

Re-Categorizing Americans:
Difference, Distinction, and Belonging in the Dillingham Commission (1907-1911)

By

Seonmin Kim

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Committee in charge:

Professor Ann Swidler, Co-chair

Professor Cybelle Fox, Co-chair

Professor Irene Bloemraad

Professor Mara Loveman

Professor Taeku Lee

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Abstract

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This dissertation asks how American social scientists and federal bureaucrats generated knowledge about immigrants in the early twentieth century, and how such knowledge led to the re-invention of the boundaries within and around whiteness. To answer these questions, I analyze archival materials related to the Dillingham Commission (1907-1911), an investigative commission that conducted the most comprehensive study of immigrants ever undertaken by the federal government. With the rapid increase of immigration in the late nineteenth century, there was a growing sense that immigration was a problem, and both the public and elite policymakers deliberated over immigration control. The Dillingham Commission was tasked with providing a scientific foundation for immigration policy-making by sorting out “desirable” immigrants from “undesirable” ones based on a massive amount of statistical and ethnographic data.

The importance of the Dillingham Commission, however, lay in the fact that it captured the ways in which immigration was transforming racial boundaries – those within and around the the whiteness. Southern and eastern European immigrants, whose numbers had risen dramatically at the end of the nineteenth century, were different from those who had come before: they were white and certainly not black, but did share the same social standing as the Anglo-Saxon Protestants who occupied most elite positions in the country. By exploring the margins of whiteness which these “new immigrants” occupied, the Dillingham Commission reformulated whiteness to encompass *different kinds of difference*, and articulated different kinds of boundaries applicable to different groups: whereas non-European immigrants were distinguished through a bright boundary around whiteness, the differences among Europeans were marked by blurred boundaries within whiteness, and thus could be overcome, although only through a properly controlled process of assimilation. Through this process, the architecture of the American national belonging went through a renovation: while the white/non-white bright boundary marked the outer limits of the national belonging, the blurred boundaries among Europeans mapped the topography within the imagined community.

Drawing on more than 27,000 pages of the Dillingham Commission Reports as well as other archival sources, I trace the process through which such architecture emerged. Although the existing literature on the Commission characterizes its inquiry as “racist,” highlighting the ideology of nativism among its elite members, my analysis of original archival sources presents a more complicated picture. During this period, investigative commissions often revealed the limits of state power over knowledge by producing an outcome that government officials did not intend. In the Dillingham Commission’s case, the data from the field often showed that the boundary separating undesirable “new immigrants” and desirable “old immigrants” were not as clear as the nativists had hoped, and these findings challenged the nativist ideology based on the WASP cultural identity. Faced with a contradiction, the nativist executive members would reconsider parts of their racial ideology, and in the process, inadvertently paved a way for the idea of new whiteness. In other words, located at no man’s land between the state, civil society, and empirical evidence, the Dillingham Commission was a laboratory in which new associations of racial ideology, theory, and evidence would emerge; and the distinction between bright and blurred boundary was an unintended consequence that came out of such space.

The first and second chapters of the dissertation document the larger intellectual, political, and legislative context leading up to the Dillingham Commission by chronicling the history of race thinking in the nineteenth century (Chapter 1) and the congressional debate around immigration in the early twentieth century (Chapter 2).

In the first chapter, I survey race-thinking in the nineteenth century with a particular focus on how European ideas about race travelled to the United States and informed immigration policy at the federal level; in the process, I pay particular attention to how the executive committee members of the Commission were influenced by European race-thinking, first by way of slavery apologists in the South and later through nativists in elite universities of New England. This chapter presents the intellectual foundation of the Commission’s work and serves as a prehistory of its theories about race and national identity.

In the second chapter, I document the legislative history leading up to the Dillingham Commission and provide information on the larger organizational context in which the Commission was embedded. I discuss the global context involving Japan and Japanese immigrants in San Francisco as well as the history of struggle between the nativists and pro-immigrant politicians. I also present brief biographical accounts of executive committee members and experts, highlighting how their personal trajectories informed their ideas about race, national identity, and social science knowledge. This chapter serves as the immediate background for Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

I then turn to three key moments in the Commission’s work as examples of how the tenuous connection between nativist ideology, state power, and knowledge production led to *different kinds of difference*. In each of these substantive chapters, I focus on the moments of mismatch between theory and data, unexpected implications of data analysis, and debates around interpretation of collected data. Following the interactions between executive committee members, experts, field agents, and intellectuals outside the Commission, I show how ideas around *different kinds of difference* emerged as those involved in the Commission haphazardly responded to the gap between the ideology of whiteness and empirical data.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the Commission inadvertently undermined the rigidity of racial categories through its focus on European immigrants. Many classical theories of racial difference, which presupposed a unified “European” or “Caucasian” category, proved not useful for the Commission because they failed to differentiate Southern and Eastern European immigrants from Northern and Western ones. Thus the Commission adopted a new scheme, “races or peoples,” which emphasized differences in language and geography within Europe. Although the elite members of the Commission had no intention of undermining the rigidity of the biological conception of race, this move away from physiology to culture provided flexibility to the conception of whiteness and had the unexpected consequence of blurring boundaries among Europeans. Furthermore, when applied to data collection activities, the “races or peoples” classification scheme failed to provide a clear-cut division between “desirable” Northern and Western European immigrants and “undesirable” Southern and Eastern European immigrants.

Chapter 4 traces how the Commission inadvertently provided support for the development of assimilation theory, which further undermined the rigid biological conception of race. With funding from the Commission, anthropologist Franz Boas collected data on head shapes – supposedly the most stable indicator of “racial type” – of the children of European immigrants in New York City. The data showed that bodily traits could change rapidly under environmental influences. Boas used the finding to criticize the rigid racial assumptions underlying the contemporary caricature of “new immigrants,” and envisioned the possibility of their eventual assimilation. This chapter shows that even before the political mobilization around ethnicity emerged in the 1930s and 1940, the Commission’s findings inadvertently paved a way for the criticism of scientific racism, thereby further discrediting the WASP-centered perspective on the relationship between race and national identity.

Chapter 5 turns attention away from the interior structure of national belonging to its margins, and shows how the bright boundary between whites and non-whites was rigidly maintained in the face of the contradictions endemic to the Commission’s project. The Commission’s study of Japanese immigrants on the West Coast revealed that they were in many respects more “desirable” than European immigrants: The Japanese were educated, hard-working, law-abiding, family-oriented farmers who were willing to speak English and follow American customs. In order to address the decoupling of desirability and whiteness, the Commission had to argue that although the Japanese were not necessarily inferior to whites, they were too different to assimilate, and therefore should be prevented from naturalization. It was at this moment the full circle of *different kinds of difference* was completed: Europeans were a potentially assimilable kind of different people, whereas Japanese immigrants, and non-whites in general, were a non-assimilable kind.

In the conclusion, I discuss how the concept of *different kinds of difference* inspired law and immigration policy in the decades following the Dillingham Commission. The closing pages feature my reflections on why the Dillingham Commission matters and what it means for the study of immigration and American national identity in the twenty-first century.

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Introduction: Social Construction of Whiteness

Social Construction of Whiteness

Historical studies of whiteness have contributed much to our understanding of how race is socially constructed, through everyday social interaction and in various institutions—the census, courts, unions, local governments, media, civic organizations, and everyday social interaction (Roediger 1991; 2005; Jacobson 1998; Guglielmo 2000; Painter 2010; Iganitev 1995; Brodtkin 1998; Haney-López 1996; Pascoe 2009; Jiménez and Horowitz 2013; Fox and Guglielmo 2012; see McDermott and Samson 2005 for a review of studies in sociology and psychology; see Kolchin 2002 and Fields 2001 for criticism of the whiteness literature in history). Most of the existing literature in the field, however, has yet to fully capitalize on the theoretical potential of its own contribution (see Kolchin 2002). Instead, the debates have focused on whether certain immigrant groups – e.g. The Irish, Jews, Italians, and so on — achieved their statuses by “working towards whiteness” (Roediger 2005) or whether they were already “white on arrival” (Guglielmo 2004; Fox and Guglielmo 2012). What has been neglected in this debate, however, is the process through which whiteness is socially constructed. As Kolchin has correctly argued in his critical appraisal of the literature, whiteness has often been portrayed “as a ubiquitous and unchanging transhistorical force rather than a shifting and contingent construction” (2002: 159). Rather than focusing on the debate over “how diverse groups in the United States came to identify, and be identified by others, as white” (Kolchin 2002: 156), this dissertation pays attention to the gap between notions of whiteness and their messy application as principles: instead of treating whiteness as a label that does or does not apply to a particular group, this dissertation analyzes whiteness as a system of ideas substantiated through empirical data to produce “white people,” even while recognizing that such processes are always fraught with “contradictions, confusions, and unintended consequences” (Omi and Winant 2015; Brubaker, Loveman, and Stamatov 2004). In short, this dissertation makes those processes, along with their attendant confusions, contradictions, and unintended consequences, legible. Specifically, I focus in particular on how the interrelation of politics, culture, and empiricism contributed to the construction of race in the early twentieth century United States

Documenting the history of the Supreme Court decisions on whiteness, Ian Haney-López has characterized this period as a time in which “white” was “a highly unstable legal category, subject to contestation, expansion, and contraction” (1996: 48). From 1790, Congress had limited naturalization rights to “free white persons,” without fully defining what “white” meant. Until 1952, when the law was officially overwritten, it was left up to different types of courts to decide who belonged in the “white” category, and therefore was eligible to naturalize. Expectedly, immigrants from many regions of the world mounted legal challenges in courts while invoking various reasons to call themselves “white.”

Although lower-level courts were split on the merits of these challenges, a couple of Supreme Court rulings in 1923 and 1924 cleared legal grounds for whiteness of a person. Takao Ozawa, a UC-Berkeley educated Japanese immigrant living in Hawaii, argued that, among other factors, his fair skin made him “white in color,” whiter than “the average Italian, Spaniard, and Portuguese.” In another case, Bhagat Singh Thind, an immigrant from Punjab, reasoned that he was a member of “Caucasian” race, and by virtue of sharing ancestry with Europeans, was therefore white.¹ The court ruled against both men: Ozawa

¹ As discussed in Chapter 1, the term “Caucasian” originates from the regions around mount Caucasus, or what is today a part of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The nineteenth-century race-

was told that, regardless of his skin tone, the contemporary science of racial classification determined that the Japanese people were not white; Thind, on the other hand, was told that, regardless of the scientific theories around “Caucasian” category, he was not white because “the understanding of the common man” dictated that a brown-skinned “Hindoo” man from Punjab was not white (Haney-López 1996: 56-63).

These two cases exposed the contradiction central to the idea of whiteness: on the one hand, as the ruling against Ozawa made clear, whiteness was understood as a self-evident, natural fact supported by science; on the other hand, whiteness was a social assessment made by people already established firmly as white (the politically, socially, and culturally enfranchised “common man”), as the *Thind* ruling effectively demonstrated. These two Supreme Court decisions, as Haney-López argues, settled the debate on whiteness by completing a circular logic in the legal construction of race: whiteness was what was deemed to be white by law, and in the process, the logic of power dictated its specific boundaries (Barth 1969), be that the authority of science or “common sense.” By resorting to the naked logic of power through the unquestionable authority of “common sense,” however, the Supreme Court inadvertently revealed the fundamentally arbitrary nature of whiteness: there was no sound logic determining legal criteria for whiteness—only the will to exclude and dominate. With these two rulings, the “highly unstable category” of whiteness, which had been “subject to contestation, expansion, and contraction” in the early twentieth century, seemingly acquired stability by fiat from the unimpeachable “common man.”

Race is a contradiction by definition, mainly because the idea is rooted in an untenable combination of political ideology, personal prejudice, and bad science. At the same time, understanding the fact that race is a contradiction does not free us from the necessity of analyzing the specific logics of its operation. Oftentimes the social constructionists account of race puts emphasis on demystification over analysis: doing away with the veil of ignorance and exposing the (empty) truth behind race is an admirable and much-needed task, yet it is a different one from understanding how race is socially constructed (Hacking 1999).

This dissertation contributes to research and thinking that exposes the contradiction within whiteness, but with a distinctive empirical and theoretical focus. By virtue of focusing on court decisions, Haney-López’s account highlighted how the boundary of whiteness is policed, and, in the process, revealed the fundamentally arbitrary nature of the policing. The abrupt transition from the science of racial classification to “the understanding of the common man” revealed that the process was ultimately about power to categorize and not about any “real” or “biological” foundation for racial categorization. Yet with this account, we only hear about the ending of the story, a story about the assertion and maintenance of privilege through the pretense of a false universality, the self-evident, unquestionable “common man.” We know that the policing of boundaries around whiteness required this expression of naked bias and power. What about the plot of the

thinkers, in their search for the origin of “white” race, pointed to Mount Caucasus as the most probable location for the garden of Eden, from which Adam and Eve descended. According to their theories, God created the first couple as “white” persons after his own image, and as they fell from the grace and adapted to the environment outside Eden, their skin became darker. In this narrative, the peoples of Europe and the Indian subcontinent were both direct descendants of the original “white” race.

story leading to this conclusion? The fact that whiteness has no coherent logic does not mean that it has no logic at all. Whiteness entails *some* operational dynamics, however flawed and contradictory they may be, and these principles are worked out in a process, in an unfolding drama with principal actors, on a stage where the law, policy, science, and everyday social interaction catalyze important shifts in thinking about race.

What lies in the void between *Ozawa* and *Thind*? What happened in the course of the transition from the science of racial classification to “the understanding of the common man”? The *Ozawa* and *Thind* rulings were separated by only a few months of time. How could the court arrive at entirely different, contradictory justifications for telling someone they were not white? What historical forces and tensions of the time sustained the contradictory logic that defined and justified whiteness as such? If the early twentieth century was an “unsettled time” (Swidler 1986) for the idea of whiteness, what were the catalyzing factors? What were the logical and theoretical limits of the nineteenth-century theory of race, and how did they manifest in the practical challenge of classifying people as white? What were the responses of theorists and policy makers to those challenges? In the process, how did ideas about whiteness transform, to what extent, and what were the policy implications of such a transformation?

In order to answer these questions, I shift the analytical focus from ins and outs of landmark court cases adjudicating whiteness to the construction of whiteness as it hinged upon theoretical and practical debates on race, immigration, and national identity. The United States Immigration Commission, more popularly known as the Dillingham Commission after the name of its chairman, Senator William P. Dillingham (1843-1923, R-VT), is my primary case for analysis. From 1907 to 1911, the nation’s most influential politicians and policy experts worked under the banner of the Dillingham Commission to collect data on immigrants living across the country. As is the case today, the rapid increase of immigration in the early-twentieth century, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, provoked much anxiety over the stability of boundaries demarcating whiteness: these “new immigrants” were Europeans and regarded as white by both the state and the science of racial classification², yet at the same time they seemed to display all of the undesirable traits purportedly associated with non-whites, such as higher poverty and crime rates (Jacobson 1998; Guglielmo 2000; Roediger 2005). While collecting data that could be used to sort “desirable” immigrants from “undesirable” ones, the Dillingham Commission arrived at new ways of marking boundaries of whiteness, which I call *different kinds of difference*: The Dillingham Commission distinguished between assimilable and non-assimilable aliens, placing Southern and Eastern Europeans in the former category and other non-European immigrants in the latter. The sharp distinction between whites and non-whites, as well as limiting the possibility of assimilation to white immigrants, came to redefine whiteness in the early twentieth century. As we will see, however, this process was fraught with confusion, contradiction, and unintended consequences: while the members and staff of the Dillingham Commission did not fully understand the implications

² Although many scholars have argued that Southern and Eastern European immigrants’ whiteness was sometimes doubted during this period, especially in the domains of cultural production and everyday social interaction, yet Fox and Guglielmo (2012) have demonstrated that the state and the science of racial classification consistently categorized them as white. This dissertation, which focuses on the knowledge production process, side with their assessment in characterizing Southern and Eastern Europeans as decisively belonging to the white category.

of their work, the tenuous but persistent connection between state power, racial ideology, and empirical data transpired changes in the ideas of whiteness, and consequently, inspired new policy ideas, thereby shaping the racial makeup of the nation.

Drawing on over 27,000 pages of the 41-volume Dillingham Commission Report as well as numerous original archival sources, I focus on moments of instability in knowledge production to understand this process and its outcomes. The literature on race-making has juxtaposed top-down versus bottom up perspectives: some theorists have highlighted the state's power to impose racial categories through its administrative capacity (Nobles 2000; Starr 1992; Goldberg 2002; King and Smith 2005) while others have underscored how the racialized groups mobilized against these attempts (Omi and Winant 2015; Nagel 1997; Schor 2005). Recent scholarship is increasingly problematizing the binary division between the state and civil society, while highlighting the porous nature of the boundary between the two domains. Drawing on the works that focuses on the interaction between the state and civil society (Bourdieu 2015; Loveman 2005; Mora 2014; Emigh, Riley, and Ahmed 2015; Rodríguez-Muñiz 2017), I conceptualize the Dillingham Commission as the liminal space of state power in which the nativists were confronted with contradictions in their ideology of whiteness in the process of knowledge production.

The majority of the executive committee members on the Commission espoused negative views towards contemporary immigrants arriving to the country at the time, and some of them, especially those in the leadership roles, were heavily influenced by the nativist movement. Although they were determined to brand the "new immigrants" as "undesirable races," the project quickly spun out of their control, and they had to contend with the unexpected consequences of their data-collection activities. These men found themselves caught in a double bind between their dual allegiance to nativism and science. On the one hand, their everyday experience and upbringing, as well as their foray into nineteenth century race-thinking, led them to perceive the immigrants in a negative light; on the other hand, their education and self-understanding as enlightened, informed men of the Progressive Era forced them to respect empirical evidence and reasoning, even if doing so led to conclusions they could not easily stomach. Even though these men did not like immigrants, they saw themselves as very different from the Know-Nothings of the 1850s or the West Coast mob amassing against Chinese laborers: they perceived immigrants not as a deserving target for prejudice but as an object of analysis, a policy problem to be solved through the power of science and the administrative state (Benton-Cohen 2018). Racism and science were not mutually exclusive in the late nineteenth century United States; in fact, many perceived the former as inevitably deriving from the latter.

That is, until their incompatibility was revealed in a large body of empirical evidence collected and presented in the work of the Dillingham Commission. The Dillingham Commission, as an investigative commission tasked with collecting facts on immigration, was situated in a unique position vis-à-vis the state: it was funded by the federal government and controlled by the members of Congress, yet its operation relied on the logic of data collection. In other words, state power could not completely determine the outcome of its inquiry, and by the same token, the executive committee members could not completely control the empirical data that came out of the Commission's data collection efforts. They could attempt to put an interpretive spin on the data, yet the very act of interpreting the data, as well as the inevitable contestations that followed the interpretation, exposed vulnerability in the power of the state and revealed the contradiction between

racism and science. Simply put, “facts” did not support racism, and the ideology of whiteness had to be revised and reconstructed to make room for the unexpected implications of the data collected through the Commission’s work.

First, the overarching concept of a unified white race proved not suitable for the fine-grained data-collection activity focusing on differences within whiteness, and this logical conundrum forced the nativists to move away from a biological to a cultural understanding of race, thereby driving the concept away from its initial essentialism. In addition, the empirical data collected by the Commission showed the “new immigrants” to be not really as “undesirable” as they had initially seemed: immigrant experts hired by the Commission often delivered data and analysis that undermined the nativist argument that Southern and Eastern European immigrants were harmful to the nation. In other words, the Commission’s insistence on empirical data collection endangered its vision of the United States as a white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant nation, by destabilizing the category of, as well as the hierarchy centered on, whiteness. Moreover, pro-immigrant advocates took advantage of these incidents to argue for the possibility of assimilation for “new immigrants,” and the Commission conceded grounds to these criticisms in order to resolve the contradictions within its inquiry.

Empirical data, however, had its limitations as well: in the case of non-white immigrants, such as Japanese Americans in California, data reflecting positively upon the immigrants did not translate into effective advocacy, because, unlike their European counterparts, non-white immigrants lacked elaborated structures of mobilization in both political and intellectual spheres. In other words, whereas data in conjunction with mobilization promoted the concept of assimilation for European immigrants, blurring the boundary between Southern and Eastern European immigrants and other European immigrants and native-born white Americans, data without mobilization failed to achieve such an outcome for Asian immigrants, resulting in a bright boundary against non-white immigrants. In this context, my concept of *different kinds of difference* refers to the outcome of these processes through which anti- and pro-immigrant intellectuals and activists struggled and compromised over the data collected in the Commission’s inquiry.

My argument is that the concept of *different kinds of difference* was inspired by the Dillingham Commission’s work, as the nativists inadvertently revised their understanding of the relationship between race, immigration, and national identity through these struggles and compromises. As many critical race theorists have noted, “being American” entailed a close connection with being “white” throughout American history (Roediger 2005; Omi and Winant 2015; Gerstle 2002); however, the meaning of whiteness have not rested solely on the exclusionary racial ideology that promoted exclusion of anyone deemed “different.” The meaning of racial difference was constantly debated and contested, and some differences were regarded as acceptable under certain conditions, while other kinds of differences were deemed not fitting for the whiteness of the nation. For the Dillingham Commission, the ideology of whiteness was revised to incorporate *inclusive* as well as *exclusive* dimensions in boundary-making practices: not only did it specify who was not white, it also laid out the roadmap for others to move upward in the hierarchy within whiteness in order to achieve full membership.

In summary, when the nativist Commission members could not obtain the empirical data supporting their exclusionary racial ideology from the Commission’s inquiry, the unexpected encounter led to ad-hoc, haphazard revisions in their ideas about whiteness,

which eventually resulted in the incorporation of both inclusive and exclusive dimensions of boundary-making into the racial categorization. In the end, by dissecting the latent connections between racist ideology, state power, and social science knowledge, this dissertation provides an empirical account of how a racial category, such as whiteness, is transformed through interactions between theory, data, and experts (Collins and Evans 2003; Eyal 2013; 2006; Eyal and Bucholz 2010).

The following pages of this introduction consist of three sections. In the first section, I discuss the historical context of the early twentieth century, and introduce the Dillingham Commission with this backdrop. I present a schematic account of the contemporary immigration debate, along with a brief account of the legislative history around immigration before the launch of the Dillingham Commission in 1907. In the second, I elaborate further on the empirical and theoretical contributions of this dissertation. While engaging with the historiography of the Dillingham Commission in particular and the chronology of racial idea formation in the early twentieth century more generally, this dissertation is primarily a contribution to theoretical discussions around the relationship between race-making and state power. I discuss why investigative commissions serve as useful cases in studying the dynamics between race, power, and knowledge, and highlight how the disjuncture between these three things lead to the emergence of new racial ideas, mainly through inadvertent ideological revisions in the face of unexpected empirical evidence. In the last section, I discuss my research methods and data, following with chapter summaries.

Context (1): “New Immigrants” and the Problem of the Color Line

The early decades of the twentieth century, according to Historian Robert Wiebe, were a period in which the United States engaged in a “search for order” (1967): the nation was rapidly evolving from a rural society to an industrial empire at the center of global commerce and relation. The capacity of the federal government increased dramatically during this period, and as Lieberman (1981) has observed, social as well as physical mobility abounded. The reconstruction and the subsequent Great Migration were restructuring race relations in the South and beyond; Southern and Eastern Europeans were pouring into the East Coast cities, inciting nativist reactions from those who had immigrated slightly earlier; and in the West, the frontier was gradually closing down, with new territories and peoples brought under federal supervision. Intellectuals and politicians sought an order in the face of such chaotic social transformations.

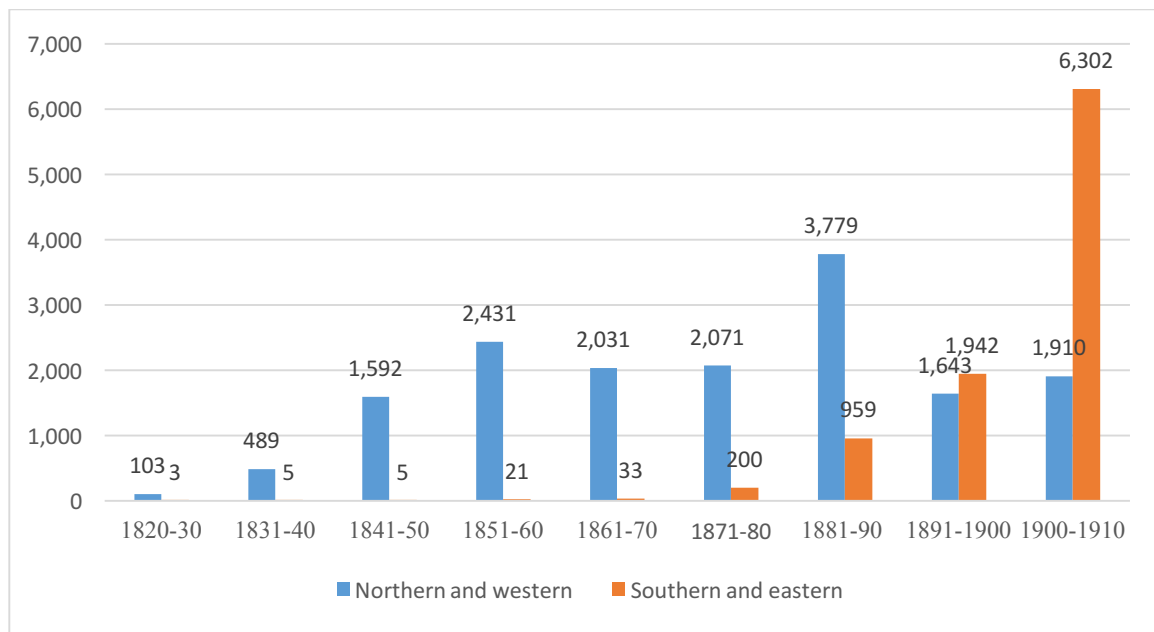


Figure 1. The Number of European Immigrants Admitted (in thousands)³

In this context, immigration was the symbolic representation of the anomie that the nation faced, and to properly control immigration was to reinstate order. Contemporary immigrants, nativists argued, were very different from the founding fathers of the nation, or even the “old immigrants” who arrived in the nineteenth century. Whereas “old immigrants” were typically Protestants from the Northern and Western Europe, the “new immigrants” were predominantly Catholics and Jews from Southern and Eastern Europe. The former, as the nativist argument went, typically settled in the frontier and became settler-farmers, and helped build and expand the nation; the latter, however, gravitated towards the industrial cities of the East Coast and Midwest, becoming associated with urban problems such as crime, poverty, and moral decline (Guterl 2001; Jacobson 1998; Roediger 2005). Immigration control felt to be an expedient means of purification for these social ills: after all, the federal government had already established a precedent in immigration control through the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), and the notion of “race” figured centrally in the attempt (Higham 1963; Lee 2003).

But the meaning of the term “race” was markedly different from how we perceive the concept today (Gossett 1963). Race certainly encompassed discussions of human group differences which were based on (purported) biology and expressed through observable traits such as skin color and hair texture. At the same time, however, the term included social and historical characteristics of groups, or what we would understand as “culture” or “ethnicity” today. Race was defined through looks, language, food, habits, religion, place of origin, and any other traits that could be used to distinguish a group from others. In addition, under the influence of the nationalist impulse of German romanticism (Wimmer 2009), race often served as a synonym with nation or country, and represented a collective historical trajectory for a given group. Under the influence of Social Darwinism and romantic nationalism, many intellectuals and politicians, most notably Theodore

³ Source: The Dillingham Commission Reports (henceforth DCR) vol.1: 64.

Roosevelt, perceived history as a mythic tale of free-for-all battle among race-nations, in which heroic individuals represented the glory of their respective races with heroic deeds. There were intellectuals who were beginning to challenge the scientific value of the race concept, including W.E.B. DuBois (Morris 2015) and Franz Boas (Williams Jr. 1996; Stocking Jr. 1968), yet they were marginal voices relative to the mainstream of academic and popular discourse. In other words, in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, race as set forth above was a cutting-edge theory explaining both nature and society, although its precise definition was constantly in flux (Gossett 1963; Hattam 2007).

The best example of how race was understood by the WASP elites during this period, especially in relation to the Dillingham Commission, comes from Henry Cabot Lodge⁴, the influential statesman and effective leader of the Commission. In a speech to the Senate in 1896, Lodge articulated his all-encompassing, almost transcendental concept of race: Race consisted of “moral and intellectual characters, which in their association make the soul of a race, and which represent the product of all its past, the inheritance of all its ancestors, and the motives of its conduct.” These characteristics were more socio-historical than biological; yet because they were forged over a long period of time through a series of collective historical experiences, they were assumed to be as immutable as, if not more so than, biological givens: “The men of each race possess an indestructible stock of ideas, traditions, sentiments, modes of thoughts, an unconscious inheritance from their ancestors upon which argument [has] no effect” (Lodge 1896). While it was theoretically possible to engage in an “argument” to change the racial temperament of “new” immigrants, for example, Lodge saw this means of influence as futile (“no effect”) and pursued a more practical solution: by controlling immigration, Lodge sought to preserve the American “race” as he saw fit. That was the reason why he was interested in collecting data on Southern and Eastern European immigrants: if they were proved to be an “undesirable race” based on empirical data, the argument for immigration control would gain a scientific foundation.

Yet the status of Southern and Eastern Europeans was not a simple issue. It was clear that Eastern European Jews, Poles, Greeks, and Italians were different from both blacks and the Protestants of Anglo-Saxon origin, who constituted the absolute majority of whites in the early twentieth century (Hattam 2007); yet it was less clear how exactly these immigrants were different from those two groups, and what those differences meant for the nation. The binary scheme – either one was white or black – was not helpful in accounting for differences among these diverse groups of immigrants (Guterl 2001; Jacobson 1998; Guglielmo 2000; Roediger 2005). Experts from various fields weighed in with their respective knowledge on the topic (Painter 2010); bureaucrats also participated in the discussion by drawing upon their everyday work of collecting data about these immigrants (Perlmann 2018). Together they engaged in a racial project, as Omi and Winant (2015) would call it: they attempted to redefine the concept of “race” and account for the purported difference of these “new immigrants,” and in the process, rework the idea of whiteness and what it meant for the nation.

Context (2): The Dillingham Commission

⁴ Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924) was clearly the most powerful politician among the nativists. Having close ties to the Boston-based Immigration Restriction League (IRL), Lodge did much to implement nativist agenda into the Commission’s inquiry. See Chapter 1 for more on Lodge.

This was the real task of the Dillingham Commission when it began its four-year inquiry on the immigration question in 1907. Initially, the political situation around immigration control was not very favorable to the nativists. For two decades, any attempts to control the inflow of European immigrants had been blocked by Congress, which feared the political clout of the immigrant-origin voters in major urban areas. The Immigration Restriction League (IRL), consisting of notable academics and philanthropists of the time, actively pushed for the literacy test for immigrants in the 1890s and 1900s with the support of major unions such as the American Federation of Labor (Solomon 1956). The proposal, however, faced a staunch opposition not only in Congress but also from the executive branch, as shown by the veto from President Grover Cleveland in 1897 (Tichenor 2002; King 2002; Gerstle 2002; Benton-Cohen 2018).

The call for an independent commission emerged in this context. Before going into another round of debate on immigration, Congress wanted scientific and systematic information on the present condition of immigrants. A congressional investigative commission for this task was established under the leadership of Senator William P. Dillingham in 1907. The true mastermind behind the Commission, however, was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA). As we have seen in the previous section, Lodge, as well as many of the other executive members of the Commission, was a committed nativist: he firmly believed that “new immigrants” were “undesirable races,” and hoped to forge a scientific basis for immigration control through the Commission’s inquiry.

During the Progressive Era, knowledge, more specifically science, carried much political weight. The rapid advancement of technology in the nineteenth-century, in conjunction with the development of transportation across land and sea, led many educated citizens to believe that the power of technology and science could solve all human problems. As the power of the federal government expanded, civilian experts were often summoned to provide an aura of scientific knowledge around governance, by way of conducting comprehensive and scientific investigations on policy matters. The American expansion overseas, to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, provided these experts opportunities to travel and experience the world, further enriching their professional expertise. These experts returned and founded university departments and professional associations, making the United States the leader in the development of social sciences. As opposed to the humanities and natural sciences, which were still dominated by a European hegemony from the nineteenth century, policy-oriented, practical social sciences became a focus of American intellectual development, and the policy-knowledge network around the federal government proved to indispensable as the nation took the political, cultural, and military leadership of the world in the twentieth century (Ross 1992).

The Dillingham Commission was situated at the intersection of the immigration debate and such developments. The Commission enlisted the services of leading politicians, bureaucrats, and civilian experts, including economists, sociologists, anthropologists,⁵ and

⁵ To be precise, these disciplines were often bundled together under various names, such as “economics” or “politics.” The divide between different social science disciplines was invented as its practitioners engaged in boundary-making activities against others. Claiming exclusive control over a subject matter and securing federal funding was one of the most effective means of establishing disciplinary boundaries, and the Dillingham Commission figured centrally in this history. See Ross (1992). For instance, the career of Franz Boas, and his project in the Dillingham

statisticians, in order to conduct a comprehensive study of immigration (Zeidel 2004; Benton-Cohen 2018). The main task was to gather statistical data on the immigrants living in the U.S. regarding various issues such as crime, welfare, language, education, and occupation. The Commission compiled the results of the inquiry into a 41-volume report, and presented it to Congress and the public in 1911.

Empirical Contribution (1): A New Study of the Dillingham Commission

Existing accounts usually characterize the Commission as a product of collaboration between nativist ideology and Progressive-Era social sciences (Higham 1963: 310-311; Zeidel 2004; Ngai 2005: 31). Many authors are quick to treat the reports of the Dillingham Commission as another work in the tradition of race science that was built on prejudice, haphazard theorizing, and false evidence (Painter 2010; Brace 2005). Even when significant attention is paid to the Dillingham Commission, scholars usually focus on how its work effectively reproduced and even enhanced the nativist argument by infusing its rhetoric with an aura of science, complete with the trappings of empirical evidence (Zolberg 2006: 232-238; King 2002: 50-84; FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014). Alternatively, the Commission is depicted essentially as another institutional hurdle in the convoluted structure of American legislative process, which tended to infinitely delay contentious legislative proposals (Tichenor 2002: 42-43).

A closer look at the reports reveals a much more complicated picture, however (Perlmann 2018; Benton-Cohen 2018). Because the Dillingham Commission was a state-sponsored social science inquiry, neither racial ideology nor political calculations alone could dictate the outcome of its work; instead, at least on the surface, empirical data and scientific reasoning served as guidelines for its data collection activity. I am not arguing that the Commission was free of ideological and political interventions from the outside; on the contrary, there were both external and internal attempts to appropriate the Commission's work to serve certain ideological goals throughout its four-year tenure (Zeidel 2004; Benton-Cohen 2018; Perlmann 2018); however, as will become clearer in the following chapters, these attempts never exerted a unified force, and there were instead multiple ideological and political influences competing for the control of the Commission. I do not take the Commission's emphasis on empirical data and scientific reasoning at face value; instead, I highlight the disjuncture between its ideological and political constraints and its purported claims for the objective nature of its work, and how that disjuncture created contingencies that allowed for innovations and reworking of racial ideas. Because it was constrained by exclusionary racial ideology on the one hand and the logic of inquiry and empirical data on the other, the Commission ended up becoming a testing site where experimentations and new spins on existing ideas were possible. Because empirical data showed that Southern and Eastern Europeans were not that different from either Northern and Western Europeans or native-born Americans, the nativist members of the Dillingham Commission were moved to contrive two different kinds of racial boundaries in order to advance their political aims: Southern and Eastern Europeans were demarcated by somewhat blurred boundaries *within* whiteness, whereas non-white immigrants were marked by a bright boundary *around* whiteness. Moving away from the more reductive and simplified takes on the Commission outlined above, my account reveals how both

Commission, was instrumental in the process through which anthropology gained its status as an independent, scientific domain of expertise.

inclusionary and exclusionary boundary-making practices emerged from the contradictions between the racial ideology of whiteness and empirical data garnered through the Commission's data collection efforts.

Empirical Contribution (2): The Diverging Trajectories of Racial Ideas in the Early Twentieth Century

Many scholars agree that the conceptual distinction between race and ethnicity parallels different ways immigrants have been understood throughout American history (Hattam 2007; Treitler 2013; Steinberg 2001; Omi and Winant 2015). Race is generally understood as “purportedly physical, immutable, ascribed, or externally imposed division” of human groups, while ethnicity as “claimed to be cultural, malleable, achieved, or self-designated” identity (Saperstein, Penner, and Light 2013). As Treitler (2013) has forcefully argued, these concepts are alternative lenses through which we understand American society: seen through the prism of race, the United States is a nation scarred by group-based inequality, discrimination, and violence, all of which are often sanctioned and sometimes actively promoted by the state (Omi and Winant 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Emirbayer and Desmond 2015; Feagin 2000); understood in relation to ethnicity, however, it is a liberal society where individuals can exercise their “ethnic options” (Waters 1990), and the importance of group identity is facing its “twilight” through successful integration of various immigrant groups (Alba 1985; 2014; Gans 1979).

The genealogy of the two concepts partially explains how such a contrast emerged (Hattam 2007). The history of race as a concept has its roots in the history of colonialism and nineteenth century theories of evolution.⁶ Authors who have explored “the invention of ethnicity” (Sollors 1995; Glazer and Moynihan 1970) conclude that ethnicity was a relatively new concept that emerged in the early 1940s. With immigration restriction in the 1920s and the Americanization movement that followed (Ziegler-McPherson 2009), ethnic identity became a key axis of cultural and political mobilization for European immigrants and their children, who had previously been pressured to conform to Anglo-Saxon and Protestant culture. The official title for this movement, “ethnicity,” came into circulation in the early 1940s: “The word ethnicity first saw print in 1941, in [*The Social Life of a Modern Community*] by W. Lloyd Warner” (Sollors 1995: xiii). After a brief hiatus in the 1950s and 1960s, ethnicity emerged once again as a popular term following the radical social movements of non-whites in the 1960s and early 1970s (Glazer and Moynihan 1970), although for the descendants of European immigrants, ethnic identification came to represent more of a symbolic choice (Gans 1979; Alba 1985; Waters 1990). In this genealogy, ethnicity, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant have correctly pointed out, emerged in the context of the inflow of the “new immigrants” in the early twentieth century, and contributed to the sharp distinction between European immigrants and non-white minorities by providing the former with psychological “wages of whiteness” (Omi and Winant 2015; Roediger 2005). Southern and Eastern European immigrants were different from the Anglo-Saxon elites of the country, but their difference was of a different kind from the difference embodied by the descendants of the slaves on the one hand, and Native Americans on the other (Hattam 2007; Baker 1998). In short, ethnicity, or more precisely,

⁶ See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion.

the ethnic, was invented to address this new kind of difference among white, European immigrants.

My study of the Dillingham Commission contributes to this history of diverging narratives about difference and peoplehood in American society. In a nutshell, the Dillingham Commission was instrumental in the emergence of *the ethnic*, first by specifying the nature of the difference embodied by the new influx of European immigrants, and second by mobilizing state power to substantiate the categories it established to discriminate among European immigrant groups. The most vexing question for the Commission members concerned Southern and Eastern European immigrants: these immigrants were white, but they were different from Northern and Western European immigrants and native-born Americans, whose social profiles served as the template for whiteness (Jacobson 1998; Guglielmo 2000; Roediger 2005). The members and staff of the Dillingham Commission struggled with this question as they collected empirical data from the field, and in the process, worked out a new way of thinking about the relationship between race, immigration policy, and national identity.

Many accounts of the rise of *the ethnic* provide post-hoc explanations, focusing on when exactly the term “ethnicity” came into circulation (Sollors 1995) or what kind of ideological function it served (e.g. Omi and Winant’s “wages of whiteness” explanation). My account, on the other hand, observes the process through which the concept emerged, by highlighting how the Dillingham Commission members and staff struggled with the question of whiteness. Because they ostensibly endorsed the logic of scientific inquiry and adhered to the value of empirical data, they could not completely control this process, and often times they had to make compromises between the exclusionary racial ideology of whiteness and the result of data collection that betrayed their intentions. Although the paradigm of “ethnicity” might have paid European immigrants a “wage of whiteness” for European immigrants (Omi and Winant 2015), or served as a basis of mobilization for their children (Sollors 1995; Glazer and Moynihan 1970), this benefit would be the *result* of the emergence of ethnicity as a tool for identity assertion and affiliation, not the *process* through which ethnicity was conceived, paradigmatically and conceptually. By focusing on the results, in a post-hoc manner, these accounts often neglect latent connection between nineteenth-century race-thinking and *the ethnic* of the early twentieth century. For instance, Victoria Hattam (2007) has argued that *the ethnic* emerged out of the space *outside of* racial discourse of the time, as Jewish intellectuals of the Menorah journal engaged in the quest to articulate their own group identity. In my account, however, I present *the ethnic* as emerging from a state-led inquiry motivated by racial ideology, thereby clarifying the connection between nineteenth-century race-thinking and the twentieth-century articulation of *the ethnic*. By highlighting the question of whiteness in the Dillingham Commission, this dissertation emphasizes the continuity between these two strands of racial ideas, as they are subjected to and shaped by unintended consequences of empirical data collection.

Theoretical Contribution (1): Investigative Commissions between the State and Civil Society

Existing research privileges the state when it comes to race-making, and scholars have typically studied exercises of the state power to affirm and implement racial ideology through its administrative capacity (Nobles 2000; Starr 1992; Emigh, Riley, and Ahmed

2015; Omi and Winant 2015; Goldberg 2002; King and Smith 2005; see Bourdieu [2015] and Loveman [2005] for a broader theoretical discussion of the symbolic power of the state). Different social domains such as the census (Anderson 1990; Thompson 2016; Prewitt 2013; Schor 2017; Perlmann 2018), immigration law (Ngai 2005), the criminal justice system (Hinton 2017; Alexander 2010), and administration of social policy (Fox 2012; Lieberman 2001; Quadagno 1996) have all been presented as sites to observe the ways through which the state engages in the process of “making up people” according to its racial ideology (Hacking 2002). Others have pushed back against this top-down, state-centered perspective, highlighting how the racialized groups resist and defy the imposition of racial ideology. Omi and Winant’s racial formation theory (2015) is paradigmatic in this regard, whereas Nagel (1997)’s account of native American ethnicity resurgence provides an important empirical example of how a racial category can be re-appropriated by emerging social movements.

