of the ideas and aptitudes which fit men to take up readily and easily the problem of self-care and self-government, such as belong to those who are descended from the tribes that met under the oak-trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chieftains.⁶⁵

Adopting historians’ arguments, Walker regarded the capacity for self-government, democracy and economic independence to be inherent racial qualities of Anglo-Saxon males that were endangered by the new immigrants’ “incapacity even to understand the refinements of life and thought in the community in which he sought a home”.⁶⁶

Apart from this supposed lack of manly Anglo qualities, Walker identified another threatening characteristic of the new immigration: the rise of an impoverished working class. Pauperism, for Walker, was a matter of “inherent baseness or cowardice or moral weakness”. He claimed that it also was an effect of state intervention since poor relief had suspended natural selection. The problem had previously been solved by the hard life on the frontier, Walker argued, America now had to “strain out of the blood of the race more of the taint inherited from a bad and

⁶⁵ Francis A. Walker, ‘Restriction of Immigration’, in *Discussions in Economics and Statistics*, ed. by Francis A. Walker, 1899 (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1971), pp. 437–51 (pp. 438, 446- 447). First published in *Atlantic Monthly*, 77 (1896), 822-829. Especially the expression “beaten men from beaten races” was adopted in public discourse.

⁶⁶ Francis A. Walker, ‘Immigration and Degradation’, in *Discussions in Economics and Statistics*, ed. by Walker, pp. 417–26 (p. 424). First published in *The Forum*, 11 (1891), 634-643.

vicious past before we can eliminate poverty, much more pauperism, from our social life".⁶⁷ While pauperism, according to Walker, had indeed occurred among the Anglo population, it had been mostly a small-scale effect of individual genetic characteristics. This situation, however, had changed with the arrival of the new immigrants: their lower standard of living, he claimed, had enabled them to underbid the male American breadwinner and thus had lowered both groups' wage levels. For Walker, it was immigration and not industrialization which for the first time in American history had resulted in the rise of separate classes in American society – those of “natives and foreigners”. Walker thus recast class struggle in biological terms, and interpreted the impoverishment of large parts of the population to be a direct effect of the new immigration. This argument was further substantiated by Walker's explanation of the falling native American birthrate, a theme he expounded and propagated in a series of publications and talks.⁶⁸ The American public was perplexed by the declining birthrates of the nineteenth-century demographic transition, disregarding the fact that these were a consequence of decreasing mortality rates. Noticing the continuous decline in birthrates, Walker linked it to the simultaneously rising number of new immigrants. The mere correlation of these two phenomena led him to assume that the American white male had been driven to a lower reproduction rate due to the “degrading” competition with immigrant workers, lower standards of living and depraved living conditions:

The American shrank from the industrial competition thus thrust upon him. He was unwilling himself to engage in the lowest type of day-labor with these new elements of the population; he was even more unwilling to bring sons and daughters into the world to enter this competition.⁶⁹

Therefore, Walker concluded, the arrival of ‘racially inferior’ immigrants had not increased population size but had merely replaced the native American's natural growth rate, curbing the ‘superior’ Anglo-Saxons' reproductive drive.

⁶⁷ Francis A. Walker, ‘The Causes of Poverty’, in *Discussions in Economics and Statistics*, ed. by Walker, pp. 455–71 (pp. 456–458, 469). First published in *The Century*, 55 (1897), 210–216.

⁶⁸ Walker, *Immigration and Degradation*, p. 424. For public talks, see for example “America for Americans: General Walker Talks on the Restriction of Immigration“, *Philadelphia American*, 17 December 1895; “Walker on Immigration“, *Springfield Union*, 16 April 1896. For earlier discussions of the 1860 and 1870 Massachusetts census results, see Charles E. Rosenberg, *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 67.

⁶⁹ Walker, *Immigration and Degradation*, pp. 424–25. The fecundity of second-generation immigrant women was significantly lower and, resembling that of native American women, a factor disregarded by Walker: Miriam King and Stephen Ruggles, ‘American Immigration, Fertility, and Race Suicide at the Turn of the Century’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20.3 (1990), 347–69. Similar theories had already been articulated by Chickering in the mid-nineteenth century: Conk, p. 86.

Walker's fertility theory was positioned at the nodal points of class, race, sexuality and gender.⁷⁰ In both the census and Walker's explanation of the declining white birthrate, women were reduced to their reproductive role. Walker thus combined racial differentiation with another important development regarding the interpretation of human differences in nineteenth-century biological sciences: the gendering of bodies. The modern gender binary was based on the idea that the two sexes were inherently different and that male and female physical and mental capacities were determined by their particular genetic make-up. The biological sciences did not only establish the white body as the norm, the white *male* was assigned as the normative category everything else deviated from.⁷¹ At a time when women were entering the labour market in fields previously dominated by men and started to fight for emancipation, the gendered and sexualized dimensions of Walker's metaphors such as "shrinking" and "withdrawing" indicate white male status anxiety, Matthew Hannah has pointed out. Hannah argues that Walker's theories were widely accepted because they projected the ideal of manly economic independence onto the entire white American population. In Walker's conception, racial qualities were predetermined biologically, the new immigration was therefore interpreted as a threat that could cause a "national impotence among native white working men" and thus endangered the population's social stability.⁷² Walker did not only evoke notions of the biological danger of immigration, but connected it to a prediction of the decline of American male superiority, buttressed by demographics. His interpretation of the statistical data was for the most part accepted despite its methodological and argumentative shortcomings. Immigration's assumed "contraceptive effect", to quote Walter Benn Michaels, was widely discussed in public and scientific discourse in the decades to come.⁷³

⁷⁰ For the entanglement of these categories in the nineteenth-century US, see Evelyn N. Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 18-92.

⁷¹ This is not to imply that the differentiation of humans into two sexes is not in itself constructed: Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Rosenberg, pp. 54–79. For a critique of Laqueur, see Heinz-Jürgen Voss, *Making Sex Revisited: Dekonstruktion des Geschlechts aus biologisch-medizinischer Perspektive* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010).

⁷² Hannah, pp. 182, 185.

⁷³ Walter B. Michaels, 'The Souls of White Folks', in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. by Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 185–210 (p. 198). Jeanne Petit, who investigates the literacy test debates from the viewpoint of

For Walker, the political implications of his findings were obvious. Since the census demonstrated new immigrants' racial inferiority, their continued immigration would result in a deterioration of the population's racial essence. Therefore, new immigration had to be stopped to preserve American institutions, wages and values as a model for the rest of the world. For Walker, immigration restriction thus emerged as a new imperative; not just "the deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, insane, pauper, or criminal" immigrants needed to be excluded, but new immigrants in general.⁷⁴

While Walker was the first to explicitly connect white American masculinity, class status and reproduction to the new immigration, he was by no means the only social scientist writing at the time about the immigrants' assumed racial inferiority. Some of his themes had already been articulated by economist Richmond Mayo-Smith in a series of articles published in the late 1880s. Mayo-Smith also wrote the prototype of a literary genre: the progressive reform literature on immigration. In *Emigration and Immigration*, published in 1890, he discussed the ostensible social problems of immigration in a scientific analysis. Creating a template for later progressive era treatises, his investigation included the history of immigration, its racial composition, and differences in occupations, settlement patterns, and cultural attributes of immigrant groups. Mayo-Smith then described the reputedly negative effects of immigration in detail, dealing in several chapters with economic, social and political aspects before ending on a discussion of proposed measures to regulate immigration. In his writings, Mayo-Smith located new immigrants as distinctively below Anglo-Saxons in the racial hierarchy, regarding them to be "as much an alien element in our civilization" as African Americans, both groups being "ignorant, unskilled and often degraded". Like Walker, he linked immigration to social deviance; according to him, the "defective and delinquent classes" had been coming to the US after 1880s. He corroborated this belief by referring to census data about the higher proportion of criminals, paupers and inmates of mental institutions among new immigrants in comparison with the overall population. In his opinion, the

gender, for some reasons does not mention Walker's pioneering work about race suicide at all. She also only analyzes Ross's and Madison Grant's writings in detail: Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 63-65, 83-84

⁷⁴ Walker, *Restriction of Immigration*, p. 450; Francis A. Walker, 'Methods of Restricting Immigration', in *Discussions in Economics and Statistics*, ed. by Walker, pp. 429-34 (p. 437), first published in the *Yale Review*, 1 (1892), 138-143. Walker's preferred method for restriction was to increase the head tax.

growing new immigration posed a severe threat to Anglo-Saxons' political freedom, their standard of living and the "social morality of Puritan settlers". With regards to state intervention, Mayo-Smith concluded that only a strict regulation of immigration could inhibit the imminent 'racial deterioration' of the American population. Applying a biological analogy, he argued that "[a]rtificial selection may be useful in developing a high type of national life, as well as in breeding live stock".⁷⁵

Over the next three decades, progressive academics regarded as scientific authorities on the question of social phenomena took up Mayo-Smith's line of argument and updated Walker's fears about the declining American birthrate.⁷⁶ Their publications served several purposes. Firstly, the focus on American history and the composition of its 'original population' perpetuated nineteenth-century historians' belief in American identity determined by Anglo-Saxon racial characteristics. IRL executive Prescott F. Hall explained that the original settlers had come from "Teutonic and Celtic stock" and that Germans and Irish thus had been "kindred in habits, institutions and traditions". Similarly, sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild wrote that the old immigrants "were of a racial stock very closely related to the early settlers of the country", making assimilation a rejuvenation "on the American soil, of the English race". According to Wisconsin sociologist E. A. Ross, the "restless, striving, doing Aryan", this "vigorous, individualistic breed", had to be controlled by the

⁷⁵ Richmond Mayo-Smith, *Emigration and Immigration.: A Study in Social Science* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968 [first publ. 1890]), pp. 5-6, 133-164, 278; Richmond Mayo-Smith, 'Control of Immigration I', *Political Science Quarterly*, 3.1 (1888), 46-77 (pp. 53-54); Richmond Mayo-Smith, 'Control of Immigration II: Do We Need the Immigrants?', *Political Science Quarterly*, 3.2 (1888), 197-225 (p. 211); Richmond Mayo-Smith, 'New Aspects of the Immigration Problem', *Public Opinion*, 17.89 (1894), 938. However, Mayo-Smith did not totally exclude of possibility of "racial assimilation": Mayo-Smith, *Emigration and Immigration*, pp. 150, 153.

⁷⁶ John R. Commons, *Races and Immigrants in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1907); Henry P. Fairchild, *Immigration: A World Movement and its American Significance* (New York: Macmillan, 1913); Prescott F. Hall, *Immigration and its Effects upon the United States* (New York: Holt, 1906); Jeremiah W. Jenks and W. J. Lauck, *The Immigration Problem* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1912); Edward A. Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: Century, 1914). Most of Ross's book had first been published as articles in *The Century* in 1912: Julius Weinberg, 'E. A. Ross: The Progressive as Nativist', *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 50.3 (1967), 242-53 (p. 246). Ross and Commons both taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the latter had served on the federal Industrial Commission between 1898 and 1900. For Ross, see for example Leon Fink, *Progressive Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Democratic Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 25; for Commons, see Richard A. Gonce, 'John R. Commons's "Five Big Years": 1889-1904', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 61.4 (2002), 755-77. For Fairchild, see for example Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Scribner's, 1916), pp. 14-21.

legal framework of the state for his own good.⁷⁷ These publications thus helped to further establish the racialized identity of white native Americans as supposedly superior Anglo-Saxons.

Secondly, the division between old and new immigrants was reiterated by the racialization of the latter. While this was already partly implied in the description of ‘superior Anglo-Saxon qualities’, most of the books entailed detailed description of the assumed racial characteristics of particular immigrant groups. Ross deplored the arrival of “wavering, excitable, impulsive” Italians, “reckless” and “superfecund Slavs” and “pleasure-loving Jewish business men”. By transplanting “sixteenth-century people into a twentieth-century community”, Ross argued, the new immigrants’ putative racial deficiencies would “necessarily lower the general plane of intelligence, self-restraint, refinement, orderliness, and efficiency”.⁷⁸ All authors explored the assumed negative effects of the new immigration on the standards of living, pauperism, crime, and insanity in detail.⁷⁹ More important, however, was the assumption that these characteristics were not effects of detrimental living conditions but stable racial traits. John R. Commons admonished readers to consider “whether there are not factors of race and heredity more fundamental than those of education and environment”. He was convinced that regarding “human degenerates [...] heredity is everything” and estimated that about 1.75% of the population was congenitally defective, being “below the normal Aryan brain level”. If statistics demonstrated that these defects occurred more often among the new immigrants, the quality of the American population would therefore deteriorate.⁸⁰

Thirdly, the authors updated Walker’s argument about declining birthrates. Ross coined the term race suicide in an address given in 1901, arguing that Anglo-Saxons’ “race supremacy” was caused by their manly virtues of energy, self-reliance, foresight and self-control, predestining them for expansion. Despite the presence of African Americans and the fact that “the last twenty years have diluted us with masses of fecund but beaten humanity from the hovels of far Lombardy and Galicia”, he argued that racial supremacy still had been maintained. However, the

⁷⁷ Fairchild, p. 130; Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, pp. 5, 37; Edward A. Ross, *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), pp. 3, 439.

⁷⁸ Ross, *Old World*, pp. 10-11, 13, 119, 129, 140, 150, 195-227, 228.

⁷⁹ Commons, *Races and Immigrants*, pp. 160-97; Fairchild, pp. 301-68; Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, pp. 139-200; Ross, *Old World*, pp. 228-81.

⁸⁰ Commons, *Races and Immigrants*, p. 5; John R. Commons, ‘Natural Selection, Social Selection, and Heredity’, *The Arena*, 18.July (1897), 90-97.

differential birthrates threatened to reduce Americans to a superior, but isolated caste in their own country since their “*strong sense of its superiority*” and “*pride of blood*” ruled out intermarriage, Ross argued. Commons agreed that race suicide was “the most fundamental of our social problems”, tending to “dry up the older and superior races”.⁸¹

The idea of race suicide was further popularized by Theodore Roosevelt who, as Diane Paul points out, “probably did more than any other individual to bring the views of academic race theorists to ordinary Americans”.⁸² Obsessed with the so-called manly virtues and the professed danger of overcivilization, Roosevelt shifted the emphasis from class to gender aspects and from the effects of immigration to individual responsibilities of white citizens, thus re-centring the debate on American racial characteristics. In his opinion, declining white American birthrates were “more important than any other question in this country” and represented the ills of modern society and overcivilization, namely decadence, corruption and selfishness. For Roosevelt, any individual who refused to reproduce was “in effect a criminal against the race”. Overcivilization, however, could be overcome if only Americans would revert to traditional gender roles: men needed to be ready to fight and “anxious to be fathers of families” while women should be “the wife and fearless mother of many healthy children”, Roosevelt argued.⁸³ As Gail Bederman has adduced, the theme of race suicide thus enabled white American middle-class men to voice concerns about shifting gender roles, simultaneously offering a way to celebrate male sexuality as public service to reaffirm “the sexual

⁸¹ Edward A. Ross, ‘The Causes of Race Supremacy’, *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 18.July (1901), 67–89 (pp. 88–89). Original emphasis. John R. Commons, ‘Racial Composition of the American People: Amalgamation and Assimilation’, *Chautauquan*, 39.May (1904), 217–27 (p. 218); Commons, *Races and Immigrants*, p. 208. Commons was the only social scientists who noticed that the birth-rates of second-generation immigrants were actually similar to those of native Americans: King and Ruggles, pp. 367–68. Other scientists and political economists such as Irving Fisher and René Kuczynski also took up the theme of race suicide. For Fisher see Annie L. Cot, “‘Breed out the Unfit and Breed in the Fit’”: Irving Fisher, Economics, and the Science of Heredity’, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 64.3 (2005), 793–826. Kuczynski was one of the founders of modern vital statistics and worked for the Census office between 1897 and 1901. He regularly published popular articles on vital statistics; see for example “Immigration and Fecundity”, *Boston Herald*, 31 March 1902.

⁸² Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), p. 102.

⁸³ Roosevelt to Bessie Van Vorst, 18 October 1902, in Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The Square Deal: 1901-1903* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 3: The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, pp. 355–56; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), p. 4.

power of American manhood”.⁸⁴ These concerns were also addressed in Ross’s writing. Highlighting the danger of “underbreeding”, he ascribed declining birthrates to modern “*democratic, individualistic, feminist, secular and enlightened*” society. In his opinion, the increase in divorces, the emancipation of women and the growing number of women working in industries had led to a higher average age at the time of marriage and therefore to a shorter reproductive period.⁸⁵ The celebration of a new, aggressive masculinity was also reflected in Roosevelt’s writings about war and imperial conquest. In his opinion, the struggle on the frontier had enabled American men to reinvigorate their racial qualities by regressing intermittently to their healthy barbarous roots. Since the frontier had vanished in the settlement of the continent, wars were necessary to overcome the adverse effects of industrialization by experiencing manly combat, unifying Americans regardless of their class, religion or ethnicity. By reinvigorating their masculinity in war, Roosevelt argued, Americans would re-emerge as a “stronger and more manful race”.⁸⁶ To avert race suicide, then, was not only a responsibility towards their race, but to guarantee the global Anglo-Saxon predominance. Consequently, he rarely missed an opportunity

⁸⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 - 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 200–06, see also Laura Doyle, *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 10–34. For feminists’ reactions to the idea of race suicide, see Linda Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976), pp. 136–58.

⁸⁵ Edward A. Ross, ‘Western Civilization and the Birth-Rate’, *Publications of the American Economic Association*, 8.1 (1907), 76–89 (p. 83); Edward A. Ross, *Changing America: Studies in Contemporary Society* (New York: Century, 1912), pp. 32–48, 64–82. Original emphasis. Commons, in contrast, assumed that that “with the independence and education of women sexual selection becomes a refined and powerful agent of progress”: Commons, *Natural Selection*.

⁸⁶ Bederman, pp. 184–96; Leroy G. Dorsey, *We are all Americans, Pure and Simple: Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), pp. 46–68; Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 38, 61–68; Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 14–43; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 133–79; Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, p. 17, first held as a speech before the Hamilton Club in Chicago in 1899. For overcivilization, see also T J. J. Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880 - 1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 47–58; E. A. Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 251–55. Roosevelt’s obsession with manliness was partly caused by his personal experience: after being ridiculed as emasculate in his early political career, he reinvented himself as vigorous frontier cowboy to establish political authority. See in detail: Bederman, pp. 170–77. On the role of gender conceptions in politics, see Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). For Roosevelt’s personal views on the topic, see “The Manly Virtues and Practical Politics”, first published in *The Forum* in July 1894: Theodore Roosevelt, *American Ideals: And Other Essays, Social and Political* (New York: Putnam’s, 1900), pp. 75–92.

to point out the civic responsibility of reproduction, frequently addressing the topic in his speeches and writings.⁸⁷

In the racial discourse, these authors proposed a set of solutions for the problem of race suicide. They replaced the purportedly salutary frontier experience with the reinvigoration of American manhood by war, justifying American imperial expansion and the oppression of so-called inferior races abroad while they promoted a new set of manly qualities. The intense discussion of Anglo-Saxons' assumed characteristics, and on race suicide, contravenes one of whiteness studies' main assumptions, namely that whiteness itself is an unmarked marker, unnamed, and invisible, at least to white people themselves.⁸⁸ On the contrary, the discourse indicates that white racial qualities in this particular time-period were the subject of elaborate scientific investigations and intensifying public discourses required by the limitation of 'full whiteness' to Anglo-Saxons. Therefore, whiteness itself was addressed and became visible to those who participated in these discussions, making whiteness studies claim of invisibility untenable, at least for this period of American history.

This issue has only recently been addressed in whiteness studies. Scholars concentrating on this period have pointed out that whiteness indeed came under close scrutiny by "a multitude of methods to examine, evaluate, compare and determine the degrees and shades of male whiteness".⁸⁹ In his study on Australian discourses on health, Warwick Anderson concludes that "whiteness was not an

⁸⁷ Bederman, pp. 200–15; Dyer, pp. 143–67; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 147–48; Lake and Reynolds, pp. 95–113; Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 23; *Advances in Contemporary Educational Thought Series*, pp. 40–42. Roosevelt was influenced by Pearson in his writings about the competition with Asian nations, see for example his review of "National Life and Character", first published 1894 in *The Sewanee Review: Theodore Roosevelt, American Ideals: Part II: Administration - Civil Service* (New York: Putnam's, 1902), pp. 176–224.

⁸⁸ Sara Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', *Feminist Theory*, 8.2 (2007), 149–68 (p. 156); Birgit Brander Rasmussen and others, 'Introduction', in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen and others (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 1–24 (pp. 1–10); Ross Chambers, 'The Unexamined', *Minnesota Review*, 47.Fall (1996), 141–56 (pp. 141–51); Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 3; Ruth Frankenberg, 'The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness', in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. by Brander Rasmussen and others, pp. 72–96; Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies*, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women Working Paper Series 189 (Wellesley, 1988).

⁸⁹ Eva Bischoff, 'Between Animal Instinct and Morality': The Construction of White Masculinity in Medico-Psychiatric Discourse in Weimar Germany', in *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, ed. by Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey and Katherine Elinghaus (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2007), pp. 427–35 (p. 428).

empty category, defined only in opposition to other races; rather, it was filled with flexible physical, cultural, and political significance”.⁹⁰ Whiteness in this period thus was “far from being unmarked”; its nature and characteristics were constantly discussed in publications concerned with a putative crisis of white manhood and threats to the white race and its civilization.⁹¹

This observation, however, has rarely been connected to whiteness studies’ theoretical framework. Julian Carter has put forward the argument that the discourse on white health and bodies was crucial in establishing white heteronormativity between 1880 and 1940. He argues that scientific experts and political commentators tried to maintain or re-establish idealized white middle-class gender roles that banned women from the world of employment and reduced their role to the moral obligation of reproduction. This discourse thus inscribed the responsibility for heterosexual reproduction as a normal white behaviour.⁹² The family was invoked as “the site of [the race’s] physical reproduction” and equated with the race and the nation.⁹³ Carter adduced that discussions about whiteness and its alleged crisis helped to establish white heterosexuality as the norm and contributed to the “gradual discursive elision of white raciality”, transforming explicit discussions of white normality into an invisible norm.⁹⁴ If these arguments about the close connection between whiteness and (hetero)sexuality are considered, it can be argued that similar to the permanent nature of the crisis of white masculinities, white identity formations require discourses on their assumed endangerment and instability to re-inscribe their hegemonial position.⁹⁵ Interpreting the discourses on whiteness and racial difference as similar to Foucault’s reading of the repressive hypothesis, the analytical focus shifts from the racialization of others to the productive dimension of whiteness: the incitement to address one’s own and others’ raciality.

⁹⁰ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 3.

⁹¹ Robert M. Vanderbeck, ‘Vermont and the Imaginative Geographies of American Whiteness’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96.3 (2006), 641–59 (p. 648).

⁹² Julian B. Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880 - 1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 12.

⁹³ Irving, p. 12; Michaels, *Our America*, p. 11. For the invocation of the family in racism, see also Appiah, p. 14.

⁹⁴ Carter, pp. 1-6, 30-41. For a similar argument about whiteness in the British Empire, see Radhika Mohanram, *Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 3–25.

⁹⁵ For the permanent crisis of masculinity, see Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz, *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2008), 5: Historische Einführungen, pp. 64–73. For whiteness, (hetero)sexuality, bodies and gender, see also Dyer, pp. 1–40.

Several scholars have argued that whiteness studies can benefit from the application of Foucault's theories.⁹⁶ Foucault argued that the common interpretation of sexuality in the Victorian era as repressed is a misconception. Censorship, control and prohibition did not result in a silence, but stimulated the discourse on sexuality in its prohibitive and confessional aspects, establishing a 'normal sexuality' that regulated individual sexual behaviour.⁹⁷ Subjects as nodal points of technologies of power and as "one of power's first effects" became "fold-backs" of power relations, they constituted and regulated themselves and their sexuality according to the dominant discourse.⁹⁸ This self-constitution was not limited to sexuality, but also encompassed racial identity formation, as Ioanna Laliotou has argued. For immigrants in the progressive era, this meant that they were perceived and perceived themselves as different from the prevalent racial and social norms; they became migrants in a process of subjectivation in their encounters in America.⁹⁹ If this line of thought is extended, it can be argued that these processes also served the subjectivation of white, native-born Americans as Anglo-Saxon. Modern power thus did not only establish the technologies of self-discipline and self-conduct, but also constituted subjects as "racial selves",¹⁰⁰ transforming abstract discourses into "productive new forms of 'subjects'".¹⁰¹ Thereby, it can be explained why American citizens did not only participate in processes of racializing others but also perceived themselves as Anglo-Saxon. Simultaneously, the discourse about whiteness in this period included the solution to the problems it identified: through the white qualities

⁹⁶ Catriona Elder, Cath Ellis and Angela Pratt, 'Whiteness in constructions of Australian nationhood: Indigenes, immigrants and governmentality', in *Transnational Whiteness Matters*, ed. by Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Maryrose Casey and Fiona J. Nicoll (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 208–21; Ladelle McWorther, 'Where do White People Come From? A Foucauldian Critique of Whiteness Studies', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 31.5-6 (2005), 533–56; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, 'Towards a New Research Agenda? Foucault, Whiteness and Indigenous Sovereignty', *Journal of Sociology*, 4 (2006), 383–95; Ann L. Stoler, 'Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 11 (1997), 183–206.

⁹⁷ Foucault, *Introduction*.

⁹⁸ Maria Bonnafous-Boucher, 'The Concept of Subjectivation: A Central Issue in Governmentality and Government of the Self', in *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*, ed. by Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), pp. 72–89; Foucault, *Society*, pp. 242–54; Foucault, *Security*, pp. 54–134; Sebastian Harrer, 'The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault's Lecture Series *L'Herméneutique du Sujet*', *Foucault Studies*, 2 (2005), 75–96 (pp. 81–83).

⁹⁹ Ioanna Laliotou, *Transatlantic Subjects: Acts of Migration and Cultures of Transnationalism between Greece and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ Stoler, *Education of Desire*, p. 95.

¹⁰¹ George Yancy, 'A Foucauldian (Genealogical) Reading of Whiteness: The Production of the Black Body/Self and the Racial Deformation of Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*', in *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. by George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 107–42 (pp. 107–08).

of rational reflection and progressive reform, modern society's problems could eventually be solved.¹⁰² The solution was thus threefold: white American men had to reinvigorate their manly qualities; women had to realize their civic duty of reproduction; and, most important of all, the state had to restrict the new immigration, ostensibly the main reason for race suicide.

Towards the end of the century, racialization was thus not limited to the new immigrants, but also encompassed Anglo-Saxons. While the racial discourse provided the means to distinguish between races that were grouped hierarchically, many of the individuals involved in the emerging progressive reform movements acted on the assumption that racial identity correlated with physical, mental and social characteristics. Within American academia, the prevalence of racial interpretations was reflected in both the production of statistical knowledge and the writings about race suicide. The progressive literature on immigration merged discussions of racial qualities with anxieties about class status, white masculinity, sexuality and deviance. This powerful rationale provided an elaborate framework for organizations such as the IRL to convince their fellow citizens that immigration restriction was imperative.

¹⁰² Carter, pp. 12, 46-74.

3. Progressives, the IRL and racialization

The racial distinctions constructed in nineteenth-century discourses in science and humanities were soon applied in public discussions about the new immigration. Progressive-era reform movements were foremost in using scientific findings about race for the construction of the new immigration and shaped its image in the popular discourse.¹ To understand how reformers contributed to both the new ideal of the participating citizen and the preservation of the assumed racial superiority of Americans, it is necessary to first analyze progressive movements' modes of operation. The Immigration Restriction League was one of the most influential forces in public discussions concerning the purported consequences of immigration. Its campaign for the literacy test before the turn of the century will be analyzed to investigate how it contributed to the construction of an Anglo-Saxon American identity and the racialization of the new immigrants. It will be demonstrated that similarities with other progressive movements can be disclosed, both regarding its mode of operation and its general aim to convince other citizens of the need for state intervention.

3.1 The pattern of Progressivism

A wide range of historical research on the progressive era has been published in the last fifty years. Puzzled by the variety of progressive ideology, to quote Rogers M. Smith, historians have struggled to reach general conclusions about the era.² Even the chronological boundaries of the progressive era have been disputed, and while most scholars argue that its core can be located in the years between 1900 and 1914, others extend it to the period between 1890 and 1917, some even further.³ The literature on the era can be divided into distinct periods. After initial reflections in the 1930s by former participants on their achievements and shortcomings, Richard Hofstadter's influential *The Age of Reform* (1955) characterized progressives as part of an old gentry that tried to defend their diminishing social standing in a "status

¹ Laliotou, p. 38.

² Smith, p. 412. In this thesis, the adjective progressive refers to the progressive movement and does not imply a judgement about political orientation, the 'right' way towards a modern society, social justice or the like.

³ For a more general discussion of periodization in historical research and that of the progressive era in particular, see Martin J. Sklar, *The United States as a Developing Country: Studies in U.S. History in the Progressive Era and the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1–77.

revolution”, and to preserve or restore traditional concepts of democracy and morality.⁴ While Hofstadter stressed the continuity between the populist movement and the progressive and New Deal eras historians of the 1960s and 70s, in contrast, searched for progressives’ distinctive features. Despite the fact that many interpretations focussed on the progressives’ failure to overcome business’s predominance in political decision-making, reform movements were described as associations led by a new middle class that initiated groundbreaking changes in society.⁵

The idea of a homogeneous group initiating reform projects to ameliorate the life of individuals and improve society by solving key issues of their time has since been criticized profoundly. In his “obituary” for the progressive movement, Peter G. Filene laid out the problems of this approach: far from unity, a multitude of progressive movements varied broadly in their aims, programmes, memberships and mass appeal. He highlighted the significance of “shifting coalitions”, temporarily uniting different protagonists on local, state, and federal levels, varying over issues, regions and time.⁶ Successive studies tried to identify oppositions within the movement to deconstruct the era’s depiction as an inevitable, ‘progressive’ process of industrialization, democratization and centralization.⁷

In the past fifteen to twenty years, an outpouring of historical research, to use Richard McCormick’s words, has pointed to the diversity of issue-related groups, their memberships and particular methods for achieving their goals.⁸ Recent studies have tried to disentangle the assumed coherence of progressivism by concentrating on biographical approaches, local developments or single groups within the

⁴ Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*; for a critique see Alan Brinkley, ‘Richard Hofstadter’s *The Age Of Reform: A Reconsideration*’, *Reviews in American History*, 14.September (1985), 462–80.

⁵ See for example Gabriel Kolko, *Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); David F. Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 1979); James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

⁶ Peter G. Filene, ‘An Obituary for “The Progressive Movement”’, *American Quarterly*, 22 (1970), 20–34. The diversity of progressive coalitions was first explored in John D. Buenker, ‘The Progressive Era: A Search for a Synthesis’, *Mid-America*, 51.July (1969), 175–94; David P. Thelen, ‘Social Tensions and the Origins of Progressivism’, *Journal of American History*, 56.2 (1969), 323–41.

⁷ Brinkley; Daniel T. Rodgers, ‘In Search of Progressivism’, *Reviews in American History*, 10.4 (1982), 113–32.

⁸ Richard L. McCormick, ‘Public Life in Industrial America, 1877-1917’, in *The New American History*, ed. by Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), pp. 107–32 (p. 108).

movement, focusing on questions of gender, race, or class.⁹ Thus, conservative or even reactionary aims and imperialistic, racist, and sexist tendencies could be included not as aberrations, but as important factors shaping perceptions and outcomes. This delineation from earlier accounts describing progressivism as a precursor of the movements of the 1960s and 70s has then again led to a narrative which loses sight of common features of social reform movements in this period.

Hence, the quest for determining the essence of the progressive movement seems to be the object of a perpetual historiographic debate, the “historical profession’s version of the snipe hunt”, as Colin Gordon puts it.¹⁰ Instead of giving another general account of the progressives, this chapter develops a different perspective to contextualize and depict progressivism as an agent in the transformation of the power relations between the American state and its citizens. Applying Foucault’s concepts of governmentality and biopolitics, the progressive movement will be connected to emerging systems of knowledge, new technologies of power and a changing role of citizens in modern society.

As explained above, the progressive movement was far from being a unified entity. A new middle class of white-collar employees, doctors, lawyers, scientists, suffragettes and feminists formed coalitions with the older middle class and sometimes with farmers, workers, or immigrants to tackle a diverse array of social problems.¹¹ Sometimes contradictory in their aims, progressives were often divided by differences in political opinions, social background or proposed solutions.

Historians have tried to come to terms with these differences by attempting to determine the reformers’ common denominators, drawing on shared ideals and similar patterns of political activity. Some unifying goals can indeed be identified: progressives tried to mitigate industrialized mass society’s most menacing

⁹ See for example Glenn; Julie Novkov, *Constituting Workers, Protecting Women: Gender, Law, and Labor in the Progressive Era and New Deal Years* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing “The People”: The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Colin Gordon, ‘Still Searching for Progressivism’, *Reviews in American History*, 23.4 (1995), 669–74 (p. 669).

¹¹ For coalitions between farmers and workers see Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State 1877-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For collaborations between middle-class reformers and workers see Richard A. Greenwald, *The Triangle Fire, the Protocols of Peace, and Industrial Democracy in Progressive Era New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Johnston; Stromquist.

consequences for workers and citizens, resulting in state and federal laws to regulate working hours, workplace security, workers' compensation, child and women's labour and health standards. Reformers aimed at breaking the power of an increasing number of industrial and financial corporations, trusts, and mergers perceived as a threat to economic progress, social stability, and individual freedom.¹² Progressives also reinterpreted the relationship between the state and its citizens: society and communities were regarded as interrelated entities. In order to change the state, progressives aimed at educating individuals to have them assume responsibility and become part of the reform movements. As a result of progressives' efforts, elements of direct democracy were implemented: the direct election of senators, women's suffrage, direct primaries, direct initiative, referendum and recall were introduced in this era.¹³ Progressives shared common denominators in their underlying motivation: according to Hamby, reformers regarded it as a moral obligation to fight for this new, inclusive democracy and to defend it against partial interests. A new vision of citizenship, resting on "common social interest that transcended the goals of economic interest groups" was to be realized with the help of the new social sciences to overcome divisive factors in society.¹⁴ Another salient feature of the progressives, often neglected by earlier historical accounts, was their almost complete disregard for racial equality. In a period characterized as the "nadir of American race relations", even the most liberal progressives – apart from a tiny minority – did not engage in African Americans' struggle against segregation and discrimination.¹⁵ Despite efforts to fight discrimination, by the end of the progressive era Jim Crow had prevailed, all southern states had disenfranchised

¹² Sidney M. Milkis, 'Progressivism, Then and Now', in *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, ed. by Sidney M. Milkis (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 1–39 (pp. 7–10). Some scholars further augment this characterization by adding movements for social justice and those for social control to their description of progressive reformers. See for example John W. Chambers, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890 - 1920* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1980), pp. 113–15.

¹³ Thomas Goebel, *A Government by the People: Direct Democracy in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, 1983), pp. 26–66.

¹⁴ Alonzo L. Hamby, 'Progressivism: A Century of Change and Rebirth', in *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, ed. by Milkis, pp. 40–80 (p. 43).

¹⁵ Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir 1877-1901* (New York: Dial Press, 1954). Logan argued for 1901 as the lowest point.

African-American men, many had established miscegenation laws, lynching was at its zenith and the civil service was mostly segregated.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the great variety in their sometimes conflicting aims, progressive reform movements were unified by their mode of operation. Belief in the necessity of regulation led progressives to idealize a stronger federal state that intervened efficiently in economy, work and life to guarantee its citizens' well-being and to harmonize group and individual interest.¹⁷ To achieve these goals, reform movements followed a shared pattern of action: they identified a social problem, investigated it scientifically and empirically, created public awareness, cooperated with other reformers and state agencies, generated remedies, and – ideally – had these implemented by state or federal government.¹⁸ Instead of imposing an artificial distinction between liberal, 'progressive' aspects of reform movements and their more coercive, conservative or racist counterparts, these shared ideals and mode of operation can be identified as the unifying characteristic of the multitude of reform movements.¹⁹ Donald Pickens's and Garland Allen's argument that the eugenic movement should be interpreted as being "very much in the mainstream of the Progressive Era" since it resembled other reform efforts in crucial aspects has been accepted by most historians. Like other movements, eugenicists could build on the financial and intellectual support of the educated white middle- and upper-class. In the progressive-era reform spirit, eugenic organizations believed in scientific management applied in a rational state intervention to correct social problems and

¹⁶ See for example Morton Keller, *Regulating a New Society: Public Policy and Social Change in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 251–81; Eileen L. McDonagh, 'Race, Class, and Gender in the Progressive Era: Restructuring State and Society', in *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, ed. by Milkis, pp. 145–91; Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870 - 1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), pp. 182–218; David W. Southern, *The Progressive Era and Race: Reaction and Reform, 1900-1917* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 2005). For progressives in the South, see Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983); William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁷ For the most comprehensive study of progressivism under this premise, see Keller.

¹⁸ Fink, p. 25; Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 112–16; McCormick, p. 121; Christina A. Ziegler-McPherson, *Americanization in the States: Immigrant Social Welfare Policy, Citizenship, & National Identity in the United States, 1908-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), pp. 6–19.

¹⁹ For the concept of coercive progressives, see Link and McCormick, pp. 96–104. Eisenach, in contrast, argues that progressivism was intellectually and morally coherent and only dissolved with its eventual triumph in the Wilson administration: Eldon J. Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

improve efficiency for the greater good.²⁰ Similarly, I argue, these characteristics and the organizational patterns explained above also apply to restrictionists: if the laissez-faire tradition towards European immigration was abandoned, they claimed, the application of scientific knowledge would result in the rational regulation of immigration that ensured the nation's assumed racial superiority.

In this reading of the progressive movement, Foucault's writings on governmentality can lead to further insights on the relation between knowledge, citizens and the state. According to Foucault, modern western societies augmented the older models of sovereignty and discipline, which exerted power through laws, punishment, and corporeal techniques, by governmental management. Governmentality does not focus on single subjects only, but aims at the population as a whole and draws upon the subjects' willingness for self-regulation and readiness to improve society.²¹ The citizens are no longer the mere object of power, simply subjugated by coercion and domination.²² In modern society, they are constituted in particular ways to become part of the governmental process via their self-discipline, self-conduct and the conduct of others; power "not only *acts on* a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being".²³ This subjectivation and its permanent actualization are

²⁰ Garland E. Allen, 'The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, 1910-1940: An Essay in Institutional History', *Osiris*, 2 (1986), 225-64 (pp. 255-260, 264); Pickens, pp. 3-22, see also Ian R. Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada, 1880 - 1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, pp. 161-69; Daniel J. Kevles, 'Eugenics in North America', in *Essays in the History of Eugenics: Proceedings of a Conference Organised by the Galton Institute, London, 1997*, ed. by Robert A. Peel (London: Galton Institute, 1998), pp. 208-26 (p. 210); Edward J. Larson, *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 30; Thomas C. Leonard, "'More Merciful and Not Less Effective': Eugenics and American Economics in the Progressive Era', *History of Political Economy*, 35.4 (2003), 687-712; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, p. 77. In her overview of the progressive era, Flanagan extends this interpretation to restrictionists: Flanagan, pp. 107-108.

²¹ Foucault, *Security*, pp. 107-10.

²² Jack Z. Bratich, 'Making Politics Reasonable: Conspiracy, Subjectification, and Governing through Styles of Thought', in *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality*, ed. by Jack Z. Bratich, Jeremy Packer and Cameron McCarthy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 67-100 (pp. 72-76); Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 19-23. Governmentality does not replace sovereignty and discipline, but augments these older modes of power. See Alex Houen, 'Sovereignty, Biopolitics and the Use of Literature: Michel Foucault and Kathy Acker', in *Foucault in an Age of Terror*, ed. by Morton and Bygrave, pp. 63-87 (p. 69).

²³ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 13. Original emphasis. See also Graham Burchell, 'Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self', in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, ed. by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 19-36; Bonnafous-Boucher; Dean, pp. 17-30; Dreyfus and Rabinow, pp. 212-13; Foucault, *An Introduction*, pp. 10-12, 26-29; Thomas Lemke, 'Rechtssubjekt

guided by the dominant forms of knowledge and tie abstract discourses to the individuals, to the “very interior of our existence and experience as subjects”.²⁴ Modes of subjectivation do not completely determine subject positions, but they “elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities, qualities and statuses to particular agents”, as Mitchell Dean explains. While discourses and knowledge limit the field of possible actions for subjects, individuals are nonetheless acting agents able to choose options and find ways of resisting power.²⁵ The new subjects are both an effect of and a prerequisite for the governmental mode of power, governmentality “can[not] avoid passing through, theoretically and practically, the element of a subject defined by the relationship of self to self”, as Foucault emphasized.²⁶ Infinitesimal and manifold relations between self and self, self and others, and power and subjects “constitute a chain”, governmentality rules through “the conduct of conduct”.²⁷ “To govern” in the modern sense, thus is “to structure the possible field of action of others”.²⁸

This new form of power can only be exercised over and by free subjects; it requires liberal society and its “management of freedom”. In the governmental mode of power, individuals’ self-interest and desires are released in such ways that they also serve the common weal.²⁹ Barbara Cruikshank describes this new subject position as “citizen-subjects”, nominally free citizens whose freedom is “a condition of the operationalization of power”.³⁰ But modern liberal society also constitutes a

oder Biomasse? Reflexionen zum Verhältnis von Rassismus und Exklusion’, in *Biopolitik und Rassismus*, ed. by Martin Stingelin (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), 1644: Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, pp. 160–83 (pp. 259–68); Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 40–47; Paul Patton, ‘Foucault’s Subject of Power’, in *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, ed. by Jeremy Moss (London: SAGE, 1998), pp. 64–77 (pp. 69–73); Alan Rosenberg and Alan Milchman, ‘The Final Foucault: Government of Others and Government of the Self’, in *A Foucault for the 21st Century*, ed. by Binkley and Capetillo, pp. 62–71 (p. 66); Robert M. Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity, and Identity: Historical Constructions of Subject and Self* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), pp. 51–78. Subjectivation is sometimes also translated as subjectification, to avoid confusion, only the term subjectivation will be used in this thesis.

²⁴ Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 10.

²⁵ Dean, pp. 43–44; Dreyfus and Rabinow, pp. 220, 224–226; Foucault, *An Introduction*, pp. 95–96.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (New York: Picador, 2006), p. 252; Harrer, p. 81.

²⁷ Bratich, p. 74; Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, p. 252; Colin Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality: An Introduction’, in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. by Burchell, Gordon and Miller, pp. 1–51 (p. 2). This term never appeared in the official translations of Foucault’s work, the use of Gordon’s own translation of “conduire des conduits” is nonetheless widespread.

²⁸ Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 221.

²⁹ Foucault, *Security*, pp. 72–73; Foucault, *Biopolitics*, p. 63.

³⁰ Cruikshank, p. 21.

paradox: the new freedom has to be protected by the state; “[l]iberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion”. Biopolitical strategies of security, which are “both liberalism’s other face and its very condition” curtail individual freedom in order to protect society from the deviant, the abnormal, the centrifugal forces threatening to undermine its stability.³¹ The fact that subjects request the limitation and regulation of their own freedom can be explained through desire, Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out. In their extension of Foucault’s theoretical framework, social production equals desiring-production that does not follow rational rules, but can be directed against one’s own interest.³² Through the introduction of the social as a sphere that not only connects the subject to the state but also confuses the boundaries of responsibility between these two,³³ civil society becomes “the interface [...] of governors and governed”.³⁴ The amalgamation of the public and the private opens new areas to power which now rules indirectly – due to their mode of subjectivation, citizens now request the state to intervene in their lives and thus increase power’s hold over society.

If this reading is applied to the progressives, their optimism about the creation of a critical democratic public and the creation of a better society can be understood as a part of this new mode of power. Progressives as citizen-subjects were eager to govern themselves and to guide others to also pursue the new ideals. Reformers’ efforts to transform workers, immigrants, farmers and the upper class alike into a homogeneous and harmonic association can thus be interpreted as the middle class’s attempt to reshape the social order after their own idealized self-image, as Michael McGerr argues. Updating Wiebe’s account of the new middle-class, McGerr identified the idea of creating “new people living by new codes of conduct” as “fundamental to progressivism”, which he interprets as a “fight over

³¹ Foucault, *Biopolitics*, pp. 64–65; Sven Opitz, ‘Government Unlimited: The Security Dispositif of Illiberal Governmentality’, in *Governmentality*, ed. by Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, pp. 93–114.

³² Deleuze and Guattari take this elaboration even further exploring why “men fight for their servitude”: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 23-27, 279, see also Butler, pp. 1–30. For Deleuze’s rereading of subjectivation with his concept of the fold, see Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 94–123.

³³ Deleuze, Foreword to Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. IX–XVII.

³⁴ Foucault, *Biopolitics*, p. 297.

how people should live their life”.³⁵ Progressives’ crusade for “applied reason and active citizenship” aimed at producing a decalomania of themselves; their struggles were an attempt to turn other individuals into responsible citizens zealous to combine their efforts for the common weal.³⁶ Farmers’, the working class’s or immigrants’ contribution to reform movements do not contradict this argument, but suggest that all social classes participated in this governmental reform approach. The quest for a better society started with the optimization of the self and extended to the conduct of others, eventually resulting in an increase of power of the state over its citizens. This search for constant renewal and self-critique is characteristic for governmentality, as Bratich points out: “as an incessant task, as perpetual self-problematization, the liberal art of governing obviously needs to instigate this ethos [of renewal] again and again”.³⁷

Apart from this new ethos of governmentality, progressive era reform movements relied heavily on the emerging social sciences to find solutions for society’s pressing problems. They regularly allied with social scientists who were often directly involved in the progressive cause, acting as social workers or conducting field work in urban tenements.³⁸ White male scientific experts represented the professionalization and specialization of the sciences and helped to detect “the ‘true’ nature of a problem and then finding and implementing a solution”, to quote Robert F. Zeidel.³⁹ They fulfilled the desire for scientific government, the idea that new knowledge provided new means to govern society more efficiently. Experts and social scientists advised new political institutions such as special commissions, congressional committees and executive agencies, thus constituting a link between reformers and the government. Simultaneously, their advice on social and political questions was more likely to be followed since it was privileged by scientific authority.⁴⁰ Both the creation of knowledge and the proposition of implementable

³⁵ McGerr, p. 79; Wiebe, pp. 111–32. For domesticity, see also Eric Rauchway, *The Refuge of Affections: Family and American Reform Politics, 1900-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

³⁶ Fink, p. 13.

³⁷ Jack Z. Bratich, Jeremy Packer and Cameron McCarthy (eds), *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), p. 77.

³⁸ Fink, pp. 25-26, 64-69.

³⁹ Hannah, pp. 72–76; Tichenor, p. 77; Zeidel, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Tichenor, pp. 41–45. The classic work on links between Taylorism, ideas of efficiency and the progressive movement is Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the*

solutions were, therefore, not merely attempts to provide new jobs for the emerging professional class, as some historians have argued, but were products of the inhere logics of governmentality and progressivism.⁴¹ Activists and state institutions alike depended on quantification and statistical data to elucidate their concerns; the scientization of society produced new forms of biopolitical knowledge and provided the tools for its regulation. The collaboration between social scientists, reformers, and the state, in turn, produced new results that arrogated and justified state intervention to prevail over the laissez-faire tradition.⁴² Like the census, citizen-subjects hence helped to constitute the population and its calculable risks as an object of scientific knowledge and made it “accessible to governmental technique”.⁴³ State interventions manifested themselves as imperative acts on behalf of the population’s welfare rather than as mere exertion of power.⁴⁴ The state’s apparatuses could be extended to areas which had not been penetrated before, not only with the citizen’s consent, but by virtue of their demand.⁴⁵ Progressive movements thus became part of the new dispositifs forming a network between knowledge, subjects, and power. While the similarities in the operations of the

Progressive Era, 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), see also Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978). For a broader discussion of experts’ role in American politics, see Desmond King, *In the Name of Liberalism: Illiberal Social Policy in the USA and Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 28–48.

⁴¹ This explanation was prominent among historians of the 1960s and 70s. According to Wiebe, the new middle class tried to fulfill the reformers’ visions of a new society through organization and bureaucracy, a point stressed even more explicitly in Hays’s concept of “functional organizations”: Samuel P. Hays, *American Political History as Social Analysis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980); Wiebe, pp. 111-132, 164-195. For more outspoken articulations of the thesis of a professional class creating and securing employment opportunities for itself, see Jerold S. Auerbach, *Unequal Justice: Lawyers and Social Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); James G. Burrow, *Organized Medicine in the Progressive Era: The Move toward Monopoly* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Edwin T. Layton, *The Revolt of the Engineers: Social Responsibility and the American Engineering Profession* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971). For an explicitly Marxist perspective depicting the role of experts as a vehicle of class conflict, see Garland E. Allen, ‘The Role of Experts in Scientific Controversy’, in *Scientific Controversies: Case Studies in the Resolution and Closure of Disputes in Science and Technology*, ed. by H. T. Engelhardt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 169–202.

⁴² Pickens, p. 20.

⁴³ Foucault, *Security*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ Dreyfus and Rabinow, p. 196.

⁴⁵ Although Bensel correctly points out that the growth of the nation-state can be located in the Reconstruction era, it accelerated significantly in the Progressive Era, especially during World War I: Richard F. Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Richard L. Watson, *The Development of National Power: The United States, 1900-1919* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

various reform movements followed the logic of this new apparatus, the subjects' agency, however, provided for multiple interpretations and suggested varying solutions for society's problems.

3.2 Progressives and immigration

While the IRL and other progressive associations were similar in their organizational approaches and the rationales for solving perceived problems, their stance towards new immigration varied significantly. By analyzing their reactions to urbanization, it can be disclosed how individuals' agency and organizations' reliance on different racial rationales could influence proposed policies. During the progressive era, the rapidly growing cities were a locus where reformers bundled their efforts to try to solve a multitude of what they perceived as society's most pressing problems caused by rising immigration figures, migration from rural to urban areas and the incipient First Great Migration. Jacob Riis wrote in 1890 that

in the tenements all the influences make for evil; because they are hot-beds of the epidemics [...]; the nurseries of pauperism and crime that fill our jails and police courts; that throw off scum of forty thousand human wrecks to the island asylums and workhouses year by year.⁴⁶

Sanitary and living conditions were indeed disastrous because municipal administrations were often incapable of providing basic services and regulations for the growing urban centres. In their attempt to gain attention for these problems, however, Riis's and muckraking journalists' depictions of tenements or 'slums' as impenetrable jungle breeding disease and immorality reified stereotypes about immigrants. The immigrant and American inhabitants of 'the slum' alike epitomized developments in urban centres eluding state control which were assumed to threaten and destabilize the social and moral order, often described in racialized metaphors in the journalists' "domestic travelogues". Thus, progressive discourses on urbanization and immigration should not be interpreted exclusively as a critique of policies and social conditions: they also described possible fields of political intervention to make society's fringe areas accessible for state control.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York*, 1890 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 23. Riis campaigned for improving living conditions in New York by means of lectures, exhibitions of photographs, and model tenements: James B. Lane, *Jacob A. Riis and the American City* (London: Kennikat Press, 1974).

⁴⁷ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 123–87; David Ward, *Poverty, Ethnicity, and the American City, 1840-1925: Changing Conceptions of the Slum and the Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

As a reaction to accelerating urbanization, Jane Addams, Lillian Wald and other reformers created settlement houses to ameliorate living conditions. Building on European predecessors, progressives created these centres in major American cities, mostly in the Northeast; their number grew from six in 1891 to over four hundred in 1910.⁴⁸ Taking essential necessities such as improvement of sewer systems, waste disposal, medical services and hygienic condition as starting point, settlement houses provided communities with impulses to fight for political reform and municipal services. Reform attempts were not limited to the individual or community level, but soon spread to issues of state or federal legislation.⁴⁹ The social workers' approach was two-fold: believing in positive environmentalism, they counted on the benign effect of altered conditions on individuals. These efforts, on the other hand, had to be augmented by educational endeavours to enable citizens to take care of themselves and their community. Problems were investigated and quantified by scientific means, remedies modelled and disseminated among the public to create political pressure. Accordingly, methods to ameliorate sanitary conditions and public health were not limited to new architectural designs, construction of public bathhouses or the provision of medical care. They also included educational efforts to disseminate knowledge about diseases and their

1989), pp. 46–93. For the metaphor of “domestic travelogues” and the link between imperialism and reform, see Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 121–27. For muckraking, see for example Robert Miraldi (ed.), *The Muckrakers: Evangelical Crusaders* (Westport: Praeger, 2000). For a similar interpretation of British urban reform, see Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003). For the claim that much of the progressive reform urge stemmed from the urban masses, see John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Norton, 1973).

⁴⁸ For the transatlantic connections between American and European progressives, see James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870 - 1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); Marc Stears, *Progressives, Pluralists, and the Problems of the State: Ideologies of Reform in the United States and Britain, 1909-1926* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 3–25. For more recent accounts see Ruth H. Crocker, *Social Work and Social Order: The Settlement Movement in Two Industrial Cities, 1889-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Molly Ladd-Taylor, ‘Hull House Goes to Washington: Women and the Children’s Bureau’, in *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. by Nancy S. Dye and Noralee Frankel (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), pp. 110–26; Rivka S. Lissak, *Pluralism and Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). For the Social Center movement, see Kevin Mattson, *Creating a Democratic Public: The Struggle for Urban Participatory Democracy During the Progressive Era* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), pp. 48–86.

transmission by visiting nurses, physicians and social workers.⁵⁰ The settlement movement evidently reveals one of progressivism's central concepts: the effort to turn working-class Americans and immigrants into responsible, politically empowered and productive citizens, thereby trying to reshape and remodel others after the middle class's self-image. Thus, "the colonial metaphor of teaching the 'native' how to behave" took a new shape in urban centres, Leon Fink has argued.⁵¹

Many of the reformers involved in the settlements were women, attempting to overcome the era's gender restrictions by applying their newly gained academic knowledge in society. At the same time, they reinstated gender stereotypes by turning to aspects of progressivism which emphasized education and self-sacrifice for the common weal.⁵² Most of the residents in the settlements were young upper- or middle-class idealists with a college education who acquired occupational experience in social work. In their approach to racial hierarchies, reformers were divided in coping with the various social conflicts in immigrant, working-class and black neighbourhoods. Many settlement houses reproduced the pattern of segregation by establishing separate facilities for African Americans. Concerning reformers' attitude towards immigrants, earlier historiographic writings have emphasized their inclusive work. Lissak, in contrast, has conclusively pointed out that even the most liberal and anti-restriction settlement workers believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority. At best, reformers' concepts allowed for selected immigrant cultural contributions, their main effort aimed at elevating them to the American civilization's reputedly superior level.⁵³ The settlement movement's prominent figures' attitudes towards immigrants were not only condescending, but could also include restrictionist positions, as the example of Robert A. Woods demonstrates. Boston's most prominent social worker did not only believe in the beneficial effect of segregating the chronic paupers, prostitutes and criminals from the 'worthy' poor,

⁵⁰ Boyer, pp. 220–31; Daniel E. Burnstein, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 2–15; Kraut, pp. 105–65; Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 69–128; John F. McClymer, *War and Welfare: Social Engineering in America, 1890-1925* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 84; Contributions in American History, pp. 12–29; Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 91–236.

⁵¹ Fink, p. 24. See also Ziegler-McPherson, pp. 6–19.

⁵² McClymer, pp. 12–29; McDonagh, pp. 162–69.

⁵³ Jonathan M. Hansen, *The Lost Promise of Patriotism: Debating American Identity, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 33-39, 92-98, 128-130; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 116–23; Lissak, *Pluralism*, pp. 25-47, 157-181; Stromquist, 150-152.

but also in a reasonable limitation of immigration due to the problems in assimilating those already in the US. Consequently, Woods supported the IRL's work and became a member of its executive committee in 1911.⁵⁴

A similar attitude was epitomized in Joseph Lee's many reform activities. Lee, a friend of Woods and one of the IRL's most important officials, engaged in urban reform and earned other progressives' respect as "father of the playground movement".⁵⁵ According to Lee, supervised playgrounds could instill social skills and democratic values in disadvantaged children while simultaneously fostering "a quasi-military discipline" for boys in "hard, organized play" and "maternal instincts" in girls. Playgrounds aimed at both American and immigrant children, teaching them leadership and responsibility, preventing juvenile delinquency and simultaneously institutionalizing community interaction.⁵⁶ While his vision of the playground incorporated the assimilation of immigrants, Lee was also an adamant restrictionist and believed in eugenics. In letters written in 1907 to representatives of the Russel Sage foundation, Lee argued that all efforts to "establish a democratic standard" were to be in vain if the arrival of the "weak and vicious" was not stopped since 'racial differences' were insurmountable. "[T]he largest and by far most important problem as to the causes of adverse social conditions", Lee wrote, "is the problem of race selection". In their "foolish American optimism", reformers assumed that "the laws of heredity were not made for the American and have no

⁵⁴ Davis, pp. 91–92; Lissak, *Pluralism*, pp. 4–5; Solomon, pp. 140–43; Robert A. Woods, 'The Total Drift', in *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study*, ed. by Robert A. Woods (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1899), pp. 288–312 (pp. 291–96); Robert A. Woods, 'Assimilation: A Two-Edged Sword', in *Americans in Process: A Settlement Study*, ed. by Robert A. Woods (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1902), pp. 356–83 (pp. 370–72); IRL Records (338, 1027); IRL Records (fMS 1050-1052), Series II: record books of the IRL, Minutes of the meetings of the executive committee of the IRL, 1894-1920, 3 volumes, 6 October 1911 (hereafter: IRL Minutes).

⁵⁵ Dinner for Joseph Lee, 1936, Lee Papers, I, B, Carton 5. One laudatory publication also called him the "godfather of the playground": Lee Papers, I, C, Carton 9. Playgrounds have been mostly analyzed as means of social control in the progressive era, as attempts to educate immigrant and working-class children after the middle-class reformers' model, enforcing gender distinctions and ideas about citizenship: Boyer, pp. 242–51; Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Cary Goodman, *Choosing Sides: Playground and Street Life on the Lower East Side* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979). For more recent accounts that challenge these assumptions, see Ocean Howell, 'Play Plays: Urban Land Politics and Playgrounds in the United States, 1900-1930', *Journal of Urban History*, 34.6 (2008), 961–94; Sarah J. Peterson, 'Voting for Play: The Democratic Potential of Progressive Era Playgrounds', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 3.2 (2004), 145–75. Peterson, however, almost completely neglects Lee's racial ideas that influenced his notions of citizenship and democracy.

⁵⁶ Joseph Lee, *Constructive and Preventive Philanthropy: with an Introduction by Jacob A. Riis* (New York: Macmillan, 1902); Joseph Lee, 'Play as an Antidote to Civilization', *The Playground*, 5.4 (1911), 110–26; Joseph Lee, *Play in Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

jurisdiction over him”. All efforts of urban reform, Lee concluded, were “like trying to pump out the vessel without stopping the leak” if immigration would not be restricted.⁵⁷

Other IRL members also interpreted urban problems as consequences of racial difference and recreations of the immigrants’ ‘normal environment’. In the League’s opinion, new immigrants could not be assimilated since they lived “in colonies by themselves, speaking their own language and keeping all their own customs, unaffected by the higher civilization around them”. These ideas and customs were reflected in “the morals and in the sanitary condition of our larger cities”; supposedly a racial trait rather than a result of inadequate municipal regulation.⁵⁸ Prescott Hall reminded readers that immigrants came from

the degraded, ignorant, lawless and pauper classes. [...] These people go on living in much the same way as at home, they form oftentimes local foreign communities removed as far from American citizenship in their political and social habits as the language they speak is different from English.⁵⁹

In contrast to the settlement movement, the IRL thus regarded new immigrants as incapable of improvement or assimilation due to assumed differences in racial dispositions. In this logic, the situation in the cities could only be improved if immigration was restricted; the efforts of settlement workers would be meaningless if more new immigrants were to replace those that had been assimilated successfully, as Ward regularly explained to social workers.⁶⁰ Both interpretations of urbanization thus believed in a stronger role of the federal state, restrictionists in regard of immigration regulation, settlement workers for improving living conditions. Simultaneously, both sides’ aim to reform their fellow individuals was rooted in racial rationales: while settlement workers and liberal progressives acted upon precepts that led them to assume that immigrants only had to learn how to

⁵⁷ Lee to Robert W. DeForest, 2 February 1907, Lee to John M. Glenn, 20 April 1907; Lee Papers. In these letters, Lee made the case for a scientific investigation of immigration to be conducted by the foundation. For the Sage foundation’s role in financing playgrounds, see Ruth Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage: Women’s Activism and Philanthropy in Gilded Age and Progressive Era America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Roberta J. Park, “Boys’ Clubs are Better than Policemen’s Clubs”: Endeavours by Philanthropists, Social Reformers, and Others to Prevent Juvenile Crime, the late 1800s to 1917’, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24.6 (2007), 749–75 (pp. 763–65).

⁵⁸ IRL Records (1116, folder 2); IRL, *The Present Aspect*.

⁵⁹ Hall, “To the Editor”, *Brookline Chronicle*, 28 March 1896.

⁶⁰ Ward frequently addressed the Boston school of charity, later the Simmons School of Social Work, whose members he found “much interested in the further restriction of immigration”: IRL Minutes, 25 April 1905; see also 13 April 1908, 8 April 1909, 16 June 1911, 9 May 1912; Solomon, p. 140.

become American, the League aimed at remembering their fellow Anglo-Saxons of their responsibility to invest into the protection of the race. In order to have other citizens identify as Anglo-Saxons concerned with the racial composition of the country's population, the League had to expound the asserted racial difference and the encompassing threats to the nation's racial homogeneity in detail.

3.3 The IRL as progressive movement

3.3.1 Founding the League

Like other parts of the US, New England saw a significant rise in newly formed social reform and philanthropic organizations in the late 1880s and early 1890s. In Massachusetts, most of these were led by upper middle-class and upper-class members of the so-called Boston Brahmins, a term describing established New England families of significant wealth who dominated the city's social and political life. On the community and state level, however, they had begun to lose their leading role in politics to Irish immigrant leaders; the first mayor of Irish descent had been elected in Boston in 1884. Concern about immigrants' political weight merged with the racial discourse taught at Harvard, where most of Boston's intellectual, cultural and economic elite were educated.⁶¹ Influenced by historians such as John Fiske and Nathaniel Shaler who believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority, the three founders of the IRL relied on Mayo-Smith's and Walker's writings about new immigration to identify it as a threat to American society. Five years after their graduation from Harvard, "that inveterate citadel of scientific racism", they founded the Immigration Restriction League in May 1894.⁶²

Charles Warren was a descendant of a colonial family and son of a prominent Mugwump. In his commencement speech at Harvard in 1889, he had already attributed the corruption of city governments to immigrants' influence. After graduation, he visited Harvard Law School and practiced law. While Warren played an important role in the IRL's early years, he began to retreat from the executive committee after 1898 and concentrated on his fictional and historical writings before

⁶¹ Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard & the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), pp. 160–82; Solomon, pp. 43–58.

⁶² Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, p. 65. Technically, the League was also founded by Samuel D. Parker and Winthrop T. Hodges. Although present at the League's first meeting, they only played a minor role in the League's very first years: IRL Minutes, 31 May 1894.

disappearing from the League's records after 1903.⁶³ Robert DeCourcy Ward, through his mother Anna Saltonstall, could also claim colonial heritage. After graduation, he became a geologist at Harvard, first as instructor and assistant professor, and from 1910 as professor of climatology. Ward published over three hundred papers and served on the Harvard College administrative board for over thirty years.⁶⁴ Apart from periodic absences during research trips, Ward became one of the most active members of the IRL's executive committee. He worked for the IRL's cause until his death in 1931; afterwards, his son Henry continued the work of the League into the 1950s.⁶⁵ The League's most adamant fighter for restriction was Prescott F. Hall, conducting the work of the League with a fervour verging on mania. A staunch anti-Semite, Hall was quick to suspect Jewish conspiracies if yet another bill was blocked or buried in Congress and ascribed much of the resistance to his proposals to steamship companies' influence. In the League's publications and official correspondence, however, this disdain for Jews as a racial rather than a religious group was not mentioned. Jeanne Petit has claimed that after 1910, "the men of the IRL began to express anti-Semitism much more blatantly in their public and private writings", especially in regard to the "sexual danger" putatively posed by Jewish immigrant men. These claims, however, only rely on the publications of IRL vice-president Madison Grant and E. A. Ross, then member of the League's national committee. In its own publications, the IRL never publicly spoke out against Jewish immigrants in particular; none of the IRL publications was concerned with Jewish immigration and sexuality. In contrast to Ross or Grant, Hall did not address Jewish immigration in particular in *Immigration and its Effect*; the book and other IRL publications that mentioned race suicide always referred to assumed general racial characteristics, and hardly ever explicitly mentioned sexuality. Hall

⁶³ IRL Minutes, 1894-1903; Solomon, pp. 99-100. The term Mugwump originally denoted Republican dissenters supporting Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland in the presidential elections of 1884; afterwards, it remained in use for independents or supporters of reform politics. Warren became Assistant Attorney General in 1914, an office he held for four years. Warren's most lasting legacy – besides drafting the Espionage Act in 1917 – was his history of the Supreme Court which won the Pulitzer Prize: L. H. Woolsey, 'Charles Warren', *American Journal of International Law*, 49.1 (1955), 50-54. The only historical work on Warren is a somewhat laudatory dissertation: Michael A. Wolf, 'Charles Warren: Progressive, Historian' (Dissertation, Harvard University, 1991).