More interestingly, however, recent research has attempted to transcend the binary opposition between the top-down vs bottom-up, or the state vs. civil society, perspectives in race-making. In this line of work, civil society is often presented as a place where racial ideas are forged, mainly through the interaction among experts who produce knowledge about race (Gossett 1963). When it comes to race, oftentimes “the boundary between state and civil society is necessarily porous and uncertain” (Omi and Winant 2015). Sociologists such as Mara Loveman, Cristina Mora, and Michael Rodriguez-Muñiz have explored this fuzzy boundary and argued that understanding the relationship between civil society and state is essential in developing a sound theory of race-making, highlighting the role of experts occupying this liminal space (Loveman 2015; Mora 2014; Rodriguez-Munoz 2017).

Investigative commissions, and the Dillingham Commission in particular, are unique institutions in which scientific expertise and state power intersect to produce “facts” as an object of inquiry, and eventually, modes of governance (Poovey 1998; Frankel 2006). The uniqueness of investigative commissions stems from their place in relation to the larger bureaucratic structure of the state. Investigative commissions – such as the Kerner Commission, which investigated “civil disorders” of the 1960s, or the Rogers Commission, which investigated the causes for the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster – are usually not a part of the state’s regular organizational structure; they are established as a response to an urgent and contentious issue, in order to first determine “facts” around the particular problem prior to implementing policy solutions. Politicians, typically ranking members of the senate and house, occupy executive positions, and civilian experts, including professors from major universities, work as advisors, while federal employees and other street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) collect data in the field. Because their subject matter is “facts,” impartiality and empiricism are, at least on the surface, the core values of a commission, and conspicuous pursuit of partisan interests is discouraged. Multiple political factions with different views on the subject matter are usually invited to participate in the Commission, in order to guarantee such impartiality. In many cases, ensuing policy discussions occur on the basis of what commissions determined as “facts” (see Vaughn [2016] for an example of a contemporary investigative commission; see Frankel [2006] historical examples; see Simon [2004] for legal implications of investigative commissions).

In the parlance of political sociology, investigative commissions are situated in the liminal space between the state and civil society. More specifically, although expert commissions are propelled by the power and administrative capacity of the state, each

commission's operational logic is independent of its origin, and such independence grants some level of autonomy both in terms of its activity and overall findings. As Historian Oz Frankel (2006: 4-10) demonstrated with his study of investigative commissions in the nineteenth century, the state engaged in "fact-finding activities" through these commissions when it recognized the limits of its own power. Facing particularly thorny issues, such as contested policy proposals concerning emancipated slaves after the Civil War, the state established commissions, such as the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission (1863), to gather information and determine the relevant "facts" before implementing a policy solution.

By doing so, the state came to recognize that certain things were not under its complete control. These investigative commissions "facilitated unforeseen encounters and dealings between governments and legislatures and their local interlocutors." Oftentimes, "facts and knowledge proved elusive and occasionally ungovernable" (Frankel 2006: 8-9). Their objects of inquiry – in our case, immigrants – chose to "talk back" (Hacking 2002): sometimes they mobilized against the attempts to study them; other times they just said too much, providing answers that investigators did not expect or appreciate. In fact-finding activities, the state willingly opened itself up to other factors, and then, facing the limited scope of its power (understood as a capacity to force others to act in certain ways), it sought to develop a better means of controlling the situation. In short, investigative commissions were not only a field of struggle and compromise between different actors, but also a "space for the modern state's self-invention and self-reflection" (Frankel 2006: 10) through engagement with the limit of its power.

In the case of the Dillingham Commission, that limit was met when it came to determine the relationship between race, immigration, and national identity. The nativist leaders of the Commission had a clear idea about the supremacy of the White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant cultural and group identity. In their minds, the Commission's goal was to affirm this view by portraying Southern and Eastern European immigrants in a negative light through empirical data. Yet, as the nineteenth-century positivists would often proclaim, "facts were facts"⁷: once the inquiry began, the Commission ventured onto an unknown territory in which the racial ideology of nativism clashed with the empirical reality of immigration. There could be debates as to how to interpret those "facts," but no actor in the Commission could completely control what kind of "facts" would be found, and the terms of the political struggles in and outside of the Commission were structured by those "facts." The "tension between government's desire to master social knowledge and knowledge's endemic ungovernability" (Frankel 2006: 21) translated into the distance between racial ideology and its practical applications in the operation of the Dillingham Commission; by gauging the distance, we can comprehend the contingency inherent in whiteness, and how the American state struggled to develop a coherent vision

⁷ As discussed in the earlier sections, I do not adhere to nineteenth-century positivism and argue that the facts alone dictated the outcome of the Commission's inquiry. Rather, I highlight how the Commission members' simultaneous allegiance to positivism and to nativist, WASP racial ideology put them in an impossible position, and, consequently, opened up a zone of indeterminacy within the Commission's inquiry. In other words, my analysis does not subscribe to the Commission's positivism, but rather focuses on how the epistemology of positivism, combined with exclusionary racial ideology, contradicts itself, resulting in unintended consequences (Merton 1936).

of its identity through a series of unexpected encounters in the field. In other words, the Dillingham Commission put the idea of whiteness through a process of “self invention and self-reflection” by finding “facts” about immigration.

The Dillingham Commission’s inquiry, therefore, was far from a one-way projection of nativist ideology onto empirical data, as many analysts have pointed out (Zeidel 2004; Benton-Cohen 2018; for a different perspective, see Richard Alba’s account⁸). It was a site for struggle and compromise, not only between nativists and pro-immigrant activists but also between the ideology of whiteness and uncompromising empirical data. Through these contests and compromises, anti- and pro-immigrant intellectuals gradually formulated a common ground for deliberation, at the center of which was the empirical data gathered by the Commission. And it was on this common ground that the concept of *different kinds of difference* emerged.

Theoretical Contribution (2): Contingency in Whiteness

Whereas the focus on the liminal space between state and civil society adds to the literature of political sociology, my analysis of the encounter between racial ideology and unexpected data provides a new take on the theory of how exactly racial categories emerge. While most accounts focus on the primacy of racial ideology — namely that politicians and experts control the process and create racial ideas according to their view of the world — therefore highlighting the predictable, deterministic nature of the process, my account centers on the inherent contingency of race-making, especially in the case of whiteness. Simply put, ideology does matter, but the intentions and convictions of the actors involved do not completely determine the outcome, mainly because other variables — in my case, empirical data — come into play and in consequential ways. Because race is an idea purportedly based on science, its ideologues cannot completely abandon the pretense of logic and empiricism, and often times this dual allegiance to ideology and science leads to confusion and contradiction in the face of unexpected empirical evidence, a collision we see taking place in the Dillingham Commission. Race-making occurs as ideologues respond to these confusions and contradictions in an ad-hoc, haphazard fashion, and in the end, the outcome is oftentimes something that is unforeseen by the actors involved in the process. In short, racial ideologues do “make” race, but neither in the way they envision, nor on their own; as is the case with many other complicated social processes, they do not know wholly control what they set about to do.

In the Dillingham Commission, the first point of confusion concerned the logical conundrum around the biological understanding of race and whiteness. In nineteenth century race-thinking, whiteness was a category rooted in essentialism: it was a God-given, natural category impervious to any change over time. However, when the nativists of the Commission wanted to collect data on Southern and Eastern European immigrants and compare them with other immigrants and native-born Americans, the concept of whiteness proved to be limiting, because it did not allow further distinctions within whiteness. Thus they had to concede ground to classification principles other than biology, providing room for factors such as geography and language. In order to engage in a fine-grained data

⁸ Alba, Richard 2013. “The Dillingham Commission’s Ranking of Immigrant Groups Affected U.S. Policy for Decades” *All Things Considered*, NPR. (<https://www.npr.org/2013/01/28/170494504/dillingham-commissions-ranking-of-immigrant-groups-affected-u-s-policy-for-decad>)

collection exercise, the Commission thus had to revise its concept of whiteness and make it less essentialist, thus endangering the rigidity of its race concept in the process.

Moreover, the data collected from the field did not always match the nativist worldview of the Commission members. Often times the data did not clearly demonstrate that Southern and Eastern Europeans were more “undesirable” than other groups; in some cases, the data suggested that they were actually more “desirable” in some respects than native-born Americans, further undermining the nativist cause.

In addition, the Commission in some cases hired immigrant intellectuals, such as Franz Boas, as independent researchers, providing them funding and intellectual autonomy to conduct their own investigations on immigrants. Their views on immigrants were very different from those of the nativist executive committee members, and their research often suggested that the contemporary immigrants would one day become “Americans,” and the immigration problem could and would be resolved with enough time and proper effort towards helping immigrants, as opposed to restricting their entry. The conclusions from these research projects provided another instance of uncomfortable outcome in the Commission’s inquiry.

Facing these unexpected outcomes of data collection, the Commission members were torn between their commitments to the logic of scientific inquiry and their revulsion towards immigrants. Their answer was to make a compromise with the uncomfortable data: although in the summary they ignored the data that did not support their argument and concluded that Southern and Eastern Europeans were “undesirable,” the Commission members nevertheless published all of the empirical data collected, making themselves vulnerable to criticisms from outside.

And that was what happened: after the publication of the Commission reports, pro-immigrant intellectuals and ethnic organizations conducted careful re-analysis of the Commission data, and used it to advance their argument that immigrants, including Southern and Eastern Europeans, were indeed not very different from native-born American citizens. In other words, the data that was supposed to highlight a bright boundary was instead mobilized to blur the boundary between Southern and Eastern European immigrants and native-born Americans.

The boundary-blurring potential of the empirical data, however, tells only one half of the story. In the case of the Japanese immigrants in California, the uncomfortable data did not create common ground to engage in a dialogue about the nature of the boundary separating immigrants and native-born Americans. The Commission’s data on the Japanese in California, some of which was collected by Japanese American intellectuals such as Yamato Ichihashi, proved that the Japanese met all the marks of respectability preached by the nativists: they were educated, spoke English, worked hard, and in their independent life style of farming, strove to meet the American ideal of self-determination. But because Japanese immigrants lacked the extensive support networks that other white immigrant groups controlled, these uncomfortable facts were never mobilized enough to blur the boundary separating the Japanese from more enfranchised groups. There were a couple of lone attempts to advocate for the naturalization rights of Japanese immigrants, yet the failure of those attempts reconfirmed the salience of the boundaries demarcating whites and non-whites. In short, facts mattered in blurring racial boundaries not just in themselves but when intellectual and political networks effectively mobilized them.

My concept of *different kinds of difference* brings the consequences of these negotiations into focus. Uncomfortable facts and their mobilization led to blurring of the boundary against Southern and Eastern Europeans; uncomfortable facts and lack of mobilization led to re-confirmation of the boundary drawn against Japanese immigrants; and when we put together these two opposing processes of boundary-making, we see the distinction between assimilable and non-assimilable difference, and understand how the architecture of whiteness (Ngai 1999; 2005) went through a renovation: as opposed to the simple, black-white binary scheme, the new whiteness articulated how the processes of categorical exclusion and gradual inclusion applied to different groups, thereby producing a more dynamic apparatus of membership and (non)belonging. The notion of “white people” as we understand it today emerged as an *effect* of this transformation, when it was embedded in the state apparatuses of federal immigration bureaucracy through the national quota restrictions of 1920s (Scott 1998; Mitchell 1991). My main point is that this association of racial ideas is not the express design (Zolberg 2006) of an individual or a group, but largely the unscripted consequence of the encounter between racial ideology and empirical data in the Dillingham Commission.

Method and Data: Tracing the Process of Knowledge Production

In tracing the work of the Dillingham Commission, I rely on archival materials from various sources. First of all, the 41 volumes of the Dillingham Commission Report serve as a starting point for my analysis. The Commission had an ambition to undertake as comprehensive a social survey as possible, and it published the entirety of the data collected, producing more than 27,000 pages on a wide array of subjects. Although the absolute majority of these pages consist of tables featuring numerical data on immigrants, there are a good number of sections that contain ethnographic and historical accounts. In addition, there are also volumes featuring the history of immigration as well as the letters sent to the Commission by various civic groups. And most importantly for our purpose, there is a volume on the theories of racial classification (Vol. 5: *The Dictionary of Races or Peoples*), which I will discuss more in depth in Chapter 3. The titles for all 41 volumes, as well as the names of the main authors, are presented in Appendix A.

In addition to the final reports, I also tracked down and reviewed the personal papers of the people who worked for the Dillingham Commission. Following the careful archival work of historians who produced monographs on the Commission (Zeidel 2004; Benton-Cohen 2018; see also Perlmann 2018), I identified the personal papers of executive committee members and experts, as well as other federal officials and intellectuals who corresponded with them in the course of the Commission’s work.

These personal papers provided varying perspectives on the knowledge production process of the Commission. As discussed more in detail in Chapter 2, the executive committee was comprised mostly of politicians, high-level federal bureaucrats, and civilian experts, who collectively made decisions regarding the Commission’s project. As we have seen in the case of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, it was no secret that many of them were under the influence of nativist ideology and regarded immigrants as a social problem that should be brought under control through regulation. However, their intentions did not travel all the way down to the level of data collection in the field, at least not without significant modifications in the process.

One may be able to characterize this as a case of the principal-agent problem, in which there is a mismatch between those who control the overall process and those who actually do the work on the frontlines. The executive committee worked through the executive secretary, W.W. Husband, and hired multiple investigators, typically university professors, to conduct inquiries on certain topics and regions. These investigators in turn hired field agents, usually recent college graduates with some social science training, while also bringing in people from their own professional and intellectual networks to serve as collaborators in their respective projects. As the personnel networks proliferated, so did the ideological heterogeneity: not everyone agreed with the position of the executive committee; as we will see more in detail in Chapter 3, many field agents were wedded more to the empirical data they collected than to the nativism of the executive committee, and this led the former to sometimes counter the position promoted by the latter, either actively by voicing discontent or passive-aggressively by noting that the committee's ideas were not useful in the field. Experts also brought in their own perspectives based on their domain of expertise, and sometimes expressed skepticism toward, if not overt criticisms of, the overall agenda of the executive committee and nativist politicians. The Commission was a complicated organization consisting of people with diverse viewpoints, and such diversity, conjoined with the ungovernable nature of empirical data, led to unexpected outcomes in its inquiry.

By studying the personal papers of these different personnel who worked in the Dillingham Commission, I maximize the chance of observing the mismatch between theory and data in the knowledge production process: different persons present different perspectives, if not contradictory takes, on the same subject matter. Another key source in this regard is the meeting minutes of the Dillingham Commission, found in the personal papers of the W.W. Husband, the executive secretary of the Commission. As an assistant to the executive committee, Husband was present in all of the committee meetings, and oversaw the administrative work associated with the Commission. Although the Commission's official documents are presumed to have been destroyed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service,⁹ Husband personally kept some of them, and they provide a window into how the gap between the ideology of whiteness and empirical data manifested in the Commission's inquiry. In short, drawing on various archival sources, I document how the mismatch between theory and data was manifested and resolved in the Commission's data collection and analysis, and how, in the end, the process resulted in new ways of thinking about the relationship between race, national identity, and immigration policy.

Lastly, to provide a more complete perspective on what happened in the Dillingham Commission, I engaged in in-depth reading of the literature from the era, focusing on how race and immigration were understood by contemporary politicians, policy makers, and intellectuals. In addition, I closely followed the biographies of the people who participated in the Commission, situating their time in the Dillingham Commission within the context of what happened before and after in their lives.

⁹ Zeidel (2004) discovered an internal document of Immigration and Naturalization Service that noted the destruction of most Dillingham Commission records. However, I was able to discover many documents pertaining to the Dillingham Commission in seemingly unrelated sections of the INS records (RG85).

As will become clear in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, my analysis entailed the following procedures: first, I read through the Dillingham Commission Report and digested the official factual information presented in the material; second, I read through the personal papers of the people who participated in the Commission's work, and cross-checked their accounts with those of the Commission report for confirmation; third, where these accounts did not match, I delved further into the personal papers, meeting minutes, and other archival sources, as well as relevant literature of the period, to explore further why the mismatch between racial ideology and empirical data came about, and what came out of the efforts to address those contradictions. My substantive chapters synthesize the results of these endeavors.

Chapters

The first and second chapters of the dissertation document the larger intellectual, political, and legislative context leading up to the Dillingham Commission by chronicling the history of race thinking in the nineteenth century (Chapter 1) and the congressional debate around immigration in the early twentieth century (Chapter 2).

In the first chapter, I survey race-thinking in the nineteenth century with a particular focus on how European ideas about race travelled to the United States and informed immigration policy at the federal level; in the process, I pay particular attention to how the executive committee members of the Commission were influenced by European race-thinking, first by way of slavery apologists in the South and later through nativists in elite universities of New England. This chapter presents the intellectual foundation of the Commission's work and serves as a prehistory of its theories about race and national identity.

In the second chapter, I document the legislative history leading up to the Dillingham Commission and provide information on the larger organizational context in which the Commission was embedded. I discuss the global context involving Japan and Japanese immigrants in San Francisco as well as the history of struggle between the nativists and pro-immigrant politicians. I also present brief biographical accounts of executive committee members and experts, highlighting how their personal trajectories informed their ideas about race, national identity, and social science knowledge. This chapter serves as the immediate background for Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

I then turn to three key moments in the Commission's work as examples of how the tenuous connection between nativist ideology, state power, and knowledge production led to *different kinds of difference*. In each of these substantive chapters, I focus on the moments of mismatch between theory and data, unexpected implications of data analysis, and debates around interpretation of collected data. Following the interactions between executive committee members, experts, field agents, and intellectuals outside the Commission, I show how ideas around *different kinds of difference* emerged as those involved in the Commission haphazardly responded to the gap between the ideology of whiteness and empirical data.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the Commission inadvertently undermined the rigidity of racial categories through its focus on European immigrants. Many classical theories of racial difference, which presupposed a unified "European" or "Caucasian" category, proved not useful for the Commission because they failed to differentiate Southern and Eastern European immigrants from Northern and Western ones. Thus the Commission

adopted a new scheme, “races or peoples,” which emphasized differences in language and geography within Europe. Although the elite members of the Commission had no intention of undermining the rigidity of the biological conception of race, this move away from physiology to culture provided flexibility to the conception of whiteness and had the unexpected consequence of blurring boundaries among Europeans. Furthermore, when applied to data collection activities, the “races or peoples” classification scheme failed to provide a clear-cut division between “desirable” Northern and Western European immigrants and “undesirable” Southern and Eastern European immigrants.

Chapter 4 traces how the Commission inadvertently provided support for the development of assimilation theory, which further undermined the rigid biological conception of race. With funding from the Commission, anthropologist Franz Boas collected data on head shapes – supposedly the most stable indicator of “racial type” – of the children of European immigrants in New York City. The data showed that bodily traits could change rapidly under environmental influences. Boas used the finding to criticize the rigid racial assumptions underlying the contemporary caricature of “new immigrants,” and envisioned the possibility of their eventual assimilation. This chapter shows that even before the political mobilization around ethnicity emerged in the 1930s and 1940, the Commission’s findings inadvertently paved a way for the criticism of scientific racism, thereby further discrediting the WASP-centered perspective on the relationship between race and national identity.

Chapter 5 turns attention away from the interior structure of national belonging to its margins, and shows how the bright boundary between whites and non-whites was rigidly maintained in the face of the contradictions endemic to the Commission’s project. The Commission’s study of Japanese immigrants on the West Coast revealed that they were in many respects more “desirable” than European immigrants: The Japanese were educated, hard-working, law-abiding, family-oriented farmers who were willing to speak English and follow American customs. In order to address the decoupling of desirability and whiteness, the Commission had to argue that although the Japanese were not necessarily inferior to whites, they were too different to assimilate, and therefore should be prevented from natrualization. It is at this moment the full circle of *different kinds of difference* was completed: Europeans were a potentially assimilable kind of different people, whereas Japanese immigrants, and non-whites in general, were a non-assimilable kind.

In the conclusion, I discuss how the concept of *different kinds of difference* inspired law and immigration policy in the decades following the Dillingham Commission. The closing pages feature my reflections on why the Dillingham Commission matters and what it means for the study of immigration and American national identity in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 1. Race-Thinking Before the Dillingham Commission

Categories and Hierarchy

The Dillingham Commission had two core working assumptions in designing its inquiry: first, immigrants could be classified into a discrete set of groups, which the Commission called “races or peoples”; second, by collecting statistical and ethnographic data using the classification scheme, it was possible to compare “races or peoples” and discern which groups were more or less “desirable” for the nation.

These two assumptions correspond to what Zuberi (2001: 34) has identified as the two core tenets of a racial stratification system: *racial reification* and *racial ranking* (see also Omi and Winant 2015). That is, the idea of race consists of two distinctive epistemological principles—one about what kind of races there are, and the other about what relationship exists among those races. I use the terms *categories* and *hierarchy* to denote these principles. As with any intellectual inquiry, the Dillingham Commission did not start from a scratch: although the Commission did not follow the typical academic protocol of “standing on the shoulders of giants” – clearly demarcating past contributions from its own enterprise of knowledge production – it did mobilize the existing theories about race and immigration to build categories and hierarchies. In this chapter, I attempt to elucidate this process of mobilization by reviewing the theoretical strands that preceded the Dillingham Commission’s race-thinking.

There is a long history behind the belief that human beings can be classed into mutually exclusive groups and that those groups can be ordered into a hierarchy. I use the term *race-thinking* to reference this tradition, and *race-thinkers* to designate the theorists and academics who affirmed this premise through their participation in an influential conversation about race. While the theories and scholarship taking up race do not constitute a coherent intellectual tradition, the two core tenets of categories and hierarchy nevertheless served as the rallying point for the various spectrums of race-thinking.

Up to the time of the Dillingham Commission, there existed three distinctive camps of race-thinking, each with different purpose in engaging with race. First, naturalists, who initially came up with the idea of biological human differences, were interested in studying differences in human kind, and attempted to determine the number of races that existed in nature. The key question for them was how to find the best measure for racial differences, and, as we will see, collecting and measuring human skulls was their answer to the question. Although the emphasis on skulls gradually faded among race-thinkers throughout the nineteenth century, this tradition was revived in the Dillingham Commission through Franz Boas’s work on the head shapes of immigrant children. As will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 4, however, Boas criticized the notion of essential group differences based on biology through his work, effectively dismantling the core tenet of naturalists.

Secondly, polygenists attempted to develop a meta-theory of race in addition to merely documenting and describing biological differences. Their key contention was that different races were different species and not variations of *homo sapiens*. In their theories, the natural order became a model for a desirable, God-given social order in which whites governed and other races followed. Invoking both science and religion, polygenists used their theories to justify reactionary political ideologies that defended slavery and colonialism. However, by arguing that difference races were different species, polygenists defied the commonly accepted Biblical doctrine of monotheism – i.e. God created humans as one unified specie. As a result, its popular appeal was limited, and the overly biological

theory of human difference lost traction and gave way to theories that emphasized social and historical grounds of group differences (Brubaker 2015).

Lastly, the Progressive Era and the rise of social science led to the emergence of a new generation of race-thinking, which conceptualized human group differences not as a natural fact or a divine creation but as a statistical construct, obtained through analytical induction from empirical data. Reform-minded social scientists put aside metaphysical questions about race and instead pursued the “practical” use of the concept, in order to provide solutions to the key social problems of the time such as immigration. In the process, race became an all-encompassing entity that addressed both biological and social dimensions of human group differences. The men who were directly linked to the Dillingham Commission – Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, and Daniel Folkmar (see Chapter 3) – were all heavily influenced by this tradition.

Although these three camps will be presented in a sequence throughout this chapter, the transition from one camp to another does not signal accumulation of knowledge in race-thinking. More skulls did not mean a better classification system, and more data did not indicate that race had a stronger scientific ground on which to stand. Neither were the transitions paradigm shifts (Kuhn 1972), for they did not represent breaks from the legacies of the past. In fact, each camp represents a different assemblage of a certain recurring themes: fascination with nature, elitism, and personal and collective insecurity have always undergirded different forms of race-thinking; statistical reasoning, desire for social manipulation, and nationalist urges were added to the mix in the late nineteenth century to boost the social and political sway of race-thinking.

As we will see in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the Dillingham Commission selectively drew from these repertoires to make sense of the data it was collecting. The Commission members had to work far more on their project than any of the race-thinkers mentioned in this chapter, because the amount of their data was unprecedented and the data did not always tell them the story they wanted to hear. Thus they had to reach deep into the toolkit of race-thinking, summoning many race-thinkers ranging from Blumenbach to Roosevelt. And in the process, they inadvertently initiated the transformation of race-thinking, about whiteness in particular.

The Origin Story

It is not easy to determine when and where the idea of race originated. Ruling aside the genetic account,¹⁰ most scholars attribute global changes associated with the rise of modernity as key factors in the foundation of race-thinking. For instance, in a simple but provocative account, anthropologist C. Loring Brace (2005) presents the understanding about categorical group differences as originating from development of transportation, i.e. long-distance navigation. Before the era of naval expansion by Europeans, any travel – be it explorations by adventurous individuals or large-scale military campaigns by empires – was characterized by its gradual pace. That is, people moved slowly – no more than 100 kilometers per day at max on land mass, and in the process, they might be compelled to encounter a panorama of human differences in biological characteristics, such as skin color

¹⁰ i.e. categorical human differences originate from distributions of gene chromosomes, presumably through evolutionary processes and migration patterns dating back to pre-historic times; see Shiao, Bode, Beyer, and Selvig (2012) but also Morning (2011; 2014) as well as Duster (1990).

and hair texture, and culture, such as settlement patterns, housing, and customs. But since these differences came to view gradually, they did not present themselves as abrupt demarcations separating types of people. Even aggressive military campaigns waged by belligerent empires such as Rome or Mongol were limited by the physical mobility of their troops, and thus groups they conquered were regarded as reflecting the natural, incremental differences of human societies across different places and climate zones, not categorical differences among human kind.

The great European naval expansion and Columbus's "discovery" of the American continent, however, led to a watershed in how human differences were perceived. After years of lonesome voyage on the high seas, Europeans sailors crossed unprecedented distance and arrived at a categorically different climate zone, encountering those whose looks and habits were far different from their own. To be clear, the difference was striking only because they had been subjected to isolation for months before encountering new people; had they been moving across the continent, the sailors would have all kinds of peoples between "us" and "them"; yet on the high seas, there was no middle ground, only seabirds and waves. In these extra-continental encounters, human group differences were perceived not as gradational but as categorical — that is, sharply divided and without overlapping characteristics. Ensuing colonial expansion and violent conflict between groups with diametrically opposing interests and destinies (e.g. colonialists and indigenous groups) also contributed to this way of thinking about human differences.

In *Modern Peoplehood* (2004), John Lie argues that the notion of categorical difference alone is not sufficient to warrant for the development of race-thinking. Lie rightly points out that categorical difference was widely invoked in any society with a hierarchical caste structure, usually in order to explain the differences between groups with different social statuses, such as peasants and aristocrats. In his account, race emerged as a "fact of nature" only in the nineteenth century, as a collaborative project between the modern state apparatus and the ascending science of biology (2004: 89-91). Previously, human differences, whether categorical or incremental, were explained through a variety of factors, such as climate, history, religion, and social institution. Yet by separating nature from all other factors and characterizing it as immutable — i.e. given at birth, heritable through reproduction, and impervious to environmental influences — early race-thinkers turned the notion of categorical differences into an *essentialist* theory about human characteristics. Different groups were different because they were different in nature, and their respective characteristics would never change. These differences could be measured "the idea of progress," a hierarchy of civilization—along with which races could be ranked according to supposed level of achievement. European civilization, which was expanding globally through colonial ventures, stood at the top of the hierarchy, while all other races ranked below. In other words, *hierarchy*, in addition to *category*, in association with modernity and civilization, enabled the concept of race, and by deeming itself as "natural" — i.e. an irresistible fact proven by science — race-thinking obtained authority and power in the broader intellectual discussion about culture and society.

Naturalists: Linnaeus, Blumenbach, and the Color Races

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the Swedish botanist known as the father of modern taxonomy, spent his entire career classifying everything, from animals and plants to rocks and supernatural beings. Not satisfied with the haphazard classification system of the middle

ages, he aspired to build a reliable and systematic order of nature distinguishing *species* and *varieties*: species concerned proper distinctions among different organisms as God almighty had intended; and *varieties* were different expressions of those species, which reflected not differences in essence but in their contexts, such as climate or geography (Gossett 1963: 35). In other words, Linnaeus devised two *different kinds of difference*: of essence and of expression. For instance, dogs come in variety of breeds, ranging from Siberian Husky to Shih Tzu, but all of the breeds still belong to a single specie (Lie 2004). Linnaeus separated *Homo Sapiens* into four categories, using color and continent to distinguish these varieties, as “white Europeans,” “red American,” brown Asian,” and “black African.” Yet this classification scheme remained a marginal topic in his vast classification system, which included an impressive number of known plants and animals and even “monsters” such as phoenix, dragon, hydra, and siren.

Many race-thinkers, including those of the Dillingham Commission, however, credit Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) as the founder of the modern race-thinking. Blumenbach’s key contribution was, unlike Linnaeus, conceptualizing race as difference in essence and not in expression, thereby cementing the concept of race as an immutable, inherent characteristic of different human groups. In addition to making popular the labels of the “color races” – Caucasian (white), Mongolian (yellow), Malayan (brown), Ethiopian (black), and American (red) – Blumenbach also utilized observational data to substantiate these categories. With regard to the application of this scheme, he argued that visible indicators of race, such as skin color, were unreliable because they could easily be influenced by environment, as evidenced by the cases of European colonialists becoming dark-skinned after spending time in the tropical sun, as well as European farmers being darker than their lords and kings. Instead of superficial features such as skin color or hair texture, Blumenbach reasoned that essential features, such as shape of skulls, could serve as the core measure of different racial types.

In *On the Natural Variety of Human Kind* (1775), Blumenbach documented the process through which his theory of race developed. The main focus of the book was on the racial categories based on shapes of skulls, which he substantiated by presenting drawings from his extensive collection of human crania. As historian Neil Irving Painter tells us, Blumenbach’s academic reputation allowed him to mobilize many supporters among the wealthy and powerful, and his influential friends wanted to assist the respected professor by sending him human skulls they had obtained from their oversea adventures. With a little help from his friends, the young, devout naturalist became the “father of craniology” (Gossett 1963: 37) and race-thinking, all in the process of “placing scores of human skulls from around the world in a line and measuring the height of the foreheads, the size and angle of the jawbone, the angle of the teeth, the eye sockets, the nasal bones” (Painter 2010: 75).

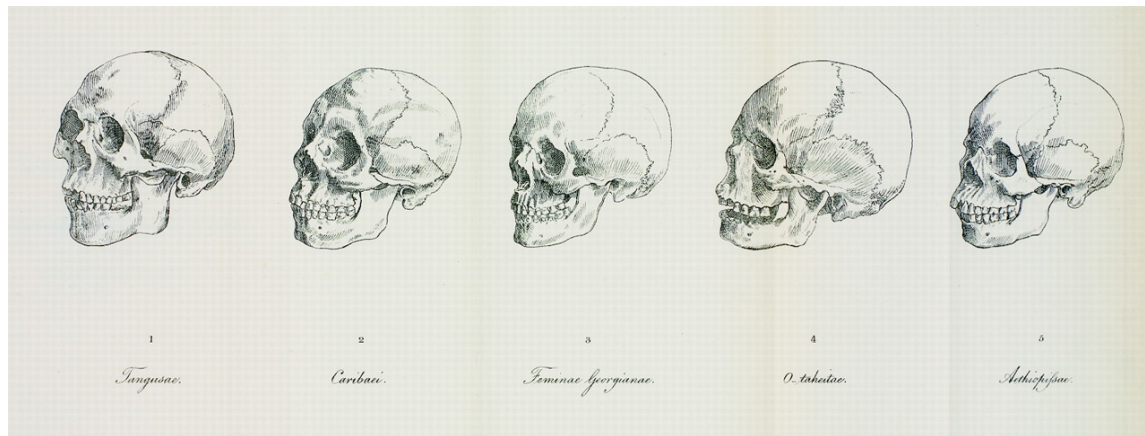


Figure 2. Plate IV of the third edition of Blumenbach's MD thesis
(source: Bophal 2007)¹¹

Along with Linnaeus and other early naturalists, Blumenbach is generally known as not attributing a *hierarchy* to his racial classification scheme, focusing more on *category*, the other core component of race-thinking. In fact, as Gossett points out, he often criticized those who brought in the prejudice of ethnocentrism into the scientific enterprise of racial classification scheme, claiming that “if a toad could speak...and were asked which was the loveliest creature upon God’s earth, it would say simpering, that modesty forbade it to give a real opinion on that point” (Gossett 1963: 39). “At the time when the negroes and the savages were still considered as half animals,” one of his admirers argued in a memoir published after his death, “Blumenbach raised his voice, and showed that their psychical qualities were not inferior to those of the European, that even amongst the latter themselves the greatest possible differences existed, and that opportunity alone was wanting for the development of their higher faculties” (Marx 1840: 9).

However, like many of his peers concerned with racial classification, Blumenbach had his own idiosyncratic way of projecting a hierarchy onto his five-group scheme. Faithfully following the Book of Genesis, he maintained that all humanity originated from the first couple, Adam and Eve, who just happened to be of Caucasian race. After their fall from Eden, the skin color of their descendants gradually darkened to yellow, red, brown, and black as they adapted to different climates in different continents around the world. Known as the “degenerative hypothesis,” this narrative of decline was initially proposed to explain varieties of skin color in the global population while staying within the boundaries of the Biblical doctrine of the time. Yet this hypothesis of degeneration from whiteness became a key recurring theme for future generations of race-thinkers, who associated the presence of non-whites with the decline of white, European civilization.

Like many gentlemen scientists of his time, Blumenbach often combined scientific empiricism in his observations with a romantic, aesthetic appreciation for the objects of study—in his case, skulls. It is a well-documented fact that Blumenbach was the first person to use the label “Caucasian,” supposedly based on a single skull of female person from the Eurasian country of Georgia in the southern region of Mount Caucasus. As Painter’s fascinating account shows (2010: 82-84), Blumenbach’s thinking informed by

¹¹ The middle one (3) is “Feminae Georgiane,” the famed “Caucasian” skull of a female Georgian.

the aesthetics of his prized possession. Selectively drawing on the travel writings of seventeenth century gentleman explorers, Blumenbach asserted that central Asia was a region that featured many beautiful individuals, especially women. Attached to this notion, he declared, “my beautiful typical head of a young Georgian female...always attracts every eye, however little observant” (quoted from Painter 2010: 82). Hence he used the Georgian skull as an inspirational corner stone for his racial classification scheme, representing the ideal from which all other races would degenerate. Many other skulls did not receive such appreciation.¹² By combining empiricism and romanticism with the Biblical narrative of the fall from the grace, Blumenbach presented a basic template for race-thinking, and many future race-thinkers would take up his example.

The Skull Collector: Samuel Morton and the Limits of Craniology

If Blumenbach provided a template for future race-thinkers by blending empiricism and romanticism, Samuel George Morton (1799-1851) created a stronger and bolder platform for race-thinking through his infamous skull collection. Born in Philadelphia and educated in the Quaker tradition, Morton was trained in the influential medical school of Edinburgh as a physician. His European education introduced him to the emerging tradition of empiricism, and he learned to appreciate nature by observing it with his own eyes as opposed to merely contemplating abstract concepts. Like Linnaeus and Blumenbach, Morton felt that it was his obligation to decipher the logic of God’s order of creation, and he pursued his calling throughout his life while practicing medicine in Philadelphia. Morton had a peculiar passion, however, specializing in collecting and measuring human skulls and, following the example set by Blumenbach, argued that skulls could provide a reliable and valid indicator of racial difference.

It is likely that Morton became interested in human skulls through his exposure to phrenology during his years in medical school of University of Edinburgh (Fabian 2010: 23-26). Although now seen as a pseudo-science, phrenology was once regarded as the finest example of the eighteenth century empiricism: by connecting the physical features of the head with its owner’s character, phrenology implied that observation could provide a window of understanding into traits that were not directly observable. This seemingly straight-forward, unmediated empiricism challenged a classical intellectual tradition that privileged the musings of distinguished individuals; fired up by the promise of a more democratic and anti-establishment kind of science, factory workers as well as professionals of Edinburgh filled the seats in phrenology lectures with remarkable enthusiasm. By debunking the aura around the notion of genius – i.e. the term literally meaning “noble in birth” in Latin – phrenology provided a kind of catharsis for working and middle-class residents in the highly polarized, aristocratic society of Edinburgh (Shapin 1975; Cooter 1984).

Morton wrote to merchants, travelers, and professional grave hunters asking for skulls, and gave almost all of his disposable income to sketchy characters who promised to procure human remains from exotic corners of the world. When he died in 1851 at the age

¹² Painter (2010: 84) has argued that the relative scarcity of Caucasian skulls, especially of the female variety, contributed to this special appreciation. The supply of non-Caucasian skulls, while never enough, was relatively abundant due to colonial expansion and massacres occurring outside the Europe continent. The invasion by Russia of central Asia yielded Blumenbach’s Georgian skull, hence the origin of the term “Caucasian.”

of 52, he left behind 867 skulls from all over the globe. “Anatomists had long compared animal skulls, but until Morton came along, no naturalist or anatomist had human skulls in anywhere near a number that approached his” (Fabian 2010: 31). As one might expect, however, the geographical origin of the skulls was confined to certain regions, the list of which closely overlapped with the geography of colonial violence: “In the category of the English ‘race’ there were five skulls, in the American seven, and in the German eighteen. On the other hand, there were 338 Indian and 85 Negro skulls” (Gossett 1963: 74). Being a fair-minded scientist, Morton always looked out for opportunities to collect more “white” skulls, yet they were hard to come by. Regardless, the collected skulls were carefully preserved, labelled, measured, and featured in his most influential publication, *Crania Americana; or, a comparative view of the skulls of various aboriginal nations of North and South America* (1839). Adorned with detailed sketches of skulls and their measurements, the 484-page monograph displayed the cutting-edge lithography techniques of antebellum Philadelphia, and instantly became a must-have coffee table book of the time.

MEAN RESULTS OF THE FOREGOING TABLE.

	Toltecans, including skulls from the mounds.	Barbarous nations, with skulls from the Valley of Ohio.	American Race, embracing the Toltecans and barbarous nations.	Flathead tribes of Columbia river.	Ancient Peruvians.					
	No. of skulls.	MEAN.	No. of skulls.	MEAN.	No. of skulls.	MEAN.	No. of skulls.	MEAN.		
Longitudinal diameter.	57	6.5	90	7.	147	6.75	8	6.7	3	6.8
Parietal diameter.	57	5.6	90	5.5	147	5.55	8	6.	3	5.
Frontal diameter.	57	4.4	90	4.3	147	4.35	8	4.9	3	4.2
Vertical diameter.	57	5.3	90	5.4	147	5.35	8	4.8	3	4.8
Inter-mastoid arch.	57	14.9	90	14.6	147	14.75	8	14.6	3	13.3
Inter-mastoid line.	57	4.1	90	4.2	147	4.15	8	4.1	3	4.
Occipito-frontal arch.	57	13.6	90	14.2	147	13.9	8	13.1	3	14.3
Horizontal periphery.	57	19.4	90	19.9	147	19.65	8	20.	3	18.8
Length of head and face.	53	7.8	78	8.1	131	7.45	8	8.3	3	8.4
Zygomatic diameter.	49	5.3	64	5.3	113	5.3	8	5.7	3	5.1
Facial angle.	55	75° 35'	83	76° 13'	138	75° 45'	8	69° 30'	3	67° 20'
Internal capacity in cubic inches.	57	76.8	87	82.4	144	79.6	8	79.25	3	73.2
Capacity of the anterior chamber.	46	±32.5	73	34.5	119	33.5	8	32.25	3	25.7
Capacity of the posterior chamber.	46	±43.8	73	48.6	119	46.2	8	47.	3	47.4
Capacity of the coronal region.	46	±14.	71	16.2	117	15.1	8	11.9	3	14.6
Capacity of the sub-coronal region.	46	±61.8	71	66.5	117	64.5	8	67.35	3	58.6
The total capacity being estimated at 100, gives the following proportionate results as parts of 100.		Ant. chamb.	42.6	41.5	42.1	40.63	35.1			
		Post. chamb.	57.4	58.5	60.	59.37	64.9			
		Coronal reg.	18.47	19.6	19.	15.	20.			
		Sub-cor. reg.	81.53	80.4	81.	85.	80.			

† These three heads are artificially moulded.

‡ The seeming discrepancy in the sums of these two pairs of measurements, arises from the fact that only 46 of the 48 heads measured, enter into each series.

Figure 3. A Table from *Crania Americana* (Morton 1839: 259)

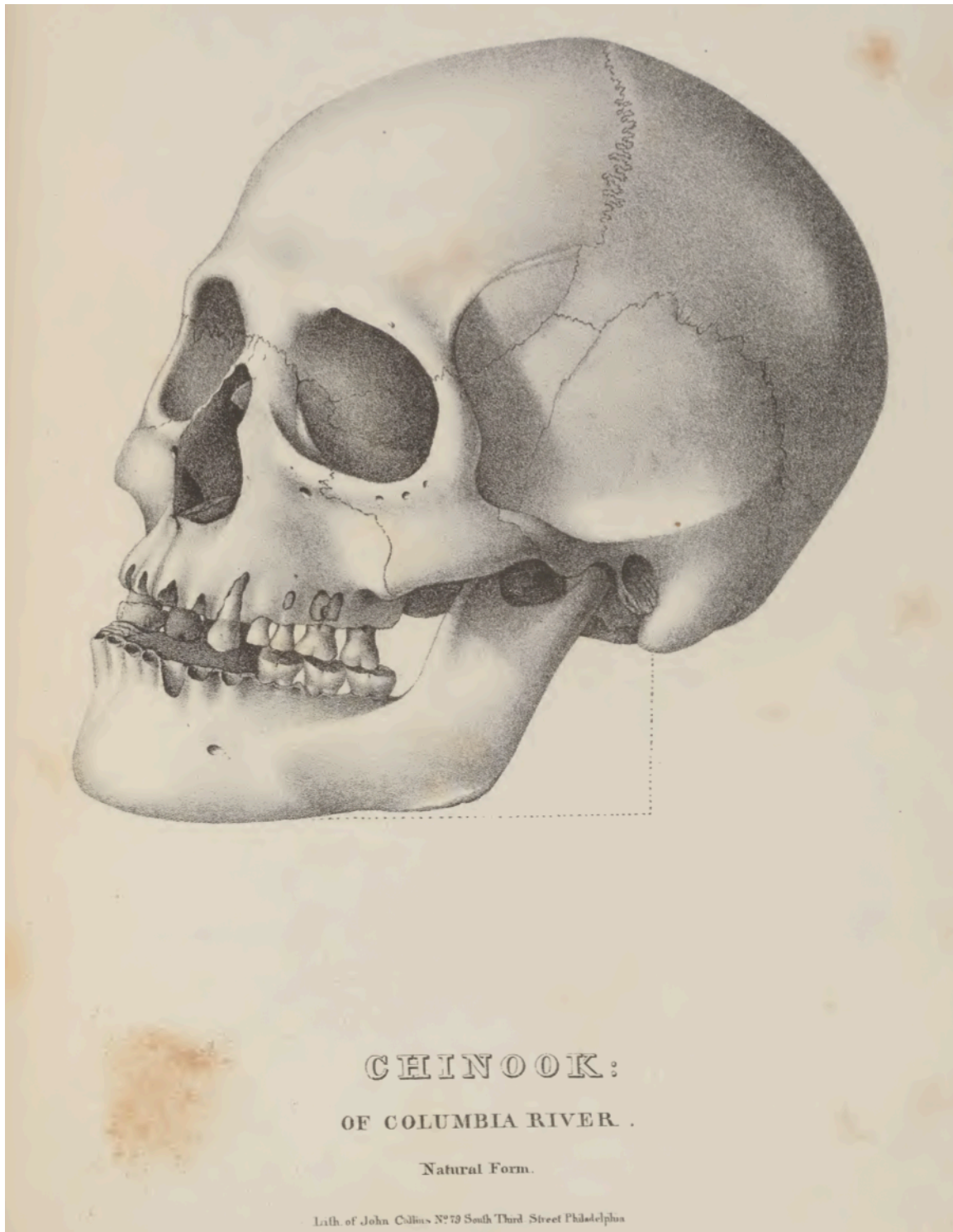


Figure 4. Picture of a Skull from *Crania Americana* (Morton 1839: Pl.42)

With his formidable skills of record-keeping and meticulous observation, Morton brought about momentous developments in the domain of race-thinking, advancing the credibility of a model for qualitative difference. First, unlike Blumenbach, who had focused on overall shape and a few measurements in comparing skulls of different races, he developed an elaborated set of indexes to note numerous features of skulls, also increasing the sheer number of skulls from which the data was drawn. Along with the sketches of the skulls, he presented cross-tables to display how differences between different races could be stated in numerical terms (see figure 3).

Second, reflecting the influence of phrenology, Morton attempted to measure the “capacity” of his skulls. Size and shape of skulls could vary due to various environmental factors; however, Morton argued, the average volume of skulls for each racial group was constant. A skull with larger volume indicated a larger brain, and, according to Morton, an enhanced faculty of reasoning. Morton filled skulls with grain to accurately measure the average volume of each racial group, and, not surprisingly, Caucasian male skulls had the highest average volume, or “capacity” for reasoning, followed by various other races. As William Stanton observed, “Morton’s quantitative distinctions were also qualitative” (Stanton 1960: 35) and the differences in degree were easily converted into qualitative differences in kind. Whereas Blumenbach moved the focus of race-thinking from the superficial (i.e. skin color and hair texture) to the essential (as thought to be indicated by skull shape), Morton went a step further by locating the essence of race in a differing “capacity” of reason for different races, a conclusion that gained credence because of how contrived to connect it to his in-depth empirical observation of skulls. Hence race became something more than looks or numbers: it became tied to the ability of a race as a group to think, and, more importantly, to how intelligently they could reason. In other words, Morton made it clear that the question of categories was intrinsically tied to the question about hierarchy, because races differed in their capacity for higher reasoning.

Lastly, but most importantly, Morton made a bold argument that each race was an independent specie, and that God had created each of them in different continents as separate beings. Before Darwin, species were understood as God’s creations: they were created perfectly, and thus any change in their design was both unnecessary and impossible, except for minor modifications in superficial elements. Arguing otherwise would amount to blasphemy, or at least an open invitation to quarrel with the church. But given the measurements he had taken, and in view of the qualitative conclusions he had drawn about skull volume (which was, he assumed, independent of environmental influence like nutrition) Morton was led to conclude that different races were in fact different species. The doctrine of polygenism, or the belief that human beings were created as multiple species, was a dangerously provocative idea: in the nineteenth century United States, even mentioning such possibility could easily taint one’s reputation as a decent Christian (see Stocking 1968 for a full account of polygenism during this period). Thus Morton refrained from openly proclaiming his ideas. Yet there were other gentlemen scientists who were willing to embrace Morton’s heresy: as the Civil War approached and the social conflict around slavery intensified, at least one of the slavery apologists rallied behind Morton’s polygenism, citing the evidence of his skull collection to make a defense of slavery. Polygenist theory would eventually survive the Civil War and find its way into a current of Progressive social thought by way of the nation’s most prestigious institutions.

Polygenism and the American School of Ethnology

In *Crania Americana*, Morton's polygenism remained less pronounced. After all, the book was designed to showcase his skull collection, and the emphasis was on sketches and numerical data. George Robbins Gliddon (1809-1857), a British-born Egyptologist who grew up in Alexandria, Egypt, served as the key spokesperson promoting the political potential of Morton's theory. In the first half of the nineteenth century, after Napoleon's conquest and forced extraction of its vast collection of ancient artifacts, Egypt became the subject of much popular and academic interest in Europe and North America. Gliddon worked as a contractor for Morton, procuring over one hundred skulls and a few mummies from Egypt for Morton's collection. In the process, Gliddon came to appreciate Morton's polygenism, and launched his own career as a public intellectual by embarking on a lecture tour of the major American cities with his loot from Egypt. Many respected academics, including Louis Agassiz, the Harvard naturalist whom I will discuss in detail later, attended his talk with the wide-eyed public to listen to Gliddon's tales of the world's oldest civilization.

Even before the rise of Egypt as an object of intellectual fascination, the ancient empire on the Nile remained a conundrum for European race theorists. Before Greece and Rome, in which "white" Europeans founded the "western" civilization, Egypt had built a much more elaborated civilization, adorned with all the spectacles of pyramids, hieroglyphics, mummies, and grand temples. The case of Egypt presented a puzzle, or more of a dilemma, for race-thinkers: Africans were supposed to lack in their aptitude for building advanced civilization; ancient empires in Asia – regardless of how the region was demarcated — were respectable, but "the dark continent" should not have had such a commanding display of grandeur and urbane complexity. Gliddon found an answer to this puzzle in Morton's polygenism. In front of his bewildered audience, Gliddon argued that the discrepancy could be accounted for by recognizing that Egypt was a racially segregated society, much like the antebellum United States: "Caucasian" Egyptians, who were actually from the European continent, were rulers who designed all the grand buildings and monuments; dark-skinned Africans from the south of Nile worked as slaves for the rulers, building the monuments as they were instructed; the two groups remained socially and biologically separate without much mixture between them. Such arrangement reflected God's intention of creating two different species of humans, one to lead and the other to build. Conveniently, this narrative mapped squarely onto the social order of the antebellum South.

After Morton's premature death, Gliddon teamed up with Josiah Nott (1804-1873), and together they published *Types of Mankind* (1854), which caused a stir in the contemporary intellectual scene by popularizing the idea of polygenism. Nott, who was also a physician, encountered Morton's theory while he was attending the medical school of University of Pennsylvania. Combining Morton's empirical style and the Southern political ideology, Nott became the flag-bearer of the American School of Ethnology, the core doctrine of which was polygenism.

Whereas Morton confined his discussions to skulls and the implication of their measurements, Nott did not hesitate to explicitly address the pressing questions of his times, including slavery. He firmly supported the existing racial hierarchy and believed that slavery was inevitable. Yet unlike other slavery apologists of the South, Nott invoked the authority of science, including that of an internationally-acclaimed northern scholar,

Morton of Philadelphia, to bolster his case. Different races, according to Nott, were created differently by God at the moment of creation, and they remained the same through millennia without any change because God had intended them to be so. Relying on Morton's work, Nott asserted that Caucasians had the capacity for civilization and "Negroes" did not. In addition, mixing of different races would not only result in a betrayal of God's intentions but also in biological degeneration of "hybrid off-springs." Therefore, slavery – in which white men ruled and "Negroes" worked while the two groups remained socially segregated – was the best possible social institution for all those involved, an institution that would simultaneously appease God and prevent biological disasters. Morton's skull collections and Gliddon's Egyptology neatly provided quasi scientific grounds for this line of reasoning: cranial measurements supposedly showed that race was immutable; moreover, Egypt proved that a social order based on racial domination could achieve spectacular things.

While preaching this political gospel, Nott came into a collision course with Biblical orthodoxy of the time, because such an account of human origin(s) openly contested the explanation provided in the Book of Genesis. By placing the question of race at the intersection of two powerful institutions of the time – slavery and religion – Nott became a sort of self-proclaimed freedom crusader, or, more precisely, "a fervent southern polemicist who defended white supremacy with all the zeal of a South Carolina slave owner while urging the freedom of scientific inquiry from religious orthodoxy" (Horsman 1987: 81). With the controversy, the American School of Ethnology soon gained notice from European naturalists and race-thinkers as well. In the emerging world of nineteenth-century modern science, the United States was usually regarded as a periphery where surprising evidence was brought to view but no creative theorizing was expected. The American School of Ethnology challenged that expectation by providing a provocative hypothesis about the origins of, and differences among, men (see Stocking Jr. [1968] for a more detailed history of the American School of Ethnology).

However, polygenism remained a contentious idea for the time, and its popular and political appeal was limited at best. Many southern intellectuals found enough reasons to justify slavery without seeming to put Biblical doctrine into question. Conservative clergymen, from both the north and south, attacked Nott as preaching heresy, a charge he was willing to accept as a price to pay for intellectual freedom (Stocking Jr. 1968). Nevertheless, the American school of ethnology and polygenism had left a lasting legacy in an unlikely place: In the nation's most prestigious educational institutions, elite academics held onto polygenism and taught the idea to the next generation, which would eventually forge their own race-thinking out of old examples. But before we turn to that story, we should take a brief detour to another front for race-thinking, the reactionary, royalist political ideology from Europe, which projected the language of race onto the bloody realities of class struggle in post-revolution France.

Gobineau: Projecting Race onto Class

As Nott was transitioning from his study of varieties of mankind in nature to expressing his opinions about contemporary affairs, he came across an esteemed European author who, just like Nott himself, had attempted to explain the world history in terms of race. Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816-1882), had produced a 1400-pages book, *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853), which was instantly translated into English and

published in the U.S. under Nott's supervision, only three years after its original publication in France.

Gobineau was not a famed scholar like Morton. His contemporary influence was minimal, and his work did not circulate outside the small circle of royalists in Paris and the slavery apologists in the South. Yet as Hannah Arendt correctly recognized in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951: 170-175), Gobineau gave new life to the political ideas of European aristocrats by re-packaging their reactionary class politics with the language of race. Through the work of Gobineau, the largely provincial quibbles about skulls sizes evolved into a full-fledged political ideology that explained the past, present, and future of civilizations in the world. As many scholars pointed out, his work was important because it viewed the class conflicts after the French revolution through the prism of race. Naturalists, like Blumenbach and Morton, mostly focused on the *category* question, asking how many varieties of men existed in nature. However, Gobineau was more concerned about the *hierarchy* question. While incorporating the language of "nature" developed by naturalists and thereby effectively providing a foundation for his argument, Gobineau largely ignored biology, and substituted naturalism with broad-sweeping generalizations about world history. In doing so, Gobineau's work functioned as a link between skull-collecting and political agitation.¹³ More than a half century after its publication, Gobineau's work gained notoriety by inspiring the most infamous race-thinkers of all time — Madison Grant in the U.S. and Adolf Hitler in Germany.

According to *Essay*, race was the primary factor driving shaping world history. There were three races: the white race was inclined towards intellect and organization, thus suitable for leading and governing; the yellow race opted for utility and materialism, making them ideal practitioners of commerce and manufacture; and the black race displayed sensual and artistic qualities while lacking discipline, hence providing good candidates for artists and manual workers. Contrary to many of his contemporaries, who abhorred the idea of race mixture, Gobineau reasoned that all civilization originated from a mixture of white race, which was supposed to be the civilizing element, and other races. For instance, the white race, on its own, would not have produced art; only with the contribution of the sensual black race, did aesthetic creation become possible. Gobineau explained the rise and fall of the various nations and empires across the history as functions of different forms of race-mixture. The rise was generally attributed to white race, in particular the "Aryan" stock and the contributions of the aristocratic families within the stock; the fall was the inevitable outcome of their mixture with other races, through which the white race lost the vigor in their bloodlines and succumbed to degeneration.¹⁴ "The two most inferior varieties of the human species, the black and yellow races, are the crude foundation, the cotton and wool, which the secondary families of the white race make supple by adding their silk; while the Aryan group, circling its finer threads through the

¹³ Ironically, Gobineau was a true pessimist who despised any attempt to intervene in contemporary politics. Except for his short stint with Parisian royalists in his twenties, he refrained from any kind of political organizing, firmly believing in the inevitability of the fall of the western civilization. Kale (2010) has argued that this stance reflected the irreversible defeat of the French nobility in the nineteenth century.

¹⁴ It should be noted that Gobineau was looking at successes and failures of civilizations from the perspective of white race.

noble generations, designs on its surface a dazzling masterpiece of arabesques in silver and gold” (Biddiss 1970: 120-121).

In short, much of Gobineau’s work represented, in part, the personal grumblings of a dilettante noblemen caught up in an unfortunate turn of history. However, as the dedication in the American translation of *Essay* notes, the work was the first of its kind written “from the point of view of the statesman and historian than the naturalist” (1856).¹⁵ In other words, those who sought a natural and scientific foundation for social analysis found what they needed in *Essay*. The appeal was especially strong for those who shared Gobineau’s social origin and trajectory — the men who found security in their power and privilege, which they felt gradually sliding away from them through rapid social change. *Essay* provided a metaphysical outlook on their feeling of loss by projecting their particular social circumstances onto world history.

The lineage from Gobineau to the Third Reich is well-documented by many scholars, most famously by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, yet its connection to the United States, more specifically to the the immigration restriction movement in the early twentieth century, has often been neglected. Although Gobineau’s initial influence was largely confined to Josiah Nott and his friends, the reactionary political ideology he articulated survived through the Civil War and reconstruction and would eventually reach the Boston Brahmins. The New England aristocrats revived him from obscurity by publishing a new translation of *Essay* in 1915.

Harvard Professors at the Service of Race-Thinking: Agassiz and Shaler

Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) and Nathaniel Shaler (1841-1906), two influential scientists at Harvard, served as unlikely purveyors of polygenism during the period between the Civil War and the end of the nineteenth century. In a way Agassiz’s trajectory represents a story of an immigrant learning the craft of race in America through socialization. His biographers agree that Agassiz, who was born in a Swiss canton and worked mostly in Germany, had no impetus to develop specific opinions on race before his migration to the new world. Upon his arrival in the United States, Agassiz quickly came into the orbit of the members of the American School of Ethnology, which led him to quickly recognized the importance of the concept, in everyday life as well as in the natural sciences.

Agassiz’s stance on race was, according to Irmscher, an expression of “the desire to align himself, as an immigrant, as firmly as he could with other whites of European descent in America” (2013: 241). One could well argue that his race-thinking was motivated by this impulse; there was a clear affinity between Agassiz’s conception of natural order and the racial order envisioned by polygenists. Combining his expertise in geology and biology, Agassiz divided the world into a set of climate zones, each of which corresponded to a different group of plants and animals. God designed the specific correspondences of species and environments, and, according to Agassiz, the order of nature should be respected without further human interference. By extension, different races were also created to fit into different climate zones, and they should not intermix with each other, for such interaction would only cause a chaos in God’s otherwise perfect design.

¹⁵ In the first page of the translated version, Nott wrote: “To the Statesman of America, this work, the first on the races of men contemplated from the point of view of the statesman and historian rather than the naturalist, is respectfully dedicated by the American editor.”

Machado (2012) summarizes Agassiz's stance on race by highlighting three key viewpoints: creationism, polygenism, and opposition against "hybridism," or any form of interracial marriage. The first two views were largely supported by his studies of animal kingdom and geology. In his research projects on race, Agassiz focused on the third, highlighting the dangers of "hybridism." In his expedition to Brazil in 1865, he took pictures of "pure races" and "mixed races," attempting to establish that race-mixture was in fact a mixing of different species rather than between variations within a specie. He wanted to demonstrate that "mixed races" were less fertile (i.e. having fewer off-springs) than "pure races." In other words, Agassiz sought to reinforce the theme of degeneration, common among many race-thinkers of past and future: when different races interact, the consequences are negative; therefore, races, just like plants and animals, should be confined to their respective habitats and remain separate, without close contact.

Agassiz could hardly be considered an expert on biology of race, much less its social implications. Nevertheless, he actively engaged with the topic, and as one of the most famous natural scientists of the nation, his voice carried the authority of science. The American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission (1863), which was organized during the Civil War to study possible policies regarding the emancipated slaves, consulted Agassiz about the racial characteristics of the formerly enslaved. The Harvard professor fully supported abolition, but at the same time he maintained that any extended contact between blacks and whites was unnatural and undesired, for it would lead to degeneration of both races. In other words, he was advocating that "freedmen should be assured legal equality, but social and especially political equality [should] be checked" (Frankel 2006: 223; see also Guyatt 2016).¹⁶

Nathaniel Shaler (1841-1906) can be considered the direct successor to all that Agassiz represented, even though he altered and updated some of his teacher's core ideas to better incorporate the changing realities of the late nineteenth century society. Just like Agassiz, Shaler also actively engaged with race, providing his supposedly expert opinions on a scientific basis for the complicated social issue. His position generally mirrored Agassiz's: different races were created differently by God, and they were to remain separate. Although Shaler firmly denounced slavery, the embattled aftermath of reconstruction gave him occasion to doubt the capacity of the ex-slaves to govern themselves. While not categorically denying African-American potential, Shaler proscribed that only extensive social engineering would ensure a positive, "civilized" future for the former slaves and their children. And in the process, echoing Agassiz's revulsion of race-mixture, Shaler maintained that black and whites should remain socially apart: political equality and social contact were two different things, and nature, according to Shaler, provided a chance for the former but strictly prohibited the latter.¹⁷

¹⁶ Agassiz was staging a careful balancing act between his political affiliation to the North and his scientific allegiance to polygenism. In a way, this stance anticipated the "separate but equal" doctrine by condemning contact between different races while acknowledging their "natural" and social differences. As we will see later in Chapter 4, this "visceral revulsion" against race-mixture would survive the progressive era and influence not only the American eugenicists but also social scientists of the early twentieth-century, such as Robert Park of the Chicago school.

¹⁷ As Livingstone (1987) has noted, there was a logical contradiction in his position: only whites could assist African-Americans in achieving a civilization; yet extended contact would lead to degeneration of not only whites but all of the races involved. In the early twentieth century, this

In the 1880s and 1890s, as the dust of the Civil War settled and immigration once again increased, Shaler's race-thinking gradually shifted its focus to immigration. Here we see Shaler's unique contribution to Agassiz's polygenism: he distinguished Southern and Eastern European immigrants from the previous generations of immigrants, and characterized them as racially unfit for inclusion in the nation. In the process, he drew from the Teutonic theory of democracy, as well as the long-standing beliefs about the Anglo-Saxon cultural identity of New England.

In order to understand Shaler's perspective on so-called "new immigrants" in the 1880s, we need to first understand his primary audience. Essentially, Shaler was engaged in a conversation among men of the privileged families from Boston and Cambridge, who worried about the rapid transformation of the country—or more precisely, about social shifts taking place in New England.¹⁸ In her seminal work, *Ancestors and Immigrants* (1956), Barbara Miller Solomon pointed out some of the core characteristics of these men, who called themselves "Boston Brahmins": they were heirs of the esteemed families, some of which proudly traced their roots to Mayflower and the American revolution; they saw themselves as equally devoted to the ideals of democracy and God; in their worldview, American history and its democratic ideals were the manifestation of God's vision; and New England, more specifically Boston, was at the center of this vision, as both the religious and intellectual heart of the new world.

However, the democratic ideals that lasted till the mid-nineteenth century, according to Solomon, withered in the course of the Civil War and eventually turned into cynicism and despair by the 1880s. To the later generation of Brahmins, all the great things had been achieved in the past by their fathers and grandfathers. Suddenly their cherished homeland, Boston and New England, had turned into a strange place they did not recognize: rapid industrialization and mass immigration from southern and eastern Europe were transforming the town into a metropolis with slums, just like New York City, and the progress of science was challenging the Christian way of looking at the world, along with the cultural authority of the men like themselves.

In short, the elite men of Shaler's generation saw themselves as "strangers in their own land" (Hochschild 2016), much like Gobineau did in the post-revolution years of France and Europe. The sense of insecurity and isolation drove them to reactionary ideas, some of which were directly borrowed from the old world aristocrats like Gobineau and their American counterparts such as Josiah Nott. Facing the seeming erosion of their values and ideals, Boston Brahmins searched for the root cause of this decline. They found an easy target in the back alleys of Boston: immigrants. Yet they distinguished themselves from the previous waves of nativism such as Know-Nothings (Higham 1963) by presenting immigration as a social problem to be addressed through appropriate social policy, not

paradox of "white men's burden" weighed heavily on the minds of reform-minded race-thinkers who did not categorically deny non-white potential for equality. If contact meant improvement and degeneration at the same time, what should they do as reform-minded Christians firmly believing in the universality of human kind?

¹⁸ Somewhat ironically, Shaler as a private individual remained "a reluctant nativist," who "remained a bit touchy, for example, about Brahmin exclusiveness, and while welcome in Boston homes, he never felt quite at one with the society of which he had become a part" mainly because of the fact he was from Kentucky. He was one of the rare Harvard faculty members who would open up their homes to the students of the Russian Jewish background (Livingstone 1987: 132).

through violence and hatred. To this end, they used their knowledge, power, and networks to organize a systemic inquiry of immigrants, in order to produce a scientifically grounded solution based on empirical evidence. Eventually, Boston Brahmins' existential concerns about their own decline would initiate the sequence of events that would lead to the Dillingham Commission, and their representative, Henry Cabot Lodge, would take the leadership position in the inquiry.

Shaler was the catalyzing authority figure at the beginning of this sequence. Extending Agassiz's favorite theme, Shaler argued that there was an essential correspondence between different races and different environments — a certain race could prosper in a given environment, while others could not. Obviously to him, the United States represented a particular kind of environment, in which only a few selected races could prosper. Blending what we today perceive as nature and culture, Shaler argued that since the key features of the American environment were freedom and self-government: only those races inherently suited to thrive under these conditions were fit to live in the American environment.

In this argument, Shaler was borrowing from the Teutonic theory of democracy and combining it with his science of environment. Initially the musing of European historians searching for or metaphysical forces driving history, the Teutonic theory of democracy proposed that the Germanic tribes of the late Roman empire were by nature suited for freedom: The first self-governing peoples who resisted despotic repression, they supposedly had a deep, inborn craving of freedom and autonomy, best expressed through fraternal bonfire gatherings in the wild forests of *Germania*, an inherent passion which brought about the fall of the cosmopolitan, hedonistic Roman empire. The urge to rebel for freedom ran through the blood lineage of the Teutons, as their descendants were known, and to one of their sub-groups in the British Isle, Anglo-Saxons, who conquered the land. The Puritans of Mayflower were, according to this theory, direct descendants of these noble freedom-seekers, and the United States being the final destination of their journey to self-government: in a land seemingly free of despotism and aristocracy, the descendants of the Teutons established democratic institutions and flourished.

Boston Brahmins loved this theory. It gave them a sense of entitlement, a feeling of self-affirmation that gained luster from the old world (Yokota 2014).¹⁹ The democratic institutions, it seemed, were not functioning very well; and the descendants of the Teutons might have prospered until their fathers' generation, Boston Brahmins thought, but not anymore. Immigrants who were not the Teutons – Italians, the Jews, Irish, etc. – did not possess the inherent craving for freedom and self-government, and thereby unfit for the American environment, were flocking into the country, further damaging the declining democratic institutions. “Lacking the necessary sociobiological equipment,” Shaler asserted, “the eastern European, for example just simply could not respond either to the

¹⁹ Yokota (2014) has portrayed the antebellum United States as a post-colonial nation haunted by identity crisis and insecurity, suffering from an inferiority complex in relation to Europe. The heady cultural and intellectual admiration continued until the late nineteenth century, and we can see its effect on Agassiz's rapid rise and acceptance as “the professor.” Many of the Boston Brahmins spent summers and studied for years in Europe, usually in Germany, often pursuing doctoral degrees. Both Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt spent considerable amount of time in Germany during their formative years, and in the process, were deeply influenced by German romanticism.

stimulus of ‘American air’ or to the equally embracing American way of life.” Therefore, “America, in short, was only suitable for the Teutons” (Livingstone 1987: 137). In order to save the nation’s democratic institutions, someone should do something about the unchecked flow of immigrants, especially those who were unfit for democracy. By combining the Teutonic theory and his science of environment, Shaler equated race and nation, and “by conflating biological constitution, social identity, and cultural heritage,” his nativist ideas “helped reinforce the confusion between natural history and national history” (Livingstone, 1987: 131).

The Immigration Restriction League and Henry Cabot Lodge

Some students took the teachings of Shaler to heart. Prescott Hall, Robert DeCourcy Ward, and Charles Warren, three young Harvard alumni in their twenties, founded the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) in 1894, inviting their former teacher to be one of the senior members of the newly minted civic organization. The three young professionals represented the new generation of Brahmins who decided to stop worrying and instead to seek a policy solution to the changes they were witnessing. In the process, unlike the previous generation of race-thinkers, they relied on the scientific education they had received from the likes of Shaler and Agassiz: they gathered evidence, devised a solution, and attempted to sway public opinion by reasoning. They prided themselves for “reject[ing] nativist baiting in the 1850s, and in the 1880s”²⁰ and “not condon[ing] crude group bigotry” (Solomon 1956: 105). While facing strong opposition from the ethnic lobby concerned about its support base and the executive branch mindful of diplomatic relations, the IRL remained committed to this supposed scientific approach to policy. Eventually, by building a wide-ranging coalition of “strange bedfellows” that included both employers and unions, the southern Democrats and western Nativists, the league finally succeeded in passing the Immigration Act of 1917 (Tichenor 2002), which would only allow entry to immigrants who could read and write in their own languages. Although the league disbanded in 1921 after Prescott Hall’s death, the group was indeed the engine of the restrictionist movement from the early 1890s to the 1920s.²¹

The league’s evidence-based policy-making efforts went into motion from the outset. As one of its first activities, Hall, Ward, and Warren obtained statistics from the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor and other agencies in order to carefully study the data on crime, delinquency, pauperism, and illiteracy among the “new immigrants.” After seizing on the literacy rate as the most significant characteristic that separated the “new immigrants” from the “old immigrants” and native-born, the three gentlemen invited themselves to Ellis Island in 1895 and administered the literacy test to a sample of incoming immigrants. They found a “close connection between illiteracy and general undesirability” of the new immigrants, and thus decided on the test as the most practical and effective means of controlling immigration (Solomon 1956: 110).

²⁰ They are referring to the Know-Nothing Party and the Chinese exclusion movement, respectively.

²¹ Solomon (1956) and Higham (1963) provide a general overview on the IRL, while Spiro (2008) tells the story of the individual members of the league. In this section I draw on the original archival sources from IRL papers in Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, as well as these works to present a more detailed account of the organization’s work.

In addition to being a hub of activity for organizing influential citizens concerned about immigration, this kind of evidence-gathering and brainstorming were the league's most distinctive contribution to the restrictionist cause. In many ways, the organization's activities preceded the Dillingham Commission's inquiry. For instance, in 1904, the IRL conducted a mail survey of its members across the country. The survey asked respondents to check the "classes of persons not desired in your State," and proceeded to give choices such as "1. Foreign Born; 2. Southern and eastern European; 3. Asiatics; 4. Illiterates; 5. Those settling in the cities and averse to country life; 6. Immigrants distributed from eastern cities." Some respondents felt that these categories were not enough and wrote their own answers in the margins of their response letters. The summary of the survey results presented additional categories of immigrants to the list mentioned above, including "7. Poles; 8. Persons who can't speak English"; 9. Latin race (except French); 11. All but best classes; 12. Any at all." Many included personal letters along with their responses, which offered documentation of the immigration situations in their respective communities.²² The survey results were summarized and delivered to policymakers through the league's extensive lobbying network, strengthening the appeal of its policy proposals.

Henry Cabot Lodge (1850-1924), who would later become the *de facto* leader of the Dillingham Commission, spearheaded the lobbying efforts of the league. Born in a wealthy merchant family in Boston, Lodge attended Harvard and joined the infamous, exclusive dining club, the Porcellian.²³ As a powerful politician and close confidant of Theodore Roosevelt²⁴, Lodge exercised much power in important issues of the nation, including international relations and immigration, through his long tenure in the House (1887-1893) and Senate (1893-1924) (Garraty 1953). Yet throughout his entire political career, the single issue that he cared most deeply about was restriction of immigration.

Lodge first proposed the Literacy Test Bill in 1891 when he was a junior congressman from Massachusetts. The bill was clearly intended to exclude certain "new immigrants," whom Lodge, following the standard platform of the IRL, found unfit for the national character of the United States. He was not necessarily a progressive, but still saw himself as a reformer. He championed the American ideal of democracy and American's

²² "Replies to Immigration Restriction League Circular Letter (1904)" Immigration Restriction League (U.S.) Records, 1893-1921; Circular letters; Replies to circular letters: 1904-1905. MS Am 2245, folder 1049a. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

²³ The exclusive societies functioned as a model for Lodge in thinking about immigration control: "The Porcellian stood at the summit of Harvard's elaborate and rigid social hierarchy, which began to sort students from the moment the new freshmen arrived in Cambridge. By sophomore year, the class was officially divided into the social elect and the outsiders by the venerable Institute of 1770, which identified the one hundred members of the class most fit for "society" (Karabel 2006: 15). Theodore Roosevelt also belonged to the club, along with many other male members of his extended family.

²⁴ The two men's friendship began early when they were both young politicians in the Republican party, and lasted throughout their lifetimes regardless of changes in their respective political positions. Roosevelt revered Lodge – who was eight years his senior and had passed through the same exclusive social circles of Harvard, the Porcellian, and the mentorship of Henry Adams — and asked for his advice in important matters. Teddy's sudden ascension to the White House in 1901 provided Lodge with enormous political clout. "While Roosevelt was President, Lodge was probably in and out of the White House as often as he was in and out of his home on Massachusetts Avenue" (Garraty 1953: 223).

workers' rights, and in his view, the "new immigrants" were ruining both by corrupting democratic institutions through party machines on one hand, and bringing down the living standard of working men through wage competition on the other. Lodge saw both the robber baron capitalists²⁵ and the "new immigrants" as representing what was wrong with social change in the late nineteenth century (Garraty 1953: 226).

Thus Lodge's race-thinking was somewhat different from that of his predecessors: while carefully balancing biological accounts with cultural and environmental explanations of race, he sided with neither but took a "practical" stance towards the issue. In his 1896 speech in the Senate, Lodge acknowledged that there was "no such thing as a race of original purity according to the divisions of ethnical science." He could, however, for practical purposes, acknowledge "artificial races," like the English, the Germans, and the Jews. Although these "races" were, Lodge argued, forged by mixture of different "elements" over a long period of time, the United States was founded and shaped by the German-English – or more precisely, the Teutonic – tradition. In theory, it may be possible to assimilate other groups under the guidance of the democratic, Teutonic tradition, yet such an endeavor, Lodge envisioned, would take a very long time, not to speak of enormous effort and cost associated with the process. Therefore, Lodge was arguing for immigration restriction not based on the essentialist theories about fundamental differences, but on practical grounds — to protect American people, institutions, and culture — not to express his personal prejudices towards the unfamiliar (Solomon 1956: 115-116). Or at least that was what he himself claimed. As we will see later, this seemingly "practical" stance on race was transplanted into the Dillingham Commission, which adopted "races or peoples" classification not based on theory, but on "practical grounds" of collecting data.

To be clear, Lodge did not regard race an unimportant. The practical stance meant, unlike his naturalist predecessors, he was not willing to engage in theoretical debates in the science of race. He was not interested in how many races there were, or how best to measure differences between races. Yet race still was a concept of utmost importance for him as a historian and politician, because the concept encompassed everything he deemed important about the collective lives of human beings. The "practical" stance was anchored to the weight of the race concept in his worldview, not from its insignificance: because "the immigration problem" was so important, Lodge implied, actions were prioritized over scholarly precision.

In the same speech, Lodge expressed his all-encompassing, almost transcendental perspective on race: Race consisted of "moral and intellectual characters, which in their association make the soul of a race, and which represent the product of all its past, the inheritance of all its ancestors, and the motives of its conduct." These characteristics were

²⁵ The Boston Brahmins were generally antagonistic towards the new generation of industrial capitalists, many of whom were based in New York City. In addition to differences in life styles, the two elite groups clashed in terms of their material foundation: whereas the Boston Brahmins traditionally relied on trade and commerce with Europe, industrial capitalists built factories to replace European imports and their factories were the main reason why the "new immigrants" were flocking to American cities. Of course, this conflict of interest was often expressed through the language of morality and culture, all of which the "new immigrants" supposedly lacked (Solomon 1956).

in fact, in his thinking, more socio-historical than biological. Because they were forged over a long period of time through a series of collective experiences, however, they were just as immutable as, if not more so than, biology: “The men of each race possess an indestructible stock of ideas, traditions, sentiments, modes of thoughts, an unconscious inheritance from their ancestors upon which argument has no effect.” Lodge used an example of India and the British Empire to further elaborate his point: “You can take a Hindoo and give him the highest education the world can afford. He has a keen intelligence. He will absorb the learning of Oxford, he will acquire the manner and habits of England, he will sit in the British Parliament,” Lodge mused, “but you cannot make him an Englishman.” It is not that the two groups were irreversibly different, as polygenists had argued a generation ago: “Yet he, like his conqueror, is of the great Indo-European family.” The problem was the time horizon: “[I]t has taken six thousand years and more to create the differences which exist between them. You cannot efface those differences thus made, by education in a single life because they do not rest upon intellect” (Lodge 1896). While it was theoretically possible to engage in an “argument” to change the racial characteristics of the “new immigrants,” for example, Lodge pursued a more practical solution to the problem: control of immigration, and preservation of the American “race” as he saw fit. Those who abided by the Teutonic tradition, including the English, Germans, Scandinavians, and the Irish, were included; and all others should be excluded.²⁶

Progressive Social Science and Eugenics: The Data Turn in Race-thinking

In the previous sections, we witnessed how gentlemen scientists’ musings about human variety partnered with aristocratic, reactionary political ideology, and how the resulting ideas gained prominence at elite educational institutions in the United States. The lineage connecting Gobineau, Nott, Agassiz, and Shaler represents this thread in the American race-thinking in which natural scientists took the lead while ideologues and dilettantes followed. Social scientists were late to the gathering, but they contributed a critical component to the modern race-thinking: numbers, or more precisely, the statistical way of looking at the world.

In the later decades of the nineteenth century, the emerging discipline of social sciences started to produce a new group of race-thinkers (Hattam 2007: 23; Stocking Jr. 1968). Just like Lodge, the newcomers shunned prejudices and emotion, while pursuing a more pragmatic solution to the problem of race: in their framework, race was neither a feature of God’s creation nor an object of revulsion, but a matter of practical concern. To be precise, they did not deny the biological foundation of race all together, nor did they underplay the importance of race in determining individual and group outcomes; however, social scientists tended to bracket off fundamental theoretical questions – e.g. how many races there were, and how race could be measured accurately – and focused more on documenting how race manifested itself in social settings. The emerging science of statistics provided the necessary tools for such documentation, and race-thinking slowly

²⁶ Much has been written about the racial status of the early Irish immigrants (Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1991; 2005; Jacobson 1998). In Lodge’s case, both theoretical and practical necessity undergirded the inclusion of the Irish in the “fit” group: The Irish, Lodge argued, had been dominated by the British for long enough to warrant their assimilation and subjugation into the Teutonic tradition. In addition, perhaps more importantly, Irish immigrants and their organizations in Boston and Massachusetts were his core constituents.

moved its roots from the biological domain to the social by way of what Ian Hacking termed the “avalanche of numbers” (Hacking 1982; Porter 1995; Muhammad 2011).

Francis Walker (1840-1897)’s pointed argument about immigrant and native fertility hit a nerve for intellectuals worried about the immigration, such as Lodge. As one of the first economists of the nation, Walker served in prestigious positions such as the President of American Economics Association and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As an expert on statistics, Walker oversaw the 1880s census, and based on the data and experience, argued that the inflow of the “new immigrants” were undermining the fertility of the native-born, thereby diminishing the vitality of the nation as a whole. If the trend continued, Walker warned, the United States would inevitably face decline – meaning that the nation would turn out to reflect not its past or ideal future but the miserable condition of the countries from which immigrants were coming. This line of argument was markedly different from previous agitations, which, according to Walker, worried about “the wards of our almshouses, our insane asylums, and our jails from being stuffed to repletion by new arrivals from Europe.” Instead, what was at stake was “the American rate of wages, the American standard of living, and the quality of American citizenship” (Walker 1896). In other words, it was not a matter of separating the harmful elements – the poor, the insane, and criminals – from the general inflow of immigrants; the problem was the inflow itself, and its impact on the American average. If the immigrants as a group were lower in averages – whether it was wages, living standard, or the quality of citizenship – their continued addition to the nation would only lower the “American” – average, overall and in various dimensions. In other words, Walker’s reasoning represented what Benton-Cohen (2018) called the “from quality to quantity” turn in American immigration policy: officials and intellectuals were starting to pay less attention to the individual features of immigrants, and focus more on the overall trends and numbers. Although his argument relied more on sentiments than precise statistical inference, Walker’s calling cry against the “beaten men from beaten races” had a enormous popular and intellectual appeal.

Many progressive intellectuals concerned about the problems of industrialization took a similar stance against immigration. Edward Ross (1866-1951), one of the most famous first-generation sociologists in the U.S., was a champion of labor rights and other progressive causes. He opposed immigration precisely on those grounds: Chinese workers, and later Japanese immigrants, were hampering labor’s capacity to unionize and negotiate effectively with employers through their willingness to accept lower wages and worse working conditions than the American standard. Joining forces with popular union leaders, Ross mounted vicious assaults against “Asiatic,” “coolie” laborers during the anti-Asian labor campaigns in the 1880s and 1890s. His employer, Stanford University, was not pleased with his position: as a major railroad tycoon, Stanford’s fortune was built on the labor of the Chinese workers, and Ross’s attack against the Chinese was perceived as an indirect criticism of those who employed the Chinese workers.²⁷ As Tichenor (2002) has observed in regards to immigration policy-making, the “strange bedfellows” of reform-minded intellectuals, labor leaders, and New England elites engineered the social science turn of the race-thinking in the United States.

²⁷ Eventually, Walker was forced to resign and move to the University of Nebraska. The case invoked a wide-ranging opposition from progressive intellectuals across the country, leading to the debates around academic freedom and protection of tenure, and eventually to the foundation of the American Association of University Professors.

As the focus of American race-thinking shifted to the “new immigrants,” their supposed difference became the primary concern for the newly emerging race-thinkers. Whereas most of the nineteenth century race-thinking had focused on the difference between Europeans and non-Europeans, such as Africans and Asians, the new generation of race-thinkers delved into the difference among Europeans, most aptly represented by the “new immigrants.” These scholars would directly provide the Dillingham Commission with a theoretical jumping-off point to classify and categorize Southern and Eastern European immigrants as a separate, “undesirable race” different from Northern and Western European immigrants and native-born Americans. In the process, they realized that the overarching category representing whiteness – e.g. “white,” “European,” or “Caucasian” – was not very useful in capturing the supposed difference of the “new immigrants,” and began to develop new concepts, such as *peoples* or *ethnic groups*.

Daniel G. Brinton (1837-1899) was the author of *Races or Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography* (1890), which was a comprehensive review of European racial theory, along with his own contributions on what he called “the American race,” or Native Americans. In this book, Brinton discussed characteristics of various *peoples* within the European continent, showcasing the internal diversity within the group that were formerly categorized as “whites” without distinction. William Z. Ripley (1867-1941), a well-known Harvard economist who spearheaded the Progressive-era criticisms of big businesses and banks, wrote *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (1899), which argued that there were multiple races within Europe. Amassing a wide range of physiological and geographic data and compiling numerous maps and graphs in 600-pages, Ripley argued that Europeans consisted of three races – Teutonic, Alpine, and Mediterranean – instead of just one “white” or “Caucasian” race. By doing so, he placed himself in the opposite camp from the previous generation of race-thinkers, such as Blumenbach and Agassiz, who assumed the unity of the “white” race. He engaged in a lively debate with Joseph Deniker (1852-1918), a French anthropologist who took the racial classification among Europeans into a new level: in *The Races of Man* (1899), while criticizing Ripley’s indiscriminating use of the term “race,” Deniker posited that “race” should be based on “somatic character” — meaning physiological traits, such as skin color and shape of skull — while “peoples” should “take into account *ethnic characters* (linguistic and sociological), and above all *geographical distribution*” (Deniker 1899: 280; italics in the original text). He proceeded to suggest “ethnic groups” as a proper term for the groups classified on the basis of their language and geography. In short, facing the practical challenge of classifying the “new immigrants,” race-thinkers at the turn of the twentieth century were moving away from biology and embracing cultural factors in conceptualizing race. As we will see in Chapter 3, these developments had a direct bearing on how the Dillingham Commission classified and collected data on immigrants.

In the meantime, eugenics was slowly gaining traction among intellectuals. As historian Daniel Kevles (1985) has noted, eugenics covered a wide variety of ideas and practices on both sides of the Atlantic as well as in some colonial and post-colonial settings. Yet the gist of the enterprise came down to the scientific understanding of, as well as interventions in, human heredity. In other words, the urge to understand and control individual- and society-level reproduction informed the core tenets of eugenics.

At its foundation, race was not a primary concern for eugenicists, at least in the ways in which contemporary Americans used that term. The founders, such as Francis

Galton and Karl Pearson, were concerned more about “geniuses” and how they were reproduced through generations.²⁸ After all, the etymology of eugenics can be traced back to the study of the exceptional individuals who were “good in birth” or “noble in heredity” (Kevles 1985: 1). In tracing those with outstanding ability through family trees, Galton and Pearson developed key concepts and techniques in modern statistics, including normal distribution and linear regression: whereas the former captured how ability was distributed across populations, the latter explained how the ability of offspring reverted back to the parental mean (MacKenzie 1981; Xie 1988; Porter 1995). By studying ability and its patterns of reproduction, eugenicists attempted to develop a scientific means of improving the “stock” of a society, mainly by intervening in individual decisions around reproduction. Not surprisingly, the proposed interventions were concentrated disproportionately on the socially vulnerable — e.g. the poor, women, the incarcerated, and the disabled. Many British socialists, feminists, and radicals embraced the idea, thinking that the scientific gospel of eugenics would bring about a utopian society by eliminating the root cause of social problems. Likewise, American progressives were attracted to the doctrine because it represented freedom from the burdens and constraints of biology and reproduction: if society as a whole could control its making and re-making, decisive and fundamental reform would become possible.