⁶⁴ Charles F. Brooks, 'Robert DeCourcy Ward, Climatologist', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 22.1 (1932), 33-38; Robert T. Jackson, 'Robert DeCourcy Ward', *The Scientific Monthly*, 24.2 (1932), 192-94.

⁶⁵ Robert DeCourcy Ward Papers, Boxes 78, 80A, 80B, 81.

only disclosed his his hatred for the “eternal Jew” in his private letters when he was sure that he was communicating with like-minded people.⁶⁶

Apart from his anti-Semitism, Hall also sometimes displayed an anti-democratic attitude. In his opinion, the right to vote should be limited to those of a certain educational or economic standard.⁶⁷ Like other eugenicists, he wrote and spoke at length about the importance of the propagation of the supposedly superior Anglo-Saxon, but had failed to contribute personally to the fight against the falling birthrates when he died at age fifty-four in 1921.⁶⁸ Hall struggled with frail health, mostly nervous problems and depression; a doctor friend described him as an “analytical mind in a supersensitive body”. After his death, his widow explained that his overprotective mother had caused Hall to be “a frail little hothouse plant, for he was never allowed to romp, to climb, and to be reckless”. Hall appears to have compensated for his ill health with an enormous workload to fulfil the ideal of a productive masculinity: after graduating from Harvard in 1888, he completed law school and worked for several law firms before forming a partnership with a colleague in 1904. Living on four hours of sleep per night, Hall dedicated much of his time to the League as executive secretary, and was a member of numerous other organizations, “always vigorous in his conversations and his writings”, as his widow remembered.⁶⁹

As members of the Boston Brahmin elite, Ward, Hall and Warren looked for support among their social stratum. In the League’s early years, a number of former classmates and acquaintances from their own generation served the IRL in various

⁶⁶ IRL Records (342, 434, 446, 468); Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 77–78. In a letter written in 1910, Hall even contended that Jesus had not been a Jew: IRL Records (424).

⁶⁷ Prescott F. Hall, ‘Aristocracy and Politics’, *Journal of Heredity*, 10.4 (1919), 166–68.

⁶⁸ For other childless or unmarried eugenicists, see Spiro, pp. 240, 254-255.

⁶⁹ Lucyle Hall, ‘The Personal Side’, in *Immigration and other Interests of Prescott F. Hall*, ed. by Prescott F. Hall and Lucyle Hall (New York: Knickerbocker, 1923), pp. 119–23. Solomon had the opportunity to conduct interviews with Hall’s fellow League member John F. Moors and Ward’s son who described Hall as depressive: Solomon, pp. 242, n. 46. Hall also fought for the preservation of Boston’s historic Park Street Church. In Brookline, where he lived, he convinced the council to prohibit the erection of modern three-story apartment houses: Hall, *The Preservation of Park Street Church*, pamphlet, Massachusetts Historical Society, Bdses-Sm 7 February 1903; Lucyle Hall, ‘Prescott Farnsworth Hall: His Life, his Activities, his Writings’, in *Immigration and other Interests of Prescott F. Hall*, ed. by Hall and Hall, pp. XIII–XXVIII; Hall, *The Personal Side*. For Anglo-Saxonism and the preservation of colonial New England, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 203–62.

functions.⁷⁰ While most of the work was conducted by Hall and Ward, the executive committee met regularly to discuss organizational matters.⁷¹ In 1898, the League was able to secure the support of Joseph Lee, son of the affluent Boston Banker Henry Lee and president of the Massachusetts branch of the National Civic League (NCL). Joseph Lee would become the most important financial contributor; Boston real estate developer Richards Merry Bradley served for many years as the League's treasurer.⁷² For moral support and social prestige, however, the IRL turned to their fathers' Brahmin generation. Historian John Fiske became the first president of the League after Henry Lee, Francis Walker, Nathaniel Shaler and former senators Henry Parkman and George Edmunds had declined.⁷³ The last only refused because they did not want to accept any additional work and subsequently became honorary vice-presidents of the League, joined by Boston philanthropists and, befittingly, Richmond Mayo-Smith. To underscore their freedom from religious prejudice, the League added Catholic Thomas F. Ring. Although most vice-presidents only contributed to the League with the prestige of their names on the letterhead, the IRL mourned Walker's death in 1897 bitterly, reporting that it had lost "one of its most active members and an earnest supporter of the cause of restriction of immigration".⁷⁴

Over time, the League extended the list of its prominent supporters beyond its New England roots. When Fiske resigned as IRL president in 1898, John F. Moors replaced him. The place of deceased vice-president Mayo-Smith was filled by Columbia University sociologist Franklin H. Giddings in 1901. In 1903, the League won over a number of new vice-presidents, including prominent names such as William DeWitt Hyde, president of Bowdoin College; Frank B. Reynolds, New York University settlement worker; Franklin MacVeagh, a Chicago banker and head

⁷⁰ Up to 1898, the most frequently involved were Moors, Robert Treat Paine, Jr., G. Loring Briggs, Frank A. Farnham, Alpheus S. Hardy, James A. Bailey and Samuel D. Parker: IRL Minutes, 1894-1898.

⁷¹ IRL, *Constitution of the League*, 1894, Ward Scrapbooks.

⁷² IRL Minutes, 8 May 1896, 10 January 1898. For Bradley's background and his activities in other reform organizations, see Marilyn S. Blackwell, 'The Deserving Sick: Poor Women and the Medicalization of Poverty in Brattleboro, Vermont', *Journal of Women's History*, 11.1 (1999), 53-74. For the congruence of nativist, restrictionist and social reform movements' membership, see Christopher Harris, 'A Mirror of Boston: Faneuil Hall at the Turn of the Century', *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 33.1 (2005), 37-56 (p. 42).

⁷³ IRL Records (421, 589), IRL Minutes 20, 26 June, 24 July, 20, 31 August, 11 October, 7 November 1894; Fiske to Ward, 20 November 1895, Ward Papers, Carton 80A.

⁷⁴ IRL, *Invitation to Annual Meeting 1895; Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1896*, Ward Scrapbooks.

of the National Civic Federation's (NCF) Immigration Department; Owen Wister, popular writer and close friend of Theodore Roosevelt; and New York publisher Henry Holt.⁷⁵ Ten years later, the League also created a National Committee to "fill up our letter head", as Ward put it. This list included Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell, Stanford president David Starr Jordan, Dean of Chicago University Leon C. Marshall, University of Pennsylvania educator James T. Young, eugenicist and professor of medicine Lucien Howe, Boston settlement worker Robert A. Woods and conservationist Madison Grant. Unsurprisingly, the race suicide proponents Commons, Ross and Fairchild also joined the League's committee. Harvard sociologist Thomas N. Carver became a member of its executive committee in 1910 and served in this function until the 1930s.⁷⁶ Franklin MacVeagh joined the committee after his tenure as Secretary of the Treasury had ended; ex-senators Samuel B. Capen and Frank B. Gary were also added to the list. Labour was represented by American Federation of Labor (AFL) vice-president James Duncan and AFL secretary Frank Morrison. With this array of prominent men of influence, the League's membership role indeed read "like a *Who's Who* of American education and civic leadership", Jacobson points out.⁷⁷

After the turn of the century, the League professionalized its mode of operation. It employed Charles Edgerton as a lobbyist in Washington, a position "practically indispensable for the successful prosecution of the League's work". After the session had ended in 1902, Edgerton was hired intermittently in the following years to lobby for labour unions' support.⁷⁸ For a short period in 1903/04, the IRL also employed F. H. Ainsworth, former INS officer, to canvass for members and donations New York City.⁷⁹ In 1905, the IRL eventually found its assistant secretary

⁷⁵ IRL Records (521, 535, 625); IRL Minutes 9 February 1903; *Report of the Executive Committee for the Year Ending June 30, 1903*, Ward Scrapbooks. Giddings resigned in 1903; although he favoured restriction in general, he did not agree with the literacy test as the best means to achieve it: IRL Records (458). For Wister's racial views, see Adams, pp. 212–15.

⁷⁶ IRL Records (410, 590); IRL Minutes 7 November 1903, 11 March 1910.

⁷⁷ Ward to Lee, 27 January 1912, Lowell to Lodge, 9 August 1910, Lee Papers; IRL Records (151, 295, 382, 521, 525, 535, 560, 610, 625, 680, 806, 1014, 1140); Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, p. 197.

⁷⁸ IRL Minutes 20 November, 5 December 1901, 22 March, 5 April 1902, 31 June, 13 July 1905, 4 January 1906; IRL, *Report of the Executive Committee for the Period from May 16, 1901, to June 30, 1902*.

⁷⁹ IRL Minutes, 26 September, 22 December 1903, 9 April 1904; IRL Records (1056, folder 6). Ainsworth also wrote a pamphlet for the League summarizing problems in the application of existing immigration regulations: IRL, *Burdens of Recent Immigration as Illustrated in the State of New York*, Publication no. 40, 1904.

in James H. Patten. He served the League for twenty-five years and identified completely with its goals. At a salary of \$3000 a year, gradually raised to \$6000 by 1912, Patten was the League's main lobbyist, fighting relentlessly for restriction. A skilled organizer, Patten had an intimate knowledge of the political arena in the capital and maintained working relationships with labour and patriotic societies.⁸⁰ The League's new professional status was also represented by Richards M. Bradley who took over the office of the treasurer in 1905. Responsible for the League's finances, he regularly solicited among its wealthier supporters. Most years, however, expenses not covered by contributions were paid by Joseph Lee. It remains uncertain how high the League's annual expenses actually were; Lee claimed in solicitation letters to contribute between \$8000 and \$12,000 annually.⁸¹ When Warren slowly retreated from the League, its work was run by Hall, Ward, Bradley, Lee and Patten.

The IRL never evolved into a mass movement but remained an elitist circle of influential middle or upper-class white men. In the 1890s, the membership rose to more than 650, during the 1910s it fell towards 300. Women were allowed to contribute financially but could not become members. The IRL's gender and class bias was also reflected in the composition of so-called influence list of sympathizers, mostly male members of the North-eastern elite. After the League had been founded and its programme publicized, Leagues were created in other parts of the country. Apart from the associations in New York City and Brooklyn led by organized labour, most of them seem to have been short-lived.⁸² The League's mode of operation thus resembled other progressive era reform movements: a small circle of individuals dedicated their time and energy for the state's sake, and convinced men of reputation to give their name for the cause.

⁸⁰ IRL Minutes, 13 May 1905, 2 July 1907, 21 September 1909, 16 February 1912. Solomon writes aptly that he "served the League fanatically": Solomon, p. 124. Apart from accounts in the IRL Records little is known about his life. He finally fell out with Ward, Lee and Bradley over his services for patriotic societies in 1930; Ward even threatened to resign from his IRL post over the dispute: Patten to Bradley, 21 September 1929, Ward to Lee, 5 October 1929, 15 September 1930, Lee to Ward, 20 September 1930, Lee Papers, I, A, Carton 2.

⁸¹ IRL, Circular, June 1904, Ward Scrapbooks; Lee, Circular, October 1913, Lee Papers. Unfortunately, only a small fracture of the League's financial records has been preserved, providing a very incomplete picture of its finances: IRL Records (1053). The IRL unsuccessfully tried to secure contributions from Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller: IRL Records (1056, folder 4); IRL Minutes, 9 April 1904.

⁸² IRL Minutes, 5 February 1895, 20 March 1896, 15 May 1913; IRL Records (1058, folder 4, 1063, folder 3, 1064, folders 4, 5, 1067, folder 2, 1069, folder 3); Solomon, p. 106. For the Brooklyn League, see for example "For Brooklyn's Workers", *New York Press*, 26 May 1895. The IRL even formed an Association of Immigration Restriction Leagues, but reports from other cities can only be found for a few years after 1894 in the League's records.

3.3.2 Investigating the problem

The IRL's programme combined the findings of scientific racism taught in Harvard with the progressive spirit of good citizenship. Like other progressive organizations, the League emphasized its impartiality and its reliance on scientific facts. In its constitution, the IRL articulated its aims as follows:

The objects of the League shall be to advocate and work for the further judicious restriction or stricter regulation of immigration, to issue documents and circulars, solicit facts and information on that subject, hold public meetings and to arouse public opinion to the necessity of a further exclusion of elements undesirable for citizenship or injurious to our national character. It is not an objective of this League to advocate the exclusion of laborers or other immigrants of such character and standards as fit them to become citizens.⁸³

Relying on the established racial discourse, IRL leaders equated qualification for citizenship with Anglo-Saxon descent, claiming that the new immigrants of the "Slav, Latin, and Asiatic races" could never fulfil these standards since they were "ignorant alike of their own language, of an occupation, and of the standards of living and character which distinguish the American people". Simultaneously, the League claimed to be "non-sectarian and non-partisan" and stated that no group should be discriminated against for their religion or place of origin.⁸⁴ Throughout its existence, the IRL would combine these two strains: claiming neutrality by a strict adherence to scientific findings, and, on the other hand, championing the exclusion of the new immigrants since these very findings presumably gave evidence to their racial inferiority.

Like other progressive organizations, the IRL regarded their political activity and the concern for the nation's future as normal behaviour of responsible citizens, connecting it to a concept of civic duty. IRL member Moors, in a letter to a newspaper, stressed that it was "our moral duty" to utilize science's "wonderful new discoveries to show us how to avoid whatever of inherited weak character" to limit the putatively harmful immigration. Writing after his death, Hall's widow stated that her husband had "felt it was the duty of every intelligent person to have some public spirited interest, some interest in the common good, [and] the betterment of the future generations". For Hall, good citizenship was congruent with the preservation

⁸³ IRL, *Constitution*. The last sentence was added to many of the League's publications.

⁸⁴ Hall, *Letter to Newspapers*, 3 December 1896; Ward and Warren, *Letter to Members of Congress*, 13 November 1895, Ward Scrapbooks.

of the professedly superior white race; he assumed that “to point out wherein our immigration laws need strengthening for the better protection and preservation of the race is a duty”.⁸⁵ To inform his fellow (white) citizens of new immigration’s dangers and to convince them of the necessity of further action was part of this duty, as well. IRL leaders thus not only regarded it to be their civic responsibility to take action to protect the population, but also assumed that other subjects would, in return, also fulfil their ‘duty’ if only informed about new immigration’s consequences.

The IRL’s methods resembled the progressive pattern: since the problem of the new immigration had already been identified in the racial discourse, the League concentrated on tabulating census statistics and on obtaining additional data from state and private institutions, including charities, mental institutions, and chambers of commerce.⁸⁶ In its investigation of the new immigration, the IRL relied on statistics and data included either in the census or the Commissioner-General of Immigration’s annual reports. From its creation in 1891, the immigration service was a trade union stronghold. As head of the service, former congressman Herman Stump was succeeded by Terence V. Powderly in 1897, the prominent former Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor (KoL).⁸⁷ Both Stump and Powderly were moderate supporters of the literacy test, the latter stating that it may be a temporary solution while Stump regarded it “the most efficient mode or restricting

⁸⁵ Moors, “Restriction of Immigration”, *Christian Register*, 19 July 1894; Alexander E. Cance and others, ‘Second Report of the Committee on Immigration of the Eugenics Section of the American Genetic Association’, *Journal of Heredity*, 5.7 (1914), 297–300 (p. 297); Prescott F. Hall and Lucyle Hall (eds), *Immigration and other Interests of Prescott F. Hall* (New York: Knickerbocker, 1923), p. 121. The concept of restriction as a moral duty was upheld in future publications, see for example IRL, *The Present Status of the Immigration Problem*, Publication no. 37, ca. 1903.

⁸⁶ IRL, Circular Letters 1898-1907, IRL Records (1046).

⁸⁷ The 1891 immigration act had established the Bureau of Immigration and installed Commissioners of Immigration at major ports of entry. Stump’s title was Superintendent of Immigration, it was changed to Commissioner-General when Powderly took office: Darrell H. Smith and H. G. Herring, *The Bureau of Immigration: Its History, Activities and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1924), 30; Service Monographs of the United States Government, p. 9. For the KoL, see for example Robert E. Weir, *Knights Unhorsed: Internal Conflict in a Gilded Age Social Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000). For Powderly’s anti-immigration stance as union leader, see Terence V. Powderly, ‘A Menacing Irruption’, *North American Review*, 147. August (1888), 165–74. Until Nixon’s presidency, all Commissioner-Generals of Immigration had labour union backgrounds: Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 35–36.

immigration” but assumed that it would not necessarily sift out the worst immigrants.⁸⁸

For the IRL, cooperation with the Bureau of Immigration provided opportunities to attain statistical information on immigration trends, to influence the application of existing laws and to concertedly lobby for new regulations and a bigger appropriation for the INS. The League was in close contact with its officials, was on the service’s mailing list and could frequently attain new arrival figures before they were officially released. The Bureau also referred statistical requests it could not answer to the League and demanded to have three copies of each IRL publication sent.⁸⁹ Aside from immigrant arrivals, the Commissioner-General’s annual reports contained numerous statistics including the immigrants’ illiteracy ratio, a practice taken up in 1893.⁹⁰ The League reworked the latest statistical trends into gloomy editorials and short articles sent to newspaper editors. The IRL’s executive committee claimed that its statistics were frequently reprinted since they offered more concise information than the lengthy government reports.⁹¹

3.3.3 Proposing a solution

The League’s preferred measure to keep out “undesirable” immigrants was the literacy or educational test. Other options such as a minimum monetary requirement for immigrants (the so-called money test), a marked increase in the head tax for arrivals or the issuance of consular certificates for prospective immigrants were repudiated for their impracticality or inefficiency.⁹² Literacy as qualification for full citizenship had a long tradition in American history. The first literacy test to

⁸⁸ Industrial Commission, *Hearings before the Industrial Commission on the Subject of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), pp. 6, 40-42.

⁸⁹ For the Bureau’s letters to the IRL regarding statistics, see INS Records, entry 8, letters sent, 18 February, 7 July, 16 September, 22 December 1896, 16 July, 14 August, 28 September 1897, 18, 21 October 1898, 21 February, 13 April, 15 May, 15 October, 22 December 1899, 8 June, 11 July, 15 August, 26 October 1900, 28 February, 9 July, 10 September, 18 May 1902. Unfortunately, the letters received from the IRL have not been preserved. In 1902, the League was allowed to tabulate data from over a thousand immigrant landing manifests: IRL, *Report 1903*, Ward Scrapbooks.

⁹⁰ The 1893 immigration act increased the information on passenger lists: Superintendent of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Immigration to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1893* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893), pp. 21–22. A first reference to literacy had been made in the 1892 report but lacked a solid statistical basis: Superintendent of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Immigration to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1892* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 19–20.

⁹¹ IRL, *Report 1896*.

⁹² IRL, *The Educational Test as a Means of Further Restricting Immigration*, Publication no. 6, 1895; IRL, *The Present Aspect of the Immigration Problem*, Publication no. 1, 1894.

discriminate against a racially defined group, however, was applied in Mississippi in 1890. Among other practices, the reading test was an effective tool for disenfranchising African-American men and was adopted by other southern states. The test required voters to read and “give a reasonable interpretation” of a passage of the state constitution and was therefore susceptible to discriminatory application. While most white voters were assumed to understand the constitution “to the satisfaction of the white registrar [...] as an automatic product of their racial heritage”, as Edward L. Ayers has pointed out, African-American men were denied this quality.⁹³ The late nineteenth century then saw the test transferred to another racialized group: the new immigrants.

Six years before the IRL was founded, economist Edward Bemis had suggested the introduction of a reading test to keep out ‘undesirable’ immigrants, an idea picked up by Massachusetts Representative Henry Cabot Lodge.⁹⁴ A close friend of Theodore Roosevelt, Lodge’s understanding of citizenship had been shaped by the racial discourse taught at Harvard. His thesis analyzed the “Teuton origins” of Anglo-Saxon land law and made him the first student to earn a PhD degree in history from Harvard.⁹⁵ In many ways, his work in his early political career foreshadowed the League’s argumentative pattern. In 1891, Lodge wrote about the arrival of “races most alien to the body of the American people and from the lowest and most illiterate classes among those races”, therefore pleading for a literacy test. In another article, he analyzed the lynching of eleven Italians in New

⁹³ Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 146, 149; J. M. Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 239; Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 442–51; Gilbert T. Stephenson, *Race Distinctions in American Law* (New York: Appleton, 1910); C. V. Woodward, *Origins of the New South: 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 9, pp. 321–49. For a broader discussion of literacy and citizenship see Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Edward W. Stevens, JR., *Literacy, Law, and Social Order* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1988).

⁹⁴ Edward Bemis, ‘The Restriction of Immigration’, *Andover Review*, 9 (1888), 251–63.

⁹⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Land-Law’, in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law*, ed. by Henry Adams (Boston: Little Brown, 1876), pp. 55–120; Alfons Lammers, ‘The Cabot Lodges: A Family Portrait’, *European Contributions to American Studies*, 39 (1998), 172–84 (p. 174). Higham, Lammers, Roediger and others claim that Lodge was the first to receive a Harvard PhD in political sciences. Given the subject of the thesis, his work as instructor in history at Harvard, and the fact that Henry Adams was his supervisor, it seems more likely that Solomon is correct with her assertion that he earned his degree in history. This is corroborated by the American National Biography stating that Lodge received one of the first American doctorates in history in 1876: Higham, *Strangers*, p. 96; Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, p. 14; Solomon, p. 112.

Orleans, predicting more violence if the immigration of ‘Mafia members’ was not restricted. Subsequently, he introduced a bill containing a literacy test. After it had failed to pass Congress, he continued to argue for restriction by investigating the “distribution of ability” in the US which he unsurprisingly attributed to the influence of Anglo-Saxon racial traits.⁹⁶ Elected to the Senate in 1893, Lodge was to become the League’s most reliable political ally for the next thirty years.

The League’s members were thus acquainted with this method of restriction. In April 1895, Ward and Hall, “at the special invitation of Commissioner J. H. Senner and Ass’t Commissioner E. F. McSweeney”, visited Ellis Island to survey immigrant inspection. Joseph Senner, an Austrian immigrant and former editor of one of the most important German-language newspaper, had been serving as Commissioner at Ellis Island since 1893 and endorsed the literacy test in 1895.⁹⁷ His assistant Edward McSweeney came from an Irish-American trade union background. Although he did not publicly speak out for the test but only for restriction in general, he helped the League on several occasions.⁹⁸

After several days at Ellis Island, the IRL men were satisfied that existing laws were enforced adequately, but also concluded that they were “radically defective and ineffective” to keep out “undesirable immigrants”, that a “close connection between illiteracy and general undesirability existed” and that the

⁹⁶ Henry Cabot Lodge, ‘The Restriction of Immigration’, *North American Review*, 152.410 (1891), 27–36 (p. 32); Henry Cabot Lodge, ‘Lynch Law and Unrestricted Immigration’, *North American Review*, 152.414 (1891), 602–12; Henry Cabot Lodge, ‘The Distribution of Ability in the United States’, in *Historical and Political Essays*, ed. by Henry Cabot Lodge (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1892). For a discussion of the New Orleans killings and the status of Italian immigrants as non-white, see George E. Cunningham, ‘The Italian, a Hindrance to White Solidarity in Louisiana, 1890-1898’, *Journal of Negro History*, 50.1 (1965), 22–36; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 52–62. For his studies on ability, see also John H. Moore, ‘William Cabell Bruce, Henry Cabot Lodge, and the Distribution of Ability in the United States’, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 86.3 (1978), 355–61.

⁹⁷ Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1895* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), p. 15; Joseph H. Senner, ‘Immigration from Italy’, *North American Review*, 162.June (1896), 649–57 (p. 654). Senner, however, did not share restrictionists’ racial views but believed in society’s ability to assimilate immigrants: Cannato, p. 91; Pitkin, pp. 21–22.

⁹⁸ Due to his skills, McSweeney managed to retain his post after McKinley’s electoral victory, reflecting the change from the patronage system to the professionalized civil service requirement. Due to the incompetency of Thomas Fitchie, who replaced Senner in 1897, McSweeney became one of the most important figures on Ellis Island. When he was dismissed from the service in 1903 after a prolonged feud with Powderly, he was charged with the attempted removal of several thousand service records: Cannato, pp. 109-111, 143-145; Patrick Weil, ‘Races at the Gate: A Century of Racial Distinctions in American Immigration Policy (1865-1965)’, *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, 15.Summer (2001), 625–48 (pp. 629–30); Robert DeCourcy Ward, Samuel W. McCall and Edward F. McSweeney, ‘Should Immigration Be Further Restricted? A Symposium’, *Donahoe’s Magazine*, 35.2 (1896), 125–33 (pp. 129–33).

educational test was “absolutely practicable and applicable”. In December, IRL executive members Warren and Paine examined “six shiploads” of immigrants for their reading and writing skills, handing on their results to newspapers.⁹⁹ Since their sample did not contain any Italians, Hall and Briggs again visited the island for several days in 1896 to study immigration records that had been made available by Senner. Shortly thereafter, the League published a pamphlet concluding that more than two-thirds of Italian immigrants were illiterate and that the educational test would be the best means to exclude “ignorant” and “degraded” immigrants. The data attained at the visits was later used by the IRL in Congressional hearings to argue for the literacy test.¹⁰⁰ In hindsight, Senner claimed that it had actually been the “consultation with the officials in Ellis Island” that had moved the League to endorse the test. Responding to the League’s criticism that the literacy statistics were incorrect since they completely relied on the immigrants’ answers, Senner introduced the test on Ellis Island in October 1896 (without consequences for immigrants failing) and provided tabulations demonstrating a discrepancy between the immigrants’ statements and the actual test results.¹⁰¹

The League’s call for the literacy test resembled its overall two-pronged strategy oscillating between overt agitation against new immigration and reference to scientific impartiality. In an 1897 article, Hall argued that illiteracy could be used to identify undesirable immigration, defined as

destitute of resources, either in money, or still more, in ability and knowledge of a means to support itself; which is generally ignorant; which has criminal tendencies; is averse to country life, and congregates in our city slums; which has a low standard of living and little ambition to seek a better, and which has no permanent interest in this country.

⁹⁹ IRL, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1895*, Ward Scrapbooks; “The Kinds of Immigration”, *Hartford Times*, 15 February 1896.

¹⁰⁰ IRL, *The Present Italian Influx*, Publication no. 14, 1896; Senate, *Regulation of Immigration: Report of the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, on the Bill (H. R. 12199) to Regulate the Immigration of Aliens into the United States, with statements before the Committee in the First and Second Sessions of the Fifty-Seventh Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), pp. 5–6. The visit was even reported in the *New York Times*: “Looking into Immigration”, 21 April 1896.

¹⁰¹ Joseph H. Senner, ‘The Immigration Question’, *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 10 July (1897), 1–19 (pp. 14–16). For the IRL’s criticism see IRL, *Distribution of Illiterate Immigrants*, this was also taken up by newspapers: “Reports are False”, *Detroit Tribune*, 4 April 1896. The League would use Senner’s implementation of the test as evidence for its applicability in later publications, see IRL, *Brief in Favor of the Illiteracy Test*, Publication no. 56, 1911; *Immigration Figures for 1913*, Publication no. 62, 1913.

Citing empirical data, Hall was “startled to find a progression [in illiteracy] almost parallel” to the rise in the numbers of foreign-born inmates of prisons, mental asylums and poor-houses, concluding that illiteracy could be utilized as a marker for deviance and delinquency. Additionally, he adduced, high illiteracy rates were also to be found among the slum population. Although literacy in itself was not “evidence of good moral character” and a “few desirable immigrants” would be excluded by an educational test, it was a rule that “in general the illiterate are undesirable, and that the undesirable are illiterate”, he claimed. Such a test, the IRL argued, was easy to apply, clear in its results and immigrants would know in advance if they could pass it. Therefore, the League pleaded for the adoption of the test as “the most simple, the most rational, the most effective and the most American that can be applied”.¹⁰²

On the other hand, the League openly argued for the test on racial grounds: it would exclude “a considerable proportion of the least desirable immigrants, those who are most alien to us in race, habits, and standards of living”. It underlined that “the illiterate are the Slav, Latin and Asiatic races, historically down-trodden, atavistic and stagnant”. In contrast, those “who built up the North and the West [...] the British, Irish, Germans and Scandinavians [...] would be practically unaffected by a reading and writing test”. This test, the League argued, was necessary to provide “the best service that Americans can render to the world”, namely, “to preserve the American Republic and the high standard of American citizenship”.¹⁰³

Claiming impartiality by referring to scientific arguments, the League also tried to distance itself from earlier and contemporaneous anti-Catholic movements. Remnants of the Know-Nothing movement had been reinvigorated in the 1880s, most notably by Josiah Strong’s monograph *Our Country*. Strong reminded Anglo-Saxons of their duty to civilize and Christianize within and outside the US to avert the dangers of socialism, intemperance, urbanization, immigration and Catholicism. In 1887, the American Protective Association (APA) was founded to diminish the influence of Catholic immigrant groups, to raise naturalization requirements and to

¹⁰² Prescott F. Hall, ‘Immigration and the Educational Test’, *North American Review*, October (1897); INS Records 51762/21; IRL, Letter to Members of Congress, 13 November 1895, Ward Scrapbooks.

¹⁰³ IRL, *The Educational Test*; Hall, Educational Test, p. 396; IRL, Letter to Newspapers; IRL, *Twenty Reasons why Immigration Should Be Further Restricted Now*, Publication no. 4, 1894.

outlaw parochial schools. The movement, however, was short-lived and imploded after 1896. Patriotic right-wing associations, however, could benefit from this wave of anti-catholic sentiment during the economic crises of the 1880s and 1890s by gaining new members. In marked contrast to these organizations, the IRL emphasized the empirical and scientific basis of its demands and assured Irish and German interest groups that its activities were not aimed at them.¹⁰⁴

Patriotic societies and fraternal orders, however, were to become some of the League's most reliable political allies. As Solomon has pointed out, the IRL entered a "quiet entente" with these groups, cooperating closely but avoiding public display of association.¹⁰⁵ Acting as "a clearing-house or focussing point for other organizations" to coordinate restrictionist efforts, the League cooperated with the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Guardians of Liberty, and the Patriotic Order of the Sons of America.¹⁰⁶ The most important patriotic society, however, was the Junior Order of United American Mechanics (JOUAM). The Order had a long nativist tradition: after opposing Catholic immigration in the mid-nineteenth century its focus had shifted to anti-radicalism in the 1880s and 1890s and to new immigration at the turn of the century. Until 1914, it doubled its membership to 224,000 by canvassing in the South and West.¹⁰⁷ After Patten was employed by the League, he often addressed local JOUAM chapters; the IRL also supported the Order's officer Jesse Taylor in his unsuccessful bid for a congressional seat in 1909. In return, the JOUAM mobilized among members to write petitions and resolutions to their congressmen to demand the passage of a literacy test law, reminding its members that "[e]very true American [...] should fully realize the importance of the enactment of laws to protect our homes, health,

¹⁰⁴ Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, 1886 (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963); David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 169–82; Curran, pp. 93–108; Knobel, pp. 190–218; Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Hall, Letter to German-American editors, 3 January 1902, Ward Scrapbooks. Bennett argues that the IRL "echoed the themes of the nativist past", the fact that the League consciously decided not to model itself on earlier or existing patriotic or anti-Catholic associations contradicts this claim.

¹⁰⁵ Solomon, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ "Objectives of the League", not dated, IRL Records (1140). This document must have been composed after 1917 since it claimed responsibility for the passage of the literacy test. Identical wording was also used to describe the League's activities in 1925: IRL, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1925*, Lee Papers.

¹⁰⁷ Bennett, p. 181; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 173–74; Knobel, pp. 192–95. For the DAR, see Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 43–54. For the IRL's cooperation with the Guardians of Liberty, see IRL Records (482).

morals and institutions against the incoming of the foreign hordes". It also cooperated with the League in supporting restrictionist congressmen and campaigns for the strict application of existing laws.¹⁰⁸

Overall, the League thus resembled other, more liberal progressive reform organizations in many regards. Driven by a small core of middle-class men, it mobilized prominent citizens in its effort to improve society and to protect it from supposed dangers. Based on the racial discourse, the IRL modelled its own vision of a just and working American society on a racial basis. The unification of responsible citizens in their obligation to protect the continued superiority of the American model, the League believed, would both guard and enhance American democracy based on Anglo-Saxon racial qualities. Overcoming the special interest of steamship companies and urban political machines, the cooperation with state agencies in the optimization of immigration laws would secure the racial basis for America's success. The IRL assumed that, once informed of these facts, other citizens would also become engaged in the movement, leading to a rational and effective reform of immigration laws. Like other progressive reformers, the League thus engaged in an "issue-orientated, information-centered" political campaign, combining knowledge, power and subjectivation.¹⁰⁹

3.4 The campaign for the literacy test, 1894-1897

Apart from cooperation with its allies, the League's main task was to convince other white citizens of the urgency of the 'immigration problem' to get them involved in political lobbying for federal state intervention. For this purpose, the IRL issued numerous publications that ranged from simple summaries of annual immigration statistics to speeches, proposed bills, and detailed statements on new immigration's 'undesirable effects'. In the three years after its foundation alone, the IRL issued twenty-three different publications in a total circulation of 140,200. Until 1920, the League distributed seventy-four different publications, normally in a circulation between two and four thousand. These were sent to members of Congress, associations, libraries and individuals the IRL regarded as influential, mostly

¹⁰⁸ IRL Minutes, 9 November 1896, 18 January 1902, 13 July, 9 October 1905, 17 February 1906, 21 September 1909, 8 November 1911; IRL Records (411, 561, 909); Patten to Lee, 5 November 1906, Lee Papers. In 1906, Taylor published a book compiling arguments for restriction: Jesse Taylor, *The Alien Menace and its Effects Upon our Country* (Washington, D.C.: Hayworth, 1906).

¹⁰⁹ Fink, p. 27.

lawyers, physicians and trade unionists. As the most important multipliers, newspapers received the IRL material “accompanied by a request for publication, in whole or in part, or for the use of them as a basis for editorial notices”. In 1894, the IRL had already contacted 400 newspapers; two years later, this number had risen to 1000. In its annual report for 1897, the executive committee proudly noted that

The press as heretofore has shown its appreciation of the various publications distributed by the League, in its prompt and empathic approval of the League’s objects, and by the constant publication, often in the form of editorials and often verbatim, of the matter sent out by the League.¹¹⁰

Additionally, the IRL could report an increase in interest demonstrated by the 5000 articles on immigration it had received from a clipping bureau. The League also sent “[m]atrices for electrotype plates showing by diagrams the relative illiteracy of the different parts of Europe” to sixty-five newspapers and “the five principal newspaper associations of the country”. Apart from the professional use of the media, members of the League regularly gave talks or participated in discussions of associations, community meetings or at universities.¹¹¹

The League’s publications did not centre on deviant and delinquent individuals, but focussed on putative racial group characteristics and their alleged effect on American society. Linking immigration to crime, poverty, low standards of living and sanitation, and mental and physical defects, the IRL engaged in the racialization of the new immigrants. While the origin of the new immigrants’ racialization can be located in scientific discourse, the IRL transferred its findings to the public debate. To analyze how the IRL contributed to the construction of the new immigrants as non-white, its campaign for the literacy test between 1894 and 1897 is analyzed here since it served as a blueprint for the League’s later efforts. Concentrating on new immigrants’ assumed racial difference, their effect on the economy and politics and the purportedly higher rates of pauperism, criminality and insanity, the League’s impact is illustrated by newspaper articles that adopted its point of view. In addition to the racialization of the new immigrants, the League provided other white subjects a narrative and rationale to identify as part of an

¹¹⁰ IRL, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1897*, Ward Scrapbooks; IRL Minutes 31 July 1895, 18 January 1896; *Report 1895*; *Report 1896*; IRL Minutes, 1894-1920. For a list of newspaper in favour of restriction in 1902, see IRL Records (1055). Editorials were especially important since they were often syndicated and thus reprinted by numerous newspapers across the country.

¹¹¹ IRL, *Report 1897*; for talks, see for example “A Man Who is Not Afraid”, *Providence Telegram*, 12 April 1896.

assumedly superior race. Issuing pamphlets with titles such as *Twenty Reasons why Immigration Should Be Further Restricted Now* or *Study these Figures and Draw Your Own Conclusions*, the IRL connected abstract statistics on immigration and deviance to the Anglo-Saxon subjects' lives. It combined the racial discourse with an appeal to citizens to reflect on their racial status, the potential threats to the nation's assumed superiority and to get actively involved in efforts for the racial restriction of immigration, reflected by readers' contributions to public discourse.¹¹²

3.4.1 Racial difference

From its very beginnings, the League concentrated on the new immigrants' purported racial difference and inferiority. In the IRL's first publication, Ward emphasized that

Our immigration has, until lately, been chiefly made up of the most intelligent and of the most desirable races of Europe, but recently the numbers have greatly increased of those who are without question the most illiterate and the most depraved people of that continent.¹¹³

In letters to newspapers, Hall explained these phenomena by racial difference, stating that the old immigrants had been "people of the same blood as the original settlers", of "Germanic descent, with an inborn spirit of freedom and a past history of conquest and success". The new immigrants, in contrast, were coming from "physically inferior races who have been downtrodden socially and politically". For Hall, the rising number of immigrants endangered "proper race development" and implied "the social and biological danger" of racial degeneration. Anticipating eugenic argumentation, Hall admonished readers to take action: "We spend [...] time and thought on breeding our cattle well. Shall we permit these inferior races to dilute the thrifty, capable Yankee blood of the sturdy qualities of the earlier immigrants?"¹¹⁴ In comparison to male Anglo-Saxons, new immigrants were thus not only regarded as being of a lower racial quality, but also characterized by their presumed lack of manly sturdiness and bodily strength.

Newspapers reproduced this argument in reports on the ostensibly decreasing quality of incoming migrants, no longer made up from the "best people of Europe"

¹¹² IRL, *Study These Figures and Draw Your Own Conclusions*, Publication no. 2, 1894; IRL, *Twenty Reasons*.

¹¹³ IRL, *Present Aspect*.

¹¹⁴ Hall, "The Immigration Problem", *New York Tribune*, 11 July 1894; Hall, "The Immigration Problem", *Boston Herald*, 7 November 1894.

but from “Latin races” of “foreign blood”, endangering American homogeneity by the “deteriorating mixture of racial characteristic and tendencies”. One article concluded that “the two classes [of immigrants] cannot be compared, so infinitely superior in the aggregate was the former”. Another newspaper took this comparison even further by declaring that new immigrants were “the most degraded people on earth; compared with them Chinese are most desirable citizens”.¹¹⁵

Racial difference between old and new immigrants was also perpetuated by the use of metaphors appealing to subconscious fears. Gerald O’Brien has argued that these can be distinguished into metaphors describing the population as an organism, object metaphors, images of natural catastrophes and animal and subhuman metaphors.¹¹⁶ Depicting the nation as organism, newspapers compared immigration to indigestion or infection, describing it as “what dirt or poison is to the human body”, contaminating “the life-blood which flows through the arteries of American civilization”.¹¹⁷ New immigrants were also often described as “the scum of Europe”, “the vile spawn polluting our shores“, using the US as a “dumping ground” and turning it into a “cesspool into which the moral filth of the Old World has been drained”.¹¹⁸ Animal or subhuman metaphors de-individualized immigrants as hordes, swarms, cattle or herds.¹¹⁹ Most frequently, however, liquid metaphors were applied to describe “ebbs”, “tides”, “floods”, and “flows” of immigration, these images are still perpetuated in contemporary immigration debates and even by historians themselves.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ “Drive Back the Unwashed”, *Haverhill Gazette*, 22 May 1895; “Protection of Citizenship”, *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, 22 March 1896; “Italians in America”, *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, 7 September 1895; “The Question of Restricting Immigration”, *Detroit Tribune*, 22 December 1895; “Congress and Immigration”, *Philadelphia Telegraph*, 13 March 1896; “Immigration: An Enormous Peril and International Wrong”, *Home Market Bulletin*, 09 January 1893.

¹¹⁶ Gerald V. O’Brien, ‘Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes, and Waste Material: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18.1 (2003), 33–47 (pp. 35–44). For the similarities between metaphors of othering applied to Chinese immigrants and new immigrants, see Lee, *America’s Gates*, pp. 35–36. For metaphors of diseases and germs, see Fairchild, pp. 42–47.

¹¹⁷ “Immigration Abuses”, *New York Tribune*, 3 October 1902; “Restricting Immigration”, *St. Joseph Herald*, 9 January 1898.

¹¹⁸ “Foreign Immigration”, *Sioux City Tribune*, 7 August 1895; “Immigration”, *Cambridge Tribune*, 4 April 1896; “National Danger”, *Wilmington Evening News*, November 1894.

¹¹⁹ *St. Joseph Herald*, *Restricting Immigration*; “The Ways of Congressional Committees”, *New York Twentieth Century*, 5 March 1896; “Restriction of Immigration”, *Cambridge Tribune*, 21 March 1896; “The Tide again Rising”, *Philadelphia Telegraph*, 18 November 1895; “Horde of Italian Paupers”, *Boston Herald*, 16 April 1896.

¹²⁰ *Philadelphia Telegraph*, *Tide again Rising*; “The Problem of Immigration”, *New Orleans Picayune*, 12 April 1896; “The Foreign Flood”, *Jersey City Journal*, 5 May 1902; “Cheap-Rate Immigrants”, *Boston Transcript*, 15 June 1904; see also Spiro, pp. 92–96. The use of liquid

3.4.2 Labour, politics and gender

In addition to the new immigrants' depiction as racially different, their racialization also incorporated themes of former male predominance: labour and politics. The changing role of white middle-class men as single providers, the rise of heavy industrialization and periodic economic crises led to conflicts between organized labour and capital in the 1880s and 1890s. New immigrants, often excluded from union membership, were linked to images of unfree labour in public discourse. The cliché of the boss or padrone as an "ahistoric personification of greed and primitive cruelty" was evoked to characterize the new competitors as non-white. Donna Gabaccia has emphasized that the construction of racial difference and inferiority relied heavily on this stereotype, "nineteenth-century observers *had* to label migrants as unfree *in order to* exclude them as racially undesirable".¹²¹ The IRL adopted this argument, in one of its publications it stated that "it [is] to the interest of every intelligent laboring man to stop the importation of the vast hordes of cheap and degraded labor unloaded on our Atlantic coast".¹²²

Simultaneously, the IRL and newspapers adopted Walker's argument of new immigrants' lower standard of living as a racial characteristic that distorted competition with American workers. Immigrants were described as willing to "subsist on food that here is thought to be fit only for swine" and as working for less "than any of the [white] races mentioned can possibly live on". Newspapers wrote that they underbid "our native and better class of foreign-born working people in the labor market" and contributed to "the evils of the 'sweating system'".¹²³ The American workman was thus forced to lower his own standard of living, completely adverse to his 'racial' instincts. The IRL argued that in

times of industrial depression our skilled workers are thus deprived of the opportunities of employment in unskilled occupations [...] and our unskilled labor is reduced to starvation basis through being underbid by immigrants who are willing to live in a way utterly incompatible with American habits and character.

metaphors in contemporary historiographic accounts is hardly problematized by scholars. For a discussion of the metaphor of guarded or unguarded gates, see Lee, *America's Gates*, p. 19.

¹²¹ Peck, p. 17; Gabaccia, p. 186. Original emphasis.

¹²² Nelson A. Miles, 'The Lesson of the Recent Strikes', *North American Review*, 159.445 (1894), 180–88, quoted in IRL, *Various Facts and Opinions Concerning the Necessity of Restricting Immigration*, Publication no. 3, 1894.

¹²³ "To Restrict Immigration", *Burlington News*, 16 August 1895; "The Vandal Horde", *Boston Beacon*, 10 August 1895; "The Immigration Evil", *Buffalo Express*, 30 June 1895; Haverhill Gazette, *Drive Back the Unwashed*; Hall, *Industrial Aspects*. For the relevance of Walker's argument in political debate, see Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 48–52.

Unemployment was thus caused by “ill-responsible, ill-advised and ill-adapted immigration”, the League argued.¹²⁴

The League also published statistics to prove that new immigrants, in contrast to North-western Europeans, were “largely unskilled”.¹²⁵ The idea of unskilled labour was connected to a low educational level; newspapers depicted immigrants as illiterate and ignorant, underlining that the US had welcomed “the lowest, most debased and most ignorant population of the non-Teutonic nations”. This “racial illiteracy”, newspapers argued, was “comparable only to the illiteracy of colored citizens in the Southern states” and it was doubted that “ignorant, illiterate, debased” immigrants could ever “rise to the height of skilled labor”.¹²⁶ The idea that illiteracy served as a marker for assumed lower mental capacities and racial inferiority thus allowed for the reconfiguration of class conflict into a racialized difference to explain growing tensions within American society.

In the political sphere, the predominant position of white middle- and upper-class men had been eroding since the 1870s. The growing influence of old immigrant politicians was partly caused by the rise of the so-called machine politics on local and state level. This term describes systems of patronage and graft: leaders of ethnic communities, so-called bosses, used their offices to hand out government contracts, posts and employment opportunities to their loyal supporters. In the 1890s, the two-party system also came under pressure by the rise of the Populist Party. Americans interpreted this political instability as a threat to their political culture and its moral and republican values.¹²⁷

As mentioned above, the racial discourse interpreted the capacity for self-government as a racial characteristic. Prescott Hall reminded readers that in contrast to Sparta where only the elite had been allowed to vote, the US had granted this

¹²⁴ IRL, *Twenty Reasons*; IRL, *What the Commission on Unemployment Says About Immigration*, Publication no. 8, 1895.

¹²⁵ IRL, *Bibliography of Recent Literature on Immigration*, Publication no. 17, 1896; IRL, *Study these Figures*; Prescott Hall, “Some Immigration Problems”, *Boston Transcript*, 13 November 1894.

¹²⁶ “Tax Immigrants”, *Bridgeport Post*, 15 December 1895; “The ‘Anti-Immigration Craze’”, *Cambridge Tribune*, 28 March 1896; “Immigration and Illiteracy”, *Newark News*, 5 December 1895; “Restriction of Immigration”, *Indianapolis Journal*, 28 January 1896; No title, *Akron Beacon and Republican*, 22 August 1895.

¹²⁷ Jones, pp. 199–202. The most renowned example for this sort of corruption was Tammany Hall in New York City. The People’s Party or Populists represented farmers’ and working-class interest. While its main issue was the adoption of bimetallism to end deflation, it also championed civil service reform, the direct election of Senators, an eight-hour working day and a gradual income tax.

privilege to “the perieci and heliots”, making the political system more vulnerable. “The dangers to our municipal suffrage, a thing requiring the greatest possible intelligence and honesty for its protection”, had risen significantly due to the new immigration, he concluded.¹²⁸ This notion was taken up by newspapers and their readers, describing old immigrants as “members of the great Teutonic race, kindred in language, in institutions and in traditions with the masses of our own people”. The American Constitution had been designed for the “law-abiding, God-fearing Saxon, and not for the heterogeneous conglomeration of humanity which confronts us today”, one letter to the editor claimed.¹²⁹ In the debate about American citizenship and the immigrant franchise, it was argued that (white) women had more right to vote than male new immigrants:

American women, who have known no other country, [...] who are conservative in all their thinking and are thoroughly American in all their instincts and aspirations, are forbidden the right to vote while the registration lists, especially in the Northern and Western cities, are crowded with the names of those who cannot speak or write the United States [*sic*] language and who know nothing of the government.¹³⁰

In contrast to the virtues of American women who were still denied the vote, however, immigrants, “yearly naturalized by the tens of thousands”, were selling their votes to the highest bidder, newspapers claimed. Organized by their ethnic leaders, they had more political influence than Anglo-Saxons by voting en bloc. Lacking education and the racial inclination towards democracy, they were regarded as “the natural dupers of conscienceless demagogues”.¹³¹ The US therefore had to guard its political system. The *St. Joseph Herald* argued:

For a system which requires intelligence for its preservation we have welcomed the densest ignorance of the world. To a government which depends largely upon the self control of citizens, we have admitted the most turbulent and unrestrained people in the world. [...] This suicidal policy must stop. The duty of self-defense demands that we put an end to undesirable immigration.¹³²

¹²⁸ Hall, *Immigration Problem*; Hall, “Facts about Immigration”, *Boston Herald*, 11 February 1896.

¹²⁹ Bridgeport Post, *Tax Immigrants*; Civis Americanus, “To Preserve the Republic”, *New York Tribune*, 16 August 1894.

¹³⁰ “Shut the Door in their Faces”, *Charleston News*, 28 January 1896. For an analysis of links between women’s rights and racial thought, see Bederman, pp. 121–69; Louise M. Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Morgan.

¹³¹ Philadelphia Telegraph, *Tide again Rising*; Indianapolis Journal, *Restriction of Immigration*.

¹³² “Suggestive Statement”, *St. Joseph Herald*, 30 April 1895.

Apart from these assumed tendencies, newspapers claimed that new immigrants imported anarchism and socialism and were willing to turn to violence to achieve their political goals, especially in strikes. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, fierce conflicts between organized labour and employers resulted in prolonged strikes with lockouts, strike-breakers and violence, often discursively linked to left-wing ideologies.¹³³ Newspapers perpetuated these connections when they accused immigrants of importing “the crimes of Socialism and Anarchy” and depicted them as “the elements from which Mafia assassins, Haymarket-square bomb-throwers, and Chicago pillagers are bred”, leading to “anarchy, disturbance and riot”. The immigrants’ contempt for “law, [...] country and institutions”, according to one article, was the reason for their involvement in strikes. One article concluded that the tradition of unrestricted immigration had to come to an end: “If the ‘oppressed’ are Anarchists, Nihilists and so-called Socialists who make war upon law and the existing order of things it is time to shut down the gates of the asylum and placard them ‘closed’”. The IRL summarized such views when it explained that “such distinctly un-American and in the highest degree dangerous occurrences such as the Haymarket massacre at Chicago, and the Mafia incidents at New Orleans”, the latter resulting in lynching, were due to racial difference: “In such disturbances as these the Anglo-Saxon element has been almost unanimously on the side of law and order.” For the IRL, this adherence to law and order obviously could include the lynching of people regarded as non-white.¹³⁴

The IRL thus did not just emphasize the new immigrants’ racial difference, but also incorporated contemporary concerns about shifting gender roles, especially in relation to traditional domains of male dominance – labour and politics.¹³⁵ While African-American and working-class women had to work to feed their families, working middle-class women were a relatively new phenomenon. As mentioned above, women’s bodies and sexuality were problematized discursively as a reaction

¹³³ William Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 11–34; Daniel R. Fusfeld, ‘Government and the Suppression of Radical Labor, 1877-1918’, in *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, ed. by Charles Bright and Susan Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), pp. 344–77; Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 88–97.

¹³⁴ IRL, *Present Aspect*.

¹³⁵ Bederman, pp. 10–20; Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870 - 1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 62; Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 57–79; Rotundo, pp. 167–221. For the impact of gender roles on immigrants’ lives, see Gabaccia, *Other Side*.

to their new position in labour and politics.¹³⁶ The IRL and newspapers took up Walker's theses about female new immigrants' higher fertility and the supposedly imminent race suicide.¹³⁷ Other assumed consequences of the immigrants' racial difference were a rise in prostitution and 'immoral' behaviour, the latter including adultery, promiscuity and common-law marriage. An intense discourse about female immigrants' sexuality and prostitution, however, only evolved after the turn of the century in discussions about the so-called white slavery, a debate the IRL did abstain from.¹³⁸

As the IRL material testifies, assumed differences in immigrants' gender roles thus were relevant factors in the process of racialization, but did not play as prominent a role as Jeanne Petit has claimed. Petit analyzed the history of the literacy test, using the records and publications of the IRL and pro-immigrant groups, to argue that the debate about the test was framed "in terms of race, manhood, womanhood, and sexuality".¹³⁹ Petit is correct in pointing out the role of gender in the racialization of the new immigrant; economic independence and political participation were indeed encoded as essential parts of white manhood. Her focus on gender and sexuality, however, results in a portrayal of the IRL that distorts the relevance of these topics for the League's argumentation. The IRL hardly ever wrote explicitly about immigrant or Anglo-Saxon women's role and abstained from discussions about white slavery or sexuality. The League was not mainly concerned with conceptions of masculinity or womanhood, but with the ostensible stability of racial traits. IRL leaders' argumentation therefore did not focus on gender, but on racial difference and deviance. Informed by the racial discourse and statistical knowledge, its leaders assumed that new immigrants' putative racial inferiority was

¹³⁶ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian Women in New York, 1870 - 1924* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p. 102; Petit, *Men and Women*; Carolyn S. Vacca, *A Reform against Nature: Woman Suffrage and the Rethinking of American Citizenship, 1840-1920* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 200: American University Studies Series 9, History.

¹³⁷ Hall, "Some Industrial Aspects of Immigration", *Boston Commonwealth*, 26 January 1895; "Restriction of Immigration", *Boston Herald*, 11 July 1895; "Foreign Immigration", *Memphis Domestic Appeal*, 16 November 1895; "The Question of Restricting Immigration", *Detroit Tribune*, 22 December 1895. The IRL also reprinted one of Walker's articles: IRL, *Restriction of Immigration* by Francis A. Walker, Publication no. 33, 1902.

¹³⁸ Connelly, pp. 11–66; Gardner, pp. 62–81; Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, pp. 8–14. For the discrepancy between discursive images of prostitution and the actual number of immigrant sex workers, see for example Hobson, pp. 88–94; Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900 - 1981* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 137–43.

¹³⁹ Petit, *Men and Women*, p. 7. Like other historians, Petit only covers the IRL Records and Lee Papers, but does not analyze the Ward Papers or the IRL minutes.

proven by their higher rates of criminality, pauperism and insanity. Its main argument relied on key technologies of the progressive era, statistical evidence and empirical probabilities, to prove that new immigrants posed a racial threat because of the higher rates of abnormal behaviour. Petit is correct, though, to point out the relevance of gender in combination with debates on race suicide: since IRL leaders assumed that deviance was caused by inheritable and unalterable racial traits, racial difference, reproduction and deviance— and not the role of men and women in American politics – became their key issues in the racialization of the new immigrants.¹⁴⁰

3.4.3 Poverty, criminality and insanity

Criminality, insanity and pauperism were the categories of deviance the IRL used most to racialize new immigrants. The concept of pauperism had formed in early nineteenth-century England and described a class of the chronically poor that survived through government aid or private benevolence, lived in work houses or only found casual employment. Causes of poverty were not located in the lack of economic opportunities but in individuals' inherent dispositions. In contrast to so-called deserving poor, whose suffering had been caused by unfortunate circumstances, paupers were assumed to be outcasts from evolution, a biological underclass whose anti-social behaviour was a threat to society.¹⁴¹ Similar rationales can be found in contemporary explanations for criminal behaviour. The *homo criminalis* was an invention of the nineteenth century, first constituted in the social sciences before it became an object of political intervention, putatively an evolutionary aberration or individual regression to earlier evolutionary stages caused by genetic predisposition. These chronic criminals, it was assumed, had to be excluded from society since they threatened to deteriorate the population's biological composition.¹⁴² Additionally, the establishment of psychiatry as a science, its professionalization in the nineteenth century and the growing number of mental asylums made insanity a prominent theme in public discourse. The "age of

¹⁴⁰ Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 5-40, 47-51, 59-65.

¹⁴¹ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System, 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 19; Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography; Lemke, *Eine Kritik der*, pp. 210-11; Procacci, pp. 157-58.

¹⁴² Pasquale Pasquino, 'Criminology: The Birth of a Special Knowledge', in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. by Burchell, Gordon and Miller, pp. 235-50 (pp. 157-59); Nicole H. Rafter, 'Criminal Anthropology: Its Reception in the United States and the Nature of Its Appeal', in *Criminals and their Scientists: The History of Criminology in International Perspective*, ed. by Peter Becker and Richard F. Wetzell (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press; German Historical Institute, 2007), pp. 159-82.

nervousness” gave birth to new illnesses and mental ailments of the middle and upper class such as neurasthenia that were explained by over-civilization or the strains of modern life. On the other hand, people classified as feeble-minded, insane or degenerate were sought to deny the right to procreate by the emerging eugenic movement.¹⁴³

In the late nineteenth-century US, new forms of knowledge thus provided the means to identify biological, social, mental and moral deviations as supposedly inherent characteristics. In the biopolitical codification of these aberrations, individuals were no longer included as part of the population but discursively constituted as threats to society or as the reverse side of the race, the exception that proved and defined normality.¹⁴⁴ Connecting individual deviance to a racial hierarchy, the discursive representations of new immigrants depicted them as both a threat to the American political and moral order and a biological danger to the population. While the new scientific disciplines concentrated on identifying, treating and separating the socially deviant within the nation, the statistical knowledge compiled and applied by the League aimed at the defence from exterior threats, namely, the new immigrants. The role of the IRL in this process was a governmental one, since its members volunteered to disseminate scientific knowledge to other white subjects to convince them to also take action on behalf of the state. The rationales propagated by the League provided a combination of models of differentiation and hierarchization that established the divide between assumedly desirable and undesirable parts of the population. Via the public discourse, the IRL offered modes to interpret new immigration as a threat and, simultaneously, to identify as responsible citizen. As a consequence, citizens called for state intervention to exert disciplinary and juridical control over the border and the population.¹⁴⁵

In its publications, the IRL combined compiled census data to point out the new immigrants’ higher rates of deviance, a tabulation that had been made possible by Walker’s censal innovations. Referring to Mayo-Smith, whom the IRL praised for

¹⁴³ Lears, pp. 47–58; James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 6: Medicine and society, pp. 7–130.

¹⁴⁴ Lemke, *Eine Kritik der*, p. 224.

¹⁴⁵ For biopower’s double directionality, see Dean, pp. 165–66.

his “leading work” on immigration, the League published the immigrants’ proportion of the three groups: “[O]ur foreign-born population”, it pointed out, “which is 14.77 per cent of the total, furnishes one third of all our insane and nearly one half of all our paupers”. New immigrants, the IRL argued, were also more likely to be criminal since foreign-born and those of foreign-born parentage made up for 38% of the white population but furnished 54% of white prisoners. The fact that most of the new immigrants were young male adults who were represented disproportionately in these three categories was not mentioned by the League and only rarely noticed by readers and commentators. Although the IRL admitted that some immigrants might be suffering from negative environmental factors, it assumed that the proportion of “criminal and worthless elements among the foreign-born” was markedly higher than the American average due to their racial traits.¹⁴⁶

This argumentation was adopted by newspapers that received IRL statistics. Editorials emphasized that new immigrants were “paupers and worse than paupers”. “These are statistics that show very clearly that something should be done to restrict immigration of the undesirable class”, a newspaper concluded.¹⁴⁷ The conflation of categories of deviance and race is particularly evident in an article about the lynching of several Italian workers in Cleveland in 1895. After the Italian government had protested that the police had not prevented the killings, a newspaper commented:

The nations of Europe offcast their lowest class, the debased Huns and Slavs of the Russian and Austrian provinces, murderous Sicilians and blood-thirsty Portuguese, and dump them on our shores. They find their way to various parts of the states and receive the same treatments at the hands of the law that is accorded to native-born men of their class. They have at least the same protection as the southern negro. [...] The claim that the spewings of pauper Europe must be sacrosanct in America is intolerable.¹⁴⁸

This statement embodies the racial encodings of the new immigrants in the Jim Crow era: since they were regarded as non-white and on a lower evolutionary stage than the ‘superior Anglo-Saxons’, contemporaries interpreted these murders as citizens’ rightful acts to protect their community.¹⁴⁹ In the new immigrants’

¹⁴⁶ IRL, *Various Facts and Opinions; Twenty Reasons; Study these Figures*; IRL, *Suggestive*, Ward Scrapbooks, 1894 [?].

¹⁴⁷ “Undesirable Immigration”, *New York World*, 14 April 1896; *Wilmington Evening News*, *National Danger*.

¹⁴⁸ “A Matter of American Independence” *Ducay Evening Reader*, 14 April 1895.

¹⁴⁹ Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 52–62.

racialization, a number of negative characteristics were thus combined. One article warned that an increasing number of “ignorant, degraded, distinctively vicious persons without the least desire to become good citizens” was arriving, threatening all aspects of American society: “They are the tools of demagogues, they invade the ranks of honest toil, they fill the prisons, jails, reformatories, and pauper institutions of the land”.¹⁵⁰ Consequences could be fatal, the *Boston Beacon* warned:

Immigration must be checked, the criminals, ignorant and depraves, who are coming over here every year in a constantly increasing flood, must be kept out, or American institutions will go down before a wave of savagery that has not been equaled in devastation since the Goths and Vandals swept over imperial Rome and trampled her glory in the dust.

Referring to immigration statistics provided by the League, the article concluded that “[t]hese figures are so suggestive that they carry their own lesson, and that lesson is that American people cannot [...] permit the stream of nationality to be poisoned at its source”.¹⁵¹

3.5 The literacy test debate in Congress

For the IRL, the adequate method to stop ‘undesirable’ persons from immigrating was the literacy test. In 1895, after consultations with McSweeney, Senator Lodge, Massachusetts Representative Samuel W. McCall and other congressmen, the League prepared a bill that would exclude all “persons between fourteen and sixty years of age who cannot read and write”. In Congress, the bill was redrafted several times; the final version limited the requirement to males over sixteen years of age and unmarried women over sixteen unaccompanied by or not joining family in the US. Thus, the final version re-inscribed prevailing gender stereotypes, reducing women to their role as mothers, wives and daughters who could enter the US if their assumed male provider was literate. Immigrants over fifty years were also exempted from the test provided they were either accompanied by or joined family members able to support them. In contrast to the IRL’s earlier draft, the bill only required ability to read in any language, including non-official languages such as Yiddish.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ “‘The Perils of Immigration’: Lecture by Mrs. J. C. Manchester at Y. M. C. A. Assembly Hall”, *Springfield Evening Union*, 13 April 1895; “Immigrants Coming In”, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 3 April 1896; “A Wise Precaution”, *St. Albans Messenger*, 25 January 1896.

¹⁵¹ Boston Beacon, *The Vandal Horde*.

¹⁵² IRL, *Report 1895*; IRL Minutes, 12 March, 6 November 1895; IRL, *A Bill to Amend the Immigration Laws of the United States*, Ward Scrapbooks; Edward P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy: 1798 - 1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

Until President Cleveland's final decision to veto the bill in March 1897, the League fervently lobbied for the test. Organized labour would grow into an important partner, but needed convincing despite its interest in excluding potential competitors. During most of the 1890s, trade unions hesitated to speak out for restriction due to their internationalist tradition, their partially foreign-born membership base and their need for the immigrants' support in labour disputes. The IRL specifically targeted labour newspapers and addressed local unions to convince them of the necessity of restriction. Although the KoL officially endorsed the literacy test in 1895, the most important union, the AFL led by Samuel Gompers, would only hesitantly organize campaigns against immigration in the mid-1890s.¹⁵³ Despite the League's efforts, the AFL only endorsed the test at their annual convention in 1897 after it had already been vetoed by Cleveland. Influenced by an impending recession, the union decided to opt for restriction in a highly contested vote.¹⁵⁴ In the first debate about the literacy test the League was thus only able to convince local unions to adopt resolutions for the bill; numerous small unions would subsequently canvass for the test amongst their members and write to their congressmen.¹⁵⁵ Some workers participated in the racialization of the new immigrants, depicting them as being "un-American and [with] unassimilative qualities", having the same "objectionable characteristics as the Chinese", as one unionist wrote to an editor.¹⁵⁶

1981), p. 121. For an analysis of the debate about (immigrant) women's role as mothers and the literacy test, see Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 22–30.

¹⁵³ IRL, letter to members, 23 October 1895, Ward Scrapbooks; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 45–52, 71–72; Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, pp. 78–91. Occasionally, local chapters still tried to deter new immigrants by high joining fees for foreign-born applicants. Catherine Collomp, 'Labour Unions and the Nationalisation of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1880–1924', in *Migration Control in the North Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-War Period*, ed. by Andreas Fahrmeir (New York: Berghahn, 2003), pp. 237–52 (pp. 240–46).

¹⁵⁴ IRL, *Report 1897*; James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger, 'Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the "New Immigrant" Working Class', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16.3 (1997), 3–44 (pp. 22–23); Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 71–72; A. T. Lane, *Solidarity or Survival? American Labor and European Immigrants, 1830–1924* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 21: Contributions in Labor Studies, pp. 88–116. The IRL proudly reported in November 1897 that AFL second vice-president James Duncan had been "converted to the literacy test": IRL Minutes, 3 November 1897. By 1897, Gompers, an immigrant himself, had accepted Walker's view that the new immigrants were "beaten men from beaten races": Robert Asher, 'Union Nativism and the Immigrant Response', *Labor History*, 23.3 (1982), 325–48 (p. 328).

¹⁵⁵ See for example IRL Minutes, 28 November 1896; IRL Records (1054, vol. 1). For a list of organizations supporting the literacy test including trade unions, see IRL, *Endorsements of the Illiteracy Test for the Further Restriction of Immigration*, Publication no. 20, 1897.

¹⁵⁶ "Wants the Gates Closed", *Brooklyn Eagle*, 14 August 1895.

The League continued its press campaign to exert political pressure on the members of Congress. In its report for 1896, the IRL confidently announced that its publications had been reprinted by more than one thousand “of the principal newspapers of the country”. According to Hall, only thirty newspapers opposed further restriction; the League tried to use this fact to impress members of the House Committee on Immigration.¹⁵⁷ A significant number of newspapers indeed endorsed the literacy test as an adequate and rational means of restriction that impartially prevented immigration of the ‘undesirable element’. The *Boston Herald*, for example, emphasized that the bill would “not exclude the laborers and other immigrants who are capable of becoming citizens, and yet it will be an effective barrier against the entrance of those who would add to our pauper population”. Another newspaper claimed that the test would single-handedly solve many of America’s most pressing problems:

[I]f we should look for the origin of the Socialism, anarchism, and, largely, of the pauperism which have had such extraordinary development in the United States during recent years, we would unquestionably find it in not only the foreign element, [...] but among the most illiterate of them.¹⁵⁸

Enthusiasm for the test, however, was not unanimous. The novel argument of the supposed correlation of illiteracy with deviance and delinquency made the test hard to sell. Newspapers, readers and political commentators frequently remarked that it would not keep out radicals or criminals and that it was not a test of moral character. It seemed absurd, the *New York Tribune* claimed, that “not health, not manhood, not moral worth” or the willingness to work, but literacy should become the crucial test for immigrants.¹⁵⁹ The IRL had to constantly explain the concept of correlation, repeating that “[c]riminal tendencies generally keep pace with illiteracy, as does also insanity, imbecility, drunkenness and immorality”. At a Boston club dinner, IRL members emphasized that laws to exclude these groups already existed and the

¹⁵⁷ IRL, *Report 1896*; IRL, letter to members of the House of Representatives Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 11 March 1896; see also IRL, *Is the Educational Test demanded by the Country?* Publication no. 13, 1896.

¹⁵⁸ “Educational Test for Immigrants”, *Boston Herald*, 18 March 1896; Philadelphia Telegraph, *Congress and Immigration*.

¹⁵⁹ “Too Stringent Rules Proposed”, *Denver Republican*, 28 December 1897; “Restricting Immigration”, *New York Tribune*, 18 December 1897.

literacy test would not nullify them and would affect only 4% of the “desirable races of Northern Europe”.¹⁶⁰

Some critical commentators argued that similar stereotypes had been applied to earlier immigrants who later became “such a sturdy, homogeneous and honourable element of our nation” despite their illiteracy.¹⁶¹ Many believed in America’s capacity to assimilate immigrants. Judge Colt of the US Circuit Court commented in a discussion that “in due time these diverse branches of the race will be amalgamated into one race, which will make this country the grandest and most glorious ever seen”.¹⁶² Moreover, political commentators adduced, the test would end the American tradition of unrestricted immigration and its role as an asylum for the oppressed. William Lloyd Garrison Jr., son of the famous abolitionist, combined this theme with an appeal to the Christian ideal of benevolence. On various occasions, he publicly opposed the literacy test which he regarded as “a political craze” and “a selfish plan” that contradicted American “noble ideas” in “a land of unlimited abundance and opportunity”.¹⁶³ Overall, the opponents of restriction were, by far, not as vocal or organized as its supporters. Apart from some German-American and Polish-American leagues, immigrant interest groups lacked national frameworks and would only start to organize support after they realized how imminent the prospect of a reading test had become. Although foreign-language newspapers protested the test vigorously, immigrant networks were less effective than the well-connected restrictionists.¹⁶⁴

In its campaign for the test, the League also addressed politicians directly. It did, however, encounter numerous problems. The literacy test and immigration restriction, for the next thirty years, would be divisive issues in party politics; even the adoption of restriction in the Republican platform of 1896 did not guarantee the party’s unanimous support. Although Republicans generally could be won over more easily than Democrats, representatives’ consent to this and similar bills

¹⁶⁰ “Favor the Bill”, *Boston Globe*, 1 January 1903; Providence Telegram, *A Man Who is Not Afraid*; Hall, *Educational Test*, p. 400.

¹⁶¹ George, Henry, JR., “Will a Check on Immigration be a Help to this Nation?”, *North American*, 8 August 1901. For this argument, see also “A Review of Certain Arguments for Restrictive Law”, *Boston Herald*, 25 July 1894; “Immigration Tests”, *New Bedford Standard*, 6 January 1903.

¹⁶² “Judge Colt Speaks Well of the Immigrants”, *Boston Globe*, 25 January 1896.

¹⁶³ William Lloyd Garrison, “Lodge or Lowell”, *Boston Transcript*, 18 March 1896; Garrison, “Reply to Mr. Hall”, *Ibid.*, 23 March 1896.

¹⁶⁴ King, *Making Americans*, pp. 56–58; Tichenor, p. 82. For an overview of New England anti-restrictionists, see Solomon, pp. 176–94.

depended on their particular constituency. Regional differences, economic status, class structure, and, most importantly, the ratio of foreign-born voters in their electoral district would determine politicians' voting behaviour on restriction more than party lines. While representatives from urban or urbanizing districts and those with more than 30% foreign-born constituents generally supported an open door for immigrants, the rest of the country gradually shifted towards more restrictive policies between 1896 and 1917.¹⁶⁵ To ensure congressional support for the literacy test, the IRL forged bipartisan alliances and supported their most important and reliable allies in electoral campaigns.

In the debate about the literacy test between 1895 and 1897, the League tried to exert pressure on congressmen by arguing that their constituents were opposed to the new immigration, presenting replies to questionnaires sent to governors and state legislatures.¹⁶⁶ The IRL also urged their most prominent members, sympathizers and members of allied associations to write directly to members of Congress to demonstrate the public demand for restriction. While the bill was pending, the League stayed in close contact with Senators and Representatives to discuss legislative strategies and the bill's wording.¹⁶⁷ One effective approach was the cooperation with members of congressional committees on immigration established in the early 1890s. At that time, committees were an innovative and effective way for finding legislative solutions for increasingly complex problems. As Tichenor pointed out, the consultation of government officials, scientific experts and interest groups in hearings institutionalized "extraparty openings to directly lobby national policymakers".¹⁶⁸ IRL executives used their status as experts on immigration and their members' academic and social prestige to establish a network with political decision-makers. In January 1896, IRL members Paine, Ward, Moors, Farnham and Hall travelled to Washington to testify in the hearings; they could also rely on the support of Professor Dewey (MIT), former chairman of a commission investigating

¹⁶⁵ For more detailed discussions see Claudia Goldin, 'The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921', in *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy*, ed. by Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 223–57 (pp. 223–39); Tichenor.

¹⁶⁶ IRL, *Do Our States Desire Further Immigration?* Publication no. 12, 1896; IRL, letter to members, sympathizers, and the press, 14 July 1897, Ward Scrapbooks.

¹⁶⁷ IRL, *Report 1896*; IRL Minutes, 9 October, 6, 20 November, 10 December 1895, 7 March, 8 April, 22 May, 9 November, 29 December 1896.

¹⁶⁸ Link and McCormick, pp. 58–66; Tichenor, pp. 41–45, 76–77. Tichenor claims that James Patten already worked at the IRL office in Washington during this debate, Patten was not hired and the office not established before 1905.

unemployment. For the twelve months preceding Congress's final vote on the bill in February 1897, IRL members regularly visited the capitol; in March 1896, Vice-president Nathaniel Shaler urged congressmen to pass the bill. The League's most ardent workers, Hall and Ward, were also present for the conference committee that harmonized the House's and Senate's versions of the literacy test bill.¹⁶⁹

In the House, IRL ally McCall introduced the bill in late 1895, adopting the League's terminology of the new immigrants' reputed racial difference. According to him, Americans had the right "to protect themselves against the intrusion of hostile or alien or inferior races and to prevent their entrance to an extent which may degrade their citizenship and impair their civilization". Like the IRL, McCall relied on the statistical correlation of the decrease in old and the increase in new immigration to construct causality, claiming adherence to scientific facts:

[I]n the proportion as you admit more Chinese or more of the cheap-labor races you thereby diminish the immigration of or exclude the better races. And this law is demonstrated practically and clearly in the working of the figures which I have cited, so mathematically and so scientifically that it can not be denied.

Due to the League's research, McCall claimed, the literacy test had been determined to be the best device for sifting out 'undesirable' immigrants while not affecting the races of North-western Europe. He then connected new immigrants to the problems of urbanization which he, like the League, regarded to be outcomes of their racial composition. The test, he went on,

does exclude races which have never been trained in those principles [of self-government], and from which large masses of men who either fester in the slums of our great cities or make predatory incursions into industrial centers, where they do work for wages upon which American workingmen can not live. The evidence abundantly shows that they habitually live in shanties, that they eat the rudest food, that they do not have even the most common sanitary appliances, that they expose themselves to all the diseases that are generated by filth.¹⁷⁰

McCall used the opportunity to praise the League's civic commitment, stating that "a more reputable set of gentlemen were never associated together for the promotion of a great public end". He emphasized that "these men have freely given their time

¹⁶⁹ IRL, *Report 1896*; IRL Minutes, 31 December 1895, 13 March, 28 November 1896, 6 February 1897.

¹⁷⁰ *Congressional Record*, 54th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 1677, 9 February 1897.

and money to secure the most careful and scholarly investigation that could be made of the immigration question”, underlining the IRL’s governmental nature. Praising the League as a model, McCall admonished his colleagues to follow its lead in preserving Anglo-Saxon ‘superiority’, describing restriction as a moral duty to future generations:

I say that it is the duty of the men responsible for the government of this country to protect our civilization against any such a destructive competition [...]. We owe it to those who are here and to the millions who are to come to us in the future to maintain the high character of our civilization and to preserve this country and the institutions of America.¹⁷¹

In the Senate, Lodge argued similarly. Quoting from a questionnaire the IRL had sent out to governors, Lodge claimed that the South and West would still receive the immigration they demanded since the test would only affect the new immigrants who predominantly settled in the Northeast. Lodge corroborated the IRL’s central argument that illiteracy could serve as an indicator for ‘undesirable’ traits by referring to the congressional committee’s investigations:

[T]he committee’s reports prove that illiteracy runs parallel with slum population, with criminals, paupers, and juvenile delinquents of foreign birth or parentage [...]. It is also proved that the classes now excluded by the law, the criminals, the diseased, the paupers, and the contract laborers, are furnished chiefly by the same races as those most affected by the test of illiteracy.

Referring to French race theorist Gustave Le Bon, Lodge argued that earlier immigrants had belonged to the same Germanic “race stock” as the Anglo-Saxons while new immigrants came from “races of totally different race origin”. The senator defined race as mental and moral qualities, “an indestructible stock of ideas, traditions, sentiments, modes of thought, an unconscious inheritance”. For him, race was the most important factor in a nation’s fate, shaped in centuries of historical progress and not to be altered within a few generations. The alleged superiority of the Anglo-Saxons in America was in danger, he stated, “of a great and perilous change in the very fabric of our race” since racial blending would inevitably lead to racial degeneration:

If a lower race mixes with a higher in sufficient numbers, history teaches us that the lower race will prevail. The lower race will absorb the higher, not the higher the lower, when the two strains approach equality in numbers. In

¹⁷¹ *Congressional Record*, 54th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 5476-8, 20 May 1896.

other words, there is a limit to the capacity of any race for assimilating and elevating an inferior race.

Lodge concluded that this would not only have a detrimental effect on the US, but also global implications since the “lowering of a great race means not only its own decline but that of human civilization”. Therefore, according to Lodge, the time had come for the exclusion of these groups to prevent them from becoming a part of the American population. Making the case for the literacy test, Lodge combined this biopolitical argument with a plea to citizens’ duties, claiming that the test would

operate against the most undesirable and harmful part of our present immigration and shut out elements which no thoughtful or patriotic man can wish to see multiplied among the people of the United States.¹⁷²

The bill’s final version passed the House and Senate in February 1897 after more than a year of congressional negotiations, mostly, as McCall emphasized, due to the “thorough scientific work done by the League”. The IRL consequently urged their members and friends to write President Cleveland to sign the bill, fearing that he would veto it as one of his last actions in office.¹⁷³

While some members of Congress had opposed the bill on grounds of the American tradition as an asylum for the oppressed or on behalf of the immigrant groups they represented, the opposition finally got organized.¹⁷⁴ Surprisingly, Joseph Stump, former Commissioner-General of Immigration, and Joseph Senner, who was about to be replaced as Commissioner at Ellis Island after McKinley’s electoral victory, decided to write to President Cleveland urging him to veto the bill. Although both had formerly supported the test, they now argued for literacy as a qualification that should only be applied as naturalization requirement and not as a reason for immigrants’ exclusion.¹⁷⁵ While Congress had passed the test bill, Cleveland rejected this “radical departure from our national policy” on the grounds of his belief in the assimilative powers of American society, denying that the new immigration was a threat to Anglo ‘superiority’. “It is said”, Cleveland wrote in his veto message,

¹⁷² *Congressional Record*, 54th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 2816-2820, March 16, 1896.

¹⁷³ McCall to Ward, 25 May 1896, Ward Papers, Box 80A; IRL Minutes, 25 February 1897. The House had passed the bill 217:36 votes, Senate with 34:31; Hutchinson, p. 121.

¹⁷⁴ For opposition to the bill in Congress, see Henry B. Leonard, *The Open Gates: The Protest Against the Movement to Restrict European Immigration, 1896 - 1924* (New York: Arno Press, 1980 [first publ. 1967]), pp. 12–24.

¹⁷⁵ Cannato, p. 105; Tichenor, pp. 82–83; Vought, pp. 18–19.

“that that the quality of recent immigration is undesirable. The time is quite within recent memory when the same thing was said of immigrants who, with their descendants, are now numbered among our best citizens”.¹⁷⁶ While the House overruled his veto by a strong margin, the Senate did not take it up again, thus forfeiting the literacy test for the time being.¹⁷⁷

Lodge’s attempt to reintroduce the test bill in 1898 was even less successful. Although the prospects of passing the test had increased after McKinley had won on a restrictionist platform, immigrant interest groups had realized how close restrictionists had come to a victory. Senner, although he had permitted the League to collect data at Ellis Island, founded the Immigration Protective League in 1898. This League was supported by German-American, Irish-American and Jewish-American groups and largely modeled its approach along the usual lines of progressive organizations. While the IRL relied on the newly-won AFL support and the Republicans’ endorsement of restriction, immigrant groups cooperated with business organizations, steamship companies, chambers of commerce and ethnic associations to organize mass rallies against restriction.¹⁷⁸ Although Hall protested against the Immigration Protective League’s mobilization of German immigrants, a group hardly affected by the test, he could not deny its growing momentum.¹⁷⁹ Senate passed the bill in January 1898, but the House, on a close vote, decided not to consider it to the preeminence of the Spanish-American war. Instead, the Industrial Commission was created that, among other things, was to investigate immigration’s effect on the US. Although Hall was asked to testify which reflected the IRL’s status immigration experts, the League had to accept that the war had swept immigration off the political agenda. The IRL confined its activities to educational work,

¹⁷⁶ Grover Cleveland, ‘Veto Message of the Immigrant Literacy Test Bill: March 2, 1897’, in *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues: A Documentary History*, ed. by Michael C. LeMay and Elliott R. Barkan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 80–82.

¹⁷⁷ Hutchinson, p. 121.

¹⁷⁸ Denver Republican, *Too Stringent Rules*; “To Favor Immigration”, *New York Times*, 7 January 1898; IRL Minutes, 10 January 1898; Leonard, pp. 36–46; Tichenor, pp. 83–84. Hall later attributed Senner’s change in attitude towards immigration to the financial temptations the steamship lobby offered: Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, pp. 268, 277–278. The Immigration Protective League is not to be confused with the Immigrants’ Protective League (IPL), founded in 1908 by Chicago Hull House settlement Grace Abbott, which concentrated on practical help and assimilation: Rivka S. Lissak, ‘Liberal Progressives and ‘New Immigrants’: The Immigrants’ Protective League of Chicago, 1908–1919’, *Studies in American Civilization*, 32 (1987), 79–103; Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 40–47, 87–102.

¹⁷⁹ IRL, *The Surprising Circular of the Immigration Protective League*, Publication no. 24, 1898; Hall, “Letter to the Editor”, *New York Tribune*, 31 January 1898.

publishing only annual statistics on immigrant arrivals to maintain its status as “recognized authority” on immigration.¹⁸⁰

3.6 Keeping up the fight

When the League decided to resume its work in October 1901, it professionalized its mode of operation and tried to widen its appeal beyond the New England elite. In the years up to the Great War, the IRL pursued a strategy of including a diverse array of social and political groups in its efforts to protect the nation from the asserted evils of immigration.¹⁸¹ This new approach was a combination of an intensification of its pre-1898 mode of operation and the search for new allies. It resulted in a reinforced cooperation with academics and reformers, an informal cooperation with patriotic orders and the extension beyond its north-eastern home turf by reaching out to white Southerners and Mid-western farmers.

After the turn of the century, prospects for the passage of a new literacy test bill seemed good. The Spanish-American war had brought questions of racial hierarchies to the centre of political attention: the occupation of and the denial of political sovereignty to Guam, the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico and the annexation of Hawaii had been justified by the idea that Americans would provide guidance to self-government for the liberated, but racially ‘backward’ or ‘inferior’ inhabitants.¹⁸² IRL executives must have been elated when Roosevelt assumed the highest office after McKinley’s assassination: although a New Yorker, Roosevelt had strong connections to New England. He had been educated at Harvard, was a close friend of Lodge and his first wife Alice had hailed from the Lee family of Boston. Additionally, his education had been shaped by Nathaniel Shaler and John W. Burgess; in his own historical writings, he frequently applied racial explanations.¹⁸³ Before his rise to the presidency, Roosevelt had expressed his support for immigration restriction to “keep out races which do not assimilate readily with our own, and unworthy individuals of all races”. In 1896, he had

¹⁸⁰ Solomon, p. 119; Tichenor, p. 85; Industrial Commission, pp. 46–70; IRL, *Annual Report for 1898, 1899, and 1900*, 1900, Ward Scrapbooks.

¹⁸¹ IRL Minutes, 7 October 1901.

¹⁸² Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 221–59; Hoganson.

¹⁸³ Dyer, pp. 45–68, see for example Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Volume 1* (New York: The Review of Reviews Company, 1904 [first publ. 1889]), pp. 15–42. After 1905, however, Roosevelt completely dropped the term Anglo-Saxon, being convinced that no such race existed and that ‘Aryan’ only denoted a linguistic group, not a race. However, he used the term English-speaking race to describe an allegedly culturally and linguistically homogeneous group.

explicitly assured the IRL that “I do heartily sympathize with the [literacy] test”. In his first presidential message, Roosevelt declared that existing immigration laws were “unsatisfactory” and needed to be improved to “secure by a careful and not merely perfunctory educational test some intelligent capacity to appreciate American institutions and to act sanely as American citizens”. Roosevelt argued for both an educational and an economic test to stop “cheap labor” and to “protect and elevate the general body politic and social”. This, however, would remain one of the very few occasions Roosevelt as president spoke out publicly for the test. Even when his friend Lodge asked him to include “a strong paragraph in your message urging the passage of the bill [containing the literacy test] now so nearly completed”, he only declared that the United States could not have “too much immigration of the right kind, and we should have none at all of the wrong kind”.¹⁸⁴

The change in the president’s attitude can be explained by both his personal views on race and the political necessities of the time. His unmatched talent to combine seemingly conflicting or contradictory views allowed Roosevelt to design his very own racial rationale, embodying Americans’ ambivalent attitude toward immigration, as Robert Zeidel has pointed out. Roosevelt concurred with Frederick Jackson Turner’s argument that the frontier had served as a melting pot for Europeans and had created a new, homogeneous American race through assimilation. Although the frontier had disappeared, he was optimistic about America’s racial future: if race suicide could be averted by the reinvigoration of manly qualities, the assimilation of European immigrants could be achieved. This “civic nationalism”, as Gary Gerstle calls it, allowed Roosevelt to envision a new American society where civic commitment, progressive reform, and improved laws and controls regarding the admission of ‘deficient’ or deviant individual immigrants would guarantee America’s racial quality.¹⁸⁵

Roosevelt’s reluctance to champion the restriction of European immigrant was not only due to his racial views, but also his political instincts. After the literacy test had been vetoed in 1897, the economy recovered and public demand for restriction

¹⁸⁴ IRL Records (801); Henry Cabot Lodge (ed.), *Addresses and Presidential Messages of Theodore Roosevelt: 1902-1904* (New York: Putnam's, 1904), pp. 301-302, 387; Henry Cabot Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918: Volume I* (New York: Scribner's, 1925), pp. 251, 545; Roosevelt, *American Ideals*, p. 67.

¹⁸⁵ Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, pp. 34–38; Gerstle, *Crucible*, pp. 14–80; Zeidel, p. 22.

became less pressing. Despite the Republicans' endorsement of restriction in 1896, McKinley had managed to gain the immigrant voters' support. The Republican Party dropped its restriction plank for the 1904 and 1908 presidential elections while the Democrats sought to uphold their traditional ties to immigrants. Roosevelt reacted to the potential threat to the Republican vote by appointing prominent New York lawyer Oscar Straus Secretary of Commerce and Labor, making him the first Jewish cabinet member.¹⁸⁶

Another factor that made politicians hesitate to endorse restriction was the immigrant interest groups' professionalization and growth. Big business with its demand for low wages was organized in the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). For industrialists, it was a more reliable association than the NCF that represented business and labour or the fickle National Board of Trade (NBT); the latter supported the literacy test until 1904.¹⁸⁷ Immigrant societies organized by nationalities remained the most important opponents of restriction, regularly organizing rallies and resolutions against impeding legislation. In 1907, German-American and Irish-American associations agreed to oppose all future restriction. Simultaneously, new immigrant groups organized in local, state and national associations. One of the most prominent of these was the American Jewish Committee (AJC), formed by Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler and Jacob Schiff. German-Jewish Americans were also represented in the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and provided the leaders for the National Liberal Immigration League NLIL, founded in 1906. The NLIL soon assumed the leading role among these associations. Resembling the IRL and other progressive organizations, this League combined prominent 'old-stock' Americans with respected Jewish-Americans on its letterhead. Furthermore, it connected old and new immigrant groups as well as businessmen, politicians, and academics such as Princeton's president Woodrow Wilson and Charles Eliot from Harvard. The financial backing was provided by manufacturers, railroad and steamship companies, a fact the League denied constantly. Republican representative William S. Bennet from New

¹⁸⁶ Cannato, p. 170; Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap (eds), *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 226–34; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 104, 113, 127-128; Paul Kleppner, *Continuity and Change in Electoral Politics, 1893-1928* (New York: Greenwood, 1987), 120: Contributions in American History, pp. 201–05; Vought, pp. 20-26, 42-43.

¹⁸⁷ Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 115–16; Leonard, pp. 55–60. For the NCF's position on immigration, see Christopher J. Cyphers, *The National Civic Federation and the Making of a New Liberalism, 1900 - 1915* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), pp. 97–125.

York, who soon became the IRL's arch-enemy, was in charge of the League's lobbying in the capital. New York lawyer and philanthropist Edward Lauterbach became the NLIL's first president, but most of the work was conducted by Nissim Behar. Similar to the IRL and other organizations of the progressive era, the NLIL tried to win over prominent members for its cause, organized rallies and mass meetings, and, most importantly, tried to influence public opinion by distributing publications and statements. In these efforts it was supported by the American Association of Foreign-Language Newspapers (AAFLN), led by Louis Hammerling.¹⁸⁸

The IRL reacted to political obstacles and the immigrant groups' growing organizational strength by intensifying their pre-1900 organizational approach. The League continued to lobby among state governors and legislatures and convinced local boards of charity and chambers of commerce to endorse restriction in questionnaires and resolutions. In a pamphlet published after the passage of the 1903 Immigration Act, the League claimed to have received over five thousand endorsements for the test, mostly by boards of charities, immigration societies of the American northwest, chambers of commerce, boards of trade, state legislatures and labor organizations.¹⁸⁹ Simultaneously, the League continued and intensified its cooperation with old and new allies.

One of these was the AFL which became the League's most reliable and influential partner in the campaign for restriction. As Lane has argued convincingly, the AFL took up European immigration when economic fluctuations, low real wages, growing immigration figures and technological and managerial innovations in industry increased pressure on trade unions.¹⁹⁰ Defeats in strikes and courts, the Republican Party's unwillingness to cooperate, the growing dissent with the union's

¹⁸⁸ Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), pp. 3–53; Naomi W. Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999), pp. 82–123; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 123–30; Rivka S. Lissak, 'The National Liberal Immigration League and Immigration Restriction, 1906-1917', *American Jewish Archive Journal*, 47.2 (1995), 197–246 (pp. 206–22); Leonard, pp. 84–105; Sheldon M. Neuringer, *American Jewry and United States Immigration Policy, 1881 - 1953* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), pp. 37–123; Tichenor, p. 117.

¹⁸⁹ IRL, *Present Status*. 1904. For single replies to the IRL, see for example IRL Records (55, 149, 219, 240, 298, 306, 403, 541, 644, 715, 761, 1046, 1056, folder 7, 1125, folders 8, 12); W. A. Gates to Joseph Lee, 6 December 1905, Lee Papers.

¹⁹⁰ Lane, *Solidarity or Survival*, pp. 117–45. Before 1903, the AFL mostly concentrated on the renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

left-wingers regarding the cooperation with business leaders in the NCF, and unauthorized strikes run by grass-roots activists contradicting AFL leaders' arbitration strategies added to the union's problems.¹⁹¹ While its membership numbers had risen from 250,000 to 1.5 million between 1898 and 1903, figures began to decline after 1904. The majority of the union's membership was still made up by skilled workers, mostly native Americans or old immigrants. When fears of unemployment and declining wages arose in the short depression of 1904, immigration restriction became more prominent on the AFL's agenda.¹⁹²

The IRL had realized the AFL's potential as a political partner early and was willing to form what Higham has called a "strange alliance" between the New England Brahmin elite and the nation's most powerful trade union. Directly after the League took up its work again in 1901, it started to lobby among AFL leaders for their renewed support for restriction. IRL executives and Edgerton regularly communicated with Gompers, Duncan, Morrison and fourth vice-president John Mitchell to canvass for the renewal of the AFL's endorsement of the literacy test, for support for particular bills or to discuss political strategy. The League also tried to convince particular unions to press for the test and to instruct their delegates to vote for the respective resolutions at the annual AFL conventions.¹⁹³

AFL leader Samuel Gompers endorsed the literacy test again in May 1902. In contrast to the League, the AFL justified the restriction of European immigration on economic rather than racial grounds. Apart from "scattered references" the AFL refrained from racial theories in order not to alienate its second- and third-generation

¹⁹¹ The annual growth in manufacturing real wages from 1900 to 1914 was 1.4%, however, the lower-skilled wage level stagnated: Goldin, pp. 244–45. For estimates of real wages and unemployment levels, see also Lane, *Solidarity or Survival*, pp. 117–20. Mink argues that immigration played a formative role in reinforcing divisions within the American working-class, explaining its relatively conservative political position: Gwendolyn Mink, *Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development: Union, Party and State, 1875-1920* (Ithaca, 1986), pp. 161–203. For a counterargument considering a variety of factors, see Julie Greene, *Pure and Simple Politics: The American Federation of Labor and Political Activism, 1881 to 1917* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For women, especially immigrant women in the workforce and unions, see Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). For labour and immigrants in the West, see Philip J. Mellinger, *Race and Labor in Western Copper: The Fight for Equality, 1896-1918* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995).

¹⁹² Lane, *Solidarity or Survival*, pp. 169–78; Tichenor, p. 118. For conflicts between African Americans, ethnic groups and white Americans in workplaces and unions, see for example Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

¹⁹³ Higham, *Strangers*, p. 164. See for example IRL Minutes 20, 27 November 1901, 7, 18 October 1902, 11 July 1903, 27 July 1905, 19 October 1908; IRL Records (381); IRL, *Report of the Executive Committee for the Year Ending June 30, 1904*, Ward Scrapbooks.

immigrant membership.¹⁹⁴ In a letter to a congressman written in 1903 and reprinted by the IRL, however, Gompers emphasized that new immigrants endangered the standard of living and would increase unemployment “[i]n just the same way the Chinaman and others drive out the American, the German, the Irishman”. Gompers declared the educational test to be the most feasible means for checking immigration “in a moderate degree”. The growing support for restriction among organized workers was reflected in a resolution endorsing the test passed by the 1902 AFL national convention. Only the internationalist wing of the union opposed it, leading to a univocal vote of 1858:352. The AFL subsequently continued to support the test and the League’s campaigns until its passage in 1917.¹⁹⁵

Apart from its cooperation with labour, the IRL also tried to widen its supporter base by canvassing amongst farmers. Since the 1880s, farmers’ economic and political position had suffered from decreasing prices, rural flight, the shift to cash crops, mechanization and the decreasing number of farmers in relation to the overall population. The farmers, most of them either native Americans or descendants of immigrants from North-western Europe, reacted by organizing in progressive associations such as the Grange, the Farmers’ Educational and Co-operative Union of America or the Farmers’ National Congress.¹⁹⁶

For the League, agricultural associations represented an opportunity to win over the Mid-West and, more importantly, the South. In 1896, more southern Congressmen had voted against the literacy test than from all other areas

¹⁹⁴ Lane, *Solidarity or Survival*, p. 180; Leah H. Haus, *Unions, Immigration, and Internationalization: New Challenges and Changing Coalitions in the United States and France* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 43–51, in detail in A. T. Lane, ‘American Trade Unions, Mass Immigration and the Literacy Test: 1900–1907’, *Labor History*, 25.1 (1984), 5–25.

¹⁹⁵ IRL, *Demand of American Labor for Restriction of Immigration and an Illiteracy Test for Immigrants*, Publication no. 35, 1903; James S. Pula, ‘The Progressives, the Immigrants, and the Workplace: Defining Public Perceptions, 1900–1914’, *Polish America Studies*, 52.2 (1995), 57–69 (p. 61). For opposition to immigration restriction within the AFL and other unions, see Haus, pp. 51–62. For a Marxist interpretation of the AFL’s attitude toward immigrants, see Kitty Calavita, *U.S. Immigration Law and the Control of Labor* (London: Academic Press, 1984). For the AFL’s support, see for example: IRL, *Report 1903*; IRL, *Protect the Workman*, Publication no. 52, 1909; ‘Experts Discuss Varied Problems of Immigration’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 April 1910; Samuel Gompers, ‘Immigration up to Congress’, *American Federalist*, January (1911), 17–21 (p. 17); John Mitchell, ‘Protect the Workman’, *The Outlook*, September 11 (1911).

¹⁹⁶ McGerr, pp. 21–29; Sanders, pp. 148–77. The Grange’s full name is The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry; for its history, see Dennis S. Nordin, *Rich Harvest: A History of the Grange, 1867–1900* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1974).

combined.¹⁹⁷ In 1900, only 6% of the foreign-born population lived in the South, Southerners thus often argued for immigration to advance industrialization. Contemporaries explained the gap in industrial growth between North and South by the absence of new immigrants instead of historical developments, the access to resources or differences in wage levels. Accordingly, southern industrialists, railroad companies, agricultural producers and politicians revived state immigration agencies after 1900 to actively recruit European immigrants, much to the dismay of farmers and workers.¹⁹⁸ Additionally, the INS established the Division of Information in 1908 to distribute immigrants among the country. Welcomed by immigrant associations and severely criticized by the IRL, the division, headed by former Commissioner-General Powderly, distributed information about wages and employment opportunities among immigrants at Ellis Island. Although relatively unsuccessful – between 1908 and 1913 only 23,000 immigrants used its services – the League feared that it would increase the influx of new immigrants to all parts of the country.¹⁹⁹

Searching for Southern allies to oppose plans to induce further immigration, the IRL started to lobby among agricultural organizations in 1905. Hall and Ward regularly attended their meetings and gave addresses advising against the importation of immigrants of “low vitality, poor physique, very ignorant, often diseased, mentally deficient and of criminal tendencies”. As in the breeding of farm animals, Ward expounded in an address to the Farmers’ National Congress, only the good, strong and healthy should be considered in the “selection of human stock” which should not be left to parties only interested in their own material gain. The Farmers’ Congress subsequently passed a resolution for restriction and against distribution and renewed it four years later.²⁰⁰ A similar resolution was passed by the Farmers’ Educational and Co-operative Union in 1908. Subsequently, the Union

¹⁹⁷ John Higham, *Send these to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 40.

¹⁹⁸ Rowland T. Berthoff, ‘Southern Attitudes Towards Immigration’, *Journal of Southern History*, 17.3 (1951), 328–60 (pp. 328–29). Hardly any literature on southern attitudes on immigration exists apart from Berthoff’s article. Although Berthoff mentions the IRL, he was obviously not aware of its lobby work in the South.

¹⁹⁹ Cannato, pp. 187–88; Cohen, *Not Free*, pp. 45–53. The Division of Information later became part of the Department of Labor’s Employment Service and was abandoned in 1921: Smith and Herring, p. 29.

²⁰⁰ IRL Minutes 7 September, 28 September 1905; Official Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Farmer’s National Congress of the United States, 105-110, in: IRL Records (1116, folder 2); Berthoff, p. 345.

with its 2.4 million members protested against distribution, employed lobbyists in Washington to support IRL secretary Patten and testified in congressional hearings.²⁰¹ Additionally, Patten made several trips to Southern immigration association and labour union conventions. Consequently, labour leaders expressed their discontent with distribution in a meeting with Secretary of Commerce and Labor Oscar Straus in 1909; even Commissioner of Labor Charles P. Neill joined them in their criticism.²⁰²

In 1905, the League surveyed southern politicians, state officials, mayors, commercial clubs, industrial association, boards of trade, chambers of commerce, manufacturers and editors to inquire about their attitude towards new immigration. More than half of the five thousand letters sent were answered, revealing a “striking unanimity in favor of the exclusion of illiterates, persons of poor physique, imbeciles, and aliens desirous of settling in the cities and averse to country life”. The South, Patten wrote to Lodge, had learned from its experience with “the introduction of the negro as a solution of the 18th Century labor problem” and did not wish to add an additional race problem. The IRL thus followed a line of argument common in the South, equating – at least to a certain degree – the purported racial inferiority of African-Americans with the non-white status of new immigrants.²⁰³

Aside from sending a selection of answers to Commissioner-General Sargent, the League also criticized distribution plans in a number of articles. According to Ward, these were advocated by steamship and railroad companies due to their intention “*to turn public attention away from the need of further restrictive legislation*”. Ward implied that the distribution scheme was devised by Northerners who “would be glad to have many of its city slums emptied into the South”. Thus, he argued, Southerners should “hear the lesson which the North has been learning

²⁰¹ IRL Records (848); IRL Minutes 15 January, 20 June 1908, 19 May, 21 September 1909, 24 January, 25 April 1912; Patten to Lee, 6 April 1910, 15 February, 6 September 1911, Lee Papers; Patten to Nagel, INS 53072/2A; House of Representatives, *Relative to the Further Restriction of Immigration: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Part 3* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912). For agrarians’ support for immigration restriction and cooperation with labour unions, see Sanders, pp. 350–53.

²⁰² IRL Minutes, 21 June 1905, 17 February 1909; IRL Records (608); Ward to Lee, 4 January 1906, Lee Papers. For Gomper’s critique of distribution, see for example Samuel Gompers, ‘Schemes to “Distribute” Immigrants’, *American Federationalist*, 18.7 (1911), 513–28.

²⁰³ IRL Minutes, 8 June 1905; IRL Records (608); for the questionnaire, see Ward Scrapbooks. For a typical answer, see IRL Records (17). For an example of this equation voiced by a Southern historian see Walter L. Fleming, ‘Immigration to the Southern States’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 20.2 (1905), 276–97.

regarding undesirable immigration”.²⁰⁴ In articles in Southern newspapers, Patten regularly admonished readers to learn from their experience with “one alien race” imported to “solve an alleged labor problem” and to oppose the coming of the “brownish races of Southeastern Europe and Western Asia”. Distribution, Patten explained in a letter to the *New York Times*, could thus only be “a weak palliative” that would be useless if “nothing is done to remedy the cause”.²⁰⁵

In the long run, the IRL’s strategy succeeded. Instigating fears of immigration by applying its established discourse of racial otherness, the League helped to transform the former pro-immigrant South of the 1890s into a region supporting further restriction. After the turn of the century, Southerners became “as outspoken xenophobes as [...] old-stock Northerners” despite the sustained lack of a noteworthy number of new immigrants below the Mason-Dixon Line.²⁰⁶ Southern politicians responded to voters’ demands and began to support restrictive legislation; the IRL could count on Democratic congressmen such as John Burnett (AL), Frank B. Gary (SC), Ellison Smith (SC), Oscar Underwood (AL), Zebulon Vance (NC), John Sharp Williams (MS), and Stanyarne Wilson (SC). Consequently, both Berthoff and Goldin identify 1906/07, the high tide of the IRL’s campaigning in the South, as a turning point in the region’s attitude towards immigration restriction. After this point in time, southern congressmen supported restrictive legislation in both houses to a far greater extent than their Northern counterparts and often provided the “decisive edge in the House”.²⁰⁷

3.7 Defeat: the Immigration Acts of 1903 and 1907

Despite the growing support for the literacy test among Southern members of Congress, the IRL’s futile attempts for its passage reflected the growing resistance against restriction after the turn of the century. In 1902, a new immigration act to codify the array of existing legislation was drafted by Representative William Shattuc (R-OH), Commissioner-General of Immigration Frank Sargent and

²⁰⁴ IRL Records (916); INS 51490/19; Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘The Agricultural Distribution of Immigrants’, *Popular Science Monthly*, 66 (1904), 166–75 (pp. 167, 170); Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Immigration and the South’, *Atlantic Monthly*, 96.5 (1905), 611–17. Original emphasis.

²⁰⁵ Patten, “The Immigration Problem and the South”, *Raleigh American*, 1 April 1906; “Warns the South to Go Slow About Inviting Aliens”, *Norfolk Landmark*, 12 November 1907; Patten, “Aliens and Congestion”, *New York Times*, 3 December 1910.

²⁰⁶ Berthoff, p. 343.

²⁰⁷ Berthoff, pp. 352–60; Goldin, pp. 233–36. See also McDonagh, p. 157; Higham, *Send these to Me*, pp. 40–49.

Commissioner of Ellis Island William Williams in cooperation with the League. Introduced in the House in March 1902, Oscar Underwood (D-AL) amended it with a literacy test. Although passed by the House and endorsed by Roosevelt, the Senate dropped the test. While Underwood promised to fight for the amendment in the conference committee, Lodge and the League's allies were willing to drop it to ensure the passage of the bill. The Immigration Act, minus the literacy test, thus became law in March 1903. It added anarchists, epileptics, the insane, "professional beggars" and persons "who procure or attempt to bring in prostitutes" to the excluded classes. It also raised the head tax to \$2, and extended the deportation period for persons who had become public charges to two years after arrival if due to "causes existing prior to landing". Although the League was understandably disappointed that the literacy test had not been included, it still rated the Act a "considerable gain" since it incorporated many of its suggestions.²⁰⁸

Three years later, proposals for a new immigration bill were introduced by Senator William P. Dillingham (R-VT) and Representative August Gardner (R-MA and Lodge's son-in-law), including a literacy test.²⁰⁹ The literacy test was again the most contested issue in the debates about the bill; after intense lobbying by restrictionists and immigrant groups, the Senate passed the bill in May 1906. In the House, however, the League faced a fierce opponent: Speaker Joseph Cannon (R-IL). "Uncle Joe" Cannon was motivated by doubts about the test's effectiveness and a congressional district with many naturalized voters; even a letter from Theodore Roosevelt could not convince him.²¹⁰ The last in a row of powerful Speakers, Cannon controlled his party's most important political players in the House. After refusing to allow the bill to be introduced, the increasing pressure eventually made him devise a combination of floor rules to block the passage of the test: the time of debate was limited and he ordered the vote to not be recorded. Additionally, he allowed the test to be substituted with a provision that established a commission to investigate immigration in detail. Although restrictionists protested, the chair allowed a vote on the proposal. When it was rejected by 136 to 123 votes, William

²⁰⁸ IRL Records (827, 907); IRL Minutes, 1 July 1902, 9 February 1903; IRL, *Report 1902*; Act of March 3, 1903 (32 Stat. 1213); Higham, *Strangers*, p. 112; Hutchinson, pp. 130–33; Tichenor, p. 123; Vought, pp. 39–40. The IRL also consulted officers of the Department of the Treasury about the proposed bill.

²⁰⁹ Gardner was, in turn, supported by the IRL in the 1906 elections: IRL Minutes, 27 October 1906.

²¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Cannon, 27 May 1906, Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The Big Stick: 1905-1907* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 5: The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, pp. 285–86.

Bennet demanded a roll-call vote. Subsequently, Cannon personally urged Republican representatives to vote for the amendment, the recount resulted in 116 nays and 128 ayes.²¹¹

For the following eight months, the bill was stuck in the conference committee since Cannon, Bennet and their allies declined considering it while Lodge and other restrictionist Senators refused dropping it. In the end, Roosevelt appealed to Lodge to accept Cannon's amendment to enable the passage of the pending Gentlemen's Agreement blocked by the deadlock. Thus, the bill eventually became law in February 1907. The new Immigration Act, apart from creating the Immigration Commission, doubled the head tax to \$4 and allocated the money levied to the INS. It also created the Bureau of Information and extended the Secretary of Commerce and Labor's authority to review exclusions. The list of excluded classes was amended again, now encompassing persons regarded as imbeciles and feebleminded and extending the deportation period for certain cases to three years.²¹²

For Hall and other restrictionists, the intention in creating the Commission was obvious: it would forestall any new immigration legislation for the foreseeable future.²¹³ While immigrant groups rejoiced, many Congressmen who personally believed in the literacy test may have been relieved that the contentious issue would not come up again anytime soon. The League and its allies, however, unable to reintroduce the test before the Commission would have finished its work, would concentrate on two aspects: to influence the investigation's outcome and to urge for the strict enforcement of existing immigration laws. In these two endeavours, their strategies and arguments increasingly became informed by a new scientific rationale that gained momentum after the turn of the century: the eugenic movement.

²¹¹ Tichenor, pp. 123–28; Vought, pp. 54–58; Zeidel, pp. 26–36.

²¹² Act of February 20, 1907 (34 Stat. 898); Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 128–30; Hutchinson, pp. 137–43; Tichenor, pp. 123–28; Vought, pp. 54–58; Zeidel, pp. 26–36. For Patten's view, written in retrospect, see Patten to Hall, 20, 22 March 1910, Patten to Lee, 16 May 1910, Lee Papers.

²¹³ See for example: Prescott F. Hall, 'The Recent History of Immigration and Immigration Restriction', *The Journal of Political Economy*, 21.7 (1913), 735–51 (p. 735). For the League's frustration with Cannon, see for example IRL Records (468).

Part II:
Knowledge and Control

4. The eugenic rationale

When the IRL resumed its work in late 1901, the public discourse about immigration and its possible effects on the US had begun to change significantly. The Spanish-American War and the entailing occupation of foreign territory were justified by references to Americans' presumed racial responsibility to uplift others to the American level of civilization. Theodore Roosevelt, president after McKinley's assassination, never grew tired of reminding citizens to procreate to avert 'race suicide'. Between the turn of the century and World War One, debates about American identity and the racial effects of imperialism and immigration became more prominent and were soon influenced by the emerging eugenic movement.

For the IRL, the eugenic rationale provided a broader scientific basis for its goal of immigration restriction. Equating the nation with its assumedly superior predominantly Anglo-Saxon population, the trajectory of the League's efforts was grounded in concerns about the genetic quality of the American population. Writing to his local newspaper in 1896, Prescott Hall had already laid out that for him "the question of immigration is not in its essence economic, but biological and social". "Undesirable immigrants", he emphasized, "are not bad bread, but bad yeast". Hall thus stressed that his concerns were less about individual deficiencies but about the overall biological quality of America's future generations. While eugenicists first concentrated on 'defectives' within the US, restrictionists argued that attention had to be paid to incoming immigrants who might taint the population's genetic quality. Providing a scientific rationale that promised to eradicate genetic defects from the American gene pool, eugenics and restriction can thus best be understood as biopolitical projects to "administer, optimize, and multiply" life.¹

As mentioned above, biopolitics as a part of the government mode of power heavily relied on new forms of knowledge and statistical data produced by scientific disciplines, progressive associations and governmental agencies. In determining the population's biopolitical parameters, biopower treated it as a species with specific characteristics that could be manipulated to attain desired results. Ultimately, it increased state power in this new field of intervention, life itself and its

¹ Foucault, *An Introduction*, p. 137.

reproduction, to protect it from potential threats.² In the progressive-era US, many biopolitical projects were created: new laws regarding food, drugs, workplace security, working hours and urban living conditions as well as new modes of self-optimization in sports and education aimed at protecting, regulating and optimizing the citizens' bodies and lives. Apart from projects to encourage positive trends, however, state racism reintroduced death to the nexus of power. State racism is

a way of introducing a break into the domain of life [...]: the break between what must live and what must die. The appearance within the biological continuum of the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races [...]: all this is a way of fragmenting the field of the biological that power controls. [...] That is the first function of racism: to fragment, to create caesuras within the biological continuum addressed by biopower.³

State racism thus was the instrument to reintegrate the sovereign's right to kill into the modern state, not necessarily aiming at racialized groups but establishing the break between the normal and the abnormal. Inside the state, it occurred as the elimination of abnormalities; outside, as war against other races.⁴ State racism allowed for the actual or symbolic elimination of individuals or groups regarded as detrimental to the population's quality and potential. It followed the logic that the death of others maximized positive elements in the state's population:

The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I – as species rather than individual – can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be.⁵

Foucault emphasized that “death” or “elimination” in this regard do not necessarily imply physical destruction, but can also be understood as every form of what he calls “indirect murder”: “increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection”.⁶

Postcolonial scholars have accused Foucault of neglecting the colonial dimension in his analysis. Although he mentioned occasionally that the

² Dreyfus and Rabinow, pp. 139–40; Foucault, *Society*, pp. 243–45.

³ Foucault, *Society*, pp. 254–55.

⁴ Foucault, *Society*, pp. 137-166, 316.

⁵ Foucault, *Society*, p. 255.

⁶ Foucault, *Society*, p. 256. For the adoption of the concept of biopower by other scholars, see for example Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Deleuze, *Foucault*; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

transformation of the racial discourse began with colonization, he limited his actual analysis to the European discourse.⁷ Additionally, Foucault focused almost exclusively on the transformation of the racial discourse from the defence against invading races to the fight against “its own elements and its own products” and thus neglected to consider the function modern states conferred to their border regimes. In the US between 1890 and 1920, biopower did not only produce an “internal racism of permanent purification” that controlled the socially deviant within the own society. The same logic was applied to immigrant groups within the country and at the borders to distinguish between potentially beneficial and detrimental additions to the biological, social and political body. As a prerequisite for purification, it was also in this sense that the discourse on race became “the discourse of power itself” and that this new “biological-social racism” functioned as “a principle of exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, as a way of normalizing society”. While the Dillingham Commission produced knowledge about immigration’s impact on the country, the exclusion and deportation of immigrants by the modern border regime entailed the biopolitical “indirect murder”. The security apparatus of border control gave practical meaning to the abstract laws and specified the bodily, mental and moral standards that had to be met to be allowed entry. Producing medical, psychiatric and statistical knowledge, immigration control identified and excluded perceived threats to society’s stability, public health and the population’s biopolitical future. Although rudimentary in its beginnings and only professionalizing slowly, the INS and PHS connected individual features to the population as a whole, allowing the state to identify and eliminate potentially assumedly dangerous individuals and groups. Biopower and state racism thus constituted and provided the political and social technologies for the dispositif of immigration regulation, practices to identify and ward off “those who deviate from that norm, [...] those who pose a threat to the biological heritage”.⁸

In the IRL’s efforts for a biopolitical state intervention, eugenic thought became the most important rationale in its interactions with both the Dillingham Commission and the border control apparatus. The League hoped for more accurate information

⁷ Foucault, *Society*, pp. 65, 257; Paul Gilroy, ‘Race Ends Here’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21.5 (1998), 838–47 (p. 847); Stoler, *Education of Desire*, p. 53.

⁸ Foucault, *Society*, pp. 61–62.

about the supposed racial effect of immigration from the Commission, simultaneously, it urged INS and PHS officers to enforce regulations to avert new immigration's putatively dysgenic effect. To fully understand the League's intentions and underlying paradigm in these interactions, it is necessary to first lay out the main features of the eugenic movement.

4.1 Aims, measures and organizations

Although proto-eugenic and early eugenic thought had been circulating before the turn of the century, the concept of hard heredity propelled the eugenic rationale. Hard heredity was an early model used to falsify notions of the inheritability of acquired characteristics. August Weismann was one of its most prominent advocates; his germ-plasm theory assumed that organisms contain an unalterable kernel passed on from generation to generation.⁹ More important for hard heredity's success, however, was the rediscovery of Mendel's studies of heredity in pea plants in 1900. His findings about dominant and recessive traits were applied to the field of human evolution to explain the general laws of inheritance, a field soon to be called genetics. Eugenicists justified their programmes with the assumption that single factors – later called genes – were responsible for single physical, moral or mental characteristics.¹⁰ Thus, Spencer's and Galton's ideas backed by the model of hard heredity provided eugenicists with a powerful framework for their political demands. Although today often depicted as an outlandish or specious pseudoscience, eugenics was remarkably popular in the first half of the twentieth century and formed a complex and – more or less – coherent theory based on elaborate and extensive research.¹¹ As a scientific sub-discipline, it attained validity in its own time and was believed to offer meaningful programmes for the improvement of society. In the US, where eugenic measures were installed to a higher degree “than

⁹ August Weismann, *The Germ-Plasm: A Theory of Heredity* (New York: Scribner's, 1893); Bowler, pp. 253–56; Elof A. Carlson, *The Unfit: A History of a Bad Idea* (Cold Spring Harbor: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001), pp. 148–53. In Weismann's best-known experiment, he cut off mice tails over several generations to prove that this mutilation did not result in a change in the inherited material.

¹⁰ Jackson and Weidman, pp. 102–04; Stocking, pp. 234–69.

¹¹ On the criticism of scholarly thought applying this condescending label to disqualify eugenics and the resulting validation of contemporary science, see for example Young, pp. 40–41. For an older, but still helpful overview of the vast literature on the eugenic movement, see Frank Dikötter, 'Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics', *American Historical Review*, 103.1 (1998), 467–78. As mentioned above, eugenic policies continued to be applied in the second half of the twentieth century; the movement, however, had its strongest impact between 1910 and 1930.

in any European country except Nazi Germany”, its impact on state and society persisted far into the second half of the century.¹²

Like other progressive era reform movements, the eugenic movement consisted mostly of middle- or upper-class white men, largely from the Northeast, including numerous self-made men and scientists from different fields. With its reliance on scientific expertise to manage and solve society’s problems, eugenics attracted members of other progressive reform movements.¹³ Due to their biologic models of explanation, eugenicists explained social phenomena by linking them to questions of racial descent, biological characteristics, and heredity. No longer investigating the past for political solutions to social problems, they imagined a society reshaped according to biological criteria.¹⁴ Relying on eugenics’ scientific validity, eugenicists postulated state intervention to preserve an assumed Anglo-Saxon superiority by protecting its ‘genetic essence’. Hard heredity linked undesirable traits (mental, moral, and physical ‘defects’) to inheritance; eugenicists’ pivotal aim to prevent ‘degenerates’ from reproducing thus promised “pluralism without regression”.¹⁵ In the first decades of the twentieth century, eugenic movements formed in North America and throughout Western Europe. Although characterized by historians as a transnational social movement, the national eugenic movements evolved into distinct directions. While the British movement mostly focussed on class, American eugenics incorporated questions of race, in particular the assumed dangers of racial ‘degeneration’ and miscegenation.¹⁶

¹² Hawkins, p. 242.

¹³ Dowbiggin, pp. 124–25; Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, pp. 161–69; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 63–64; Ludmerer, Immigration Restriction Act, pp. 15–19; Diane B. Paul, *The Politics of Heredity: Essays on Eugenics, Biomedicine, and the Nature-Nurture Debate* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 11–35; Pickens, pp. 3-22, 102-130; Tucker, *Science and Politics*, pp. 55–56; for similar tendencies in Britain see Michael Freeden, ‘Eugenics and Progressive Thought: A Study in Ideological Affinity’, *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 645–71. For eugenics’ different role in the South, see Dowbiggin, pp. 124–31; Larson; Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ Hannaford, p. 325; Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 19–24.

¹⁵ David J. Depew and Bruce H. Weber, *Darwinism Evolving: Systems Dynamics and the Genealogy of Natural Selection* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), p. 239.

¹⁶ Randall Hansen and Desmond King, ‘Eugenic Ideas, Political Interest, and Policy Variance: Immigration and Sterilization Policy in Britain and the U.S.’, *World Politics*, 53.2 (2001), 237–63 (pp. 247–48).

Eugenic measures can be distinguished into two different categories: positive and negative eugenics. Positive eugenics focused on encouraging reproduction among the genetically 'advantaged' and centred on educational approaches. According to eugenic thinkers, couples were meant to inform each other of their pedigree; families were encouraged to explore their genealogies to avoid 'mismatched' spouses. In order to raise awareness for the cause, various eugenic organisations announced contests for the best popular scientific essays on birth-rates, the 'supremacy' of the 'Nordic race' or even for the best sermon on eugenics. *Better Baby Contests* and *Fitter Families Contests* were held at state fairs where displays presented eugenic theories in simple terms and images.¹⁷ Some eugenicists promoted birth control as a method to reduce reproduction among the working class, leading to odd alliances with feminist reformers.¹⁸

Negative eugenics started with relatively modest suggestions to prevent 'defectives' from procreating, such as the sexual segregation of inmates of mental asylums and poorhouses during reproductive age, but eugenic thinkers soon devised more drastic methods. Eugenicists proposed marriage laws and eventually the coercive sterilization of the genetically 'defective'. By the mid-1930s, forty-one states had adopted laws prohibiting marriage of persons classified as insane, mentally deficient or feebleminded.¹⁹ Coercive sterilization was first implemented in Indiana in 1907; by 1916, sixteen states had adopted such laws. After legal disputes on state level, the Supreme Court ruled sterilization constitutional in the notorious *Buck v. Bell* case in 1927.²⁰ Eventually, thirty states adopted such laws, leading to

¹⁷ Allen, *Role of Experts*, p. 185; Marouf A. Hasian, *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 35–45; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 68–69; Nancy Ordovery, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 32–33; Selden, pp. 31–33.

¹⁸ For the role of gender and sexuality and connections between the birth control and the eugenic movements, see Ellen Chesler, *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); Angela Franks, *Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005); Gordon, pp. 116–35; Hawkins, pp. 249–71; Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Carole R. McCann, *Birth Control Politics in the United States, 1916-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 99–134; Ordovery, pp. 137–58; Nicole H. Rafter, 'Introduction', in *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919*, ed. by Nicole H. Rafter (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 1–31; Rosenberg, pp. 54–88.

¹⁹ Dowbiggin, pp. 75–76; Kevles, *In the Name*, p. 91. For eugenic lobbying in the creation of Virginia's marriage laws see Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), pp. 161–82.

²⁰ Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, pp. 82–83. Most of the comprehensive works on eugenics concentrate on sterilization. For an older example see Chase, for more recent publications see Black; Harry Bruinius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's*

the enforced sterilization of more than sixteen thousand persons by 1933, and at least sixty thousand persons until 1974, when Virginia became the last state to repeal compulsory sterilization.²¹

While numerous eugenic organisations existed in the 1920s, their beginnings were humble. The first eugenic research institutes were founded by agriculturists or biologists who tried to understand the laws of inheritance in plants and animal husbandry to transfer this knowledge to the ‘human stock’.²² The first major organization was the American Breeders’ Association (ABA), founded in 1903. In 1906, it installed a Eugenics Section on Charles B. Davenport’s initiative. Apart from Davenport, other prominent members of the committee included Alexander Graham Bell, Stanford president and biologist David Starr Jordan, botanist Luther Burbank, geologist Roswell H. Johnson, Harvard geneticist William E. Castle and Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson. In 1912, the ABA was renamed the American Genetics Association (AGA); its *American Breeders’ Magazine* was continued as *Journal of Heredity*.²³ Other eugenic organisations followed in the first decades of the century: the National Committee for Mental Hygiene (NCMH) in 1909; the Race Betterment Foundation (RBF), founded by John Harvey Kellogg in 1911; the lobbyist Eugenics Research Association (ERA) in 1913; the elitist Galton Society as a counterweight to the American Anthropological Association in 1918; and the American Eugenics Society (AES), founded in 1926 as an umbrella organisation, presided over by economist Irving Fisher.²⁴

4.2 The Eugenics Record Office, family studies, and deviance

The most important eugenic institution was the Eugenics Record Office (ERO), founded in 1910 as an adjunct to the Station for the Experimental Study of Evolution

Quest for Racial Purity (New York: Knopf, 2006). For a detailed history of *Buck v. Bell*, see for example Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

²¹ Hawkins, pp. 241–46; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, p. 83. For detailed histories of compulsory sterilization, see Rebecca M. Kluchin, *Fit to be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1950-1980* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

²² For a case study of agricultural experiment stations, see Rosenberg, pp. 153–210.

²³ Black, p. 98; Chase, pp. 114–18; Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 62–63; Barbara A. Kimmelman, ‘The American Breeders’ Association: Genetics and Eugenics in Agricultural Context, 1903-13’, *Social Studies of Science*, 13.2 (1983), 163–204; Ordovery, p. 222.

²⁴ Black, pp. 88–90; Cot, p. 798; Haller, p. 71; Selden, pp. 7–12; Spiro, pp. 179–89.

at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, by Charles B. Davenport. Davenport had graduated from Harvard with Hall, Ward and Warren in 1889. After teaching at Harvard and at the University of Chicago, he founded the Cold Spring Harbor station in 1904. Often depicted by historians as unsound in his scientific methods and ridiculed for his far-fetched conclusions, Davenport was a prolific writer who published more than four hundred papers and books.²⁵ He had a remarkable talent for fundraising and management and, as a member of more than sixty scientific organizations, was well-connected to the academic community. Within a few years he built up one of the best-endowed research institutes in the US that became “one of the premier scientific organizations of the world”.²⁶ The experimental station was supported by the Carnegie Institution and in 1910, Davenport convinced Mary Harriman, heiress to a railroad fortune, to sponsor the ERO.²⁷ Davenport assigned Princeton graduate Harry H. Laughlin, a former instructor in agriculture, as the office’s superintendent. Aside from Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn, Laughlin and Davenport became the most renowned advocates of eugenics. They also helped to organize the international eugenic congresses in London (1912) and New York (1921, 1932), fostering links between the various national movements.²⁸ Apart from providing a repository for eugenic research on the American population, the ERO also acted as a “clearinghouse for data and information generated by similar, though less spectacularly endowed organizations” and published the *Eugenical News*.²⁹

While the Station for Experimental Evolution centred on biological spadework on heredity, Harriman’s funding allowed the ERO to focus on eugenic research, mostly

²⁵ Allen, Eugenics Record Office; Kevles, *In the Name*, p. 48; Spiro, p. 131. Davenport’s enormous output and his scientific reputation considered, Carlson’s claim that he tried to compensate scientific failure with organizational endeavours seems untenable: Carlson, pp. 51–52. Pickens even equates Davenport’s relevance with that of Galton in Britain which seems exaggerated given the latter’s sustained impact on shaping eugenics’ theoretical framework: Pickens, p. 56.

²⁶ Black, p. 31.

²⁷ Shipman, pp. 122–27. The ERO and other eugenic endeavours were also supported by Rockefeller, see Allen, *Role of Experts*, pp. 182–85. In 1920, the ERO and the Station for Experimental Evolution were merged.

²⁸ Kevles, *In the Name*, p. 52. For Laughlin, see Frances J. Hassencahl, ‘Harry H. Laughlin, ‘Expert Eugenics Agent’ for the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, 1921 to 1931’ (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1970); Philip K. Wilson, ‘Harry Laughlin’s Eugenic Crusade to Control the “Socially Inadequate” in Progressive Era America’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36.1 (2002), 46–67. For the eugenic movement’s international aspect see Stefan Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten: Aufstieg und Niedergang der internationalen Bewegung für Eugenik und Rassenhygiene im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1997); Turda, pp. 31–39.

²⁹ Allen, Eugenics Record Office; Haller, p. 73; Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, p. 158.

family studies. Davenport covered the whole spectrum of the ‘socially inadequate’, trying to locate and identify defective genes, thus creating “a sort of reversed mirror of Galton’s search for hereditary genius”.³⁰ According to Davenport’s simplified model of heredity, single traits were transmitted in so-called “unit characters” from generation to generation. Dominant or recessive, one or more of these factors could be attributed to physical traits such as eye or skin colour, diseases, disabilities and social characteristics such as musical ability, criminality, pauperism or feeble-mindedness.³¹

In order to investigate these factors’ hereditary transmission, the ERO organized annual summer schools to instruct field workers. By 1924, two hundred and fifty-eight had been trained to gather eugenic data, 85% of them were female. In Davenport’s gender conception, women were naturally gifted in gaining interviewees’ confidence and in intuitively evaluating their racial fitness. Field workers returned every year to the ERO’s summer school, their work resulted in a data-base on the American population. The investigations focussed on questions of mental, moral and physical deviance and the compilation of a register of ‘defectives’ descent to prove the heredity of undesirable traits. Interviewers could rely on the cooperation of state institutions and had access to confidential data. Equipped with a trait book, field workers collected data through visual diagnosis and interviews to clarify if characteristics were recessive or dominant, thereby providing the basis to predict the future probability of defects.³²

While the abstract census data had only allowed for general assumptions, the material gathered by ERO workers underlined and exemplified the tax burden of the public care for ‘defectives’ and helped to make a case for eugenic measures to reduce future expenses. In 1911, Davenport published *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*. To prevent the spread of “defective germ-plasm”, he argued, the state

³⁰ Depew and Weber, p. 240.

³¹ Chase, pp. 115–17; Charles B. Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (New York: Holt, 1911), pp. 6–25; Rosenberg, pp. 91–93; Spiro, pp. 129–30. Davenport even tried to demonstrate that “thalassophilia” (love of the sea) and “waywardness” resulting in prostitution were due to hereditary predisposition.

³² Allen, Eugenics Record Office, pp. 240–46; Amy S. Bix, ‘Experiences and Voices of Eugenics Field-Workers: “Women’s Work” in Biology’, *Social Studies of Science*, 27.4 (1997), 625–68 (pp. 634–39); Black, p. 31; Chase, pp. 120–24; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, pp. 57–58; Nicole H. Rafter (ed.), *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 19–22; Spiro, p. 129; Wilson, pp. 53–55. For an example of the instruction of field workers and other contributors, see for example Charles B. Davenport (ed.), *The Family-History Book* (Cold Spring Harbor: Eugenics Record Office, 1912), 7: Bulletin.

should maintain a eugenic register of the population and prevent the reproduction of the genetically impaired by segregation, vasectomy or even castration. Eugenics, Davenport explained, would “improve the race by inducing young people to make a more reasonable selection of marriage mates; to fall in love intelligently”. Apart from the citizens’ individual responsibility, Davenport reiterated the progressive creed when he reminded readers that society did not only have the right, but also the duty “to know the nature of the germ plasm, upon which, in last analysis, the life and progress of the state depend”. Thus, the state should have the power to exert control over “the propagation of the mentally incompetent”.³³

Hereditary explanations for individual deviant behaviour were further explored in the influential family studies conducted by ERO-affiliated researchers. Arthur Estabrook, former ERO field researcher, reinvigorated the study of the Juke family, originally investigated by Richard L. Dugdale in 1874. While the latter had claimed that numerous criminals, prostitutes, alcoholics, and paupers emanated out of a single family, his belief in the relevance of environmental factors made him plead for education to battle individuals’ putatively innate predisposition to crime. In contrast, Estabrook re-examined his findings and supplemented them with own research, arguing that environmental effects could not overcome heredity’s influence and postulated eugenic segregation and sterilization.³⁴ Estabrook and other ERO workers undertook further studies with analogous results, for example reinvestigating the so-called Tribe of Ishmael, a family located in Indianapolis, which had been studied in 1877 by Oscar C. McCulloch. Most of the family studies concentrated on poor rural families and sought to demonstrate their social deviance over generations.³⁵

³³ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation*, pp. 4, 255-259, 267-271.

³⁴ Richard L. Dugdale, “*The Jukes*”: *A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity, also further Studies of Criminals*, (New York: Putnam’s, 1884); Arthur H. Estabrook, *The Jukes in 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1916); Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, p. 43. For Estabrook’s influence on Virginia’s miscegenation laws, see J. D. Smith, *The Eugenic Assault on America: Scenes in Red, White, and Black* (Fairfax: George Mason University Press, 1993), pp. 83–88.

³⁵ Oscar McCulloch, ‘The Tribe of Ishmael: A Study in Social Degradation’, *Proceedings of the Conference of Charities and Corrections* (1888), 154–59. For the “Tribe of Ishmael”, see Nathaniel Deutsch, *Inventing America’s “Worst” Family: Eugenics, Islam, and the Fall and Rise of the Tribe of Ishmael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 1–154. For a compilation of eugenic family studies, see Rafter (ed.), *White Trash*.