One may expect eugenics to be another version of “scientific racism,” essentially a different variation of skull-collecting with more numbers and formulas. Yet there is a subtle but important difference in how eugenics conceptualized race as opposed its formulation in previous waves of race-thinking: in eugenics, “instead of speculative definitions of alleged archetypes,” — i.e., Blumenbach’s skull-based model or Agassiz’s assertion that races were created by God — “species or races might be defined in terms of the quantitatively certain distribution of a given character around a mean and by the statistical correlation of character pairs” (Kevles 1985: 28). In other words, true to the scientific spirit of the late nineteenth century, race was presented not as a Platonic ideal but as a product of analytical induction from statistical data. Therefore, unlike Blumenbach or Agassiz who sought to approximate the essence of race through observations of nature, the race-thinkers informed by eugenics would treat statistical data as an integral part of what race was: race *was* a pattern in statistical data, not an archetype existing “out there” in nature.

Along with emphasis on history and culture, this transition to numbers meant that race-thinkers needed an additional process in substantiating their racial argument. That is, they should collect data first to demonstrate that racial *categories* and *hierarchy* exist, as opposed to deductively reasoning their existence and engaging in a world-historical narrative about their implication. As we will see in the case of the Dillingham Commission, this transition opened up a whole range of new possibilities, as well as problems, for race-thinking.

British eugenicists were interested in mapping the differences between different population groups, and, not surprisingly, the selection and identification s of these groups replicated the racial divide in British and colonial societies. However, it was Galton and Pearson’s American protégé, Charles Davenport, who opened up the potential of eugenics to produce further innovations in race-thinking. “Eugenics enthusiasts in the United States” were “largely middle to upper class, white, Anglo-Saxon, predominantly Protestant, and

²⁸ Both Galton and Pearson used the term “race” to denote the differences between geniuses and laypeople. In other words, race was more about class position and ability than skin color.

educated” (Kevles 1985: 64). Thus it is not surprising that their anxiety about emancipated slaves and the “new immigrants” shaped the primary focus of application for the newly imported scientific trend. Following the prevalent nativist argument, Davenport argued that the “new blood,” or the Southern and Eastern European immigrants, would make Americans ‘darker in pigmentation, smaller in stature, more mercurial...more given to crimes of larceny, kidnapping, assault, murder, rape, and sex-immorality” (Davenport 1866: 216, 218, 221; quoted in Kevles 1985: 47).

Unlike the previous generations of race-thinkers, however, Davenport thought of race in less essentialist terms. That is, he understood that there was a normal distribution of ability or “desirability” within a particular race, and that not all members of a certain race were “undesirable.” “He may have argued against barring the entry of particular national groups, but he believed that the European nations sent over disproportionately large numbers of their worst human stock, that immigrants rapidly outbred the native population, and that they supplied an excess of public charges” (Kevles 1985: 51). In an ideal world, Davenport would have preferred a method of selecting the “best” individuals of any given race, yet such selection process would be impossible to implement. Instead, Davenport and the eugenicists argued for the next best thing—categorical exclusion of certain races that had high number of “undesirables” among its members. While the specific list of races to be excluded reflected the popular prejudices of the day, Davenport and eugenicists argued that race was merely a statistical proxy for weeding out the undesirable element within a population group. Just as one would avoid consuming too much of a food that contained harmful elements, Davenport and the eugenicists argued, the nation should also exercise caution in what it ingested, and categorically denying access to some groups was an easy solution to a complicated problem.

Once again, we witness the unholy alliance between a reactionary political ideology and scientific language: “In part, [Davenport’s] negative eugenics simply expressed in biological language the native white Protestant’s hostility to immigrants and the conservative’s bile over taxes and welfare” (Kevles 1985: 51). Established with major support from Rockefeller Foundation, the Eugenics Records Office in New Haven, Connecticut, became a hub for race-thinking during the first half of the twentieth century. Influential intellectuals such as Prescott Hall, the founding director of the Immigration Restriction League, and Theodore Roosevelt, the former president, would pass through its circuits, strengthening their personal ties as well as adding another layer of sophistication in race-thinking. Eventually eugenics served as the key justification for passing the Immigration Act of 1924, which allocated different quotas for different European nations while excluding Asian immigrants all together (FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014).

Theodore Roosevelt

The place for the last major race-thinker to pave the way for the Dillingham Commission should be reserved for Theodore Roosevelt, the president who launched the Commission’s inquiry by signing off on the Immigration Act of 1907.²⁹ Just like many of his contemporaries such as Lodge, Roosevelt grew up in a prosperous household, and developed an infatuation with German mythology at early age. The young Roosevelt projected the heroic struggle of Siegfried in Wagner’s *Der Rings des Nibelungen* onto the

²⁹ For a more detailed account of how the bill came to pass, see Chapter 2.

stories from the American west, fantasizing about a world in which the descendants of the Teutonic Gods were expanding the frontier of the civilization by struggling against nature (Dyer 1980: 3). At Harvard, just like Lodge, who would later become his lifelong best friend, he was deeply influenced by Nathaniel Shaler's ideas, inheriting his theoretical inclinations as well as his obsession over "new immigrants."³⁰ As a race-thinker, Roosevelt's key contribution came from the fact that he revised the Teutonic doctrine and Anglo-Saxon fetish into a nationalism of a distinctive American variety, producing a more dynamic notion of race and nation that would fully blossom in the Dillingham Commission.

Roosevelt's main focus was on equating national identity with race, and conceptualizing race as a mixture of various "stocks" that have melted together to produce a political community. Following the Herderian tradition and German romanticism (Wimmer 2009), race, defined as political community in Roosevelt's thought, meant more than the shared allegiance of its members to a common flag: it also meant that they shared "the blood," a transcendental identity forged through both actual and metaphorical experiences of fighting collectively against other political communities and natural obstacles. Race, and its equivalent, nation, was a community of those who shared a fate — a sense of one's destination and purpose in the world.³¹ Although the American nation, Roosevelt argued, was forged out of the diverse European stock, the resulting political community collectively engaged in a set of decisive struggles, such as the western frontier expedition and Spanish-American war, and therefore formed a different race from its European origins. In this sense, Roosevelt stood apart from the essentialist strand in race-thinking, including the Teutonic theory, Anglo-Saxonism, and the Aryan myth: The American race, and by extension the American nation, was not simply another variety of the glorious, best European race; rather, it was an independent branch of the family, which was forged through its own adventures in the new world, and, through those experiences, became better than its European predecessors. Roosevelt thought that "[r]aces that did not move or migrate following their original settlement ran the risk of degenerating into physical and moral weakness" (Hawley 2008: 64). The American race, according to Roosevelt, was not a weak race because it did not stop moving towards the west. Implicitly criticizing previous traditions in race-thinking, Roosevelt saw race as always in the making.

Hence Lamarckianism – the belief that an organism can change to adapt into a new environment – was his preference for the theory of nature. Based on Lamarckianism, Roosevelt nominally supported the equipotentiality of all races: given a proper process and time, any race could bring itself up to the level of the highest civilization. He saw the world as a playing field for different races, all struggling against each other and natural obstacles to prove themselves at the tribune of civilization. His worldview was far from aristocratic; it was that of a fighter, who achieved everything through struggle, not with privilege—or

³⁰ Shaler believed that among the different branches of "the American race," "the frontier men" from Kentucky, his home state, displayed the best quality (1909). Being a faithful student, Roosevelt affirmed his professor's claims by championing Kentucky men on various occasions, as a proud example of "the American race" full of the frontier spirit.

³¹ In this aspect, Roosevelt's race-thinking had an affinity with those who attempted to conceptualize the collective trajectories of non-white races as struggles against dominance and subjugation. See Dawson (1994) for the discussion of "linked fate" among African Americans. Jones (2011) showed that the nationalisms of both Roosevelt and Marcus Garvey could be traced back to the French life philosophy of the early twentieth century, namely Henri Bergson's work.

at least that was how he perceived himself. If the white race, or Americans, were better than others, it was because they won the struggle, not because they were born better. By the same logic, Roosevelt was willing to entertain the possibility – however remote it might be – of any race on equal grounds with the American race or other European races.³²

At the same time, however, the old influences did not completely vanish. Although he denounced Anglo-Saxon supermacism and the Teutonic doctrine, he often referred to “the English-speaking race” to note the special bond among the older generation of Americans, many of whom came from the British Isles and retained an emotional bond with their old country. This original immigrant group struggled the most, according to Roosevelt, and had rightfully obtained their rights as the leader in the political community of the American nation. Therefore, Roosevelt reasoned, all other races who came later should and would follow their lead and adapt to their ways of life, and not attempt to maintain the old world traits they brought from Europe. In other words, although Roosevelt championed the possibility that races could change, adapt, and melt into a new race, at the same time he was realistic about who would lead the process of Lamarckian evolution: The English-speaking race, or the old-stock Americans, would absorb and digest “foreign” stocks to produce a healthy, vigorous race-nation out of the mixture, and the American nation would maintain its hegemony against both domestic and international threats. His famous war-time cry against “hyphenated Americans” and for “100 percent Americanism” was not just an impulsive jingoism, but a theoretical notion that explained how “a nation of immigrants” could naturally become a unified race-nation against threats from outside.

Conclusion

As discussed throughout this chapter, the nineteenth century race-thinking featured a variety of ideas, as represented by the three camps described in this chapter: naturalists, polygenists, and the Progressive-era race-thinkers. Although race-thinking began as largely innocuous quibbles about skull sizes and group differences, political ideologues used it as a supposedly scientific ground to support their reactionary theory about world history. Against the backdrop of slavery and colonialism, race-thinking highlighted the distinction between “whites” and non-whites, or Europeans and people outside the continent. However, as the American intellectuals at the turn of the century started to focus more on the “new immigrants” – the most visible racial “other” in front of them – they realized that the overarching category of “white,” supposedly based on biology, could not properly capture the difference represented by Southern and Eastern European immigrants. This led them to move away from the biological essentialism and embrace culture and history as basis for racial classification. In other words, the balance between naturalism and reactionary political ideology tilted towards the latter in the face of “the immigration problem” in the early twentieth century. Social science and its claims on empirical evidence came to fill the void left by naturalism, further sustaining the scientific authority of race-thinking. Combined with the nationalistic zeal of politicians like Theodore Roosevelt, race became a term for all-encompassing metaphysical dimension of group identity, and intellectuals and bureaucrats embraced the concept in advancing their evidence-based policy making

³² On this note, he had a special obsession about Japanese culture and the empire’s ability to become a major superpower in the struggle for global hegemony. See Chapters 2 and 5 for a more detailed account on how Roosevelt saw Japan, the Japanese, and Japanese immigrants in the United States.

attempts in the Progressive Era. However, as we will see in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the turn towards the social proved to be challenging on its own regard, and race-thinkers had to confront unexpected consequences of their emphasis on empirical data. The Dillingham Commission, located at the center of this transition in race-thinking, was the primary site in which these confrontations occurred.

Chapter 2. The Context

Political Calculations and Personal Trajectories

The first chapter focused on the intellectual origins of the Dillingham Commission's work, namely the genealogy of the racial ideas employed in the Commission's project. In this chapter, I highlight the more immediate context of its inquiry: the political calculations that led to the signing of the Immigration Act of 1907 by Theodore Roosevelt, which tasked the Dillingham Commission with finding facts about immigration ("political calculations"); and the diverse personal motivations and career trajectories of the key members of the Dillingham Commission ("personal trajectories"). To showcase these two distinctive but interrelated contexts surrounding the Dillingham Commission's work, this chapter brings together two strands of historical narratives: first, I narrate the legislative process leading to the Immigration Act of 1907 and chart the varying political calculations of diverse actors around immigration restriction. Second, I recount the personal biographies of the key members of the Dillingham Commission, focusing on their career trajectories leading up to the Commission; contrary to the previous research on the Commission – which often caricatured the Commission as driven by the nativist agenda – its members were not uniform in their career trajectories and ideological inclinations, and the diversity of their viewpoints on race and immigration had considerable implications for the Commission's project. While describing these viewpoints, I show that the political divide among the key members of the Commission cannot be reduced to a clear-cut, binary antagonism between anti-immigrant restrictionists and pro-immigrant advocates, and that there existed multiple vectors of personal motivations and career interests that challenge the integrity of this model.

The goal of this chapter is to show that these complex layers of immediate context resulted in over-determination (Althusser 1962) of the Dillingham Commission's inquiry: that is, instead of one political agenda steering the overall direction of the project, the clash of different influences actually opened up a space of contingency within the Commission. Because so much was at stake, and many different actors were trying to control the process, the Commission ironically became a no-man's land governed by, at least ostensibly, the logic of fact-findings and scientific inference. Although backstage political manipulation was a constant threat, the curtain separating center stage from the what went behind the scenes was opaque enough to create a liminal space of contingency within the Commission. And as we will see in the following chapters, it was in this liminal, contingent space between racial ideology and state power that the transformation of ideas around whiteness occurred.

The Immigration Debate Up to 1907

Daniel Tichenor has characterized U.S. immigration policy up to the 1870s as largely a laissez-faire affair: until the federal judiciary voided the ability of states to implement their own system of screening immigrants, both local and federal government exercised limited control over immigration inflow (2002: 46-49). Up until then, periodic surges of grassroots mobilization against various immigrant groups – French, Irish, Germans, and French-Canadians, to name a few – had a difficult time scoring any legislative victory, mainly because the regulatory structure around immigration was decentralized and nativists could not find an effective political target for their grievances. "In the early 1870s, official efforts to regulate European immigration remained largely the province of state governments with major ports of entry" (Tichenor 2002: 67). On the other hand, a radically different story

would play out for Asian immigrants in California: a sustained effort by the collation of local labor leaders, progressive intellectuals, and nativists would eventually triumph over those business and farm owners and political representatives who favored the laissez-faire immigration policy, leading to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. To many nativists, the Act was seen as a hopeful promise that a federal restriction of immigration based on the notion of race was possible (Lee 2003; Lew-Williams 2018).

Yet the European immigrants on the Atlantic coast presented a somewhat different matter. There were two major roadblocks to immigration restriction against European immigrants in the late nineteenth century: first, there were multiple social divisions within the participants of immigration politics, or what he called “the politics of alien admissions and rights,” which made it extremely difficult to build an effective legislative coalition to advance the restrictionist cause. Table 1 presents those divisions, identifying the positions of specific figures and organizations in late nineteenth century immigration politics.

Alien Rights Should Be	Alien Admissions Should Be	
	Expanded or Maintained	Restricted
Expansive	Cosmopolitans	Nationalist Egalitarians
	Horace Kallen	Samuel Gompers
	Jane Addams	Terence Powderly
	Louis Marshall	John R. Commons
	Franz Boas	Jeremiah Jenks
	Immigration Protective League	American Federation of Labor
	American Jewish Committee	Knights of Labor
Restrictive	German American Alliance	Wisconsin progressive
	“Social justice” progressives	economists
	Free-Market Expansionists	Classic Exclusionists
	William Howard Taft	Henry Cabot Lodge
	Stephen Mason	Madison Grant
	Joseph Cannon	Albert Johnson
	National Association of Manufacturers	Immigration Restriction
	Steamship companies	League
	U.S. Chamber of Commerce	Patriotic societies
		The Grange
		Eugenicists
		Asian Exclusion Leagues

Table 1. Immigration Coalitions of the Progressive Era
(reproduced with modifications from Tichenor [2002: 121])

According to Tichenor (2002), the “strange bedfellows” of immigration politics can be classed into four distinctive factions, distinguished by their respective stances towards

the rights and admission of immigrants. Alien rights were tied to labor protection within the United States — i.e. the benefits and rights of native-born workers and, by extension, immigrant workers who had already migrated. On the other hand, alien admissions involved control of immigration, usually at the federal level. “Cosmopolitans” were usually left-leaning, radical intellectuals and their organizations which advocated for the common humanity of all workers, regardless of their citizenship status; they believed that a person of any nationality deserved protection, and their right to move freely should not be restricted by the federal government. On the opposite side, we see their counterparts, “Classic Exclusionists,” consisting of aristocratic social conservatives who strongly believed in the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant identity of the nation; it was natural for them to hold immigrants accountable for many of the contemporary social problems such as poverty and crime. They were not interested in labor rights — instead, they argued that with proper immigration control, the labor problem would naturally disappear because wages and working conditions would improve without the downward pressure from immigrant workers who were willing to work for very low wages.

Whereas these two factions somewhat squarely map onto the contemporary liberal-conservative ideological divide between pro- and anti-immigration constituents, other cells in the table make matters more complicated. “Nationalist Egalitarians” included labor leaders and progressive reformers who championed workers’ rights and put faith in the collective regulation of market capitalism. From their perspective, the continuing influx of non-unionized, inexpensive labor from Europe was the most effective threat against a unified, strong labor movement. Therefore, just as they demanded state intervention in the market and workplace, they also called for federal regulation of immigration, in order to protect the American standard of living for American workers (Benton-Cohen 2018). Across the aisle from them were “Free Market Expansionists,” comprised largely of big business owners and their political spokespersons. Immigrant labor was the most important source of their profit, and this otherwise socially conservative group maintained a liberal attitude only in regards to alien admissions — i.e. they wanted *laissez-faire* immigration policy, so that they could continue to hire non-unionized, inexpensive immigrant labor.

Unlike other political issues, immigration politics in the early nineteenth century featured two axes of division: one around labor (alien rights/labor protection) and the other around maintenance of national boundary (alien admissions/immigration control). This complicated political terrain made it extremely difficult to organize an effective coalition that could overcome pressure from the opposing groups, leading to the stalemate on federal-level immigration policy regarding European immigrants, which continued well until the 1910s, even while a small group of committed nativists repeatedly attempted to pass restrictionist legislation.

The second major roadblock was the legislative process itself, or what Tichenor (2002) has identified as the distinctive feature of American political institutions in the pre-reform era: due to emphasis on the checks and balance of power, the American legislative branch contained many “veto-points” at which opposing groups could effectively thwart any legislation with relatively little effort. This included the two-tiered system of the House and Senate; various committees and chairmanship positions, many of which could sabotage a proposed piece of legislation for months and years, if not entirely sinking it all together; hierarchies within the party system that amplified the voices of senior leaders over more numerous junior members; and lastly, the presidential veto power that stood apart from the

direct influences of both Congress and the electorate. All of these institutions favored the status-quo over change, and immigration was a perfect example of the institutional inertia: many agreed that something had to be done about immigration, yet no one could amass enough political capital to bulldoze through all of the veto-points. In this context, relatively small but highly motivated ethnic lobby organizations were able to impede many attempts at immigration restriction by nativists.

The legislative history leading up to the Immigration Act of 1907, which established the Dillingham Commission, is a perfect example of how these two political roadblocks thwarted even highly coordinated legislative efforts to change immigration policy. As previously discussed, nineteenth century popular nativism had been unable to score any major legislative victory in terms of immigrant restriction, largely due to the veto-points described above and, more importantly, immigrant-origin voters who were supporting the politicians occupying such veto-points. In the steps leading up to the formation of the Dillingham Commission, however, Henry Cabot Lodge and the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) brought new ammunition to use in the old battle: distancing themselves from the previous waves of nativism, which they characterized as driven largely by irrational fear and prejudice against the unfamiliar, the new generation of reformers saw immigration as a practical social problem, the solution to which should be provided by scientific reasoning. Enlisting the support of natural and social scientists – Nathaniel Shaler, Francis Walker, and Edward Ross, to name a few (see Chapter 1) – Lodge and the IRL provided a comprehensive perspective on how immigration was impacting the national identity and how it should be controlled by federal power. Their argument rested on the idea of “fit” between race and nation: according to Shaler and his student, Lodge, the United States was founded by the Anglo-Saxons, and provided a more fitting environment for the descendants of those groups. Southern and eastern Europeans, whose numbers were rapidly increasing in the 1890s and 1900s, would only contribute to the problems of the nation due to lack of fit, and therefore should be prevented from entering the country. Starting in 1891, Lodge repeatedly introduced to Congress the literacy test as a means to weed out the “undesirables” of those “races” that were a supposed mismatch for the American environment.³³ Of course, his proposal suffered multiple defeats in the course of the decade when stalling out at many of the aforementioned veto-points.

The most interesting – frustrating, from the perspectives of Lodge and his allies – episodes in those defeats come from the early 1900s, from the notorious, ever-powerful Republican House Speaker, Joseph Cannon of Illinois (“Uncle Joe”). Learning from the repeated failures of the 1890s, the restrictionists amassed a strong coalition of supporters behind their cause, including labor leaders such as Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor and the southern “social control” conservatives who believed that

³³ As noted in Chapter 1, Lodge and nativists were not advocating for categorical exclusion of Southern and Eastern European immigrants. They did not necessarily argue that all Southern and Eastern Europeans were “undesirable”; rather, they maintained that a higher number of people among them belonged to the category, and argued that a literacy test – implemented across all groups – could effectively prevent the “undesirable” component of any group from entering the country. In other words, their policy proposal for immigration restriction was thoroughly rationalized around the statistical thinking around race, although their motivation might have been rooted lie in categorical, essentialist understanding of race and nation. See Chapter 1 for more details.

immigration was as much of a “race problem” as African Americans in the South. With the rise of Theodore Roosevelt, the progressive president, nativists had high hopes for effecting immigration restriction, which was then regarded as core progressive policy agenda. In 1906, Lodge introduced the literacy test proposal one more time, on this occasion in the form of an amendment to the immigration bill proposed by Senator William P. Dillingham (R-VT), the moderate restrictionist chairman of the Senate Immigration Committee.³⁴ The bill passed through the Senate with ease, garnering support from the majority of Republicans and even some of the southern Democrats.

In the House, however, “Uncle Joe” Cannon stood firmly in opposition. In an effort to dismantle this blockade, Lodge and the nativists enlisted Augustus P. Gardner (R-MA), a junior congressman from Massachusetts who happened to be Lodge’s son-in-law, to sponsor the bill. However, “[I]obbied intensely by ethnic associations and the Liberal Immigration League, House party managers worried that the measure would provoke electoral reprisals from foreign-born voters; Cannon’s own district contained a large and active constituency of naturalized voters” (Tichenor 2002: 124). As the chairman of the Rules Committee, Cannon had unilateral power to decide which legislation would reach the House floor for a debate, or whether it did at all. In a sheer show of force against the rank-and-file progressive Republicans, Cannon sat on the Literacy Test Bill for the several months in 1906 without allowing the debate. When he finally gave in to the mounting pressure from the progressive-restrictionist coalition, he countered by proposing yet another amendment that would remove the literacy test and take its place: a proposal for establishing a new investigative commission, which would conduct impartial fact-finding activities to ensure that future immigration policy debate would be based on the solid foundation of empirical evidence.

Behind the strong semblance of a reasoned and reasonable approach was, expectedly, a political motivation: Cannon was not willing to allow the literacy test bill to pass. He named three of his loyal subordinates, excluding Gardner, to participate in the conference committee of Senate and House to face off Lodge and Dillingham, obviously intending to sabotage the entire restrictionist agenda. For the remainder of the year, the committee remained in a deadlock over the debate between instituting a literacy test and establishing a new investigative commission (Tichenor 2002: 125-127).

This whole episode can be seen as one of the many battles reform-minded politicians engaged in during the progressive era, which placed more established, well-connected and often corrupt party bosses on the one side, and the new generation of maverick, activist-minded junior politicians, most aptly represented by Theodore Roosevelt, on the other. In this context, the Dillingham Commission was a part of a delay tactic employed by the old guard to fend off challenges to their monopoly on power, if only for the time being; from the perspective of progressive reformers, it was a second-best option which allowed them to keep their agenda alive while garnering more evidence to support it. During the progressive era, the authority of science, reason, and facts had, at least on the surface, higher ground over politics and self-interest. Reformers, given their enthusiasm over data and empirical evidence, were happy to engage in an investigation although it meant they would have to wait a few more years to pursue legislation around immigration control. Eventually, the eight-month legislative stalemate was broken in

³⁴ See the Dillingham’s biography for the description of his “moderate” restrictionist stance.

February 1907, when the restrictionists accepted the new amendment, launching the Dillingham Commission.

The enthusiasm for data, however, was not the only reason why the reform-minded nativists such as Lodge agreed to the compromise. In order to understand how and why they accepted the compromise requires us to move beyond Washington DC politics and pay attention to another arena of conflict, having repercussions across the Pacific: the diplomatic crisis over Japanese school children in San Francisco, and subsequently, the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 between Japan and the U.S., played a key part in the launch of the Dillingham Commission.

The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, or How Japan Differed from China

1905 was a monumental year for Japan. The new empire had just emerged victorious from the Russo-Japanese war, much to the surprise of the world which had expected otherwise. Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō and the Japanese imperial navy destroyed the Baltic Fleet of the Russian Empire, securing Japan's dominant position in the Far East. With firm support from Great Britain and a tacit approval from Theodore Roosevelt³⁵, Japan placed Korea under its military protection, just like the European empires had done for their colonies in the first stages of occupation. Finally, it seemed, the time had come for Japan to reap the fruits of its ongoing expansion campaign, in effect since the Meiji Restoration in 1868: the Meiji slogan of "Datsu-A-Ron (脱亜論)" — translated literally as leaving Asia, but figuratively as entering the West — was about to be realized, and Japan stood alongside other Western superpowers on equal terms, not as an exotic, barbarian island country in the edge of the map, but as a legitimate, sovereign member of the imperialist world order.

The Japanese immigrants in the United States, who had been gradually arriving to the West Coast by way of Hawaii since early 1880s, also took great pride in the rise of their home country (Azuma 2005). Perhaps they saw their personal trajectories overlapping with that of the empire: they had worked hard and rapidly risen through the ranks of immigrants in the American west; some of them had accumulated enough capital to own farms and small businesses, and finally, they hoped that they would now be able to get some respect from Americans – white Americans, to be precise – for their hard work and success.

Japan's rise in the global scene coincided with the resurgence of emergence against Japanese immigrants in San Francisco. Popular mobilization against Asian immigrants was not a new phenomenon. Since the Gold Rush, Chinese immigrants had occupied the bottom strata of the working class, doing the hardest work for the lowest pay. Economic competition led to racial resentment, and subsequently to violence against Chinese workers, until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 nearly stopped their migration except for trickles of illegal entries (Lee 2003; Lew-Williams 2018). The rise of anti-Japanese agitation was only a matter of time: Japanese immigrants were replacing the aging Chinese workers as

³⁵ William Howard Taft, then the secretary of state, sat down for a meeting with Katsura Tarō, the prime minister of Japan, in 1905. The two powerful men discussed matters related to the other countries in the Pacific. The presumption was that U.S. was willing to overlook Japanese aggressions in the Far East, including the occupation of Taiwan and the Korean peninsula, as long as Japan recognized American control of the Philippine Islands. Although the Taft-Katsura agreement was never formal, it was widely understood as a sign that the U.S. recognized Japan as an equal partner in international affairs. See Esthus (1966) for the complicated diplomatic history behind the meeting.

an inexpensive but reliable source of labor, and they soon became the new target of the white working class and their leaders. For instance, in May 1905, sixty-seven trade unions, led by the otherwise progressive San Francisco Building Trades Council, launched the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League, a nativist organization focused on restricting immigration from Japan and Korea. With enthusiastic support from local media, such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and local politicians, the organization would actively lobby for discrimination and restriction against all Asian immigrants (Bailey 1934: 28-45).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, international relations and domestic racial politics were on the collision course in San Francisco. The Roosevelt administration was more than willing to recognize Japan as a partner in keeping the order in the Pacific Rim. However, the white working class in California, as well as their representatives in the state and federal government, were not ready to accept the Japanese immigrants as permanent members of their local community. As Katherine Benton-Cohen (2015; 2018) has shown in her detailed account of the clash, this collision would trigger the end of legislative stalemate between Lodge and Cannon's lieutenants, launching the Dillingham Commission's investigation of immigrants.

In the early 1900s, Japanese immigrants made up less than 1 percent of the total population of California. Anti-Japanese agitation was largely a symbolic gesture aimed at a small minority population scattered around San Francisco, but it drew the attention of Roosevelt because he rightly saw in the opposition potential for a future conflict with Japan. In 1905, writing to Henry Cabot Lodge, Roosevelt opined that he was "utterly disgusted at the manifestations which have begun to appear on the Pacific...The California State Legislature and various other bodies have acted in the worst possible taste and in the most offensive manner to Japan."³⁶ Until the United States had a fully functional navy in the Pacific, according to the president, offending the victor of the Russo-Japanese War would be a grave mistake, especially in the context of the active expansion policy that resulted in U.S. acquisition of Guam and the Philippines (Love 2004). Fortunately for Roosevelt, the many propositions and declarations made by anti-Japanese organizations did not materialize into concrete actions.

That was until the Great Earthquake of April 1906. The natural disaster of unprecedented scale radically transformed the social fabric of San Francisco as well as its physical outlook. Destruction and ensuing lawlessness provided a fertile ground for racial resentment to bloom into violence. Angry mobs attacked Japanese immigrants and their businesses, and the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League officially organized boycotts against Japanese-owned diners, which were, ironically, frequented by white workers because they provided meals at more affordable price than their American counterparts. The Japanese government – which suffered through many earthquakes itself during the Meiji era – donated more than \$246,000 for the relief, exceeding the sum of the donations from all other countries around the world combined. Unfortunately, the people of San Francisco responded to this show of hospitality by throwing stones at the two Imperial Tokyo University professors who visited the city after the earthquake to inspect the damage (Esthus 1966: 132).

Against this backdrop, San Francisco Board of Education made a decision to segregate 93 Japanese American students. The pupils were attending local public schools

³⁶ Roosevelt to Lodge, May 15, 1906, Morrison, Roosevelt Letters, V, 1179-1182. Quoted from Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (1966): 130-131.

across the city in their respective neighborhoods, but the new measure would place all of them in a single, specially designed “oriental school.” Before the decision, intense residential segregation against Chinese had virtually confined anyone of Chinese ancestry to Chinatown. The heavily crowded public schools in Chinatown were, taken together, already a *de facto* “oriental school” whose isolation did not any further intervention from the school board. Japanese immigrants, on the other hand, were not concentrated in a single spot, and resided in a number of ethnic clusters throughout the city, including the current location of Japantown in Filmore and a few other blocks in the Sunset district. With the earthquake that severely damaged Chinatown, many Chinese families moved out of the city to Sacramento and the Central Valley, opening up vacancies in Chinatown schools. The board took advantage of the occasion to cater to the nativist lobby by proposing to concentrate all of the Japanese pupils under its jurisdiction in the “oriental school” in Chinatown.

Racial segregation in schools in the early 20th century was more of a norm than an exception. Many schools across the South were legally segregated, and in other places, residential segregation naturally led to school segregation. When the news of the school board decision reached Japan, however, the repercussions were immense. Both the Japanese government and public were enraged. For the new empire that saw itself as poised to leave Asia and enter the West – as “Datsu-a-ron” suggested – it was unacceptable that its subjects were being singled out as an “undesirable” race. Activating the official diplomatic channel between the two countries, the Japanese government expressed its deepest regrets about the outburst of prejudice on the American West Coast.

Theodore Roosevelt and his administration had a dilemma: they could not risk shaking up the friendly relationship with Japan, given American territorial interest in the Pacific; at the same time, they could not afford to lose the support of nativists in California, who had remained loyal to the administration throughout the years. As historian Eric Love has noted, Roosevelt faced a dilemma of “race over empire” (2004): American expansionism could not co-exist with insistence on a whites-only nation at home, because expansion would naturally bring in non-whites into the fold.³⁷ In a sense, the global dominance of white supremacy necessarily led to problems for white purity through conquest and incorporation of non-whites, just like scientific racism led to confusion and contradictions in the racial knowledge production process through unexpected empirical evidence that defied racial ideology. Some measure had to be devised to control Japanese immigration without offending the Japanese government. A wholesale exclusion, best exemplified by the Chinese Exclusion Act, was not an option. After all, Japan was not China, and the rising empire in the Far East desired anything but being associated with China, which was the symbol of corruption and backwardness.

The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 was devised to solve this dilemma. By definition, the agreement relied on the mutual trust of both parties. Japan would stop issuing passports to workers moving to the United States, and therefore try its best to curtail further migration and economic competition in California; the U.S. government, on the other hand, would seek the best measure to deal with anti-Japanese agitation, and guarantee

³⁷ The classic example of this dilemma is seen in the American occupation of the Philippines (Kramer 2006) and ensuing ambiguous racial position of Filipinos under the U.S. welfare bureaucracy. The connection between imperialism and immigration is more extensively discussed in the British case (see Gilroy 1995; Kundnani 2007).

equal protection for the Japanese subjects already living within its jurisdiction. The fact that the U.S. was willing to sign “gentlemen’s” agreement with Japan was in itself an achievement for the island nation: Japan was no longer among the colonized, and it had its place in the table of “gentlemen” nations of Europe and North America, discussing and deciding the fate of the world.

The Roosevelt administration succeeded in persuading both the Japanese government and the San Francisco school board to agree to these terms. At the same time, Roosevelt mobilized the Republicans to add an amendment to the Immigration Act of 1907, the discussion about which was going nowhere in the conference committee because of the struggle between the Senate restrictionists and the Cannon surrogates from the House. The amendment would provide the president with the authority to enforce the Gentlemen’s Agreement by allowing him to block the entry of immigrants causing “the detriment of labor conditions.” Cannon accepted the amendment, and in return, Lodge and the Senate Republicans conceded to the idea of establishing an investigative commission on immigration. Soon after the passing of the act and signing of the Gentlemen’s Agreement, Roosevelt enacted an executive order banning the entry of Japanese laborers; the San Francisco school board rescinded the segregation order, and the Japanese school children remained in their original schools. While workers from Japan were restricted from entry, the wives and children of Japanese immigrants already in the United States were allowed to join their family members. All those involved – Roosevelt, restrictionists, the House republicans, Japanese government, Japanese immigrants, and San Francisco school board – were able to gain something from the compromise, and it looked like the Gordian knot connecting the domestic and international politics had been cut.

In short, the Dillingham Commission was a product of the legislative struggle between anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant politicians over restriction, yet it was also a product of compromise orchestrated by President Theodore Roosevelt, who had to appease various constituents and interests. Different groups agreed to the idea of an investigative commission because they all thought that empirical evidence would be helpful in achieving their respective goals: nativists welcomed the opportunity to bring the authority of science and empirical evidence to their side; pro-immigrant politicians were somewhat skeptical, yet a supposedly objective inquiry was better than a straightforward restriction; in addition, Roosevelt was genuinely curious about the situation of Japanese immigrants in the West Coast, which might continue to cause problems for his expansionist ambition. In short, the Dillingham Commission entailed a sort of the Rashomon effect for its participants and interested parties: each had a different idea of how the Commission’s work would turn out. As we will see in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, these different visions would provide a fertile ground on which the voices of “facts” were amplified, and eventually lead to struggles around different interpretations of those “facts.” And through these deliberations, the idea of whiteness would transform, incorporating *different kinds of difference*.

The People of the Dillingham Commission

There were three major groups among the people who participated in the Dillingham Commission. First, there were politicians, three senators and three congressmen who were recommended by their peers and approved by the president. They sat on the executive committee and oversaw the general direction of the fact-finding activity, while making decisions on all financial and personnel matters of the Commission. Although they did not

devote too much time to the Dillingham Commission – they met every month or other week, at best – they were in the position of power, and the decisions that mattered, such as what kind of topics to study and whom to hire as expert investigators, had to go through their vote. They understood that immigration was an important policy subject and invested considerable energy and political capital in the work of the Commission, although some members were clearly more interested in its activity than others (see personal biographies of politician members).

Second, there were experts, most of whom held Ph. D.s in social sciences and who were either professors in universities or research staff in relevant federal agencies.³⁸ Three experts were especially appointed by the president to participate in the executive committee; the others were hired by the executive committee to work on particular subsections of the Dillingham Commission's inquiry, and they often took charge of a certain area of investigation and as well as authoring the final report. In many cases, much like what we see in contemporary government-funded research projects, the Commission provided funding, and the professors worked with their students and hired staff to obtain data and write reports. It is fair to say that, as experts, they had a considerable amount of autonomy: once the outline of investigation was submitted to and approved by the executive committee, the committee members had no direct control over the project. The committee received reports and approved (or denied) additional funding, and in the process provided some feedback, but the inquiry itself was largely in the hands of experts. Upon receiving the final report, the executive committee technically had to vote on whether to accept or reject the report, yet with hectic schedules and given the amount of resources invested, the committee accepted all of the reports it commissioned. As we will see more in detail in Chapter 5, the committee may have chosen to put less emphasis on an unexpected outcome by placing it somewhere in the middle of the 41 volumes, yet once the report was written by experts, it was difficult to bury the result altogether.

³⁸ William Wheeler, a businessman from San Francisco, was an exception.

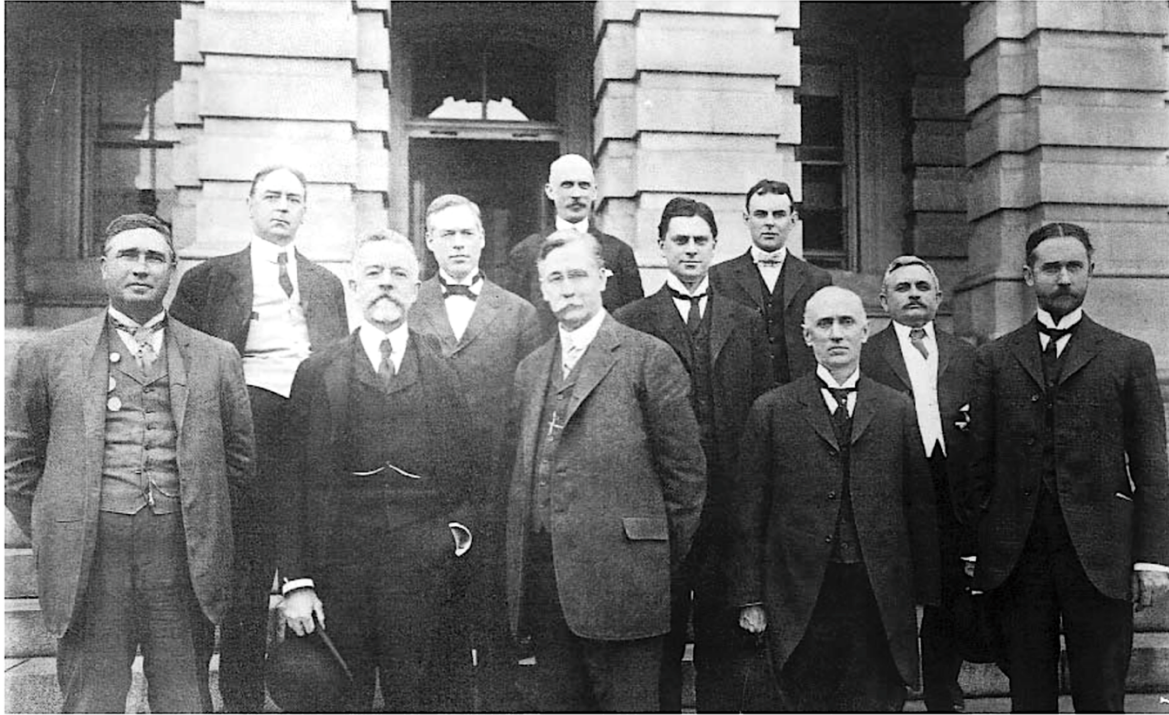


Figure 5. The Executive Committee and Key Staff Members

Lastly, there were staff members, who managed the administrative tasks of the Dillingham Commission and actually collected the data in the field. In some cases, experts managed their own personnel, but the majority of field researchers were hired by the Commission and received their salary directly from the executive committee. In both cases, the staff members were provided a badge and employment certification in the name of the United States Immigration Commission (see Chapter 5 for further details). Interestingly, many of the staff members hired to conduct statistical analysis and tabulating were women, while vast majority of the field researchers were men. The following figure displays the names of some of the women who worked for the Commission (see Benton-Cohen [2018] for the role of women in the Dillingham Commission).

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

Persons assigned to competitive examination authorized by the Immigration Commission February 22, 1910, and the rating resulting from such examination.

Name	Date	Rating	Rank
Addison, Sara M.	March 15	39.38	388
Agnew, Katharine V.	15	80.75	128
Aldridge, Louise F.	15	88.85	60 ✓
Alexander, Josephine A.	14	69.06	195
Alexander, May L.	14	75.80	163
Alsop, Mrs. Alice,	14	2.19	484
Alloway, Ella D.	----	---	---
Altadofer, Lena	----	---	---
Arnold, Vera N.	15	78.10	144
Ash, Jennie	15	90.75	45
Atkinson, Mrs. Edith D.	14	41.25	376
Aveilhe, Mrs. Gertrude	14	27.50	432
Baker, Bessie H.	14	54.69	300
Baker, Florence A.	14	67.81	205
Bantz, Lizzie K.	14	85.05	87
Barbee, Mrs. Virginia	14	35.00	402
Barlup, M. Lula	14	81.55	118
Barnum, Charles V.	15	50.00	326
Bates, Mrs. L. B.	14	47.50	340
Bean, Mrs. Minnie M.	12	68.75	198
Beeson, Maude S.	----	---	---
Belmont, Arnauld	15	67.81	207
Bender, Mrs. Emma M.	14	54.06	306
Bender, Robert E.	April 2	55.31	297A
Best, Takota J.	March 15	45.31	355
Bechtel, Mrs. Laura W.	15	88.30	65
Blackburn, Mrs. Lillian	12	86.55	75
Blake, Mrs. Marie A.	14	37.19	395
Blaine, Rebecca L.	14	24.38	448
Bleecker, Miss M. Norton	15	40.63	378
Bohnke, Hubert C. R.	15	100.00	2
Boss, Mary L.	15	67.50	208
Breen, Mrs. Clara G.	12	33.44	411
Briggs, Florence A.	14	73.95	172
Brightwell, Margaret D.	----	---	---
Broadus, Hattie	----	---	---
Brown, Edmund H.	12	45.31	352
Brown, Ella V.	15	79.40	140
Brown, Hatton D.	14	79.10	141
Browne, Julian N.	14	39.06	389
Bumpus, Edna V.	14	70.15	187
Burke, Elizabeth M.	14	69.20	194

Figure 6. The Names of the Low-level Staff Members

In the following section, I discuss the personal trajectories of some of the executive committee members, focusing on their prior education and experiences relating to fact-finding activities. I also discuss their understanding of race and immigration before, and sometimes after, they participated in the Commission.

Politicians

Henry Cabot Lodge

The most important politician in the Dillingham Commission was undoubtedly Henry Cabot Lodge, whose life and perspective was discussed extensively in Chapter 1. As a prominent race-thinker, Lodge advocated for the literacy test for two decades, and maintained close ties with nativist organizations such as the Immigration Restriction League. Continuing his prior role in the negotiation around the 1907 bill, Lodge was elected to represent the Senate, and, more importantly, the restrictionists in the Dillingham Commission.

William Paul Dillingham

Senator William Paul Dillingham (R-VT; 1843-1923) is a less well-known figure than Lodge. Dillingham came from an old, established political family in Vermont, whose heritage could be traced back to the early Puritan colonies of the sixteenth century. According to Zeidel, he was a “regular” Republican “who consistently opposed progressive reforms, such as woman’s suffrage and direct election of senators” and was “committed to preserving the remaining vestiges of an older America” (2004: 41).

In terms of immigration, he maintained a rather careful stance as a “moderate restrictionist” (Zeidel 2004: 26). Although he served as the chair of the Senate Immigration Committee and sponsored numerous bills geared towards immigration restriction, including the 1907 bill that launched the Commission, personally and politically he remained aloof from the nativists who were openly inciting hate and violence against Southern and Eastern European immigrants. He was somewhat sympathetic to the new generation of restrictionists, best represented by the IRL and Lodge, but he did not actively advocate for their cause, either. Dillingham approached the issue strictly as a policy question, focusing on social harms and benefits of immigration, and largely refrained from making any statements that could be construed as based on prejudice. Of course, he did believe and invest in the idea of the United States as the WASP nation, both in his public and personal life, but as Lund (2008) thoughtfully argued, his “Vermont nativism” had unique characteristics originating from the rural environment of his home state.

Just like any predominantly rural state, Vermont witnessed the might of Know-Nothings in the 1850s, and antipathy towards Irish and Catholic immigrants was a common theme in both local politics and everyday life of the state. The antipathy mapped squarely onto the rural and urban divide: as opposed to the virtue of quiet rural life that Vermonters appreciated, Irish immigrants were associated with an intensification of urban social problems in the state, such as poverty, disease, prostitution, and anarchism. Born in 1843, Dillingham came of age in the post-Know-Nothing period, presumably under the strong influence of the anti-Catholic, anti-urban sentiment. When he was elected as the governor of the state in 1888, however, the situation had changed somewhat: with the rise of industrial production in neighboring states, such as Massachusetts, the agricultural communities in Vermont suffered a labor shortage. As much as the people of Vermont

cherished their heritage and the virtue of quite rural life, the economic realities of rapidly developing capitalism forced them to look for factory jobs in emerging industrial towns near big cities like Boston. As the governor, Dillingham established a commission to study the agricultural sector in Vermont, and he asked the commission to collect data on immigrants living in the state in order to assess which group would be the best candidate for replacing the native laborers who had left for work in the factories. The Commission concluded that “the hard-working, honest Scandinavian” could be the group, given the “geographical similarities between Scandinavia and Vermont.” Based on this recommendation, the Commission recruited twenty-seven families from Sweden to immigrate to the farm towns of the state (Valentine 1890; cited in Lund 2008: 6-8).

In short, while advocating for the literacy test and immigration restriction, Dillingham remained focused on distribution of immigrants – i.e. immigrants only become problems when they concentrated in cities, so the government should devise a proper method of distributing them across rural areas, in order to facilitate their smooth and quick assimilation (see Benton-Cohen [2018] for further details on the so-called “distribution scheme”). In fact, in a speech advocating for his immigration bill in 1906, he specifically explained how his stance differed from other nativists: “There are in this country two classes of persons who differ in judgment as to the policy to be adopted to control immigration. One is made up of pronounced restrictionists who favor drastic measures for the reduction of the numbers admitted. The other class think that the demand for labor should govern the numbers admitted, but we should select from those who offer themselves, and permit only those to enter who are sound in mind, sound in body, sound in morals, and fit to become fathers and mothers of American children. The present law was based on this latter principle — the principle of selection – and the amendments proposed in this bill were framed in accordance with this principle” (Dillingham 1906; quoted from Lund 2008: 12).

One may perceive Dillingham’s move to distance himself from the restrictionists as an attempt to disguise his true intentions or personal feelings towards immigrants: in fact, as we have seen in the case of Lodge, some progressive nativists did maintain personal prejudices against Southern and Eastern Europeans, and personally desired to see less of them occupying their cherished hometowns, as opposed to treating the issue of immigration as another policy concern. Among these different spectrums of nativists, however, Dillingham appears to be one of the more disinterested figures in his participation in immigration-related matters.

Asbury Latimer and Anslem McLaurin

After Dillingham and Lodge, we have three Democratic senators from the South, each of whom maintained a brief presence in the Commission. When Asbury Latimer (D-SC; 1851-1908) died in 1908 during his first year on the Commission, Anslem McLaurin (D-MS; 1848-1909) took over, only to leave the office soon after with his own untimely death in 1909. LeRoy Percy (D-MS; 1860-1929) came in as his replacement in 1910, by the time much of the Commission’s inquiry was completed. In short, the three southern Democratic senators who passed through the Commission had minimal impact on the Commission’s work, other than conspicuously displaying the spirit of bipartisanship with their presence. In the surviving commission meeting minutes, these senators rarely participated in the

discussion about the details of the inquiry — that is, if they were present at the meeting at all.

LeRoy Percy

The paucity of direct sources notwithstanding, Benton-Cohen has traced the role of LeRoy Percy in the Commission, and more importantly, the relationship between the Southern agricultural interest and immigration restriction (Benton-Cohen 2018). Both Latimer and McLaurin represented the Southern political establishment: Latimer was a wealthy planter from rural South Carolina, and McLaurin was a confederate veteran who in his later life became a politician. Both men maintained typical anti-Reconstruction, anti-black track records as Southern Democrats, yet their stances toward immigration were more nuanced. After the failure of the Reconstruction, former slaves started to migrate en masse to the urban north in search for better opportunities, and some innovative Southern politicians were eyeing European immigrants as an alternative source of labor. While antebellum sensibility about racial purity prevented them from wholly committing to the idea of assisted migration, men like Latimer and McLaurin, as Zeidel has succinctly observed, could easily see immigrants as “white reinforcements” who would save them from “Negro rule” after Reconstruction; at the same time, however, they could just as easily view immigrants as another “racially impure” group posing a threat to the social and cultural hegemony of supposedly “pure” whites in the South (Zeidel 2004: 45-46). In the end, both politicians remained relatively reserved on the issue of immigration throughout most of their careers, perhaps because they did not want to make themselves politically vulnerable by entering into this complicated racial calculus.

Unlike his two predecessors, LeRoy Percy addressed the dilemma of labor and immigration more directly with his work inside and outside the Dillingham Commission. Between African Americans and immigrants, Percy committed himself to the latter. In fact, as detailed documentation by Benton-Cohen (2018) shows, he was a part of the venture to recruit Italian immigrants to work for a plantation in the Delta. Known as Sunnyside, the small agricultural colony in Mississippi was once hailed as a once-and-for-all solution to “the Negro problem” of the South.³⁹ That is, by recruiting Italian immigrants to work in the farms, the white landowning class would not have to deal with the social conflict associated with the legacies of slavery.

However, the solution was not really a solution: in fact, the working conditions in Sunnyside was not very different from those of slavery, and as such, it garnered much attention from Italian diplomats and the Department of Justice. A federal investigation, led by Mary Grace Quackenbos, the first female assistant U.S. attorney from New York City, revealed the horrible conditions in the plantation, and recommended a formal prosecution of the owners. The Commission’s investigation of Sunnyside was seen as an attempt at redemption for Sunnyside. LeRoy Percy, who was actively lobbying on behalf of his colony through his extensive ties with Northern politicians, including Theodore Roosevelt, was invited to the Commission, mainly to ensure that the report, published as a part of the *Recent Immigrants in Agriculture* investigation (vol. 22), “sang with enthusiasm” the virtue of the Sunnyside experiment. The report, approved by Percy, depicted an ideal immigrant

³⁹ Prior to Italians, Benton-Cohen notes, the land in Sunnyside was once cultivated by black sharecroppers and convict laborers from Arkansas; both turned out to be “not satisfactory” (p. 13).

community where Italian farm workers “had it pretty good: with their kitchen gardens, a church and clergy, a school, dances on Sunday, community cookouts, train service and a ferry to town, generous terms at the plantation store, options for land ownership, and a chance to better the lot of their children” (Benton-Cohen 2018). Regardless of the rosy portrayal by the Commission, Sunnyside turned out to be a failed experiment, and the few remaining Italian families left soon after the publication of the report in 1911. Percy himself abandoned the grand vision of substituting African American sharecroppers with immigrant farmers.

In short, LeRoy Percy’s perception of immigration differed from that of the nativists who were advocating for immigration restriction. In the Southern context, immigrant labor was depicted as a solution, not a problem, and Sunnyside represented a concrete example of the form in which such solution took shape, however failed in this particular instance. Under Percy’s influence, the investigation on Sunnyside depicted Italian farmers as ideal, “desirable” immigrants. Just like we have seen in the Dillingham’s case, Percy’s perception of immigrants could not be understood through the one-dimensional spectrum of love and hate.

William Stiles Bennett

Representative William Stiles Bennett (D-NY; 1870-1962) was the lone advocate of immigrants in the Commission. Born in New York City, Bennett practiced law before he entered politics. Representing the immigrant constituents of the seventeenth congressional district of upper Manhattan, which was home to much of the city’s immigrant and black populations, Bennett championed the rights of those he represented. In the House Immigration Committee, Bennett opposed the literacy test and the Senate nativists led by Lodge; while working in the Commission, Bennett clashed with Lodge and Dillingham in almost all issues, cautioning every time against possible prejudice that the Commission may hold against immigrants. In the final summary report of the Commission, Bennett refused to sign off the literacy test recommendation, and instead opted to add a “Views of the Minority” which championed immigrants as future citizens who would make a distinctive and positive contribution to the nation.

It is not clear whether Bennett was fully aware of the consequences of his advocacy, which pit them against the powerful, established politicians and nativist lobby. Regardless, he paid a political for it: after the Dillingham Commission: he lost his congressional seat in the election of 1910, at least partially as a result of nativists supporting his opponent; although he made a brief comeback in 1916 by being elected again as a congressman, the Dillingham Commission was the highlight of his career as a public official.⁴⁰

John Burnett

On the other hand, Congressman John Burnett from Alabama was firmly in the restrictionist camp.⁴¹ Like Percy, he was familiar with the Southern scheme of recruiting

⁴⁰ The biographical details draw from the materials found in William Stiles Bennett Papers, Special Collections, State University of New York, Albany, Albany, NY.

⁴¹ P.9, “Address of Mr. Heflin, of Alabama.” *John L. Burnett: Memorial Address Delivered in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States, Sixty-Sixth Congress*. House Document No. 1021. Washington, Government Printing Office. 1922. The biographical details were obtained from the memorial addresses as well as from “John Lawson Burnett,”

immigrants for agriculture — in fact, after the Civil War, the Alabama state legislature had many times attempted to secure “white reinforcements” from Europe through such efforts. Yet by the 1900s, just like in the case of Sunnyside, these ventures turned out to be largely futile, mainly because the pull factors in the industrial North were much stronger. Thus in 1906, speaking in the House, Burnett did not mince words on immigration and the South, characterizing the recent immigrants as “contamination” to “our white civilization.” While Burnett “believe[s] that we have partially solved on race question,” a new race problem was emerging, with “this horde of Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Syrians, Bohemians, and others of that class.” He imagined the apocalyptic scene in which the members of “negro” and “dago” race met up in great numbers in the South, warning that “there will be the devil to pay” in social consequences of such encounter.⁴²

If judged on the basis of these statements, Burnett comes across as a stereotypical Jim Crow era racist who did not hesitate to express his contempt for all the groups he found unfamiliar. However, while speaking in favor of the literacy test, he was specifically denying the charge that his position was based on prejudice. After appealing to the notion of the Southern purity, Burnett quickly added that he had “nothing against foreigners” and “many of [his] best friends” were “foreigners.” In fact, he thought that the literacy test was the best means of selectively excluding problematic classes of foreigners, as opposed to a blanket exclusion against a group: “Not all Italians are illiterate or bad, and I would not exclude them merely because of their name.” As a rhetorical strategy to represent the literacy test as a rational means of immigration control, he used the example of one of his best friends: “As good a friend as I have in my home city was born beneath Italian skies. So excellent a character does he bear that he is a member of one of the secret orders to which I myself belong. And as a brother, I am glad to meet and greet him; and were all Italians like Mike Costa, I would never raise my voice against their admission. But I have no doubt but that he would join me in my desire to shut out the illiterate hordes from entering our sunny South.”⁴³

On the contrary, his stated objection to immigration stemmed from his devotion to the people he represented, or so-called “American workers.” George Huddleston, a Congressman from Alabama, described Burnett’s constituents as “old-fashioned Americans [...] whose ancestors came to this country so long ago that they have lost the track of when they came, whose ancestors were the hardy pioneers who carved this Republic out of its original virgin wilderness.” Huddleston added that “no finer people live in America than those from [Burnett’s congressional district] and “if there are any real Americans, these are they.”⁴⁴ When others characterized Burnett as “sprung from the ranks of great common people and was himself a man of the people,” they were using “people” in this socially and historically specific manner, meaning the people of a certain race, class, region, and possibly generation.⁴⁵ Of course, it should be added that whether this lineage

Encyclopedia of Alabama (written by Jon Sedlaczek, Auburn University: <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3645>. Accessed in April 5th, 2018).

⁴² Congressional Records, 59th Congress, 1st session: 9192.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ P.41. *John L. Burnett: Memorial Address Delivered in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States, Sixty-Sixth Congress*. House Document No. 1021. Washington, Government Printing Office. 1922

⁴⁵ P.12 *Ibid.*

of “people” had actually “carved this republic out of its original virgin wilderness” was up for debate, especially considering the fact that Southern attempts at secession had nearly broken apart the republic.

In short, Burnett may have been the closest thing to a stereotypical Jim Crow-style racist on the Commission, yet his support of the literacy test and immigration restriction had an idiosyncratic side, rooted in the particular social milieu of the South. In fact, along with Bennett, Burnett formed an unlikely alliance of resistance to the Senate Dillingham bill, holding off the literacy test in the conference committee. As we have seen above, he was fully supportive of the immigration restriction and literacy test, but he was against a provision added to the bill which granted the president power to exclude an entire nationality on the event of fraudulent use of passports by some members of the group. At the time, the United States did not require a passport for entry, and the measure was regarded as largely inconsequential. Burnett, however, perceived this authority to be another instance of expanding unchecked federal executive power over the states and Congress (Zeidel 2004: 44-45; see also McKeown 2008; Torpey 1999 for a broader perspective on passport).

After the Dillingham Commission finished its work, Burnett took the lead in the legislative effort to implement its primary recommendation, the literacy test. Burnett finally saw his persistent advocacy for the measure yield fruit: After a drawn-out series of congressional battles in the House and Senate and vetoes from three successive presidents, Burnett saw the legislation with his name becoming a law in 1917⁴⁶. As can be seen in the Figure 7 below, his name was strongly associated with immigration restriction in the 1910s.

⁴⁶ The legislative aftermath of the Dillingham Commission will be discussed in detail in the conclusion.



THE AMERICAN WALL, AS CONGRESSMAN
BURNETT WOULD BUILD IT.

UNCLE SAM: You're welcome in—if you can climb it!

Figure 7. Raymond O. Evans, "The American Wall" *Puck* (1916)

Benjamin Franklin Howell

Benjamin Howell, the Republican who represented the 3rd congressional district of New Jersey, was appointed to serve on the Commission mainly because of his position as the chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. A member of a well-established WASP family in New Jersey, he fought in the Civil War and maintained an active record of civic participation in various organizations, such as the Sons of the American Revolution. Zeidel reported that although he had worked with progressives in establishing more systematic procedures of naturalization – including the 1906 bill to end

state courts' granting of citizenship – "as a congressman, [he] had demonstrated little animosity toward immigrants" (2004:42). Yet he was largely seen as an ally of the restrictionist cause, and once in the Commission, he did not raise strong objection to the leadership of Lodge and Dillingham.

Experts: Presidential Appointees

Jeremiah Whipple Jenks

If Lodge was the political leader of the Commission, Jeremiah Jenks (1856-1929) was the intellectual mastermind behind the Dillingham Commission's research. Jenks exemplified the progressive-era intellectual drawn to the emerging discipline of the social sciences: often from middle-class families of Midwestern towns, they subscribed to the calling of the "social gospel," (Ross 1992) which sought to use scientific means of empiricism towards the Christian end of helping others. Their science was not just appreciation of nature, but practical knowledge they felt could actually make differences in the world. Many of them had received their graduate education in Germany, which boasted the most sophisticated system of higher education during the time; at the same time, however, these progressive young intellectuals endeavored to transcend their European training by building an independent, American brand of scholarship. As documented in Dorothy Ross's classic work, *The Origin of American Social Science* (1992), they were the first generation of social scientists in the United States, and as such, they were the founding members of many key institutions across the country, including social science departments in major universities as well as national professional associations of social scientists.

After completing his studies in Germany, Jenks served as a professor at Indiana, Cornell, and New York Universities, specializing in monetary policy and anti-trust regulations. He also participated in the many of the progressive-era commissions as an investigator: before the Dillingham Commission, he took charge of the much-celebrated Industrial Commission in 1899. Jenks co-authored and edited the final reports of the Industrial Commission, providing Theodore Roosevelt with scientific grounds on which to indict big businesses for their overwhelming power over labor and the American market and labor. As a part of the Industrial Commission's inquiry, Jenks also directed a brief, one-volume study of immigrant labor in industries. Through the Industrial Commission and other projects, Jenks "pioneered a style of statistical empiricism that would not be out of place in modern Industrial Organization" (Brown 2004: 69). That is, he showcased a style of scholarship that was very popular in the progressive era: rather than deduction or abstract theorizing, Jenks valued carefully collected statistical data, presented through seemingly endless series of cross-tables. While always being conscious about the limits of his data and inference, Jenks nevertheless attempted to draw broad and valid conclusions for reform and policy intervention. As a policy intellectual with prior experience studying immigrants, Jenks was an ideal person to oversee the Dillingham Commission's data collection efforts. A personal relationship with Theodore Roosevelt, originating from the Industrial Commission and strengthened through Jenks's participation in other government projects through the 1900s, was a key factor in his contribution as well.

After completing his work on the Dillingham Commission, Jenks co-authored *The Immigration Problem* (1913) with William Jett Lauck, a standalone manuscript which summarized many of the Dillingham Commission's findings. The book was hailed as the

most comprehensive and up-to-date source for the study of immigration in following decades, and was used in many classrooms across the nation as a textbook.

Charles Patrick Neil

Charles P. Neil (1865-1942) had the reputation of being a seasoned investigator even before his appointment to the Dillingham Commission. As a son of Irish immigrants, Neil was born in Illinois and attended the University of Notre Dame, followed by doctoral work in economics and politics at Johns Hopkins University. After a brief stint of teaching in Catholic University of America, Neil was picked up by Roosevelt to serve as an arbitrator in various labor disputes. He successfully resolved a number of strikes, and was then appointed as the commissioner of labor under the Department of Labor and Commerce in 1905. For the next decade, he had a successful career serving different administrations as a civil servant specializing in labor, and afterwards he continued his career as a skilled labor arbitrator in the private sector.

Although Neil maintained professional relationships with a couple of members of the Immigration Restriction League, his perspective on immigration was not made clear in his official speeches or through his work. Perhaps we can imagine Neil as a stereotypical second generation immigrant: even though he was from an Irish immigrant family of modest background and raised Catholic, Neil travelled in the world of college-educated professionals, both as an academic and successful civil servant in the Department of Labor, working alongside many of the WASP elites who had low opinions of the Catholic immigrants. Even in the Dillingham Commission, he was the only Catholic among the high-level staff and executive committee members. It is not easy to infer from available sources how he felt about immigrants; however, it is reasonable to assume that he held different views from people like Lodge, Dillingham, or Burnett.

William R. Wheeler

William Wheeler, a business man from San Francisco, was brought in to the Commission as a representative of the West Coast. After the year-long struggle with the political crisis over the placement of Japanese school children, Roosevelt was keen on having California and the Pacific Coast represented in the inquiry. He recruited Wheeler, an active Republican and a successful business manager in the transportation industry, to provide the Pacific perspective on the immigration problem. Wheeler took charge of the West Coast investigation, hiring Harry Alvin Mills of Stanford University and overseeing the overall inquiry in California and other Pacific coast states.

Staff Members

Walter William Husband

As a public official, Walter Husband (1871-1942)'s entire career trajectory dovetailed with that of the immigration restriction movement. Born in East Highgate, Vermont, he worked as a store clerk and postmaster in his hometown before he worked for a local newspaper. He arrived in Washington D.C. to serve as a secretary to Senator Dillingham, and was subsequently hired as the executive secretary of the Dillingham Commission when his boss took its chairmanship. After the publication of the Dillingham Commission Report in 1911, he moved to the Department of Labor, where he assumed the position of Commissioner-

General of Immigration (1921-1924) and Assistant Secretary of Labor (1924-1935) until he retired.⁴⁷

Experts: Independent Researchers

William Jett Lauck

Born in West Virginia, William Lauck (1879-1949) followed the career trajectory of a quite essential progressive intellectual. He was an associate professor of economics and political science at Washington and Lee University before he joined the Dillingham Commission in 1908. In the Commission he oversaw the inquiry associated with the subsection titled, “Immigrants in Industries,” which constituted 14 out of the 41 volumes of the final report. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, he was tasked with overseeing the data collection efforts of the field agents hired by the Commission. Afterwards, he resigned from his position in the university and became a full-time government employee, working in various agencies such as the U.S. Commission of Industrial Relations and the U.S. Health Service. He also participated in the New Deal by working in the National Recovery Administration in the early 1930s. As a labor expert, he served as a long-time consultant of United Auto Workers in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁸ Although he is generally remembered as a labor economist, Lauck’s stint in the Dillingham Commission resulted in one of the most cited immigration-related reference in the early twentieth century, *Immigration and Labor* (1913), which he co-authored with Jenks.

Franz Boas

As one of the most iconic intellectuals of the twentieth century, Franz Boas (1858-1942)’s work and life have been the subject of many biographies (Cole 1999; Williams Jr. 1996). These works usually focus on his later life, in which he led his students and other intellectuals in the struggle against scientific racism by replacing the biological understanding of race with the idea of culture. It is an often neglected fact that he was hired by the Dillingham Commission to conduct a research project, in the relatively early stage of his career as a professor.

Many attributed his anti-racist stance to his being a minority in the United States, namely a (secular) Jewish immigrant from Germany. Although it was not as intense in Germany and other countries during the time, anti-Semitism in the United States had a considerable presence, especially in the upper echelons of social life where upwardly mobile Jewish immigrants were increasingly gaining a foothold. Karabel (2006)’s discussion of the Jewish quotas at the elite Ivy League colleges provides a good example of this discrimination. In fact, Boas’s employment as a Columbia University professor was

⁴⁷ Biographical information obtained from the official homepage of United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (“Agency History”, <http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history-25>)

⁴⁸ Biographical information gathered from The W. Jett Lauck Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, MI. Another collection under his name is available in Albert H. Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, VA. The former focuses on his activities relating to the labor movement; the latter concerns his academic and government-related work as well as his private consulting activities. The materials relating to the Dillingham Commission are found in the UVA collection, often under generic folder headings (i.e. “notes” and “field reports”).

only secured after his uncle, an influential businessman and philanthropist of New York City, made a significant donation to the university (Cole 1999). Needless to say, he was also an adult immigrant who sometimes struggled to communicate academically in his second language.

Müller-Wille and Barr (1998) pinpoint a more specific origin of Boas's anti-racist beliefs: The Arctic expedition he undertook in his twenties. Having graduated from university without an employment prospect, Boas obtained funding from a newspaper to conduct an Arctic expedition. In the nineteenth century, the reports from the remote corners of the world were popular material in newspapers and magazines, and Boas wanted to further his geographical study while fulfilling his desire for adventure. In the course of his expedition, however, Boas faced extreme weather and life-threatening frostbite and was forced to stay in an Inuit village for an extended period of time. While being cut off from all outside communication, Boas practiced an archetype of ethnographic research: he lived with the Inuit, learned their craft of whale and seal hunting, and participated in their village life. He even consumed raw seal meat, following the dietary custom of the Inuit. Müller-Wille and Barr argue that these experiences led to him to a revelation that all people respond to the challenges of nature in their respective ways and there was no hierarchy among different cultures. The belief in cultural relativism, as the idea was later named, led him to travel and study different peoples across the world, including the indigenous tribes of the American continent. As we will see in Chapter 4, these experiences led Boas to think about immigrants in a radically different way from the rest of the Dillingham Commission.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on disproving two very common misunderstandings about the Dillingham Commission: that it was merely a delay tactic used by pro-immigrant politicians to hold off the nativist lobby, and that the Commission's members were mainly motivated by racism and nativism towards Southern and Eastern European immigrants. Although both of these statements convey a grain of truth, the story of the Dillingham Commission was much more complicated. First, domestic and international political calculations undergirded the Commission's establishment, and the struggle between nativist lobby and pro-immigrant politicians were only one factor among many; second, while some members of the executive committee were clearly nativists, diverse perspectives and experiences were represented in the Dillingham Commission's executive committee. Even when we confine our observation to the nativist contingent, namely Lodge, Dillingham, and Burnett, their nativism and racism featured diverse ideological elements, drawn from their different backgrounds and reflecting their idiosyncratic intellectual tastes.

In short, the Dillingham Commission was a complicated organization, and the complexity entailed possibility for unexpected outcomes. Because many forces were competing for control of the Commission's inquiry – some direct, some more subtle – the voice of empirical data was, ironically, amplified. Different sides found themselves appealing to the same data to make their case. In this way, they could argue that they spoke from the perspective of the empirical data—and markedly different conclusions could be drawn from the same set of data. In other words, ideological heterogeneity provided a fertile ground for confusion and contradiction in knowledge production: the exposure of mismatch between theory and data could provide formidable leverage, and the competing

social forces proceeded onto engage in a theoretical and political struggle that would lead to unforeseen outcomes. As we will see in detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, these unforeseen outcomes produced *different kinds of difference*, the idea that there were assimilable immigrants and non-assimilable immigrants, and that the divide between these two different kinds of immigrants mapped onto the boundary marking whites and non-whites.

Chapter 3. Problems in Data Collection: Facts Talk Back

Problems with Category and Hierarchy

In the first two chapters, I documented the intellectual, political, and personal context of the Dillingham Commission. I argued that because divergent forces put the Commission into motion, each seeking to wrest a somewhat different outcome from the data, the Commission's inquiry actually acquired some autonomy; the findings, which lay claim to empirical objectivity, provided contestable landscape amid competing social forces. It was in this no-man's land that the voices of facts "talking back" (Hacking 2002) were amplified. These voices were not necessarily pro-immigrant, but they did not always align with the nativist agenda, either. This chapter documents those voices, reflecting on how the discussion enabled by the Commission's inquiry created a subtle but very important shift in the history of American discourse around race.

The voices of facts challenged nativist ideology on two fronts: *category* and *hierarchy*. As discussed in Chapter 1, race-thinking operates with two core tenets, one about what kind of races there are and the other about what kind of relationship exists between those races (Zuberi 2001). In early twentieth century nativism, the notion of WASP supremacy was articulated through these two principles: in terms of *category*, there were different races, more or less corresponding to different European nations and colonized regions of the world, and these races were clear-cut, never-changing human groups, and the interaction among them should be discouraged to prevent dilution of desirable qualities; in terms of *hierarchy*, the Anglo-Saxon Protestant "race" was better than all of them, and the members of the WASP race were qualified by nature and destiny to lead the American nation. Immigration restriction was, according to the nativist argument, a necessary measure for maintaining WASP supremacy against the horde of invaders from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Dillingham Commission was supposed to procure empirical evidence affirming the "undesirable" nature of Southern and Eastern European "races," thereby supporting the nativist argument with the authority of science.

As we will see, however, the empirical data did not support these claims. In terms of both *category* and *hierarchy*, the nativists encountered data that undermined or even contradicted their claims, and they had to revise and expand their working definitions of race and racial hierarchy to respond to the challenges. On the one hand, the Commission's understanding of racial category was put through the wringer due to its focus on Southern and Eastern Europeans, and on the other, the information gathered by field agents betrayed the initial promise of a clear hierarchy between Southern and Eastern Europeans and native-born Americans. I conclude this chapter by briefly discussing how these unruly facts were appropriated up by pro-immigrant intellectuals as they advocated in favor of immigrants against the nativist ideology.

The First Challenge: The Meaning of "Race"

Justifying "Races or Peoples"

Even though the leaders of the Commission were clearly nativists, in the sense that they were committed to the idea of the U.S. as an Anglo-Saxon, Protestant nation, the Commission explicitly distanced itself from the biological definition of race as promoted by the early generation of race-thinkers (see Chapter 1). For the most part, unlike the race-thinkers who argued that different races carried God-given, nature-sanctioned traits that cannot change over time, the Commission highlighted what we today perceive as "social" factors in defining races: "[T]he Commission, like the bureau [of Immigration], uses the

term ‘race’ in a broad sense, the distinction being largely a matter of language and geography, rather than one of color or physical characteristics such as determines the various more restricted racial classification in use, the most common of which divides mankind into only five races”³ (DCR, vol.1: 17).

“The most common...five races” likely referred to a scheme devised by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), the German scientist who divided people into “Caucasian, Mongoloid, Negroid, Malay, and American races” (see Chapter 1). As discussed in Chapter 1, his key contribution to race-thinking was developing a scientific basis for racial classification: in addition to skin color and hair texture, which were difficult to measure, he used measurements of skulls to develop what he considered to be reliable categories of “race,” and many other race-thinkers after him followed his template, conceptualizing race as consisting of essential traits like skull shapes and size (Painter 2010: 66-85). However, in the first volume of its report, the Commission made clear that the scholarly consensus of measuring “race” through skulls was inadequate for its task.

The Commission needed a different scheme that went beyond “five races,” because “[f]or practical or statistical purposes such classification is obviously without value, and it is rarely employed” (DCR vol.1: 17). The Commission was well aware that the most pressing matter for its inquiry was the racial status of “new immigrants,” most from Southern and Eastern Europe, and “color or physical characteristics” would not be sufficient to distinguish them properly, mainly because they were not visibly different from Anglo-Saxon whites – at least to the extent that blacks or Chinese were visibly different from them. On the same page, the Dillingham Commission presented its classification scheme for “races or peoples,” an alternative to “five races,” as follows:

African (black)	Korean
Armenian	Lithuanian
Bohemian and Moravian	Magyar
Bulgarian, Servian, and Montenegrin	Mexican
Chinese	Pacific Islander
Croatian and Slovenian	Polish
Cuban	Portuguese
Dalmatian, Bosnian, and Herzegovinian	Roumanian
Dutch and Flemish	Russian
East Indian	Ruthenian (Russniak)
English	Scandinavian
Finnish	Scotch
French	Slovak
German	Spanish
Greek	Spanish-American
Hebrew	Surian
Irish	Turkish
Italian, North	Welsh
Italian, South	West Indian (except Cuban)
Japanese	All other peoples ⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Source: DCR vol.1: 17.

At first glance, the classification looked as if it was based on national or geographical origins. There were, however, several notable features inconsistent with such a rationale for designation. First, the categories were uneven: some encompassed a wide range of subgroups, while others were surprisingly specific. For instance, “African (black)” lumped together an entire continent, the size of which was in fact much larger than the north American continent. “English” was distinguished from other regions of the British Islands, whereas “French” and “German” did not receive such fine-grained treatment. There were distinctions between “Spanish,” “Spanish-American,” and “Mexican,” presumably to distinguish between people from Spain and the Spanish-speaking population from South America. “Hebrew” stood out as a non-national category, just like “African (black).” Most strikingly, the immigrants from Italy were divided into two categories, of south and north. In short, these categories were indeed classifying immigrants, but the overall scheme lacked a coherent principle behind it.

The decision to adopt this scheme was made out of practical necessity of procuring the large volume of data collected by the Bureau of Immigration. Joel Perlmann (2018: 13-40) has traced the origin of the “races or peoples” classification scheme to the Bureau of Immigration in the 1890s. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the Bureau had collected data on nationality of incoming immigrants. As the the number of Southern and Eastern Europeans surged rapidly towards the end of the century, however, the Bureau faced a practical challenge of classifying immigrants from the multi-national empires of Eastern Europe, such as the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires. In other words, classifying someone from these regions were not as straightforward a task as classifying someone from British Isles or France, according to the Bureau.

In 1899, the bureau devised a new classification scheme to respond to these challenges, and the scheme became the model for the “races or peoples” scheme of the Dillingham Commission. Rather than relying on the contemporary science of racial classification, the Bureau constructed the scheme based the experience of the immigration agents inspecting incoming immigrants. In the process, the bureau prioritized language and religion of immigrants as primary criteria for classification, based largely one pragmatic economic reasoning: Victor Safford, a medical doctor in Ellis Island who devised the “races or peoples” scheme reasoned that “[p]eople that speak the same language and that have the same religious ties” will “be forced into the same occupations” upon their arrival to the U.S., and in order to assess their “industrial and social values,” he proposed to classify them based on their language and religion (Perlman 2018: 22-23). In other words, language and religion was suggested as proxies to capture the ways in which immigrants grouped themselves, and the Bureau did not care to justify the theoretical reason why they chose to use such criteria. All statistical data collected by the Bureau followed the “races or people” scheme, and the Dillingham Commission adopted the scheme to use as the basis for its 41-volume report.

The Commissioners learned early on that a classification scheme was not merely a technical issue, but a matter of political and theoretical contestation (Bowker and Star 1999). Even though they were adopting the scheme out of practical necessity – they needed the vast amount of data on immigrants collected by the Bureau of Immigration at the ports of entry – they still had to justify their choice to outside audiences. The Bureau of Immigration was an administrative organization; its primary task was to monitor and control the population inflow, not delve into a theoretical discussion of how and why the agency operated in a particular way. The Dillingham Commission was, however, different: it was an investigative commission established to provide

scientific grounds on which to design a more effective immigration policy; its legitimacy relied primarily on its insistence on the ability to produce knowledge, and theoretical as well as empirical validity was key feature of its work. Hence the Commission had to engage in a difficult task of justifying the classification scheme of “races or peoples,” which was initially conceived out of practical necessity by immigration inspectors in Ellis Island.

Volume 5 of the Commission report, aptly titled *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (henceforth *Dictionary*), was devoted to the issue of clarifying “races or peoples.” The Commission hired an expert in “ethnology and anthropology,” Dr. Daniel Folkmar, to draft the *Dictionary*. Because the Commission was operating under a hectic schedule, *Dictionary* was being written at the same time as field agents were collecting data using the “races or peoples” scheme. In the end, the work that went into the *Dictionary* did not exactly guide the inquiry of the Commission, but served more as a post-hoc justification for its classification scheme. Nevertheless, the *Dictionary* provides a valuable opportunity for us to witness the challenges faced by the Commission members: caught between racial ideology, state power, and the necessity to theoretically justify its classification scheme, not to mention the hectic schedule of the project, the Commission had to juggle multiple demands and make revisions to its ideas about race.

Juggling Multiple Demands

Born in 1861 in Roxbury, Wisconsin, Daniel Folkmar attended Harvard University and the University of Chicago, and continued his education in Paris, where he received a doctorate in anthropology. Afterwards, he worked as the lieutenant governor for the Philippine Civil Service from 1903 to 1907, working on a physical anthropology project using the data from the prisoners in the Bilibid prison. The project was classic race science à la Blumenbach: he attempted to document 43 provincial “types” present among the prisoners using physical measurements, pictures, and plaster casts of their heads. The resulting monograph, *Album of Philippine Types*, was displayed in the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, along with the plaster casts he made with the assistance of the prisoners (Kramer 2006: 426; Rydell 1984). Upon completing his service in the Philippines, he was recruited by Jeremiah W. Jenks, a Cornell economist on the executive committee of the Dillingham Commission, to work on the *Dictionary* as an expert in racial classification and ethnology.⁵⁰

In justifying “races or peoples,” Folkmar began by addressing the Commission’s core concern: the racial status of “new immigrants.” “Early in the Commission’s investigations among these newer immigrants,” Folkmar wrote, “[I]t became apparent that the true racial status of many of them was imperfectly understood even in communities where they were most numerous, and the difficulties encountered in properly classifying the many ethnical names that were employed to designate various races or people suggested the preparation of a volume that would promote a better knowledge of the numerous elements included in the present immigration movement” (*Dictionary*: 1). As shown in the above passage, conceptual confusions regarding race still lingered in the introduction to this volume of the report: terms such as “racial status,” “races,” “people,” “ethnical names,” and “numerous elements” were used interchangeably to refer to “six hundred subjects, covering all the important and many obscure branches or divisions of the human family” that the *Dictionary* aimed to sort.

In a strange twist of logic, however, the *Dictionary* admitted that classification was bound to be arbitrary, or more a matter of custom than science. “The sciences of anthropology and

⁵⁰ Biographical information obtained from Daniel Folkmar Photographs of Philippine People, circa 1903-1907, NAA Photo Lot 105, National Anthropological Archives.

ethnology,” according to Folkmar’s assessment, “are not far enough advanced to be in agreement upon many questions that arise in such a study.” Instead, he argued that “[t]he use of this classification as the basis for the present work is perhaps entirely justified by the generally prevailing custom in the United States” (*Dictionary*: 5). As noted in the literature on the court decisions concerning race of individuals, using “common sense” as a justification for a classification scheme was a widely accepted practice during this time (Haney-López 1996; Pascoe 2009). Of course, this “prevailing custom” often served as a convenient tool for affirming the existing social hierarchy attributing the white identity to the rich and powerful while denying the status for anyone who challenged the existing system of social hierarchy. However, unlike the courts of the same period, the Dillingham Commission could not resort to the naked logic of power, or end the discussion by invoking “prevailing custom”: because it was an investigative commission concerned with objectivity and facts, the Commission had to engage in the exercise of defining, and justifying, what “prevailing custom” meant for its classification scheme.

“Prevailing custom” could mean many things, but the *Dictionary* decided to privilege the language spoken by groups as a standard in making distinctions among races: “The primary classification of mankind into five grand divisions may be made upon physical or somatological grounds, while the subdivision of these into a multitude of smaller ‘races’ or peoples is largely upon a linguistic basis” (*Dictionary*: 3-4). This decision came from practical, rather than theoretical, considerations, such as the fact that the “immigrant inspector or the enumerator in the field” lacked “the training to determine whether that individual is dolichocephalic or brachycephalic in type” (*Dictionary*: 4). Folkmar also emphasized that the classification scheme would coincide better with census data and immigration statistics from other countries.

In short, Folkmar was aware that he was moving away from “races” as discussed and conceptualized by the leading race-thinkers of the time. He was focused more on how immigrant inspectors would gather data based on classification, and how immigration law and censuses in the U.S. and other countries would be able to adopt the classification scheme for policy purposes. Language was, according to Folkmar, “the most convenient and natural” way to tell people apart, much more so than other so-called scientific measurements of race, such as their head types.

Folkmar did not give up entirely on trying to justify “races or peoples” theoretically. Although his discussion of the matter was geared towards attesting to the practicality of the classification scheme, he was aware that it did have some basis in existing literature on ethnology and anthropology. Two tables, presented without much explanation, clarified those grounds, but only to those familiar with the tradition of race-thinking.

COMPARATIVE CLASSIFICATION OF IMMIGRANT RACES OR PEOPLES.

Based on Brinton (cf. Keane).			People.	Ripley's races, with other corresponding terms.
Race.	Stock.	Group.		
Caucasian..	Aryan....	Teutonic	Scandinavian:	I. TEUTONIC. II. Europæus (Lapouge). Nordic (Deniker). Dolicho-leptorhine (Kohlmann). Germanic (English writers). Reihengräber (German writers). Kymric (French writers).
			Danish.....	
			Norwegian.....	
			Swedish.....	
			German (N. part).....	
			Dutch.....	
			English (part).....	
			Flemish.....	
			Lithuanian.....	
			Scotch (part).....	
		Celtic.....	Irish (part).....	Part Alpine.
			Welsh.....	
		Slavonic.....	Russian.....	II. ALPINE (OR CELTIC). H. Alpinus (Lapouge). Occidental (Deniker). Disentis (German writers). Celts-Slavic (French writers). Lappanoid (Pruner-Bey). Sarmatian (von Hölder). Arvernian (Beddoe).
			Polish.....	
			Czech:	
			Bohemian.....	
			Moravian.....	
			Servian.....	
			Croatian.....	
			Montenegrin.....	
			Slovak.....	
			Slovenian.....	
Mongolian .	Sinitic....	Chinese.....	Ruthenian.....	Part Alpine. Part Mediterranean. III. MEDITERRANEAN. H. Meridionalis (Lapouge). Atlanto-Mediterranean and Ibero-Insular (Deniker). Iberian (English writers). Ligurian (Italian writers). Part Mediterranean. Part Teutonic. Part Mediterranean. Doubtful.
			Dalmatian.....	
			Herzegovinian.....	
			Bosnian.....	
			Albanian.....	
			Armenian.....	
			French.....	
			Italian (part).....	
			Roumanian.....	
			Spanish.....	
Malay.....	Semitic....	Chaldaic....	Spanish-American.....	
			Mexican, etc.....	
			Portuguese.....	
			Greek.....	
			Hindu.....	
			Gypsy.....	
			Arabian.....	
			Hebrew.....	
			Syrian.....	
			Caucasus peoples.....	
Ethiopian..	Euskarie..	Finnic.....	Basque.....	Doubtful.
			Finnish.....	
			Lappish.....	
			Magyar.....	
			Bulgarian (part).....	
			Turkish, Cossack, etc.....	
			Japanese.....	
			Kalmuk.....	
			Chinese.....	
			East Indian (part, i. e., Indo-Chinese).	
American (Indian).			Pacific Islander (part).	
			East Indian (part).....	
			Negro.....	
			American Indian.....	