Henry H. Goddard, a trained psychologist and president of the ABA's subcommittee on feeble-mindedness, examined a family he named the Kallikaks. Goddard used the Binet-Simon test to measure intelligence or "mental age" and classified 'defectives' into idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded and morons. In his opinion, the latter, defined as mentally defective but only displaying "few or no obvious stigmata of degeneration" were the most dangerous, appearing to be normal and able to pass on their defective traits to their progeny. Together with field researcher Elizabeth Kite, he traced two different family strains, one of which they labelled feeble-minded, back to an ancestor who fathered a child out of wedlock during the American Revolution. The study, published in 1912, supposedly proved the heredity of feeble-mindedness resulting from this extra-marital connection and illustrated the social costs that could have been prevented by eugenic measures. *The Kallikaks* went through twelve editions; its combination of science and moralism moulded into a "eugenic parable" appealed to the American public.³⁶

After 1910, eugenic thought became increasingly popularized and was adopted by state agencies, college textbooks individual scientists and their professional associations.³⁷ Although racial and eugenic thought came to dominate the debates about immigration restriction in the 1920s, eugenic thinkers did not take up immigration as a field of political intervention immediately. As demonstrated above, the emerging eugenic movement was predominantly concerned with the so-called defectives *within* the white race in the US before the World War. Although eugenicists were also involved in designing measures to police the colour line, most research and proposed solutions concentrated on the white rural poor. Living on the margins of society, these liminal whites were held responsible for socially inadequate behaviour, namely pauperism, criminality, prostitution and insanity. The scientific investigation of these families and their histories, researchers believed,

³⁶ Henry H. Goddard, *Feeble-Mindedness: Its Causes and Consequences*, 1914 (New York: Macmillan, 1920), p. 4; Stephen J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1996), pp. 188–204; Kline, pp. 20–26; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, p. 50; Trent, pp. 131–83; Zenderland, pp. 143, 158–185. Goddard only discussed segregation and sterilization, not voicing support for either: Henry H. Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, 1913 (New York: Arno, 1973), pp. 101–17. In 1914, Goddard published a voluminous follow-up study on the same topic: Goddard, *Feeble-Mindedness*. Alfred Binet had developed one of the earliest intelligence test together with Theodore Simon after the turn of the century, children were observed while conducting tasks to determine their development in comparison to their age group to judge their intellectual capabilities. For a detailed history of feeble-mindedness, see Trent.

³⁷ For an overview of the popularization of eugenics, see Selden, pp. 39–83.

would enable them to uncover the causes of degeneracy among whites and to design measures to prevent such in the future. In contrast to clearly discernible African Americans, Asian immigrants or the seemingly non-white new immigrants whose presumed inferiority was rarely questioned by eugenicists, liminal whites represented the danger within the race that needed to be eradicated to enable the future purification of the world's supposedly most superior race. By rendering the investigated groups "not quite white", as Matt Wray put it, the eugenic discourse reinstated dominant middle-class assumptions about moral self-conduct and explained deviant behaviour with genetic defects.³⁸

The proposed solutions to society's problems, articulated as positive or negative eugenics, appealed to the public and to policy-makers because they promised to both enhance the race and to minimize the tax-payers' burden. Since eugenics was based on an accepted scientific apparatus, its proposed measures, as drastic as they were, were not represented as artificially imposed state interventions but emerged naturally out of the discipline's logic.³⁹ After the turn of the century, eugenics thus emerged as a key biopolitical technology. While the new sciences of psychiatry, psychology and criminology provided the means to identify the abnormal that breached society's laws, eugenics promised to eradicate them from the population and to prevent the spread of their 'defective' characteristics to a potentially large progeny that itself would multiply its 'inferior genetic strains'. For progressives, eugenicists' aim of the permanent purification of the white race was especially appealing: if applied systematically, eugenics not only offered to transform the normal occurrence of aberrant behaviour into a problem that could be identified, measured and explained, it also provided the technologies to eventually solve social problems by state intervention. Eugenics, if considered as state racism in the Foucauldian sense, thus supplied the means for society to defend itself from the biological dangers inherent in the race and population. It served as the citizen-subjects' rationale to demand the ultimate state intervention: to decide over the right to procreate, over life and death.⁴⁰

³⁸ Wray, pp. 65–96. Apart from the rural poor, eugenicists also targeted urban young single women: Angie C. Kennedy, 'Eugenics, "Degenerate Girls," and Social Workers during the Progressive Era', *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 23.1 (2008), 22–37.

³⁹ Tucker, *Science and Politics*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *An Introduction*, pp. 135–59; Foucault, *Society*, pp. 109-136, 254-257, 291-318; Marks, p. 101.

4.3 Eugenics and immigration restriction

Although historians have investigated eugenic justifications for the national quota system in detail, the early history of the eugenic concern with immigration has hardly been explored. In contrast to historians concentrating on the political history of immigration restriction, who acknowledge the League's impact on legislation, most historians concerned with eugenics only mention the connection with immigration at the point where it became most palpable: the congressional debates about the quota system in the 1920s. The role of the IRL is usually addressed in no more than a couple of casual paragraphs, assuming that eugenicists' focus on the new immigration evolved naturally.⁴¹ Allan Chase, for example, acknowledges Prescott Hall's role as one of four "prime movers" of scientific racism, but his lack of original research leads him to depict the IRL as mostly motivated by anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic thought.⁴² Mark Haller, while admitting that "the stage had been set" in the 1890s by the League and discussions about immigration were dominated by eugenic concerns even before "a movement bearing the name eugenics had begun in the United States", hardly mentions the IRL in his study.⁴³ Nancy Ordover, on the other hand, includes Ward's articles in her insightful analysis of writings on immigration in the *Journal of Heredity* and the *Eugenical News*. Her limited contextualization, however, leads her to depict the IRL's aims as "keeping the Irish out of Boston" with Italians as secondary target. Unaware of Hall's articles written almost a decade earlier, Ordover fails to recognize that Ward wrote for a very specific audience: he wanted to convince eugenic researchers of the necessity to take up immigration restriction to complement eugenic measures within the US.⁴⁴

Solomon, concentrating on the League's role, realizes the significance of eugenics as "the final argument for immigration restriction" and claims that it "transformed

⁴¹ For a notable exception, see Connelly, pp. 205–09.

⁴² Chase, pp. 111-114, 139-145. Chase's parts on the IRL contain numerous factual errors, e.g. he states the League was founded in 1889 and that Wilson's veto in 1915 was overruled by Congress.

⁴³ Haller, pp. 55-56, 65, 144-145, 152-159.

⁴⁴ Ordover, pp. 3–43. This lack of contextualization might be explained by the absence of Solomon's book from Ordover's bibliography. Ordover also does not mention the older discourses on differential birth-rates and is unaware of Sydney Gulick's original intent in creating the first national quota models. Furthermore, she claims that literacy became "a mark of inborn mental and intellectual health" for eugenicists, ignoring the considerable difficulty the League encountered in convincing eugenicists of the test's validity as a selective tool. Petit is also unaware of Hall's 1904 article and claims that only after 1908, the IRL "openly embraced eugenic reasoning": Petit, *Men and Women*, p. 39. She also fails to recognize that the League's use of eugenic argumentation depended on the audience it addressed.

the ambiguous xenophobia of Brahmin restrictionists into a formidable racist ideology".⁴⁵ Apart from the problematic conceptions of xenophobia and ideology, this stance disregards the validity already attained by restrictionist and racial argumentations. Furthermore, it neglects the active role the League played in convincing eugenicists to take up immigration. Focussing on macropolitical legislative frameworks, historians also often disregard the impact of eugenics on subjectivation. Laliotou has argued that the popularization of eugenic narratives "dictated the migrants' subjectivation", influencing their perception and self-perception. Regarding eugenics as "means of subject-formation" and a "technology of the racial self", this interpretation needs to be extended to the subjectivation of American citizens as Anglo-Saxons.⁴⁶ A detailed investigation of the IRL's attempts to convince eugenicists, progressive reformers, government institutions and other citizens of immigration restriction to protect the stability of the racial order thus helps to disclose the micropolitics of the internalization of a new, Anglo-Saxon identity that needed to be guarded from assumedly dysgenic influences.

The analysis of the IRL's activities reveals its pioneering role in connecting eugenic thought to the discourse on immigration. The League's line of arguments had been shaped by racial thought from its very inception. Walker's birth rate theory had pointed to the ostensibly dysgenic long-term effect of high fertility rates of 'undesirable' elements in the population coupled with decreasing native American reproduction rates. In the League's conception, new immigration had always been racially encoded as 'inferior' to the Anglo-Saxon standard it meant to preserve; the purported danger to white superiority had been the very reason for its founding. The emergence of the eugenic rationale, reinforced by notions of hard heredity, merely provided the League with a larger framework and a coherent scientific theory to refer to. After the turn of the century, the IRL thus included eugenic arguments more explicitly in its publications.

At a time when most eugenicists were still concerned with the mechanisms of hereditary transmissions in plants and animals, the League already realized eugenics' potential to reinforce its argument against immigration. If it could be assumed that hereditary traits were stable and the environment's influence on human

⁴⁵ Solomon, p. 151.

⁴⁶ Laliotou, pp. 35–37.

characteristics was negligible, the League's statistical data on the new immigrants' supposedly higher rates of social deviance in proportion to their ratio of the overall population appeared even more alarming. In 1904, six years before the ERO was founded, Prescott Hall laid out this eugenic argument in an article on "The Selection of Immigration". He tried to convince readers that it was not sufficient to talk "of regulating marriage with a view to the elimination of those unfit *for other purposes than mere survival*", it had to be realized "that here in the United States we have a unique opportunity, through the power to regulate immigration, of exercising artificial selection upon an enormous scale".⁴⁷ In the League's opinion, racial improvement could not be achieved by simply concentrating on the enhancement of the white population's desired traits, the influx of so-called inferior race stock from abroad had to be stopped as well. For the IRL, all eugenic projects aiming at the detection and elimination of 'defective genetic strands' within the American population were pointless if not augmented by a racially defined immigration policy. In 1908, in an IRL publication named "Eugenics, Ethics and Immigration", Hall explained that eugenic policies did not aim at "the killing of the less fit, but of preventing of their being born into it or by migration". Eugenic policies as "the control of man over nature", in his opinion, were also ethically justifiable: there was no reason God did not want man to interfere in human procreation in the same way as in the creation of "better types of seeds, race horses, seedless oranges", mankind was entitled to accelerate "the advent of the superman". Since history, according to Hall, had demonstrated that "the Teutonic stock has been the finest in the world", the conservation of its natural environment and institutions in the US ultimately was "the most generous attitude [...] to the world at large".⁴⁸ Thus, preventing the racially inferior from entering the US was the only logical conclusion, Hall argued in an article, since the examples of the Juke family had demonstrated "how much harm can be done by immigration of a single pair of defectives".⁴⁹

Simultaneously, Hall used eugenics to appeal to the readers' sense of responsibility as Anglo-Saxon subjects and contextualized eugenic immigration restriction with other progressive efforts. In the same way "compulsory education,

⁴⁷ Prescott F. Hall, 'Selection of Immigration', *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 24.July (1904), 169–84 (p. 170). Original emphasis.

⁴⁸ Hall, Prescott F., "Eugenics, Ethics and Immigration", Publication no. 51, 1908.

⁴⁹ Prescott F. Hall, 'The Future of American Ideals', *North American Review*, 195.674 (1912), 94–102 (p. 102)

pure food laws and countless other regulations [...] protect the people from harm and raise them to a higher type”, a eugenic approach to immigration could help to prevent the “thinning of the life blood of the people or [...] supplanting the existing races by others whose ideals are different”. Since “the highest results come from collective effort”, American citizens should combine in the fight for immigration restriction “for the migration of peoples is one of the matters in which conscious human agency may produce the greatest results, by the selection of future races”.⁵⁰ In a 1904 article, Hall urged readers to become aware of their responsibilities as members of the white race to engage in the fight for more rigid restrictions:

We are the trustees of our civilization and institutions with a duty to the future, and as trustees the stocks of population in which we invest should be limited by the principle of a careful selection of immigrants.⁵¹

The connection between the biopolitics of the state and civic responsibility was also pointed out by Ward in a series of articles published between 1910 and 1913. In his opinion, “the admirable work now being done in England along the lines of National Eugenics deserves far more attention than it has yet received in the United States”.⁵² In the past, according to Ward, Americans had allowed the “eugenically unfit for race culture” into the US, “physically, mentally and morally undesirable for parenthood”.⁵³ Referring to race suicide, Ward warned that “society is recruiting itself from below”, from those “least fitted mentally and morally”. Alarming, he stated, the latest scientific research pointed out that all efforts to assimilate or educate new immigrants were less promising than had been assumed since the environment “does not modify the germ plasms from which the next generation is produced”. While he welcomed the application of eugenic policies, he reminded readers that sterilization laws, marriage restrictions or the segregation of ‘defectives’ would be futile if immigration was not restricted rigidly. The US should thus embrace the “remarkably favorable opportunity for practicing eugenic principles in the selection of fathers and mothers of future American children through our power to regulate alien immigration”. Eugenics, he explained,

⁵⁰ Hall, *Eugenics, Ethics and Immigration*.

⁵¹ Hall, Selection of Immigration, p. 184.

⁵² Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘National Eugenics in Relation to Immigration’, *North American Review*, 192.656 (1910), 56–67 (pp. 56–57).

⁵³ Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Our Immigration Laws from the View Point of Eugenics’, *American Breeders’ Magazine*, 3 (1912), 20–26 (p. 20).

means the prevention of the breeding of the unfit native, no less than the prevention of the admission, and of the breeding after admission, of the unfit alien. [...] Parenthood on the part of the insane, the imbecile, the feeble-minded, the hereditary criminal, and those afflicted with hereditary disease, is a crime against the future. To admit such persons into this country is no less a crime against the future.⁵⁴

Ward thus followed the League's strategy of ascribing an inferior status to new immigrants. Simultaneously, he adopted the eugenic logic and drew the only possible conclusion: if certain immigrant 'races' were inferior to Anglo-Saxons, all eugenic efforts within the US to improve the white population would be in vain if not augmented by a racial restriction of immigration. In an article named "Our Immigration Laws from the View Point of Eugenics", he concluded that

if the quality of the American race is to be preserved [...] there should be a far more careful selection of our incoming alien immigrants, on eugenic grounds, than we have ever attempted. The need is imperative for applying eugenic principles in much of our legislation. But the greatest, the most logical, the most effective step that we can take is to begin with a proper eugenic selection of the incoming alien millions.⁵⁵

While Hall's and Ward's articles also addressed the public, most of them aimed at a specialist audience to convince it to take up restriction. Markedly earlier than eugenicists, the IRL had identified what was to become one of eugenics' most important areas of political intervention. The IRL's suggestion that immigration restriction was the logical extension of eugenic measures within the US was soon adopted by eugenicists. Davenport himself discussed restriction in *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, repeating the argument that the new immigration was inferior and would result in the American population becoming "darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial, more attached to music and art, more given to the crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape and sex-immorality". Thus, Davenport concluded, the only "proper way to classify immigrants for admission or rejection is on the basis of the probable performance of their germ plasm".⁵⁶

The IRL also directly induced those interested in eugenics to consider the political potential of merging the two discussions. Ward had already met Davenport

⁵⁴ Ward, *National Eugenics*, pp. 58-62, 64-65.

⁵⁵ Ward, *Our Immigration Laws*, pp. 25-26 .

⁵⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation*, pp. 211, 219-223.

in 1910 to discuss eugenics and immigration.⁵⁷ One year later, Ward addressed the meeting of the ABA's eugenic section. He appealed to researchers to stop focussing on economic concerns since "the eugenic and racial side far outweighs this". Reminding members of the audience of the duty to ensure the best possible future for coming generations, he explained that "we shall earn the gratitude of millions of those who will come after us, for we shall have begun the real conservation of the American race". Subsequently, the section voted to establish a committee on immigration.⁵⁸ Eugenicists soon realized the political potential of immigration, a topic hotly debated after the turn of the century: after reading Ward's article, Irving Fisher wrote to Davenport in 1912 that "this subject might afford a good lever on which to interest Americans in eugenics". Referring to the Dillingham Commission, Fisher pointed out the "golden opportunity to get people in general to talk eugenics" since a "sentiment in favor of restricting immigration" clearly existed.⁵⁹

Davenport had already started to discuss the establishment of a committee on immigration half a year before Ward attended the eugenics section's meeting, asking his old classmate Hall to become its secretary. In Davenport's opinion, its main object was "to secure a more detailed study of the hereditary traits that immigrants are bringing in this country". The committee, however, was meant to refrain from publicly discussing restrictive measures such as the literacy test since "there might be illiterates who would add desirable traits to the germ plasm of our country". Hall agreed that the commission's work "should be strictly impartial" but objected to Davenport's idea to invite NLIL representative Sherwood. He also disagreed with his suggestion to include Franz Boas in the commission. Rather than Boas, an anthropologist who had argued for the significance of environmental influences on immigrants in the Dillingham Commission, Hall preferred "the men who worked with me for many years" who had given "a great deal of time with no compensation, and I know that while they may be prejudiced, they are sincere". After prolonged discussion, the committee finally settled for Hall as Secretary and Ward, Franz Boas, Alexander E. Cance from the University of Massachusetts' Agricultural College, who had conducted research on immigrants in agriculture for the

⁵⁷ IRL Minutes, 11 April 1910.

⁵⁸ Davenport Papers, Series I, American Breeders' Association, Committee on Eugenics, folder 1, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia; IRL Minutes 4 January 1912; Robert DeCourcy Ward, 'Eugenic Immigration', *American Breeders' Magazine*, 4 (1913), 96-102.

⁵⁹ IRL Minutes, 26 January 1912; Fisher to Davenport, 2 March 1912, Davenport Papers, Series I, correspondence; Fisher, Irving, folder 1, 1909-1913.

Dillingham Commission, and James A. Field, political economist at the University of Chicago. While Field actually met with Ward and Hall, Cance merely accepted the first report drafted by Ward and Hall.⁶⁰ Boas, on the other hand, declared that he would only attend a meeting “if a serious report is to be drawn up” after receiving Hall’s draft, which left Hall so infuriated that he asked Davenport to have Boas removed from the committee to “put on somebody who takes some interest”, suggesting Fisher or Emily Robbins of the RBF.⁶¹ In a letter to Fields, Hall frankly voiced his reservation about Boas, revealing anti-Semitic tendencies he normally concealed when making official IRL statements. Written in 1912, Hall reported that he had told Davenport from the beginning that “there would be trouble if Boas was put on the committee” because “very few Jews have any manners”. Without adducing any evidence, Hall stated that Boas was “tied up” with the NLIL, “a Jewish-steamship affair”. Subsequently, Boas was replaced by Fisher; in 1914, Field resigned.⁶²

Published in the ABA’s magazine in 1912, 1914 and 1916, the committee reports declared that its goal was to establish laws guaranteeing that incoming immigrants brought “good health, and normal and superior heredity to this country”. Apart from tightening border controls to exclude ‘defective’ individuals, the authors were especially concerned with “the much larger class of aliens who are below the mental and physical average of their own countries and cannot fail to lower the average here”.⁶³ Ward and Hall used the opportunity to canvass among those interested in eugenics for the literacy test, arguing that it would reduce overall immigration and improve its “eugenic quality, because a decrease in numbers gives more time and better opportunity for inspection”. The committee combined racial and economic arguments for exclusion:

The ‘cheap labor’ element is one which eugenicists ought to unite in restricting. Those of us who are particularly interested in the eugenic aspects of our immigration problem have every possible reason for joining hands

⁶⁰ IRL Records (226, 342). For Field’s attitude towards eugenics, see James A. Field, ‘The Progress of Eugenics’, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 26.1 (1911), 1–67. For Boas, see the chapter on the Dillingham Commission.

⁶¹ IRL Records (143, 342).

⁶² IRL Records (417).

⁶³ Alexander E. Cance and others, ‘First Report of the Committee on Immigration of the Eugenics Section’, *American Breeders’ Magazine*, 3.4 (1912), 249–55.

with those who have the economic aspects of it most at heart, in the campaign or the better regulation of alien immigration to our shores.⁶⁴

Apart from appealing to eugenicists in their main publication and through correspondence, representatives of the League also attended the RBF's first conference. Organized by Kellogg at his sanatorium, this prestigious meeting brought together eugenicists and other progressives. Reformers and eugenic researchers such as Walter Willcox, Jacob Riis, Booker T. Washington, Fisher, Davenport and Laughlin discussed prohibition, hygiene, child care and immigration. While Laughlin introduced a proposed programme for sterilization, Ward used the opportunity to present his ideas on "Race Betterment and Our Immigration Law". Repeating the argument that the "prevention of the immigration of the unfit alien" was at least equally important as eugenic regulations applied to those already in the country, he argued that this aspect was "by far *the easier to solve*". Ward appealed to his audience to become aware of the "responsibility which rests upon us": "We can decide upon which merits – physical, mental, moral – these incoming aliens shall be selected". Therefore, he asked for the progressives' support:

Every medical man in the Unites States: every social worker: every person in any way connected with the care of mental defectives: every taxpayer: every citizen who wants to keep the blood of the race pure, should join in demanding of the Sixty-Third Congress the immediate passage of a similar [to the failed literacy test] bill.⁶⁵

While eugenicists became increasingly convinced of the IRL's argument and adopted a eugenic restriction policy as part of their agenda after 1910, the ideal method remained contested. The League's complicated logic of the literacy test as a selective measure that would disproportionately exclude new immigrants did not immediately convince eugenicists who adhered to the principle of excluding individual 'defectives'. Although Davenport occasionally spoke out for restriction to keep out "unsocial bloodlines" and the "hereditarily untrainable and the socially antagonistic", he thought it "unwise to insist on the exclusion of the illiterate". In his correspondence with Hall, Davenport repeatedly argued for a eugenic register for all prospective immigrants. An investigation into the prospective immigrants' family

⁶⁴ Alexander E. Cance and others, 'War, Immigration, Eugenics', *Journal of Heredity*, 7.6 (1916), 243–48 (pp. 299–300).

⁶⁵ Robert DeCourcy Ward, 'Race Betterment and Our Immigration Law', in *Proceedings of the First National Conference on Race Betterment*, ed. by Robbins, pp. 542–46, original emphasis.

history, he argued, could determine their racial quality. In his opinion, ERO field workers should be employed by American consulates to gather information on immigrants in Europe to prevent the “entry of the actually undesirable (those with a germ plasm that has imbecile, insane, criminalistic, alcoholic, and sexually immoral tendencies)”.⁶⁶

Hall tried to convince Davenport of the impracticability of such a plan, arguing for the literacy test “based on the principle of dealing with large classes, and also for certain other administrative reasons”. In 1912, Ward admonished Davenport that restrictionists and eugenicists “ought to pull together [...]. If we don’t all pull together in the same direction, we can do nothing”.⁶⁷ Internally and in communication with others, Hall was more explicit in expressing his frustration with the most prominent eugenicist. Hall wrote to Harvard philosopher Clarence Irving in 1912 that Davenport’s plan seemed to him “very expensive, and not very satisfactory. We could not debar persons because their pedigrees were not what we liked”. As late as 1920, Hall complained to Lee that Davenport still clung to his “fool scheme for eugenic investigations of aliens at home”. Hall also unsuccessfully tried to convince Davenport to invest some of the ERO’s funds in an investigation to attain better statistics on immigrant dependency and delinquency by race and nationality. Despite these frustrations, the IRL continued to cooperate with Davenport and the ERO, even providing him with graphs and statistics for eugenic exhibits.⁶⁸

After the turn of the century, the emerging eugenic movement and its increasingly elaborate rationale thus provided an additional scientific framework for the IRL to argue for restriction. Eugenics’ growing popularity gave League members an opportunity to canvass for the exclusion of both racially defined groups and supposedly defective or deviant individuals, pointing to the potential dysgenic consequences of their procreation demonstrated by eugenic family studies. While eugenicists believed that “the economic aspects of the immigration problem will take care of themselves”, as Davenport put it, the more realistic members of the

⁶⁶ Davenport, “Unsocial Bloodlines”, Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, 9 June 1913; IRL Records (342); Davenport, *Heredity in Relation*, p. 224.

⁶⁷ IRL Records (342).

⁶⁸ IRL Records (33, 342, 417, 560); Ward to Davenport, 5 February 1912, Ward Papers; Hall to Lee, 4 October 1920, Lee Papers.

IRL's executive committee tried to balance the racial and economic arguments for restriction. When Hall proposed in 1911 to rename the IRL the "Eugenics Immigration League", Bradley wrote to Lee that it "seems to me a tactical mistake, and a serious one, for Hall to make a race issue out of the present aspects of the immigration question". Regarding the growing strength of immigrants' organizations and their weight in elections, such a strategy would "alienate many" and transform the debate into "a personal question to the races involved". Instead, the League should "put the thing on economic and sociological grounds, which seems to me much better for all purposes, including fighting purposes".⁶⁹

In public discourse, however, Hall seemed to be more considerate and realistic about the potential damage of advocating the eugenic argument too aggressively. In his book, although he repeated that the question of immigration was one "between our children and grandchildren and theirs", he only dedicated one of fifteen chapters to the "racial effects of immigration", emphasizing instead the new immigration's reputed social and economic impact.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Ward and Hall genuinely believed in the scientific validity of eugenic research. Eugenics' claim that individuals' 'defective traits' were passed on in hereditary transmission, combined with statistical data on the occurrence of deviance and delinquency in immigrant groups, became a cornerstone in the League's argumentation, allowing it to extend its argument from individual traits to the characteristics of racialized groups. Eugenics thus did not just "provide the final argument for immigration restriction", as Solomon states, but became central to the League's thought and argumentation.⁷¹ Rather than merely conferring "a new respectability on the IRL's positions" or adding "the imprimatur of science" to the League's demands, as Tucker claims, the relationship between eugenicists' and restrictionists' programmes was symbiotic.⁷² Keith Fitzgerald's characterization that eugenics "gave an old idea for a basis of exclusion – literacy tests – new legitimacy" thus seems more apt, although he neglects the League's agency.⁷³ While the League did not succeed immediately in convincing eugenicists and the public to extend eugenic measures

⁶⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation*, p. 220; IRL Records (1078); IRL Minutes, 14 December 1911, 4 January 1912; Bradley to Lee, 16 March 1911, Lee Papers.

⁷⁰ Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, pp. 99–120.

⁷¹ Solomon, p. 151.

⁷² Tucker, *Science and Politics*, p. 88; William H. Tucker, *The Funding of Scientific Racism: Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 26. Tucker also wrongly states that Madison Grant had been an IRL vice-president since its inception.

⁷³ Fitzgerald, p. 138.

from the purification of the Anglo-Saxons to the protection of its borders, the actors involved in the Dillingham Commission and the enforcement of the immigration laws proved more amenable to the eugenic rationale.

5. The Dillingham Commission

In early 1907, with the impending creation of a commission to investigate immigration and to determine future policy, Robert DeCourcy Ward could hardly mask his disappointment. In a letter to Joseph Lee, he described the future prospects of the League in gloomy terms:

Personally, I think it almost impossible to organize effectively when we are so uncertain as to the ourcome [sic] of the Commission's investigation. [...] We should send out notice to our members and sympathizers that we are not going to die.¹

This frustration, which would grow over the following three years, sprang from the foreseeable delay of any major immigration legislation during the Commission's investigations. On the other hand, the League viewed the Commission as an opportunity to have the new immigration's putatively detrimental effects verified in a scientific and all-encompassing study.

When the Commission was established in 1907, immigration had reached a new peak with almost 1.3 million immigrants arriving that year. In the decade after 1900 almost 8.8 million people immigrated overall, 71.9% of these from Southern and Eastern Europe.² Compared to earlier investigations, the Commission was unprecedented in its size, expenses, scope and purview. At its peak, it employed a staff of three hundred; in the three years of its active work, it spent over a million dollars and surveyed more than 3.2 million individuals to acquire data, which was published in forty-one volumes.³ The Commission was assigned to "make full inquiry, examination, and investigation [...] into the subject of immigration" to come to an elaborate decision for or against a "change in the immigration policy of the government".⁴ The Commission created a vast, almost encyclopaedic body of knowledge that future politicians, sociologists and historians would refer to. Its

¹ Ward to Lee, 17 February 1907, Lee Papers.

² Immigration Commission, *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission: With Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority (In Two Volumes: Vol. I)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 1: Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 56-57; 64. These numbers do not include remigration rates.

³ Tichenor, pp. 12, 20, 129. The publication of a 42nd volume, containing an index, had been intended, but was never completed. Surprisingly, most historians are unaware of this fact.

⁴ Immigration Commission, *Vol. I*, p. 11.

investigations supplied restrictionists with statistical data on the 'nature' of immigration but also allowed for the first ideas of the nascent counter-discourse opposing scientific racism to be articulated. The Commission also represented a cardinal point in the production of scientific knowledge about immigration: while previous claims about new immigration's assumedly adverse effect had predominantly been made in academic discourse or public debate, the Commission conveyed these arguments into the realm of official, governmental knowledge.

The Commission's composition reflected power relations in Congress as well as the progressive ideal of selecting the most competent men to produce a balanced and comprehensive investigation. The Commission members encompassed administrative experience and scientific expertise, deriving their impartiality from the scientific methods to be applied in the investigation. Apart from subordinate field workers, the staff consisted almost exclusively of white males. The President, Senate and the House each appointed three Commissioners.

President Roosevelt selected Jeremiah Jenks, head of the economics faculty at Cornell University. Jenks was heavily involved in the progressive movement, serving as scientific advisor for research institutes and federal commissions. He had been part of commissions investigating Ellis Island and Chinese immigration. Jenks was appointed as scientific leader of the Commission, providing experience in social sciences and in directing problem-orientated government investigations. Together with chief economics investigator W. Jett Lauck, he published a condensed summary of the reports with the telling title *The Immigration Problem* in 1911.⁵ Roosevelt also appointed Charles P. Neill, a former professor of political economy and Commissioner of Labor from 1905 and 1913. Neill had investigated the South's demand for immigration, negotiated in labour disputes and investigated working conditions in the Chicago meatpacking district with IRL vice-president Reynolds in 1906, resulting in the Pure Food and Drug Act. The third presidential appointee, Republican William Wheeler from California, represented business interests. As manager of a transportation company, he was the voice of the influential railroad

⁵ Vought, pp. 61-62, 117; Jenks and Lauck. The book went through six editions over the following fifteen years and would be extended from 496 to 717 pages.

and steamship lobby and also provided the Pacific perspective focussing on Asian immigration.⁶

The House appointed Representative John Burnett from Alabama. A staunch racist and champion of Jim Crow, he epitomized the South's growing concern with the new immigration's racial composition. While a report from IRL employee Edgerton in January 1906 had classified him as "being doubtful or opposed to the illiteracy test and the restriction of cheap labor", Burnett insisted on the inclusion of the test in the immigration bill in February 1907. He had also cooperated with Patten during the latter's campaign in the South against the federal distribution of immigrants. During his time on the Commission, Burnett stayed in contact with the League, which supported his bids in the elections of 1906 and 1910. After his re-election in 1910, Patten reported that Burnett "acknowledges that it would have been impossible without our help".⁷ The House's second appointee, Benjamin F. Howell (R-NJ), was from 'old stock' and an active member of patriotic societies such as the Sons of the American Revolution. As a member of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, he had supported restrictive legislation.⁸ The third delegate of the House was the only outspokenly pro-immigrant Commissioner, William Bennet, who had been paramount in establishing the Commission to prevent the passage of the literacy test. The New York Republican represented his district's interest in unrestricted immigration and served on the NLIL's advisory committee. During his years on the Commission, he was to become the IRL's nemesis. While the IRL had already hoped to "have the pleasure of reading of Bennet's defeat" in the elections of 1906, they succeed four years later, having Bennet "completely knocked out" in his failed attempt for re-election.⁹

The Senate appointed Lodge to the Commission, the League's oldest and most reliable ally. The Senate's second appointee Asbury Latimer (D-SC) replaced Anselm McLaurin (D-MS) on the latter's request. Latimer was associated

⁶ Zeidel, pp. 39–41. Neill was a friend of IRL supporter Richard T. Ely, who had taught Commons and Ross in political economy at Johns Hopkins.

⁷ Pula, p. 63; Zeidel, pp. 44–45; IRL Minutes, 27 January 1906, 13 April 1908, 19 September 1913, 21 April 1916; Patten to Lee, 5 November 1906, 10 November 1910, Lee Papers; IRL Records (203).

⁸ Zeidel, pp. 44–45; House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization of the House of Representatives, January 23, 1906, to March 6, 1906, inclusive: on the Bills to Establish a Bureau of Naturalization, and to Provide for a Uniform Rule for the Naturalization of Aliens throughout the United States, and on Different Bills Referring to the Subject of Restricting Immigration*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906).

⁹ Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, p. 214; Patten to Lee, 5 November 1906, 7 January 1911, Lee Papers.

with Ben Tillman's agrarian movement and had introduced an IRL bill in 1906. On Latimer's death in February 1908, McLaurin returned to the Commission but died in early 1909 and was subsequently replaced by LeRoy Percy, another Mississippi Democrat. Although Percy had canvassed for new immigrants as labour supply, he had also equated Italians with the 'inferior' African Americans. This row of appointments from the South supports the view that the Commission sought to represent a balance of both party and regional interests. Chairman William Dillingham lent the Commission its popular name. Although not a radical restrictionist, the League had cooperated with him during the debates on the literacy test. From the IRL's point of view, Dillingham may not have been as ideal a candidate for the chair as Lodge would have been, the latter described him as "all right[,] but very slow".¹⁰

The most important members of the Commission's staff were Morton E. Crane, Frederick C. Croxton, William W. Husband, and W. Jett Lauck, who embodied the progressive urge for professionalism. Crane had been nominated by Lodge, who valued him as a friend and loyal ally of the president. Croxton served as chief statistician and seems to have been chosen due to his experience in the Department of Commerce and Labor. As executive secretary, Husband oversaw the daily work, kept office records and supervised fieldwork. He had been Dillingham's personal secretary since 1903 and had served as clerk for the Senate immigration committee. Lauck, professor of economics and politics, worked on the investigations of immigrants in industries.¹¹

For the IRL, the composition of the Commission was not a complete success. The secretary of the JOUAM's national council had suggested lobbying for Patten as Commissioner. Lee and Ward followed his advice, but, according to Zeidel, Bennet "nix'd his application". Patten would eventually contribute to the Commission's investigation of the South, but the League tried to keep "any official connection" off the record.¹²

¹⁰ Zeidel, pp. 45–47; IRL Records (590); IRL Minutes, 9 October 1905. For Dillingham, see John M. Lund, 'Vermont Nativism: William Paul Dillingham and U.S. Immigration Legislation', *Vermont History*, 63.1 (1995), 15–29; Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil, 'The Antiracist Origin of the Quota System', *Social Research*, 77.1 (2010), 45–78 (pp. 50–52).

¹¹ Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 101; Vought, p. 62; Zeidel, pp. 49–50; IRL Records (608). For Lauck's background and his subsequent career, see Fink, pp. 214–41.

¹² Taylor to Lee, 1 February 1907, Lee to Lodge and Gardner, 5 February 1907, Ward to Lee, 4, 17 February 1907, Lee Papers; IRL Minutes, 15 January 1908; "Immigration Again", *Brattleboro*

Historians applying the concept of nativism have claimed that the composition of the Commission was a result of the restrictionists' deliberate attempt to guarantee a justification for exclusionary measures and that the Commissioners only sought to verify their "preconceived ideas".¹³ This view has been accepted – although to different degrees – by many historians.¹⁴ In contrast, Zeidel repudiates that the Commission was the tool of racists and nativists and argues that most of its members had "decidedly moderate attitudes" and their selection was not "an effort to advance a particular ideology". Although his claim can be contested on the grounds that Bennet was the only outspokenly pro-immigrant Commissioner and that many of his colleagues and staff had a history of supporting restrictive legislation, he is nonetheless correct in stating that most of the Commission's members genuinely believed that they could conduct a balanced scientific investigation of all available facts to come to a justified and impartial recommendation for legislative action.¹⁵

Zeidel, however, neglects the fact that the ways immigration could be thought and talked about had already been prefigured by the dominant racial discourse. The attitudes and actions of social scientists, politicians, newspapers and the IRL itself had already pervaded the American interpretation of immigration, profoundly affecting the judgments about its quality and effects, and thus influenced the Commission's choice of objects of the study and its interpretative categories. In this chapter, Zeidel's diligent and elaborate analysis of the central characters' personal papers and the surviving minutes of the Commission's meetings will thus be complemented by an analysis of its reports that focuses on the rationale, categories and concepts that shaped the interpretation of the new immigration to address continuities and dissimilarities with the restrictionist discourse. The second

Reformer, 11 February 1910; Solomon, p. 197; Zeidel, p. 48. Fitzgerald mistakenly claims that Ward was employed by the Commission: Fitzgerald, p. 137.

¹³ Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 131; see also Divine, pp. 3–5.

¹⁴ Archdeacon, pp. 163–64; Daniels, *Guarding*, p. 24; Fitzgerald, p. 137; Bernard A. Weisberger, *Many People, One Nation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 225–28; Zolberg, p. 232. For more balanced statements see Jacobson, *Different Color*, p. 80; Jones, p. 230; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 73–76.

¹⁵ Zeidel, pp. 3–20. This view is also supported by the rejection of Patten's application as Commissioner and the similar refusal of a Jewish candidate: Cohen, *Not Free*, p. 43; Cohen, *Schiff*, p. 157. In a letter to Roosevelt, Lodge also defended Bennet, stating while he had a pro-immigrant stance, he still "is as determined as I am to get all the facts. He will not and has not tried to suppress anything": Lodge to Roosevelt, 26 July 1908, Henry Cabot Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918: Volume II* (New York: Scribner's, 1925), pp. 306–07.

part of this chapter will concentrate on the IRL's strategy, and, on the other hand, the pro-immigrant lobbies' approach. It will use the Commission's context to focus on aspects which hitherto have been neglected, namely the conflicts between the two camps in its early years and the IRL's official statement to the Commission. While the latter illustrates how the League urged citizens to identify as Anglo-Saxons, the conflict between restrictionists and pro-immigrant groups discloses the relevance of other countries' immigration legislations in the American debate.

In contrast to earlier federal commissions, the Dillingham Commission chose not to hold hearings, to merely compile available data or to rely on external experts. Instead, the Commissioners decided to "make an original inquiry into fundamental phases of the subject which had previously been considered only in a superficial manner", employing field workers to gather their own empirical data. The Commission aptly described its work to be "more far reaching and [to] involve more work than any inquiry of a similar nature, except the census alone, that had ever been undertaken by the Government".¹⁶ Similar to the census, the Commission aimed at creating knowledge to make phenomena accessible to governmental management. Its scope, resources and purpose, however, allowed for qualitative statements and prognoses about immigration's potential impact instead of merely concentrating on quantitative data. The data, calculations and judgments of the Commission thus provided the foundation for concrete state interventions for the optimization of the biopolitical and racial future of the American population, thus forming an important part of the dispositif of immigration regulation.¹⁷

The data the Commission collected was organized in its temporal, spatial, and social dimensions to compare immigrants to the rest of the population. These "grids of specification" formed systems "to which the phenomena were divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects".¹⁸ They included age groups, occupations, the distinction between male and female, and, as the central organizing category, racial classifications. The preponderance of racial distinctions was implied in a talk given by Jenks in 1909 when he delineated the original concerns which had led to the creation of the Commission, namely "the

¹⁶ Immigration Commission, *Vol. I*, p. 14.

¹⁷ Foucault, *Confession*, p. 226.

¹⁸ Foucault, *Archaeology*, p. 46.

racial problem of immigration". He explained that every man had a natural, mostly unconscious "race feeling" or "racial prejudice", regarding other races as inferior. Jenks underlined that determining immigrant groups' racial compatibility with American society was "one of the problems the Immigration Commission has before it – to discover some test to show whether some may be better fitted for American citizenship than others". While racial prejudice itself, according to Jenks, was mostly irrational, racial differences could lead to "a lack of harmonious cooperation such as is desirable in our citizenship". Therefore, he argued, it was the Commission's task to investigate immigrant groups to "see which race is the most valuable". Its reports would therefore be able to offer clarification on the question "whether we shall admit or exclude or make a distinction among the races".¹⁹ Jenks and his colleagues were obviously perplexed by the seemingly irrational 'race feeling' and the question of the immigrants' racial value. His statement reveals a cardinal conceptual problem that would persist during the Commission's existence. For the Commissioners, the most important problem was to measure the immigrants' quality regarding the maintenance of a 'high standard of citizenship'. Since the concepts of citizenship and individual 'qualities' were racially encoded, the real goal was maintaining racial purity. Therefore, the Commission's quintessential task, although not explicitly articulated, was to design its investigations in such ways that it would be able to transform this emotional, irrational 'race feeling' into reasonable, scientific, and quantifiable scientific data.²⁰ Simultaneously, it combined this racial or anthropological approach with one concentrating on the economic effects of immigration. While the Commission's reports oscillated between economic and racial measurements and both rationales often overlapped or were consciously conflated, the Commissioners hoped that this combination would allow American citizens and their government to establish an immigration policy based on scientific principles. Jenks and Lauck expressed this purpose in accessible terms after the Commission had finished its work. Like the IRL, they reminded citizen of their responsibility for the state's future:

If the facts relative to immigration, which are now available, show such injurious effects upon American standards of civilization as to awaken a fear regarding the stability or progress of the best of those institutions, it is clearly

¹⁹ Jeremiah W. Jenks, 'The Racial Problem in Immigration', *The Social Welfare Forum: Proceedings*, 36 (1909), 215–22 (pp. 216–22).

²⁰ Laliotou, pp. 25–33

the duty of every citizen to face, clear-eyed, boldly, these facts. It is no less his duty to judge, not sentimentally, but sanely and wisely and sympathetically, those conditions, and to determine what are the wisest remedies for the evils, and the practicable measures to be taken to establish and to secure for the future the maintenance and progress of our civilization.²¹

5.1 The Reports of the Commission

The two approaches were reflected in the topics the Commission chose to investigate. The first two volumes of its reports included a fifty-page summary of the Commissioners' conclusions and recommendations and presented abstracts of the findings, mostly condensed versions of the actual reports. They were of critical importance in public debate because they had been designed to "meet the requirements of the average student of the immigration problem" and thus were more likely to be read. Prepared by Secretary Husband, the abstracts depicted immigrants more negatively than the reports themselves and sometimes even contradicted actual findings.²² Of the remaining thirty-nine volumes, twenty dealt with immigrants in industries. Apart from new immigrants' economic impact, the Commission investigated their rates of criminality, pauperism, and mental illness, their settlement patterns, their assimilation, and so-called white slavery. The Commission's choice of topics thus indicates the racial discourse's predominance regarding the very ways immigration was perceived and problematized, using the same categories restrictionists had deployed to racialize new immigrants and to describe their supposedly adverse effect on society.²³

In the introduction to the Commission's concluding statement, Husband summarized the intention and the outline of its work. He stated that the Commissioners considered immigration's "changed character" to be the most important single factor in their investigation. While 95% of immigrants in 1882 had

²¹ Jenks and Lauck, p. 9.

²² Immigration Commission, *Vol. I*, p. 1; Immigration Commission, *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission: With Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority (In Two Volumes: Vol. II)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 2; Reports of the Immigration Commission; Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, pp. 97–131; Zeidel, pp. 101-103, 110-111. While Handlin states that it was doubtful that the Commissioners were involved in editing the volumes, Zeidel's investigation of the Commission's minutes falsifies this claim. According to him, Husband asked central office staffers to prepare summaries of the reports before the Commissioners reviewed them. Zeidel also provides the strikingly worded description of the reports as "generally dull, and a host of arcane statistics, graphs, and charts", deterring potential readers by "size and technical style". He therefore doubts that anyone apart from Commission members has ever read the reports their entirety.

²³ Immigration Commission, *Vol. I*, p. 12.

come from North-western Europe, in 1907 81% were from “southern and eastern countries”. According to the Commission, these immigrants differed “in many essentials”. Repeating arguments the IRL had made in the 1890s, the Commission stated that old immigrants had worked as pioneers in the West, had soon become land-owners and had “mingled freely with the native Americans and were quickly assimilated”. In contrast, new immigrants were largely unskilled males, “from the less progressive and advanced countries”, settling in North-eastern cities “in sections apart from native Americans [...] to such an extent that assimilation has been slow”. It was also argued that new immigrants were “far less intelligent” since almost one third of them were illiterate. More importantly, the report went on, “[r]acially they are for the most part essentially unlike the British, German, and other people who came during the period prior to 1880”. Furthermore, the Commission reported, in contrast to the old immigration, new immigrants were coming for economic reasons, indicated by their willingness to return to Europe after a few years. The Commission thus decided to concentrate “almost entirely” on the new immigrants, in particular on their effect “upon the institutions, industries and people of this country”.²⁴

This focus on the new immigration indicates three significant points. First, the Commission perpetuated and re-inscribed the (racial) dichotomy between old and new immigrants created by the late nineteenth-century racial discourse. Second, this distinction also implied the adoption of the patterns of interpretation connected to it; the categories of inferiority set by the hegemonic discourse on the immigrants’ racial characteristics. Third, the Commission marked the moment when knowledge produced in the racial discourse became part of the official technologies of governmentality providing scientific expertise on immigration. By speaking from a seemingly neutral position, by applying ostensibly impartial and up-to-date scientific methods and by the enormous scope of the study, this perpetuation further valorised the hegemonic racial discourse. This is not to deny that some of the Commission’s findings were less blatantly and outspokenly racist than might have been expected. Nonetheless, the adoption of the older discourse’s classification systems to construct racial difference signifies the first large-scale introduction of this biopolitical split into the official government knowledge.

²⁴ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 12–14.

The concern with racial classifications was expressed to the strongest extent in the *Dictionary of Races or People*. This particular volume included an investigation of all immigrant ‘races’ according to the latest ethnological and anthropological findings to provide “a discussion of the various races and peoples indigenous to the countries furnishing the present immigration”. Compiled by Dr. Elnora C. and Dr. Daniel Folkmar, the handbook had first been designed to assist field workers in their investigations before it was revised into a single report. In its scope, the *Dictionary* was unprecedented as a government publication on race, even if it only grouped “races or people according to their languages” and “physical characteristics” to serve “the convenience of students” of immigration “rather than [...] the ethnologist”. The theoretical background for its system of racial distinction was an amalgamation of different strands of the racial discourse. While the Commission applied Blumenbach’s distinction of five main races, it also utilized Ripley’s and other’s enumerations of “sub-races”. The actual system of classification used in both the dictionary and throughout the entire investigation was modelled on the INS’s “list of races of people”.²⁵ Thus, the Commission adopted a key technology of the racial state to adequately identify and quantify the new immigrants’ ‘racial’ characteristics, significantly increasing the amount of data distinguished by race.

The *Dictionary* summarized the prevailing discourses on the new immigrants’ ‘racial otherness’. “Anglo-Saxons” were set as the invisible norm which did not have to be defined; it was assumed that “all Americans understand the race which has given us our language and laws and political institutions”. The *Dictionary* exemplifies the inherent epistemological difficulties of racial concepts, namely the absence of any ‘pure races’. The authors elucidated that the “ancestral language” determined the immigrant’s race – the English race thus did not only include most people in the Anglophone world, but all people of “Teuton” descent, part of the larger “Caucasian” or “Aryan race”. Members of the “African” or “Negro” race were characterized as “belonging to the lowest division of mankind from an evolutionary standpoint” with only aboriginal Australians being “still lower in civilization”. Similarly, established stereotypes regarding new immigrants and their putative racial characteristics were perpetuated. Jewish people, listed as a distinct race, were ostensibly discernible by their facial characteristics. Italians were

²⁵ Immigration Commission, *Dictionary of Races and People* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 5; Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 1–2; Zeidel, p. 111. For the INS “list of races and people”, see the chapter on regulation at the border.

divided into Northern and Southern Italian. While the former belonged “to the Aryan family”, the latter were regarded as a “Mediterranean race” with “some infusion of African blood”. In “psychic character”, they were believed to differ significantly, the North Italian being “cool, deliberate, patient, practical, and as capable of great progress in the political and social organization of modern civilization” while Southern Italians were regarded as “excitable, impulsive, highly imaginative, impracticable; as an individualist having little adaptability to highly organized society” with “all crimes, and especially violent crimes, [...] [being] several times more numerous among the South than the North Italians”. These characterizations render Zeidel’s argument that South Italians were also described as “benevolent, religious, artistic, and industrious” irrelevant – this only demonstrates that racialization also ascribed seemingly positive features.²⁶

Zeidel is correct, though, in pointing out that the *Dictionary* did not make any statements about the stability of these features. It also left the assessment of the consequences of the differences to the readers’ discretion. Nonetheless, it can be argued that a dictionary implies that it is designed to provide definitions valid over time. The *Dictionary* certainly reiterated the racial distinctions not only between old and new immigration but gave detailed descriptions of immigrant groups’ presumed racial characteristics. The Commission thus perpetuated the racial hierarchy by grouping the races and their subdivision on a “scale of human development and worth”, as Jacobson points out.²⁷

5.1.1 Deviance

The racial distinction between old and new immigrants and their more specified subdivisions became a leitmotif in the Commission’s reports. Some of the most frequently used categories applied in the racial discourse were those of ‘ghettos’, criminality, pauperism and a reputed mental or physical inferiority; all of them were mirrored in the Commission’s investigations. The report on “Immigrants in Cities” investigated over ten thousand households in major North-eastern cities and concentrated on blocks with high rates of “congestion and racial homogeneity”. In its findings, the report stated that such districts were populated predominantly by “races representing recent immigration”. The Commission found the state of homes

²⁶ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 30-33, 54-57, 74, 81-83, 100, 104; Zeidel, p. 107.

²⁷ Jacobson, *Different Color*, p. 79; Zeidel, p. 107.

“materially better than had been anticipated”. Where “deplorable conditions” existed, they were largely due to the negligence of communal authorities. Nonetheless, the Commission identified “rich opportunities” for the benevolent work of “city authorities, as well as landlords and philanthropic people”.²⁸

Regarding crime, the reports provided an equally positive conclusion about new immigrants. In contrast to groups such as the IRL, the Commission did take into consideration that new immigrants were overrepresented in statistics because of their higher ratio of “persons of what may be termed the criminal age”. Therefore, it was impossible to determine whether immigrants were more likely to be criminal than the native-born population.²⁹ Only a change in the character of crimes committed was noted, especially the noticeable increase in crimes of personal violence. This, it was stated, was “largely traceable to immigration from Southern Europe, especially from Italy”. The older immigrant groups were “notable in penal records for intoxication”. These statistics suffered from two methodological biases: the samples consisted of statistics from areas with high immigrant populations and above-average crime rates. The statistics also only indicated the proportion of certain crimes compared to the overall crime of groups of a particular descent. They did not prove, as Oscar Handlin has pointed out, that “the foreign-born committed *more such crime* than the natives either absolutely or relative to their percentage in the population”.³⁰

Similarly, the report on immigrants and pauperism provided a positive description of the new immigrants. The study investigated state and private charities in forty-three cities, primarily in the northeast and northern states. The Commissioners came to the conclusion that though in “the earlier days of unregulated immigration” pauperism had been one of the gravest problems, recent immigrants rarely suffered from poverty shortly after admission. Although the investigation had been conducted during a period of economic recovery after the

²⁸ Immigration Commission, *Immigrants in Cities: A Study of the Population of Selected Districts in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Buffalo and Milwaukee (In Two Volumes: Vol. I)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 26; Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 4–7; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 36–37.

²⁹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 36–37.

³⁰ Immigration Commission, *Immigration and Crime* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 36; Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 2, 228–229; Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 127. Original emphasis.

panic of 1907, only “a small percentage of the cases represented immigrants who had been in the United States three years and under”.³¹

The investigation of “Immigration and Insanity” concluded that insanity was more prevalent among the foreign-born, presumably due to unfamiliar environment. Although “mentally unsound” aliens were prohibited from entering the US and controls were “satisfactory”, thousands of immigrants had to be admitted to mental institutions. However, the Commission stated, the “racial tendencies” towards insanity were more prevalent among other groups than restrictionists had expected. German, Scandinavian and Irish immigrants, “the nationalities furthest advanced in civilization”, provided for a proportion of inmates higher than their percentage of the total population.³² Regarding physical defects, the Commission established that the “effective administration” of the immigration regulations ensured that only healthy immigrants were admitted to the US. Most of the immigrants treated in American hospitals belonged to “the races of old immigration”; the predominant cause for treatment among them was alcoholism.³³ The investigation of social deviance and delinquency thus predominantly led to surprising results that partly even falsified restrictionist arguments. The application of these categories by the Commission, however, demonstrates that the discursive categories applied by the IRL and its allies were regarded as relevant.

5.1.2 Social effects and assimilation

Racial explanations for social deviation thus were at least partly invalidated by the Commission’s investigation. The new immigration’s ‘racial value’ was also analyzed by attempts to measure and quantify its social effect. Immigrants’ progress in assimilation was covered by several reports. One of these investigated the “Changes in Bodily Forms of Descendants of Immigrants”. Conducted by Franz Boas, it would form the most salient pro-immigrant counter-discourse within the Commission, employing anthropometric methods to analyze the influence of ‘racial’ and environmental factors. Boas’s significance for the eventual decline of eugenics and scientific racism has been highlighted by almost every historian concerned with

³¹ Immigration Commission, *Immigrants as Charity Seekers (In Two Volumes: Vol. I)* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 34; Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 3–5; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 35–36.

³² Immigration Commission, *Vol. 2*, p. 251.

³³ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 33–35.

these topics.³⁴ Born in Germany to Jewish parents in 1858, Boas decided to pursue a career in the US and eventually became an instructor in physical anthropology at Columbia in 1896.³⁵

From the very beginnings of his career, he took a critical stance towards racial interpretations. Boas consistently contested the validity of Mendelianism and biometrics, claiming that the environment had at least as much influence as hereditary factors. By the time the Commission was designing its investigations, Boas had become an authority in American anthropology who had grave doubts about the validity of his discipline's methodology, and called for additional data to reassess it. In *The Mind of Primitive Man*, published in 1911, he challenged anthropometrical findings, stating that cranial size did not necessarily correlate with intellectual capability and that race, culture and language were independent variables.³⁶

In the Commission, Boas saw the opportunity to extend his research to new immigrants. He planned to conduct anthropometrical studies of 120,000 individuals to compare immigrants and their descendants regarding changes in head shape to evaluate the impact of environmental influences. The results could then be compared to existing research on European head-types to discern the changes caused by migration to America. Thus, he could determine whether 'racial types' were stable or influenced by environment to make statements about the prospects of the immigrants' assimilation. He eventually obtained data on 18,000 persons before the Commission had to finish its investigations.³⁷ The results were surprising: data on 'Hebrews' and Sicilians demonstrated that bodies and head-shapes changed notably in the second immigrant generation. The study substantiated that differences of the cephalic index were bigger between the European population and children of immigrants than between native Americans and immigrants. The plasticity of

³⁴ See for example Barkan, *Retreat*, pp. 76–134; Bowler, p. 288; Gossett, pp. 409–430; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 134–35.

³⁵ Baker, pp. 101–03; Vernon J. Williams, JR., *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and his Contemporaries* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp. 7–9.

³⁶ Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1911); Baker, pp. 103–07; Barkan, *Retreat*, pp. 76–82; Williams, JR., pp. 11–22. For Boas' impact on other progressives and African-American intellectuals see for example Matthew P. Guterl, *The Color of Race in America, 1900 - 1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 112, 115; Marshall Hyatt, *Franz Boas, Social Activist: The Dynamics of Ethnicity* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 6; Contributions to the Study of Anthropology; William S. Willis and Rosemary L. Zumwalt, *Franz Boas and W. E. B. Du Bois at Atlanta University, 1906* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2008), Vol. 98, Pt. 2: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society.

³⁷ Stocking, pp. 177–79; Zeidel, pp. 86–97.

immigrants' head-shapes therefore challenged some of scientific racism's central assumptions about the immutability of 'racial traits'. Within the anthropometrical logic, changes in physiology would consequently correlate with changes in mental capacities, thus revealing the potential for the new immigrants' 'racial development' and eventual assimilation.³⁸ Boas, although constrained by the dominant racial discourse, thus applied the methodological apparatus of scientific racism to falsify some of its most fundamental assumptions.

The significance of his study was immediately recognized by restrictionists who tried to diminish its impact by contesting Boas on various grounds. The Commission stated that although his results were "much more far-reaching than was anticipated", further research was needed to attain validity.³⁹ In his review of Jenks's and Lauck's *The Immigration Problem*, Hall stated that Boas's results were disputed among biologists and that they did not prove that "changes in the skull involve changes in character".⁴⁰ After his work for the Commission, Boas unsuccessfully applied for further funding and never completed his study of immigrant physiology.⁴¹ Although his studies did not have an immediate impact on either the Commission or the dominant racial theories, they constituted a significant point of reference for the advocates of the melting-pot theory and of Americanization. Boas himself fought for both immigrants and African Americans and became, according to Barkan, the "most prominent scientist active against immigration restriction". Besides his numerous publications, his followers and students were to contribute to the paradigmatic shift towards environmental and cultural factors in anthropology in the 1910s and 1920s, which later would be transferred to broader public and political discourses.⁴²

Boas's argument indicates that a counter-discourse to the predominant views of scientific racism was possible and demonstrates the possibility of individual

³⁸ Immigration Commission, *Changes in Bodily Forms of Descendants of Immigrants* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 38; Reports of the Immigration Commission; Barkan, *Retreat*, p. 106; Hyatt, p. 108; Zeidel, pp. 96–100. The cephalic index is the breadth of the human head as a percentage of its length.

³⁹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 38*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Prescott F. Hall, 'Review: The Immigration Problem by Jeremiah W. Jenks; W. Jett Lauck', *American Economic Review*, 2.3 (1912), 675–77 (p. 677).

⁴¹ Zeidel, p. 100. Boas's research proposals in later years were rejected by the Carnegie and Rockefeller institutions: Allen, *Role of Experts*, p. 186.

⁴² Barkan, *Retreat*, pp. 84, 90–96; Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 149–51. The most prominent of his many students was Margaret Mead.

agency within the discursive framework. Even though he was constrained by hegemonic scientific categories, he used the anthropometric apparatus to falsify its central claims. Boas thus applied a racial interpretation in his analysis to emphasize cultural and environmental factors and to weaken deterministic views of the stability of racial traits. It should be noted, though, that his distinctively pro-immigrant results remained a unique exception within the Commission's reports.

While Boas tested the validity of racial theories, the remaining volumes on the immigrants' assimilation concentrated on their social impact. Commissioners were puzzled about how to measure "the tendency of newer immigrant races toward Americanization, or assimilation into the body of the American people". Apart from statistics on immigrants' children in schools, reports concentrated on occupations, demonstrating the second immigrant generation's upward mobility.⁴³ One report on fecundity unsurprisingly recorded higher fertility rates for immigrant women caused by lower age of marriage, a smaller percentage of childless women and the higher average number of children born.⁴⁴ While accepting fecundity and reproduction rates as a relevant category set by Walker's and others' concerns about race suicide, the report refrained from using this discourse's language and did not make any statements about the meaning or the consequences of differential birth rates.

Despite these results, the Commission's statements about the state of assimilation in its abstracts reveal its negative attitude. The Commissioners stated that many immigrants still had not abandoned "native customs and standards of living", lacked English language skills and that applications for naturalization were low. In the Commission's interpretation, these phenomena could mostly be explained with the absence of "family life" among young male new immigrant workers living as boarders or with other men with only rare "contact with Americans". Immigrant families, however, lived in "much more wholesome surroundings" and were more easily reached by "agencies promoting assimilation", making them "acquainted with the duties and privileges of American citizenship and civilization". Another important advantage of respectable middle-class family life was the influence of children as "unconscious agents in the upliftment of their

⁴³ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 2*, pp. 36–43.

⁴⁴ Immigration Commission, *Occupations of the First and Second Generations of Immigrants in the United States - Fecundity of Immigrant Women* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 28: Reports of the Immigration Commission.

parents”. Therefore, the Commission established that life in heteronormative families, without interference from boarders or lodgers, provided the best environment to become “assimilated into the body of the American people”, at least in the second generation.⁴⁵ The categories the Commission chose to investigate to come to a statement about the new immigrants’ assimilation thus reflected the categories of deviance used in their racialization, but actual findings contradicted common stereotypes. While Boas’s report deconstructed central findings of scientific racism, the other reports counteracted the IRL’s representations of immigrants as more likely to become a public charge, criminal or insane. In most cases, the Commission found reasonable social and/or economic explanations for the immigrants’ higher ratios in these groups. The findings led Jenks and Lauck to state that “undue importance” had been attached “to the social effects of immigration” during the past years, instead concentrating on its economic effects.⁴⁶

5.1.3 Economic effects of immigration

The design of the investigation of “Immigrants in Industries” created a daunting, not to say megalomaniac task: Lauck and his staff conducted nothing less than a census of thirty-six branches of industry east of the Rocky Mountains.⁴⁷ The findings reveal that the Commission perpetuated some of the racial discourse’s depictions of immigrant labour. Although cases of peonage were reported from various states, the Commission declared that these were rare exceptions and not signs of an existing “general system” or a racial characteristic. However, it did establish that new immigrants had “almost completely monopolized unskilled labor activities” in the textile industry, mining, meatpacking and railroad construction. Purportedly, this was due to the fact that they accepted lower wages and conditions “which the native American and immigrants of the older class had come to regard as unsatisfactory”. New immigrants, the Commission stated, had “displaced” Americans and old immigrant groups for all but “the inert, unambitious, thriftless element”. Incorrectly assuming that the old immigration had mainly consisted of skilled labour, this analysis construed a stark contrast to more recent immigrants groups as constant supply of cheap, unskilled labour. The reports thus reiterated Walker’s and

⁴⁵ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 42–43.

⁴⁶ Jenks and Lauck, pp. 64–66.

⁴⁷ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 1–12; Zeidel, pp. 77–78. Contrary to Oscar Handlin’s criticism, the investigation did consider the “length of residence” of the immigrants and its influence on their economic status: Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 103; Zeidel, pp. 102–03.

restrictionist groups' argument and questioned the new immigrants' ability to function in a modern market economy on the grounds of their assumed racial characteristics.⁴⁸

The Commission claimed that new immigrant workers were able to survive on lower wages because they had not brought their families. While the reports were equivocal as to whether new immigrants had reduced the general standard of living, it was argued that wages for unskilled labour had decreased since their arrival. The reason for this, the Commission claimed, was the new immigrants' tendency to not organize in labour unions. Driven by the need for work and the acceptance of low wages, an ostensible "tractability", lack of industrial training and language skills, the high illiteracy rate, "racial prejudice" and "lack of interest in the tenets or policy" of unions supposedly contributed to low membership rates. The new immigrants had thus been "instrumental in weakening the unions" by their "availability and [...] general characteristics and attitude", the Commission argued. While the report itself noted that new immigrants were by and large sympathetic toward unions and that all unskilled workers were generally less organized, these factors were omitted in the abstracts.⁴⁹ The report thus voiced unions' concerns and clung to the dominant progressive-era discourse in depicting immigrants as helpless victims exploited by greedy employers. Interestingly, this counteracted the characterization of immigrants as political radicals threatening the stability of the American democracy, a topic entirely absent from the Commission's reports.

Summarizing the Commission's findings, Jenks and Lauck stated that "the point of complete saturation has already been reached", making it "impossible to assimilate the newcomers, politically or socially, or to educate them to American standards of compensation, efficiency or conditions of employment". Thus, they interpreted the immigrants' 'racial value' in economic and social terms, in their opinion, the "problem" of immigration was "fundamentally an industrial one, and should be principally considered in its economic aspects".⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 2*, p. 449; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 536, 541; Irving, pp. 51–69.

⁴⁹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 37–39, 530–531, 537; 541; Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 117.

⁵⁰ Jenks and Lauck, pp. 140, 144–145, 186–197.

5.1.4 Racial immigration restriction in the Anglosphere

The reports on immigration's economic consequences were accompanied by three volumes on the American West which paid special attention to "Japanese and Other Immigrant Races" and contained more outspoken racial characterizations. Chinese immigrants were hardly mentioned because of their low number. Mexican immigrants, in the Commission's opinion, were "corresponding somewhat to some of the southern and eastern European races" and primarily acted as "transient and migratory labor supply". Like new immigrants, Mexicans were characterized as unskilled workers receiving lower wages, living in the poorest and most overcrowded quarters of cities, settling in "colonies", having the smallest family incomes and the lowest standard of living. Furthermore, they displayed high levels of illiteracy, relied more often on public charity than other 'races' and their share of prison inmates was above average compared to their proportion of the overall population. Japanese immigrants were praised for their industry in agriculture and small business. According to the Commission, they showed "a great capacity for assimilation" and were anxious to learn western ways. However, the Commission repeated Jenks' theme by stating that "race feeling growing out of difference in colour, characteristics, and ideals" resulted in factual segregation. East Indian immigrants were characterized as working in the "roughest, most unskilled labor". The abstracts also reported a lower standard of living and higher illiteracy rates than found in any other immigrant group and claimed that Indians' "assimilative qualities" were "the lowest of any race in the West".⁵¹

Therefore, the Commission perpetuated racial hierarchies applied to non-European immigrants and situated East Indians below Mexican, Chinese and Japanese migrants. The categories of racialization resembled those applied in earlier depictions of Asian immigrants and, in comparison to new immigrants, were used more overtly. Although the Commission refrained from unequivocal judgments on inherent qualities, a supposedly insurmountable racial difference was established. Jenks and Lauck concentrated on "race prejudice", an "important political fact" that had led to "serious race conflicts", a reference to the anti-Asian riots on the Pacific coast in 1906/07 and had supposedly deterred "white races" from moving to the

⁵¹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 41, 675-680, 688-690. In prerequisite cases, Japanese and Indian immigrants tried to reject the claim that they were racially different by arguing that they in fact belonged to the Caucasian or Aryan race. See also the chapter on the quota system.