Figure 8. Table Featuring Classifications from Brinton and Ripley (*Dictionary:5*)

The first table, titled “Comparative Classification of Immigrant Races or Peoples,” showed how the “races or peoples” scheme compared with racial classifications of other theorists. In figure 8, we see the names of the contemporary race-thinkers, such as Brinton and Ripley (see Chapter 1), on the top. Although Folkmar did not go into a detailed discussion of these authors, the table conveyed an informative argument for readers versed in nineteenth-century race-thinking. He was attempting to build a bridge between two conflicting theoretical traditions: Brinton provided a theoretical foundation, and explained how the “races or peoples” scheme came out of the classic tradition of European race theory, which divided men into “five grand divisions”; meanwhile, Ripley’s division of Europeans into multiple races spoke to the concern of the Dillingham Commission, which took great interest in the racial status of SEEs. In sum, this table showed how the “races or peoples” scheme, although originating from the administrative necessity of the Bureau of Immigration, was far from a haphazard one.

Keane (after Linnaeus).	Blumenbach.	Deniker.	Huxley.	Flower (cf. Quatrefages).
1. Negro (except 5).	2. Ethiopian (except 4, 6).	1. Bushman..... 2. Negrito..... 3. Negro..... 4. Melanesian..... 5. Ethiopian (Abyssinian, etc.). 6. Australian..... 7. Dravidian..... 8. Assyroid..... 9. Indo-Afghan..... 10. Arab (Semite)..... 11. Berber..... 12. Littoral European..... 13. Ibero-Insular..... 14. Western European..... 15. Adriatic..... 16. Northern European..... 17. Eastern European..... 18. Aino..... 19. Polynesian..... 20. Indonesian..... 21. South American..... 22. North American..... 23. Central American..... 24. Patagonian..... 25. Eskimo..... 26. Lapp..... 27. Ugrian..... 28. Turco-Tatar..... 29. Mongol (incl. Malay).	1. Negroid..... 2. Australoid (except part of 5). 5. Melanochroid (with part of 5). 4. Xanthochroid (with part of 27). 3. Mongoloid (except part of 27).	1. Ethiopian (except 5) 3. Caucasie (with 5). 2. Mongol.
4. Caucasian (with 5).	1. Caucasian (except 19, 20).			
3. American.	5. American.....			
2. Mongol....	3. Mongolian..... 4. Malay ^a			

Figure 9. Table Featuring Classification from Blumenbach and Deniker (*Dictionary*:6)

The second table, titled “Some Classifications of the Grand Division of Mankind,” was Folkmar’s attempt to justify his use of language and geography in distinguishing “races or peoples.” The most important figure here was Joseph Deniker (see Chapter 1), whose classification scheme was presented in the middle column. As discussed in Chapter 1, Deniker prioritized language and geography in classifying peoples, arguing that his groupings amounted not to “race,” which was based on “somatic character,” but to “ethnic groups.” In this figure, however, Folkmar was showing that Deniker’s “ethnic groups” existed in relation to “big races” as noted by Blumenbach. In other words, “peoples” or “ethnic groups” existed within “races,” and language and geography were, rather than being totally removed from biology, means of developing fine-grained classifications within each “big race.”

Simply put, in terms of classification scheme, the most pressing issue for the Commission was that the traditional understanding of race, based on the notions of “color” and biology, could not provide grounds for distinguishing Southern and Eastern Europeans from Northern and Western Europeans: following this scheme, the two groups were all lumped together into an overarching “Caucasian” or “European” category. In Deniker’s theory, however, Folkmar found the solution to the problem: under the phrase “Deniker’s remarkable and often misunderstood scheme,” Folkmar wrote in the explanatory paragraph at the top of the table, “the larger groups of races recognized by him are more like the grand division of other writers than has been commonly supposed.” Language and geography determined a subset of “larger races,” defined through physical features. Folkmar did not have to choose between “races” or “peoples,” or between physical characteristics and language; with this move, he could afford to choose as a principle of classification whatever was necessary for the immigration inspectors and field agents to do their work.

Given this flexible and expedient scheme, classification could serve the exigencies of each case. The “African (black)” category – defined simultaneously through physical features and geography – in the *Dictionary* was sufficient and merited no further specification, because there were rarely any African immigrants arriving on U.S. shores, at least according to the data from the Bureau of Immigration.⁵¹ “Chinese” were all “Chinese,” regardless of their linguistic backgrounds⁵², because under the Chinese Exclusion Act there was no need to categorize them as anything other than “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” For European immigrants, on the contrary, the classification tree needed to expand to encompass a range of subgroups based on language and geography.

In short, the key to the problem of classifying “new immigrants” was not having an overarching classification principle for all immigrants, but selectively applying different criteria for different groups. In other words, not only were there *different kinds of groups*, but also *different kinds of differences*, for the purposes of the Bureau of Immigration and Dillingham Commission, covering different dimensions of classification. While juggling multiple demands – administrative necessity for acquiring data, practicality for inspectors and agents, and theoretical validity for scholars – Folkmar inadvertently paved the way for a two-tiered classification system of race and ethnicity. The distinction between physical and cultural bases of group identity would later become the core tenet of national quota restriction, which excluded non-whites while allocating a different number of quotas for different groups of European immigrants (Ngai 2005). Even so, the skillful juggling of multiple demands led to an unexpected theoretical dilemma.

“Unfixing Race” and the Problem of Language

Thus language and geography became the most important criteria for classifying immigrants. This was, however, only the first step in resolving many logical contradictions within “races or peoples.” In actually presenting facts about various “races or peoples,” the *Dictionary* often contradicted its

⁵¹ From 1899 to 1910, the total number of immigrants in the African (black) category was 33,630 — less than 0.4% of the total number of immigrants (9,555,673) during the period (DCR vol.1: 97). In the main volumes of the reports, the Dillingham Commission used both “negro” and “black” to refer to African-Americans, not immigrants in the “African (black)” category.

⁵² Of course, as an empire with a long history of subjugating and assimilating minority groups, China and the concept of “Chinese” also presents an interesting case for challenges associated with racial and ethnic classification. See Mullaney (2010) for the ways through which the Chinese Communist Party in the 1940s dealt with the challenge.

own premises by valuing factors other than language when distinguishing groups. Let us look at an exemplary entry, the one on Egyptians as a “race or people”:

In an ethnographical sense, the ancient race or people of Egypt, best represented today by the Copts or Fellahs, although they are generally of mixed stock. In a political sense, any native of Egypt. In the present population of Egypt, about 10,000,000, there are many racial elements, mostly Hamitic (Fellahin and Copts) and Semitic (Arabs and Bedouins). The Christian Copts number perhaps 800,000, and still preserve a liturgical form of the ancient Egyptian language. Practically all the remaining population is Mohammedan, including the larger section known as the Fellahin or laborers, who have adopted the Arabic language. Their number has been variously estimated at from 1,000,000 to 5,000,000. Very few Egyptians have found their way to America.

Here the description invokes ethnology; language; religion; nation-state; elementary census figures; and finally, the group’s relevance to American immigration policy. Clearly language was not the only factor that distinguished these “many racial elements” under the heading of “Egyptians.” Interestingly, there is virtually no mention of geography. Perhaps the most important feature of this description was the last sentence – namely that there were not too many Egyptian immigrants in the U.S. entry ports and immigration stations.

As was usually the case with race-thinking in general (Painter 2010), Folkmar used whatever data he could obtain to rationalize his categories of “races or peoples.” When there was census data available from the government of the region, more detailed numbers were provided in tables. When discussing “races” residing in what was perceived as the border area between Asia and Europe (e.g. Turkey, Romania...) there was usually a considerable amount of description of physical features including height and shape of skull. If the geographical domains for particular “races” did not coincide with geographical boundaries defined by nation states – usually in Eastern Europe, most notably in the case of “Magyar” in what is now Hungary and nearby areas – the *Dictionary* took special care to present a map of the area according to racial makeup. In short, the *Dictionary* seemed to suggest that the categories of “races or peoples” factored in every possible trait: every conceivable variable, including bodily features, language and its history, geography, culture, and shared political experience, constituted the basis of distinction—depending on the circumstances.

In using whatever data he could obtain to elaborate and justify his scheme, Folkmar was, from the perspective of race-thinking, ironically veering closely toward what Victoria Hattam (2007) describes as the “unfixing” of race: the central tenet of race-thinking was the stability of racial categories, or what Zuberi (2001) has termed “racial reification.” The point of calling something “race” was to essentialize it: race has to be a set of stable, immutable categories that do not change easily. Holding this premise, early race theorists such as Blumenbach collected skull measurements, which were supposed to be more stable indicators of the underlying racial type of an individual than, say, skin tone or eye color. However, the rise of Lamarckism⁵³ in the late

⁵³ Before the theory of natural selection and Mendelian genetics were widely accepted, the theory of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) was an authoritative explanation for the process through which organisms came into their current statuses. According to Lamarck, acquired characteristics could transform organisms and those transformations were inheritable. Inspired by his theory of gradual biological

nineteenth century, according to Hattam, dismantled rigid assumptions about the stability of racial types, and opened up the possibility of races being transformed through individuals' experiences, just like other biological properties. In other words, the basic foundation of race theory had, at least in some circles, come under scrutiny. In the wake of this shift, Folkmar's scheme inadvertently opened the door to the interrogation of racial essentialism, by, in effect, decentering the rigid biological principles of classifications ("five grand divisions of mankind"), complicating them with language, geography, and a host of other factors.

From a practical perspective, the crucial question concerning the stability of "races or peoples" came down to whether learning a new language could in fact alter how persons should be classified. If an immigrant from Poland claimed she was from Germany and spoke fluent German, should immigrant inspectors classify her as a "German" immigrant? A similar question could be raised with respect to the other factors that Folkmar presented in substantiating "races or peoples." Most of them could change over time, blurring the boundary between categories, and as a result, endangering the stability of the classification scheme. The dilemma was between expedient flexibility and scientific integrity: "races or peoples" should be flexible enough to account for variations among Europeans, but at the same time rigid enough to affirm the legitimacy of classification based on the categories.

This dilemma was further discussed in the entry for the English as a "race or people." Folkmar considered the challenging question of "Irish and Scotch descent" among the "English": "[H]ow long a resident of his ancestry in England entitles him to be called English?" (*Dictionary*: 54). He recognized that the English could serve as an important test case for the whole classification scheme he proposed: because the English comprised, according to Folkmar, such a self-evident group, the definitions and theories behind this categorization should be generalizable, without any contradiction.

His answer is worth quoting at length:

But how long a residence in England will entitle an Irishman, or a Scotchman, or a French Huguenot, or one of Norman French stock, to be called English if the mother tongue is the test? Evidently, this phrase must be interpreted to mean the ancestral or racial language in dealing with a stock which has kept itself quite pure in descent. But since the greater part of the English population of today is of mixed origin, a census may adopt the arbitrary rule that the paternal line only shall determine the race, or, what is evidently more difficult and more scientific, it may name the mixed races as such, or consider the race to be determined by the preponderant element in the mixture. (*Dictionary*: 54)

When Folkmar took a close look at it however, "English" was not as clear-cut and pure a category as he had initially imagined. The English "race," in fact, was a fusion of multiple other "stocks," such as Scots, the Irish, and even French Huguenots, and not "pure" English. Again, the answer to this dilemma was somewhat "arbitrary": Folkmar resorted to "paternal line," without any theoretical justification, or yet another determinant, "the preponderant element in the mixture." The meanings of these concepts were not clarified further.

change, some race theorists questioned whether racial categories were transformable over time and whether individuals can be classified into a different race depending on the context (see Brubaker 2016 for a discussion focusing on contemporary examples of "transracialism").

In the narrow sense, the race of an immigrant is determined by ancestral language, as above indicated. The historical limit which determines the transition from one race into another as thus defined varies with different races. It will be assumed in this article that the English race is practically one thousand years old, since the essential elements composing it were welded before or soon after the Norman invasion. (*Dictionary*: 54-55)

The solution to the dilemma was a fusion of biological rigidity and historical flexibility. The English “race or people” consolidated a thousand years ago, according to Folkmar, and by definition, English language and geography, were determined around such time. Although the exact time frame for the consolidation of each “race or people” would differ case by case, “one thousand years” represented the careful balance that Folkmar was trying to maintain between essentialism and flexibility: flexible enough to classify Southern and Eastern Europeans as different from other “white” immigrants, but still rigid enough to make the distinctions matter.⁵⁴ As Hattam (2007) has documented, the move away from the biological conception of race would in the following decades eventually lead to the concept of ethnicity and cultural pluralism, thereby constituting the core tenet of the new whiteness: that different ethnic groups within whiteness existed, and their differences were “cultural,” as opposed to the biological differences attributed to all non-white groups.

Yet none of these developments were foreseen at the inception of the Commission’s inquiry. The nativists in the executive committee of the Commission, such as Lodge, were concerned mainly about Southern and Eastern European immigrants undermining the WASP national identity, and did not intend to demarcate the boundary between biology and culture. In the end, however, confusion and contradictions within the racial classification scheme led to the unintended consequence of undermining racial reification, eventually paving a way for the concept of ethnicity, which still informs a popular understanding of whiteness and European immigrant identity to this day (Waters 1990; Alba 1990; Gans 1979).

The Second Challenge: Field Agents Report Back

The second challenge emerged out of the Commission’s data-collection efforts. The field agents, who were hired by the Commission to conduct statistical and ethnographic investigations in field sites across the country, reported that the reality differed from what the Commission sought to affirm. The classification scheme of “races or peoples” was not useful; and the Commission’s proposed racial hierarchy centering on the superiority of “native-born Americans” over immigrants often turned out to be inaccurate, if not entirely misguided.

⁵⁴ This careful balancing act between essentialism and flexibility was repeated when the Commission advocated for the use of the “races or peoples” scheme in the 1910 Census. Jewish organizations opposed the proposal, seeing it as another attempt to single out Jews, immigrant or otherwise; the organization of Slavic immigrants, who were formerly categorized in censuses only through their birthplace, welcomed it as an opportunity to receive recognition of their group identity from the state. Caught between different pressures, the Census Bureau adopted “mother tongue” — language learned and spoken at home, which often stood in for essential identity based on ancestry without explicitly invoking the notion of “race” or bloodline — as a basis for a classification scheme that would maintain the balance between rigidity and flexibility. In a sense, this move mirrored the Dillingham Commission’s emphasis on “one thousand years” it took for immigrants to truly learn a new language and adopt a new racial identity. See Perlman (2018: 133-180) for the convoluted sequence of events surrounding the “mother tongue” question.

William Jett Lauck (1879-1949), a statistician and economist who worked in many investigative commissions throughout his career, spearheaded the Commission's data collection activity. His project, titled "Immigrants in Industries," would feature the data collected from various industrial towns throughout the country, covering a wide range of trades in specific locales, from coal mines in New England to meatpacking plants in Midwest. His reports on these various industries would constitute of 16 of the 41 volumes of the Dillingham Commission's report, comprising the main body of the DCR.

Lauck drew up a very detailed master plan to guide his project.⁵⁵ He began by stressing the importance of the population count according to "races or peoples," because that data would serve as the basic foundation for all other inquiries. He also noted other topics for data collection, such as geography of the site, its history of immigration, occupational characteristics, assimilation, and social and civic lives of immigrants. There were sections concerning racial hierarchy, such as "employer preference of immigrants," for which field agents were instructed to ask which "races or peoples" were the most preferred by employers; also featured were "racial displacements," for which agents had to decide whether "new immigrants" were displacing "old immigrants" or native workers, and if so, why. These two topics were clearly designed to single out Southern and Eastern Europeans—as "undesirable races" who were taking away jobs from more preferred American workers. In collecting such information, the Commission was hoping to obtain data that would support the common nativist narrative of "new immigrants" taking jobs from native workers.

I. C. 79.

THE UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D. C.

CHECK OR PAY
No. _____

1. What is your name? _____

2. Where do you live (street and number)? _____

3. Mark the race to which you belong with a cross (thus X):

_____ American, white.	_____ Finnish.	_____ Lithuanian.	_____ Russian.
_____ American, negro.	_____ French-Canadian.	_____ Magyar.	_____ Ruthenian.
_____ Bohemian.	_____ German.	_____ Montenegrin.	_____ Scotch.
_____ Bulgarian.	_____ Greek.	_____ Moravian.	_____ Servian.
_____ Croatian.	_____ Hebrew.	_____ Norwegian.	_____ Slovak.
_____ Danish.	_____ Irish.	_____ Polish.	_____ Slovenian.
_____ Dutch.	_____ Italian (north).	_____ Portuguese.	_____ Swedish.
_____ English.	_____ Italian (south).	_____ Roumanian.	_____ Syrian.

If of any other race, write name of race here _____

4. Occupation (what work do you do)? _____

5. What do you earn per day? _____ 6. What do you earn per week? _____

7. What work did you do before coming to the U. S.? _____

PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS SLIP.

Figure 10. A Sample Survey Schedule Used by Field Agents of the Commission⁵⁶

⁵⁵ W. Jett Lauck, Immigration Commission-Reports and Plans of W. Jett Lauck, Box 80, W. Jett Lauck Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

However, when the field agents of the Commission, equipped with these plans, took to their respective research site, they encountered all kinds of other information that did not neatly fit into the nativist narrative. The field agents, who did not have a clear sense of the overall design of the Commission's inquiry, wrote back faithfully about what they had seen and heard in the field.⁵⁷ Without adhering to the Commission's nativist agenda, these agents were strictly following the guidelines of scientific methodology that they had learned in their schooling, and thereby generating information the executive members neither expected nor desired.

Impossible Classification

On the very first page of the report on a Pennsylvania mining town, an agent wrote about the difficulty of applying the "races or peoples" scheme in the actual process of data collection: "It has been impossible[.]" the agent confessed, "to secure accurate information as to the number of each race employed in the plant." Even men who were "above the ordinary" in terms of their intelligence and experience in the industry felt "at sea when attempting to classify [immigrants] by races." Immigrants from eastern Europe were generally lumped together as "Slavish" by foremen asked to classify them. Tasked with hiring workers, the foremen "looking for results" and "no questions [were] asked as to his race." The theoretical validity of the "races or peoples" scheme did not matter much on the job. The foremen were looking for workers who could produce "results"; the workers' races mattered less than the fact that they were able-bodied men who could work.⁵⁸

In a report on a steel factory town in Pennsylvania, another agent expressed his skepticism about using the Commission's classification scheme to collect data: "Your agent has exhausted every means to ascertain the number of each race, when first employed, but this is absolutely impossible." Again, just as is the case in the mining town mentioned above, the agent could only obtain a "statement of old employers, who hired the majority of these men" – that "a few years ago all of these foreigners were called Slavs or Hunns." More precise classification by "races or people" was impossible; therefore, any earnest attempt to collect statistics according to the provided categories was bound to be "utterly impossible." The agent was able to compel the employers to "venture an opinion" on the races of workers, "only by associating one incident with another." In other words, the agent had to make his interviewees conform to the Commission's terms—often against their own wills. To be clear, not all of the field agents reported difficulties in applying the Commission's classification scheme. However, none made use of all of the "races or peoples" categories either, simply because not all groups were present in the towns they were

⁵⁷ The final reports of the Commission do not contain the names of the agents. Lauck Papers features a number of field reports with authors' names. One recognizable figure among the agents is LeRoy Hodges (1888-1944), a Washington and Lee University graduate who had a prolific career in the state of Virginia and the federal government. While he was still a college student, he was probably hired by Lauck, who had held a faculty position at the university prior to working full time in the Commission (see LeRoy Hodges Papers 1908-1942, Special Collections, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA). The other is Erville B. Woods, who later became a faculty member of the sociology department at Dartmouth. He received his doctorate degree from University of Chicago in 1906 (see *University Records volume X: July 1905-April 1906*, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL). He would have likely worked for the Commission after receiving his degree. If these two figures are representative of the agents, I suspect that most of the field agents were students or recent graduates who had received at least some training in social science methodology.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, "Community Report for Immigration Commission." Box 62, William Jett Lauck Papers.

studying.⁵⁹ In most cases they went along with local classifications, such as “Slavs” for all immigrants from Eastern European, neglecting the Commission’s original intentions.

Impossible Hierarchy

In addition, the questions designed to obtain information that confirm a racial hierarchy – “employer preference of immigrants” – yielded many unexpected results. For instance, in the steel factory mentioned above: “The officials of this Company prefer these recent immigrants in the following order, viz: Slovacs, Poles, and Magyars” while the employers saw “very little difference in the other races.” Moreover, “[t]he Slovak is considered the most intelligent and in the opinion of those who come in daily contact with him, he will advance more rapidly than the others.” The agent dutifully continued to convey all the information obtained, even if the discussion was moving away from employer preferences: “Many of this race have purchased homes, which is always interpreted as making for a better citizenship, and a permanent force from which to secure laborers.”

The question of employer preference was designed to establish a hierarchy between “old immigrants” and “new immigrants,” and also a racial hierarchy within the latter group. In this answer there is no mention of the “old immigrants”, so it is not clear which groups were preferred between the “old” and “new immigrants.” The rank order of various Eastern European groups somehow confirmed the Commission’s intentions, but the information about home purchases was unnecessary extra information—especially the fact that “Slovacs,” who were supposed to be an “undesirable” race, were ranked as highly desirable workers and home owners. According to the popular nativist argument, these “new immigrants” were supposed to have come to the U.S. to work for money without any intention to settle permanently, and their transience was supposedly the reason why they were causing all the social problems; however, the Commission’s own inquiry often revealed that they were putting down roots, buying homes for their families, showing that in fact “new immigrants” were not so “undesirable” after all.

“South Italians” were, both in the popular discourse and according to the Commission’s agenda, generally regarded as the most “undesirable” immigrant groups of all, perhaps on the same level with “Hebrews,” but for different reasons. However, the data had different things to say about their standing: “In one mining establishment[,]” according to the Commission, “the South Italian miners were said to be the most industrious of all the races employed, and they were reported to work more steadily than either Russians or the natives.” Of course, not all stereotypes were proven wrong, and the South Italians reportedly “consumed a large quantity of whisky and beer.” Still, they “were less given to intoxication than the natives” and displayed “a greater tendency toward sobriety than any of the other employees.” Even their supposed “inability to use English was said to have had no effect whatever upon the efficiency” of their work in the mine. The Italians were “said to take a greater interest in their homes than was shown by the natives. They cultivate gardens around them and in other ways, try to make them attractive” (DCR, vol. 7: 225-226).

Again, “South Italians” during this period were stigmatized with every possible negative immigrant stereotype: they were supposedly lazy, politically suspect, and immoral; they were also caricatured to drink heavily and commit crimes when they were drunk (Guglielmo 2000). But the

⁵⁹ Note that the categories shown in figure 10 were slightly different from the original “races or peoples” scheme (see the beginning of this chapter). All of the non-white “races or peoples” were missing from the list, and instead there was an “American, negro” category (upper left). The gap between the high theory of racial classification and the reality of data collection was already visible even before the agents were sent out to the field.

data from the field proved otherwise: they were not only better workers and more temperate drinkers, but also more invested in home ownership and improvement than natives.

Sometimes the hierarchy question solicited a discourse rather than a clear answer because the interviewees had a much more nuanced understanding of the subject. The employers often added in their own agenda in answering the question. In a report about a sugar refining company in Philadelphia, for example, one foreman had devised a very sophisticated racial hierarchy of his own.

Mr. Peterson ranks the races about as follows when compared with each other and with Americans:

- (a) Efficiency – German, Polish, American, Irish.
- (b) Progress – German, American, Irish, Polish.
- (c) Adaptability – German, American, Irish, Polish.
- (d) Tractability – German, Polish, American, Irish.
- (e) Industriousness – German, Polish, American, Irish.

Your agent thinks Mr. Peterson is probably German himself.⁶⁰

The implication of the last sentence was obviously that the interviewee, Mr. Peterson, was biased towards Germans; but even without Germans, the other three groups do not form a clear hierarchy. Detailed as it was, Mr. Peterson's hierarchy did not further the Commission's overall agenda of singling out Southern and Eastern Europeans as "undesirable" groups. Instead, it showed that racial hierarchy was bound to be multi-dimensional, relative, and, most importantly, biased. There was no hint of irony or sarcasm in this agent's faithful reporting; yet the information itself was exposing the vulnerability of the Commission's project, and displaying the uselessness of attempts to confirm a racial hierarchy.

Unfortunately, the Lauck papers did not feature any of the letters he wrote to agents as responses to these reports. By tracing the paper trail to the final reports, however, we can indirectly infer how the Commission dealt with these challenges created by the empirical data. Of course, the most obvious way to deal with these issues was to quietly shelve the field reports, and then selectively incorporate the data that supported the overall agenda of the Commission. Certainly this strange omission occurred throughout the report; none of the above quoted reports appeared in the final version of the volumes. The summary volume represented the boundary between Southern and Eastern Europeans and Northern and Western Europeans as undoubtedly bright, and affirmed the strict hierarchy between the two groups. Based on these (erroneous) interpretations of the data collected, the Commission recommended exclusion of Southern and Eastern Europeans, and suggested the literacy test as a scientifically-informed policy measure for immigration control (DCR vol. 1:45-47).

However, many of the challenges featured in the reports by field agents survived, especially in the main body of the Commission report. Across the 38 volumes – excluding the first two volumes intended as executive summary and the index volume that never got published – there were numerous tables and ethnographic accounts contradicting the overall conclusion of the

⁶⁰ Anonymous, "Community Report for Immigration Commission." Box 62, W. Jett Lauck Papers

Dillingham Commission, such as those referenced in the above section. The nativists were satisfied with the executive summary, and did not bother to take a closer look; however, pro-immigrant intellectuals and organizations would use the data collected by the Commission to refute its findings, and, in turn, argue that immigrants were not much different from the natives. In short, the Dillingham Commission's data were appropriated by those who wanted to oppose the Commission's nativist orientation. In the following section, I present two examples of such appropriation—one by the Massachusetts Commission on Immigration, and the other by a Russian Jewish émigré economist named Isaac Hourwich.

The Irony of Data: Using Dillingham Commission's Numbers to Refute Its Findings

Massachusetts Commission on Immigration

"Finding facts" about immigration was an appealing idea, and many local governments followed suit by establishing local investigative commissions of their own to study immigrants within their jurisdiction. The Massachusetts Commission on Immigration was one example of such efforts, and its single-volume report, published in 1914, summarized the findings from its inquiry.

From its organizational structure to the style of reasoning in the report, the Massachusetts Commission followed the template established by the Dillingham Commission. The executive committee featured prominent members of the state legislature and the head of the chamber of commerce; it also included a notable academic with expert knowledge on immigration, Professor Emily G. Balch of Wellesley College.⁶¹ The executive secretary of the Commission, who was charged with conducting the investigation, was Grace Abbott (1878-1939), a younger sister of Edith Abbott (1876-1957).⁶² The investigation also followed the formula of the Dillingham Commission, focusing on subjects such as crime, welfare, employment and education, combining statistical data and ethnographic accounts. In the process, the report relied much on the Dillingham Commission's data, citing and duly acknowledging the contribution of the federal investigation.

A closer examination, however, reveals the crucial difference between the two investigative commissions. The Massachusetts Commission had a very different goal from that of the Dillingham Commission. As can be seen from the profiles of the participants, it was much more sympathetic to the plight of immigrants: instead of singling out Southern and Eastern Europeans as "undesirable races," the Massachusetts Commission attempted to understand the social context which forced immigrants into those "undesirable" circumstances. In other words, instead of "blaming the victim," the investigation attempted to understand the social structure that produces those victims. While citing the Dillingham Commission's data, the Massachusetts Commission critically examined every aspect of it, highlighting confusions and contradictions such as those noted in the previous section. In short, the Massachusetts Commission refuted many of the Dillingham Commission's findings even while using its data.

⁶¹ Born in a wealthy family in Boston, Emily G. Balch (1867-1961) studied in Paris and Berlin before becoming a professor at Wellesley College in 1896. She participated in numerous investigative commissions, specializing on issues relating to women's labor and immigration. A close ally of Jane Addams and the settlement house movement, she was also active in the peace movement, and received Nobel Peace Prize in 1946 for her work.

⁶² Born in Nebraska, the Abbott sisters studied social sciences at the University of Chicago, and participated in many of the pro-immigrant organizations of the city, including the Hull House and Immigrant Protective League. Edith Abbott later served as a professor of social welfare at the University of Chicago, and is largely regarded as the founder of the academic field of social welfare in the United States.

For instance, the section on immigrant employment allocated many pages to refuting the “displacement” thesis put forward by the Dillingham Commission. According to the Dillingham Commission’s conclusions, Southern and Eastern Europeans were taking jobs previously held by American workers, and such a takeover was undermining “the American standard of living” by driving down the wages of low-skilled manual labor (Benton-Cohen 2018). However, the Massachusetts Commission, using the Dillingham Commission’s data, showed that this was unsubstantiated claim. In fact, American workers had moved to better-paying jobs, and it was unusual for “employers to engage recent immigrants at wages actually lower than those prevailing at the time of their employment” (*The Report of Massachusetts Commission on Immigration*, henceforth MCR: 87). In a striking tone that anticipates the apparent biases of the German foreman in previous section, the report noted that any attempts to rank employees by their efficiency would be “an expression of individual preference or prejudice rather than a business judgment”; it also added that “in the textile industry, where weaving is the most important and the most skilled work, the Polish and Lithuanian women are being used as weavers increasingly large numbers” (MCR: 85-86).

In short, through a close, critical reading of the Dillingham Commission reports, the Massachusetts Commission debunked the findings of the federal investigation: immigrant workers were not driving down wages; if anything, they were being paid less than their skill level and efficiency merited. On other topics, such as crime, welfare, and education, this pattern of reasoning continued: careful scrutiny of the Dillingham Commission data revealed that immigrants were less likely to commit crime and less likely to be on welfare than natives; many of their children attended American schools, and when they did not, it was because the municipal governments did not invest enough in the public education system. Through these analyses, the Massachusetts Commission effectively revealed that the immigrants were not separate, “undesirable races” to be feared and restricted, but men and women temporarily struggling in an unfamiliar land.

Although the Massachusetts Commission did not comment on the subject in an explicit manner, it is telling that the Commission largely avoided using the concept “race” in its report. Instead, the term “immigrants” was used to denote the commonality shared by both “old” and “new immigrants,” and the data supporting such commonality was presented to counter the Dillingham Commission’s emphasis on “race.” In short, whereas the Dillingham Commission focused on dividing up the larger category of whiteness into smaller “races,” the Massachusetts Commission and pro-immigrant activists were trying to patch up those divisions, interrogating their empirical legitimacy and implying that all immigrants share a common humanity.

Isaac Hourwich

In addition to the Massachusetts Commission, Isaac Hourwich (1860-1924)⁶³, an economist working for the U.S. Census Bureau, also published a monograph refuting the Dillingham Commission’s findings. *Immigration and Labor: The Economic Aspects of European Immigration*

⁶³ Born in a middle-class family in Lithuania, Isaac Hourwich studied mathematics at the University of St. Petersburg. After his involvement with socialists led to a 5-year exile in Siberia, Hourwich moved to New York City and earned a doctorate degree in economics from Columbia University. He published many articles in high-profile academic journals, worked for various federal government organizations in DC, and maintained an active presence in socialist and Zionist circles. The American Jewish Committee, which sought to produce a counterargument to the Dillingham Commission’s findings, recruited Hourwich to produce a monograph almost immediately after the Commission published its reports. For details regarding Hourwich’s relationship with the Dillingham Commission, see Perlmann (2018).

to the United States (1912) is an impressive work, to say the least: in a whopping 544 pages, Hourwich engaged in the formidable task of deconstructing almost the entire 41-volume corpus of the Dillingham Commission, displaying his mastery of statistics and government-produced data. The fact that the book was written as the Dillingham Commission was still analyzing its data was even more remarkable.⁶⁴ Whereas the Massachusetts Commission focused on highlighting the obvious contradictions within the Dillingham Commission reports, Hourwich often re-engineered its raw data, producing a different set of comparisons that overturned the Commission's findings. The key was not comparing immigrant groups of different "races" in the same year, to see which "race" stood out, as the Dillingham Commission attempted; instead, Hourwich factored in the years of residence for each immigrant group, and showed that the contemporary Southern and Eastern Europeans were moving along a trajectory not too different from Northern and Western European immigrants of a few decades ago. Faithfully following the basic principles of statistics – "finding the right comparison" – Hourwich conducted a sophisticated table-by-table analysis of the Commission's data. In fact, his techniques were much more sophisticated than the plain two-way cross-tables of the Dillingham Commission.⁶⁵

After an exhaustive review of the Dillingham Commission's data, Hourwich concluded that "the immigration commission, after a study of the earnings of more than half a million employees in mines and manufacture, has discovered no evidence that immigrants have been hired for less than the prevailing rates of wages" (Hourwich 1912: 23). Brushing aside nativist agitation by noting that "every complaint" against immigrants "is but an echo of complaints which were made at an earlier day against the new immigration from Ireland, Germany, and even from England," Hourwich ruled that the Dillingham Commission's analysis was fundamentally misguided (Hourwich 1912: 43). As far as statistics were concerned, the classification by "race" was at heart of the problem, because it "inevitably led to the slitting up of all statistical data into minute groups unfair for any generalizations" (Hourwich 1912: 57-58). Much like the Massachusetts Commission, Hourwich also argued that "splitting up" was not a valid way to study immigrants. Speaking from a purely economic perspective, Hourwich emphasized that all immigrants, regardless of their race, were just workers with different skill levels and preferences.

Conclusion: Reworking Whiteness

In this chapter, I presented two challenges the Dillingham Commission faced, one concerning its racial classification scheme, "races or peoples," and the other focusing on its claims about "undesirable" Southern and Eastern European immigrants. In the former instance, the logical contradiction inherent in the concept of whiteness served to deconstruct race as a biological concept and paved the way for a more flexible concept of ethnicity; and in the latter, the Commission's empirical data endangered the stability of the supposed racial hierarchy by showing

⁶⁴In the preface, Hourwich thanked W.W. Husband, the executive secretary of the Dillingham Commission, for providing table proofs of the Commission reports in advance of publication.

⁶⁵In England, Frances Galton and Karl Pearson had already developed elementary forms of regression analyses and methods for controlled comparison of group-level data. However, these methods were considered cutting-edge techniques and most of the experts in the Dillingham Commission were not trained in these methods. One notable exception was Franz Boas, whose knowledge on the statistical techniques helped him produce the Commission reports on the Cephalix Index (see Chapter 4). MacKenzie (1981) has chronicled how these techniques were developed as an extension of interest in race and eugenics. Xie (1988) has pointed out the limitations in MacKenzie's approach.

that Southern and Eastern Europeans were not as “undesirable” as the executive committee members assumed. However, these failures did not make the Commission a completely wasted opportunity for the nativist contingent – on the contrary, the nativist leaders of the Commission downplayed these challenges, and presented not what they found, but what they wanted to find: namely that Southern and Eastern Europeans were a separate, “undesirable race” that should be restricted through federal-level immigration control. In the summary and overall analysis, the Commission’s writing stood by the nativist doctrine, regardless of what the empirical data seemed to indicate.

However, the Commission made a compromise by publishing all of the data collected in the form of table and numbers, without hiding the uncomfortable facts, and in making that decision, stood by its claims on scientific validity and objectivity. Of course, the Commission did not put a spotlight on the data that did not support the nativist ideology; in many cases, the inconvenient facts were buried in the remote corners of the 27,000 pages-long final report. However, pro-immigrant intellectuals were more persistent than the executive committee members might have imagined. As we have seen in the examples of the Massachusetts Commission on Immigration and Isaac Hourwich, careful observers found the traces of those challenges, and used them to refute the findings of the Dillingham Commission. In the process, they engaged in the conceptual movement opposite to that of the Dillingham Commission: instead of highlighting the differences within the larger category of whiteness, they emphasized the commonality across immigrant groups, arguing that Southern and Eastern Europeans had much in common with previous generation of immigrants and native-born Americans, regardless of their “race.”

We can summarize this complicated sequence of knowledge production and appropriation in three different stages: first, the nativists initiated the exclusionary impulse targeting Southern and Eastern Europeans, which launched the Dillingham Commission’s inquiry and dividing up of the larger category of whiteness; second, in the course of the Commission’s work, the demand for logical consistency and empirical evidence resulted in challenges from “facts,” which, in turn, undermined the nativist understanding of race and racial hierarchy; and lastly, other pro-immigrant actors capitalized on those challenges, using them as a foundation on which to argue for the common humanity of all immigrants regardless of their “race.” In short, the dual movement of exclusion and inclusion were woven together through the demands of social science expertise in the Dillingham Commission, and through this circle of highlighting and dismantling the differences within whiteness, the concept of *different kinds of difference* emerged.

Chapter 4. Hijacking Knowledge Production: Franz Boas and the Assimilation Theory

Introduction Franz Boas and Head Shapes

Whereas the previous chapter highlighted how empirical data challenged the Dillingham Commission's nativist ideology, this chapter focuses on how an immigrant intellectual effectively hijacked the Commission's inquiry by using its funding to conduct a pro-immigrant research project. I discuss in detail the case of Franz Boas, a noted anthropologist who authored volume 38 of the Dillingham Commission Report, titled *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants*. In this report, Boas traced the bodily characteristics, most notably head shapes, of European immigrant children living in New York City. He showed that head shapes – supposedly the most stable indicator of “race” in the tradition of Blumenbach and Morton (see Chapter 1) – changed rapidly once the children were exposed to the American environment. Moreover, regardless of where they came from in Europe, their head shapes converged into a single form as they lived longer in the American environment. The idea that even the most rigid, biological indicator of “race,” such as head shape, could transform rapidly over time undermined the classical, essentialist notion of race as a fixed biological type, and provided evidence that European immigrants could transform into American citizens.

The result of this project radically challenged the exclusionary racial ideology of the Dillingham Commission. In addition to the concept of ethnicity and culture, the notion of assimilation, as Boas termed it, became another important pillar in the overall framework of *different kinds of difference*: European immigrants were indeed different, but their difference was something that would go away over time, as opposed to biological, essential difference that would never change. By adding this temporal dimension to the discussion of boundary-making, the assimilation concept became an important turning point in thinking about the relationship between race, nation, and immigration policy. And Franz Boas's work in the Dillingham Commission proved to be crucial in the development of assimilation theory.

Assimilation Theory Before the Dillingham Commission

In the 1900s, the concept of assimilation was slowly gaining attention from sociologists and reformers, but had a long way to go in terms of theoretical elaboration. Moreover, the concept of assimilation was muddled with social Darwinism, and its outlook was very different from what we know today as assimilation theory.

Sarah E. Simon, writing for the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1901, attempted a synthesis on the state of assimilation theory in the United States, to the extent that there was any discussion on the concept. She started by providing a basic definition of the term, citing European ethnologists and American social scientists: assimilation generally indicated “growing similar” or “denationalization” of two different races due to contact (Simon 1901: 790-791). Yet Simon pointed out that the term was used without proper theoretical elaboration: for instance, scholars often used the term without defining what the terms such as “race,” “similar,” “different,” and “contact” meant, causing confusion. She sought to resolve this ambiguity by pinning down the concept, taking up then-popular perspective of social Darwinism. Her first task was to confine the concept of assimilation to concerns about the development of civilization, arguing that “[c]onsideration of spontaneous assimilation in groups that have achieved nothing, that have contributed in no way to the world's fund of established knowledge, will not be undertaken.” Simon reasoned that assimilation was only meaningful in the context of civilization and conquest, noting that civilizations emerged “[t]hrough conquest, and the resulting amalgamation and assimilation of heterogeneous ethnic elements” (Simon 1901: 793). In other words, assimilation was a process

that occurred during a conquest, as a mechanism to instill the civilization of a conqueror into the conquered or in rare cases, vice versa.

Although this way of thinking about assimilation seems absurd to from the perspective of mid-twentieth-century assimilation theory (Gordon 1964), it is not too difficult to decipher what Simon meant if we consider the historical backdrop: the nineteenth century was the heyday of European colonialism, when small European nations, which had divided and conquered the rest of the world, maintained hegemony through ideology as much as they did by force. The United States, with its frontiers disappearing, was on the path to join other European empires in expanding its territory, most notably to Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines. As Eric Love (2004) has chronicled, race and empire was a pressing concern for American elites, who were in the process of reinventing themselves from domestic power brokers to standard-bearers of the world. The expansion of American territory would inevitably bring “democratically unfit” subjects – as non-whites were deemed – into the community of nation and citizenship; would the founding principles of freedom and equality apply without discrimination to these new subjects? In other words, American elites faced a choice between a unified democratic republic built around an enlightenment ideal and a powerful, expansive empire with an aristocratic racial hierarchy. Of course, as Guyatt (2016) has shown, the American democratic ideal itself was built on the premise of racial segregation against African Americans and Native Americans, as well as non-white immigrants such as Chinese and Mexicans. Nevertheless, in the age of empire, assimilation was understood through the lens of colonialism, as a theory of how races could change through contact initiated by morally sanctioned colonial conquests.

Assimilation was, to Simon, a process that followed military conquest; its outcome was—or rather, should be—the advancement of civilization. Groups that “have achieved nothing” and “have contributed in no way to the world’s fund of established knowledge” lied beyond the horizon of assimilation, and were not worthy of scholarly discussion. For Simon, assimilation was a state-led, or more precisely, empire-led, process in which different races submit to a common political order, one that was administered by the conqueror. For assimilation between two races to occur, “race consciousness” of the two groups should somehow converge to one. If that is not the case, “[a]ntipathy may be so great as to prevent all union.” For instance, “[t]he Chinese is so utterly out of the sphere of thought of the western man that his non-assimilation to occidental culture seems well-nigh a foregone conclusion. The ideals of the Chinese are diametrically opposed to those of the western man; there are no common culture bonds between the two races.” Hence “there is no possibility,” Simon ruled, “of the formation of fellowship feelings” between those who were too different, such as the Chinese, and hence in those relationships “there can be no assimilation” (1901: 799).

In short, Simon had a clear idea about the boundary of assimilation: races that “have achieved nothing” and are “utterly out of the sphere of thought of the western man” could not be assimilated. In Simon’s formulation, the notion of difference easily translated into the notion of inferiority. In addition to “races” like Chinese towards whom “antipathy” was “so great,” intermarriage, or “physical assimilation” was also presented as something to avoid. Intermarriage was “the inevitable result” of contact between different races and “plays its part in the process of assimilation”; but Simon also argued that assimilation is possible without intermarriage, as evidenced by “the partial assimilation of the negro and the Indian of the United States” (Simon 1901:801). This is because race-mixture inherently led to a decline of civilization: “Half-breeds, produced by the mixture of different races, have nowhere attained a high civilization.” Simon listed

“[t]he Indian half-breed and the mulatto of the United States” as the living examples of her theory of civilization decline (1901: 802).

In other words, Simon regarded assimilation as essential in the advancement of civilization through colonial conquest, but wanted to demarcate its limitations as well. The races deemed “too different” could not be assimilated, and intermarriage, or “physical assimilation” was a misbegotten means of developing civilization. The case of “the partial assimilation of the negro and the Indian of the United States” was invoked to support this point. It is not very clear what she meant by “the partial assimilation” – most likely she meant the troubled segregation and discrimination these groups faced in the contemporary United States; however, it was still assimilation – if only “partial” – because they were the subject of the American political order.

In the country where miscegenation was a horrible crime (Pascoe 2009), the eugenic theory of race degeneration easily gained much support among elites, and Simon invoked the perceived threats to whiteness in marking out the boundary of assimilation as a concept. That is, assimilation was a necessary evil in colonial ventures, but, Simon emphasized, its boundaries should be clearly highlighted lest it should lead to the degeneration of whiteness. Her intentions became clearer when she discussed the pitfalls of assimilation for “white men”: “When civilized man on the borders of civilization comes in contact with barbarous or semi-civilized races,” Simon claimed, “there is modification on both sides” (Simon 1901: 804). “White men,” in their mission of civilizing the world, would inevitably come in contact with “less civilized” races, and the contact would most likely result in their becoming “callous and superstitious and lax in morals.” In short, contact and degeneration, along with methods of preventing degeneration, were the key components of assimilation theory in the nineteenth century.

Hence at the turn of the twentieth century, the concept of assimilation ran into contradictions: if different races were that much *different*, as the nineteenth-century race-hinkers sought to demonstrate, how could they “grow similar”? The question of racial hierarchy logically preceded—and troubled—the question of assimilation: among “lower races,” only those who were redeemable could be the subject of assimilation. However, if there was a clear hierarchy of civilization among different races, and “lower races” were confined to their lower positions by their limited faculty, either by their natural, inherent characteristics or by God’s overall design, how could such races expect to “grow” at all?

When Boas was writing to the Dillingham Commission, seeking the funding for his research on immigrant assimilation, this was the theoretical terrain that he was walking into. Nativists in the Commission probably reasoned along the line of Simon’s article when they heard him reference the concept of assimilation, thinking that he would conduct a research on the themes of race, degeneration, and the pitfalls of American nation as melting pot. As we will see below, however, Boas was approaching the issue from a fundamentally different perspective.

The Origin of the Hijacking: the 1894 AAAS Address on Human Faculty and Race

In 1894, Franz Boas was at the lowest point of his academic career — or possibly of his life. As an ambitious, intellectually fierce young scholar with a German Ph.D., Boas had been looking for a permanent faculty position in the United States for ten years. Having worked with the Inuit in Baffin Islands of the North Pole and the native tribes in British Columbia (see Chapter 2), he had extensive fieldwork experience, contrary to his colleagues, who prioritized armchair theorizing over empirical observation. Yet for a German Jewish immigrant with a thick accent and uncompromising personality, landing a stable job was not an easy matter. He was moving from one temporary position to another, taking up short-term curator positions in various museums.

During the summer, he worked as a fieldworker for other scholars, taking transcontinental railroad and procuring artifacts from native tribes on the West Coast to support colleague's theorizing. In 1894, he was working on curating the Northwest Coast exhibition for the Chicago World's Fair (1893) while eyeing a faculty position as the newly founded University of Chicago. W.H. Holmes, his rival, was eventually offered the position. In the same year, his newborn daughter died of illness, and Boas had to write to his father back in Germany to ask for medical and living expenses for his family (Cole 1999: 152-166).

At this difficult time, he was invited to speak in Section H of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the only national association for anthropologists at the time. Perhaps to forget everything that had happened to him in 1894, Boas put much work into preparing his address. He needed attention from his colleagues, and so he picked the most important and contested topic – “Human Faculty as Determined by Race.” This was the first time that he was publically stating his opinion in regards to matters of race. Boas had lived among the Inuit and Native Americans, developing his own perspective on the existing theories about the relationship between race and civilization. Yet he was not considered an expert in the area, and had not been engaged in the debate, which dominated anthropology at the time. He began by summarizing the existing theories, which amounted to self-congratulation for European civilization as the grand achievement of the white race. European civilization was thought to display a higher degree of development than other civilizations; therefore, the capabilities of the white race must be greater than those of other races; physical evidence, such as differences in brain size, affirmed these racial differences. In other words, civilization, mental ability, and bodily characteristics formed a core nexus of racial hierarchy — this was the state of contemporary anthropology (Boas 1894a: 222-223).

Boas attacked this nexus from multiple angles. His main argument was an elementary expression of what is today known as cultural relativism. Rather than supposing a rigid hierarchy among races, he focused on criticizing the sketchy evidence that buttressed the hierarchy. Boas also pointed out the weak link between physical characteristics and mental ability, citing numerous problems with measurements and data collection regarding the subject. Although Boas did not deny the hierarchy of civilization all together, he attempted to sever its ties to racial characteristics, defined according to the physical features and mental ability of a group. In other words, there may be a hierarchy among different civilizations or races; however, Boas reasoned, the existing measurements, such as physical traits and indicators of mental ability, failed to verify such a hierarchy in empirical terms.

The most famous part of Boas's argument for cultural relativism focused on individual variations within racial groups: “the variations inside any single race are such that they overlap the variations in another race so that a number of characteristics may be common to individuals of both races”(Boas 1894a: 227). Hence, Boas reasoned, one could not argue that any racial characteristics, defined as the average of statistical measurements of the group (see Chapter 1), could be associated with the level of development in civilization. Whereas civilizations are bound together in a more or less coherent way, population groups, or “races,” overlap much in their characteristics, and it would be inaccurate to assume a sharp division between racial groups.

Other arguments relied on an evolutionary framework, overturning the favorite logic of race-thinkers. For Boas, the key was in distinguishing actual level of development from aptitude for development. Boas claimed that he was not trying to deny the differences in the level of development among different civilizations. He argued, however, that the qualitative differences among civilized societies did not mean that less developed civilizations would not or could not

reach their full potential, provided that enough time was given to them. In other words, the contemporary hierarchy of civilization might be a temporary one, and lower-ranked civilizations might possess equal, if not more, aptitude for development as the white civilization on the top. A true evolutionary framework, Boas emphasized, would suppose a longer time frame for the test of potential, as was the case in biological evolution: “[I]f we assume arbitrarily no more than 20,000 years as the age of man, what would it mean that one group of mankind reached the same stage at the age of 20,000 years which was reached by the other at the age of 24,000 years?” (1894a: 224) As a German-trained Ph.D. with extensive fieldwork experience, Boas saw through the amateur theorizing of American race-thinkers, who often rushed to premature conclusions to rationalize their political convictions and racial prejudice. An accurate understanding of the theory of evolution, as well as attention to empirical data, Boas thought, would correct their misunderstandings.

The most important argument for our purpose, however, comes from his emphasis on assimilation and amalgamation between different civilizations. The hierarchy of civilization assumed the independence of each “race” and supposed that each race struggled on its own to realize its potential. However, this was, according to Boas, far from what actual had occurred in history: many civilizations had been in contact with other civilizations, sharing much of what they developed through trade and communication. In some cases, different civilizations merged into a single entity through assimilation and amalgamation, often resulting in further development of civilizations involved. Boas pointed out that the so-called “white race” of Europe was a result of amalgamation of multiple groups, the conditions for which were more favorable in Europe than the other regions of the world.

Again, Boas was man of his time, and he did not deny the racial hierarchy entirely; he conceded that, at least for the time being, Europeans would maintain a higher degree of development than, say, Asians and Africans. Yet his emphasis on the relationship between different races made him push his argument in a direction that challenged the assumptions of the race-thinking of the time. Using the example of the Islamic empires of the Middle Ages, Boas highlighted the applicability of assimilation as a concept: It is of interest to see in what manner [the Islamic empires] influenced the negro races of the sudan....[w]e see that, since that time, large empires were formed and disappeared again in struggles with neighboring states and that a relatively high degree of culture has been attained.” This is because “[t]he invaders intermarried with the natives, and the mixed races, some of which are almost purely negro, have risen high above the level of other African negroes” (Boas 1894a: 225).

As was the case in Sarah Simon, military conquest, colonial or otherwise, was an important precondition of assimilation for Boas. The development of civilization following assimilation was also his concern. On the question of intermarriage, however, Boas differed sharply with Simon’s theory of race degeneration. He contrasted traffic between races in ancient empires with contemporary European colonization, pointing out that “the whites send only the products of their manufactures and a few of their representatives into the negro country” and the export-only policy would not lead to “[a] real amalgamation between the higher types of the whites and the negroes” (Boas 1894a: 226).

Whereas the people of ancient Islamic empires conquered and intermarried with members of African tribes, thereby assimilating their civilization, Boas argued that the contemporary European empires “send only the product of their manufactures” and “a real amalgamation” was not occurring. Instead of assimilation and amalgamation, European colonization brought what Boas termed “arrested development” to other civilizations: “The rapid dissemination of Europeans

over the whole world cut short all promising beginnings which had arisen in various regions...without regard to the mental aptitude of the people among whom it was developing” (Boas 1894a: 226). In other words, by exporting products and extracting resources without ensuring “real amalgamation” through intermarriage, the contemporary European empires were hampering the potential of colonized nations to civilize. Boas was arguing that the supposed racial hierarchy was a self-realizing prophecy: Europeans were on top because they were blocking everyone else from climbing up the ladder of civilization.

In order to properly situate the novelty of Boas’s claims, we have to evaluate his emphasis on assimilation and amalgamation in the context of turn-of-the-century race-thinking. As we have seen in the case of Sarah Simon, eugenic theories of degeneration were very popular, especially among WASP elites who often saw immigration as a threat to the established social and political order of the nation. As we have seen in the case of Agassiz’s “revulsion” against a black waiter serving him (Chapter 1), the antipathy towards interracial contact and mixture had more of an emotional foundation than a scientific one, even when race-thinkers attempted to amass objective evidence showing the pitfalls of race-mixture. In this context, Boas’s emphasis on assimilation and amalgamation – which in fact advocated for intermarriage between whites and those who were deemed not as well developed in their potential for civilization– was considerably out of tune with the mainstream consensus of American society, its implicit affirmation of racial hierarchy notwithstanding.

Although Boas was not preoccupied with either supporting or criticizing the race-thinking of the time, he often chastised pseudo-scientific theories of eugenicists when they failed to provide empirical evidence for their bold claims. As a foreigner, Jew, and most of all, person with uncompromising dedication scientific empiricism, Boas was not swayed by emotional and moralistic reaction against race-mixture. If anything, it was an empirically interesting phenomenon to study. Whereas the progressive reformers of the time bemoaned race-mixture as a moral failing and race-thinkers documented its negative consequences, Boas focused on the empirical data.

In *The Half-Blood Indian: An Anthropometric Study* (1894), published in the same year as his AAAS address, he wrote: “[T]here are few countries in which the effects of intermixture of races and of change of environment upon the physical characteristics of man can be studied as advantageously as in America, where a process of slow amalgamation between three distinctive races is taking place” (Boas 1894b: 761). By “three distinctive races,” he meant “native race,” “European,” and “African.” Using his fieldwork among Pacific Coast native tribes as an opportunity to collect the data, he observed whether race mixture caused sterility in the following generation. According to the eugenics theories that were widely accepted during the time, racial mixture would lead to degeneration of “racial stock,” resulting in sterilization and regression in the development of mind and body for the following generations.

If these theories were true, Boas would find a decline in birth rate of the Native American women who were born out of marriages between white men and Native American women (“Half-blood Indian”). The evidence he collected did not support these predictions. In fact, “half-blood Indian” women had more children than “pure-blood Indian” women, and head sizes of the children, which were supposed to reflect their level of physical development, revealed no sign of regression. In other words, empirical evidence was not in favor of eugenic theories of degeneration. Although his book focused more on presenting empirical evidence and disproving existing theories, Boas was beginning to think about a new theoretical framework to address difference among population groups. Assimilation, intermixture, head shape, and the influence of environment—the things he encountered in his fieldwork would later inform his project with the Dillingham Commission, and

eventually provide a foundation for his new theory of race and culture. Using these concepts and variables, Boas would later engage in a lifelong struggle against scientific racism, and eventually put the nails in the coffin of race-thinking by confirming that race had no scientific basis in either nature or culture. In other words, what some scholars call the “Boasian revolution” (Williams 1996) was beginning to take shape in his early fieldwork experiences.

The revolutionary aspects of his theory, however, did not announce themselves in his AAAS address. They were nested in careful analysis of the available evidence on racial difference, most of which proved to be, according to Boas, rather unreliable. His overall conclusion was not a full-blown argument for racial equality, but a cautionary remark on the methodology of anthropological research: “When considering psychological evidence, we found that most of it is not a safe guide for our inquiry, because causes and effects are so closely interwoven that it is impossible to separate them in a satisfactory manner, and as we are always liable to interpret as racial character what is only an effect of social surroundings” (Boas 1894a: 242).

Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants

A decade later, when the Dillingham Commission’s inquiry began, Franz Boas was in a very different position from where he had been in 1894. He was a professor of anthropology at Columbia University; he was one of the founding members of the American Anthropological Association; he had trained and placed a new generation of anthropologists, such as Alfred Kroeber and Edward Sapir, who had taken positions in new, emerging institutions of higher education such as the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Michigan, and was about to work with the promising next generation of anthropologists, including Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Zora Neal Hurston; although he did not have much time to do fieldwork himself, he had been orchestrating multiple fieldwork projects in and out of the United States; he was also involved in the movement that founded NAACP and was corresponding with an emerging cadre of black intellectuals, including W.E.B. DuBois and most importantly, he was regarded as a leading figure in the emerging discipline of anthropology.

It was in this context that Boas came to contact Jeremiah W. Jenks, a Cornell economist who was the academic mastermind behind the Dillingham Commission (see Chapter 2). Boas first pitched his idea to Jenks in the form of a research proposal, hoping that the Commission would provide the necessary funds for his data collection. Citing the contemporary shift in the composition of immigrants from “the tall, blond northwestern type of Europe” to “the east, central, and south European types,” Boas stated that his goal in the proposed investigation was to test for “the marvelous power of amalgamation that our nation has exhibited for so long a time.” In other words, he proposed to assess the degree to which European immigrants “amalgamate” when they migrate to the United States, and if so, how. In order to measure changes in “racial type,” he would collect data on head measurements, and color of hair and eyes from various immigrant groups.⁶⁶ The Commission members were initially skeptical of Boas’s research, thinking that his proposal exceeded the sociological scope of the Commission. In other words, the Commission members perceived his project as focused too much on theoretical issue as opposed to serving the more practical aims of the Commission (see Chapter 3). To the Commission members, his proposal contained a lot of compelling scientific terms pertaining to the newly emerging science of eugenics, yet no one, perhaps other than Jenks, was qualified to exactly understand what Boas was trying to

⁶⁶ Minutes of Immigration Commission Meetings, April 1, 1908. Husband papers, Chicago History Museum; Franz Boas to Jeremiah W. Jenks, March 23, 1908. Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

do. Still there was mention of race and immigration; and the project would deliver empirical data, a great deal of it.

After Boas's passionate plea and reporting of preliminary findings, the Commission finally granted the necessary funding and permission to proceed with the project (see Zeidel 2004: 86-96; Hyatt 1990:105-112 for the details leading up to Boas's involvement in the Dillingham Commission). The resulting report, *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (vol. 38)⁶⁷, became one of the most cited volumes in the entire 41-volume collection. As he proposed, Boas demonstrated that physical features of "racial types" were far from stable; exposure to a new environment would lead to assimilation of physical features, resulting in the convergence of characteristics in the children of immigrants, and he was "compelled to conclude that when these features of the body change, the whole bodily and mental make-up of the immigrants may change" (Boas 1911: 5).

This rather bold statement relied much on his use of head measurements. In fact, he did not find too much evidence of assimilation in color of hair and eyes. Anthropologists and biologists of the time had yet to fully rediscover the Mendellian theory of hereditary, and Boas did not have the theoretical tools with which to make sense of his data on eyes and hair. Head shape, however, was a different story. Head form, according to Boas and other race-thinkers of the time, "had always been considered one of the most stable and permanent characteristic of human races," (Boas 1911: 5) and cephalix index – defined as ratio of the maximum width of a head divided by the maximum length – provided a reliable means to compare differences in head forms across different races. Drawing from the large body of previous research on head forms in Europe, Boas observed the effect of environment, measured by the length of stay in the United States, on cephalix index. The key question was whether living in a new environment would lead to changes in head shapes. In other words, would immigrants remain a distinctive and different race after they had spent time in the United States – as Lodge had argued with his "one thousand years" logic (see Chapter 1) – or would they readily transform into something else, defying the rigid, essentialist ideas of race held by the Commission members? The answer to this question was presented through the following figures prepared by Boas himself for the report.

⁶⁷ Henceforth I refer to report as Boas (1911) rather than DCR vol. 38, in order to emphasize how the volume stood out from the other volumes of DCR.

TABLE 2.—Cephalic index of Hebrew and Sicilian boys; foreign-born, those born in America within 10 years after arrival of mother, and those born 10 years or more after arrival of mother.

Type and age.	Cephalic index.	Average age.	Cases.
SICILIAN.			
Foreign-born boys 5 to 12 years old.....	79.5	9.6	241
American-born boys 5 to 19 years old:			
Born less than ten years after arrival of mother.....	80.9	10.0	375
Born ten years and more after arrival of mother.....	81.8	9.5	127
HEBREW.			
American-born boys 7 to 10 years old:			
Born ten years and more after arrival of mother.....	82.3	9.2	290
Born less than ten years after arrival of mother.....	82.4	9.2	257
Foreign-born boys 7 to 10 years old.....	84.6	9.1	179

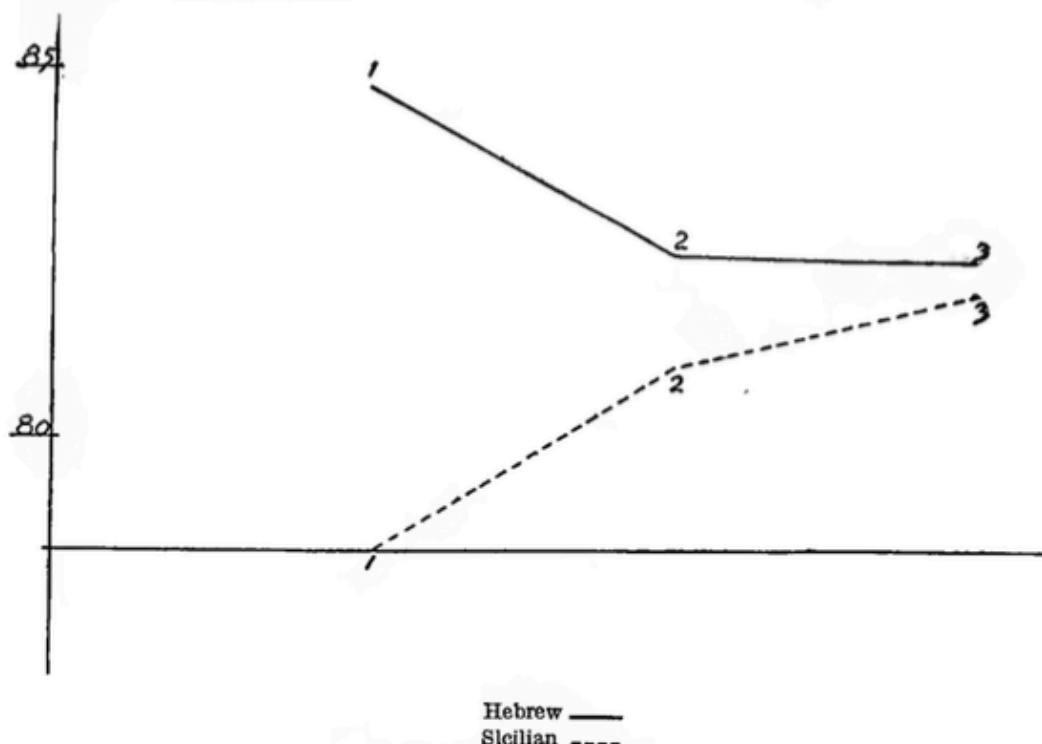


FIG. 2.—Comparison of head form of Hebrews and Sicilians, arranged according to time elapsed between birth and immigration.

At 1 is indicated the head form expressed by the ratio between width and length of head of foreign-born Hebrews and Sicilians; at 2, the same ratios for those born within ten years after the arrival of their mothers in the United States; at 3, the corresponding values for those born more than ten years after the arrival of their mothers in America. The diagram shows the very rapid approach of the two types among children born shortly after the arrival of their mothers in America, and the slower continuation of this approach among children born a long time after the arrival of their mothers in America.

Figure 11. Cephalix Indexes of "Hebrew" and "Sicilian" Children of Immigrants
(source: Boas 1911: 8)

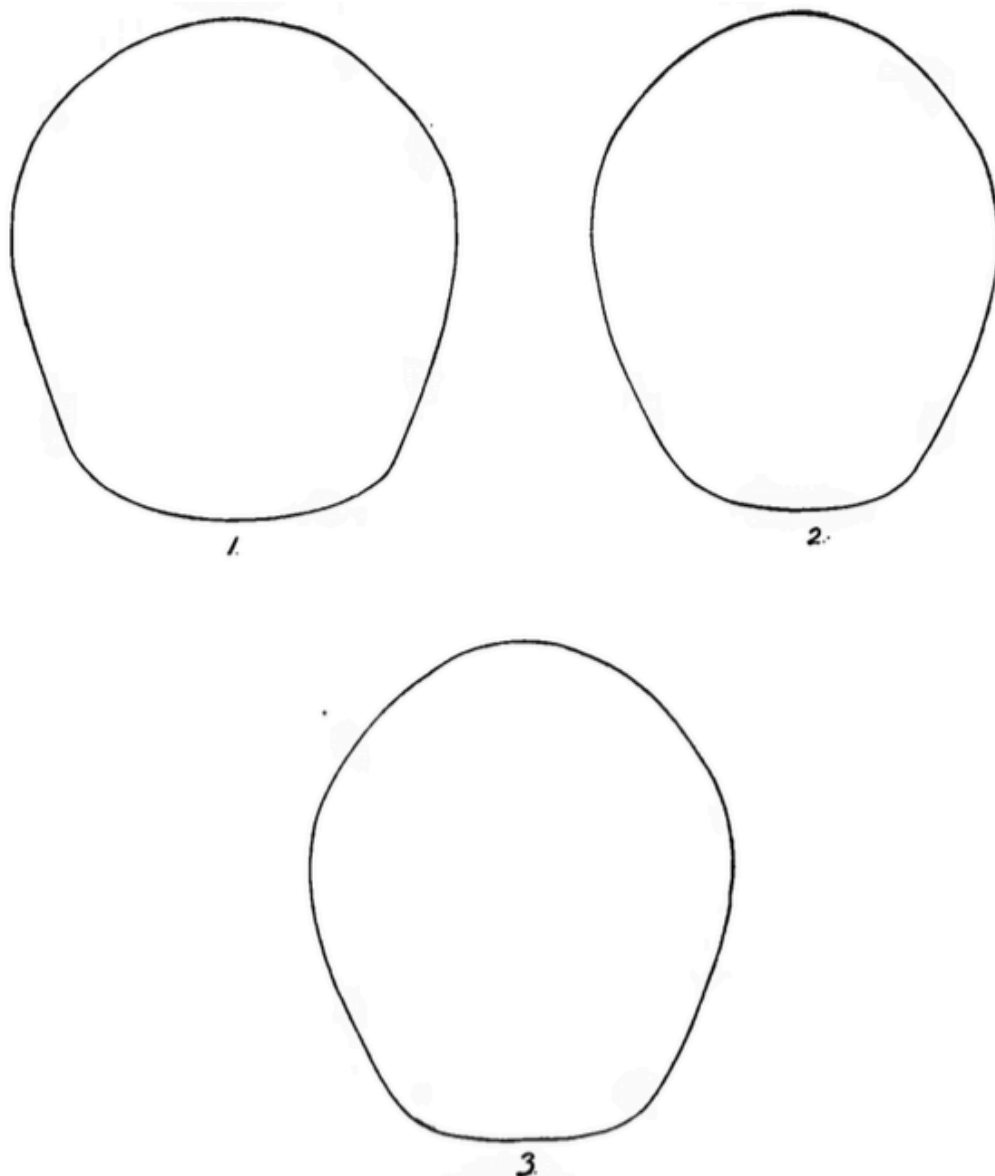


FIG. 3.—Sketches of head forms.

Showing (1) the average form of the head of the foreign-born Hebrew; (2) the average form of the head of the foreign-born Sicilian; (3) the average form of the head of the American-born Hebrew and Sicilian born more than ten years after the arrival of the mother in America. These sketches are intended only to give an impression of the change in proportions. They do not represent the head forms in detail.

Figure 12. Sketches of Head Forms: “Hebrews(1),” “Sicilians(2),” the American-born Children(3) (source: Boas 1911: 9)

The previous research from Europe indicated that “Hebrews” (i.e. Eastern European Jews) were farthest apart from “Sicilians” (i.e. Italians from the island of Sicily) in terms of their “racial type.” The differences in their respective cephalic indexes were greater than any other two groups within Europe. Whereas “Hebrews” had the highest cephalic index, representing their “round heads,” “Sicilians” had the lowest cephalic index, representing their “long heads.” But as seen in Figure 11, the children born after their mothers had immigrated the United States displayed more similar cephalic indexes; as point 3 shows, the convergence became greater when the mothers had

stayed in the American soil longer before giving birth. As seen in Figure 12, “in this country both approach a uniform type, as far as the roundness of the head is concerned” (Boas 1911: 5). In other words, head shape, or cephalix index, was far from being a stable measure of a racial type; rather, just like other bodily characteristics such as height and weight, it was a product of environment. Therefore, Boas implied, race was, after all, a product of environment, and there was no essential, unchanging trait that would confine immigrants to a fixed type. After making this decisive argument, Boas went on to fill almost all of the remaining 550 pages of the report with figures and tables, addressing and discarding most, if not all, of the alternative explanations for the results.⁶⁸

The tone of his argument was conspicuously at odds with the Dillingham Commission as a whole. The Commission’s purpose was to classify and count immigrants in order to distinguish “desirable” immigrants from “undesirable” ones. To this end, the Commission presented an “avalanche of printed numbers” (Hacking 1982) that filled the 41 volumes of the report. Boas in effect made the opposing argument while relying on the same method of quantification: his results displayed that even cephalix index, supposedly the most stable feature of “racial type,” went through considerable transformation for immigrants under the influence of a new environment—and within one generation. Hence, Boas implied, the racial categories that the Commission was attempting to naturalize were far from reliable—in fact, Boas was carefully, but boldly, claiming that “a new American type” of race was emerging out of immigration.

Assimilation as a Transformation

As we saw in his AAAS address of 1894, Boas had been interested in assimilation and amalgamation of races for some time. Unlike his colleagues who accepted eugenics theories of race degeneration, Boas saw contact between races as a key mechanism in the development of civilization. Nevertheless, he never formally defined what he meant by assimilation. A number of commentators acknowledged that Boas did not clearly define his most important theoretical concepts, such as culture and folklore (Lewis 2001; Stocking Jr. 1968). Instead, he liberally used them in different contexts, always putting empirical data in front of conceptual precision. In other words, Boas amassed a great amount of data within the framework of his concepts, such as assimilation, but it was not clear as to whether all of the data collected belonged under the same heading.

As we have seen in his AAAS address, however, his theoretical inclination was slightly different from that of other theorists of assimilation, such as Sarah Simon, although he did not fully lay out how he differed from them. In his writings on blacks, Jews, and Native Americans in contemporary American society, Boas strictly adhered to a definition of assimilation as interracial marriage, or race-mixture: assimilation to Boas meant “becoming indistinguishable” in physical

⁶⁸ Anthropologists have debated the validity of Boas’s statistical analysis (Sparks and Jantz 2002; 2003; Gravelee, Bernard, and Leonard 2003a; 2003b; Holloway 2002) and the debate garnered much popular attention (“A New Look at Old Data May Discredit a Theory on Race” *New York Times* 10/08/2003). Although critics have argued that Boas’s argument on plasticity of head forms was much exaggerated, if not entirely groundless, Gravelee and his co-authors found that Boas’s most important findings were still valid when tested by modern statistical techniques. They did note, however, the effect size of the length of stay on the cephalix index was quite small.

attributes, to the point where marginalized groups could pass without being noticed as such by other members of the society. Writing for the *Yale Review* in 1921, Boas opined that the so-called “the negro problem” would not disappear “until the negro blood has been so much diluted that it will no longer be recognized just as anti-Semitism will not disappear until the last vestige of the Jew as a Jew had disappeared” (Boas 1921; as quoted in Degler 1991: 80). In this regard, Boas’s concept of assimilation assumed the same outcome as it did for other theorists, only through a different process: a larger, more advanced group would eventually prevail over smaller, marginalized group. In Sarah Simon’s framework, colonial conquest would lead to dissolution of “race consciousness”; in the Boasian scheme, intermixture would lead to physical absorption of the smaller group into the larger one. In both cases, we still see the traces of racial hierarchy and imagery of conquest by the strong over the weak.

In *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants*, however, we see a radically different usage of the assimilation concept. In Boas’s work with the Dillingham Commission, assimilation was defined as “growing alike,” but not through intermixture, but through common environmental influence and adaptation. It is striking that Boas’s analysis did not feature comparison of immigrant groups with “Americans,” which was the most prevalent comparison across the 41 volumes of the Commission report. To Boas, “Americans” were not a pre-defined group whose life style and culture should be protected from immigrants, as the Commission members supposed, but an outcome of the process through which immigrants were assimilating in a new environment. In other words, head shape number 3 – see Figure 12 – was “American,” as defined by his empirical data, and against this hard-edged empiricism, the romantic nationalism of the likes of Lodge and Roosevelt had no place to stand.

The Boasian concept of assimilation did not have to do with immigrants conforming to some pre-defined notion of “Americans”; rather, it denoted the process of their transformation and adaptation in a new environment, almost in a biological fashion: as plants and animals evolve when transplanted to a new environment, European immigrants evolved in the American setting, resulting in “a new type.” Writing for *Science* in the year he was working on the report, Boas proclaimed that “the phenomenon of mixture presented in the United States is unique” and “that a similar intermixture has never occurred before in the world’s history; and that our nation is destined to become what some writers choose to term a ‘mongrel’ nation” (Boas 1909). Again, contrary to progressive reformers and race-thinkers, he used the word “mongrel” in no demeaning sense; he used it in a strictly biological manner, to indicate mixture and evolution of organisms. Assimilation was, in this case, a process that led to the formation of this “mongrel nation” and its unique “racial type.” Against nativists who argued that Southern and Eastern European immigrants were “too different” to be assimilated into American society, Boas presented evidence showing that they were in fact transforming into “a new American type” in the new environment, just as the previous generation of immigrants had. In Boas’s research, assimilation simply noted the fact that immigrants of different races were changing and becoming similar to each other under a common environmental influence; and the outcome was an unforeseen rise of a new identity. This perspective marked a demise of the old ways of thinking about race and national identity.

Influence on the Chicago School

Although his concept of assimilation was ambiguous and potentially conflicted, Boas opened up new theoretical ground in *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* by doing away with the most profound contradiction within the concept. As we saw in the Sarah Simon’s synthesis, the outcome of assimilation had always been tied to development of civilization and maintenance

of the established racial hierarchy. Boas did retain some features of this perspective, especially when he was writing about the disappearance of marginalized groups through dilution of their “blood.” As we have seen in the 1894 address, however, he did provide a ground to argue for the equality of all races; even if they did not *appear* equal as they were, there was a possibility that they would rise to a level equal with the European civilization and the “white race,” sometimes through their own effort and other times through intermixture and diffusion of culture. The question of capacity for development was no longer a problem for the concept of assimilation; the focus was on *process* and in some cases — such as in the case of Boas’s work in the Dillingham Commission — an unexpected new outcome that could come out of the process.

Boas did not see a conflict in his two different definitions of assimilation. The clear contrast between the case of blacks, Jews, and Native Americans and that of European immigrants seemed not to bother him,⁶⁹ and he did not pursue further work to clarify the contrast. The Chicago school sociologists, who are generally hailed as originators of assimilation theory (Gordon 1964: Alba and Nee 2003), however, recognized and retained this contradiction in their development of the assimilation concept.

Historians find much congruence between the core ideas of Boasian anthropology and Chicago school sociology (Degler 1991; Yu 2001; Stocking Jr. 1968). Both schools brought about paradigm shifts in their respective disciplines, leaving lasting legacies in both theory and institutional structure of the professions. Archival evidence suggests that the congruence was actually more of a direct influence than mere coincidence.⁷⁰ William I. Thomas, member of an earlier generation among Chicago school sociologists, had written to Boas as early as March 28th, 1907 to invite him to University of Chicago for a lecture. After the visit, Thomas continued to write to Boas occasionally, expressing his intellectual admiration and asking permission to include a portion of *The Mind of Primitive Man* in *Source Book for Social Origins*, an edited volume used for instruction in the department of sociology in University of Chicago (Degler 1991: 89-90). As Stocking Jr. has noted, Boas was central to the foundation of the Chicago school of sociology: “[T]he debt is further evident in 1912—the year after *The Mind of Primitive Man* appeared in the book form—when Thomas buttressed his assertion of human equipotentiality with quotations from Boas. But most of all, the debt leaps out unacknowledged page after page of Thomas’ writing, which parallels Boas’ at numerous points” (1968: 264).

Simply put, the most important contribution of Chicago sociology — race-relations cycle, assimilation, culture, and spatial model of different groups living together in urban space — relied on Boasian understanding of human potential: in order to interrogate group dynamics and social change, one should be able to assume equal potential for all groups to develop through interaction with each other, before delving into how specifically they would interact. Race science and eugenics argued that this was neither possible nor desirable, for different groups were too different to interact with each other. Boas argued otherwise, and provided a theoretical starting point for Chicago sociology to build their intellectual enterprise.

⁶⁹ It is possible that Boas was more concerned about discrimination than the white/non-white racial boundary. In order to reduce discrimination, logically speaking, any trace of group identity should disappear, as to not give grounds for discriminating; when it came to the problem of immigration and national identity, however, assimilation was a mechanism of transformation of established categories, not absorption of one identity by another. Race vs. ethnicity distinction (see introduction) is also found in Boas’s thinking.

⁷⁰ The correspondences between William I. Thomas and Franz Boas, Franz Boas Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Hence it is not surprising to find Boas's influence in Robert E. Park's canonical work on assimilation. Writing for the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1913, Park provided two definitions, focusing on individual freedom and group-level takeover, respectively: "Historically [assimilation] has had two distinct significations... There is a process that goes on in society by which individuals spontaneously acquire one another's language, characteristic attitudes, habits, and modes of behavior. There is also a process by which individuals and groups of individuals are taken over and incorporated into larger groups." The key dimension he added to the Boasian formulation, however, was to bring in the concept of nation. "The modern Italian, Frenchman, and German is a composite of broken fragments of several different racial groups," and "[i]nterbreeding has broken up the ancient stocks, and interaction and imitation have created new national types." In other words, assimilation has led to formation of nations, either through individuals voluntarily taking up other ways of life or one group dominating and forcing their ways of life on the other. The outcome of this process was, Park emphasized, "definite uniformities in language, manners, and formal behavior" found in nations (Park 1913: 66).

The last phrase, "uniformities in language, manners and formal behavior," was definitely Park's own addition to Boasian thinking. As an anthropologist with fieldwork experience in various places, Boas never believed that any manifestation of culture could be "uniform" or coherent. In fact, his early works on Kwakiutl language taught him that endless variations and diffusion of the variations were essential characteristics of culture, or any given social group. Even when he was suggesting the notion of "a new American type," he was open to the possibility of further change of such type—again, assimilation was more of a *process* than a fixed outcome for Boas. For Park, on the contrary, the emphasis was on *outcome*: whereas Boas was interested in the fact that immigrants were transforming themselves, Park asked what they were transforming into; like Simon who was interested in development of civilization, Park was interested in the formation of uniform national identity. In short, Boas's hijacking of the Dillingham Commission project was once again hijacked by Park, and Boas's theories of the transformative potential of immigrants to forge a new identity became a nationalist narrative, through which diverse groups of people came to embody a pre-defined "American" characteristics.

Conclusion: Assimilable Difference

In tracing the development of assimilation theory in the early twentieth century, I have covered multiple intellectual terrains: starting from race-thinking and eugenics, which subsumed assimilation into the theory of racial hierarchy, I have followed Boas as he hijacked the Dillingham Commission's project to highlight the transformative potential of immigrants, leveraging this revelation against nineteenth century beliefs about the connection between head shapes and stability of racial types. After reviewing where his contribution originated from, I also traced the legacy of his work, to the full-blown development of nationalist assimilation theory in the Chicago School and Robert E. Park. The long evolution of the assimilation concept can be summarized into three steps: race and civilization (Simon), transformative potential of immigrants (Boas), and nationalist appropriation of such potential (Park). The Dillingham Commission, or more precisely, Boas's hijacking of Commission funding and authority, was situated squarely in the middle of this conceptual development, marking the moment at which the nineteenth-century race concept evolved into twentieth-century nationalism.

Whereas the problems within the data collection process, documented in Chapter 3, undermined the rigidity of the biological concept of race, the development of assimilation theory provided an alternative way of thinking about immigrants. In the assimilation framework,

immigrants were not a distinctive “undesirable” race with no hope of ever adapting to the American environment, as the nativists such as Lodge had argued; rather, they were people who were in the middle of transformation, either forming an unforeseen American “type” (Boas) or gradually embodying desirable “American characteristics” (Park). In both of these formulations, the difference of immigrants was regarded as something that could change over time, something that would naturally disappear either with or without a proper intervention. In other words, immigrants were a problem, but they would not remain as a problem forever. Whereas nineteenth-century race-thinking had held to the concept of insurmountable, unacceptable difference, the theory of assimilation provided a new way of thinking about group difference, one that was not as foreboding and cumbersome. I call this way of thinking assimilable difference, and argue that it formed another crucial component of *different kinds of difference*.

Chapter 5. “Too Different”: Impossible Whiteness of Japanese Immigrants

One Data, Two Interpretations

Yamato Ichihashi (1878-1963) was one of the special agents who worked for the Dillingham Commission. He collected statistical and ethnographic data for volumes 23, 24, and 25 of the Commission reports, collectively titled *Japanese and Other Immigrant Races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States* (henceforth the *Pacific Coast Reports*). Originally from a lower-level samurai family in Nagoya, Japan, he arrived in San Francisco in 1894 at the age of 16.⁷¹ He put himself through high school and community college, most likely working as domestic help in an affluent San Francisco household.⁷² Eventually he received a bachelor's and master's Degree in economics from Stanford University. The Dillingham Commission offered him the first job he took after the graduation. Just like all other highly educated non-whites of the time, Japanese immigrants faced severe discrimination in the labor market and were often barred from pursuing white-collar jobs for which they were qualified. Thus it is not surprising that Ichihashi took great pride in working for a U.S. Congressional commission: the opportunity represented not just his assimilation to the American mainstream but also a hope for Japanese immigrants as a whole, a hope that empirical data based on thoughtful observation would lead to mutual understanding and respect between the Japanese and Americans. More than 70 years later, Ichihashi's son, Woodrow, still remembered his father beaming with pride when he showed the Immigration Commission badge to his little son (see Chang 1997: 472; see endnote 37).

Following his stint with the Dillingham Commission, Ichihashi went onto receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University, and eventually became the first tenured professor of Asian ancestry at the Department of History at Stanford University. The Dillingham Commission was a crucial turning point in his professional development: his dissertation as well as his most well-known work, *Japanese in the United States* (1932), was based on the data he collected for the Commission. His use of the data, however, differed very much from that of the Commission. Ichihashi argued that the data proved Japanese immigrants to be more "desirable" as potential citizens than any other immigrant group—including not only the Chinese and Mexicans, but also Southern and Eastern European immigrants such as Italians, Greeks, and Poles (see Ichihashi 1932; 1913: ii-iii). In Ichihashi's view, the current law limiting naturalization rights to "free white persons" (Haney-Lopéz 1996) failed to take the data into account, and should therefore be revised. The Commission, on the other hand, did not concern itself with the status or tribulations of Japanese immigrants. Instead, in its overall policy recommendations, the Commission gave sanction and force to pervasive anti-Asian sentiments, stressing that restrictions against Asian immigrants – the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Gentlemen's Agreement (1907) – should stand, as long as they proved to be effective in controlling the inflow of people from the Pacific (DCR vol.1: 45-49).

The Commission and Ichihashi had the same set of data, collected by Ichihashi and documented in the three volumes of the *Pacific Coast Reports*, but again, differed radically on how it should be interpreted and used. This chapter traces how these diverging trajectories emerged from the data, and more importantly, how in the process the Japanese were distinguished from

⁷¹ The following details of Ichihashi's life are based on Gordon Chang's biography (1997) as well as the Yamato Ichihashi Papers, SC0071, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University.

⁷² Ichihashi did not leave much records pertaining to his early life, especially in regards to the time before he entered Stanford. During the early twentieth century, many Japanese students who came to study in the United States worked as domestic help, especially in San Francisco, in exchange for room and board. Ichihashi would later praise the "progressive spirit" of these Japanese "school boys" with much affection, complimenting them on their determination to work and study at the same time (1932).

white immigrants and native-born whites through the assertion of a bright boundary (Azuma 2005; Alba 2005), rendering them as “too different” to be included in the national community. As opposed to the concept of assimilable difference, discussed in Chapter 4, this conceptual move marked the other half of *different kind of difference* by delineating the limits of inclusivity in the Dillingham Commission’s thinking about immigrants.

The racial hierarchy maintained by the Dillingham Commission operated on the presumption of character traits tied to race: Northern and Western Europeans were “civilized,” hard-working, and ready to settle in the U.S. as farmers and stable families; they learned and spoke English, adopted “American” clothing and customs, and rapidly moved upward along the socio-economic ladder; Southern and Eastern Europeans, as well as blacks, ostensibly lacked these “progressive” traits, and were thus deemed “undesirable.” The Dillingham Commission had no problem fitting the Chinese and Mexicans into this simplified, distorted picture of immigration in the early twentieth century; in many aspects these groups were supposed to closely mirror blacks, a view that reinforced the racist stereotypes intrinsic to the white/non-white racial binary. The Japanese, however, seemed to display all of the “progressive” traits while being non-white at the same time. According to the criteria based on character traits, they should be on par with Northern and Western Europeans—but their non-whiteness should confine them to the level of blacks, Chinese, and Mexicans (Haney-Lopéz 1996). In short, the Japanese became a source of nagging discord in the harmony of whiteness and desirability. They presented as overqualified non-whites, and for the whole racial hierarchy to function without contradiction, there should be a way to resolve their over-qualification.