West. According to the authors, although “race prejudice” should be “heartily condemned” it was a natural human reaction. It could also be found in

Canada, in Australia, in South Africa, in every place where these oriental races have come into immediate contact with the white race [...]. We must recognize this feeling, then, as a natural one and one that must be counted upon when it comes to political action.

Therefore, the US should not only continue to exclude Chinese and Japanese immigrants, but also “take up with the British Government the question of practically excluding the East Indians”, as Canada had already done.⁵²

References to other countries’ immigration regulations can also be found in the Commission’s work and restrictionist rhetoric. While the IRL encountered significant difficulty in convincing the American public of restriction, the literacy test was adopted in other parts of the Anglosphere. In the US, the indefinite renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentlemen’s Agreement with Japan during Roosevelt’s presidency barred most Asian immigrants.⁵³ Other countries in the Anglosphere, in contrast, used a modified version of the literacy requirement to exclude Asian immigrants. Since the protection of the assumed Anglo-Saxon superiority constructed in racial discourse was regarded a global task, justifications and means for excluding racialized immigrant groups were exchanged between Anglophone countries, leading to what Alison Bashford has called “international biopolitics”. In British colonies, American practices of segregation and immigration regulation were regarded as a model; simultaneously, its racial heterogeneity served as a cautionary tale.⁵⁴

In Natal, later to become part of the South African Union, American discussions about the literacy test in the 1890s had been followed closely. The colony adopted a literacy test shortly after Cleveland’s veto to restrict Indian

⁵² Jenks and Lauck, pp. 200, 242-243.

⁵³ Dyer, pp. 134–40; Gyory; Lake and Reynolds, pp. 166–89; Erika Lee, ‘Hemispheric Anti-Orientalism and the 1907 Pacific Race Riots’, *Amerasia Journal*, 33.2 (2007), 29–48; Salyer, pp. 128, 162-169; Vought, pp. 32-37, 46-54. Vought argues that the exclusion of Asian immigrants was “class-based” since missionaries, teachers, students, professionals and merchants still were allowed to enter. Given the small number of these permits, especially for Chinese applicants, it is obvious that the act’s intent was racial exclusion.

⁵⁴ Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 137; John W. Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Lake and Reynolds, pp. 137–65; Smithers.

immigration. It was regarded as a way of avoiding explicit racial discrimination in immigration legislation; such regulations had before not received royal assent for fear of diplomatic repercussions. The so-called Natal formula, subsequently recommended by the Colonial Office, combined individual categories of exclusion similar to American laws with a dictation test to be held in *any* European language *to be chosen by the immigration officer*. In its application, officers chose languages the particular immigrant was not conversant with in order to exclude racial groups while avoiding overt discrimination. The test was subsequently adopted by Australia in 1901; in discussions about the test, politicians underlined the importance of preserving a ‘pure whiteness’ and not to repeat America’s mistake of importing ‘inferior races’. The test marked the beginning of the official White Australia Policy and would deter most Asians from immigration.⁵⁵

The Natal formula and the White Australia policy in turn became a model for other countries in the Anglosphere. New Zealand had introduced reading tests for immigrants not speaking English in 1899.⁵⁶ On the Pacific coast, anti-Asian sentiment resulted in the 1906/07 Vancouver and San Francisco riots, bringing the ‘immigration problem’ to political attention. American and Canadian officials cooperated in negotiating the Gentlemen’s agreement with the Japanese government. Repeated attempts to pass a literacy test in British Columbia, however, were repealed by the federal government.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Bashford, p. 138; Marilyn Lake, ‘From Mississippi to Melbourne via Natal: The Invention of the Literacy Test as a Technology of Racial Exclusion’, in *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, ed. by Ann Curthoys (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2005), pp. 209–30 (pp. 219–27); Martens, pp. 327–37; A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion, 1896-1923* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1964), pp. 10-12, 42-66.

⁵⁶ Bashford, p. 144; Lake, Mississippi to Melbourne, p. 227; Martens, p. 338; Yarwood, pp. 10–12 .

⁵⁷ Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), pp. 50-52, 93; John Price, ‘“Orienting” the Empire: Mackenzie King and the Aftermath of the 1907 Race Riots’, *BC Studies*, 156/157 (2007), 53–81 (pp. 57-61, 70-76); Carolyn Strange and Tina M. Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 2: Themes in Canadian Social History, p. 120; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), pp. 104–28; W. P. Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), pp. 57–75. For US-Canadian entanglements in the urge for restriction on the Pacific Coast, see Kornel Chang, ‘Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910’, *Journal of American History*, 96.3 (2009); Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004); Lee, Anti-Orientalism.

Discussions about immigration restriction in the Anglosphere were taken up in the Commission's report on "The Immigration Situation in Other Countries" which compiled the immigration laws of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Brazil and Argentina, most likely building on existing INS files. Although the report did not give explicit recommendations, it provided an overview of existing restrictive measures against 'defective' individuals and racially defined groups.⁵⁸ In public debate, developments in Australia were noted with particular interest. Newspapers claimed that "some valuable lessons" could be learned regarding effective immigration regulation. Most articles, however, pointed out that the application of the dictation test was "a legal curiosity" shaped by "characteristic radicalism, [and] has gone to an extreme that is fairly startling". For Americans, this form of the literacy test was clearly too partial "except possibly to the more extreme among the anti-immigrationists", as one newspaper stated.⁵⁹

IRL members were thoroughly acquainted with immigration regulations in other countries and kept informed about the latest legislation. In their logic, the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon race was a common project of all 'white countries'; other countries thus provided inspiration for the optimization of border regimes. As early as 1889, Joseph Lee had published articles comparing Canadian and Australian anti-Chinese legislation. After the turn of the century, the IRL had bills and commission reports sent from the UK and was in contact with English restrictionists. When the Dillingham Commission was created, Lee, in a letter to Jenks, had pointed out that it should investigate if the new immigrants produced

better or worse results than have been attained by the American race in this country or by the Anglo-Saxon race in England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and other places. If upon the whole such a study shows that the Italian and Slavic races are inferior to the Anglo-Saxon in carrying on a democratic government, then the present immigration must be considered as the greatest misfortune that the world has ever suffered.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Immigration Commission, *The Immigration Situation in Other Countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 40: Reports of the Immigration Commission; the INS files on other countries mostly consisted of copies of the actual laws and reports on their enforcement: INS 51536/3-3B; 51538; 52332/17.

⁵⁹ "Australia also Excluding Asiatics", *Chicago Record-Herald*, 10 December 1901; "Australia Restricts Immigration", *New Britain Herald*, 18 September 1902; "An Australian Idea", *Providence Journal*, 11 October 1902; "A Review of Australian Immigration Laws", *Scranton Labor Herald*, 10 January 1903. The Australian example was still used in later years, see for example "The Immigrant Invasion", *Boston Transcript*, 12 August 1912.

⁶⁰ Joseph Lee, 'Anti-Chinese Legislation in Australia', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 3.2 (1889), 218–24; Joseph Lee, 'Anti-Chinese Legislation in British America', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 3.3 (1889), 359–64; IRL Records (73, 396, 1058, 1111, 1117); IRL Minutes 4 January,

This proposed comparison illustrates that Lee assumed that these ‘Anglo-Saxon countries’ had to cope with similar problems to protect the assumed white superiority. In 1910, IRL secretary Joseph Patten himself evaluated the application of the literacy test in other countries and came to the conclusion that in “the Australian and South African colonies it has been found to work well in excluding undesirables particularly from South-Eastern Europe and Western Asia”. This transnational knowledge was also used to underline other white observers’ viewpoints on the situation in the US and urge them to take similar action. Prescott Hall wrote to the *Outlook* in 1911 that

The future of this country depends entirely on the kinds of citizens there are in it and those who shall be born into it in the years to come. Intelligent foreigners like LeBon, Gobineau and H. G. Wells are amazed that, unlike Canada and the other British colonies, we are willing to take the people we do.⁶¹

Although legislation in the settler colonies focussed on Asian immigrants, it nonetheless became an important point of reference for the League, serving as a proof of the literacy test’s functionality and as additional argument for its application on American borders. In debates about the Commission’s results, their significance and its final recommendation, however, restrictionists and pro-immigrant groups would continue to focus on both the socioeconomic and the racial interpretations of immigration’s effects.

5.2 The restrictionist and the pro-immigrant discourse

5.2.1 The IRL and the NLIL in the early years of the Commission

Similar to the discussions about the literacy test in 1906/07, the IRL and the NLIL were the most important and active groups in the two opposing camps. The two leagues followed different argumentative strategies: the IRL concentrated on racial theories and left the socioeconomic argument mostly to the AFL. The NLIL, however, argued for unrestricted immigration because of its supposed economic benefits while the AJC and other Jewish organizations stressed the right to political

22 March 1902, 20 January, 21 April 1906, 24 February, 8 June, 13 August 1908; IRL, *Report for 1902*; Lee to Jenks, 9 August 1906, Lee Papers.

⁶¹ Patten to Ward, 14 November 1910, Lee Papers; IRL Records (739). H.G. Wells had visited Ellis Island in 1906: Cannato, pp. 165–66.

and religious asylum.⁶² The NLIL, after first making attempts to employ humanitarian arguments on behalf of all immigrants, soon chose to exclusively concentrate on white, European immigrants. In a letter to Hall written in February 1907, managing director Nissim Behar explained that he would let all “children of one Father” immigrate, “even the Chinese and Japanese”, stating that “it is our duty and privilege to raise them” to the American level of civilization. Two years later, Behar had changed his mind, arguing for unrestricted European immigration since it was “a recognized fact that all white immigrants become patriotic citizens” and the “only efficient way to offset the Japanese or Asiatic immigration” supposedly was “to favour white immigration”.⁶³ The NLIL thus had chosen to forsake the interests of Asian immigrants to gain wider support.

For a time after the establishment of the Commission, Hall and Behar continued their correspondence in a cordial tone. Behar sent Hall detailed weekly reports of the NLIL’s correspondent, Herbert F. Sherwood, who accompanied the Commission during its investigations in Europe. Hall, on the other hand, used this information to accuse the NLIL that Sherwood had been “smuggled on board of the ship” as an undercover agent. Hall seems to have forwarded this information to Dillingham and later boasted to Davenport that the former “promptly fired him [Sherwood] from their party”.⁶⁴ The NLIL and Bennet seem to have applied a similar tactic in exposing the Commission’s employment of Patten, accusing the IRL of jeopardizing its impartiality. In a letter to a newspaper which defended the hiring of “a reputable officer of a reputable organization”, IRL executive Bradley declared that Bennet only wanted to distract from the fact that the Commission delayed “necessary legislation” and that the cost of hiring Patten was negligible “compared with a much greater cost that the commission is likely to be to this country”.⁶⁵

While the Commission continued its work, the IRL repeated these accusations in letters to the members of the NLIL’s national committee. The IRL tried to convince the prominent academics, politicians and social reformers who had lent their name the NLIL’s letterhead that it only represented steamship and business interests and enquired if members were aware of its staunch anti-restriction stance, hoping that recipients would withdraw their support. Some of these letters were sent

⁶² Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, p. 225.

⁶³ IRL Records (705, 706).

⁶⁴ IRL Records (325, 705, 1060).

⁶⁵ IRL Records (707); “Immigration Again”, *Brattleboro Reformer*, 11 February 1910.

out by Patten in his newly acquired function as officer of the American Purity Federation, an organization mostly concerned with white slavery, to obscure the connection to the IRL. The IRL emphasized that the NLIL consciously misrepresented the literacy test by stating that immigrants would have to explain selected passages from the constitution.⁶⁶

Prescott Hall also tried to sway NLIL supporters by appealing to anti-Semitic feelings. In a letter to prominent banker Robert Fulton Cutting, he stated that “the real people actively interested are a group of Jews, who would like to weaken the existing laws for the benefit of their co-religionists in Europe”.⁶⁷ One of these letters containing anti-Semitic remarks must have backfired since Hall complained in a letter to Behar in 1910 that the NLIL had published a copy of

a private letter to a private individual without asking my permission. [...] What I meant was that many Jews (not all, for some are strong restrictionists) have been urging distribution as a cure-all for the ills of immigration, and thereby persuading some that there was no need of any further remedy.

Behar replied caustically that Hall should not be surprised of this since a

man like Mr. Hall, author of books on immigration, secretary of the Immigration Restriction League, and one of its most earnest workers, belongs to the public. [...] Though I differ from you in public, I respect your earnestness and I believe that you always say what you mean.⁶⁸

Apart from such minor skirmishes and attempts to influence Commissioners, the IRL impatiently awaited the Commission’s results. Patten reported repeatedly from Washington that a strong majority of Commissioners would favour the literacy test, but that Lodge considered it futile to introduce a bill before they had submitted their reports.⁶⁹ The League was thus condemned to await the results while the scope of the Commission’s investigations continued to extend. It therefore gratefully seized the opportunity to support Congressional efforts urging the Commissioners to finish their work.

Originally, the Commission had not been given any limits regarding time or money spent. When the scope of the project and the number of its working

⁶⁶ IRL Minutes, 1 December 1909; IRL Records (41). Behar had made this claim in letters to newspapers in January 1910: IRL Records (707).

⁶⁷ IRL Records (338); Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, p. 213. Hall met Behar’s son and learned that almost all of the NLIL’s employees were Jewish: IRL Minutes, 10 February 1908, 27 March 1913. Behar’s son might also have been the source of confidential information; the IRL Records for example contain a letter from Bennet to Behar: IRL Records (118).

⁶⁸ IRL Records (707).

⁶⁹ IRL Minutes, 11 January, 1 December 1909, 1 January 1910.

committees kept on extending after more than a year of work, however, Senator Gary introduced a resolution prepared by Patten as to the Commission's work. His speech concentrated on racial arguments and reiterated the IRL's argumentation. It is therefore highly likely that Patten did not only help with the bill, but also prepared the speech. Gary emphasized that immigration menaced the "homogeneity of our race" by the "constant importation of illiterate, unassimilable, and undesirable citizens from the cesspool of Europe". Criticizing the power of the Commission to spend and hire without limits, he insinuated that it might have been created "for the purpose of sidetracking and preventing needed legislation". Gary also criticized distribution plans, since in his opinion it was better that "our uncultivated lands should forever lie fallow" than to give them to new immigrants. The development of the South should not be hastened, Gary argued, since "without them our white civilization has been maintained", urging President Roosevelt to consider immigration's "effect upon our Anglo-Saxon civilization and democratic institutions".⁷⁰ The legislation passed after this speech gave Congress control over the Commission's finances. The Commission was granted an additional \$150,000 and was obligated to finish its work by March 1910. When it became obvious that this deadline could not be met, Congress begrudgingly granted an additional \$125,000 but compelled the Commission to immediately stop data collection and to spend it exclusively on tabulation, extending the deadline to December 1910.⁷¹

With the report of the Commission, and, more importantly, its final recommendations imminent, the IRL reconsidered its strategy. The political experience gained in the defeats of previous years had convinced the League to utilize organizations such as "labor, patriotic, and farmers, [...] not only to be close to, but to exercise every influence on at every stage possible". This indirect approach did not only guarantee that public outcries for restriction would be made by several associations, but also provided additional resources. In late 1909, Patten reported that he convinced the JOUAM to employ a lobbyist in Washington and to provide \$5000 for restrictionist efforts "which will be guided entirely by the

⁷⁰ IRL Minutes, 17 February 1909; *Congressional Record*, 60th Congress, 2nd session: 2609-14.

⁷¹ House of Representatives, *Statement Relative to the Work and Expenditures of the Immigration Commission Created under Section Thirty-One of the Immigration Act of February 20, 1907* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), Document No. 1489: 60th Congress, 2nd Session; Zeidel, pp. 82-84; IRL Minutes, 30 January 1910.

League”. The Farmers’ Union also provided two employees in Washington “advocating total exclusion”. Allied organizations also asked their members to write to Congressmen and to pass resolutions calling for the literacy test.⁷²

The relationship with the AFL was more complicated and required constant attention to guarantee active support. In March 1910, Patten complained to Lee that it had been “an awful long, hard effort to win the confidence and to get the cooperation of these labourites [...] – they are so skiddish [sic] and hard to convince”. Nonetheless, the AFL provided vital support in augmenting the League’s racial argument with the socioeconomic side. In one of his numerous articles, AFL vice-president John Mitchell stated that the US should welcome “all white races from every part of the earth”. Mitchell made new immigrants responsible for a declining “American standard of living” while American workers, in contrast, would “rather tramp than reduce the wage scale or lower the standard of living”. Therefore, the importation of immigrant labour was a “menace to American ideals”, Mitchell stated and advised fellow citizens to be “mindful of our obligation to maintain a high standard of life, labor and civilization in our own country”. Thus, while still defining wage standards and group characteristics in racial terms, the AFL repeated Walker’s argument and complemented the IRL’s argumentation with a focus on the new immigration’s assumed economic and social repercussions. The IRL, aware of the AFL’s weight in public debate, repeatedly reprinted Mitchell’s articles and distributed them to the press.⁷³

5.2.2 The statements submitted to the Commission

The support for the IRL’s cause was reflected in the Commission’s last volume consisting of statements submitted by various organizations. Although the surviving sources of the Commission do not indicate that it paid particular attention to these statements, they nonetheless constitute excellent summaries of the groups’ perspectives on immigration.⁷⁴

The restrictionist side was represented by the League itself and its allies, namely the AFL, the JOUAM, the Sons of America and the Farmers’ Union. Other

⁷² IRL Minutes, 21 September, 1 December 1909; Patten to Lee, 6 April, 8 November 1911, Lee Papers.

⁷³ Patten to Lee, 6 March 1910, Lee Papers; John Mitchell, ‘Immigration and the American Laboring Classes’, *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 34.1 (1909), 125–29; IRL Minutes, 21 September 1909.

⁷⁴ Zeidel, p. 110.

groups included charitable organizations, among them the YMCA, the Council of Jewish Women, the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau, the Industrial Removal Office, and the North American Civic League for Immigrants, which gave detailed advice on how to improve specific aspects of immigration and assimilation. The AJC, the Union of American Hebrew Organizations and the B'nai B'rith presented a joint statement. While these organizations were mostly concerned with details of existing immigration regulation, the NLIL's statement provides a representative argument against immigration restriction.

The IRL's statement for new restrictive legislation was structured by "the social, economic and eugenic standpoint[s]". Concerned about the future of both the country and Anglo-Saxons, the IRL pleaded for the literacy test, a higher head tax, a minimum amount of money on arrival, a cessation of the practice of admitting immigrants on bond and deportation of aliens without time limit. Regarding immigration's social effect, the IRL applied its well-known line of arguments, namely, that new immigrants showed higher rates of criminality, pauperism and insanity. In addition to its own statistics and quotes from the Commissioner-General's reports, the League also defended its argument from the accusation that statistics on criminality were misleading due to the higher percentage of foreign-born among the male adult population. It argued that children of immigrants showed an "even higher inclination towards crime", an observation verified by the Commission's statistics.⁷⁵

Generally, the League stated, the most important factor was not the "great burden" imposed by the immigrants on prisons and charity or the "menace to the public health", but the "immigration of large numbers of aliens of low intelligence, poor physique, deficient in energy, ability, and thrift". This contrast to the ideal of manly Anglo-Saxon enterprise was supplemented with the new immigrants' assumed tendency to "generally lower the mental, moral and physical average of our population".⁷⁶ The League thus turned its argument about the social consequences of immigration into a statement about the racial dangers to the biopolitical composition of the population.

⁷⁵ Immigration Commission, *Statements and Recommendations Submitted by Societies and Organizations Interested in the Subject of Immigration* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 41: Reports of the Immigration Commission, pp. 103–04.

⁷⁶ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, p. 106.

Regarding the economic standpoint, the League's argumentation continued the theme of the threat to America, stating that the "true wealth of a country consists in the character of its institutions and of its people". For the IRL, this character was coextensive with 'racial character'. In contrast to the Commission, the IRL regarded the socioeconomic impact of immigration to be an effect of racial characteristics. Integrating the labour unions' and the progressives' critique of big business, the IRL declared that politicians should not yield to employers "who want to force wages down regardless of the effect upon the community" which would only lead to a lower standard of living and deter the "efficient and desirable foreign workingmen" from coming.⁷⁷

For the League, eugenic concerns about new immigration were the most important argument for restriction. It demanded that the US should be protected "not merely from the burden of supporting alien dependents, delinquents, and defectives" but also from the "watering of the nation's lifeblood". The racial effect was regarded as the most important factor in evaluating immigration's effect, the statement claimed: "heredity is a far more important factor in the progress of any species than environment" since education "can not supply what is not there". To the League, the inferiority of the new immigrants was evident since they came from "races and countries [...] which have not progressed, but have been backward, downtrodden, and relatively useless for centuries". Furthermore, it was argued that racial character would not change since there was "no reason to suppose that a change of location will result in a change of inborn tendencies". Quoting William Williams, Commissioner of Ellis Island, the League stated that immigration "concerns every thoughtful patriotic American citizen" since "heterogeneousness in a matter of this kind is undesirable, homogeneousness desirable". These insurmountable racial differences, the statement concluded, demanded that the eugenic principles should be extended from the exclusion of 'defective' individuals to 'inferior races' threatening the assumed Anglo-Saxon superiority, thus directly connecting existing eugenic practices with immigration control:

The same arguments which induce us to segregate criminals and feeble-minded and thus prevent their breeding apply to excluding from our borders individuals whose multiplying here is likely to lower the average of our

⁷⁷ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, p. 106.

people. 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.⁷⁸

The League sought not only to persuade Commissioners of the necessity of restriction on racial grounds, but also actively tried to convince other Anglo-Saxons of the dangers of unrestricted immigration. The statement also included a selection of answers to a questionnaire sent to a list of individuals comprised from *Who's Who* and the New York Social Register. The selection of recipients reflected the IRL executives' gendered conception of political and social status, asking the opinions of "our most intelligent citizens", mainly white male lawyers, clergymen, educators, military men and doctors.⁷⁹

By sending out the questionnaires, the IRL reminded other citizens of their duty to protect the nation from the assumed dangers of immigration. Additionally, it can be argued that the League also contributed to the constitution of other citizen-subjects as Anglo-Saxon by addressing them directly and adding to their awareness of the assumed threat to American racial integrity. While the questionnaires obviously did not constitute the subjects' racial self-perceptions, they provided the space and opportunity for citizens to reflect on and enunciate pre-existing racial conceptions. Furthermore, these questionnaires are some of the rare sources indicating the recipients' reactions to and their perception of the work of the League and have hardly been analyzed by historians.⁸⁰ The analysis thus also contains a selection of replies only to be found in the IRL records demonstrating how subjects perceived immigration. While the reports of the Commission with its analyses and predictions of the macro-effects of immigration constituted immigrants as objects of knowledge, the questionnaires can be regarded as one example of the League's biopolitical micro-techniques that helped to establish other subjects' racialized self-perceptions and contributed to their willingness to get actively involved in political affairs.

⁷⁸ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, p. 107.

⁷⁹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 102, 110. Originally, the IRL had planned to also send the letters to two hundred doctors and as many members of the New York Economic club, but had failed to obtain their addresses. IRL Records, Minutes of the Meetings, 14 July 1910.

⁸⁰ Surprisingly, Handlin, Solomon and Tichenor do not analyse the League's statement at all; Zeidel states that the statements overall provide "excellent synopses of the different groups' purposes and their positions on immigration", but only glosses over them in two paragraphs: Zeidel, p. 110. Only King and Petit have analyzed the statements in more detail: King, *Making Americans*, pp. 75–76; Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 31–58. While King uses them to illustrate the League's point of view, Petit also includes the AAFLN and IPL statements to concentrate on questions of gender. In her analysis of the League's statement, however, Petit mostly concentrates on the League's official statement and hardly incorporates additional replies to its questionnaire.

In the letters, Hall assured recipients that the IRL was “opposed only to such immigration as lowers the mental, moral and physical average of our people”. The League framed the discussion about immigration according to their own priorities: It reminded recipients that 25% of immigrants were illiterate, 60% were “of the Slavic and Iberic races of Southern and Eastern Europe” and a third of them unskilled. The letter also provided their percentage of criminal, paupers, and insane compared to their ratio of the overall American population. Hall then pointed out that existing immigration laws were “inadequate to protect the present standards and institutions from deterioration”. While those “pecuniarily interested in lax immigration laws” were “strongly organized”, restrictionists were “scattered”. Thus, the League enquired if the recipients generally desired any form of further “selective tests” for immigrants, a reading test, an increased head tax or a mandatory minimum amount of money on arrival. In versions sent in 1911, Hall added a sentence emphasizing the eugenic argument, claiming that existing laws had failed to

preserve the present physical, mental and moral status of our people, to say nothing of eugenic improvement; and that the policy of admitting those who have or will have defective children means a weakening of the nation and a needless and heavy increase in public and private burdens.⁸¹

The IRL sent 3800 questionnaires to the names taken from *Who's Who*, receiving 375 replies favouring and twenty-eight opposing further restriction. Another 3381 letters were sent to graduates of the Harvard medical school leading to 157 replies with only one disapproving of further restriction.⁸² The rate of return seems to be rather low and suggests that only those already concerned about racial and eugenic issues might have answered. Nonetheless, these replies can be used as a small sample for white upper middle-class educated men and at least indicate that many of the recipients had already developed a racially encoded identity and deemed the protection of an assumed Anglo-Saxon superiority from immigration to be important. James Franklin Ailshie, justice of the Iowa Supreme Court stated that

I cannot see how anyone who is at all familiar with conditions as they now exist and who knows of the thousands of immigrants who are flocking to our shores every month and the great percentage of crime and illiteracy they

⁸¹ IRL Records (1047).

⁸² Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 110–11; IRL Minutes, 1 January, 25 March, 11 April 1910; 19 April, 31 October, 2 November 1911. Unfortunately, not all answers to the questionnaires have been preserved, making a comprehensive quantitative analysis impossible. Hall destroyed “all the correspondence except that of historical interest” when the League dissolved one of its Boston offices in 1913: IRL Minutes, 12 December 1913.

represent would not be in favor of much more rigid restrictions [...]. It seems to me that we ought to inquire into their ancestry and previous conduct and conditions more fully than we do at present.⁸³

The replies illustrate the respondents' awareness of their racial status and their concern for the population's biological quality. Attorney Charles O. Bailey argued that

the immigration question should be considered from a racial instead of an educational or financial point of view. I would favor the exclusion of immigrants belonging to other than the Aryan races and would place severe restrictions upon any excepting the western nations of Europe. It is physically impossible for races ethnologically distinct to become assimilated into a homogeneous mass. The United States was originally settled by the races of Western Europe and belongs to them.⁸⁴

The disregard of Native Americans was as common as the use of biological metaphors. Recipients referred to new immigrants as "the scum of the earth", a "constant introduction of low-grade material into our social structure" and mentioned that they had "no Saxon tradition or training; they are non-assimilable under our institutions". Carlos MacDonald, president of the New York State Lunacy Commission, claimed that about 50% of the inmates of New York State asylums were foreign-born and therefore called for the enactment of laws "raising the mental, moral, and physical requirements of immigrants coming to our shores".⁸⁵ The concern about the racial make-up was thus complemented by the perceived threat to political and social stability. Luther Burbank, an esteemed botanist, demanded "a more thorough sifting of the foreign-born population which comes to our shores" to protect "our institutions from deterioration". His statement also incorporated women's rights, arguing against immigration:

I go further and would say, that there is not a greater disgrace existing in the world today than that our women should not be allowed to vote while foreigners, who know nothing of our government or our institutions, who have no interest in them, and who pay no taxes, should be allowed to vote. That such a condition exists in a civilized country is astounding beyond belief.⁸⁶

⁸³ IRL Records (15).

⁸⁴ IRL Records (75).

⁸⁵ IRL Records (118, 212, 584); Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 114–15.

⁸⁶ IRL Records (202). On the original document, an IRL executive noted to omit this part – it was nonetheless included in the statement sent to the Commission.

His comment thus located new immigrants in a political hierarchy below American women, using a commonly applied argument taking sides for one politically marginalized group to exclude another.

The responses also referred to specific local racial encodings. John Norton Pomeroy from the Pacific Coast praised Chinese exclusion as an example of successful regulation, claiming that the nation “could learn a lesson [...]. We frankly admit, and always have admitted, that our fundamental objection to the immigration we wish to exclude is racial”.⁸⁷ Inhabitants of Southern states frequently related immigration to African Americans, stating that “we do not need statistics to show the injurious effect of pauper immigrants upon our people – even our Negroes are injured by contact with them”.⁸⁸ H. Caperton Braxton from Virginia gave a more detailed account, emphasizing the citizen’s responsibility to preserve the “racial superiority” of the American population:

I am unalterably opposed to the introduction into this country, not only of paupers and criminals, but of those races which either cannot be assimilated at all with us, or else cannot be assimilated without detriment to our own race.[...] In my judgment, the greatest mistake that this, or any other, country ever made, was the importation of negroes [...]. While there are doubtless races in Europe or Asia as unassimilable with our race as the negroes are, yet, in many cases, it is only a difference in degree, and unless some check is put upon the unrestricted outpouring upon us of these individual degenerates and members of unassimilable races, I believe posterity will rise up to curse us for our folly or neglect.⁸⁹

Elaborate racial hierarchies informed many replies to the questionnaire. The renowned retired General Thomas MacArthur Anderson, member of the Sons of the American Revolution and author of a citizenship manual for immigrants, wanted to exclude “races not assimilative”, namely “Russians, Scaves [sic], Asiatics, Greeks and southern Italians”. In his statements he revealed his expectations of coming racial confrontations by referring to his past:

In my experience as a reconstructing officer in the South, in my dealings with mobs and strikes, in my experience with our American Indians and later with Filipino [sic] insurgents I have learned that the essential things in dealing with dis-connected and submerged classes is to impress them with our dis-interested honesty and to convince them that our government will first use all means to conciliate and then all means to crush.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ IRL Records (769), original emphasis.

⁸⁸ IRL Records (364).

⁸⁹ IRL Records (171).

⁹⁰ IRL Records (45).

He therefore not only accepted dominant racial encodings and hierarchies, but also associated the new immigrants with social unrest. The account of his experiences in administering the territories acquired through imperial conquest also demonstrates the close connection between the racialization of immigrants and the colonized.

Respondents were mostly concerned with immigration's biopolitical effects – the immigrants' racial and genetic composition and its assumed effects on the make-up of the American nation, as the reply of one S. Whiney exemplifies:

The important thing is obviously to keep out all persons who are either individually or racially criminally inclined, or lacking in capacity for development, and to encourage the coming here of those, whether they may be poor or not, who themselves, or through their progeny, promise to make good citizens, and, in the end, contribute to the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the country.⁹¹

Ex-governor of Wyoming Fennimore Chatterton underlined the citizens' responsibility for their racial posterity. He favoured the complete exclusion of immigrants from all countries outside North-western Europe. In his opinion, the US was now "breeding foreigners within our midst" instead of "breeding children with American ideas and love for American institutions". Praising eugenic ideas, he concluded that

We have now sufficient breeding stock on hand; it is time to pay attention to breeding the best human being possible. Quality, not numbers, in humanity, as in beef, mutton or pork, gives the high standard of the Nation as for the individual. We owe this to those for whose future existence we are, must, under the existing conditions for our progeniture, be responsible. [...] It is very important that the immigration should be restricted to the very best class of humanity. We ought not now seek to populate quickly every acre of space, but rather to preserve some of the opportunities for our descendants and not at this time give them away to the descendants of unsympathetic and unappreciative Alien races.⁹²

The replies to the questionnaires therefore indicate that the categories applied in the racialization of immigrants prefigured the ways these individuals perceived immigration. Urged by the League's request to position themselves in relation to racial hierarchies, many respondents articulated their concerns with the new immigrants' 'racial inferiority', the latter's putatively inherent tendencies towards

⁹¹ IRL Records (977).

⁹² IRL Records (255). Original emphasis.

crime and pauperism and an assumed threat to political and social stability. The questionnaires did not only induce the respondents to enunciate their perception of their racial status, but also to reflect on ‘American race’ in relation to immigration and its restriction. The IRL’s actions thus helped to transform subjects into active citizens by directly appealing to their racial self-perception and their responsibility for the future of the American nation and race. Many of the respondents consequently promised to write to their Senators and Congressmen to urge them to enact legislation to regulate and limit immigration. Like other progressive movements, the IRL thus appealed to citizens’ mode of self-conduct, making them participate in the organization’s call for state intervention.

The League’s allies depicted new immigrants in similarly negative terms in their statements. While the Sons of America only handed in a one-page resolution supporting immigration restriction, the Farmer’s Union’s statement consisted of a hearing of the House’s Committee on Immigration and Naturalization held in early 1910. In this hearing, the Union’s representative T. J. Brooks, under heavy fire from Representatives Sabath and Bennet, had been assisted by Patten. Claiming to represent more than three million members “from the center of America”, the Union demanded the literacy test to stop the “foreign influx from southeast Europe and western Asia”.⁹³ Similarly, the AFL statement praised the literacy test as “the most practical means for restricting the present stimulated influx of cheap labor”, arguing that “swarms of life-long poverty-stricken aliens” lowered the American standard of living. It further included one of Mitchell’s articles on immigration and the minutes of a conference between him and Secretary Straus and Powderly.⁹⁴ The most explicit statement regarding the new immigrants’ racial status came from the JOUAM, submitting its statement made to the House Committee on Immigration in 1909. The Order put forward the argument that in contrast to the “independent race of men of the Aryan blood who [...] came with the idea already embedded in their hearts and minds of the beauties of self-government”, the new immigration consisted of a “vast army of illiterates” and could not be assimilated without endangering the country’s “high standard of morality and good order”. The statement concluded that the “great Anglo-Saxon character must be preserved and the pure, unmixed blood flowing

⁹³ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, p. 344.

⁹⁴ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 369–431.

down from our Aryan progenitors must not be mingled with the Iberic race". Like Canada, the US should adopt a higher head tax and a literacy test similar to "Cape Colony, New Zealand, and Australia".⁹⁵

The NLIL took a stand on behalf of immigrants. Managing director Behar denied that they were made up of "the scum of Europe" but were "the very flower of its peasantry, above our average in the strength of body". They thus made "admirable raw material for our citizenship" if assisted by a "simple, systematic and practical" federal Americanization policy. Making a case against the literacy test, Behar quoted repeatedly from Cleveland's veto message to argue that it would not exclude criminals or radicals and was not a test "either of morals or of brains". Like restrictionists, he was aware of immigration policies in other countries, but canvassed for the adaption of the distribution, information and free transportation policies of Argentina, Brazil and Chile instead of the Anglosphere's restrictive measures. Behar applied biologic metaphors explaining that "a stream dangerous when unchecked will prove a blessing to the land when well directed", claiming that the American economy needed new immigrants in "their numbers, that by their very swarming [we] define our need for rough workers, which grows with our growth of the nation".⁹⁶

Boas's and pro-immigrant groups' arguments indicate that a counter-discourse was possible in the Commission's context, but needed the categories and notional concepts of the hegemonic discourse to attain validity. The IRL's and its allies' statements, on the other hand, reveal how far eugenic concepts had already permeated the debates about immigration and were further perpetuated. While the League applied the eugenic argument selectively, Hall and his colleagues obviously thought it to be helpful in making others aware of their racial status. The actions of the opposing camps can thus be regarded as examples for the subjects' agency; they demonstrate how individuals could – within the limits set by the discourse – make their active choices. While the statements submitted to the Commission offered an opportunity to voice concerns about possible immigration legislation, both sides

⁹⁵ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 16–26.

⁹⁶ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, pp. 329–34.

were aware that the most important part of the struggle was still to come – the fight over the legislative recommendations of the Commission.

5.2.3 The Fight over the recommendations

When in early 1910 the Commission's deadline was prolonged to December, the League decided to pursue its policy of exerting pressure on politicians directly and indirectly via its allies. The IRL's executive committee resolved that it would "assail even our best friends" if they would not cooperate, but refrained from attacking the Commissioners directly, stating that the blame should not be put on "anyone except Bennet and Dillingham for delaying the game".⁹⁷ Bennet was to become the IRL's main target. Hall attacked him as "one of the most active members of the commission", pointing out that he represented "a foreign-born district" and was closely connected to the NLIL, "a society started by certain Jews in New York which masked "its true objects with certain benevolent purposes towards immigrants". The IRL even decided to take more perfidious action by publishing a pamphlet entitled "'Jews' attention!" which provided details of purported anti-immigrant action taken by Bennet, in an attempt to divide the pro-immigration camp. The anonymous author stated that Bennet had agreed to an increase of the head-tax and had approved negative statements in the report on "white slavery" about "Jewish procurers", only posing as "a liberal immigrationist and a friend of the Jew". Patten subsequently reported contentedly that the circular had had a notable effect "upon one racial section of his [Bennet's] district."⁹⁸ In an article for *The Survey* published in June 1910, Joseph Lee belittled the Commission's efforts, stating that it had done "some valuable work" and that the budget had not been spent "wholly without return". Ridiculing Boas's investigation, Lee caustically pointed out that it had at least found out that "the heads of some of the children of immigrants in a part of the city of New York is somewhat different from the supposed shape of the heads of some other people of the same race".⁹⁹

When the deadline for the Commission's report approached, the League intensified its efforts. Besides staying in close contact with congressmen, the IRL decided to indirectly exert pressure on Lodge. Joseph Lee wrote to Harvard

⁹⁷ Patten to Lee, 28 February, 6 March 1910, Lee Papers.

⁹⁸ IRL Records (801); Circular, '*Jews' attention!*'; Patten to Lee, 8 January 1910, Lee Papers.

⁹⁹ Joseph Lee, 'The Immigration Commission', *The Survey*, 04 June 1910 (1910). See also Lee to Hall, 1 March 1910, Lee Papers.

president Lowell, explaining that Lodge had shown “a tendency to wobble when it came to the pinch” and thus needed “stiffening of the backbone”. Lowell subsequently wrote to Lodge, arguing that Americans had rightfully excluded African Americans from the vote and the Chinese from immigration to maintain a homogeneous population “necessary for the success of our great nation”. Therefore, he thought it to be “vitaly important” to restrict the immigration of people lacking “the capacity of understanding what our civilization is”, defining citizenship in racial terms. The reading test, in his opinion, was the best way to exclude immigrants difficult to assimilate; in his opinion, citizens as the “trustees for prosperity” had the duty to promote it. Shortly before the Commissioners came together to agree on the recommendations, Joseph Lee and John Moors conferred with Lodge for a last time. In November, the League could also celebrate Bennet’s defeat and Burnett’s triumph in the elections. Thus, the IRL was confident that the Commission would “recommend strongly [...] some literacy test as Australia and other new countries have”.¹⁰⁰

The Commissioners met in early December to negotiate the final recommendations, which would consist of only three and a half pages of general statements. They eventually agreed on a list of general principles for further legislation drafted by Jenks. This list reinstated the binary differentiation between old and new immigrants by emphasizing that the US always had welcomed “the oppressed of other lands” but that immigration should be limited “both in quantity and quality as not to make too difficult the process of assimilation”. Jenks reiterated his opinion that immigrants’ admissions should be based primarily on “economic or business considerations” since the “physically and morally unfit” were excluded by existing regulations. The statement also emphasized that economic growth should not be the only “measure of the rational, healthy development”. Rather, social repercussions of unrestricted immigration should be considered since they affected citizens’ opportunities for “material, mental and moral development”, immigration should thus be limited to not endanger the standard of living and to allow for “the adaption

¹⁰⁰ IRL Minutes, 14 July, 28 November 1910; Lee to Lowell, 4 August 1910, Lowell to Lodge, 9 August 1910; Patten to Lee, 10 November 1910, Lee Papers. Ward also asked IRL member and Harvard professor Thomas N. Carver to write to Jenks to promote the literacy test. For Lowell’s anti-immigration and anti-Semitic stance, see for example Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

and assimilation of the incoming labor supply”.¹⁰¹ The argument thus legitimated the call for restriction not by using the racial rationale or insinuating a general inferiority of immigrants, but continued the logic of the Commission’s findings in combining economic and social factors with a progressive critique of business interests.

The Commission also gave more specific recommendations. Among others, it suggested extending the deportation period for criminals and charity seekers, to provide “sufficient appropriation” and qualified personnel for immigration stations and to strengthen distribution efforts. Regarding the restriction of non-European immigration, the Commission advised Congress that Chinese, Japanese and Korean exclusion should be continued and that steps should be taken to come to an agreement with the British government to effectively prevent the immigration of East Indian labourers. The Commissioners then turned to the question of European immigration, stating that their investigation demonstrated that “an oversupply of unskilled labor” existed. They thus unanimously agreed that immigration of unskilled workers should be restricted or limited and to exclude “those who, by reason of their personal qualities or habits, would least readily be assimilated or would make the least desirable citizens”. The IRL’s confidence about a univocal recommendation of the literacy test, however, turned out to have been premature. In the meeting on December 4, Burnett suggested recommending the literacy test explicitly, but only Howell supported him. Apart from Bennet, the other Commissioners including Lodge opposed such a statement since a simple majority vote on such a substantial decision, in their opinion, did not reflect the Commission’s scientific approach. Instead, the Commissioners decided to simply list numerical limitation, the exclusion of male labourers unaccompanied by wives and children, a higher sum of money required to be in possession of on arrival, an increased head tax, and the literacy test as possible means of limitation. It also suggested a limitation of “the number of each race arriving each year to a certain percentage of the average of that race arriving during a given period of years”, effectively providing the model for the 1920s quota system.¹⁰²

When the Commissioners met again the next day, an infuriated Burnett accused his colleagues of evading the Commission’s sole purpose – to provide an

¹⁰¹ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, p. 45.

¹⁰² Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 45–49; Zeidel, pp. 113–14.

unequivocal statement about legislative methods based on its investigation. He threatened to write a minority report that mentioned that a majority of Commissioners favoured the literacy test, thus casting doubt on the entire project's credibility. In a tense moment that must have reflected the years of pressure on the Commissioners, Lodge called for a new vote on the test. This time, all Commissioners present agreed on adopting the test as "the most feasible single means of restricting undesirable immigration", a statement that supplemented the list of possible restrictive policies in the reports. According to Zeidel, the original statement had included the specification that Commissioners agreed to "a greater or lesser degree" on the test as "the most feasible single means", this statement, however, was omitted from the final recommendations to avoid the impression of discord. Bennet, absent from the second meeting, had no choice but to hand in a minority report disagreeing with the literacy test "for which no logical argument can be based on the report". The Commissioner thus had "disregarded their own findings", as Vought states, favouring the literacy test because of political pressure and their own restrictionist inclinations.¹⁰³

This outcome was greeted enthusiastically by the members of the IRL, while pro-immigrant groups were devastated. Patten immediately ordered 10,000 copies of the Commission's conclusions and 20,000 of its legislative recommendations, and was confident that the literacy test now would finally become law, provided the League could attain between "ten and fifteen thousand dollars [...] to run the campaign". Thanking Lowell for his support, Lee mistakenly praised Lodge for having "simply done the trick", not only convincing the Commission to "unanimously recommend restriction", but to have all but Bennet "to say specifically that there should be an illiteracy test". He was especially relieved that the Commission had justified this decision "on the popular basis of labor and industrial effects rather than on the unpopular [basis] of race discrimination".¹⁰⁴

Joseph Lee indeed had a more realistic view of public opinion than Prescott Hall. In his review of Jenks' and Lauck's book, Hall criticized them for assuming that immigration's most important aspect was "economic and not social or racial

¹⁰³ Patten to Lee, 4, 11 December 1910; Lee to Lodge, 13 December 1910, Lee Papers; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, pp. 48–49; Vought, p. 93; Zeidel, pp. 113–14.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *Not Free*, p. 48; Patten to Lee, 8 December, 11 December 1910, Lee to Lowell, 13 December 1910, Lee Papers.

[...]. Very little is said about heredity, and eugenics is not mentioned. To give such exclusive prominence to the economic factors, seems to the writer fundamentally erroneous". In Hall's view, the economic factors and their social repercussions such as the lower standard of living were "instincts and habits", essentially "matters of race and inheritance. One cannot imagine men of the Baltic race being willing to live as do many of our recent immigrants, no matter how poor they might be".¹⁰⁵ Despite Hall's disagreement with the Commission's findings, its recommendation of the literacy test as the "most feasible single means" for restriction signified a major breakthrough for the League. Backed by the authority of almost four years of extensive scientific research, the Commission did not only provide a voluminous body of statistical knowledge to advise legislators how to achieve a "healthy, rational development of the country", but also spoke out for restriction.¹⁰⁶ Since it had explicitly been designed to determine future immigration policies, it served as an important point of reference for the League since it recommended the test the IRL had lobbied for since 1894.

In its investigative approach, the Commission had relied on the progressive pattern to provide insights on the immigrants' impact, intertwining scientific knowledge with suggestions for concrete legislative measures. In this regard, it did indeed epitomize "the apogee of Progressive-era scientific investigations", as John Lund has argued.¹⁰⁷ While Zeidel describes convincingly that the Commissioners intended to collect and produce scientific and objective knowledge about immigration, he neglects the fact that the investigative categories had already been prefigured by the dominant racial interpretation of the new immigration. The Commission thus was indeed "deeply informed by racial theories", as Zolberg states, perpetuating the dichotomy between old and new immigrants by concentrating almost exclusively on the latter's putative difference. Comparing the newcomers to the Anglo-Saxon self-image, the Commission also "reinforced the marginality of African Americans" and in turn reinforced the idea of American citizenship defined exclusively in terms of whiteness, as Desmond King has argued. Although the Commission disappointed "hard-core restrictionists", as Vincent Cannato notes, it accepted the prevalent racial hierarchy and classification system

¹⁰⁵ Hall, Review: Jenks; Lauck, p. 676.

¹⁰⁶ Immigration Commission, *Vol. 1*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ John M. Lund, 'Boundaries of Restriction: The Dillingham Commission', *History Review*, 6.December (1994).

and applied it throughout the investigation, thereby transforming central assumptions of the hegemonic racial discourse made in academia and public discourse into official government knowledge.¹⁰⁸

The Commission based its recommendation for the restriction of European immigration mostly on socioeconomic arguments. Jenks and Lauck, pivotal in designing the investigative approach, coped with the methodological difficulties and the lack of conclusive evidence for the new immigrants' putative racial inferiority by emphasizing their effect on American labourers and the country's limited capacity to assimilate the newcomers. The IRL, however, could use the material produced by the Commission for the economic argument against immigration to augment its racial and eugenic rationale.

The Commissioners' recommendations framed the legislative steps taken over the next eleven years, namely the continuation of Chinese and Japanese exclusion, the restriction of other Asian immigration, the adoption of the literacy test and, eventually, the creation of a quota system. The Commission thus suggested specific ways for the state to intervene biopolitically on behalf of the population to protect it from supposedly detrimental influences. Although the League seemed to have triumphed over its adversaries, the road to the eventual adoption of their political demands turned out to be a long and rocky one. During the time the IRL members had to impatiently await the Commission's results, they turned to the enforcement of border policies by the PHS and INS.

¹⁰⁸ Cannato, p. 230; King, *Making Americans*, p. 79; Zolberg, p. 215.

6. Regulation at the Border

While the Dillingham Commission struggled to measure immigration's effect on 'American civilization' in objective categories to come to its recommendations for immigration law reform, the INS and PHS applied the existing law at the border. Transforming the law's abstract regulations into applicable procedures, the INS and PHS often relied on the racial rationale. Between the turn of the century and the Great War, the two services' organizational structure underwent a number of administrative changes. The 1903 Immigration Act transferred the Bureau of Immigration from the Treasury to the Department of Commerce and Labor. Three years later, it was renamed Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization. In 1913, it was moved to the newly created Department of Labor and divided into two separate Bureaus.¹

The PHS evolved out of the US Marine and Hospital Service. This service, headed by the Surgeon-General and reporting to the Treasury, was entrusted with the medical inspection of immigrants after the passage of the 1891 Immigration Act. In 1902, it was renamed US Public Health and Marine Hospital Service and, eventually, in 1912, became the US Public Health Service.² While the INS's task was limited to immigrant inspection, the PHS also conducted research and was responsible for disease control. Like other state agencies in this period, both services became increasingly centralized and professionalized; federal government provided them with authority and resources to independently carry out administrative practices.³ Both agencies developed a self-image as keepers of the gate or, as PHS employee Dr Alfred Reed put it, as "the first, most comprehensive and most effectual line of defense", exercising the "great duty" of protecting the US from the dangers assumedly posed by immigration.⁴

¹ Congressional Research Service, *History of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1980), pp. 11–21; Smith and Herring, pp. 10–14.

² Kraut, pp. 50–60; Lüthi, pp. 106–10.

³ Fitzgerald, pp. 96–144, esp. 125.

⁴ Alfred C. Reed, 'Immigration and the Public Health', *Popular Science Monthly*, October (1913), 313–38 (p. 317); Alfred C. Reed, 'Scientific Medical Inspection at Ellis Island', *Medical Review of Reviews*, 18.8 (1912) (p. 541) For the PHS's esprit de corps, see Lüthi, pp. 106–10, for the INS and PHS see Kraut, p. 57.

If this “first line of defense” is contextualized with the *dispositif* of immigration and population control, it becomes the place where power, knowledge and subjectivity intertwine as a “series of variables which supplant another”.⁵ The history of immigrant inspection has been investigated by a number of scholars. While Alan Kraut explored how immigrants were associated with disease and contagion, more recent accounts have investigated the PHS’s history in detail. Amy Fairchild’s extensive and insightful analysis of medical inspection at the border emphasizes the role of Ellis Island as the first of a series of institutions disciplining immigrants; her central thesis is that “immigrant medical examination was shaped by an industrial imperative to discipline the laboring force in accordance with industrial expectations”. By stressing that examinations and inspections served to test the potential immigrant’s qualification for “industrial citizenship”, however, she neglects the fact that racial thought was the foundation for such considerations. While Fairchild’s investigation centres on the Foucauldian perspective in terms of its disciplining dimension, Barbara Lüthi examines the links between knowledge, bodies and medical inspection to demonstrate that the gradual conflation of eugenic and racial discourses with medical knowledge at the border control. As Lüthi has argued, the evaluation of the process of normalization at the border should not be reduced to its disciplinary function, but needs to include the biopolitical implications. In modern nation-states, public health and its protection became a central point where questions of identity, homogeneity and purity were negotiated, often in racialized terms. Simultaneously, Alison Bashford has argued, public health served as a field where “techniques of liberal governance and authority were tried, resisted, abandoned, modified, outlawed, and normalised”. Measuring and examining individual immigrants’ bodies and minds, devising new methods to define standards that had to be met and creating medical knowledge of ‘deficiencies’, the services constituted “a bandwidth of the acceptable” and specified the category of abnormality that had to be excluded.⁶

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, ‘What is a *Dispositif*?’ in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, ed. by Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 159–68 (p. 159). For an analysis of the American-Canadian border as a *dispositif*’s effect, see Christopher Alderson, ‘The Birth of Canadian Border Security/Sécurité’, in *A Foucault for the 21st Century*, ed. by Binkley and Capetillo, pp. 203–19.

⁶ Bashford, pp. 1-13, 162-163; Fairchild, pp. 16, 3-82; Kraut; Lüthi, pp. 24-26, 34-85, 90-94, 113-139, 349-361. For a popular history of the PHS, see Fitzhugh Mullan, *Plagues and Politics: The Story of the United States Public Health Service* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). Fairchild’s claim that “the term *whiteness* had little place within the” PHS and INS terminology can be disregarded due

At American immigrant stations, PHS and INS employees transformed the abstract racial discourse and immigration laws into tangible biopolitical regulatory controls that defined the moral, mental and physical standards that had to be met to be admitted to the US. The network of power relations between these groups formed the apparatus of racialized immigration control, most prominently solidified into visible, palpable, traceable histories made at Ellis Island. From the station's architecture to regulations regarding medical and immigrant inspection to the programmes, practices, techniques and technologies of border control, Ellis Island became the place where new methods were tested and future policies were shaped. Simultaneously, a new spatial mode of power was introduced: at immigrant stations, the abstract border materialized in the concept of a non-territorial space where immigrants had not yet technically and legally entered the US. The PHS's and INS's policing of this border protected the population with this *cordon sanitaire* to prevent those classified as morally, mentally or physically 'unfit' from entering, allowing the state to control movements across its borders and its population's composition.⁷ Still under construction, the apparatus of security often lacked the uniformity of rules and practices necessitated for its smooth running. At these gaps, the power struggles about the correct interpretation of scientific research on the new immigration's supposedly dysgenic effect, and the conclusions that should be drawn from it, became most salient. The emergence of the apparatus of security also provided opportunities for IRL members to intervene as citizen-subjects and to influence its policies, regulations and appointments to guarantee that the biopolitical control was in accordance with the League's racial interpretation of America's history and future.⁸ To determine the influence the IRL exerted on appointments,

to the fact that this terminology was not common at all in this period: Fairchild, p. 10. Original emphasis. For medical inspection, see also Pascal J. Imperato and Gavin H. Imperato, 'The Medical Exclusion of an Immigrant to the United States of America in the Early Twentieth Century: The Case of Cristina Imperato', *Journal of Community Health*, 33 (2008), 225–40; Howard Markel, *Quarantine!: East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). For inspection at other ports of entry, see Howard Markel and Alexandra M. Stern, 'Which Face? Whose Nation? Immigration, Public Health, and the Construction of Disease at America's Ports and Borders, 1891-1928', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42.9 (1999), 1314–31; Schneider, pp. 88–112; M. M. Stolarik (ed.), *Forgotten Doors: The Other Ports of Entry to the United States* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1988); for the Mexican-American border, see Stern, pp. 57–81.

⁷ Daniel Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 4–6; Lee, *America's Gates*, p. 6. On modern borders, see for example Ettinger; Neuman; Torpey.

⁸ The element of subjectivation within the dispositif should thus not be limited to the apparatus's influence on the subjects, but also consider their agency in forming it. While this interpretation is

inspection, regulation and exclusionary practices, this chapter investigates the INS and PHS policies at Ellis Island. Simultaneously, the island's history allows for a deeper understanding on how the discourse on the new immigrants' racialization was translated into administrative categories. After laying out the mechanisms of racial classification, this chapter analyzes immigrant inspection and categories of deviance to determine the influence of the IRL and the racial discourse.

6.1 Inspection at Ellis Island

Between the turn of the century and the war, the INS and the PHS were chronically underfunded. Simultaneously, immigration figures reached new heights of up to or over a million immigrants entering each year. Both services operated under close public scrutiny, their standards regularly and often severely criticized by restrictionist and immigrant associations – making the commissionership at Ellis Island probably one of the most unrewarding public offices of the progressive era.⁹

The INS recruited most of its mid- and high-level officers from the labour movement, but diversity and fluctuation among low-rank personnel was high. The service's gradual professionalization was slowly achieved since only employees hired after 1896 underwent the civil service exam. Corruption, patronage, and mistreatment of immigrants were still common among the service's employees (1200 by 1906), whilst several federal commissions investigated affairs at Ellis Island between 1900 and the war.¹⁰ After a lengthy conflict between Commissioner-General Powderly, Commissioner of Ellis Island Thomas Fitchie and his subordinate McSweeney had resulted in a swift clean-up ordered by Roosevelt in 1902, Republican labour leader Frank Sargent became new Commissioner-General. William Williams, a New York lawyer of Puritan heritage, was appointed Commissioner of Ellis Island.¹¹ Sargent frequently deplored that immigrants coming were no longer “of Teutonic stock”, stating that their illiteracy “will not tend to raise

already implicitly included in Foucault's writings, Agamben has stated it more overtly: Agamben, *Apparatus*, pp. 1–24.

⁹ INS 52572/8, 52495/18; Anne-Emanuelle Birn, ‘Six Seconds Per Eyelid: The Medical Inspection of Immigrants at Ellis Island, 1892-1914’, *Dynamis*, 17 (1997), 281–316 (pp. 309–11); Cannato, pp. 168–69; Fitzgerald, pp. 96–144.

¹⁰ Cannato, pp. 109-120, 127-190, 216-237; Congressional Research Service, p. 12; Pitkin, p. 29; Schneider, pp. 61–88. For unprofessional behaviour within the service, see for example INS 52495/18.

¹¹ For a detailed account, see Cannato, pp. 107–48. For Powderly's version of the events, see Terence V. Powderly, *The Path I Trod: the Autobiography of Terence V. Powderly* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 299–302.

the standard of our citizenship”. He endorsed the literacy test, provided the IRL with statistical information and regularly conferred with its members to discuss improvements to the law and its implementation.¹² Williams’ views of the new immigrants were equally unfavourable. In 1903, he stated that they were coming “from some of the most undesirable sources of population” and that immigration laws were insufficient to keep out those “generally undesirable, because unintelligent, of low vitality, or poor physique” and “unfitted mentally or morally for good citizenship”. He concluded that

Aliens have no inherent right whatever to come here, and we may and should take means, however radical or drastic, to keep out all below a certain physical and economic standard of fitness and all whose presence will tend to lower our standards of living and civilization.¹³

Williams therefore supported the literacy test, adopting the IRL’s argument of the supposed correlation of illiteracy with other unfavourable characteristics. In an article published in 1906, Williams argued eugenically: since up to 25% of immigrants were undesirable, he wrote, the US had to choose “not between the citizens and immigrants of to-day, but between the children and grandchildren of both”. Subsequently, the League cited Williams and Sargent in numerous publications to underscore the demand for the literacy test.¹⁴ Like his predecessors, Williams granted IRL members access to the service’s files and conferred regularly with them. The IRL thus concluded that the recently appointed officials were “excellent” and “in sympathy with a proper regulation of immigration”.¹⁵

¹² INS 51762/21; IRL Records (916); IRL Minutes 2 July 1904, 4, 27 January, 24 February 1906; Bureau of Immigration, *Recommendations of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor Based upon the Annual Report for the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903); Frank P. Sargent, ‘Problems of Immigration’, *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 24 July (1904), 153–58 (pp. 154–55); Frank P. Sargent, ‘The Need of Closer Inspection and Greater Restriction of Immigrants’, *Century*, LXVII (1904), 470–73 (p. 471); Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1903* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), p. 62.

¹³ Bureau of Immigration, *Report 1903*, p. 70.

¹⁴ Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1904* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 106; William Williams, ‘The Sifting of Immigrants’, *Journal of Social Science*, XLVI, September (1906), 29–43 (p. 42). For quotations, see for example IRL, *Extracts from the Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration*, Publication no. 39, 1903; Prescott F. Hall, ‘Proposed Legislation on Immigration’, *Journal of Social Science*, 46 (1906), 78–91 (p. 82); Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Sane Methods of Regulating Immigration’, *The American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 23.1 (1906), 336–39.

¹⁵ IRL Minutes, 1 July, 11 October, 22 November 1902, 16 October 1905, 13 July 1909, 16 November 1910, 25 April 1912; IRL, *Report 1902*; *Report 1903*.

Compared to the INS, the PHS was a more homogeneous service. Most of its surgeons were middle-class southern men who had undergone a challenging exam. In a period when medicine acquired scientific authority in public discourse, the service's responsibility for the protection of the American population from contagious diseases and 'defective' individuals mirrored the vocation's growing professionalization.¹⁶ The IRL was closely connected to Boston-based PHS surgeon Victor Safford who provided the League with statistical information and gave advice on proposed legislation.¹⁷ At Ellis Island, the League tried to establish a working relationship with mid-level PHS officers. Fluctuation of personnel was high at Ellis Island since service at the station was mandatory for young employees, and the long hours and cumbersome work were regarded as a training ground.¹⁸

Together, both services were responsible for the examination of arriving immigrants. While first- and second-class passengers were examined on board, immigrants travelling steerage had to undergo the so-called line inspection at Ellis Island. The rapidly increasing number of immigrants resulted, whenever Congress increased the services' appropriations, in an increase in the number of staff. Between 1891 and 1898 only two medical officers had served on the island. In contrast, by 1912 between 18 and 25 officers were responsible for the inspections of up to five to seven thousand immigrants in up to four lines examined simultaneously. The organization of the inspection was based on the principles of Taylorism to attain the most effective inspection possible.¹⁹

¹⁶ Mullan, pp. 52–53. For medicine in the Progressive Era, see W. M. Byrd and Linda A. Clayton, *Race, Medicine, and Health Care in the United States 1900 - 2000* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 35–131; Burrow; Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 79–232. Yew contextualizes medical professionalization with examinations at the border: Elizabeth Yew, 'Medical Inspection of Immigrants at Ellis Island, 1891-1924', *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 56.5 (1980).

¹⁷ IRL Records (811, 916, 917); IRL Minutes 22 November 1902, 14 December 1905, 1 January 1910, 14 December 1911, 20 October 1912. While sometimes expressing moderate views, Safford also spoke about race suicide and even claimed that new immigrants were mentally inferior: IRL Records (1064, folder 8); William Safford, *Immigration: With Reference to Its Causes and Its Effects upon the Growth and Ethnical Character of the Population of the United States. Presented at the Fifteenth International Congress on Hygiene and Demography, Washington, D.C., September 23-28, 1912* (Boston: Ellis, 1912), p. 23. For an autobiographic account of his career, see William Safford, *Immigration Problems: Personal Experiences of an Official* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1925).

¹⁸ Allan McLaughlin, 'Immigration and the Public Health', *Popular Science Monthly*, 64 (1904), 232–38 (p. 236); Yew, p. 490.

¹⁹ Lüthi, p. 150; Markel and Stern, p. 1317; Yew, p. 496. In 1908, the PHS employed seventeen commissioned officers and thirty-three acting assistant surgeons for all medical inspections of immigrants within and outside the US. In 1914, this number had grown to thirty-three and fifty-four, respectively: Public Health Service, *Annual Report of the Surgeon-General of the Public Health and*

As Anna Pegler-Gordon and others have pointed out, the station's architectural design helped to organize the multitude of incoming immigrants in space into the most effective array for visual inspection.²⁰ The medical inspection relied on a intuitive examination rather than on scientific and medical diagnosis, concentrating on immigrants' current conditions instead of case histories. Steerage passengers were led through the station and observed by PHS officers to separate those who might be suffering from disease or physically or mentally impaired. Within seconds, PHS officer Reed explained, the officer could check the immigrant's "gait, attitude, presence of flat feet, lameness, stiffness at ankle, knee or hip, malformations of the body, [...] muscular development, scars, enlarged glands, [and] texture of skin" with a "rapid glance".²¹ This description was a summary of the official instruction for medical inspection issued by the PHS that laid out in detail the way and the manner how inspectors had to apply their "gaze". If the PHS examiner suspected diseases or 'deficiencies', immigrants were tagged with a specific chalk mark and had to undergo a secondary, more detailed examination.²²

Medical certificates were divided into three classes that were modified over time. These modifications reflected changes in medical opinion and in ideas about the connection between physical and mental 'defects' and the immigrants' prospects, demonstrating the "fluid nature of the exclusionary labels".²³ Class A certificates encompassed "loathsome and dangerous contagious diseases" such as trachoma, pulmonary tuberculosis, favus, leprosy, venereal diseases and the classifications as "idiot" and "insane", augmented in 1910 by a number of further diseases and those certified as epileptic or feebleminded. While a Class A certification made exclusion mandatory, Class B certificates left the immigrant's

Marine-Hospital Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year of 1907 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 67; Public Health Service, *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1916* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 196. For the number of immigrants arriving daily, see INS 50627/16, 52495/18. Taylorism, named after Frederick Taylor, is the scientific management of synthesized workflows to increase productivity.

²⁰ Fairchild, pp. 65–82; Lüthi, pp. 161-177, 184-195; Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 112–20.

²¹ Alfred C. Reed, 'The Medical Side of Immigration', *Popular Science Monthly*, April (1912), 383–92 (pp. 386–87).

²² Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions for the Medical Inspection of Immigrants: Prepared by the Direction of the Surgeon-General* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), p. 6; Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions for the Medical Inspection of Immigrants: Revised January 18, 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 23–26.

²³ Markel and Stern, p. 1327. See also Fairchild, pp. 83–115; Lüthi, pp. 168–77.

fate to the discretion of INS officers, indicating “diseases and deformities which are likely to render a person unable to earn a living”, or, as the 1910 handbook stated, afflictions that “will materially impair a person’s capacity for self-maintenance”. After 1910, the visual inspection was increasingly augmented by new bacteriological methods.²⁴

After passing medical inspection, immigrants were questioned by INS officers. They crosschecked the immigrants’ answers with information given in the ships’ manifests to determine if they violated immigration laws, e.g. by travelling on prepaid tickets or by being a polygamist or a convicted criminal.²⁵ Those deemed to be excludable and those with a medical certification, up to 25% of arriving immigrants, were then brought before boards of special inquiry (BSIs). These boards constituted quasi-legal institutions, conducting their affairs in the manner of courts and questioning aliens to determine their admissibility. The three immigration officers on the board who decided in a majority vote about the immigrants’ admission could question PHS officers about the nature of Class B certifications and overrule them if deemed necessary. Immigrant aid societies, especially the HIAS, often provided immigrants with legal advisors; immigrants could also bring forth witnesses whenever applicable. Often, friends or relatives provided bonds to guarantee that immigrants would not become public charges. If immigrants had not been excluded on grounds of a Class A medical certificate, they had the right to appeal: first to the station’s commissioner, then to the Commissioner-General, and, as a last resort, to the secretary heading the immigration service. These instances could then overrule BSI decisions, often admitting immigrants on humanitarian grounds.²⁶

While the boards’ decisions could have dramatic consequences for individual immigrants, overall exclusion figures remained relatively low until the war. Since steamship companies were fined for landing immigrants not admitted, they established an elaborate system of preliminary examinations at ports of embarkation and in the European hinterland. Between 1890 and 1924, exclusion rates on the

²⁴ Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions, 1903*; Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions, 1910*; Birn, pp. 295–302; Fairchild, pp. 160–84; Kraut, pp. 66–68.

²⁵ Cannato, pp. 88–91.

²⁶ INS 50627/16, 52495/18, 52516/1A; Cannato, pp. 70–91; Lüthi, pp. 190–192, 250–260; Pitkin, pp. 45–46. The secretary in charge was the Secretary of Treasury until 1903, the Secretary of Commerce and Labor until 1913 or the Secretary of Labor after 1913. Until the 1903 Immigration Act, four immigration officials sat on the boards.

American side thus never exceeded 3%; the average was less than 1% of overall immigration. Exclusion rates, however, did slowly rise, reflecting the services' gradual professionalization and the growing number of staff. Most immigrants were excluded for trachoma, not for the disease's prevalence but because it could be detected easily. Other notable reasons for exclusion were senility, hernia, psychiatric conditions, diseases of the circulatory system and diseases of the joints, muscles and bones.²⁷

In the decisions about immigrants' admission, however, most high-rank INS officers included racial considerations. Sargent instructed Williams to bring the BSIs "up to the highest possible degree of intelligence" since they had the power "to regulate what the future citizens shall be". While "sturdy Scotchmen, Irishmen or Germans" could easily be admitted, he continued, "other nationalities should not be permitted to enter unless they produce satisfactory proof of their ability to work and support themselves".²⁸ This attitude was balanced by the secretaries. Although they regularly sustained exclusions, they also often ruled to admit cases on bond. Oscar Straus reviewed appeals daily and intervened in many cases, he also advised the AJC on how best to present their cases to the administration.²⁹ His successor, Charles Nagel, appointed in 1909, also regularly disagreed with the boards' decisions. Nagel often decided immigrants' cases with sympathy, resulting in harsh criticism from the IRL. When he and Williams were attacked by German-American associations for ostensibly enforcing the law too strictly, Nagel emphasized in a letter to Hall that he always tried to "maintain the essential standards and purposes of the law without inflicting unnecessary hardship". He regarded the fact that he was criticized by restrictionists and immigrant interest groups alike as proof for his balanced administration of the law.³⁰

Despite their humanitarian approach, individuals ruled excluded at the American border depended on the goodwill of secretaries, rather than on impartial criteria. They were barred from juridical review, did not have the right to due process, and their right to legal counsel was left to the discretion of the INS. Immigrants were thus in the hands of the services with only a limited chance of

²⁷ Fairchild, pp. 56-69; 106-113; 119-131; Kraut, p. 4; Lüthi, pp. 14-18; 296-348.

²⁸ New York, New York Public Library, William Williams Papers, Box 1, Sargent to Williams, 6 October 1902.

²⁹ Cannato, pp. 170-74; Cohen, *Not Free*, p. 41; Vought, p. 57.

³⁰ IRL Records (917); Cannato, pp. 207-29; Vought, pp. 80-93.

opposing unfavourable decisions. They faced “one of the most coercive institutions of the federal government”, as Gerstle puts it – between 50 and 68% of appeals were denied between 1906 and 1916.³¹ The influence of racial discourse on PHS and the INS personnel thus was a decisive factor in many immigrants’ lives.

As Lüthi and Fairchild have pointed out, Ellis Island as an institution shaped by discipline and surveillance exposed the immigrants to the inspectors’ gaze in a calculated way. The resemblance of line inspection with the factories of industrial America was paired with the medical and socio-economic standards immigrants had to meet to be admitted: while INS personnel inquired about the immigrants’ economic background, profession and their and their families’ possible economic future in the US, the PHS ensured that they fulfilled bodily and mental requirements to guarantee their economic survival. In a Foucauldian sense, the medical gaze and inspection of immigrants served to constitute them as objects of knowledge. This process comprised two elements: individual immigrants were inspected to determine if they met the racial, physical and mental standards to be allowed to enter the US. Moreover, the practice at the border established a new norm, building a statistical archive to determine the immigrants’ probable effect on the population. This new technology of power thus combined a “system of surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping and reports” and simultaneously served the emerging apparatus of security as a regulatory control of the population.³² To analyze the extent to which practices of border control were permeated by the racial discourse and to determine the IRL’s role influencing these, I will examine the discourses about the bodily and mental deficiencies of immigrants in detail. Although the actual number of exclusions remained relatively low before the war, INS and PHS practices resulting from these discourses could have dramatic effects on immigrants’ lives. Immigrant inspection and medical examination demonstrate how abstract discursive formations were translated into palpable practices at the border. PHS and INS officers applied their expert knowledge shaped by scientific discourses to make predictions about immigrants’ future prospects; their decisions could have dramatic effects on individual immigrants’ lives. The standards of whiteness, economic

³¹ Fairchild, p. 54; Kanstroom, pp. 152–55; Gerstle, *Crucible*, p. 56. See also Zolberg, p. 229.

³² Foucault, *Society*, p. 242. For the constitution of immigrants as objects of knowledge, see Fairchild, pp. 53–82; Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, pp. XXI–XXIII; Lüthi, pp. 95–103, 168–177.

abilities, masculinity, morality and sexuality were defined in the services' daily work and in return affected the discussions about legislative regulation. While the subchapters focus on the investigation of immigrants' bodies and minds, the underlying rationale for all exclusionary categories was that of race.

6.2 Racial classification

Apart from the suggestions the IRL had made in the late 1890s, the most important statistical innovation to serve its purposes was introduced in 1898 when the immigration service remodelled its statistics of the immigrants' origin. A committee consisting of McSweeney, PHS surgeon Safford, Commissioner at Philadelphia J. S. Rodgers, and INS officer Richard Campbell was assigned to investigate new methods. In a first report, Safford informed his colleagues that "a more careful differentiation" of the immigrants' "racial physical characteristics" should be made. Although he believed that he himself could determine these by a quick glance, he noticed other officers' difficulties in classifying people from multi-national empires. McSweeney thus reported that Safford, "with his usual skill and thoroughness", had determined that existing statistics were "practically valueless for the purposes of race and industrial comparison".³³ The committee suggested that immigrants should be classified by a "list of race or people", consisting of forty-three races. This process was not "an ethnological classification" but was supposed to serve "as a clew [sic] to what will be his immediate future after he landed". The classification system was to reflect "recognized communities [...] who have the same aptitudes or industrial capacities" to determine the "racial characteristics from each order or class, [and] its industrial and social value to the country". If an immigrant's race could not be determined unequivocally, additional characteristics such as nationality, religion and mother tongue were also to be considered. The category "color" was added "with special reference to the Negro race" to "secure racial distinctions which would not otherwise be apparent", referring to West Indian immigrants and black Europeans. Following the dominant racial discourse, the list even distinguished between the North Italian and South Italian 'races'. In 1903, with help of the Smithsonian's curator of ethnology, Prof. Otis T. Mason, the races were

³³ INS 52729/9. Campbell later became Chief of the Naturalization Division: Marian L. Smith, 'Race, Nationality, and Reality: INS Administration of Racial Provisions in U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Law Since 1898, Part 1', *Prologue*, 34.2 (2002). For Safford's claim, see his autobiography: Safford, *Immigration Problems*, pp. 6–10.

further grouped into five “grand divisions”. Commissioner-General Powderly immediately approved the new system and ordered new forms to be delivered to all immigrant stations before the start of the fiscal year in July 1898.³⁴

In his annual report, Powderly proudly reported that the “character of immigration” could now be determined more accurately, “distinguishing occupations of each race, its moral, mental, and physical characteristics”. Thus, he concluded, the impact “upon the population and industries of the United States” could be identified as the immigrant “does not lose his race characteristic by coming”.³⁵ Although the new system was implemented in July 1898, it was not codified until the passage of the 1903 Immigration Act, under protest of some Jewish-American groups.³⁶ Subsequently, the list was used in PHS statistics and became the predecessor to the Dillingham Commission’s *Dictionary*. Congress even discussed including race as a category for classifying European immigrants in the 1910 census, a scheme dropped due to Jewish protests.³⁷ Although it was not adopted in the census, the list fulfilled similar functions as the census categories “foreign-born” and “of foreign parentage”. Reflecting and codifying existing racial differentiations, it assumed that ‘race characteristics’ were the most stable and influential factors in the groups’ behaviour. The list thus institutionalized racial distinctions adopted from scientific and public discourse. Like the census, it created ‘statistical races’, all other information could – and would – afterwards be tabulated by race. The knowledge of the exact racial composition of immigration, it was

³⁴ INS 51490/19; 52729/9; Bureau of Immigration, *Report 1903*, p. 113. This contradicts Pearlman’s assumption that the classification system might only have been used in New York until its legal codification in 1903: Joel Pearlman, “‘Race or People’: Federal Race Classifications for Europeans in America, 1898-1913’ (Working Paper No. 230, 2001), pp. 6–7. In its application, the list was reduced to thirty-nine races, see for example Bureau of Immigration, *Report 1904*.

³⁵ Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1899* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), p. 5.

³⁶ The act, among other things, demanded manifests to include nationality and race: Senate and House of Representatives, ‘Act of March 3, 1903’, in *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues*, ed. by LeMay and Barkan, pp. 90–92. The Jewish community was divided on the question of whether they constituted a race. While older Jewish immigrant groups objected, more recently arrived Jewish-Americans and Zionists actually demanded to be classified along racial lines: INS 52363/25; Goldstein, pp. 86–115; Victoria Hattam, *In the Shadow of Race: Jews, Latinos, and Immigrant Politics in the United States* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 21–76: Pearlman, *Race or People*.

³⁷ Pearlman, *Race or People*, pp. 16–28; Joel Pearlman, ‘Views of European Races among the Research Staff of the US Immigration Commission and the Census Bureau, ca. 1910’ (Working Paper No. 648, 2011). For its use in the PHS, see for example INS 51439/24; Public Health Service, *Annual Report 1916*, pp. 214–17. Schneider incorrectly assumes that the list was modelled on the *Dictionary*: Schneider, p. 71.

assumed, would allow for the calculation of its biopolitical effect. On an individual level, the list was used as a tool by INS and PHS officers to assign a racial status to individual immigrants entering the US, ascribing them a certain shade of whiteness before they disappeared into the statistics' anonymity. This assignment also informed PHS and INS officers' examination of individual immigrants, looking for certain diseases or mental and physical characteristics because of the immigrants' race.³⁸

Although Weil's claim that the list became the IRL's "main tool" is exaggerated, he is nonetheless correct that it helped restrictionists to compile statistical data. Hall immediately appreciated the new system's value in an article, stating that the total Jewish immigration could finally be calculated. A year later, Hall listed the new statistics as one of "some small things" that had been accomplished.³⁹ Weil's speculation that the IRL might have been involved in the creation of the list primarily relies on a letter written by McSweeney, urging Powderly to read one of Hall's articles, and McSweeney's statement in the Industrial Commission's hearings that claimed that the new scheme had been approved by "the most diligent students of the immigration question in this country". The article, however, was a purely legal review of questions regarding contract labour and no correspondence with McSweeney about the list can be found in the IRL records.⁴⁰ When the League had succeeded in urging the service to expand its statistics in 1896, it was noted in its annual report. No such statement can be found for the list, Hall did also not comment on it in his statement for the Industrial Commission – therefore, an IRL involvement in the creation of the list seems highly unlikely. Nevertheless, the League would subsequently use the service's illiteracy and arrival statistics tabulated according to the list of races and people. In his 1906 book, Hall used a similar, although not identical system of racial classification. The INS's "ethnic demography", as Fitzgerald calls it, thus indeed provided "nativists and

³⁸ Fairchild, pp. 160–89; Pegler-Gordon, pp. 120–21; Yew, pp. 594–96.

³⁹ Weil, p. 632; Prescott F. Hall, 'Statistics of Immigration', *Publications of the American Statistical Association*, 6.48 (1899), 381–83 (p. 383); Prescott F. Hall, 'Present Status of Immigration Restriction', *Gunton's Magazine*, 18 (1900), 305–10 (p. 308).

⁴⁰ Letter from Edward McSweeney to Terence V. Powderly, June 2, 2898, Library of Congress, Knights of Labor Papers, Reel 71, cited in Weil, p. 632; Prescott F. Hall, 'The Federal Contract Labor Law', *Harvard Law Review*, 11.8 (1898), 525–35; Industrial Commission, p. 91. Weil also speculates that the list might have served as a means of "racial selection when the law did not expressly authorize racial selection", but does not adduce any case files or additional evidence.

eugenicists with evidence for their arguments”. The list itself was slightly modified over the years but stayed in effect until the 1950s.⁴¹

6.3 Predicting immigrants’ future: LPC and poor physique

Apart from classifying immigrants into racial categories, officers at the border had excluded immigrants regarded as “paupers or persons likely to become a public charge” (LPC) since 1891.⁴² In 1903, the INS defined a pauper as “a person who is a burden upon public or private support” from other sources than his immediate family. An immigrant was deemed likely to become a public charge if “a reasonable probability at any future time of such person requiring charitable support” existed. Reasons for this probability could be, among others, “extreme youth or old age; physical infirmities; actual or threatened, including: deaf mutes; prostitutes or male consorts; character of occupation or lack of occupation”.⁴³ The so-called LPC-clause thus confronted INS inspectors with the difficult task of predicting individual immigrants’ future on basic information. In the “personalization of the problem of poverty”, as Calavita calls it, his age, profession, financial situation, the presence or absence of family and friends in the US and the country’s current demand for labour, all became factors that could decide an immigrant’s future.⁴⁴

The discretionary power of INS officers soon led them to rely on medical certificates. After 1903, PHS officers were advised that Class B certifications served as “conclusive or contributory evidence to justify the exclusion”. Medical expertise thus was to enable BSIs to come to “an opinion as to what degree the disease or deformity will affect the immigrant’s ability to earn a living”. Among the most common reasons for certification, the PHS listed hernia, heart diseases, senility, nervous affections, deformities, defective eyesight and so-called “poor physique”, the latter making immigrants “unable to earn a living at manual labor”.⁴⁵ The

⁴¹Fitzgerald, p. 125; IRL, *Immigration Figures for 1902*, Publication no. 36 [1903?] and subsequent publications of annual figures. See also IRL, *General Immigration Statistics*, Publication no. 48, 1908 [?]; *Brief in Favor of the Illiteracy Test*, Publication no. 56, 1910 [?]; Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, p. 342.

⁴² Senate and House of Representatives, ‘Act of March 3, 1891’, in *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues*, ed. by LeMay and Barkan, pp. 66–70 (pp. 66–67).

⁴³ INS 52495/18.

⁴⁴ Calavita, pp. 70, 88.

⁴⁵ Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions, 1903*, pp. 5-6, 10-13. See also William Williams, “Definition LPC”, 1 February 1905, Williams Papers, Box 1.

combination of medical inspection and social and economic prognoses soon made the LPC-clause the most important category for exclusion.

The idea that new immigrants were of inherently inferior health or physique had been propagated by the IRL since the 1890s and was common even among liberal progressives.⁴⁶ After the turn of the century this view also began to pervade medical discourse and PHS ranks. PHS surgeon Allan McLaughlin wrote in a 1903 article that new immigrants were “not only far below the average American in intellect”, but also “physically inferior”. Three years later, Thomas Darlington, member of the New York Board of Health, added that the “real danger” came from “the alien of poor physique”. Citing Hall to point out the importance of heredity, Darlington claimed that “the illiterate, physically unfit immigrants” endangered the quality of the American population: “the greater evil lies in their offspring, who, by inheritance and environment, perpetuate the poor physique and non-disease-resisting qualities of their progenitors”.⁴⁷

At a time when the IRL had failed to have the literacy test passed by Congress, the League regarded medical inspection and the application of the LPC-clause as opportunity to exclude new immigrants at higher rates than those from North-western Europe. The League suggested to INS and PHS officers to make “low vitality and poor physique” a reason for mandatory exclusion. Minors, parents and female immigrants joining their husbands were to be exempted from this rule; immigrants issued a “poor physique” certificate were to be denied the right to appeal except on ground of faulty diagnosis. Responses were mostly encouraging. PHS Surgeon George Stoner thought the amendment to be “in line of progress”. If a “certificate for disease affecting ability to earn a living would carry the same weight” as Class A certificates, he wrote, exclusion rates would rise significantly. McLaughlin agreed with the League that medical certificates were not “very effective under the present law, as from 70 to 90 per cent of the immigrants so afflicted are admitted by the boards of special inquiry”. In his opinion, the proposed

⁴⁶ See for example Robert Hunter, *Poverty* (New York: Macmillan, 1904), pp. 261–317.

⁴⁷ Thomas Darlington, ‘The Medico-Economic Aspect of the Immigration Problem’, *North American Review*, 183.605 (1906), 1262–71 (pp. 1264–65); Allan McLaughlin, ‘The American’s Distrust of the Immigrant’, *Popular Science Monthly* (1903), 230–36 (p. 234). Straus inquired with Watchorn about the validity of Darlington’s criticism who replied that most of his data and conclusions were incorrect: INS 51467/1B.

amendment would be impartial since “the physical standard will exclude men of all races who are not fit to cope with our strenuous life”.⁴⁸

The INS’s reaction was less enthusiastic. Williams emphasized that he had ordered the clause to be applied “as rigidly as it was possible to do so”, making the amendment unnecessary. W. C. Billings, Commissioner at Boston and a regular correspondent with the IRL, while sympathetic to the proposed idea, thought that a “strict enforcement” of the clause would suffice. Commissioner-General Sargent, in contrast, had already stated in 1903 that “those in any way physically disabled [...] or by bodily deformity, accidental or congenital, should be denied admission”.⁴⁹ Communicating with him in April 1905, Ward underlined that making poor physique a mandatory cause for exclusion could replace the “obviously impossible sharply to limit and define” LPC-clause, and should be applied “to its limit” to select “the fathers and mothers of future American children”. In reply, Sargent explained that medical certificates were “construed with reasonable strictness”, forwarding a copy of the instructions for PHS and INS officers about the poor physique clause. They included a definition of “perhaps one of the most important [medical terms] employed”, provided by Dr Schereschewsky, a PHS officer stationed at Baltimore:

A certificate of this nature implies that the alien concerned is [...] undersized, poorly developed, with feeble heart action, arteries below the standard size, that he is physically degenerate, and as such, not only unlikely to become a desirable citizen, but also very likely to transmit his undesirable qualities to his offspring, should he, unfortunately for the country in which he is domiciled, have any.⁵⁰

In instructions issued in March 1905, it was added that “in admitting such aliens, not only do we increase the number of public charges [...] but we admit likewise progenitors to this country whose offspring will reproduce, often in an exaggerated degree, the physical degeneracy of their parents”. The PHS and INS thus adopted the eugenic rationale and made it one of the main considerations for admission.⁵¹

The PHS as a whole, however, quickly grew uncomfortable with the fact that their medical diagnoses were used by the INS to make predictions about the

⁴⁸ IRL Records (1056, folder 3).

⁴⁹ IRL Records (916, 999, 1056, folder 3); Bureau of Immigration, *Recommendations 1903*, p. 4. For Billings’ cooperation with the League, see IRL Records (129, 916); IRL Minutes, 23 January 1904, 27 January, 24 February 1908. In 1921, Billings even read a paper at the Second International Congress of Eugenics on “The Medical Application of the Immigration Law”: PHS Records, Correspondence File, folder 2000.

⁵⁰ INS 51490/19; IRL Records (916).

⁵¹ INS 51490/19.

immigrants' economic prospects. In 1907, PHS and INS personnel met with Oscar Straus to determine the meaning of the poor physique clause. Surgeon-General Walter Wyman suggested dropping the term since it was "not a diagnosis", "perhaps a misnomer" and "has been considered by the board of inquiry as a stronger term than was ever intended by the medical branch". Instead, he argued, PHS officers should concentrate on other categories listed in the medical handbook and always consider if physical defects really affected the immigrant's ability to earn a living. PHS officers attending the conference also disapproved of Sargent's suggestion that they should assist the boards "in reaching a conclusion" about the immigrants' admission. While they agreed that doctors should continue to clarify on certificates for the BSIs, they insisted on providing a purely medical diagnosis. The conference thus reached the consensus that certificates should be limited to medical opinion and that the BSIs alone should decide if immigrants would succeed economically.⁵²

Although the IRL continued to lobby publicly for a mandatory exclusion of poor physique cases, the 1907 Immigration Act only added mental and physical defects "of a nature which may affect the ability of such alien to earn a living" to the list of possible reasons for exclusion. The revised 1910 edition of the PHS handbook reflected the PHS's continued unease with the vague phrasing of the poor physique clause, replacing poor physique with the categories "permanently defective nutrition" and "marked defective and muscular development". At the stations, the more differentiated categories of "poor physical development", "poor muscular development" and "lack of physical development" were applied. These categories remained prevalent, representing between eight and 27% of certifications issued between 1911 and 1916 and only declined in importance after the war.⁵³ While the LPC-clause continued to be applied, the IRL was disappointed that its suggestion to make poor physique a mandatory reason for exclusion had not been accepted.⁵⁴ IRL members interpreted the law's intent as excluding all immigrants whose ability to earn a living was affected by any bodily defect. In practice, however, it was only

⁵² INS 51490/19. For a discussion of the conference, see also Fairchild, pp. 165–68; Lüthi, pp. 271–74.

⁵³ Hall, *Legislation on Immigration*, pp. 86–88; Senate and House of Representatives, 'Act of February 20, 1907: To Regulate the Immigration of Aliens into the United States', in *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues*, ed. by LeMay and Barkan, pp. 97–98; Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions, 1910*, p. 19; Fairchild, pp. 167–68. In a letter to president-elect Taft, Hall claimed that "I happened to be the person who originally drew this provision in regard to mental and physical defectives": IRL Records (801).

⁵⁴ The IRL kept on lobbying unsuccessfully for this proposal, see for example IRL Records (1063, folder 2).

applied if BSIs decided that an immigrant was limited in his specific occupation. The IRL criticized the clause as too “vague and elastic” and claimed that immigrants were deceiving the boards by matching existing defects to pretended occupations: “large numbers of the Jews now coming in affected with hernia and other diseases, claim to be tailors”, Hall wrote. The League thus came to realize that the application of the law highly depended on high-rank officials within the INS who designed the bureaucratic guidelines.⁵⁵

In January 1905, Williams resigned after Theodore Roosevelt had declined to remove a presidential protégé from the service. Roosevelt accepted his resignation “most reluctantly”; Sargent perceived it as a “personal loss”. Ward regretted that the League lost “a valuable advisor in matters of new legislation” and thanked Williams that he had always been “more than ready to help us with any information”.⁵⁶ He was replaced with Robert Watchorn, an English immigrant with a labour-union background who had several years in the INS, indicating the growing professionalization of the service. With new record numbers of immigrants arriving and less than 1% excluded, the League was alarmed by his more lenient stance towards immigrants and his opposition to the literacy test. When Straus was appointed Secretary of Commerce and Labor in 1906, the IRL concentrated on criticizing both on a putatively too lax application of the law, the high number of appeals granted and the practice of admitting aliens on bond, making the poor physique clause “a dead letter” that had been “largely nullified”, as the League stated.⁵⁷ In its criticism, the IRL again emphasized the clause’s eugenic aspect. The immigrants’ physique, Ward wrote, was “a matter of the very highest importance for the health and future of the race”. Therefore, immigration laws should be applied “to exclude more aliens of such low vitality and poor physique that they are eugenically

⁵⁵ Hall, *Legislation on Immigration*, p. 86; IRL Records (801). The NLIL, on the other hand, correctly assumed that the poor physique clause had originated from the IRL and particularly aimed at Jewish immigrants: Neuringer, p. 94.

⁵⁶ Roosevelt to Williams, 18 January 1905; Sargent to Williams, 16 January 1905; Ward to Williams, 17 January 1905, Williams Papers.

⁵⁷ Hall, “Eugenics, Ethics and Immigration”; Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘New Immigration Act’, *North American Review*, 185 (1907), 587–93 (p. 589); Cannato, pp. 162–76. The number of deportations under Watchorn declined when he repealed an order issued by Williams that had required immigrants to have at least \$10 and money to travel to their final destination: Pitkin, p. 56. For Watchorn’s reform of the Canadian border control before his tenure as Commissioner of Ellis Island, see Ettinger, pp. 82–84.

undesirable for parenthood". Ward directly linked eugenic segregation to the immigration of people with physical defects:

Better to have 100,000 aliens spending all their lives in American almshouses, insane asylums or prisons than to have 500 physically weak, defective and degenerate aliens spending their lives in sweat-shops or factories, and reproducing their kind, to hand down these qualities of degeneracy and of poor physique to succeeding generations.⁵⁸

The application of the poor physique clause, he wrote, was flawed in that it only considered the immigrants' economic future. Instead, Ward argued, eugenic consequences should be evaluated in admitting such aliens on bond: "Bonds will not prevent them from breeding. We constantly speak of the need of more 'hands' to do our labor. We forget that we are importing, not 'hands' alone, but bodies also".⁵⁹

Watchorn, on the other hand, was irritated that the League had started to criticize him immediately after he had taken office. Defending himself, Watchorn wrote to Hall that the latter must have been mistaken in assuming that "the law is no longer intelligently, efficiently and honestly enforced". In 1905, he assured Ward that he "could not more heartily identify myself with the sentiment [for stricter regulation] you have expressed" and that he had never admitted "defective aliens" out of "misplaced sympathy". Writing again in 1908, Watchorn adopted the League's eugenic argument: although only a third of those certified with poor physique were excluded, he explained, the number was higher than during Williams' tenure. The low rate of exclusions, Watchorn wrote, was a result of his personal order to send every single certificate case to BSIs. Those admitted by the boards, he emphasized, "were not prospective progenitors, for the most part".⁶⁰ Despite these explanations, as well as Watchorn's claim that the rising number of PHS officers and "increased vigilance and the more careful scrutiny" had resulted in more certifications, the IRL continued to criticize him and Straus.⁶¹ In 1906, Roosevelt appointed IRL vice-president Reynolds to investigate the state of affairs at Ellis Island to appease Watchorn's critics. To the IRL's disappointment, he did not find

⁵⁸ Ward, *Sane Methods*; Ward, *New Immigration Act*, p. 589.

⁵⁹ Ward, *Our Immigration Laws*, p. 24.

⁶⁰ IRL Records (916, 958).

⁶¹ IRL Minutes, 10, 24 February 1908; INS 50627/16.

grave faults in his administration, but only criticized the lack of adequate facilities and staff in the examination and treatment of mental patients.⁶²

Two years later, Hall tried to incriminate Straus using his political contacts. He wrote to Lodge that Straus's application of the poor physique clause, "originally intended as a physical test", was "assimilated to the L.P.C. class, and has become an economical test". According to Billings and Assistant Commissioner Hurley, Hall wrote, Straus exerted pressure on the PHS to not certify aliens. This policy and his frequent admission of aliens on appeal, Hall wrote, effectively made the clause "a complete failure". In a letter to Roosevelt, Hall complained that Straus previously had been "bitterly opposed to this clause" and was granting the appeals of two-thirds of all immigrants certified with physical defects. Straus's leadership, Hall continued, had "rapidly demoralized" the INS, affecting all subordinates with his opposition "to any effective immigration restriction", as exemplified by Sargent's change in attitude.⁶³ When Roosevelt enquired into the validity of Hall's claims, Lodge replied that Hall was "both honest and able but he is extreme and does not understand that it is one thing to make general charges on hearsay and another to sustain them by proof". The Dillingham Commission, he explained, had investigated the number of appeals and found that "reversals had *not* increased under Mr. Straus".⁶⁴

The League finally succeeded when Watchorn was up for reappointment in late 1908 and allegations of corruption surfaced. Although it is not entirely clear how the IRL obtained the information or how influential its publication was, Hall reported to Roosevelt that Watchorn had blackmailed a caterer into paying for private party in exchange for keeping his licence for Ellis Island. In addition to his "incompetency and inhumanity" towards immigrants detained for mental examination assumedly uncovered by Reynolds, Hall accused Watchorn of forging his naturalization papers, stealing from superiors while working for a labour union

⁶² For the investigation and replies from the INS and PHS to the accusations, see PHS Correspondence File, folder 219; INS 51467/X1 to /X7; 51467/1E. Patten accompanied Reynolds to Ellis Island but was obviously unable to sway his report: IRL Minutes, 6 October 1906. Nonetheless, the IRL lobbied unsuccessfully for him to succeed Watchorn: IRL Minutes, 8 March 1909; INS 52423/13A.

⁶³ IRL Records (608, 801). Sargent indeed tamed his rhetoric about the new immigration's putative negative effects after Straus took office. He died in 1908 after suffering several strokes, reportedly frustrated about Straus's conduct of appeals: Cannato, pp. 186–87. He was succeeded by Daniel J. Keefe. Billings had complained to Hall that Straus repeatedly had reduced bonds: IRL Records (916).

⁶⁴ Lodge to Roosevelt, 26 June 1908, Cabot Lodge, *Selections Vol. II*, p. 306, original emphasis. Actually, the number of appeals rejected had dropped from 52% to 44% during Straus's first year as secretary: Cannato, p. 184.

and illegally admitting immigrants while serving in the INS's lower ranks. Roosevelt withdrew Watchorn's nomination but left office before charges had been investigated.⁶⁵ Taft had already decided to replace Straus; when Watchorn realized that he had lost his most important supporters, he resigned immediately. In his autobiography, he confirmed that the "Restriction Immigration League [sic] of Boston was malevolently opposed to my administration and was very vociferous in its demands for my retirement" but claimed that Taft later revealed that he would have reappointed him after he had been cleared of the charges. Instead, Taft made German-American Charles Nagel new Secretary of Commerce and Labor and nominated Williams for a second term.⁶⁶

When Williams returned to Ellis Island, he made the exclusion of 'defective' or 'undesirable' immigrants his top priority. He criticized that existing laws only barred "what may be termed 'scum'" and ordered that only immigrants in possession of \$25 and a railroad ticket to their final destination should be admitted. This money test, not founded on the law, was intended to be a "humane notice to intending immigrants". It was immediately attacked by pro-immigrant groups such as the HIAS; after less than two months, Nagel instructed Williams to repeal the order.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, Williams encouraged staff to apply immigration laws as strictly as possible. Experience, he explained in an INS paper, had shown that new immigrants were more likely to be "in poor physical, mental and financial condition, more of them are illiterate and more of them possess a low standard of living". Therefore, the importance of the medical inspection could "hardly be exaggerated" and the BSIs should determine if the immigrant would be "self-supportive before his funds are

⁶⁵ IRL Records (801); "Recalls Watchorn's Name", *New York Times*, 6 January 1909; "The Watchorn Holdup", *The Journal* [Washington, D.C.], February 1909. While the allegations first appeared in January 1909, Hall did not write to Roosevelt until late February. However, in retrospect he claimed that he had handed documents proving Watchorn's guilt to investigator Herbert Knox Smith: IRL Records (287, 801). Discussing the results of the Dillingham Commission, Lee also reminded Hall that the IRL should emphasize its "discoveries that led to the retirement of Mr. Watchorn, whose large and palpable malfeasance in office had escaped the acumen of the Immigration Commission": Lee to Hall, 1 March 1910, Lee Papers.

⁶⁶ IRL Records (801); "Watchorn Resigns; Forced out, he says", *New York Times*, 25 April 1909; Cannato, pp. 191–93; Pitkin, pp. 83–85; Robert Watchorn, *Autobiography* (Oklahoma City: Robert Watchorn Charities, 1958), pp. 149–52.

⁶⁷ "Our Shores Barred to Foreign Outcasts", *New York Times*, 10 July 1909; INS 52572/8; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1909* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), pp. 132–33; Leonard, pp. 116–20; Cannato, pp. 195–204. Williams might have been inspired by an English ruling that applied a similar LPC rule to immigrants possessing less than £5, included in an INS report on the enforcement of the British Aliens Act: INS 52332/1, folder 2.

exhausted”.⁶⁸ In his strict application of the LPC-clause, Williams was encouraged by IRL members. Lee emphasized that such exclusions served the country more than “all of the charities put together” and lauded him for rejecting “physically degenerate and defective aliens – an enforcement which shines so conspicuously by contrast with the methods of his immediate predecessors”. Similarly, Reynolds felt “deep satisfaction” with Williams’ policies that eliminated what he “had believed to be the weakest in the previous administration”.⁶⁹

For immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, Williams’ policies could have dramatic consequences. Medical certification remained essential for the application of the LPC-clause, often framed by assumptions about race, class and gender. The LPC-clause was frequently applied to exclude Jewish immigrants in particular, as demonstrated by the case of the Russian Jew Jacob Mendel. In 1910, he was certified with “narrow chest, winged scapulae, [and] deficient expansion” by the PHS. A professional drummer, he was ruled to be “physically defective” and unable to earn his living. Despite his insistence that he did not play a wind instrument, was only twenty-three years of age and skilled in his trade, his appeal was rejected and he was deported. Similarly, an Italian pastry cook was excluded in 1916 for “poor development, curvature of the spine, deformity of the chest” although he assured the board that he had earned his own living in Italy and his family had significant property in the US. Immigrants were also excluded as LPC due to bad vision, “lack of physical development” or bodily deformities.⁷⁰ The fact that inspectors “frequently racialized their inspection of male fitness”, to use Schneider’s words, also helped to construct concepts of disability and able-bodiedness that, as Douglas Baynton has pointed out, often disregarded immigrants’ actual abilities.⁷¹ These case files indeed indicate that many immigrants who, despite physical ‘defects’, had been self-sufficient in their home countries, were excluded for a reputed danger of

⁶⁸ “Comm. Williams will Keep Out ‘Parasites’”, *Boston Advocate*, 10 June 1910; INS 52516/1A.

⁶⁹ “Does the Country Need More Immigrant Labor at Present?”, *Boston Sunday Globe*, 15 August 1909; Lee to Williams, 28 July 1909; Reynolds to Williams, 22 June 1909, Williams Papers, Box 1.

⁷⁰ INS 52880/115; 53798/73; 53385/180; 54050/911; 54050/927. All of the immigrants’ names used in this thesis have been changed. For discourses about Jewish immigrants and mental and physical defects, see Fairchild, pp. 167–68; Kraut, pp. 136–65; Lüthi, pp. 196–247.

⁷¹ Douglas C. Baynton, ‘Defectives in the Land: Disability and American Immigration Policy, 1882-1924’, *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 24.3 (2005), 31–44; Schneider, p. 85. See also Kevin R. Johnson, *The “Huddled Masses” Myth: Immigration and Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), pp. 106–08.

economic failure. In its application, medical diagnoses and the LPC-clause thus often denied full whiteness to arriving immigrants if they seemed to not be able to fulfil the bodily standards of the role of the male breadwinner, regardless of their actual economic prospects.

After 1905, PHS officers began to apply to certify immigrants with “lack of sexual development”, although it was never added to the medical handbook. The category was used to exclude persons whose “sexual organs remain practical like those of an infant” or who were classified as hermaphrodites. In its application, PHS officers conflated bodily characteristics with putative deviant sexuality or mental defects. The “lack of sexual development”, PHS surgeon Stoner wrote about a nineteen-year old Greek orphan travelling to his uncle in 1912, was accompanied by “mental weakness” and could lead to sexual perversion. Unfamiliarity with city life, he went on, could result in mental instability, making the boy likely to become a public charge. In certifying a 15-year old Italian boy, Surgeon Oakley added that mental problems in such cases were due to “inability to satisfactorily perform sexual congress”. Such persons, he wrote, were likely “to become addicted to unnatural practices in this respect, with accompanying mental deterioration, which in some cases may lead to actual insanity”. Although relatives of these immigrants guaranteed employment, both boys were deported as LPC. These cases seem to indicate a wider pattern since Reed pointed out in an article published in 1912 that the “lack of physical and sexual development” was prevalent among “immigrants from southern and southeastern Europe”.⁷² This classification was thus not only used to exclude those who did not fit easily into the gender binary, but also represented contemporary concerns about whiteness and masculinity. Since the prevalent discourse defined masculinity by physical strength and economic success indicating mental stability, willpower and vigour, the lack of fully-developed male genitalia thus implied for PHS surgeons that such immigrants must lack these manly virtues.

As these cases indicate, the application of the LPC-clause was not limited to bodily defects or predictions about the immigrants’ future economic success, but also entailed the re-inscription of notions of the prevailing social, moral and sexual order.

⁷² INS 53248/18; 53452/952; Reed, *Scientific Medical Inspection*; Baynton, pp. 37–38. Since “lack of sexual development” was no official category, no numbers on persons excluded on these grounds exist.

Individuals who were regarded as unable to ever fulfil the ideals of the white family life, reproduction and orderly self-conduct were excluded at the border. Notions of sexuality were “coded as heterosexual and organized around biological reproduction”, a fact that mirrors Eithne Luibhéid’s and Deidre Moloney’s observation that border policies re-enforced the predominant model of the heteronormative family.⁷³ The gender dimension of INS and PHS policies was also reflected in the exclusion of unmarried and pregnant women or immigrants who had extramarital relations either as LPC or for “moral turpitude”.⁷⁴ When Emilia Raginetti, an unmarried and pregnant 22-year old Italian woman, arrived at Ellis Island in 1908, she was certified with an “abdominal tumor” – she was four months pregnant. She stated that she had not been aware of her pregnancy but admitted to “intimate relations” with a man in Italy. While INS officers agreed that she should be deported, they were unsure about the reason: was the immigrant LPC or was “unlawful sexual intercourse” to be classified as “moral turpitude”? In reply, Secretary Straus wrote that not the pregnancy, but “the very act itself” made extra-marital sex a crime or misdemeanour involving moral turpitude, referring to a definition issued a year earlier by his department’s solicitor. This definition ruled that such a crime was to be found in the “malum in se and not merely [in the] malum prohibitum”, thus it did not necessarily have to be a violation of law. Instead, every act “contrary to the moral law” that resulted in the offender’s public disgrace and was accompanied by “a vicious motive or a corrupt mind” could be classified as such. The woman was thus deported on grounds of moral turpitude.⁷⁵ While similar cases were mostly ruled excluded, women or couples could sometimes benefit from humanitarian considerations. When a Serbian unmarried woman arrived in 1909 with a three year old child to join her lover, she explained that they had not been

⁷³ Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, p. 3; Deidre M. Moloney, ‘Women, Sexual Morality and Economic Dependency in Early U.S. Deportation Policy’, *Journal of Women's History*, 18.2 (2006), 95–122. See also Friedman-Kasaba, pp. 102–04; Gabaccia, *Other Side*, pp. 36–40; Eithne Luibhéid, ‘Introduction: Queering Migration and Citizenship’, in *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, ed. by Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú, JR. (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), pp. IX–XLVI.

⁷⁴ Cases of alcoholism or drug abuse were also included in these categories. A Mexican farmhand, for example, who was found in “a comatose condition” in a soft-drink parlour after having smoked “some Cannibas [sic]” was deported with his wife as LPC: INS 55075/4. For an Australian seaman classified as alcoholic and deported as a LPC-case, see INS 55074/31. In another case, a man was deported after a drunken brawl. On order of Commissioner-General Keefe, he was not deported for a crime involving moral turpitude, but as LPC for his “quarrelsome disposition” that was likely to get him into trouble again: INS 53248/51.

⁷⁵ INS 51787/95; 53248/51.

allowed to marry because of their age. Commissioner-General Keefe argued that no adultery had been committed and that fornication in itself was not “at common law a crime or misdemeanor”. Their premarital sex, he explained, while probably being “regarded as sexually immoral” by American standards, only represented an “unmoral rather than immoral” behaviour if their home country’s moral standard was considered. Thus, she was allowed to land after she had married the father of her child at Ellis Island.⁷⁶

Considerations about correct moral conduct were also influenced by the immigrant’s class and gender. In 1911, a widow from Honduras, seven months pregnant and accompanied by her daughter and a nurse, arrived at New Orleans. Since the 1910 PHS handbook had added pregnancy as a LPC category, she could have been excluded on arrival. In contrast to most deported cases, however, she was affluent and frankly admitted that she had come to the US to hide her pregnancy from her family. The station’s commissioner explained that “our ideas and standards of morals differ widely” and that due to her wealth, she and her children would not become public charges. In contrast, Keefe ordered her deported since he assumed that she might abandon her child, automatically an American citizen, and leave it in the US. His decision was overruled by Secretary Nagel who explained that she legally could neither be deported as immoral nor as LPC-case.⁷⁷

Another case demonstrates that an immigrant’s chances of being permitted were much higher if male and affluent. While men were rarely excluded for extramarital relations or illegitimate children, an English man living in Massachusetts with his family was held at the Canadian border in 1908. The superintendent of a mill soon admitted that the woman accompanying him, an American citizen, was his extramarital affair. The INS inspector immediately inquired with his superior if the alien was excludable as having committed a crime of moral turpitude. Commissioner-General Sargent, although admitting that “the man’s conduct from the moral point of view is, of course, to be condemned”, sustained the appeal. Secretary Straus, however, disapproved and ruled the man excluded until his employer wrote him that the alien was affluent and “of excellent

⁷⁶ INS 52388/59, original emphasis. For this and similar cases, see also Cannato, pp. 264–78.

⁷⁷ Treasury Department, *Book of Instructions, 1910*, p. 20; INS 53313/2.

character". After considering the letter, Straus revised his decision and admitted the man.⁷⁸

The force of the law could thus be mitigated by class status and, sometimes, humanitarian considerations. However, border controls reinstated prevalent moral and social norms and conceptions about gender roles and sexuality, excluding those perceived as not adhering to the moral standards of whiteness. Simultaneously, the application of the law also contributed to the definition of the standard of whiteness by determining its borders. Ascribing men the prime economic responsibility for their families, immigration policies reinstated notions of male breadwinners and female domesticity, negating the economic realities of many working-class families. Exclusions on the grounds of poor physique, the LPC-clause and moral conduct were a combination of economic and eugenic concerns about the immigrants' health, bodily abilities, probable economic success, and their potential offspring's 'quality'. Although the IRL did not succeed in making poor physique a mandatory reason for exclusion it had at least Watchorn replaced by Williams. More important, however, was the adoption of the eugenic rationale – at least by to a certain degree – by PHS and INS personnel. Its application in both administrative decisions and in the services' contributions to public discourse further spread notions of new immigrants' putative racial inferiority and their dysgenic effect. After 1910, the discourse began shifting from asserted physical defects to concerns about immigrants' assumed mental inferiority.

6.4 The menace of the feeble-minded immigrant

Due to the emerging eugenic movement, mental examination at the border became a central theme in discussions about immigration. As mentioned above, eugenic family studies illustrated one of psychiatry's central presumptions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: that insanity, criminality, and deviance were hereditary. As Foucault points out, psychiatry did not only constitute normality but also the abnormal as "individuals who, as carriers of a condition, a stigmata, or any defect whatsoever, may more or less randomly transmit to their heirs the unpredictable consequences of the evil, or rather the non-normal". Eugenics and psychoanalysis, on the other hand, promised to give psychiatry "a hold on the world

⁷⁸ INS 51807/86.

of instincts” by identifying and containing these defects.⁷⁹ While Foucault applied these insights to the identification of the state’s internal dangers only, they are equally valid for medical examination at the border. Since it was assumed that the feeble-minded or ‘mentally deficient’ always carried the potentiality of pauperism, criminality, or deviance, the objectivation of immigrants in medical procedures promised to prevent their landing and their eventual blending with the American population.

Demands for more thorough mental examinations were articulated by PHS and INS members alike, often with reference to immigration’s purported eugenic consequences. After Williams had returned to office, he continued his policy of lobbying for additional funding. As Reynolds had criticized in his report, the facilities for the detention and examination of mentally affected immigrants were insufficient and, despite the erection of new buildings, would remain so until the war. Williams emphasized in his reports that without “proper medical examination”, regulations could not be enforced correctly. The small number of medical officers made it “humanly impossible for them to detect all physical and mental defects”, he wrote in 1911. The same year, Commissioner-General Keefe, who believed immigration from “the Teutonic and Celtic countries” to be “much more desirable” than the new immigration, warned that mental defects were “especially serious, both for the present and for the future, the latter because of the frequency with which such defects are transmitted by parents to children”.⁸⁰

Such critique was not limited to high-rank officials and government publications, but was also voiced by officers in scientific and popular journals. In his report for 1905, PHS officer Thomas Salmon had already complained that although 75% of immigrants passed through Ellis Island, only 50% of certifications for insanity were issued there.⁸¹ PHS officer Reed warned that “mental wrecks” were allowed to land due to lack of personnel, facilities and a lax enforcement of the law. Quoting Prescott Hall and alluding to eugenic family studies, Reed claimed that the

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 131, 137-166, 316.

⁸⁰ INS 52903/29A, 53139/7C; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1911* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), pp. 124; 147; Pitkin, pp. 105–09.

⁸¹ INS 53139/7C; Bureau of Immigration, *Report 1911*, pp. 124; 147; Public Health Service, *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health and Marine-Hospital Service for the Fiscal Year 1905* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), p. 140.

correct enforcement of medical regulations would exclude immigrants from “the Mediterranean countries [...] as well as most Hebrews, Magyars, Armenians and Turks” automatically “to a sufficient extent”. The battle against “ignorance, indifference, disease and degeneracy”, he explained, formed “the essence of the newer patriotism”. Every American should thus “awake to his civic responsibility” and support the PHS to protect “our inherited stock of good American manhood”.⁸² While Reed stressed the duties of citizenship to conserve a gendered national identity, his colleague E. K. Sprague emphasized the eugenic aspect. In 1913, he wrote that detecting mental deficiencies was of “vital importance” since eugenic family studies had demonstrated the devastating effect of “germ plasm with criminalistic tendencies in succeeding generations”. Since new immigrants were “reproductive beyond the average”, he argued, “measures to prevent the flooding of our country with such undesirable material” were essential. This, however, could be easily accomplished: if only fifty cent per immigrant would be spent on the PHS, he estimated, the staff could be increased by one hundred officers. The same amount, he argued, would also suffice to fund Davenport’s plan of inspection abroad. Without such an increase in spending, however, he assumed that only 5% of ‘defectives’ and a quarter of the insane were actually detected at the border.⁸³

The demand for an increase of the PHS’s appropriation was not limited to the services. In the new century’s first decade, medical and psychiatric institutions and associations in New York State became increasingly concerned about the rising number of foreign or foreign-born inmates. Since a high proportion of immigrants stayed in the Empire State after landing, physicians, psychiatrists and administrators argued that it had to bear an unfair share of the burden caused by an improper federal enforcement of the law.⁸⁴ While in 1906 Thomas Darlington of the New York Board of Health still aimed his criticism at the admission of poor physique cases that supposedly added to the burden of charitable and penal institutions, the focus slowly began to shift towards the ‘mentally defective’.⁸⁵ One of the most

⁸² Reed, *The Medical Side*, pp. 387, 390, 392; Reed, *Immigration and Public Health*, pp. 313, 325; Alfred C. Reed, ‘Going Through Ellis Island’, *Popular Science Monthly*, January (1913), 5–18 (p. 9).

⁸³ E. K. Sprague, ‘Medical Examination of Immigrants’, *The Survey*, June 21 (1913), 420–22.

⁸⁴ For a detailed discussion, see Dowbiggin, pp. 191–231.

⁸⁵ Darlington For an article of the commission’s president on insanity rates of South Italian immigrants, see Albert W. Ferris, ‘Italian Immigration and Insanity’, *The American Journal of Insanity*, 65.April (1909), 717–30.

active institutions in this regard was the New York State Commission on Lunacy and its Board of Alienists. In 1905, the Board had already requested to hire trained alienists to improve inspections at Ellis Island, a demand supported by Williams and New York's governor. Straus, Sargent and Surgeon-General Stoner, however, only agreed to allow three alienists appointed and paid for by the Board to sit in on BSI meetings. Until 1913, the PHS at Ellis Island would employ only six officers trained in the diagnosis of mental disorders.⁸⁶

The IRL quickly realized the potential for new allies to be found in these associations. In 1903, the League had first been able to gain the State Commission's support for its bill. After 1909, when the Board of Alienists campaigned more aggressively for the stricter application of the law, the cooperation intensified. The IRL was in close contact with the Boards' leading members, received their publications and frequently quoted them in its own material.⁸⁷ As Dowbiggin has pointed out, most psychiatrists were interested in eugenics for professional rather than ideological reasons. The League understood that this interest could be used to include them in wider discussions about immigration restriction.⁸⁸ In the ABA's immigration committee's reports, Ward and Hall repeatedly emphasized the close connection between mental standards and eugenic policies. Ward suggested incorporating official PHS and INS reports to stress that "there is recognition of the eugenic aspects elsewhere than in our own minds". Consequently, the 1912 report claimed that "imbeciles" and "alien feeble-minded", admitted because of the lack of adequate personnel were a menace if not "prevented from breeding". Two years later, the committee complained about the "rapidly increasing number of mentally defective aliens at large in our communities, in no way segregated, and free to reproduce their kind", quoting Sprague's claim that only 5% of 'defectives' were detected. According to the report, evidence that "defective aliens" were landed knowingly on appeal by the Secretary existed. The authors thus admonished readers

⁸⁶ INS 52320/1; Reed, *Going Through Ellis Island*, p. 11. "Alienist" was a commonly used term for psychiatrists.

⁸⁷ IRL Records (187, 620, 721, 813, 1063, folders 1, 5, 6, 1130, folder 2), IRL, *Report 1903*; Patten to Lee, 8 November 1911, Lee Papers; for quotes from the Commission's reports and publications, see for example IRL, *Present Status*; Lee, "Immigration Inspection", *Springfield Republican*, 3 December 1913.

⁸⁸ Dowbiggin, p. 212.

to “attack every official, no matter how high a position he may hold, who lets down the bars and weakens the enforcement of the laws to the detriments of the race”.⁸⁹

Psychiatric associations concurred for the greater part with the IRL’s political demands. In a memorandum prepared in 1912, Goodwin Brown, counsel to the State Commission on Lunacy, claimed that the state had spent more than twenty-five million on insane immigrants in its institutions since 1882 and that more than 50% of inmates and patients in Greater New York were foreign-born. The Commission therefore demanded that the federal state should either reimburse the State of New York or enforce immigration laws more stringently.⁹⁰ In its annual reports, the State Commission published extensive statistics that differentiated all categories into American and foreign-born and gave information on the number of diagnosed foreigners in relation to their share of the state population. The ratio of first admissions to state hospitals in 1911/12, the report pointed out, was twice as high for foreign-born inhabitants of the State of New York compared to that of native Americans.⁹¹ Psychiatrists thus reiterated the claim the League had made since the 1890s, namely, that new immigrants’ share of patients was larger than that of the native population. Hall, however, complained in a letter to Davenport in 1912 that the prevalence of specific forms of insanity in particular ‘races’ was not published. He claimed to have seen some data “in transfer” but did not dare to publish it since it would get “local officials into trouble”. Hall’s request for statistics on immigrants’ origin certified with physical and mental defects but admitted on appeal also led to a prolonged conflict with INS official Larned who refused access to the material. An outraged Hall threatened to complain to the President and for years to come, the IRL unsuccessfully attempted to use its political contacts to remove Larned or to obstruct his promotion.⁹²

The accuracy of statistical data was only rarely questioned. Surprisingly, one such criticism came from Alfred Reed. The staunch restrictionist argued that Hall’s claim that immigrants furnished 48% of the insane although they only represented

⁸⁹ IRL Records (948); Cance and others, pp. 249–52; Cance and others, pp. 297–98.

⁹⁰ IRL Records (1063, folder 1).

⁹¹ See for example: State Commission in Lunacy, *Twenty-Third Annual Report* (Albany: State of New York, 1912), pp. 87-93, 179-259.

⁹² INS 51762/21; IRL minutes 12 March 1915; IRL Records (342, 446, 916); Lee to Murray Crane, 27 November 1912, Lee Papers.

In 1915, Patten used the League’s contacts to Ainsworth to try to prove that Larned had accepted bribes. Larned, however, managed to stay in the service and was ordered to serve at Ellis Island: Patten to Lee, 27 February 1915, Lee Papers; IRL Records (948).

30% of the general population was misleading since it did not give “due consideration to the facts of age distribution in the classes compared”. Since immigrants were mostly young and male, their rate of insanity was markedly higher – if age groups were compared directly, immigrants only provided for thirty-seven percent of the institutionalized insane.⁹³

Demands similar to those of the State Commission were voiced by Thomas Salmon. Salmon had been transferred to a subordinate position after the Reynolds investigation for criticizing Watchorn. In 1911, he became Chief Medical Examiner of the Board of Alienists; in 1912, he additionally was appointed NCMH secretary. Apart from organizing the newly created association with Clifford Beers, he also cooperated with the Charities Aid Association to improve data capture methods on alien inmates and patients to increase deportation rates. After the war, Salmon became an internationally recognized authority on mental health and was elected president of the American Psychiatric Association. Salmon became the most outspoken voice on immigration in psychiatry, and, as Dowbiggin describes him, mirrored psychiatrists’ attitude toward immigration by mixing “humanitarianism, professional partisanship, and uncritical and ill-informed opinions about national tendencies toward mental illness”. By personal interaction, publications and proposals to reform legislation, he profoundly influenced his profession’s perception of immigration as well as that of PHS staff.⁹⁴

To improve medical inspection, Salmon demanded a range of new methods. In 1911, he suggested adding the categories “chronic alcoholism” and “psychopathic tendencies” to the excluded classes since many such cases were admitted despite being “mentally inferior or unstable”. Like other psychiatrists, he recommended a

⁹³ H. L. Reed, ‘Immigration and Insanity’, *Journal of Political Economy*, 21.10 (1913), 954–56. Hall seemed to have had access to the article through Thomas Salmon before it had been published, probably to prepare an answer: IRL Records (721). A similar criticism had already been made by McLaughlin in 1905, although he only referred to statistics on criminality: Allan McLaughlin, ‘Social and Political Effects of Immigration’, *Popular Science Monthly*, January (1905), 243–55 (pp. 245–47).

⁹⁴ Earl D. Bond and Paul O. Komora, *Thomas W. Salmon, Psychiatrist*, 1950 (New York: Arno Press, 1980), pp. 31–77; Dowbiggin, pp. 199–205; 217; State Commission in Lunacy, p. 85. Salmon had a history of insubordination that repeatedly had gotten him into trouble in the PHS. He also personally suffered periodically from mental health problems and died in 1927 in a sailing accident that could also be interpreted as suicide. For Salmon’s punishment, see INS 52467/1F; Patten to Lee, 28, 29 November 1911, Lee Papers, I, A; IRL Records (801). For the NCMH in the context of progressive-era psychiatry, see David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), pp. 293–323.

longer deportation period, more personnel and better facilities for inspection, improved inspections at ports of embarkation and placing PHS officers on steamship liners. In an article published in 1913, he stressed that medical inspection was important since some states received their main population growth not from births, but immigration. He dismissed Davenport's plan to station field workers in Europe as "too arbitrary" since hereditary mechanisms had not been fully understood yet. Instead, a sixteen-cent increase of the head tax could pay for twenty additional officers with psychiatric training. This expense, Salmon argued, was "a small price to pay for the exclusion of the insane and mentally defective among those who are to become the parents of future generations of Americans". For him, their exclusion was not just an economical question but one of public health since "it affects the welfare of coming generations of Americans as deeply as any question before the people of this country today".⁹⁵

The IRL soon recognized the potential of cooperating with Salmon. As a former PHS officer, he provided experience and authority on mental standards and examinations. In his roles on the Board of Alienists and in the NCMH he could mobilize the psychiatric community. Like the IRL, he was opposed to the existing conduct of medical examinations, and the conflicts with his former superiors also made him likely to criticize the PHS's conduct and its officials. In 1912, Salmon and Hall started to correspond extensively. They agreed that as much publicity as possible should be generated to increase pressure on federal agencies to improve the law and its enforcement. Hall and Salmon also followed Davenport's suggestion for cooperation between the NCMH and the ABA's immigration committee.⁹⁶ Both organizations participated in a conference on mental hygiene organized by Salmon for the NCMH and the State Charities Aid Association. The New York State Commission on the Alien Insane, the American Medico-Psychological Association's (AMPA) immigration committee, the New York Psychiatrial Society and the Committee of the One Hundred on Public Health also sent delegates, Ward and Hall took part on behalf of the ABA's immigration committee. Williams gave a paper on "Immigration and Insanity", demonstrating how far eugenic thought shaped his understanding of immigrant inspection. He criticized that while mental examinations

⁹⁵ Thomas W. Salmon, 'Immigration and the Prevention of Insanity', *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, 169.9 (1913), 297–301. For detailed suggestions sent to Nagel, see INS 52730/8B.

⁹⁶ IRL Records (341, 721, 813). In return, Salmon offered to help Lodge to revise the immigration law: IRL Records (721).

were guided by the most recent “modern and scientific methods”, the meagre appropriation exposed the country to the danger of “insane and other mentally defective aliens”. The medical force at Ellis Island should at least be tripled, he argued, to exclude such immigrants since they “may leave feeble-minded descendants and so start a vicious strain leading to misery and loss in future generations and influencing unfavorably the character and lives of hundreds of persons”. The conference subsequently passed resolutions demanding a reform of mental examinations, as Williams proudly reported to Keefe.⁹⁷

Eventually, the combined lobby efforts of the IRL, PHS officials, the State Board and the NCMH proved effective. After the election of President Taft, a number of new officials replaced those who had opposed the organizations’ suggestions: Charles Nagel succeeded Straus; Ellis Island’s leading PHS officer Stoner was replaced with L. L. Williams, and Rupert Blue became new Surgeon-General after Wyman had died in 1912.⁹⁸ Secretary Nagel met repeatedly with representatives of the State Commission to evaluate their suggestions and eventually brought up the topic with the president since “the pressure from the institutions in New York has been very strong” and suggested to increase the number of PHS personnel. Psychiatrists’ requests were also supported by the Secretaries of the Treasury, first by Franklin MacVeagh, later to become an IRL member, and by William McAdoo after 1913. MacVeagh proudly reported to Taft that the new surgeon-general Blue had detailed “several men of the highest grade and fitness” to Ellis Island to improve mental examinations. Blue indeed reported that the “increased experience, [and] improved methods of examination” had led to more exclusions. McAdoo wrote in 1913 to the State Charities Aid Association that the number of certificates for mental defects had increased fivefold after Stoner’s removal, excluding immigrants who “might become parents of mentally defective children”.⁹⁹ In 1913, L. L. Williams suggested that statistics be compiled on the “normal (average) mentality” of

⁹⁷ IRL Records (813); INS 53139/13; Cance and others, p. 299; William Williams, ‘Immigration and Insanity’, in *Proceedings of the Mental Hygiene Conference and Exhibit* (New York: Committee on Mental Hygiene of the State Charities Aid Association, 1912), pp. 175–82; Dowbiggin, p. 216.

⁹⁸ IRL Records (721); Patten to Lee, 28 November 1911, 6 January 1912; Patten to Bradley, 29 November 1911, Lee Papers. For Straus’s conflict with Dr Ferris and Dr Wilgus of the State Commission on Lunacy, see INS 52424/1.

⁹⁹ INS 53139/13; PHS Records, Correspondence File, folder 219; Public Health Service, *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), p. 158.

immigrants, differentiated by race to determine “the average mental capacity of each racial group”. In response, Blue recommended that Williams should take up the work in cooperation with PHS surgeon E. H. Mullan, who would be assisted by Salmon as an external, uncompensated advisor. A year later, Mullan canvassed for the project by claiming that to determine the “kind of brains that migrate to this country” was essential due because of immigrations’ effect on the population.¹⁰⁰ Although this project was never finished, its consideration illustrates the degree eugenic thought had already permeated the PHS rank and file.

The growing number of certificates of mental deficiency was not only due to an increase in staff and the change in the leading officials’ attitude, but also a result of new testing methods. The efficiency and accuracy of line inspection and mental examinations had not only been criticized by psychiatrists, but also by the best-known eugenic expert on feeble-mindedness, Henry H. Goddard. Goddard visited the station several times between 1910 and 1913 to conduct research on arriving immigrants, claiming that his fieldworkers were more accomplished in discerning those who were mentally defective in line inspection. Investigating a small sample of immigrants, he concluded that 40% were feeble-minded. Goddard, however, did not publish most of his research until 1917, and then warned readers that this sample was by no means representative and did not explicitly link intelligence to ‘racial’ origin.¹⁰¹ PHS officers were nonetheless disgruntled and criticized the eugenicist and “his lay assistants” for believing that they were able to viscerally point out

¹⁰⁰ PHS Records, Correspondence File, folder 219; E. H. Mullan, ‘Mental Hygiene’, *Public Health Reports*, 29.4 (1914), 170–79 (pp. 170–71). This standardization had first been suggested by McLaughlin and was also brought forward by Reed: McLaughlin, *Immigration and the Public Health*, pp. 237–38; Alfred C. Reed, ‘The Relation of Ellis Island to the Public Health’, *New York Medical Journal*, 98 (1913), 172–75, see also Lüthi, pp. 295–96. Blue also permitted the Smithsonian’s curator of physical anthropology, Aleš Hrdlička, to conduct anthropometric research at Ellis Island: PHS Correspondence File, folder 219; Public Health Service, *Annual Report 1916*, p. 216.

¹⁰¹ INS 53139/13A; Henry H. Goddard, ‘The Feeble Minded Immigrant’, *Training School Bulletin*, 9 (1912), 91–94; Henry H. Goddard, ‘The Binet Tests in Relation to Immigration’, *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*, 18 (1913/14), 105; Henry H. Goddard, ‘Mental Tests and the Immigrant’, *Journal of Delinquency*, 2 (1917), 243–71; Steven A. Gelb, ‘Henry H. Goddard and the Immigrants, 1910-1917: The Studies and their Social Context’, *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences*, 22, October (1986), 324–32; John T. E. Richardson, ‘Howard Andrew Knox and the Origins of Performance Testing on Ellis Island, 1912-1916’, *History of Psychology*, 6.2 (2003), 143–70 (pp. 148–49); Zenderland, pp. 261–81. For the history of mental testing at Ellis Island, see also Cannato, pp. 260–86; Fairchild, pp. 98–113; Kraut, pp. 73–77. Calavita mistakenly claims that Goddard was employed by the PHS: Calavita, p. 109.

defectives.¹⁰² Between 1912 and 1917, Sprague, Mullan, and fellow PHS officer Howard Andrew Knox develop a set of new, non-verbal mental tests, consisting of so-called formboards, logical deduction and observation tests. Publicizing his findings in scientific and popular journals, Knox soon became an authority on mental testing within the medical community.¹⁰³ After publishing in the *Journal of Heredity*, Knox was invited to present at the ERA's annual meeting and eventually became a member.¹⁰⁴ Subsequently, Knox and Mullan devised a manual that defined standards for mental testing at immigrant stations.¹⁰⁵ The increase in qualified staff and the attention paid to mental deficiencies, especially to feeble-mindedness, was reflected in a rise of certified cases. Although the PHS officers' bias might still have influenced which immigrants they decided to test for mental defects, the more accurate testing methods at least diminished the number of misdiagnoses.¹⁰⁶ The established connection between mental deficiency and new immigration, however, was to shape future debates about restriction.

6.5 Deportation policies

Psychiatrists did not only demand stricter controls at the border, but also frequently urged an extension of the deportation period from three to five years. The 1903 and 1907 immigration acts had already increased this from one to two and three years, respectively. Immigrants who became public charges "from causes existing prior to landing" could be deported at their transportation companies' expense.¹⁰⁷ This regulation rendered all immigrants in public institutions classified as paupers, diseased, mentally defective or insane probable deportation cases if they or their

¹⁰² E. K. Sprague, 'Mental Examination of Immigrants', *The Survey*, 31.16 (1914), 466–68 (p. 468). See also H. A. Knox, 'The Moron and the Study of Alien Defectives', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 60 (1913), 105–06.

¹⁰³ See for example Howard A. Knox, 'A Scale Based on the Work at Ellis Island for Estimating Mental Defect', *Journal of the American Medical Association*, March 7 (1914); Howard A. Knox, 'Tests for Mental Defects', *Journal of Heredity*, 5.March (1914), 122–30; Howard A. Knox, 'Mentally Defective Aliens: A Medical Problem', *Lancet-Clinic*, 113.18 (1915), 491–96. For a description of the new tests, see also Mullan to Blue, 20 July 1915, PHS Correspondence Files, folder 219.

¹⁰⁴ Knox, A Scale, pp. 157–58. Despite Knox's neutral attitude towards new immigrants, his presentation given at the meeting indicates that he was influenced by the contemporary racial discourse, claiming to have identified the "missing link" between ape and man in an immigrant: "Eugenicists Hear of Real 'Missing Link'", *New York Times*, 20 June 1914.

¹⁰⁵ Richardson, pp. 150–55; Public Health Service, *Manual of the Mental Examination of Aliens* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918).

¹⁰⁶ Cannato, pp. 258–59.

¹⁰⁷ Senate and House of Representatives, Immigration Act 1903; Senate and House of Representatives, Immigration Act 1907.

friends and relatives could not pay for their treatment. As Dan Kanstroom has pointed out, these regulations effectively established a system of “deportation as post-entry social control”, sanctioning behaviour regarded as socially deviant with expulsion if displayed within the first three years after landing.¹⁰⁸

The application of this rule, however, led to conflicts between the services’ personnel and the administrative bureaucracy. Although the INS established a Bureau of Deportation, it could only act if state institutions reported patients within the deportation period. More importantly, the wording of the acts posed a more serious obstacle to deportation. Even if patients’ bills were not covered and they became LPC-cases, the INS still had to decide if the immigrant had actually been LPC at the time of entry and therefore had entered the US in violation of the law. Similarly, PHS officials had to decide whether an immigrant’s mental condition was due to causes existing prior to landing. This shift in the burden of proof was criticized severely by psychiatrists, medical associations, New York State officials and PHS and INS members. Williams had already advised the IRL in 1906 to drop the “prior to landing” clause from its draft for a new immigration act and would later demand that the burden of proof should be shifted to the immigrants, “where it belongs”. Hall had stated in his book that the clause was “an unfortunate one” and demanded in an address that the deportation period should be extended to five years “whether from causes prior or subsequent to landing”. In its statement to the Dillingham Commission, the League even demanded to extend the deportation period indefinitely.¹⁰⁹

PHS officials tried to evade the rule by arguing that certain mental conditions were caused by hereditary transmission and therefore always existed prior to landing. At a conference held in 1908, Secretary Straus discussed the case of an alien diagnosed with dementia praecox with PHS and INS officers. According to PHS officer Clark, the reasons for the outbreak had existed prior to landing since it was “an absolute

¹⁰⁸ Kanstroom, pp. 5-6, 91-160. See also Schneider, pp. 115, 123.

¹⁰⁹ INS 53139/10C, 10E, 13, 52423/45, 46, 46A; IRL Records (1059, folder 2); Williams to Lee, 8 March 1906, Lee Papers; Dowbiggin, p. 215; Spencer L. Dawes, ‘The Problem of the Alien Insane’, *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 5 (1913), 671–90; Spencer L. Dawes, *Report on the Alien Insane in the Civil Hospitals of New York State: Submitted to his Excellency, Honorable Martin H. Glynn, Governor of the State of New York, January 23, 1914* (Albany: Lyon, 1914), pp. 54–55; Hall, *Immigration and its Effects*, p. 228; Reed, *Going Through Ellis Island*, pp. 16–17; Immigration Commission, *Vol. 41*, p. 103. Thomas Salmon wrote a memorandum on the Board of Alienists’ behalf instructing state hospitals how to report aliens to the INS: IRL Records (1130, folder 2).

fact that heredity is an underlying factor”. Secretary Straus, while admonishing that such certificates should only be issued if doctors were able to “certify on your reputation as physician”, accepted the expert’s opinion.¹¹⁰

Four years later, however, this practice was reversed in a case of a young immigrant girl. Sixteen years old, Russian immigrant Sarah Blumbach had lived in the US for two years before she was admitted to a hospital, suffering from mood swings and depression. Salmon examined her at the state hospital and certified her with “constitutional psychopathic tendencies and mental instabilities, which resulted in her present condition”, a diagnosis confirmed by PHS Assistant Surgeon R. D. Spratt. This individual case reflected a new practice in psychiatry: persons were now often diagnosed as psychopathic instead of mentally defective, especially in cases involving female sexuality.¹¹¹ Investigating the case, the solicitor of the Department of Commerce and Labor complained that in this and in “many similar cases” medical officials tended to give statements “in the form of a bald medical opinion or conclusion, unaccompanied by any facts or reasons showing on what it is based”. The solicitor discovered that the girl had actually been sexually assaulted at her home by a young man. Out of shame, she had not told her mother and eventually became afflicted with manic-depressive insanity. Thus, the solicitor argued, the medical judgement had been made “wholly ex post facto”, even an “ordinary mind” could understand that her condition had been caused “independently of any constitutional psychopathic tendencies or mental instability”. Thus, the girl had not belonged to the excluded classes at the time of entry and was not to be deported. In general, the solicitor argued, persons certified with constitutional psychopathic inferiority or mental instability should not mandatorily be deported as Class A certifications but subject to the Secretary’s discretion since the law did not include these two classes “expressly or impliedly”.¹¹²

After the Attorney General had concurred with this view, Salmon complained to Nagel that lawyers as laymen lacked the expertise to decide about cases of mental disease. Manic-depressive insanity, he argued, was always hereditary; the solicitor erred in “ascribing such importance to the alleged sexual

¹¹⁰ INS 51831/101. After 1910, dementia praecox was used increasingly for conditions which would today be classified as schizophrenia. For Clark’s role in shifting the NYBII’s focus to eugenics, see Ziegler-McPherson, pp. 54–58.

¹¹¹ Estelle B. Freedman, “Uncontrolled Desires”: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920–1967, *Journal of American History*, 74.1 (1987), 83–106 (pp. 88–89).

¹¹² INS 52423/46-46A.

assault.” Citing medical authorities, he argued that it was “extremely likely that the assault never occurred” since there was no evidence apart from the statement made “after the onset of mental symptoms”. If the decision was not reversed, Salmon feared that it “practically becomes law” and deportations would be rejected since a majority of mental disease cases in 1911 had been deportations based on constitutional psychopathic tendencies. In reply, Secretary Nagel clarified that his department would not accept medical expertise as higher authority. “If Doctor Salmon’s views were to prevail”, he wrote, “the function of the Secretary would be reduced to the mere ministerial or administrative one of giving effect to the registered finding of a physician, which would be conclusive and beyond inquiry”.¹¹³

As a result of this conflict between the Department of Commerce and Labor and the PHS, the so-called decision no. 120 obliged medical officers to prove that mental affliction was definitely a result of causes existing prior to landing, leading to protest from various sides. Agreeing with Salmon, Williams commented that medical certificates were “rendered by competent authority” and that the Secretary should not be allowed to overrule them. He argued that the girl’s inclination towards depression “rather than the mere manifestation or outbreak thereof” had caused her condition. He did not even refrain from victim-blaming, claiming that it was not certain “whether the offense was really committed or the woman yielded” since insanity was known “to weaken a woman’s power of resistance in such matters”. In William’s opinion, depression and other conditions had an “incubation period” and could only be discovered ex post facto – the law, he argued, did not request the medical condition to be “existing and discernable” at the time of landing, but only existing.¹¹⁴

Reed voiced the PHS’s opinion in a 1912 article, arguing that manic-depressive insanity was due “primarily and only to constitutional psychopathic tendencies and mental instability existing from birth” and therefore always existed at the time of landing. Reed was infuriated that his medical authority had been questioned: decision no. 120, he argued, was a “legal opinion in evident contradiction to medical facts, and illustrating the folly of a layman passing

¹¹³ INS 52423/46-46A. Original emphasis. For a similar case where decision no. 120 was upheld with this argumentation, see INS 52423/46B.

¹¹⁴ INS 52423/46B. Original emphasis.

judgment on a question in the most abstruse field of medicine, namely psychiatry!” Spencer L. Dawes was even more outspoken in a 1913 article, claiming that “no record whatever of sexual trauma in this case” existed and that the solicitor, “an uneducated, inexperienced, and entirely incompetent person” was not qualified to overrule Salmon, “a man of national reputation as an alienist”.¹¹⁵

While deportation cases indicated that the PHS could not detect all mentally afflicted at the border, the accuracy of the services’ diagnoses was only rarely reviewed. With the outbreak of the War, however, the number of arriving immigrants dropped from 878,000 million in 1914 to 178,000 in 1915 while that of PHS and INS officers remained almost the same, resulting in more thorough examinations and a significant rise in certifications. While 2.29% of immigrants had been certified in the fiscal year ending in May 1914, the following twelve months saw a rise to 5.37%. On days when the number of arrivals was so small that all could be examined intensively, this number even rose to 9.37%, the surgeon-general reported.¹¹⁶

The war confronted the INS at Ellis Island with another problem: those not admitted to land could not be deported back to Europe. While many were detained at Ellis Island, William’s successor, Frederic C. Howe, decided to release those classified as feeble-minded on bond. The liberal progressive was criticized profusely on this account; in 1915, Marian K. Clark, chief investigator of the New York Bureau of Industries and Immigration (NYBII), wrote that the “practice of admitting insane, feeble-minded and imbecile aliens” on bond was dangerous from “an economic and eugenic standpoint” since they were “permitted to marry and propagate their kind”.¹¹⁷

The released ‘feeble-minded’ or ‘imbecile’ were checked on routinely, at the latest when the war came to an end. The re-examinations of these immigrants

¹¹⁵ Dawes, *Alien Insane*, p. 674; Reed, *Scientific Medical Inspection*. See also Dawes, *Alien Insane in Civil Hospitals*, pp. 55–57; Reed, *The Medical Side*, pp. 336–37. For a complaint of the State Commission on Lunacy about the decision, see INS 52423/46B. Hall also criticized that medical expertise could be overruled: Hall, *Recent History*, pp. 739–40.

¹¹⁶ Public Health Service, *Annual Report of the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service of the United States for the Fiscal Year 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 189; Public Health Service, *Annual Report 1916*, p. 196.

¹¹⁷ Cannato, pp. 297–310; INS 53139/13B. For Clark, see Ziegler-McPherson, pp. 54–65, 149–153. Davenport used Clark’s reports in a memorandum sent to Madison Grant in 1921 to be used as an argument for the quota system: Davenport to Grant, 6 January 1921, Davenport Papers, Series I, correspondence, Madison Grant, folder 3.

revealed that the PHS had often been mistaken in its original diagnosis, failing to consider the immigrants' individual backgrounds and the intimidating circumstances at Ellis Island. In 1914, a sixteen year old girl travelling with her family was certified as feeble-minded. Writing on her behalf, a friend of the family stated that the girl had later revealed that she had shown "intense stupidity in answering the questions put to her" because she had been "terror-stricken" by the doctor's uniforms. Reinvestigating the case in 1919, the certificate of feeble-mindedness was withdrawn due to the "slow but continuous improvement" made.¹¹⁸ In some cases, the cause for certification could also be located in an immigrant's personal history. A Syrian boy originally certified as feeble-minded in 1914 was found to be normal by doctors when re-examined. The INS inspector reported that the boy's "unusual dullness resulted from the fact that he had herded sheep and goats in the early part of his boyhood and was isolated and alone most of the time". Since the boy had been self-supportive since arrival, the inspector recommended that he should not be deported.¹¹⁹

The case of Emilia Giuseppe, an Italian girl eighteen years of age at the time of landing, also demonstrates the influence of eugenic thought on INS decisions. Arriving in 1915, she was certified by Knox with "psychopathic personality" due to inherited constitutionality "which predisposes that individual to the development of insanity" and was detained. The BSI judged this condition as likely to affect her ability to earn a living and ruled her excluded as LPC; she was admitted temporarily on bond due to the war. When the case was re-examined by an INS officer, he discovered that the woman was "of good health" and "appeared to possess a fair amount of intelligence". Assistant Commissioner Uhl nonetheless recommended deportation since the immigrant had married, likely to result in "probably numerous offspring, mentally defective". Although the Acting Commissioner of Ellis Island concurred with Uhl, Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post overruled the decision and admitted her permanently.¹²⁰

The post-war re-examination of such cases by PHS personnel thus reveals that medical diagnoses were often influenced by the eugenic rationale, excluding

¹¹⁸ INS 53798/442. Before the war, such review was only conducted when a second medical opinion was requested, see for example INS 51970/10, 53246/730, 53299/13.

¹¹⁹ INS 53798/464.

¹²⁰ INS 53999/811. For similar cases, see for example 53798/183; 53798/442; 53999/811.

individual immigrants for assumed hereditary defects. While INS and PHS officers and psychiatrists vocally protested against decision no. 120, their support for the literacy test was less enthusiastic. Unlike Darlington who had argued for the test in 1906 to debar those who threatened to make the US “a degenerate nation”, psychiatrists concentrated on extending the deportation period and the list of excluded classes. Goodwin Brown, replying on behalf of the State Commission on Lunacy to a letter from Hall who had argued that the test would exclude 20% of the insane, stated that the Commission was “not particularly interested in the illiteracy test” but would not take any action against the League’s course. Commissioner-General Keefe was also ambivalent, stating in 1912 that the test obviously had its advantages but also “drawbacks”.¹²¹ In the League’s campaigns, however, it could still count on psychiatrists’ and the services’ support since proposed bills mostly combined the literacy test with other changes in the law.

The eugenic rationale that the PHS adopted between 1900 and 1914 would remain one of the most important considerations in its decisions. PHS officers such as McLaughlin, Darlington, Reed, Knox and L.L. Williams adopted the restrictionist rhetoric and assumed that new immigrants’ physical and mental ‘defects’ would affect the quality of the American population. During and after the war, these concerns continued to be extensively discussed in medical journals and popular publications, connecting immigration to public health and the future prospects of the nation. In 1919, Marian Clark of the NYBII worried about the release of the feeble-minded on bond in an article entitled “The Fourth Great Plague”. The exclusion of ‘defective’ immigrants, she argued, should be considered from “a eugenic point of view”. The public, she wrote, needed to be informed of the “established relationship of the immigrants to heredity” to

illustrate the utter recklessness of permitting the admission into this country of feeble-minded, epileptic, insane, and imbecile immigrants who, together with their progeny, eventually reach the hospitals, almshouses, and prisons of the state.¹²²

¹²¹ Darlington, p. 1269; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), p. 5; Dowbiggin, pp. 218–20; IRL Records (187). Post, one of the most outspoken opponents of restriction in the Wilson administration, was another target in the League’s complains about the lax enforcement of regulations.

¹²² Marian K. Klark, ‘The Fourth Great Plague - Defectives’, *Modern Medicine*, 1.June (1919), 143–49.

As the history of immigrant inspection demonstrates, such eugenic considerations indeed became a crucial factor for the admission or exclusion of individual immigrants. Fairchild's meticulous empirical research demonstrates that the racial rationale influenced the services' decisions about individual immigrants considerably. In Class A and Class B certifications, Asian and new immigrants were overrepresented significantly, while those coming from North-western Europe were judged far more favourably. While most PHS officers may not have consciously applied racial categorizations as criterion for admission or exclusion, differences in immigrant groups' exclusion suggest that these still informed their policies. Thus, decisions about LPC-cases, physical and mental 'deficiencies' indeed "rested upon racial distinctions, as the scientific probabilities for such conditions were themselves determined by the calculus of race", as Jacobson has argued.¹²³

The PHS' interest in eugenic research gave the IRL and its allies the opportunity to include officers in its calls for either new regulations or a stricter enforcement of existing laws. The League's record in influencing personnel decisions and the application of the law, however, was mixed. When William Williams resigned in 1913 after a vociferous campaign by German-American associations against his administration, the IRL lost a key ally. Although Commissioner-General Keefe and the new Commissioner of Ellis Island, Frederic C. Howe, continued to cooperate with the League, neither was as radical a restrictionist as Williams had been.¹²⁴ On the other hand, the constant extension of categories of exclusion and the concerns voiced by restrictionists, psychiatrists and PHS personnel alike combined hereditary thought and methods of discerning the abnormal from the normal. This discourse thus inscribed the connection between immigration and its putatively dysgenic effect, shaping the discussions about regulations beyond the war.

¹²³ Birn, p. 298; Fairchild, pp. 207–14; Jacobson, *Different Color*, p. 69; Kraut, p. 77.

¹²⁴ Cannato, pp. 216-237; 289-349. Keefe considered the "immigration from the Teutonic and Celtic countries" to be "much more desirable" than new immigrants: 52903/29A. He also wanted to include an endorsement of the literacy test in his annual report for 1912 but had to remove it on Nagel's order: INS 52909/29B. IRL members had a high opinion of Keefe's successor Anthony Caminetti, Commissioner-General from 1913 to 1921, because of his support for the literacy test: IRL Records (704). For a letter from Davenport to President Wilson encouraging him to nominate a restrictionist successor for Williams, see Davenport to Wilson, 6 March 1913, Davenport Papers, Series I, Correspondence.

7. Victory: The Immigration Act of 1917 and the quota system

When the Dillingham Commission published its final recommendations, the IRL was enthusiastic about the prospects for restrictive legislation. Although it had only been a “device for delay”, Hall wrote in 1913, “the public demand for restriction continued” and had even grown.¹ Since the Commission had taken up its work, however, the public attitude towards immigration had been influenced by a new set of ideas concerning immigration policy. Apart from the racial interpretation restrictionists adhered to, the concepts of the melting pot, Americanization and cultural pluralism also informed the 1913, 1915 and 1917 debates about proposed immigration acts. To understand the political setting and to explore how the League responded to these new concepts, this chapter first analyzes these approaches and then concentrates on the debates and their outcomes. The shift to the quota system established in the 1920s is then considered before the findings of the thesis are discussed.

While the racial discourse built on a complex scientific foundation augmented by eugenic theories, the arguments for unrestricted immigration had mainly relied on America’s image as an asylum for the oppressed before 1910. Other theoretical models, however, began to gain influence in public debate: the melting pot, Americanization and cultural pluralism. The idea of American society as a crucible or (s)melting pot for different European cultures had a long tradition; it had first been articulated by de Crèvecoeur in the late eighteenth century and was used frequently after the success of Israel Zangwill’s 1908 play of the same name. The melting-pot metaphor, however, could be used to argue for different political aims: while many adherents claimed that the intermixture of the European groups would lead to a better, superior American race that combined all groups’ positive traits, others used it to argue that the crucible would result in the eventual assimilation of immigrant groups via the adoption of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. As described above, the concepts of amalgamation and assimilation had been propagated by Theodore Roosevelt during and after his presidency, progressive reformers’ efforts had also often focused on teaching immigrants American values,

¹ Hall, *Recent History*, pp. 735–36.

culture and self-conduct. When the 1906 reform of the naturalization law made competence in English a requirement for naturalization, settlement houses began to establish English language classes, often accompanied by courses in American civics. Americanization efforts were intensified when the war broke out; worries about the loyalty of so-called hyphenated Americans brought the question of immigrants' assimilation to the centre of public debate.² The Americanization movement oscillated between an urge for Anglo-conformity and a more liberal view promoting cosmopolitanism or cultural pluralism. The pluralist ideal was first formulated by Horace Kallen in 1915 as a reaction to the race suicide discourse, arguing that diversity in itself was a value that needed to be preserved since heterogeneity guaranteed prosperity, political stability and democracy.³ Although historians have pointed out that Kallen's view, and similar positions espoused by Randolph Bourne and John Dewey, in fact relied on essentialist assumptions about racial characteristics, this model provided the foundation for a liberal view of immigration. During the 1910s, however, the concept of cultural pluralism found few adherents.⁴

Most groups and individuals involved in the diverse Americanization movement held the opinion that immigrants should conform to Anglo-Saxon culture. Similar to their reaction to urbanization, reformers concentrated on teaching immigrants to "replicate white, middle-class codes of conduct", Irving has argued. Progressives engaged in a wide array of activities that ranged from cooking and homemaking lessons to courses in hygiene and citizenship classes, thus defining the meaning of Americanness in intricate detail. Although the more liberal among them

² Immigrants did not have to be literate to be naturalized; judges decided if their knowledge of English was sufficient. The act also made naturalization a federal responsibility and created the Division of Naturalization. For the act, see for example Haney López, pp. 29–78; Schneider, pp. 204–11; Smith, pp. 446–48; Smith. For Roosevelt and Americanization, see Dorsey, pp. 14–45; Dyer, pp. 129–42; Gerstle, *Crucible*, pp. 43–80.

³ Horace Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot", Parts I and II, *The Nation*, 18, 25 February 1915.

⁴ Hansen, pp. 89–128; Jonathan Hansen, 'True Americanism: Progressive Era Intellectuals and the Problem of Liberal Nationalism', in *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*, ed. by Michael Kazin and Joseph A. McCartin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 73–89; David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995), pp. 83–95; Irving, pp. 91–107; Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 209–13; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 27–32, 115–123; Lissak, *Pluralism*, pp. 172–81; Michaels, *Our America*, pp. 64–72; Jason McDonald, *American Ethnic History: Themes and Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 55–61; Michaels, *Our America*, pp. 64–85; Noah Pickus, *True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 64–84; Smith, pp. 419–23; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 66–101; Stears, pp. 127–67.

accepted immigrants as potential equals, and even lobbied for the preservation of selected cultural contributions, they still adhered to the view that they needed guidance to develop their full potential in modern society, coding assimilation in terms of improvement.⁵ After the outbreak of the war in Europe, the movement gained momentum and was incorporated by unions, corporations and government agencies. Frances A. Kellor, the NYBII's chief investigator between 1910 and 1914 and secretary of the National Americanization Committee (NAC), the most important institution regarding Americanization, pushed for the adoption of English language classes by business and public schools, the surveillance of enemy aliens during the war and state-run Americanization courses. In 1915, thirty-five states had established Americanization bureaus and the NAC had achieved quasi-governmental status by its incorporation in the Bureau of Education. Although the movement lost in importance in the 1920s, the war years propelled Americanization to national prominence and enabled the implementation of more coercive policies.⁶

In a first interpretation of the Americanization movement, Higham claimed that it was bifurcated, consisting of a tolerant side represented by the settlements and, on the other hand, a more coercive strain embodied by patriotic societies. In his opinion these two factors could occasionally converge, as exemplified by Kellor's NAC.⁷ Historians concentrating on immigrants initially adhered to Robert Park's assimilation model, consisting of contact, competition and accommodation. In

⁵ Robert A. Carlson, *The Quest for Conformity: Americanization through Education* (New York: Wiley, 1975), pp. 79–93; Irving, pp. 70–90, quote: 73; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 19–27; Kraut, p. 227; Lissak, *Pluralism*, pp. 25–47, 175–177; Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–42* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 77–92; Michael R. Olneck, 'Americanization and the Education of Immigrants, 1900–1925: An Analysis of Symbolic Action', *American Journal of Education*, 97.4 (1989), 398–423; Schneider, pp. 153–63; Ziegler-McPherson, pp. 1–19.

⁶ Carlson, pp. 107–18; Gerstle, *Crucible*, pp. 65–80; Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 234–50; Knobel, pp. 235–49; Irving, pp. 70–90; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 85–126; McClymer, pp. 105–91; Mink, *Motherhood*, pp. 77–96; Schneider, pp. 156–63; Ziegler-McPherson, pp. 144–63. Kellor had been Roosevelt's advisor for immigration questions. For an account of Americanization that emphasizes the immigrants' agency and argues that class solidarity could prevail over ethnic divisions in the workplace, see James R. Barrett, 'Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880–1930', *Journal of American History*, 79.3 (1992), 996–1020. For an analysis of public education and Americanization, see Jeffrey Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 13–100. For the historical roots of contemporary Americanization debates in a perspective that combines whiteness studies and Foucauldian theory, see Sherrow O. Pinder, *The Politics of Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Americanization, de-Americanization, and Racialized Ethnic Groups*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). For an older overview of assimilation historiography, see Russell A. Kazal, 'Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History', *American Historical Review*, 100.2 (1995), 437–71.

⁷ Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 194–233.

contrast to this interpretation advocated by Handlin and others, historians such as Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Rudolph Vecoli and Herbert Gutman emphasized the immigrants' agency and the preservation of their culture.⁸ Later studies also explored the coexistence of assimilation and ethnic persistence, trying to portray the permanent realignment of immigrant group identities.⁹ Historians influenced by whiteness studies, in contrast, stressed that the new immigrants were denied the status of full whiteness but were expected to adopt Anglo-Saxon values to finally achieve it. Subsequently, historians such as Gerstle and King emphasized the coercive side of the Americanization movement.¹⁰ By concentrating on regional and local aspects, more recent studies have disclosed the wide range of attitudes and policies within the movement.¹¹ The relevance of the Americanization movement for the debate about restriction, however, has to be located in the models of citizenship and identity it propagated and the ways the League and its allies could use its rationale.

Americanizers stressed the role of the environment in the immigrants' assimilation, claiming that education in American ideals during the naturalization process could turn them into valuable citizens. In the reformers' opinion, immigrants' supposed racial traits allowed for the adoption of American cultural values if taught correctly. Americanization textbooks and manuals, published by associations and government institutions after the outbreak of the war, mostly provided lectures and readings on American history and basic civics. Additionally, they also defined the correct mode of self-conduct for future citizens: advice on health, education, saving and work was paired with instructions for naturalization to make the immigrant "think for himself

⁸ Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Gutman; Handlin, *The Uprooted*; Vecoli.

⁹ Bodnar; Kathleen N. Conzen and others, 'The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12.1 (1992), 3–41; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (London: Wesleyan University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Gary Gerstle, 'Liberty, Coercion and the Making of Americans', *Journal of American History*, 84 (1997), 524–58; Gary Gerstle, 'The Power of Nations', *Journal of American History*, 84.2 (1997), 576–80; King, *Liberalism*; King, *Making Americans*. For counterarguments, see for example Donna R. Gabaccia, 'Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Immigration Historians', *Journal of American History*, 84.2 (1997), 570–75; David A. Hollinger, 'National Solidarity at the End of the Twentieth Century: Reflections on the United States and Liberal Nationalism', *Journal of American History*, 84.2 (1997), 559–69. For Hollinger's extended argument, see Hollinger, *Postethnic America*.

¹¹ See for example Mirel; Frank van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Ziegler-McPherson.

and act as his duty directs him”, as one of the manuals put it.¹² Like the progressive efforts in the context of urbanization, Americanizers’ aim was to turn the “foreign-born man or woman into an active, informed citizen with a sense of responsibility to the community and nation”, as a 1920 Americanization dictionary stated. Frances Kellor defined Americanization as “the science of racial relations in America”, aiming at the “assimilation and amalgamation [...] the indistinguishable incorporation of the races into the substance of American life”. Keller, too, stressed the importance of teaching an appropriate mode of self-conduct, stating that Americanization encompassed the “elimination of causes of disorder, unrest and disloyalty”. These efforts, the president of the North American Civic League for Immigrants Daniel Brewer pointed out, were in fact “selfish and self-preservative” because they served the stabilization of American society. Ultimately, Americanization aimed at the involvement of state agencies: “there is no better way of attracting the attention of the authorities and securing their ultimate action”, he wrote.¹³ Overall, reformers did not just teach the duties of citizenship, but regarded Americanization as a means to achieve goals central to the progressive movement: higher standards of living, correct self-conduct, the active participation of the citizens, and, ultimately, state intervention for society’s sake. In their opinion, American citizens could solve the evils of industrialized mass society by Americanizing the newcomers and by realizing core progressive reform goals, as a handbook for social workers stated:

¹² Raymond Moley and Huldah F. Cook, *Lessons in Democracy: For Use in Adult Immigrant Classes* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), p. 160. For other examples, see Cleveland Immigration League, American Club and City Immigration Bureau of Cleveland, *Citizenship Manual for Cleveland, Ohio* (1914); Royal Dixon, *Americanization* (New York: Macmillan, 1916); Mabel Hill and Philip Davis, *Civics for New Americans* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1915); Etta V. Leighton (ed.), *Making Americans: Responsive Readings for Teaching Citizenship* (Dansville: Owen, 1920); John J. Mahoney and Charles M. Herlihy, *First Steps in Americanization: A Handbook for Teachers* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1918); Peter Roberts, *The Problem of Americanization* (New York: Macmillan, 1920).

¹³ Daniel C. Brewer, ‘A Patriotic Movement for the Assimilation of Immigrants’, *Editorial Review*, 3.August (1910), 786–800 (pp. 799–800); Frank L. Dykema, *Americanization Dictionary: Defining Naturalization Terms & Processes for the American who Desires to Help the Alien Become a Citizen* (Grand Rapids: Frank L. Dykema, 1920), p. 9; Frances Kellor, *Neighborhood Americanization* (New York: Information Service of the National Americanization Committee, 1918), p. 11; Frances Kellor, ‘What is Americanization?’, in *Immigration and Americanization: Selected Readings*, ed. by Philip Davis (Boston: Ginn, 1920), pp. 623–39 (p. 625). For an investigation of argumentative patterns in Americanization textbooks, see Annis N. Shaver, ‘The Discourse of Americanization Textbooks: 1914-1924’, in *The Textbook as Discourse: Sociocultural Dimensions of American Schoolbooks*, ed. by Eugene F. Provenzo, Annis N. Shaver and Manuel Bello (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 55–73.

Our duty to our new Americans will not be done until we have Americanized the schools their children will attend, Americanized the water their families drink, Americanized the air they breathe, and the houses they live in; Americanized their play, their work, their surroundings.¹⁴

The Americanization movement therefore also complied with the progressive pattern of political action as a governmental mode of power, relying on new modes of self-conduct.

Restrictionists, on the other hand, referred to the model of race suicide propagated by Ross, Fairchild, Commons and others, assuming that white American qualities could only be achieved by those with the required racial traits, as described above. Probably the most notorious book representing this rationale was Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*, published in 1916. Grant, who became increasingly involved in the IRL's work, dedicated more than a third of his book to the detailed description of putative "Nordic" characteristics and aptitudes, contributing to the construction of an Anglo-Saxon racial identity. In the parts about the effect of immigration on the US, he argued that the "increasing number of the weak, the broken, and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with hordes of the wretched, submerged population of the Polish Ghettos" could never become real Americans due to their racial inferiority. Jewish immigrants, Grant went on, adopted "the language of the native American; they wear his clothes; they steal his name; and they are beginning to take his women", but could never truly "understand his ideals". While the "Nordics" had been perfectly adapted to the hostile environment of the frontier, Grant explained, the survival of the fittest in industrialized society meant that those best equipped for the sweat shop, the street trench, the factory and the tenement were reproducing in greater numbers. Grant thus attacked Americanizers for urging "onto others the suicidal ethics which are exterminating his own race".¹⁵

¹⁴ Fred C. Butler, *Community Americanization: A Handbook for Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 76: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education Bulletin, p. 43.

¹⁵ Grant, pp. 79–82. For the involvement in the League, see for example IRL Minutes, 9 May 1912, 27 March 1913, 3 April, 11 December 1914, 12 February 1915, 28 January 1916, 23 March 1917, 22 March 1918. The most detailed work on Grant is Spiro, for *The Passing of the Great Race* in particular, see pp. 143-166. Spiro, however, incorrectly claims that the IRL only discovered eugenics after Grant became one of their vice-presidents in 1909: *Ibid.*, p. 198-199.

In contrast to Grant's vitriolic rhetoric, the IRL opposed assimilation in less drastic language. In 1908, Lee rejected Boston reformer Emily Green Balch's argument for the melting-pot model by referring to the assumedly inherent racial differences between Anglo-Saxons and new immigrants. Racial amalgamation, he wrote, was a question of centuries, as demonstrated by "the fixed unwillingness of the Anglo-Saxon and other Teutonic races to intermarry where there is a trace of Negro blood". History, he argued, had demonstrated the new immigrants' inferiority and the "loss of nationality" by amalgamation would finally lead to the extinction of the American to the detriment of the whole world.¹⁶ Like Lee, IRL members and supporters were staunch adherents of the eugenic rationale which had rendered the theory that "traits will blend and disappear [...] quite untenable", as Davenport argued. The melting-pot theory, Hall wrote in a private letter, was "absolutely false and vicious"; in an article, he argued that amalgamation was only desirable between the higher races since assimilation could not overcome "inherited instincts and tendencies". The stability of racial traits, David Starr Jordan wrote to Hall in 1910, permitted only one valid conclusion: "If we could only take out those worthy to enter the crucible, and leave all others behind, we would have the right clue to the question".¹⁷

Occasionally, the League also incorporated assimilation in its argumentation to convince Americanizers of restriction. While Hall in 1908 had warned readers that "it must never be forgotten that assimilation works both ways, that immigrants are assimilating us, and if too numerous and too alien they destroy our power of lifting them", Ward articulated a different position during the war and in its aftermath. Faced with growing popularity of Americanization programs, Ward argued that assimilation and Americanization could only be achieved by "long, close, patient and unselfish contact" with immigrants to instill in them "a love for our country that they will naturally and inevitably wish to become citizens". Ward argued, however, that it would be "un-American for us to permit any such influx of alien immigrants as will make the process of assimilation and of amalgamation of our foreign population any more difficult than it already is". Therefore, he

¹⁶ Joseph Lee, 'Assimilation and Nationality', *Charities*, 25 January 1908, 1452–55 (p. 1455).

¹⁷ IRL Records (342, 434, 560); Hall, *Future of American Ideals*, p. 97.

concluded, “restriction of immigration is a necessary and logical part of the Americanization program”.¹⁸

These differing views of the nation’s capability to Americanize immigrants and of the immigrants’ potential for assimilation were also reflected in the 1911-13 and 1913-15 debates about immigration acts. Both debates were similar in terms of regulations included in the respective bills, the topics dominating the debate and the political outcome. In both cases, two-year debates preceded the presidential vetoes since Congressional action was delayed by the elections in late 1912 and 1914. The political parties avoided unequivocal statements on restriction in their campaigns since immigrant voters could provide for the decisive edge in elections. Both bills were introduced by former Commissioners Dillingham and Burnett. The final versions of the bills excluded immigrants ineligible to citizenship, raised the head tax, and provided for PHS psychiatrists at immigration stations. They also included the literacy test for immigrants between 16 and 55, exempting daughters, wives and those fleeing from religious persecution. Both bills were results of bipartisan and cross-regional cooperation, Burnett (D-AL) could rely on Senators Dillingham, Lodge, and Elison Smith (D-SC) and Representative August Gardner (R-MA) and on bipartisan majorities in House and Senate.¹⁹

Despite strong majorities in Congress, both bills met with executive resistance and were eventually vetoed by the presidents. During his tenure, Taft had kept a low profile on immigration and had delegated most decisions to Secretary Nagel. In his unpromising run in the 1912 election against Wilson and Roosevelt, however, he tried to win over immigrant voter groups. Taft promised ethnic associations, the AAFLN and the NLIL to oppose further restriction. Roosevelt, despite his former support for the test, emphasized assimilation and distribution and advocated a liberal position on immigration in his civic nationalism agenda. With former Secretary Straus, Frances Kellor and Jane Addams, the Progressive Party tried to include politicians that appealed to immigrant voters. Democratic candidate

¹⁸ Hall, *Eugenics, Ethics and Immigration*; Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Immigration after the War’, *Journal of Heredity*, 8.4 (1917), 147–52 (p. 148); Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Americanization and Immigration’, *Review of Reviews*, May (1919), 512–16 (pp. 512–13); Ward, “Immigration and Americanization”, *New York Times*, 11 June 1919. Ward’s article was reissued by the League: IRL, *Immigration Restriction Essential to Americanization*, IRL Publication no. 74, 1920. For a similar argumentation, see also IRL, *Brief in Favor of the Numerical Limitation Bill*, IRL Publication no. 73, 1920.

¹⁹ Hutchinson, pp. 149–55; Tichenor, pp. 132–38; Vought, pp. 85–90; Zeidel, pp. 121–23.

Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, was heavily criticized by immigrant interest groups for statements he had made in his academic career. Influenced by the late nineteenth-century racial discourse he had been taught by Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins, Wilson had embraced Anglo-Saxonism in his historiographic publications. When Wilson left academia for a political career in 1910, his writings were instantly used by his Republican adversary in the New Jersey gubernatorial election. A similar tactic was applied in the presidential race when Taft, the Republican Party and the Hearst press attacked Wilson for his assumed anti-immigrant stance. Wilson tried to counteract these claims by emphasizing that he had been a member of the NLIL's advisory board since 1906, stressed the equality of all European groups and promised immigrant associations to oppose restrictive legislation.²⁰

The IRL thus faced presidents who had to fulfil campaign promises towards immigrant groups. Nonetheless, the League hoped to appeal to restrictionist inclinations both presidents had shown in the past, especially Wilson in his "ultra restrictive" historical writings, as Hall put it.²¹ The IRL's efforts were a continuation and intensification of its earlier approach, consisting of the mobilization of its allies, disseminating publications supporting restriction and active lobby work in Washington. Its argumentation for the test was based on the public, expert and government agencies' support for restrictive legislation. Directly after the Dillingham Commission had finished its work, the League and its allies started to inundate the Taft administration with petitions for a new immigration bill containing a literacy test. Resolutions were sent by boards of trade, boards of charities, state legislatures, the AFL, the KoL and more than five thousand local labour organizations, farmers' associations, patriotic societies and medical associations and institutions. Additionally, prominent members and supporters of the League such as Grant, Robert Woods, Richard Maclaurin (president of the MIT), William Z. Ripley

²⁰ Cannato, pp. 230–31; Cohen, *Not Free*, pp. 50–51; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 186–93; Arthur S. Link, *The Road to the White House* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 1: Wilson, pp. 186–87; Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, pp. 228–30; Mink, *Labor*, pp. 213–28; Saveth, pp. 137–49; Tichenor, pp. 134–38; Vought, pp. 70–90, 100–109; Zeidel, pp. 125–26.

²¹ IRL Records (590).

and AFL vice-president James Duncan endorsed the bill.²² To inquire about the president's attitude about the literacy test, Lee asked Lawrence Lowell to write to Taft in 1910. As with most immigration matters, Taft consulted Nagel who advised against the test believing literacy to be of "relatively small importance" in comparison to character and physical condition. Taft thus replied that although he had been in favour of the test "[u]ntil recently", he was "not quite so clear in my mind now" after "hearing the argument pro and con in the Congressional debates", and forwarded Nagel's reply. In subsequent correspondence and discussions, Lee, Patten, Gardner and Lodge unsuccessfully tried to convince Nagel of the test's benefits.²³

When the bill had passed House and Senate, Patten advised the executive committee to instruct "members of Congress, leading citizens, and labor, farmer, and patriotic officials" to write directly to Taft since he was "no longer concerned with votes" after he had lost the election.²⁴ Lodge, Charles Warren, Lawrence Lowell, Henry Holt, prominent social worker Edward T. Devine, and Harvard Professor and IRL executive member Thomas N. Carver in his function as secretary of the American Economic Association complied with the Lee's request not to mention "racial issues" but to stress immigration's economic effects instead. Robert DeCourcy Ward, Charles Davenport and Henry Fairfield Osborn, on the other hand, emphasized the eugenic argument in their letters. Davenport, while admitting that he did not regard the literacy test "the best method", argued that it would be "a useful addition" to prevent the arrival of "a semi-imbecile working class". In a telegram, Grant again urged to sign the bill in order to prevent the US "from becoming a nation of mongrels like South America".²⁵

At the League's request, former Commissioner Jeremiah Jenks also wrote to Taft. Stressing his role in the lengthy investigation, Jenks relied on the economic argument stating that restriction was necessary since "every single investigator in

²² Hall, *Recent History*, p. 733; IRL Records (446, 1047, 1125: folders 8, 12), IRL to Wilson, 4 November 1913, Lee Papers; for the actual petitions see INS 52903/29A; 53072/2, 2A; 53453/44A-44N.

²³ Nagel to Patten, 1 February 1911; Lee to Lowell, 2 November 1910; Taft to Lowell, 6 November 1910, Lee Papers; INS 52903/29A-29B; 53139/10D.

²⁴ Patten to Lee, 28 December 1912, Lee Papers.

²⁵ IRL Records (1047); Lee to Lowell, Edward T. Devine, John Golden, Robert W. De Forest, 3 January 1913; INS 53453/44A-44N. Osborn was the director of the Museum of Natural History and one of the most important promoters of eugenics. For Carver, see Solomon, p. 134. For Devine, see for example Stromquist, pp. 88-89.

the field” agreed that the abundance of unskilled labour “is clearly to lower the standard of living in a number of industries”, as demonstrated by the Commission’s research. Regarding Bennet’s opposition to the literacy test, Jenks argued that even Bennet had admitted the general need for restriction. Jenks himself and Commissioner Neill, after their initial opposition to the test, had come to the conclusion that “the illiteracy test seemed the only practical way”. Referring to the Commission’s authority, Jenks concluded that “this Bill is in the main in accord with the unanimous [sic] opinion of the Immigration Commission, the one body of men that has really made a thoroughly sound, scientific study of the question”. The test, Jenks wrote, would on the whole exclude “the labourers from Southern Italy and Austro-Hungary of the type that the Commission unanimously thought ought to be excluded”.²⁶

Opposition to the bill was dominated by the NLIL which coordinated the activities of the various immigrant associations. Through these organizations, and with the support of foreign-language newspapers, the NLIL was able to gather more than 400,000 signatures against the bill, run mass rallies, and publish the views of prominent pro-immigrant men such as Lauterbach, Carnegie, and former Harvard President Charles Eliot.²⁷ To counter restrictionists, pro-immigrants groups also combined economic and ‘racial’ arguments, lauding the positive effects of immigration.

President Taft decided to hold a hearing on 4 February 1913 before making his decision about the bill. Two hundred delegates including thirty-four speakers came to the White House; each side was allowed ninety minutes to make its case. The statement of Antonio Stella, speaking for the Italian Immigration Society and the NLIL, represented the pro-immigrant argument. Countering the Dillingham Commission’s claims, Stella argued that labour migration helped to mitigate economic fluctuation by “responding instinctively to the law of supply and demand”. The significant rise in workers’ wages in the last thirty years, according to him, also invalidated the labour unions’ argument that immigrants had displaced the

²⁶ INS 53139/10F; IRL Records (549).

²⁷ INS Records 53072/3, 53139/10F-H, 53453/42; Cohen, *Not Free*, pp. 46–53; Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, pp. 216–28. Despite his belief in eugenics, Eliot regularly opposed the IRL publicly: Solomon, pp. 181–88; Jennings L. Wagoner, ‘Charles W. Eliot, Immigration, and the Decline of American Idealism’, *Biography*, 8.1 (1984), 25–36

American worker.²⁸ Regarding standards of living and immigrants' alleged racial difference, Stella stated that they were often blamed "for conditions for which the community is responsible" and that amalgamation required more time. If the results of the Dillingham Commission were examined carefully, he emphasized, they actually rebutted claims about the immigrants' inferiority since their share in paupers and criminals was relatively low. Insanity in adults and juvenile criminality, on the other hand, were "a product of this country". Stella argued that the "high pressure of life in this country" even affected the supposedly superior Anglo-Saxon, "the chief victim of neurasthenia and like disorders". He also incorporated the racial discourse, stating that race suicide, the result of "lunatic taint, and alcoholic toxemia, or exhaustion" could be avoided by the immigration of "fresh blood willing to bear children" to make up for "the deficit of the native stock". To counter the IRL's argument for the literacy test as selective measure, Stella stated that it was purely "obstructive" and that illiteracy was no sign for fitness, moral character or intelligence, but merely indicated a lack of opportunity.²⁹

While Jewish-American representatives from the B'nai B'rith and the AJC such as Simon Wolf and Max Kohler stressed America's tradition as an asylum for the victims of religious and political persecution, others emphasized the immigrants' potential for assimilation. Nicholas Piotrowski of the New York Allied Polish Societies stated that immigrants made reliable citizens, quoting Charles Nagel and former INS leader Stump. Representing the IPL, Hull House social worker Grace Abbott rebutted the racial discourse as "based on [a] false and irreconcilable theory of American traditions" that interpreted the political system as a direct result of inherent racial characteristics. The lack of assimilation, Abbot argued, was to be located in environmental factors; the "evils in our present industrial system" thus had to be removed. Former Commissioner Bennet also rejected claims of the new immigrants' supposed inferiority, stressing that the Dillingham Commission's data indicated that they were not socially deviant to a higher degree than native

²⁸ This economic argument for immigration relied on a study commissioned by the AJC and conducted by statistician Isaac Hourwich: Isaac A. Hourwich, 'The Economic Aspect of Immigration', *Political Science Quarterly*, 26.4 (1911), 615-42; Isaac A. Hourwich, *Immigration and Labor: The Economic Aspects of Immigration to the United States* (New York: Putnam's, 1912); Cohen, *Not Free*, p. 49; Neuringer, pp. 100-02; Zolberg, pp. 234-36. IRL member Robert F. Foerster published a critical review of Hourwich's book: Robert F. Foerster, 'Hourwich's Immigration and Labor', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 27.4 (1913), 656-71.

²⁹ INS 53139/10F; 53453/43.

Americans. Bennet concluded with an appeal to Taft to follow Cleveland's example to preserve the US as an asylum.³⁰

The composition of the restrictionist side in the hearing reflected the growing strength and number of the allies the IRL had been able to mobilize in the preceding years. Patriotic societies such as the Patriotic Order Sons of America, the DAR and the Independent Americans sent delegates; F. S. Katzenbach spoke for the JUOAM. In his argument, he combined the economic and racial argument but also stated restriction would enhance assimilation. Referring to the Anglosphere, Katzenbach claimed that the literacy test had not only been recommended by the Dillingham Commission, but was also successfully applied by New Zealand, Australia and Cape Colony. The DAR delegate, Julia T. Roth, compared idealized middle-class gender roles to the immigrant working-class situation; she claimed that low wages forced women to work in detrimental conditions. These women, she explained, "by their degradation and poverty and the bitterness which must be engendered in them by such work, are not fit to become the mothers of men – men, high-minded, noble, men, who constitute a state". Similarly, AFL secretary Frank Morrison stressed that the assumed oversupply of cheap labour had led to a situation "ruinous to the workers already here", making self-improvement impossible. James Patten spoke for the Farmers' Educational Cooperative Union. He emphasized that the Southern states were now opposed to immigration since they had realized that if they had passed a literacy test "two centuries ago [...], there would have been no slave trade and no civil war". Patten also attacked Bennet, stating that he had worked as a lobbyist for steamship companies after he had lost his seat and quoted parts of the Dillingham Commission's result that contradicted Bennet's claims. Regarding the literacy test, Patten also referred to Australia as a model for its successful implementation. The IRL had also succeeded in mobilizing the various medical and charitable organizations interested in the reform of the immigration law. Delegates were sent by the NCMH, the AMPA, the New York State Lunacy Commission, the New York State Charities Aid Association's committee on mental hygiene; Ward represented the ABA's committee on immigration. While these delegates were mostly indifferent about the literacy test, they supported the bill because of the reforms of medical inspection, as Thomas Salmon testified. The IRL itself was represented by Hall, who handed Taft the long list of the bill's supporters and

³⁰ INS 51139/10F. For Abbott's position on the literacy test, see Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 87–102.

stressed the popular demand for restriction. Referring to the first presidential veto, Hall contended that Cleveland had confessed to the poet Richard Watson Gilder that he had regretted his decision in hindsight. Urged by Taft to clarify if the literacy test was selective or merely “obstructive”, Hall had to admit that some worthy immigrants might be excluded but stated that “it is the best method at present”. Although no INS representative was present at the hearing, William Williams argued for the bill in a meeting with the president, Samuel Gompers, Bennet and representative Barthold. Nonetheless, Taft decided to veto it on 14 February.³¹

In his brief veto message, Taft stated that he had vetoed the bill “with great reluctance” since it contained “many valuable amendments”. However, he could not “make up my mind to sign a bill which in its chief provision [the literacy test] violates a principle that ought, in my opinion, to be upheld in dealing with our immigration”. He also included a letter from Secretary Nagel that laid out the argument against the test in detail. Nagel explained that the literacy test was unfair since it did not consider the qualification of dependants, especially women, whose exemption was based on incorrect assumptions about their exclusion from the labour market. Furthermore, Nagel argued, the test had originally been intended as a selective test, but in effect was used as a restrictive measure to discriminate against new immigrants and would exclude “a great many desirable people” who had merely been denied educational opportunities. The recent history, he concluded, had proven that immigrants used their opportunities and that they assimilated, at least in the second generation.³²

IRL members were shocked by the veto. Until the very last moment, they had been convinced that Taft would sign the bill. “To Hell with Jews, Jesuits and Steamships!”, a frustrated Hall wrote on the day of the veto; the disheartened Ward suggested disbanding the League to start anew under a different name. Instead, the League established its National Committee to add more prominent names to its

³¹ INS 51139/10F-G; IRL Minutes, 13, 27 February 1913. Lee and Bradley were also present at the hearing, but did not testify. It is not entirely clear how the IRL learned of Gilder’s alleged statement; no such reports can be found in the IRL Records. A similar claim was later made by Madison Grant and used as an argument to convince Wilson of the test; supposedly, Cleveland had told Army Chief of Staff Leonard Wood that he regretted the veto: IRL Records (1017); IRL Minutes, 18 January 1916, 23 March 1917. Cannato writes that Grant learned of this rumour from Theodore Roosevelt: Cannato, pp. 436, n.106.

³² INS 53139/10E; *Congressional Record*, 62nd Congress, 3rd Session, 1913, pp. 3269-70. Taft actually sent the pen he had signed the veto with to the NLIL: Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, p. 230.

letterhead, as mentioned above.³³ The attempt to overrule the president's veto failed by a narrow margin, while the Senate passed the motion by 72 to 18 votes, it lacked five votes to achieve the two-third majority in the House.³⁴ Despite the Dillingham Commission's recommendations and the support of five of the nine Commissioners for the bill, the League's combination of racial and economic arguments had not been sufficient to overcome the country's tradition of unrestricted European immigration.

IRL members, however, quickly overcame their disappointment and started to organize a new campaign only two months later. The 1913-15 campaign resembled its predecessors in most regards; both sides followed the same approaches. The new bill included additional regulations allowing for the deportation of anarchists and the exclusion of persons of "constitutional psychopathic inferiority" or affected by "chronic alcoholism".³⁵ When most of the test's supporters were re-elected in the 1914 Congressional elections, the League thought that it had never been "stronger politically". Wilson, however, already indicated early that he would oppose the literacy test and recommended substituting it with a commission on distribution. Due to Southern protests, this suggestion was dropped and the test was incorporated in the final version of the bill.³⁶ To convince Wilson of the test, the members of the League sent him personal letters and a long memorandum, also issued as official IRL publication. The memorandum mostly repeated the argument made in the preceding campaign: it referred to the growing public demand for restriction, especially in the South, reflected in Congressional voting patterns, to the Dillingham Commission, and to resolutions passed by state legislatures, agricultural and labour associations, and by scientific, charitable, and medical bodies. As a selective measure, the League argued, the literacy test would mostly exclude unskilled labour

³³ Patten, telegram to IRL, 11 February 1913; Hall, handwritten note next to article "An Unwise Veto", *Boston Transcript*, 14 February 1913, in IRL Records (1110a, vol. 9); Ward to Lee, 27 February 1913.

³⁴ Tichenor, pp. 136–37; Zeidel, pp. 91–93. The League asked its members and friends to write to their Congressmen to overrule the veto: Hall, letter to supporters, 12 February 1913, Lee Papers. In the debate in Congress, the League's allies stressed the Dillingham recommendations: Senate, *Consideration of Senate Bill No. 3175 and Veto Message: Immigration of Aliens - Veto Message. Extracts from Congressional Record. February 18 and 19, 1913* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913).

³⁵ Hutchinson, pp. 159–63; Vought, pp. 113–16. For the IRL's support for the bill during the Congressional debate, see for example IRL Records (1048); IRL Records (1065, folder 3).

³⁶ IRL Records (752); Patten to Lee, 25, 27 March 1914, Lee Papers; Vought, pp. 113–16.

and the criminal, pauper and insane, those “below the average both of our country and their own”. Additionally, the League stated, the test would facilitate assimilation since literate immigrants were more likely to understand the American political system.³⁷

Debating the right approach towards Wilson, Patten emphasized that the president was “seeing the fewest possible number of callers”. Instead of inundating him with petitions, the League thus decided to select a small number of prominent men to lobby for the bill. E. A. Ross wrote to his former teacher to argue for the bill, Hall also made sure that the president received the galley proofs of Ross’s articles, later to form the core of his book. Hall also forwarded copies of Fairchild’s *Immigration* and PHS officer Dawes’s report on the alien insane. Madison Grant ensured further letters from prominent men, among them Henry Fairfield Osborn. Lee, Ward and Hall, and several congressmen met Wilson personally to canvass for the new bill.³⁸ In March 1914, when the bill was stuck in the House due to the upcoming elections, Lee, social worker Woods, race suicide theorists Fairchild and Ross, and the former members of the Dillingham Commission Jenks and Husband travelled to Washington to discuss the bill with Wilson, stressing the economic effect of immigration and arguing against distribution. In April, a visit by Commons and former Dillingham researcher Lauck was followed by Carver and Robert F. Foerster, assistant professor at Harvard.³⁹ The IRL also sent 20,000 letters to supporters, academics, organizations and newspapers to gather public support.⁴⁰ After the House passed the bill on 4 January 1915, Wilson held a hearing on 22 January; the League was represented by Moors, Lee, Jenks, Ross, Fairchild, and Henry Abrahams of the Boston Central Labor Union. The IRL again secured the support of charitable, medical and psychiatric societies. Representatives from fifteen such organizations were present at the hearing, among them Salmon for the NCMH,

³⁷ IRL, letter to President Wilson, November 1913; Memorandum for the President in Favor for the Reading Test Provision of the Burnett Immigration Bill, April 1914, Lee Papers; IRL, *The Reading Test*, IRL Publication no. 63, 1914.

³⁸ IRL Records (468, folder 1, 590, 1008); IRL Minutes, 19, 24 September, 17 October 1913, 20 March 1914, 8 January 1915, Hall to Lee, 18 July 1913, Lee Papers; Weinberg, p. 247. The League also reprinted an article by Fairchild that argued for the bill: IRL, *The Case for the Literacy Test*, IRL Publication no. 66, 1915.

³⁹ IRL Records (608); Patten to Lee, 27 March 1914, Lee Papers; IRL Minutes 20, 27 March 1914. Foerster taught a course on immigration at Harvard: IRL Minutes, 31 May 1912.

⁴⁰ IRL Records (590, 752).

Harry H. Laughlin for the ERO, Paul Popenoe for the AGA, and Spencer Dawes for the New York Commission on the Alien Insane.⁴¹

Despite the restrictionists' efforts, however, Wilson vetoed the bill on 28 January. Like his predecessors, he stressed the "radical departure from the traditional and long-established policy of this country" in closing "entirely the gates of asylum" for the politically persecuted. The literacy test, he wrote, was not one of "quality and character or of personal fitness, but [...] of opportunity of education. The object of such provisions is restriction, not selection".⁴² In more private settings, however, Wilson admitted that he could not sign the bill due to his campaign promises. Again, the veto was overridden by Senate (62:19), but the motion fell four votes short in the House (284:106). Thirteen Democrats who had voted for the bill one month earlier declined to override the veto; Patten thus concluded that their support had been acquired by "straight-out patronage deals". Nonetheless, he was not disheartened by the defeat since many opponents of the bill had lost their seats in the elections.⁴³

In the end, Patten turned out to be right. Although the League had to wait until 1917 for the passage of a new immigration act including the literacy test over Wilson's second veto, the ongoing war in Europe helped the IRL to overcome resistance to the test. Discussions about American armament and possible entry into the war heightened doubts about the so-called hyphenated Americans' loyalty to the nation. In his assistance for the Republican candidate Hughes in the 1916 presidential campaign, Roosevelt championed so-called 100 percent Americanism which dominated the debate after Wilson and his party adopted the issue. The so-called preparedness campaigns, the 1915 Americanization Day crusade initiated by the NAC and the agitation of the Committee on Public Information, a state agency created in 1917 to promote the war effort, contributed to turning anti-immigrant sentiment into a political climate verging on hysteria. Fear of enemy infiltrators and political radicalism easily translated into demands for absolute and unqualified

⁴¹ IRL Records (1008, 1066, folder 3); IRL Minutes, 22 January 1915. For Popenoe, see Kline. A week before the hearing, Bradley had also written to Wilson, concentrating on immigration's assumed effect on American wages.

⁴² *Congressional Record*, 63rd Congress, 3rd session, 1915, pp. 2481-82.

⁴³ IRL Records (401, 590); Neuringer, pp. 113-14; Tichenor, pp. 137-38; Vought, pp. 113-18; Zeidel, pp. 125-28. The most important victory for the League in the elections was probably that of Burnett whom they supported in his campaign: IRL Minutes, 11 November 1915, 28 January 1916.

loyalty and brought out the coercive side of the Americanization movement. While this potential had already been incorporated in the very beginnings of the movement, the war enabled the implementation of coercive policies: most states banned the use of foreign languages in schools and the 1917 and 1918 Espionage and Sedition Acts gave the federal government the power to persecute and deport supposedly dangerous members of radical antiwar groups and internationalist labour unions.⁴⁴ Consequently, the Americanization movement was increasingly dominated by forces that emphasized the need to facilitate unconditional patriotism in both immigrants and Americans, highlighting the “repressive side of social engineering”, to quote John McClymer.⁴⁵ Patriotic societies such as the DAR and the Patriotic Sons of America gained more influence in the movement, the NAC, although still opposing restriction, also started to canvass for policies such as compulsory alien registration. The war and its aftermath also saw the rise of new right-wing nationalistic organizations such as the American Defense Society (ADS), the National Security League (NSL), and the American Legion eager to support restriction.⁴⁶

The IRL used this momentum to further promote restriction via the literacy test after Burnett had reintroduced the bill in 1916 without major changes. Despite the significant drop in immigration figures due to the war, the League used concerns about immigrants’ loyalty and quality to warn against a significant rise that would inevitably occur after the war, a concern also articulated by other restrictionists.⁴⁷ In the third report of the ABA’s committee on immigration and in articles published in 1916 and 1917, Ward assessed that the war had resulted in “breathing space” for “the first times in centuries”, but that new legislation was needed “at once”. The time had come, he argued, to abandon the “absolute confidence in the strength of our institutions to assimilate all people” and the tradition of the asylum for the

⁴⁴ Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibility and the Liberal State* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 255–63; Dorsey, pp. 117–38; Gerstle, *Crucible*, pp. 81–95; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 194–212; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 90–115; Pavalko, pp. 68–72; Pickus, pp. 112–14. The espionage act was drafted by former IRL member Charles Warren, then Assistant Attorney-General.

⁴⁵ McClymer, p. 113.

⁴⁶ Knobel, pp. 244–49; McClymer, pp. 113–54; Morgan, pp. 104–11; Schneider, pp. 156–59. The ADS was actually a splinter group of the NSL that formed after internal conflicts: John C. Edwards, ‘Playing the Patriot Game: The Story of the American Defense Society, 1915-1932’, *Studies in History & Society*, 1.1 (1976), 54–72. For the American Legion, see for example: William Pencak, *For God and Country: The American Legion 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989).

⁴⁷ Higham, *Strangers*, p. 202. For examples how the IRL continued to use this argumentation after the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act, see IRL, circular, 5 May 1918, Lee Papers.

oppressed, since not even idealists and their clandestine supporters, the transportation companies and big business, wanted the US to become “an insane asylum, nor their ‘refuge’ to become an almshouse or a penitentiary”. Citing Commissioner of Ellis Island Frederick Howe, David Starr Jordan, Jeremiah Jenks and anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička, Ward warned that immigration would not only increase again after the war but also consist of those affected by war injuries, “venereal diseases and mental breakdowns”, the “disturbed, restless, irresponsible men”. The proposed bill and the literacy test, Ward wrote, could prevent the arrival of “the mental and physical derelicts of the war” and ban the “economically and racially unfit”. Appealing to the readers’ patriotic sentiment, Ward reminded them that as a “eugenic measure”, the bill would ensure the high “mental and physical standards of our people” and was not only in “the best interest of our future race” but also, “in the long run, of humanity at large”.⁴⁸

The war did not only provide an additional argument for restriction, but also considerably weakened the IRL’s opponents. Ethnic immigrant associations tried to keep a low profile to not raise further concerns about their loyalty, the AAFLN and German-American associations in particular came under attack during the war. The NLIL, on the other hand, had already lost its leading role in the 1913-15 campaign to the AJC. Personal frictions between AJC and NLIL leaders had led to an uncoordinated campaign against the 1915 bill; the NLIL’s public image had also suffered from restrictionist attacks as it was increasingly viewed as a tool of transportation and business interest. The German-Americans, formerly the NLIL’s most vocal supporters, avoided a prominent role in public debate. When the AFL published proof that the NLIL was actually financed by industrial, steamship and railway corporations, the League had lost its last supporters and sank into insignificance. Disheartened by the narrow victory achieved in 1915 and the attacks during the war, the Jewish-American associations realized how slight their chances

⁴⁸ Cance and others; Robert DeCourcy Ward, ‘Immigration and the War’, *Scientific Monthly*, 2.5 (1916), 438–52; Ward, *Immigration after the War*. The League had conferred with INS Deputy Commissioner Henley and Salmon to discuss the bill before it was introduced in Congress, the latter considered it to be “the best bill ever drawn”: IRL Minutes, 19 February 1916. In circulars sent to newspapers in 1915, the IRL had warned that “the flotsam and jetsam of Europe and Asia [...] will be washed into this country on a living wave; a wave so mighty that all records probably will be broken”: IRL Records (1048). For other examples, see IRL, *Immigration Figures for 1915*, Publication no. 65, 1915; IRL, letter to members, 22 February 1916, Lee Papers.

had become to prevent the passage of the bill and concentrated on the incorporation of an exemption from the literacy test for the victims of religious persecution.⁴⁹

The IRL, on the other hand, reinforced its efforts to mobilize its allies. After the disappointment of Wilson's veto, the League decided to concentrate on public pressure and on convincing Congressmen. The League hired Jenks for six months in 1915 to conduct a publicity campaign. Jenks obtained new names for the League's influence list, wrote to members and friends of the League, sent material to newspapers and answered editorials. In 1917, the overhauled and extended influence list encompassed 200,000 names; Patten also maintained a stencil list of 19,000 names arranged by congressional districts. One year earlier, the IRL had sent 50,000 copies of the AFL's newsletter to names on the lists, announcing the union's renewed endorsement of the test.⁵⁰ The bill was passed in House and Senate with large majorities in 1916. Without holding a hearing, Wilson again vetoed it in January 1917, repeating his statement that the test was only one of the immigrants' opportunities. Although the Democrats controlled the House, the veto was overridden in House (287:106) and Senate (62:19) and the literacy test finally became law. Furthermore, the bill raised the head tax to eight dollars, extended the deportation period to five years and allowed for the indeterminate deportation for moral turpitude and anarchism. The Act also shifted the burden of proof that the condition for deportation had not existed at the time of entry to the immigrant, introduced vagrancy, chronic alcoholism, and constitutional psychopathic inferiority as exclusionary categories, and excluded all immigrants from the so-call Asiatic Barred Zone, encompassing most of Eastern and Southern Asia except for Japan.⁵¹

Most historians agree that the 1917 Immigration Act was a watershed in the history of American immigration policy. Extending the principle of racial exclusion to most

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Not Free*, pp. 51–52; Cohen, *Schiff*, pp. 200–05; Lissak, National Liberal Immigration League, pp. 230–36; Tichenor, pp. 138–40. For the AAFLN and the IPL reactions to Americanization and the last campaign against the literacy test, see Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 107–24.

⁵⁰ Patten to Ward, 5 April 1916, Lee Papers; IRL Minutes, 8 January, 12 March, 16 April 1915; IRL Records (590, 1048, 1066, folder 1).

⁵¹ Act of February 5, 1917 (39 Stat. 874); Hutchinson, pp. 163–68; Kanstroom, pp. 133–35; Tichenor, pp. 140–41; Vought, pp. 118–19; Zeidel, pp. 128–29. The Asiatic Barred Zone was defined by longitude and latitude, while it mainly served the exclusion of Indian labourers that had been coming to the Pacific Coast, it stretched from Oceania to parts of Russia and Afghanistan. Immigrants from other parts of the world who passed the literacy test or naturalized citizens were allowed to bring parents, grandparents, wives, and unmarried or widowed daughters irrespective of their ability to read.

Asian immigrant groups, the Act thus marked the “unmistakable declaration of a white immigration policy”, to quote Hutchinson. Simultaneously, the literacy test “applied the principle of group exclusion to European immigrants for the first time”, as Gerstle has pointed out. However, by the time the literacy test finally got adopted, it proved to be a less effective tool than the IRL had originally envisioned in the 1890s. Despite the test, immigrant figures rose again to 800,000 in 1920, almost as high as before the war. Only several thousand immigrants were excluded for illiteracy since educational standards among new immigrants had risen significantly since the IRL had first introduced the test.⁵²

While the Americanization movement differed profoundly from restrictionists regarding its ideas about race and the stability of group traits, it did not necessarily contradict or delay immigration restriction. Problematizing the perceived lack of immigrant assimilation, it helped to racialize the new immigrants as different and as an object of state and private intervention necessary to stabilize the American society. The IRL and other more conservative political organizations of the progressive era, although adamant opponents of ideas of amalgamation or the melting pot, could thus even refer to restriction as a prerequisite for successful Americanization. The “convergence of nativist and Americanization arguments” in the “increasing hysteria of the Americanization movement during and immediately following the war years”, Irving states, helped to create the political climate necessary to finally pass the literacy test.⁵³ While the war might have given restrictionists the “extra margin of support” to override Wilson’s veto, as Higham claims, the passage of the literacy test was only a matter of time. The League’s campaign for restriction in the South had started to pay off after the Dillingham Commission had published its recommendations; in all parts of the US except for the Northeast, congressmen increasingly supported restrictive bills. The IRL’s strong alliances with farmers, labour, patriotic societies and scientific experts had helped to exert pressure on representatives, but had proven unable to overcome the

⁵² Gerstle, *Crucible*, p. 97; Hutchinson, p. 167; Tichenor, p. 142. Historians can only speculate about the test’s effect since European immigrants were aware of the regulation and might have decided not to come to the US. For the characterization of the 1917 act as a decisive turn in American immigration policy, see also Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 46–47; Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, pp. 23–24; Higham, *Send these to Me*, p. 52; LeMay, *Guarding the Gates*, p. 112.

⁵³ Irving, pp. 88–90.

real resistance to restriction which came from the executive after 1910, as Tichenor has argued.⁵⁴

Beyond the restriction of immigration, the passage of the 1917 Act was also characteristic of the increased control of the modern nation-state of its population towards the end of the progressive era. As Fitzgerald has argued, the 1917 Act embodied the “transition from symbolic federal efforts to a substantial national policy” that strengthened the state apparatus, making immigration control “one of the first examples in the United States of a national, state-centered policy sector”.⁵⁵ Regarding the application of the new law at the border, the Act incorporated the provisions that had been discussed in eugenic terms. The provisions suggested by medical experts, eugenicists and INS and PHS personnel and the new mental tests devised at Ellis Island soon helped to increase exclusion figures at the border. Constitutional psychopathic inferiority, defined by Salmon as “a congenital defect in the emotional or volitional fields of mental activity which results in inability to make proper adjustments to the environment”, already accounted for 48% of exclusions for psychiatric reasons in 1922. By its very vagueness, the clause allowed PHS officers to classify immigrants as defective that could not be easily excluded before. Furthermore, the shift of the burden of proof to the immigrants relieved the PHS and INS of a difficult task and facilitated deportation significantly.⁵⁶

The passage of the law thus had finally implemented the biopolitical control the IRL had lobbied for since its foundation. The League’s persistence, as Patten put it, had eventually convinced Congressmen that similar bills would reappear “like Banquo’s ghost” if blocked; Patten could not imagine “any greater pleasure or satisfaction” for “a genuine patriot” than that resulting from the passage of the bill. After a celebratory dinner in Boston, however, Lee soon reminded the League’s members that their work, “instead of being finished, has, however, really only begun”.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Goldin; Higham, *Send these to Me*, pp. 51–52; Tichenor, pp. 146–49.

⁵⁵ Fitzgerald, pp. 128–29.

⁵⁶ Dowbiggin, p. 215; Fairchild, p. 149; Ordovery, p. 17. For the official application and definition in the PHS, see for example Chief Medical Officer Perry to Surgeon-General, 21 April 1917, PHS Records, central correspondence file, folder 219; for a typical case excluded under the new regulation, see INS 54833/149. The clause could also be used to exclude those suspected of deviant sexual behaviour: Luibhéid, *Entry Denied*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ IRL Minutes 23 March 1917; Patten to Hall, 31 March 1916, Patten to Lee, 7 February 1917, Lee to members, 22 February 1917, Lee Papers.

7.1 The road to the National Quotas

In comparison to the preceding debate, the American political climate was even more favourable to immigration restriction after 1917. Fears of high numbers of immigrants fleeing from political instability and persecution in Europe, high unemployment figures and fierce labour unrest in the aftermath of the war made the public more susceptible to restrictive measures based on racial exclusion. The first Red Scare after the Russian revolution and accompanying reports of communist agitators in America had led to the Palmer raids and the arrest of several thousand alleged alien radicals, many of them detained at and deported from Ellis Island. Although the wave of anti-radicalism soon subsided after 1921, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, race riots in American cities, anti-Semitic propaganda and calls for 100 percent Americanism added to the heated political debate about the racial future of the nation. Warren G. Harding, a staunch supporter of 100 percent Americanism, befittingly chose the slogan “America first” for his presidential campaign in this heated political atmosphere.⁵⁸

Even before the literacy test had been enacted in 1917, various other measures to restrict immigration had been discussed in detail. Over the next twelve years, an intense debate dominated by eugenic and racial arguments would finally result in the Emergency Quota Act in 1921, the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924 and the establishment of the National Origins system in 1929. Immigration historians and historians focusing on the eugenic movement alike have emphasized the influence of biological arguments and eugenicists in these debates, resulting, as Ludmerer put it, in the “greatest triumph of the American eugenics movement in national affairs – its one major nation-wide success”.⁵⁹ While these historians mostly concentrated on the

⁵⁸ Bennett, pp. 183–98; Cannato, pp. 311–29; Gerstle, *Crucible*, pp. 95–104; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 222–233, 264–311; McGerr, pp. 300–13; Vought, pp. 139–69. In 1920, Patten was confident about the prospects of restrictive legislation since “all the candidates are talking Americanism and Americanization”: IRL Records (796).

⁵⁹ Ludmerer, *Immigration Restriction Act*, p. 61. For immigration histories, see Archdeacon, pp. 143–172; Cannato, pp. 330–49; Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 46–58; Divine, pp. 26–51; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 300–30; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 166–228; LeMay, *Guarding the Gates*, pp. 110–34; Tichenor, pp. 138–49; Vought, pp. 155–224; Zeidel, pp. 131–47; Zolberg, pp. 243–70. For the influence of the eugenic movement on the legislation, see Barkan, *Retreat*, pp. 177–228; Chase, pp. 274–301; Gossett, pp. 370–408; Stephen J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History* (London: Burnett, 1978), pp. 243–47; Haller, pp. 144–159; Hansen and King, pp. 252–58; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 96–112; Ludmerer, *American Society*, pp. 87–113; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, pp. 97–135; Selden; Spiro, pp. 202–33; Tucker, *Science and Politics*, pp. 87–97; Peter H. Wang, *Legislating Normalcy: The Immigration Act of 1924* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1975); Richard Weiss, ‘Racism in the Era of Industrialization’, in *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America*, ed. by Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1970), pp. 121–43. For the

post-war shaping of the quota system and the role of Congressional debates and lobbies, Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil have recently disclosed the “anti-racist origins” of the quota system.⁶⁰

The first quota bill was drafted by Dillingham’s secretary William W. Husband after the Commission had finished its work. It was intended as a restrictive measure with more predictable results than the literacy test and introduced by Dillingham several times in Congress. The idea of the percentage plan that would allocate immigration quotas proportionally to immigrant groups was then picked up by Sydney L. Gulick, a former missionary to Japan and staunch opponent of Asian exclusion. Gulick realized that if applied to all immigrants, such a system could circumvent the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Gentlemen’s agreement if quotas were based on the origin of naturalized citizens. From 1915, he organized support for his plan among politicians, social scientists and reformers.⁶¹ Initially, the IRL had rejected percentage plans to not endanger the passage of the literacy test. After 1917, the IRL drafted its own quota bill that left the Asiatic Barred Zone in operation and gave the Secretary of Labor the authority to limit immigration to 20% to 50% of the number of naturalized citizens of each nationality in the preceding census. The bill’s aim, according to Hall, was to “discriminate in favor of immigrants of northern and western Europe, thus securing for this country aliens of kindred and homogeneous racial stocks”. Simultaneously, it began to warn supporters of Gulick’s plan, among them Jenks, Fairchild and Ross, that the reintroduction of Asian immigration severely diminished the bill’s prospects.⁶² As Ly and Weil have pointed out, Gulick’s use of the quota system as a tool to end the discrimination against Asian immigrants discredited similar percentage plans and prevented the League’s bill from passing. Patten complained in 1919 that due to “Gulick’s propaganda” the League’s bill had not been taken up. In 1920, the new

international context of the quotas, see Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Beyond the Huddled Masses: American Immigration and the Treaty of Versailles* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁶⁰ Ly and Weil.

⁶¹ Bernard, Zeleny and Miller (eds), pp. 24–25; Handlin, *The Uprooted*, p. 260; LeMay, *Guarding the Gates*, pp. 117–18; Ly and Weil, pp. 53–56.

⁶² IRL Records (295, 363, 401, 426, 427, 462, 484, 521, 549, 608, 652, 752, 753, 754, 1070, folder 1, folder 9, 1124, folder 5); Hall to Lee, 11 March 1917, Patten to Lee, 4 January 1916, 23 April 1919, Lee Papers; Hall, “Shall We Open the Immigration Gate?”, *Boston Herald*, 16 October 1918; IRL, *The League’s Numerical Limitation Bill*, Publication no. 69, 1918; Hall, *Recent History*, pp. 744–45; Ly and Weil, pp. 48–49; Zeidel, pp. 131–35. The League’s proposal was also a reaction to the fact that the Secretary of Labor had temporarily exempted Mexican agricultural workers from the literacy test to meet the demand for wartime labour

chairman of the House Immigration Committee Albert Johnson (R-WA) suggested to completely suspended immigration for a limited period. Johnson's bill was replaced with Dillingham's quota bill; after complex negotiations, the bill limited immigration to 3% of each European nationality residing in the US at the time of the 1910 census. Although Congress passed the bill, President Wilson blocked it with a pocket veto before he left the White House in 1921. The new Congress again passed this so-called Emergency Quota Act, subsequently for the first time introducing a numerical cap for immigration, limiting it to 355,000 persons per year. Signed by Harding, the Act was only meant to stay in effect for fifteen months but was extended twice until the Johnson-Reed Act was passed in 1924. The percentage plan originally intended as an anti-racist measure, Ly and Weil have pointed out, was thus transformed into the quota system that reduced immigration significantly by racial criteria.⁶³

As many historians have pointed out, Albert Johnson became the most important Congressman in making the quotas permanent. Characterized by Spiro as a "stocky, heavy-drinking, small-town newspaper editor", Johnson's central role was due to the death of Burnett and Dillingham and Lodge's new focus on foreign policy as well as the influence eugenicists could exert on him. The League had been in contact with him since 1914; Johnson even claimed that "I secured my first suggestions for the restriction of immigration fifteen or sixteen years ago from pamphlets put out by your League". Madison Grant, who had begun to orchestrate restrictionists' efforts after 1916, integrated Johnson in a network of eugenic institutions and researchers. With his influence gained by the publication of *The Passing of the Great Race* and his existing network among scientists, conservationists, and eugenicists, Grant continued the League's efforts to interest eugenicists in restriction. Already active in the ERA, Grant founded the Eugenics Committee of the United States of America (ECUSA) in 1922 which became the AES in 1926 and served as a political lobby association for the eugenic movement. Including renown men such as Fisher, Osborn, Davenport, Starr Jordan, Kellogg, Laughlin, Popenoe, Stoddard and Ward, Grant also invited Johnson to join its advisory council, made him a member of the Galton Society and even president of the ERA in 1923. Grant also reactivated the ADS, formerly mainly concerned with

⁶³ IRL Records (552, folders 1 and 2); Bernard, Zeleny and Miller (eds), pp. 22–24; Hutchinson, pp. 168–85; Ly and Weil, pp. 59–68; Zeidel, pp. 131–38. For the IRL's support of the Emergency Quota Act, see for example IRL Records (755); Patten to Ward, 23 November 1920, Lee Papers.

anti-radicalism, and put it in contact with IRL leaders. Grant also provided the contact to John B. Trevor, chief lobbyist for various patriotic societies who became, according to Margo Conk, the “most influential lobbyist for restriction” in the 1920s and served as Johnson’s “unofficial advisor”, as Higham put it. Consequently, Johnson made Harry H. Laughlin “Experts Eugenic Agent” of the House Immigration Committee in 1921, a position he would hold for ten years.⁶⁴

The growing importance of eugenic organizations and individuals was not only due to Grant’s coordination efforts or the growing popularity of eugenic and racial thought, but also of the IRL’s weakness. After 1920, the League’s significance began to decline continually, mostly due to the death of its most active member, Prescott Hall, in May 1921. Hall had been suffering from health problems from 1916, describing them as “nervous breakdown” and stomach problems. Despite his ailments, Hall continued to work hard for the League’s goals and managed to finish an article for the *Journal of Heredity* in 1919, appealing to eugenicists to take up restriction since it served as “segregation on a large scale, by which inferior stocks can be prevented from both diluting and supplanting good stocks”. His condition deteriorated quickly after 1920, he died in June 1921. After his death, Ward and Lee deplored that they had lost the “main-stay of the work for all these years” who had provided the “constant and devoted vigilance combined with able work”, but at least had lived long enough to see the Emergency Quota Act passed.⁶⁵ From 1918, Patten also complained that his “nerves and digestive apparatus [...] get me out of this pleasurable pursuit of hunting the alien”. His doctors ordered rest to cure his “nervous exhaustion” and “nervous anemia”, Lee also admonished him that it “is really important to us as well as to you that you should stay alive”. Worried about

⁶⁴ IRL Records (347, 468, folder 2, 629, 552, folders 1 and 2); IRL Minutes 20 February, 26 September 1919, 12 March, 16 April 1920; New York, New York Historical Society, Records of the American Defense Society, series I, correspondence: box 4, folder 7, box 6, folder 2; series III, printed material: box 12, folder 1; Conk, p. 96; Divine, pp. 1–25; Edwards; Guterl, pp. 43–45; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 320, also 312–324; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 191–192, 211–212; Selden, pp. 22–38; Spiro, pp. 167–210.

⁶⁵ Ward to Lee, 2 January 1916, Hall to Lee, 31 December 1917, IRL. *Annual Report for 1922*, Lee Papers; Prescott F. Hall, ‘Immigration Restriction and World Eugenics’, *Journal of Heredity*, 10.3 (1919), 125–27. A year before his death, Hall wrote to Lee that a new doctor had discovered that his stomach was “eight inches out of place by using a fluoroscope”. Given the amount of radiation patients were exposed to in early X-ray examinations, this treatment might actually not have contributed to Hall’s health: Hall to Lee, 16 February 1920.

his condition, Lee wrote to Ward that Patten was “doing a ten men’s job himself, under discouraging conditions, but he is a marvel, heroic to the last degree”.⁶⁶

Apart from sporadic bouts of illness, Patten’s condition improved after 1921. The League, however, never quite recovered from Hall’s death. Although Ward tried to compensate for the loss by cooperating with eugenic organizations, he was “far too busy with College duties to do more than very little on the outside”. Bradley also became more engaged in the work and the correspondence, one of his daughters was hired as secretary to continue the “high-brow” correspondence with the influence list.⁶⁷ Lee occasionally wrote letters and travelled to Washington to meet politicians; Patten conducted the usual lobby work in Washington, mobilizing patriotic societies, labour unions, social scientists and prominent citizens to support restrictive legislation. The IRL’s work was increasingly augmented and even replaced activities of the various eugenic organizations and patriotic societies. Patten tried to coordinate the work and regularly met with Trevor and Francis H. Kinnikut, lobbyist for the Allied Patriotic Societies; as a result, the debate leading to the permanent establishment of the quota system in the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 was dominated by biologic arguments.⁶⁸

By the time the permanent quota system was discussed in Congress, public opinion had grown even more favourable to restriction because the themes of the new immigrants’ assumed inferiority and the need for the protection of the Anglo-Saxon’s racial composition had become more prominent. One of the factors for this development was a series of articles by Kenneth Roberts in the *Saturday Evening Post*. In an alarmist fashion, Roberts depicted Eastern European Jews fleeing from

⁶⁶ Patten to Hall, 12 July 1918, 13 November 1920, Patten to Lee, 13 May, 17 May, 28 July, 7 October 1920, 5 May 1921, Lee to Ward, 23 April 1921, Lee to Patten, 27 April 1921, Lee Papers. Instead of taking half a year off, as Lee had suggested, Patten chose to cure himself by manly outdoor activities such as “trout fishing, hiking, camping”: Patten to Lee, 15 August 1921.

⁶⁷ IRL Records (165); Ward to Lee, 20 April 1921, 29 April 1922, Ward to IRL members, 13 March 1922, Patten to Ward, 13 October 1921, Bradley to James J. Davis, 21 May 1921, Bradley to Lee, 21 May 1921, Bradley to Patten, 11 October 1922, Patten to Bradley, 3 January, 7 October 1922, Bradley to Johnson, 4 March 1924, Lee Papers, Carton 1; Ward to Lee, 22 April 1923, Patten to Bradley, 24 April 1923, Bradley to Lee, 13 November 1926, Lee Papers, Carton 2. Ward also communicated with Laughlin to coordinate restrictionists’ efforts and sent him his articles: Laughlin to Ward, 5 December 1922, 1 April, 15 September, 22 November 1924, Ward to Laughlin, 28 November 1922, 20 March, 18 September, 15, 20 November 1924, Kirksville, Truman State University, Manuscript Collection L1, Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Box C-4-1:8; Box C-4-2:7.

⁶⁸ IRL Records (590); Patten to Lee, Patten to Ward, 1922-1924, Patten to Grant, 18 November 1921, 14, 19 January 1922, Lee Papers, Cartons 1 and 2; Lee to Davis, 19 September 1923, Lee Papers, Carton 2.

persecution as inferior hordes unable to ever rise to American standards. The *Post* and other newspaper continued to publish anti-immigration articles and editorials. The IRL worried that the writings were too radical; Patten encouraged Ward in 1922 to talk to Roberts to “try to temper his violent inclination”.⁶⁹

Additionally, the racial discourse was fuelled by the so-called army tests conducted by Carl Brigham, Lewis Terman and Robert Yerkes, characterized as “the most important single scientific buttress for the racism of the 1920s” by George Stocking. Using a newly designed IQ scale, Brigham and Yerkes tested more than 1.7 million recruits and announced that the “mental age” of white draftees was as low as thirteen and that 47% of them were feeble-minded. More important, however, was that the new immigrants’ results were even worse, explained by the psychologists by their racial traits. Although the tests in fact measured cultural knowledge instead of intelligence, the findings were met with interest by the public, especially after the 1923 publication of Brigham’s *A Study of American Intelligence*. Subsequently, Brigham and other medical experts lobbied for restriction and testified in Congressional hearings.⁷⁰

Eugenic ideas were further popularized by Lothrop Stoddard’s *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, published in 1920. Stoddard applied Grant’s thesis of the downfall of a presumed Nordic supremacy on a global scale; the book became a huge success and was even quoted by Harding in a speech in 1921. Stoddard subsequently published further books recommending restriction and became actively involved in the political lobby work; the IRL cited his work in its publications. In 1920, Stoddard became a member of the League’s executive committee, a fact overlooked by historians. The cooperation was kept off the records

⁶⁹ IRL Records (126); Ward to Lee, 8 August 1921, Patten to Ward, 20 February, 29 June 1922, Patten to Lee, 29 September 1922, Lee Papers; Patten to Bigelow, 10 February 1923, Lee Papers, Carton 2; Marouf A. Hasian, ‘Conserving the Nation’s “Germplasm”’: Nativist Discourse and the Passage of the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act’, *Legal Studies Forum*, 24 (2000), 157–74 (p. 164); Laliotou, pp. 38–45; LeMay, *Guarding the Gates*, p. 115; Spiro, pp. 174–75. The articles were also published as an edited volume: Kenneth L. Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home* (1922).

⁷⁰ Patten to Ward, 9 December 1922, Lee Papers; Carl C. Brigham, *A Study of American Intelligence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1923); Spiro, pp. 216–20. The tests’ significance for the immigration debate has been explored in detail: Chase, pp. 226–273; Gossett, pp. 370–379; Gould, *Mismeasure of Men*, pp. 204–63; Haller, pp. 160–167; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 83–85; Leon Kamin, ‘The Science and Politics of IQ’, *Social Research*, 41.3 (1974), 387–425; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 80–84; F. Samelson, ‘Putting Psychology on the Map: Ideology and Intelligence Testing’, in *Psychology in Social Context*, ed. by Allan R. Buss (New York: Irvington, 1979), pp. 103–68; Ordovery, pp. 25–31; Selden, pp. 87–95; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, pp. 59–71; Tucker, *Science and Politics*, pp. 80–87; Zenderland, pp. 281–94.

to maintain the League's official impartiality since its members thought him "so extreme" that he might "hurt us".⁷¹

Many historians have investigated the public discussion and the details of the political mechanisms at work in the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act, agreeing that racial thought and eugenic lobbyists had a decisive impact. While organizations such as the IRL, the ADS, the ERA, the ERO and the ECUSA and their members inundated congressmen with material laying out the eugenic need for restriction, the undisputedly most important individual contributor of 'eugenic evidence' was Laughlin who "laid the groundwork for the legislation of 1924", as Handlin emphasized. Between 1920 and 1928, Laughlin presented the results of three extensive studies on immigration in Congress, essentially following the IRL's line of argument of the new immigrants' purported racial inferiority. For his 1922 *Analysis of America's Modern Melting Pot*, for example, Laughlin finally conducted the study Hall had urged Davenport to take up ten years earlier. In his research, Laughlin had surveyed almost 450 state and federal institutions for the care for the mentally and physically impaired, providing detailed empirical material that demonstrated that new immigrants were represented disproportionately among inmates. The IRL was impressed that Laughlin had acquired the resources to conduct the project Hall had dreamed of for years, lauding his "great amount of work" and "wonderful presentation" of the "corking study".⁷²

To stop the "deteriorating influence upon the American stock of the future" caused by assumedly inferior and inherently defective immigrants, Laughlin recommended the drastic restriction of immigration. In this "critical period in American history", he warned in his 1924 testimony, the state had to restrict

⁷¹ Hall to Lee, 10 October, 19 December 1920, Stoddard to Bradley, 25 December 1920, Ward to Lee, 30 April 1921, Patten to Lee, 22 October 1920, 1 November 1921, 19 September 1922, Lee Papers; Lee to Ward, 26 July 1927, Lee Papers, Carton 2; Prescott F. Hall, 'Immigration and the World War', *Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Sciences*, 93, January (1921), 190-93; Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1920); Gossett, pp. 390-397; Guterl, pp. 51-56; Hasian, *Germplasm*, p. 70; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 96-98; Michaels, *Our America*, pp. 29-40; Hawkins, pp. 244-45; Spiro, pp. 171-74. For the transnational aspect of Stoddard's work, see Lake, *White Man's Country*, pp. 352-53. Davenport praised the book in a letter to Grant who had written the introduction: Davenport Papers, series I, correspondence with Madison Grant, folder 3.

⁷² Patten to Ward, 20, 21 November 1922, Lee Papers; Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 98; Ludmerer, *American Society*, pp. 101-13. Laughlin's influence on immigration legislation is discussed or at least mentioned in every overview of the history of immigration restriction and the history of the eugenic movement, see note above. For the most detailed descriptions of his influence, see King, *Liberalism*, pp. 111-30; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 173-90; Spiro, pp. 210-41. King relies on Laughlin's papers and the records of congressional committees; Spiro focuses on Grant's role based on the papers of a wide range of individuals and associations interested in eugenics.

immigration if the population was not to be “supplanted by other racial stocks” due to their higher fertility. Repeating the topics of the racial discourse, Laughlin argued that America’s success had resulted from its racial homogeneity that had shaped its history, law, and government. Arguing against Americanization and ideas of assimilation, Laughlin claimed that racial character was the decisive factor determining the quality of the population since single influences did not “absorb the other”: “there is no such thing as racial assimilation”, Laughlin stated. According to Laughlin, earlier investigations of the immigration problem such as the Dillingham Commission had overstated the economic aspects while “biology and race played a very secondary part”. Although the Dictionary of Races had “laid the foundation for future biological work”, Laughlin explained, “the Nation must exercise stricter control of immigration” to guarantee the future quality of the American race. Adhering to the themes the racial discourse and restrictionists such as the IRL had articulated for decades, Laughlin thus also framed immigration as a biopolitical question. Using new immigrants’ higher rates of deviance and abnormality as putative evidence for stable inherent racial qualities, he echoed the arguments the League had made since its foundation in 1894. Due to his status as official congressional agent and his testimonies praised by various eugenic and restrictionist organizations, however, Laughlin became an “indispensable authority on the ‘biological’ side of the immigration issue”, as Kevles put it; his studies were widely distributed and quoted by newspapers and magazines.⁷³

The details of the permanent quota system were drafted by Johnson and Grant, including the reduction of the quota from 3 to 2% per year and, more importantly, the shift of the calculation basis for the percentage from the 1910 to the 1890 census. Since the 1890 census reflected the composition of the population before the majority of new immigrants had arrived, the proposed changes reduced total European immigration from 387,803 to 186,437 and new immigration’s share from 55% to 12%. Unsurprisingly, the League was enthusiastic about the plan since “this would give as far more Nordics, and very few southern and eastern

⁷³ House of Representatives, *Analysis of America’s Modern Melting Pot. Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives: Statement of Harry H. Laughlin* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), pp. 736–37; House of Representatives, *Europe as an Emigrant-Exporting Continent and the United States as an Immigrant-Receiving Nation. Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Sixty-Eight Congress, First Session, March 8, 1924: Serial 5-A. Statement of Dr. Harry H. Laughlin, with Appendixes* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924), pp. 1294-1297, 1307; Kevles, *In the Name*, p. 103.

Europeans". Although "fierce opposition" from "the Alpines, and Slavs, and Mediterraneans" was to be expected, Ward wrote to Hall in 1922, "the idea is a straight American solution of our racial problem of the future". In fact, the opposition to the Act was remarkably weak, even the NAM only recommended maintaining the 3% quotas. The few remaining pro-immigrant associations had been weakened further after the war; organizations such as the Inter-racial council and the AAFLN were perceived as hardly disguised fronts for business interest or were struggling financially. Although some ethnic immigrant organizations and pro-immigrant congressmen still emphasized the American tradition of the refuge for the oppressed, many also took up an argumentation that relied on a broader definition of whiteness that encompassed all European immigrant groups, arguing that their racial traits would benefit the nation.⁷⁴ Opposition to Laughlin's and Grant's eugenic arguments, however, arose from scientific experts. Reflecting a trend that began in the early 1920s and would grow stronger over the decade, geneticists increasingly scrutinized and criticized eugenics' theories and methods. Herbert S. Jennings, although he had been trained by Davenport, became increasingly sceptic about eugenic dogmas and attacked Laughlin's argument in the congressional hearing. As Elazar Barkan has pointed out, correcting earlier findings, Jennings criticized the methodological and argumentative shortcomings of Laughlin's evidence rather his conclusions. Jennings also neither spoke out against restriction nor questioned the assumed stability of racial traits.⁷⁵

This counterargument, however, did not impress most Congressmen. Since 1917, restrictive legislation had been supported by overwhelming majorities in both houses, reflecting the change in public opinion. In contrast to the first two decades of the twentieth century, the biggest obstacle to immigration restriction, executive resistance, had also been overcome since Harding and his successor Calvin Coolidge both supported a combination of restriction and Americanization. In the article "Whose country is this?", aptly published in the *Good Housekeeping* magazine in

⁷⁴ Ward to Patten, 5 November 1922, Lee Papers; Hasian, *Germplasm*, p. 171; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 312–24; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 212–23; Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 121–35; Spiro, pp. 220–31; Tichenor, pp. 143–46; Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 121–35.

⁷⁵ Elazar Barkan, 'Reevaluating Progressive Eugenics: Herbert Spencer Jennings and the 1924 Immigration Legislation', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 24.1 (1991), 91–112; Kevles, *In the Name*, pp. 129–47; Ludmerer, *Immigration Restriction Act*; Ludmerer, *American Society*, p. 110; Michael Mezzano, 'The Progressive Origins of Eugenics Critics: Raymond Pearl, Herbert S. Jennings, and the Defense of Scientific Inquiry', *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 4.1 (2005), 83–98; Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, pp. 115–16.

1921, Coolidge declared that racial intermixture between Europeans led to “deterioration on both sides”. The nation, he argued, should take steps to “put our house in order for the advancing hordes of aliens”. In stark contrast to his predecessors, Secretary of Labor James J. Davis also was a staunch supporter of restriction who conferred regularly with restrictionists. In a letter to Harding written in 1923, Davis argued that the army tests had demonstrated that too many immigrants “between low average and inferior intelligence” had already been admitted. Consequently, Coolidge signed the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924 after it had been passed by Congress with overwhelming majorities.⁷⁶

The Johnson-Reed Act was a result of complex congressional negotiations: it cut back the quota to 2% based on the 1890 census and replaced the Asiatic Barred Zone with the exclusion of all individuals ineligible to citizenship. The quotas, however, were to stay in effect only until 1927 to devise the so-called National Origin quotas based on the ancestral origin of the American population. For the IRL, the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act was a decisive step in their mission to keep the US a predominantly Anglo-Saxon country. Thanking Johnson for his services, an overjoyed Bradley congratulated him on having “succeeded in establishing the quota principle so completely that there is practically no discussion of it”. Bradley was convinced that the quota system would finally allow for the biopolitical improvement of the ‘American race’ since the “country will be back of a stand that will call for filling up our families, taking in citizens; not colonists and labor gangs, facing our own problems and preferring to breed our own workers”. Grant wrote to Ward to congratulate on “the splendid success” and acknowledged that “Mr. Lee also deserves a great deal of credit for the way he has financed the Immigration Restriction League throughout the long period of Egyptian night”. Grant was, however, convinced that “the best way to hold ground once gained is to renew the attack”. As an important first step, he wrote, the Johnson-Reed Act would contribute to a better age to come: “with the help of eugenics, we may be able to get back on a decent racial footing once more”.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Calvin Coolidge, ‘Whose Country Is This?’, *Good Housekeeping*, 72.2 (1921), 13-14, 106-108; IRL Records (590); Davis to Harding, 12 April 1923, Lee Papers; Cannato, p. 343; Higham, *Strangers*, pp. 318-19; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 100-104, 189, 205-206; LeMay, *Guarding the Gates*, pp. 113-27; Michaels, *Our America*, pp. 29-40; Pickus, pp. 115-16; Spiro, pp. 228-33; Vought, pp. 155-204.

⁷⁷ Bradley to Johnson, 4 March 1924, Lee Papers; Grant to Ward, 27 May 1924, Ward Papers, Box 80A; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 214-23; Spiro, pp. 231-33; Tichenor, pp. 143-46. For the

In the longer run, however, the National Origins system became a divisive issue among restrictionists. Albert Johnson had been skeptical about it initially and only accepted Senator David A. Reed's proposal to ensure the passage of the bill. Since no accurate data on racial ancestry had been included in the census, Joseph A. Hill, the Assistant Director of the Census, and his co-workers' calculations were in fact elaborate guesswork. To determine the original racial composition of the population and to accordingly distribute quota slots to nationalities, they assumed that national characteristics were passed on in a Mendelian fashion. In effect, the final report of the Quota board issued in January 1927 shifted allocated quotas even further towards North-western Europe, but this time in favor of Britain, and diminished quotas for the Irish, Germans and Scandinavians. In the dispute about the investigation's results, Congress delayed their coming into effect until July 1929. Together, the Johnson-Reed Act and the National Origins, in effect until 1965, influenced the volume and the composition of immigration profusely. Immigration figures remained below 100,000 per year in the 1930s since North-western European quotas were not fully exhausted; pre-war annual immigration levels were not reached until the end of the Cold War.⁷⁸

In the quota acts and the National Origins system, the biopolitical knowledge produced by the census, the Dillingham Commission and the INS and its differentiation into racial categories by the list of races or people was used extensively to evaluate immigration's assumed effect on the nation. Moreover, this knowledge that had been so central to the IRL's argumentation to racialize immigrants as deviant and delinquent now became the foundation for the quota system. It was thus transformed from a framework to assess the past and current state of the population into a tool for the manipulation and control of the future composition of the population. In Foucauldian terms, the knowledge produced in the dispositif of immigration now served as one of the "mechanisms through which the basis biological features of the human species became the object of a political

international repercussions of the quota system, see Vilna Bashi, 'Globalized Anti-Blackness: Transnationalizing Western Immigration Law, Policy, and Practice', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27.4 (2004), 584–606; Dutton, pp. 44–52; Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), pp. 46–67; Price.

⁷⁸ Anderson, pp. 131–58; Conk, pp. 93–97; Daniels, *Guarding*, pp. 59–60; Divine, pp. 26–51; King, *Making Americans*, pp. 221–23; Ngai, *Architectures of Race*, pp. 71–80; Tichenor, pp. 145–46; Vought, pp. 191–198, 203–214.

strategy". The "formalization of racial categories", as Ngai writes, that had been extended to European immigrant groups by Walker therefore helped to set the American immigration policy "in a kind of racialist concrete for the next generation", to quote Margo Conk.⁷⁹ In the restrictionists' opinion, these scientific tools helped to ensure the superior quality of the Anglo-Saxon population or at least put a stop to its deterioration putatively caused by race suicide and miscegenation. Since according to eugenic thought racial characteristics completely determined individual and group characteristics, the reversion of immigration trends by the quotas would in the long run restore and guarantee the nation's superiority.

The old coalition that had ensured the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act, however, slowly began to fall apart. Johnson himself advocated retaining the 1890 Census quotas because of the opposition of German-American, Irish-American and Scandinavian ethnic organizations to the National Origins. Trevor and the patriotic societies, on the other hand, were the most adamant advocates of the National Origins. The IRL's executive committee fell out with Patten over the issue: while Ward and Lee wanted him to support Trevor, Patten's political instinct told him that there was much too loose but not much to gain in this fight. When Patten got involved in the patriotic societies' internal fights and did not follow the executive committee's instructions scrupulously anymore, Ward even threatened to leave the League. Bradley, on the other hand, became increasingly frustrated with the fights over the National Origins and complained that the country was "letting in Mexicans by the hundred thousands" while "fussing over a few Swedes or Germans more or less".⁸⁰

His frustration indicates one of the unintended consequences of the quota system: while it excluded Asian immigration completely and cut down European immigration drastically, migrants from the Western Hemisphere could still come to the United States if they fulfilled the individual requirements. The IRL soon became aware that it had merely replaced one group of immigrants they assumed to be inferior with another and announced in 1925 that the "breathing space" gained by the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act now allowed to "turn our attention to the similar problem that menaces us from the south". Its campaign against Mexican

⁷⁹ Conk, p. 97; Foucault, *Security*, p. 1; Hannah, pp. 215–18; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, p. 29.

⁸⁰ Bradley to Ward, 21 May 1927, Ward to Patten, 1 March 1928, Patten to Bradley, 21 September 1929, Ward to Lee, 5, 11 October 1929, 15 September 1930, Bradley to Lee, 23 February, 3 December 1929, Lee Papers, Carton 2; Patten to Ward, 6 March 1930, Ward Papers, Box 80A.

immigration, however, never became as effective as its earlier work. Resistance from agricultural and industrial interest groups was impossible to overcome, the League's most important members were ageing and no younger men were joining, and contributions and membership numbers were dwindling after the League had achieved its main goal. Although multimillionaire Wicliffe Draper supported the League financially in the late 1920s, he soon lost interest. Several efforts to revive the League fell flat in the 1930s; its activities slowly petered out by the end of the decade. Robert DeCourcy Ward died in 1931; his son briefly reactivated the League during the second Red Scare but only published a handful of pamphlets.⁸¹

The eugenic movement struggled with similar problems. When its ideas had their strongest impact on the public in the 1920s, its scientific basis began to erode. A new generation of scientists had started to turn to genetics and refuted many of eugenics' central assumptions; the movement's leaders had neglected to recruit new members. The Great Depression also diminished the appeal of ideologies that preached the survival of the fittest; the application of eugenic policies in Nazi Germany would provide the decisive blow to eugenics' popularity.⁸² On the other hand, the eugenic movement generated several biopolitical measures in the mid-1920s that had a significant effect on the population. Shortly after the passage of the quota acts, in its notorious *Buck v. Bell* decision, the Supreme Court upheld the Virginia statute for compulsory sterilization of the feeble-minded, which had been drafted by Laughlin as a model law. Until the end of the decade, twenty-four states had enacted similar laws; as a result, many citizens regarded as socially deviant or defective were sterilized. In 1924, Virginia also passed the so-called Racial Integrity Act, drafted by Grant, prohibiting interracial marriages; by World War II, thirty states had maintained or adopted similar laws.⁸³ While these measures policed the colour line and were meant to purify the white race within the US, the racial restriction of immigration the IRL had demanded for thirty years was finally

⁸¹ IRL, *Annual Report of the Executive Committee for 1925*, Lee Papers; IRL, Financial Reports 1925-1933, Ward Papers, Box 81. For the IRL's campaign against Mexican immigration, see Jonathan P. Spiro, 'Patrician Racist: The Evolution of Madison Grant' (PhD, University of California, 2000). For Draper, see Tucker, *Funding*.

⁸² In detail, see Garland E. Allen, 'Eugenics and Modern Biology: Critiques of Eugenics, 1910-1945', *Annals of Human Genetics*, 75.3 (2011), 314-25; Barkan, *Retreat*, pp. 76-276; Spiro, pp. 328-54.

⁸³ Laughlin and Estabrook testified in the *Buck v. Bell* decision. In detail, see Black, pp. 161-82; Lombardo; Spiro, pp. 234-58; Trent, pp. 184-224.

achieved in the quota system. When the League succeeded in interesting the most influential eugenicists and their respective organizations in restrictions – a success the IRL also owed to Grant – both groups were able to shift the immigration debate from economic to racial concerns. When Davenport, Laughlin, Grant and their followers picked up the issue, they finally accepted the logic Hall and Ward had been preaching since the early 1900s – that all efforts to improve the Anglo-Saxon race within the US would be pointless if not augmented by the exclusion of assumedly inferior European races. Adopting the discourse of the new immigrants’ racial inferiority established by the IRL, eugenicists provided their expertise to the government “for the formation of biologically sound policies”, as Kevles points out. In combination, the quota system and compulsory sterilization, Matt Wray has argued, marked different groups as outsiders to the white race that had to be “excluded from the national body”.⁸⁴

The quota acts, however, did not only “put an end to a century of free movement” for European immigrants, but also codified the exclusion of all immigrants ineligible to citizenship.⁸⁵ While the 1917 Immigration Act had defined Asian exclusion in geographical terms, the 1924 Act connected the right to immigration for non-white groups to a racial definition of citizenship. The Naturalization Act of 1870 had restricted citizenship to white persons and those of African descent, Chinese immigrants had thus been ruled ineligible in 1878. In 1922 and 1923, the Supreme Court further narrowed the legal definition of whiteness. Rejecting claims to whiteness made by Japanese and East Indian immigrants, the Supreme Court alternately used scientific categorizations or “common knowledge” of racial identities as decisive factors in the eligibility for citizenship. As a consequence of the ruling, many Asian immigrants had their citizenship revoked and people from their region of origin were excluded from immigration. The Supreme Court, presided over by William Taft, also explicitly extended the ruling to other South East Asians groups regarded as non-white. This regulation thus excluded Asian immigrants almost entirely until the reform of naturalization regulations in 1952.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Kevles, *Eugenics in North America*, p. 215; Wray, p. 94.

⁸⁵ Handlin, *The Uprooted*, p. 260.

⁸⁶ Haney López, pp. 1–109; Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 223–45; Ngai, *Architectures of Race*, pp. 80–88; Smith, pp. 439–48; Smith. Additionally, the passage of the 1922 Cable Act revoked the citizenship of American women who married foreigners ineligible to citizenship, a regulation that

Mae Ngai has argued that the quota system thus did not only rely on the assumed racial inferiority of European immigrant groups, but also “divided Europe from the non-European world”. While Asian immigrants were racialized as “unalterably foreign and unassimilable to the nation”, she writes, European immigrants, although marked as undesirable, could over time become fully white and part of the American nation.⁸⁷ Ngai thus refers to Jacobson and Roediger who argued that between the passage of the quota acts and the 1960s, new immigrants gradually became white and were assigned fluid ethnicities that augmented rather than precluded their classification as part of the Caucasian race. When new immigrants ceased to be in-between people, the racial rationale that had established the multiplicity of European races was replaced by a clear white/non-white binary.⁸⁸ Only the ultimate victory of the idea of Anglo-Saxon superiority that had shaped the public debate about immigration since at least the 1890s thus enabled the eventual dissolution of the tripartite European race into a more inclusive American whiteness that simultaneously discriminated against Asian-Americans, Native Americans and African-Americans.

The establishment of a system of immigration regulation between the turn of the century and 1924, however, did not only mark the introduction of an elaborate system of racial exclusion, but also constituted new forms of state control over its population. Like other progressive era reform movements, the IRL finally succeeded in its call for state intervention on behalf of the population. In the League’s racially encoded interpretation, the control exerted by the nation-state’s apparatus over movements across its borders would eventually improve citizens’ life and, in turn, guarantee the prosperity of the nation. Although the border control apparatus might appear weak in comparison with that of the early twenty-first century, the establishment of an administrative apparatus at Ellis Island and other ports of entry marked a new era in the implementation of a national immigration policy, as

was modified in 1931 and abandoned five years later: Glenn, pp. 25–26. The citizenship cases of Asian immigrants were a continuation of the *Ah Yup v. US* ruling that had excluded Chinese immigrants from citizenship in 1878. On the other hand, these rulings still allowed people ‘of African descent’ to enter the US under the quotas of the colonial nations that exerted control over their territories of origin. The increase in immigration from the West Indies, however, was soon addressed by the US by a variety of regulations: Bashi, pp. 590–91.

⁸⁷ Ngai, *Architectures of Race*, pp. 70, 73; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, pp. 37–50. These ideas were first articulated by Omi and Winant: Omi and Winant, pp. 64–66.

⁸⁸ Jacobson, *Different Color*, pp. 91–135; Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, pp. 3–34.

Fitzgerald has argued.⁸⁹ In the context of what Gary Gerstle has characterized as “disciplinary project breathtaking in its scope”, the state’s control over the behaviour of the population had been extended by the end of the War to political views and moral self-conduct. While anti-radicalism enforced by the state subsided after the end of the Red Scare and the enforcement of prohibition proved to be problematic, new legislation and the growing apparatus of the INS had optimized and extended the period of post-entry social control of immigrants continually after the turn of the century. While the Americanization movement increased pressure on immigrants, at least discursively, to assimilate, those breaking the legal, moral, bodily or mental norms of whiteness were threatened with deportation. When the number of new immigrants started to decrease significantly after 1921, the service concentrated on the surveillance of its land borders and the deportation of non-Europeans, especially Mexican labourers. Consequently, the pre-war record of 4610 immigrants deported after entry was exceeded in 1926 and steeply rose to 16, 631 in 1930 although less immigrants were arriving.⁹⁰

The IRL continued to influence INS and PHS policies and personnel decisions during and after the war and was partly successful in supporting officers more inclined to restrictive policies. Husband was made Commissioner-General in 1921; the restrictionist Robert Tod ended a short interval of more lenient Commissioners at Ellis Island in 1921, making a “splendid Commissioner of the William Williams type”, Patten remarked. Hugh S. Cumming, Surgeon-General from 1920, was personally interested in eugenics and attended the Second International Congress of Eugenics organized by Laughlin and Davenport in 1921. Although PHS members’ prominent role in the medical justification of restrictive legislation was taken up by eugenicists in the 1920s, their support for such laws in the preceding decade and the discourse on immigration and deficiencies had been an

⁸⁹ Fitzgerald, pp. 96–144.

⁹⁰ Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner-General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1915* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 126; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1926), p. 129; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1928* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), p. 154; Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1930* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1930), p. 164; Cannato, pp. 311–29; Ettinger, pp. 145–66; Gerstle, *Crucible*, p. 91; Kanstroom, pp. 131–60; Schneider, pp. 113–49; Zolberg, pp. 264–67. For PHS policies at the Mexican-American border, see Stern, pp. 57–81.

important factor in the IRL's success. The League and its allies consequently used the high number of deportations and exclusions on medical grounds to justify the quota system.⁹¹ After the passage of a permanent quota system, the medical examination and inspection of immigrants was externalized. Immigrants had been required to hold passports and obtain visas in Europe after 1915; the establishment of the Foreign Service in 1925 allocated the actual inspections to consulates in major European cities. Rejections for medical reasons rose sharply to 5% of applicants; the immigrant stations lost in importance because of the new system.⁹² The state apparatus of security for the control of its territory, the population and the movements of aliens across its borders had now become essentially modern. In this new mode of power, the state's reach had extended to the point in time ahead of migratory movements. The screening of immigrants in their home countries and the deployment of border control "within the territory of other sovereign states" thus indeed led to the establishment of an American "remote control" for immigration, as Zolberg has characterized this system.⁹³ The extension of immigration control to the countries of origin thus was the last step in a number of measures to optimize border control, propelled by INS and PHS members and the IRL's lobbying, resulting in the extension of exclusionary categories and the racial restriction of immigration. While the League had tried to influence the application of regulations at the border, its interactions with the INS and PHS served its purposes most in their contributions to the discourse that depicted new immigrants as racially inferior. By the 1920s, the IRL and its allies had convinced the American public that restriction was not only necessary, but should be shaped by racial criteria. When the literacy test proved to be unable to reduce immigration significantly, the quota system became an effective tool to exclude racialized groups.

⁹¹ Patten to Ward, 9 December 1922, Lee Papers; J. O. Cobb, Report on the Second International Congress, PHS Records, central correspondence file, Folder 200; Kanstroom, pp. 131–60; Markel and Stern, pp. 1327–28. For the IRL's interactions with the INS and PHS, see for example IRL Records (468, folders 2, 3, 753, 916, folder 2); Patten to Lee, 7 October 1920, Lee to Husband, April 1921, Patten to Ward, 23 April 1921, 29 September 1922, Ward to Lee, 22 April 1923, Lee Papers. The Congress of Eugenics was also attended by Herbert Hoover: Hasian, *Germplasm*, p. 167.

⁹² Cannato, pp. 330–49; Fairchild, pp. 254–76; Torpey, pp. 117–21. The visa requirement was codified in 1918.

⁹³ Zolberg, pp. 9, 264–267.

8. Conclusion

The enactment of the quota system that drastically reduced European immigration was evidently favoured by situational factors. That restrictionists could use the window of opportunity between the war and the late 1920s, however, was also due to the work the IRL had conducted for more than thirty years. While the League's eventual success was to shape the racial composition of immigration for the next forty years, its underlying rationale had already been developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. It rested on a multitude of complex racial models which all shared the assumption that evolution was synonymous with progress and that the white race represented its most advanced outcome. As such, the League's approach was part of a new scientific knowledge which established a hierarchy presupposing that race correlated with physical, mental and social characteristics. As an empirically verifiable rationale, the racial discourse took hold in the field of power/knowledge and recoded political and social issues in racial terms. Race in its numerous meanings and definitions became, as Robert Young writes, "part of a knowledge which has no distinct source or centre, but which a whole range of writings, from history to science, all repeat and reaffirm with an authority drawn from its very ubiquity".⁹⁴

The nineteenth century also saw the rise of an intense transnational discourse on the essence of whiteness, or, more precisely, the nature of the English around the world. Invoking history as explanation for, and proof of, Anglo superiority, democracy, self-government, manly independence and the drive for expansion, commentators constructed these qualities as racial characteristics. While the attribution of these traits was initially limited to the Saxons or English, the racial group was extended after 1850 to first include all inhabitants of the British Isles and then the whole Anglosphere. The figure of the delocalized Anglo-Saxon permitted for racial solidarity and justified imperial expansion and racial discrimination. Although the influence of Anglo-Saxonism within the historical profession already began to decline in the 1890s, it remained a central rationale and point of reference for political commentators and scientific experts.

The growing academic output on social phenomena interpreted in racial categories was backed by empirical data. Statistics gathered by the census

⁹⁴ Young, p. 45.

constituted the population in its normality and, by its grids of specification, allowed for introducing the racial discourse's biopolitical caesuras which often correlated with the partition of the population into normal and abnormal. From a Foucauldian perspective, these forms of homogenization and heterogenization in the constitution of a biological continuum do not form a paradox, but complementary strategies.⁹⁵ The introduction of the categories of foreign-born and of foreign parentage, for instance, served as means for scientists to generate predictions, probabilities and calculations about the biological, social and political impact of immigration on the 'American race'. Scientific experts consequently constructed new immigrants as "inbetween people" in the racial hierarchy, above African Americans and Asians, but distinctively below the Teutons.⁹⁶ As Jacobson has pointed out, the racial sciences were in fact "racializing sciences" for the new immigrants that called for state regulation to 'protect' the population from assumed threats to its biological essence and social stability. Yet, as my analysis has demonstrated, the intense discourse about Anglo-Saxons' distinct qualities and the dangers of race suicide extended the construction of racial identities from new immigrants to the putatively superior Anglo-Saxons, an aspect previously neglected by historians. Authors who combined Francis Walker's birth-rate theory with eugenic research and concerns about the social effect of immigration did not only warn against the new immigration, but also urged their readers to become aware of their duties to race and nation. Additionally, the rationale's logic of the presumed threats to the American population and its future prosperity inevitably entailed the demand for a racial restriction of immigration. Thus, writings about race suicide did not just imbue "a set of common prejudices" with scientific authority as Jacobson argues, but provided empirical data and analytical concepts to claim that the new immigration posed a vital threat to the reproductive power of Anglo-Saxon men that would eventually endanger the future of the entire race.⁹⁷

It was in reaction to the image of the new immigrants and the racial threat they assumedly posed that the Immigration Restriction League was founded. Its leaders regarded the protection of the assumed Anglo-Saxon superiority to be their civic

⁹⁵ Lemke, *Rechtssubjekt oder Biomasse*, p. 162.

⁹⁶ Barrett and Roediger, pp. 3–44.

⁹⁷ Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, pp. 31, 74.

duty and invested their money, time and energy in lobbying work for restriction. In its mode of operation, the League followed the familiar pattern of progressivism: it identified and investigated a social problem with scientific means, informed the public of the threat and its solution, interacted with other reformers and state organizations, and eventually provided the rationale necessary for the extension of the state apparatus. Yet, I have also demonstrated that the IRL was part of a new mode of power which I argue must also reshape our understanding of progressive-era reform movements. Instead of imposing an artificial distinction between liberal and conservative or racist movements, as most scholars have previously done, this new perspective discloses the mechanisms essential for the creation of the modern nation-state: the new mode of conduct that stressed the citizens' obligation to participate in the optimization of state and race produced their demand for state intervention and resulted in a self-regulating society characteristic for governmentality.

It is important to bear in mind, though, that the IRL was not the only progressive organization focussing on immigration. And just as progressives' reactions to immigration varied, their aims and methods differed according to the rationales they adhered to. Settlement workers concentrated on the benign effects of an improved environment and taught immigrants the 'correct' mode of physical, moral and political self-conduct to improve immigrants and their situation. The IRL, on the other hand, concentrated on their fellow white citizens' subjectivities, informing them of the new immigration's putative dangers to convince them of the need for restriction. As an essentially modern lobby organization, the League relied on new publicity methods and the latest scientific findings about immigration. Reiterating Walker's argument in its campaigns, the IRL propagated the idea that the new immigrants as members of the 'Alpine' and 'Mediterranean' races were largely unskilled and caused the decline of American wages and standards of living, leading to race suicide. Moreover, the League's members either combined or switched between racial and economic arguments against the new immigration. Although they personally interpreted the immigrants' economic and social characteristics as immutable racial traits, they strategically applied economic and racial arguments, depending on the targeted audience, which demonstrates their agency within the discursive setting. Petit may be right to claim that in the early twentieth century economic concerns "had begun to hold much less sway", but as

my analysis of IRL material, INS and PHS policies and the results of the Dillingham Commission testifies they were far from unimportant.⁹⁸

Apart from the new immigrants' assumed economic and racial effect, the League also claimed that they were unfit for self-government and democracy and thus endangered the stability of the American republic. IRL leaders' main argument, however, was the new immigrants' racial inferiority which assumedly resulted in higher rates of criminality, pauperism and insanity. Since the IRL believed in the stability of racial traits, the new immigrants' higher rates of deviance and fertility would eventually lead to the downfall of the entire Anglo-Saxon race. As a solution, the IRL proposed the literacy test. Given the correlation of literacy with deviance and delinquency, the League argued, the test would guarantee that inferior individuals would be excluded from immigration. Simultaneously, the test would predominantly exclude new immigrants as a disproportionately deviant and illiterate group and thus preserve the nation's racial homogeneity.⁹⁹

In this racialization of the new immigrants, the IRL played a central role as the most important restrictionist lobby group, as my analysis of newspaper articles and IRL publications and correspondence on the 1894-97 literacy test reveals. The League successfully transferred these themes to the public debate where they were reiterated by politicians, newspapers and readers. The presidential veto, subsequent defeats in Congress and the growing power of pro-immigrant lobbies forced the League to professionalize its mode of operation after the turn of the century. Subsequently, the IRL reached out beyond its initial focus on the North-eastern elite and extended its group of allies to patriotic societies, labour unions, farmers, the medical community and PHS and INS personnel to win over the South and the Mid-West.

The League's argumentation became increasingly informed by the emerging eugenic movement after the turn of the century. The eugenic rationale produced research that claimed that genetic composition predetermined individuals' behaviour. Simultaneously, eugenicists proposed measures such as compulsory sterilization to eliminate those deemed 'defective'. Like the restrictionist discourse, eugenics thus centred on scientific knowledge that served the purification of the race by exclusion

⁹⁸ Petit, *Men and Women*, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁹ Petit, *Men and Women*.

– instead of restriction, however, eugenics argued for state racism’s intervention to prevent those regarded as abnormal from procreation. While eugenicists initially concentrated on the white rural poor, the IRL argued that all eugenic measures within the US would be meaningless if not accompanied by immigration restriction. My investigation of IRL correspondence and publications demonstrates that the League’s leaders tried continuously to convince eugenicists to include immigration restriction in their political agenda. Eugenics, therefore, not only provided a new rationale for restrictionists to justify their aims; the IRL’s and eugenicists’ agendas also complemented each other. While restrictionists and eugenicists initially disagreed about the best method to exclude ‘defective’ immigrants, the League finally succeeded in interesting and involving eugenicists in campaigns for immigration restriction.

Racial concerns were combined with an evaluation of the new immigrants’ social and economic effects in the investigations of the Dillingham Commission. The vast body of knowledge created by its investigations provided the basis for a truly scientific government of the population, establishing claims about the immigrants’ impact and creating prognoses about the future prospects of the country. The Commissioners inferred from the substantial empirical research that restriction was imperative because of the detrimental economic and social effects of the new immigration. Like non-governmental investigations, the Commission followed the progressive pattern, intertwining scientific knowledge with suggestions for concrete legislative measures. In its methodological approach, it differed from earlier government investigations – instead of merely compiling available data and conducting hearings of external experts, the Commission decided to attain its own data. The most difficult task in designing its research was encountered in transforming the diffuse ‘race prejudice’ into scientific facts and into quantifiable data for qualitative statements.

Whereas the Commission pleaded for the exclusion of Asian immigrants on racial grounds, its recommendation for restriction of European immigration relied on socioeconomic arguments. The Commission coped with the methodological difficulties posed by the lack of conclusive evidence for the new immigrants’ putative racial inferiority by emphasizing their effect on American workers and the country’s limited capacity to assimilate the newcomers. The relevance of the

Commission's work in the new immigrants' racialization, I argue, can be located in its almost exclusive focus on the new immigrants and the categories of deviance investigated. By investigating claims formerly made by academics and restrictionists and by accepting the racial differentiation of the new immigrants, the Commission validated these statements and incorporated them in official government knowledge. While neither the racial nor the socioeconomic argument could satisfactorily explain the new immigrants' assumed detrimental impact on American society, both provided negative statements and findings. In its recommendations, the Commission came to the conclusion that immigration had to be restricted in some form and listed the possible options that foreshadowed immigration laws of the next two decades, including the literary test as the 'most feasible single means' of restriction.

The economic and racial interpretations of immigration were also reflected in the restrictionist and pro-immigrant statements submitted to the Commission. While the IRL chose to concentrate on the new immigration's supposedly dysgenic effects, notably earlier than eugenicists did, the NLIL emphasized the economic benefits of immigration. Both groups employed transnational arguments, suggesting that the US should follow approaches chosen by other countries. The IRL applied a eugenic argumentation in its statement to the Commission and in the questionnaires the League sent to white middle and upper-class men. By informing other citizen-subjects of the purported racial dangers of immigration, the League encouraged them to position themselves as racial subjects and to engage in political campaigns. As the answers to the IRL questionnaires testify, the League contributed to the citizen-subjects' identification as Anglo-Saxons and their perception of the new immigration as a racial threat.

Since the Commission's work stalled the passage of restrictive legislation for four years, the IRL concentrated on the optimization of border control. In its interactions with the INS and PHS, the League tried to influence the services' policies and practices to increase the number of exclusions and to gather additional evidence for the new immigrants' presumed racial inferiority. The extensive analysis of INS and PHS case files and policies demonstrates how the abstract racial discourse and the restrictionist agenda translated into biopolitical controls. While the inspection at the border constituted immigrants as objects of scientific knowledge, this knowledge was organized by the racial categories of the list of race or peoples. Like the work of

the Dillingham Commission, the application of racial thought by the PHS and INS produced statistical data that could be applied by the IRL and other restrictionists to argue for new regulations and the stricter enforcement of existing laws. In its everyday work, both services transformed the abstract racial discourse and the sometimes vague immigration laws into tangible practices. Although they reflected existing ideas about bodily, mental and moral standards of whiteness that had to be met by individuals to gain admission to the country, the controls simultaneously re-inscribed and sometimes redefined the requirements for admission. Since INS and PHS officers evaluated immigrants' potential effect on the country, practices of exclusion thus became "biopolitical technologies functioning through border control" that shaped the population's racial composition, as Bashford has pointed out.¹⁰⁰

Racial and eugenic concerns were not limited to the INS and PHS, but also shaped professional perceptions of the new immigration. As my detailed analysis of case files and policy decisions suggests, the intersection of medical and eugenic rationales became a crucial factor for the admission or exclusion of individual immigrants. Although the INS and PHS officers' assumptions about immigrants' quality and prospects often proved to be incorrect when cases were re-examined during and after the war, racial knowledge informed their decisions about LPC and poor physique cases and diagnoses regarding mental defects. Similar to the Dillingham Commission, the PHS and INS combined racial and socioeconomic factors in the assessment of immigrants' abilities, their future prospects and their effect on the nation. PHS officers, however, did not adopt eugenic views indiscriminately: as the history of mental testing at Ellis Island demonstrates, they would reject eugenicists' claims if their own authority was endangered. The urge for a scientific inspection, on the other hand, drove PHS employees to keep informed about the latest research, often articulated by eugenic thinkers. While PHS officers considered themselves experts on questions of mental and physical defects, the INS and the Secretary of Commerce and Labor reserved the right to overrule their diagnoses if they regarded particular certifications to be a question of the immigrants' socioeconomic rather than medical condition. The articulation of concerns about immigrants' inherent qualities in the writings of PHS and INS

¹⁰⁰ Bashford, pp. 162–63. Bashford uses this characterization to describe Australian border policies, it is, however, also correct for the American case.

officers and in the medical literature, however, connected immigrants' assumed deficiency to concerns about public health. While the IRL's record on influencing the services' policies and personnel decisions was mixed, the discursive connection between expert knowledge and the new immigrants' alleged inferiority helped the League to convince legislators and the public of the need for restrictive regulations.

The growing impact of the IRL's lobbying that combined economic, social, eugenic and medical arguments was reflected in the narrow defeats in 1913 and 1915. The League was able to mobilize farmers, labour, patriotic societies, the medical community and social scientists and was supported by southern representatives' growing demand for restriction, only the executive resistance to the literacy test proved difficult to overcome. Although the emerging Americanization movement had changed the themes of the discourse on immigration, its aims did not necessarily contradict those of the League. In its publications, the IRL even incorporated Americanization by arguing that it could only be achieved if the number of arriving immigrants was reduced. The doubts about immigrants' loyalty and the hysteria created by the war, however, helped the League by encouraging Congress to finally pass an immigration bill which incorporated the literacy test over the presidential veto. The 1917 Immigration Act, in addition to extending exclusionary categories regarding individual behaviour, finally incorporated the principle the League had advocated for more than twenty years: the exclusion of European immigrant groups based on assumed group characteristics. Although the literacy test still allowed for single immigrants to be admitted because of their individual qualities, the test was intended as a means to predominantly exclude new immigrants. When it proved ineffective to reach this goal, the political climate was ripe for the adoption of more drastic measures.

While many of its demands were met, the League's political significance diminished after 1917. Apart from the ailments of its most important members, the growing number of eugenic associations orchestrated by Madison Grant displaced the IRL as the most important restrictionist lobby group. As many scholars have pointed out, eugenic experts were to become a crucial influence on congressional considerations. Existing analyses, however, neglect the fact that Laughlin and others merely adopted an elaborate argumentative strategy that was supported by a

powerful coalition and had been propagated by the IRL for the past thirty years.¹⁰¹ In its actual effect, the quota system finally fulfilled what the League had lobbied for: it not only introduced a drastic numerical limitation but also favoured North-western Europeans over the new immigrants. Using the census as foundation for its calculations, the National Origins system promised to recreate a population composition of past times when the supposedly superior Anglo-Saxons had dominated American society. The quota acts, however, also created unintended effects such as the increase in Mexican immigration. Although the remaining members of the League and its allies tried to extend racial exclusion to Mexican immigrants, they proved unable to win this fight; its success had eventually made this coalition obsolete, as Fitzgerald has argued.¹⁰²

The re-evaluation of the IRL's impact on American immigration policies of the progressive era in this study contributes to our understanding of the extension of the power of the nation-state, an area which has recently become a new focus for immigration historians.¹⁰³ My analysis of a wide range of source material formerly only investigated separately by scholars focusing on political or intellectual history, the history of medicine and science, the eugenic movement or the history of immigration control, enables an understanding of the complex processes that eventually led to the exclusion of the new immigrants as racialized groups. In contrast to existing analyses concentrating on the construction of racial formations, this thesis's focus on the power dimension in the extensive examination of a non-state organization helps explain citizens' contribution to and demand for new forms of coercive and regulatory state intervention. Shifting the focus beyond an interpretation of the IRL's activities as a nativist, but natural psychological reaction to outside groups, this thesis demonstrates how the racial discourse could slowly pervade public debates, inform state agency's policies, and influence citizens' understanding of the nation and their role in it. The unprecedented immigration figures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Aristide Zolberg has argued, made the "imposition of limits on the immigration flow [...] a pressing

¹⁰¹ Tucker is the only historian to explicitly make this argument: Tucker, *Science and Politics*, p. 87.

¹⁰² Fitzgerald, p. 132.

¹⁰³ Fitzgerald; Zolberg.

imperative”.¹⁰⁴ That the numerical limitation of immigration was shaped by racial thought, however, was a result of the lobby efforts of the IRL and its allies.

As a nodal point between scientific racism, progressive reform movements, state agencies and the racialization of the new immigrants, the League shaped public debates and facilitated the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act and the quota system of the 1920s. These four dimensions of the dispositif of immigration control simultaneously reflect essential components of the modern exertion of state power: knowledge, subjectivity, biopolitics and governmentality. Progressive reform movements relied on scientific knowledge; the restrictionist rationale was informed by the racial discourse, the social sciences and statistical data gathered by state agencies. The IRL transferred these concepts to the public discourse and influenced individuals’ subjectivation by addressing their racial self-perceptions and their role as citizen-subjects contributing to the optimization of state and society. The biopolitical dimension of the League’s work therefore encompassed the calculation of the new immigration’s assumed effects on the population and society, the optimization of the regulatory controls at the border and the design of immigration laws. In its mode of operation, the IRL was an organization pervaded by the governmental mode of power: its members regarded their contribution to the optimization of the state as part of their duty as responsible citizens; simultaneously, it addressed other individuals’ self-conduct to convince them to participate in the reform of immigration regulation. These perceptions of the obligations to state and race in turn enabled the nation-state to extend its apparatus to control its territory and population more effectively.

For the leaders of the Immigration Restriction League, their long and intense battle for the racial restriction of immigration had been a self-evident service to nation and race based on their understanding of civic duty. In the obituaries for Prescott F. Hall and Robert DeCourcy Ward, the remaining IRL leaders expressed this understanding when they emphasized their deceased founding members’ persistence. Each of them had fought “until almost the very hour of his death”, resulting in legislation “having so great and so lasting an effect upon the character and racial make-up of our population”. Although “practically unknown to the public”, Joseph Lee wrote of Hall, he had probably done more to “affect for the

¹⁰⁴ Zolberg, p. 9.

better of this country than almost any man of his generation". Deploring the loss of the "backbone of the agitation for restriction", Lee emphasized the selfless work Hall had performed to ensure the biopolitical future for the global Anglo-Saxon race:

Without him, the gates would have still been unguarded and the deterioration of our human standard would still be at the flood.

Mr. Hall's work was unknown, unpaid, unrecognized. It was a sheer labor of love, the love of country and consideration for the future of mankind. But it achieved success, and that was after all the only recompense that he desired.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Lee, letter to Boston Herald, 1 June 1921; Authorship unclear, Bradley or Lee, *Robert DeCourcy Ward*, sent to Boston Transcript, 27 October 1931, Lee Papers.

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List of Abbreviations

AAFLN: American Association of Foreign-Language Newspapers
ABA: American Breeders' Association, renamed AGA in 1912
ADS: American Defense Society
AES: American Eugenics Society
AFL: American Federation of Labor
AGA: American Genetics Association
AJC: American Jewish Committee
AMPA: American Medico-Psychological Association
APA: American Protective Association
BSI: Board of Special Inquiry (INS)
DAR: Daughters of the American Revolution
ECUSA: Eugenics Committee of the United States of America
ERA: Eugenics Research Association
ERO: Eugenics Record Office
HIAS: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
INS: Immigration and Naturalization Service
IPL: Immigrants' Protective League (Chicago)
IRL: Immigration Restriction League
JOUAM: Junior Order of American Mechanics
KoL: Knights of Labor
LPC: Likely to Become a Public Charge
MIT: Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NAC: National Americanization Committee
NAM: National Association of Manufacturers
NBT: National Board of Trade
NCF: National Civic Federation
NCL: National Civic League
NCMH: National Committee for Mental Hygiene
NLIL: National Liberal Immigration League
NSL: National Security League
NYBII: New York Board of Industries and Immigration

PHS: Public Health Service

RBF: Race Betterment Foundation

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association