By tracing the divergent trajectories of the Dillingham Commission and Yamato Ichihashi, I explain how the dissonance was resolved through the recourse to *different kinds of difference*: that is, by rendering the Japanese as not necessarily “undesirable” like Southern and Eastern Europeans but “unassimilable” due to their non-white status, the Dillingham Commission effectively differentiated between group differences that can and cannot be overcome. Whereas the previous chapters documented the erosion of race as a biological given, the evolving construction of ethnicity, and the rise of assimilation theory, this chapter traces how the bright boundary around whiteness was asserted through its placement in a conceptual circle of difference, distinction, and belonging embedded in whiteness and national identity.

This chapter consists of two sections. First, I discuss the contents of the *Pacific Coast Reports* in detail, showing how Japanese immigrants were rendered both “desirable” and unfit for citizenship at the same time. I highlight the instances in which the Commission employed different standards from those applied to Southern and Eastern Europeans, as a strategy for characterizing Japanese immigrants as “unassimilable” aliens not belonging to the nation. By changing the standard against which the different groups were evaluated, the Commission distinguished between *different kinds of difference*, creating two dimensions of hierarchy to be applied in defining national belonging. The second section focuses on Ichihashi’s efforts to use the Commission’s data in favor of Japanese immigrants. Unlike the inroads made by the progressive activists we have seen in the previous chapters (see especially Chapter 3), this effort would ultimately fail in gaining support from the U.S. elite and public, and Japanese immigrants would remain “aliens ineligible for citizenship” until the end of the World War II. I conclude the chapter by discussing how Japanese immigrants serve as an archetype of differences that cannot be overcome, as opposed to the differences of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, which were posited as surmountable and through the concept of assimilation.

On the West Coast, a Different World of Immigration

Out of the forty-one volumes that comprise the *Dillingham Commission Report*, only three focused on the West Coast: Volumes 23 to 25 dealt mainly with California, Oregon, and Washington, as well as Colorado and Utah, with occasional mentions of the data from Idaho and Wyoming. In many aspects, these reports were different from other volumes. As opposed to other volumes, focusing on the East Coast, South, and Midwest, these volumes highlighted the regional characteristics of the West Coast, such as relative underdevelopment of manufacturing, reliance on agriculture, and chronic labor shortage, both in cities and rural farming communities. The immigrant groups that received attention were different as well. In the table of contents for the abstract of the *Pacific Coast Reports*, the Commission presented a list of the major groups that needed empirical study. Here, rather than making fine distinctions among the “European races,” as it had done in the other volumes, the Commission settled with the umbrella category of “European and Canadian Immigrants,” and did not bother to probe into differences within that vast category, although it did use terms such as Italians, Greeks, and Poles in the main body of the report. In other words, the differences among Europeans were in this instance not a priority for the Commission. Instead, page after page was devoted to the groups that rarely appeared in the other volumes: Chinese, Japanese, East Indians, and Mexicans (DCR vol. 23: p. 5).

As made apparent in the *Dictionary of Races or Peoples* (see Chapter 3), these groups were tangential to the Commission’s concerns about racial order and how various groups fit within it. The Commission’s primary concern was to single out and study Southern and Eastern European immigrants in order to devise an effective means of controlling their inflow. The problem of Asian and Mexican immigrants was a regional issue specific to the states in the West Coast — a remote corner of the country still removed from the mainstay of intellectual and political life in the nation (Benton-Cohen 2015; Barkan 2007).

The three volumes of *The Pacific Coast Reports* amounted to approximately two thousand and one hundred pages of its three volumes, and resembled other volumes of the Dillingham Commission report in their subject matter and style. When examined closely, however, the *Pacific Coast Reports* reveal a number of critical differences. First of all, the concept of “displacement” — immigrant workers competing with and eventually replacing “American” workers — does not receive much attention, at least compared to the other volumes that focused on the East Coast and Midwest. As we have seen in Lauck’s community reports (see Chapter 3), the Dillingham Commission was especially interested in the immigration history of industrial towns, and allocated many pages to discuss whether and how inflow of immigrant workers, mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, had driven out “American” workers and turned working class community into immigrant enclaves. In the *Pacific Coast Reports*, however, the concern about displacement, at least of “American workers,” was much less salient: basically there were not too many “American workers” in the first place to replace; instead, different immigrant groups who were arriving at different time periods replaced each other in the course of meeting the fluctuating labor needs of the rapidly developing economy of the frontier.

For instance, under the section heading “race change,” a report on the vineyards of Sonoma valley brushed aside concerns about displacement: “The white race were never very numerous as grape pickers” and “[t]he Chinese, from the beginning of the industry, predominated as pickers until they were largely replaced by Japanese. The Japanese now outnumber all other grape pickers about three to one.” Of course, this transition had been propelled by the Chinese Exclusion Act. In addition to the Japanese, a few remaining Chinese and a small number of recently arrived East Indians worked as pickers in vineyards (DCR vol.24: 280). On the other hand, skilled labor, such

as wine-makers, had always been predominantly white. In short, racial division of labor was very much visible, but displacement did not occur because no “American workers” wanted the jobs in which Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and Mexican workers were needed to meet the demand.

Therefore, a typical report on a West Coast town would start with mention of the Chinese, and sometimes Mexicans, who were at the bottom of the occupation hierarchy. Many Chinese workers, however, returned home after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, when they faced serious symbolic and material threats from local governments and white workers. The remaining workers were growing old without being replenished by newly arriving young immigrants. In many communities, Japanese immigrants began to fill this gap, starting around the 1880s. European immigrants, such as the Irish, Poles, and Italians, were trickling in from the East Coast as well, working in many industries alongside the Japanese, Mexicans, and aging Chinese workers. However, the European workers seldom stayed in unskilled jobs for more than two or three years – they moved around to improve their lot, and many opted for factory labor in cities which provided higher wages and better job security. The labor needs of agriculture and railroad construction – still the most important industries in California and other western states – had been supplied mainly by the Chinese, and the Japanese were filling the gap left by the Chinese. In short, certain sectors created a free-for-all labor market in which variety of immigrant groups were competing each other for more jobs, better working conditions, and high wages. The concept of “displacement” could not actually characterize this complicated intersection of race and labor.

Still, whenever possible, the Dillingham Commission attempted to retain a bright boundary between the “old immigrants” and “new immigrants,” arguing that the difference between these two groups was just as marked in the West Coast as it was in the East. In discussing the workers employed in railroad construction, for example, the Commission found that “...social and political considerations all indicate that there exist two fairly distinct race groups, on the one hand the natives, north Europeans and Canadians, and on the other, the south and east Europeans, the Mexicans, and the Japanese.” Note that instead of zeroing in on the fine distinction within Southern and Eastern Europeans, the Commission highlighted how they were different from Mexicans and the Japanese. The latter group was “chiefly employed at common labor, where mobility of labor is an advantage and where no educational qualifications obtain.” They were employed in “gangs,” which, as the Commission asserted, removed them from “association with the natives and hence hinder[ed] the development of a civic interest among them and a desire for American citizenship” (DCR vol. 25: 88).

Discussions about the social and political consequences of immigration were much more descriptive than normative. After all, many of the immigrants being discussed were seasonal workers constantly on the move, and their housing often consisted of simple make-shift huts in which they would stay only until their seasonal jobs lasted. In many towns, there was no institutional infrastructure that catered to these immigrants, unlike in some of the eastern towns where unions, schools, welfare offices, and police force all actively interacted with immigrants in one way or another. Therefore, while the *Pacific Coast Reports* contained some discussion about assimilation, including English language proficiency and citizenship acquisition, immigrants’ crime rate and use of government aid rarely received any attention. In the railroad construction industry, turnover was extremely high, and in farming communities, there were rapid turnovers among tenant farmers, day workers, and even farm owners; a fraction of family-owned farms featured small-scale farming, yet the agriculture sector in general was characterized by large-scale operations, which, due to the ongoing need of cheap, seasonal labor, saw the waxing and waning of different groups who supplied it.

Elsewhere, but for a very limited number of communities, the reports presented a radically different outlook on immigration and industry, in which racial distinctions existed but a hierarchy of racial groups seemed to be absent. In one mining town in Wyoming, “all races [were] on an equal footing.” In addition to whites, Chinese and Japanese miners were “eligible to union membership and the relations engendered by the association which such membership entail[ed] [were] almost fraternal. Japanese and Chinese [wore] their union buttons with pride and [were] given the same treatment as other races.” Given the wide-spread agitation against “oriental” labor in the West, and the fact that almost always unions were the main agitator, this small community, where “the races mingle[d] freely both at work and in their social life” (DCR vol. 25: 291-292), was a notable exception. In similar mining communities on the East Coast, by contrast, which were described in other volumes, there always was a strict racial hierarchy, and groups were segregated without much interaction between them: native whites were on top, Southern and Eastern Europeans were in the middle, and black workers were at the bottom. At least in some communities in the west, this racial triad was replaced by a “fraternal” bond among all kinds of workers, although more often than not the Chinese and Japanese occupied the bottom positions held by blacks in the east.

In summary, the *Pacific Coast Reports* presented a multi-faceted description of the social world in the West Coast and, unlike other volumes, did not dwell much on the friction between “American workers” and immigrant workers, or the conflict between “old” immigrants and “new” immigrants. And perhaps because of this softening of the boundary, the findings from the *Pacific Coast Reports* were much less consequential in the overall summary, and had a limited impact on the Dillingham Commission’s overall conclusion and recommendations.

In the *Recommendations of the Commission*, only three simple points pertain to the findings of the *Pacific Coast Reports*. The Commission argued that the Chinese Exclusion Act should stand; the Gentlemen’s Agreement, which prevented Japanese and Korean workers from entering the country, should also stand, as long as it remained an effective means of controlling immigration from the Far East. The only recommendation was that the U.S. government should consult with the British Government to prevent further migration from India (DCR vol.1: 45-48). Perhaps in the *Pacific Coast Reports*, the Dillingham Commission was the most faithful to its founding principle—conducting a fact-finding inquiry and nothing more, nothing less.

Japanese Immigrants: “Ambitious and progressive”

As with other fact-finding activities of the Commission, however, the empirical reality of Japanese immigration on the West Coast did not always substantiate the Commission’s preconceived notions about race, a disjunction which made it necessary to wrangle with the findings. This is most evident in the sections dedicated to Japanese immigrants, featured in Volume 23.

In a nutshell, a dilemma arose from findings that suggested Japanese immigrants in the West Coast were “too good”: they embodied almost all the positive characteristics attributed to “desirable” immigrants, except that they were not white. According to the Dillingham Commission’s inquiry, they were hard workers; many of them intended on settling down permanently as farmers; they dressed in western-style clothing, and they tried hard to learn and speak English; they did not commit crimes and largely stayed away from drinking and gambling; they desired to get married and raise families; they could endure hard times in order to move up the socio-economic ladder. Discussing the general quality and character of Japanese workers in agriculture, the Commission wrote “[F]or several years the Japanese were favorably received and

praised for their industry, quickness, adaptability, and eagerness to learn American ways” (DCR vol. 23:67; see also vol. 24: 31; 58; 108).

In other words, they possessed all the traits that the Commission described as “progressive.” The concept meant many things in this era – the “Progressive Era” – but in the context of the Dillingham Commission, it meant that certain “progressive” immigrant groups were rapidly moving towards in a positive direction, improving their desirability; for instance, Italians and Polish workers were often regarded as not progressive, because, according to the Dillingham Commission and popular stereotypes, they had no intention of settling down in the U.S. and often worked in non-skilled temporary jobs, only to spend all their weekly wages on their weekend drinking rituals. These workers often associated only among themselves, usually in their ethnic enclaves which, again, according to the Dillingham Commission, were hotbeds of crime and wanton behavior. German immigrants, on the contrary, often saved money, bought a patch of land, and made the transition from being unskilled workers to independent farmers. By doing so they moved out of the ethnic ghettos and blended in with other “Americans.” Civic and cultural assimilation – naturalization, being interested in community affairs, speaking English, and adopting “American” customs – naturally followed. Throughout all the other volumes of the Dillingham Commission Report, being “progressive” was equated with “old” immigrants and their desirability; Southern and Eastern European immigrants were not “progressive” because they stuck to their ways and could not adapt to their new environment.

Within this framework, the *Pacific Coast Reports* showed Japanese immigrants to be much more “progressive” than Chinese or Mexican workers. A basic summary of statistical data on English-language acquisition found early on that “among those who had been in the United States less than five years the Japanese and Koreans show relatively great progress.” And the Japanese who had been in the United States for more than five years “showed more progress than other races except the North Europeans” (DCR vol. 24: 58). Japanese progress was underscored through comparison with other non-white groups who worked in similar professions, such as seasonal farm work: “The slow progress of the Chinese and Mexicans in this regard stands in striking contrast to the rapidity with which the Japanese have acquired our language, especially since these races have always been employed in much the same kind of seasonal work and have lived under much the same conditions” (DCR vol. 24: 59). In other words, while working side by side with the Chinese and Mexicans, Japanese immigrants picked up English much more rapidly, and perhaps as a consequence, were more successful in moving upward. To account for difference, the Commission reverted to cultural stereotypes: “The Chinese have always been self-satisfied and have looked back toward their old civilization as the only culture worth the while. The Mexican laborers, on the other hand, are notoriously indolent and unprogressive in all matters of education and culture, and evince little desire to learn to speak English” (DCR vol. 24: 59). The common trope of orientalism – that the “Orientals” tend to cling to their old culture while refusing to accept modernity – applied to the Chinese, but not to the Japanese. In an ironical fashion, the Dillingham Commission was making claims that were in sync with the Japanese ideologues who preached “Datsu-a-ron” (see Chapter 2): the common stereotypes about the “Orientals” somehow did not apply to the Japanese, whose superiority was manifested by the empire and the empire and its subjects forging into west. As Azuma (2005) has documented, this was not very different from how the Japanese immigrants understood themselves—as decisively different from other non-white groups such as the Chinese, Mexicans, or Filipinos. When the Dillingham Commission wrote that “the Japanese compare favorably with the households of north European immigrants”

(DCR vol. 23: 159), it was confirming the long-time aspirations of Japanese immigrants themselves.⁷³

The “progressive” qualities of Japanese immigrants were elaborated upon in discussions of their economic mobility—progressing from seasonal farm work to tenant farming and eventually to owning small farms. Like Chinese workers before them, many Japanese immigrants started as seasonal workers in farms, supplanting white workers through their willingness to accept lower pay and work longer hours. “[R]eliable white persons have found it easy to secure more remunerative and agreeable employment,” the Dillingham Commission observed, “while Japanese, being more regular in their work, more willing to work long hours, and more easily secured when needed, have been preferred by the employers to the less desirable class of white persons available.” Unlike Southern and Eastern European immigrants discussed in other volumes (see Chapter 3), the employers found the Japanese “more satisfactory at the rate of wages they are paid than the white men available for work as common laborers at the wages they command in the industry” (DCR vol. 23: 47).

At the same time, the Dillingham Commission recognized that the Japanese were ambitious to leave the lowest strata of labor market and climb the socio-economic ladder: “the members of this race do not like to work for wages, are ambitious, and desire to establish themselves as business men or as independent producers, as most of them were in their native land... furthermore, the Japanese are venturesome” (DCR vol. 23: 82). Unlike the Chinese and Mexican farm workers, who seemed to have no aim other than getting seasonal work for immediate economic gains, according to the Commission, the Japanese actually had a long-term plan of becoming independent farmers themselves. The section on tenant farming details how the Japanese were achieving their goals: using strong ethnic networks, they put together money saved and provided funds to individuals who were buying land or leasing farms to engage in tenant farming. Typically, such arrangements would entail high risks for the tenant. The lessee would often be charged with the price of using the tools and seed, paid directly to the lessor, and would be forced to work in the most undesirable plot in the whole farm. After the harvest, the owner would take a fixed amount of money from the returns, relegating all the risks ranging from weather conditions to fluctuating crop prices, to the tenant. In a sense, tenant farming was a gamble—one could hope for large returns in good years; yet if things went wrong, one would lose the investment in addition to the value of one’s labor.

Remarkably, according to the Dillingham Commission, many Japanese immigrants emerged as winners in this gamble, eventually buying high-quality farm lands in areas such as San Jose, the Central Valley, and along the Sacramento River. Once established, these farmers hired newly arriving Japanese workers as seasonal laborers, so the cycle of upward mobility among the Japanese continued. In addition, the settled Japanese farmers married, often by bringing women from Japan – the infamous “picture brides” story originated from this practice – and had children. Even in the cities, Japanese immigrants made rapid progress as small business owners, catering to both white and Japanese clientele, and San Francisco developed clusters of Japanese businesses throughout the city (DCR vol. 23: see Part II).

⁷³ As Lee and Zhou (2015) have shown in the case of contemporary Asian immigrants, selection before migration accounts for much of these differences. That is, Japanese immigrants were, on average, much more educated than immigrants from other countries, including those from Southern and Eastern European nations. The difference in education level can be traced back to the Meiji restoration (1868) and its emphasis on western-style general education.

In many aspects, Japanese immigrants were the embodiment of the “American dream,” or the immigrant success story, which the Dillingham Commission supposedly cherished. The Commission found that unlike most Southern and Eastern Europeans, or the Chinese workers a generation before them, Japanese immigrants did not come into the United States merely for economic gain. Instead, they were motivated, self-sustaining individuals who seemed to value everything that was “American”: English language, family, hard work, and independent living through the ownership of farms or small businesses.

“Differing So Greatly”

At the same, all these positive traits made the Japanese a target of prejudice and discrimination. As much as employers praised the Japanese for being industrious and ambitious, the Dillingham Commission found, they condemned them for their self-interest. Everywhere they go, “the Japanese...[were] condemned by every economic class.” This is because “the economic interests of all classes are believed to be adversely affected by the presence of or by the methods pursued by the Japanese.” Workers resented them for willing to take on difficult jobs for low wages, and their tendency to put up with the worst of the living conditions. Farm owners, who increasingly relied on Japanese workers, were beginning to see that, unlike the Chinese workers, the new seasonal laborers were not as docile: “The recently established custom of taking a smoking and resting period of from five to fifteen minutes when they finish weeding or cultivating a row of celery has grown out of this independent spirit due to their control of the labor situation” (DCR vol. 24: 242). The Japanese were acceptable as long as they filled the void left by the Chinese, but “were not as satisfactory laborers as the Chinese.” Japanese ambitions were all at once admirable and noisome because “they are more progressive and desirous of rising above the wage relation; they are ambitious to enter other lines of work besides the lowest kind of farm labor; they have come to make more frequent demands for higher wages and better living conditions than the Chinese” (DCR vol. 24: 46).

The resentment quickly escalated into moral condemnation of their “methods”: The Japanese immigrants working as grape pickers, the Commission reported, were “careless in their work and dishonest.” “In their zeal to make large earnings...they make great haste while picking...they do not pick the grapes properly, wasting some and leaving others unpicked upon.” Employers argued that “the Chinese and Indians stand in strong contrast to the Japanese in this regard” (DCR vol. 24: 597). Similar accusations were leveled at Japanese tenant farmers as well. Whereas the Chinese tenant farmers were “entirely honest in all contractual relations” and “[did] not abandon their leases,” the Japanese tenant farmers’ “standing...[was] much lower.” Often times they would abandon the leased land, leading the farm owners to lease it again to other tenant farmers within a single harvest cycle. Thus the land owners often required Japanese tenants to pay their rents in advance (DCR vol. 24: 429).

The resentment led to isolation and alienation from local communities. While they were in some respects shining beacons of “American dream,” the Japanese were categorically barred from obtaining American citizenship, since the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited naturalization rights only to “free white persons” (Haney-Lopéz 1996). With the exception of the second generation, born on American soil, the Japanese remained alien subjects while working on their farms and raising their families, regardless of how many years they had resided in the United States.

Ironically, the Dillingham Commission saw much promise in their potential for civic engagement, even more so than for European groups who could obtain citizenship shortly after upon meeting residency and other requirements. In a report on a farming community in Sacramento

County, the Commission reported on whether and what kind of newspapers the immigrant residents subscribed to in their homes. Reading newspapers, the Commission reasoned, displayed “to what extent these farmers have been assimilated” and testified “their standards of living.” Italian and Portuguese farmers, it turned out, displayed disappointing results in this respect: only a half of the Italians and twenty percent of the Portuguese farmers subscribed to any newspaper at all. The Japanese, on the other hand, were very impressive: “of 128 [Japanese] families...only 18 subscribed for no paper at all.” In addition, “two-thirds of them subscribed for two or more” whereas other groups rarely went beyond one newspaper. To be fair, almost all of these farmers subscribed to the papers printed in their language. For instance, the Italians farmers’ readership was confined to “a small paper published in Stockton, or [another paper] published by Italians in San Francisco.” Although an absolute majority of the Japanese read Japanese-language newspapers (103 out of 110), some of them also subscribed to an English-language newspaper as well (DCR vol. 24: 355). By all measures, it appeared that the Japanese farmers in this particular farm village in Sacramento County were more close to the ideal of independent, informed, and self-sufficient citizenry than Italian and Portuguese farmers.

However, there was a key difference between the Japanese and all other immigrant groups, if not American society more generally. Although the Dillingham Commission found that “the Japanese are greatly interested in political matters, are intelligent, quick to absorb new ideas, and progressive,” there was something elusive about them, for instance that fact that they “have been accustomed to a somewhat different form of government and have exhibited a strength of feeling for a loyalty to their country and its Government and the Mikado, seldom, if ever, found among other people” (DCR vol. 23: 160). In other words, the Japanese were exceptional, in both a positive and negative sense: “The Japanese have a comparatively small percentage of illiterates among them, are intelligent and eager to learn of American institutions, make fairly rapid progress in learning to speak English, and unusually good progress in learning to read and write it. They have not proved to be burdensome to the community because of pauperism or crime.” This was an exceptional quality for a recent immigrant group, as shown throughout the Dillingham Commission reports. At the same time, however, “the Japanese, like the Chinese, are regarded as differing so greatly from the white races that they have lived in but as not integral part of the community. A strong public opinion has segregated them, if not in their work, in the other details of their living, and practically forbids, when not expressed in law, marriage between them and persons of the white race” (DCR vol. 23: 166). As a response, Japanese immigrants shunned community life as well: “The race antipathy evidenced by the instances cited above has done much to cause and to perpetuate the clannishness of the Japanese immigrants” (DCR vol. 23: 162). This mutual avoidance led to the fact that the Japanese “process of assimilation has not been proceeded far, save in the learning of English and in the adoption of American clothes and some American business methods...the associations between the Japanese and white race are limited, and, with few exceptions, not upon the basis of equality” (DCR vol. 23: 247).

In short, the character traits that made the Japanese “desirable” in the first place also rendered them as “differing so greatly” from American social norms, removed from community life, even among immigrants more generally. The tradition of assimilation theory has long treated this cultural difference as a temporary one, something that would naturally diminish as immigrants move upward and come into increased contact with “mainstream” society (Gordon 1964; Alba and Nee 2003; see also Chapter 4). The Dillingham Commission, however, was already presenting evidence against the theory of wholesale assimilation a good half century before its heyday: in discussing the success of Japanese business owners in Seattle, the Commission found that “a few

Japanese business men find a place in the social life of the city. But here, as elsewhere, and for the same reasons of racial, language, and institutional differences and brief and more or less temporary residence, the Japanese are farther removed from normal American life than any European immigrant race” (DCR vol. 23: 301). Even successful business owners had to endure strong prejudice, to the extent that the everyday operation of their business activity became a focus for anti-Japanese sentiment.

In response, a couple of Japanese laundry owners in Seattle came up with the ingenious idea of putting white faces onto their businesses, in order to avoid prejudice. “Two of the Japanese laundries employ white collectors,” the Commission explained, in order to “secure some white patrons who do not know that the laundries are conducted by Asiatics.” As we have already seen, the Japanese immigrants displayed a range of characteristics associated with being “desirable,” except for having the appearance of “whites,” regardless of how that was defined. In an ironic attempt to reduce the social distance between themselves and the majority white residents, these two savvy business owners employed whites to interact with their customers. As the Commission immediately added after noting this practice, however, most of the patronage secured by the Japanese laundries was to be accounted for on economic grounds: “Their prices were generally lower than those charged by their white competitors” (DCR vol. 23: 278). In other words, their success and “desirability” were confined to the economic domain, while in social respects the Japanese immigrants remained ever-distant, indecipherable aliens whose differences could not be comprehended. As many scholars of Asian Americans in the late twentieth century have noted, the mismatch between economic mobility and civic alienation was the key feature defining the Japanese immigrants described in the Dillingham Commission (Kim 1999; Lee and Xu 2013).

In summary, Japanese immigrants were in a double bind: the traits that made them “progressive” simultaneously made them “diff[er]so greatly,” because they did not fit into the stereotype of the compliant immigrant worker, which, according to the employers whom the Commission agents interviewed, the Chinese workers had been so successful in fulfilling. If anything, the Commission officially maintained a neutral stance towards this finding: it did acknowledge that the particular predicament of the Japanese immigrant largely originated from the prejudice held by the native white population. At the same time, the Commission clearly did not tout the Japanese as a “model minority” as some commentators would do after the World War II; the Japanese remained an exceptional case⁷⁴ in the hierarchy of race and “desirability,” but not to an extent that endangered the entire worldview the Commission envisioned. Therefore, the Commission decided to remain in the realm of facts, faithfully report what they found, and recommend that the existing restrictions against Asian immigrants, including the Japanese, should be maintained as long as they were effective. In short, the Commission moved on to contend with matters more important to them, such as the restriction of Southern and Eastern European immigrants, than ambiguous desirability of the Japanese.

Japanophiles and Yamato Ichihashi

Yamato Ichihashi did not move on. In fact, his entire life was devoted to building upon his work with the Dillingham Commission. Ichihashi used the Commission’s data, as well as the additional data he collected throughout the decades following the Commission’s inquiry, to advocate for the naturalization rights of Japanese immigrants. This goal may seem like a radical cause in the early

⁷⁴ I borrow this praise from a conversation I had with Michael Omi.

twentieth century America, which had limited naturalization rights to “free white persons” for more than a century; yet as Ian Haney-López has documented, challenges to the restriction of national belonging never stopped, and reached its peak with the series of high-profile supreme court cases in the early twentieth century, such as *Ozawa v. United States* and *Thind v. United States* (Haney-López 1996; see introduction). In these suits, Asian immigrants argued for their whiteness, citing various measures such as their skin color and social standing; in response, the court dismissed their claims, conveniently shifting the criteria for defining whiteness to fend off their challenges. One could not, the court ruled, be classified as white merely because of her light skin, high social standing, extensive networks among white people, or familiarity with the customs of white people; one should be classified as white person according to “common sense”—of course, the court assumed that common sense was something obvious, rather than norms for judgment laden with biases.

However, these rulings did not completely deter the advocates of Japanese naturalization rights completely. In fact, faced with the San Francisco Japanese school children crisis in 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt himself advocated for an exception to the law of exclusion, hinting at his support for the naturalization rights of the Japanese in his Congressional address, in which he praised the “decency of character” found in many Japanese immigrants (Esthus 1966: 147). Such inclusion, Roosevelt argued, would further the interests of the U.S. in the Pacific as well as fortify the position of Japanese immigrants within the U.S., ultimately benefitting all those involved.

While most white American did not distinguish between the Japanese and the Chinese, many white elites and intellectuals in the early twentieth century maintained a certain fascination with the former and a strong contempt for the latter. Roosevelt himself participated in weekly sessions of martial arts in the White House, facilitated by an instructor from Japan (Svinth 2000). Perhaps because of this personal relationship, he could see their supposed “decency of character.” One thinker who plunged deeply into his fascination with Japan and its people, forming a special relationship with Ichihashi, was David Starr Jordan (1851-1931), an ichthyologist and the president of Stanford University at the turn of the century (1891-1916).

Jordan’s fascination with Japan and its people began with his dissertation fieldwork. As a student of Louis Aggasiz (see Chapter 1) he set out to study fish that no one has ever studied, which led him to Japan, the remote, secluded island nation at the edge of the Far East. Not only did the time he spent in Japan help him earn his Ph.D. and start his career, but it would also shape how he thought about the increasingly connected world. When he first became the president of Stanford University, Jordan’s vision for the university centered on its location, embracing the institution’s potential to build ties across the Pacific Ocean. He saw Stanford as the place where newly emerging trans-pacific elites could be educated, somewhat akin to the manner in which the Ivy League Universities educated elites who exemplified the ideal mix of classic European high culture and vibrant American spirit. As a biologist, he adhered to then popular ideas of eugenics and social Darwinism; at the same time, he was a Japanophile who held Japanese people and culture in high esteem, characterizing them as “in full harmony with the nations of Europe.” He even attempted to expand the contemporary race-thinking to label Japanese as Caucasians, arguing that the people of the islands originated from further in the west, and had no connection to “Mongolian” races such as the Chinese and Koreans (Burns 1952: 64-65). The Japanophile university president paid special attention to Japanese students at Stanford as well, inviting them to a dinner in his house annually and visiting their dorms in person (Chang 1997). During the time when male Chinese and Japanese workers served faculty members in their campus housings as

cooks and maids, these gestures defied social conventions of interaction between whites and non-whites. In these more liberal encounters, Jordan quickly noticed Ichihashi, the leader of the small group of Japanese students on the campus. Throughout Ichihashi's career, Jordan would serve as an important professional reference and mentor who supported him as he made his way through the white establishment.

As a first step of a lifelong sponsorship, Jordan recommended Ichihashi to the Ph.D. program in economics at Harvard University. After completing his work with the Dillingham Commission for a couple of years, Ichihashi moved to Cambridge to embark on his doctoral work. His dissertation was chaired by none other than William Z. Ripley, whose theories about racial difference among Europeans formed the backbone of the Dillingham Commission's inquiry (see Chapter 1); Fredric Jackson Turner, who developed the frontier thesis (1893), also served as a committee member.⁷⁵ In 1913, Ichihashi wrote and submitted a dissertation which focused on Japanese immigrants in California, using the data he had collected for the Dillingham Commission. Interestingly, even at the time of filing his dissertation, he "[had] not read a page of those intensive and doubtless most impartial studies" – the Dillingham Commission Report – because it "had not been accessible" to him, although the reports were published in 1911. However, he was confident in the data and analysis featured in the dissertation, because he had been "the chief instrument in gathering the data" while visiting various places such as the "fishery at Monterey, sugar beet industry in Salinas, vineyards of Fresno and potato and asparagus field in Stockton" (Ichihashi 1913: ii-iii). After finishing his dissertation, Ichihashi returned to Stanford at the urging of Jordan, and eventually rose to the rank of a tenured, full professor in the department of history.

Japanese in the United States (1932): Advocating for Racial Accommodation

In 1932, at the height of his academic career in the United States, Ichihashi finally finished revising his dissertation and published it as *Japanese in the United States*. In addition to the data he collected for the Dillingham Commission, he conducted additional fieldwork in California, and engaged in extensive analysis of immigration restriction movements during the 1910s and 1920s. Based on "objective facts and scientific understanding of the matter," he forcefully advocated for the naturalization rights of Japanese immigrants.

Ichihashi had mixed feelings about the *Pacific Coast Reports*. As noted in the acknowledgement section of his dissertation, he initially expressed great pride in having worked in a federally-funded scientific project. After the publication of the reports, and having experienced intense nativism in the 1910s and early 1920s, during which the push for immigration restriction gradually overpowered pro-immigrant forces in every corner of the American society, however, Ichihashi came to hold a view that resisted nativist beliefs and assumptions. In the introduction of *Japanese in the United States*, he laid out the trajectory of the book as well as his professional life: "The writer had been a resident of the United States for nearly thirty years, mostly in California; he has been through thick and thin in everything pertaining to the Japanese residents and has a good deal of first-hand information. His academic interest in the subject began some

⁷⁵ See Chapter 1 for Ripley's theoretical contribution to the Dillingham Commission. Azuma presents an interesting case of how Japanese immigrants appropriated the frontier discourse from the likes of Turner to advocate for their belonging on the American West Coast: essentially, they replaced the figure of European immigrant and native white settlers with themselves, arguing that the Japanese were the true frontier people embodying a "progressive" spirit and thus deserving of the unclaimed land and honor to be had for making it fruitful (2005). Idiosyncratic as this may sound, Ichihashi's work also followed this line of argument, always invoking Turner to highlight the frontier spirit of Japanese immigrants.

twenty years ago when as an agent of the United States Immigration Commission of 1908-1910...since then it has been his desire to improve his study for publication[.]” Throughout the book, Ichihashi quoted extensively from the *Pacific Coast Reports*, and used its data – which he himself had collected – to present “an impartial presentation of facts relating to [Japanese immigrants]” (Ichihashi 1932: vi).

Although he did not engage in a direct, overt criticism of the Dillingham Commission, his feelings about the organization became clear when he discussed its findings, specifically on the “Alaska boys,” the Japanese workers working in salmon canneries in Alaska. Unlike in other places such as rural California, in Alaska the Japanese were portrayed as “the worst” compared to other groups in the Commission reports. Ichihashi pointed out that “the Commission’s agents failed to secure data concerning the other races [than Japanese]” and confessed that he did not know “the information was to be used in a comparative way.” In other words, when he was working for the Commission, he had taken the Commission’s inquiry at its face value, perhaps revealing his own naïve perspective as a recent college graduate: he had thought the Commission was sincerely interested in finding facts about Japanese immigrants in the United States, and had not pondered the possibility that the information would be used to compare groups with each other and place them along a scale of desirability. In other words, Ichihashi felt that he had been deceived by the Commission—clearly he had not foreseen that his data would be used to portray Japanese immigrants in a negative light. Overtly criticizing the Commission’s bias, Ichihashi himself held a rather universalistic view concerning all immigrants regardless of their “race”: “However, such a treatment of data on Japanese men does not make their case any worse; they are bad enough. Perhaps it should be remarked that Chinese are notorious gamblers, Filipinos are famous brawlers, and Koreans drink just as well as Japanese. As a matter of fact, the vices here mentioned are by no means confined to the Japanese; they are human vices common to certain classes of all races of mankind. In truth, the picture of Japanese laborers can well represent the conditions of the labor force in the industry” (1932: 155).

To be fair, his intention was to rationalize the supposedly “bad” behavior of this particular group of the Japanese immigrants. But in doing so he revealed the tension in the Dillingham Commission’s project as a whole: The Commission wanted to build a racial hierarchy out of the data; yet the result yielded information about the social conditions of the immigrants, not their racial characteristics. As the Commission piled on additional data in an attempt to make the hierarchy reliable and robust, the contradiction generated by the clash of these two perspectives became even more evident. In any case, Ichihashi did not have any control over how his data would be used, and he did not appreciate the manner in which it was used. In *Japanese in the United States*, he was putting the data into perspective – that is, his perspective, which he presumed as not only more informed but also more objective – while attempting to provide a more accurate portrayal of his subjects.

In the process, he laid bare the contradiction of being “progressive” and “differing so greatly” at the same time. The only way to overcome this contradiction, he argued, would be to do away with the “race” clause in the naturalization law, and open up the pathway for citizenship for Japanese immigrants, so that they could fully participate in the social and political life of the nation. To this end, Ichihashi highlighted the positive findings from the *Pacific Coast Reports*, while providing explanations for the negative ones. While doing so, he liberally and flexibly mobilized both racial and cultural explanations in order to vindicate Japanese immigrants. Naturally this led to condemnation of other groups, especially the Chinese (see Azuma 2005 for how Japanese immigrants “de-sinofied” themselves in the early twentieth century).

The American public, according to Ichihashi, made a mistake in extending Anti-Chinese sentiment to the Japanese. In fact, these two groups were very different, although the latter had taken on the jobs of the former. When exposed to the harsh working conditions in the U.S., “the Japanese, being more intelligent and sensitive to these conditions than the Chinese coolies, naturally reacted more vigorously; they did not consider themselves coolies, a fact which had been recognized from the very beginning of their coming by the contract agreements, public or private.” (1932: 44) In other words, as opposed to the Chinese “coolies” who were tricked into hard physical labor and bound by their slave-like labor contracts, the Japanese were free men who had chosen to come to work in the United States. Therefore, they refused the service of white middlemen – managers who often bridged the relationship between day laborers and employers, especially in the case of the Chinese and Mexicans – and preferred to work with Japanese bosses, many of whom were chosen by the workers themselves. Through these labor “gang” bosses, according to Ichihashi, the Japanese workers more forcefully conveyed what they wanted to employers, often demanding higher wages and better working conditions.

In addition to their supposed high intelligence, Ichihashi emphasized the fact that the Japanese immigrants in the U.S. were a highly selected group of people, anticipating contemporary arguments about the selectivity of Asian immigrants in the United States (Lee and Zhou 2015). That is, most of the Japanese workers in fact came from middle class families – their fathers were usually former samurais who had lost their privilege and jobs after the Meiji restoration. Many of them had finished compulsory schooling as enforced by the Meiji law, and some of them had finished secondary schools. Therefore, citing the data from the *Pacific Coast Reports*, “the Japanese immigrants,” wrote Ichihashi, “exhibited a satisfactory average with respect to money in their possession, ability to read and write, and degree of intelligence and ambition” (1932: 82). Perhaps the last part – intelligence and ambition – was his own idiosyncratic theory, but he offered “the first-hand experience” of both his own and others to corroborate his argument.

In addition to touting the exceptional character of the Japanese immigrants, Ichihashi also strove to fend off some of the criticisms levelled against them. The most common charge was that they were “untractable”—namely that the Japanese were hard to deal with as laborers, as opposed to the Chinese workers before them, who were easy to control. Ichihashi drew on the classic American ideal of self-determination to defend the Japanese immigrants. “No fair-minded American can justly condemn” the Japanese, he wrote, “although this virtuous moving on has been persistently interpreted as a vice when practiced by the Japanese.” Taking a somewhat condescending and ironic tone – after all, Ichihashi, an alien excluded from citizenship, was appealing to American values of freedom and equality – Ichihashi urged Americans to be true to their own values: “It may be painful, but we must admit that the progressive spirit of Japanese immigrants has to be tolerated, so long as it is considered a virtue in America, a land of opportunity and of self-made men and women.” Perhaps from first-hand experience, Ichihashi understood “why Japanese immigrants are nervous, restless, ambitious, and unstable as compared with the passive Chinese”: mainly because they were so keen on moving forward and upward. He brushed off the criticism of being “untractable” by reminding the reader of “the common complaint of housewives, still dreaming of old-fashioned servants no longer to be had, that their Japanese servants are often too intellectual and philosophical” (1932: 114).

Another common complaint against Japanese immigrants was that they worked in groups, so-called “labor gangs,” under Japanese bosses, and that they drove off American workers by working for low wages. Ichihashi explained that “labor gangs” were actually communitarian organizations, and the majority of “gang bosses,” who were often criticized for exploiting their

fellow countrymen, were actually “businesslike, trustworthy, and decent in treating their employers and the men.” He contrasted them with the white labor gang bosses who largely oversaw Mexicans. Whereas white bosses would merely exploit Mexican workers for profit, Japanese bosses were actually a part of the community, and looked out for the wellbeing of their men. He cited the strong ethnic community as the main reason why the Japanese immigrants were so successful in moving up in the occupational hierarchy of the West Coast.

By the same token, the assertion that Japanese workers were driving out American workers was, according to Ichihashi, also false. Contrary to the popular perception, “aside from the aging Chinese there were none to be driven.” Ichihashi also criticized employers’ preference for Chinese workers: “many an employer expressed preference for the Chinese, but this must be understood as largely psychological; they wanted the Chinese because they were not to be had. In the same way, employers now expressed preference for the Japanese to Mexicans, Filipinos, etc., because Japanese have largely disappeared as farm hands” (1932: 175). In short, Ichihashi had a firm sociological understanding of the labor market in the West Coast: successive inflow of immigrant groups led to what appeared to be racial displacement; in fact, race had nothing to do with the trend—different groups might occupy the position of manual workers at different times, yet the structure of labor market would not change fundamentally. Therefore, Ichihashi maintained, blaming the Japanese — or for that matter, any group at all— would be unfair.

After he responded to various criticisms, mostly related to the labor market positions of Japanese immigrants, Ichihashi went onto tackle the most damaging of them all: their supposed lack of capacity for assimilation. As we have seen in the *Pacific Coast Reports*, the Japanese, along with the Chinese and Mexicans, were often deemed too different in race and culture to warrant for any possibility of assimilation. Ichihashi begged to differ. With regard to racial difference, he argued that this was not an issue, because, at least among “Mongolians,” Japanese were racially closest to Americans. He first established that both Americans and Japanese are “hybridized stock,” meaning that there were various elements within the racial groupings. “No student has yet determined to which human stock the Japanese belong, but we know that they are a product of hybridization of people many of whose origins have not been discovered. Thus in despair, Hamy, a distinguished French craniologist, says: ‘there is scarcely a race which has not contributed to make the Japanese nation – the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malay, and even in the south, a slight tinge of Negrito from the islands of the Pacific.’” In other words, the Japanese were not that simple—they were both “Caucasian” and “Mongolian” at the same time, with some elements of “Negrito” as well. Here he was faithfully following the footsteps laid out by his mentor, David Starr Jordan, who had hinted at the presence of “Caucasian blood” among the Japanese.

In fact, according to Ichihashi, if we look at the facial features of the Japanese population in Japan, “Greek, Roman, Jewish noses are well represented, as well as very flat and broad ones” (1932: 210). Even in terms of language – the Dillingham Commission’s favorite marker of distinction – Japanese stood out as a singular group: “a common notion in the West [is] that Japanese and Chinese are allied tongues; in reality they are as far apart as English is from Hittite.” As any attempt to group Chinese workers with Japanese workers was mistaken, so was the presumed linguistic affinity between the two countries. Instead, “linguistically Japanese remains a solitary orphan” (1932: 210). In other words, Japanese were racially a unique group. Whether they would be able to assimilate with Americans, Ichihashi, reasoned, was an empirical question. And Ichihashi was advocating for a chance to test different hypotheses by opening up the path towards naturalization for Japanese immigrants.

Conclusion: Too Much of Difference

In summary, Japanese immigrants were a very much exceptional group in the Dillingham Commission's inquiry. In fact, they were the only non-white immigrant group that displayed all of the "desirable" qualities. They were educated, diligent workers who strived to settle in the U.S. and start families; they actively endeavored to lose their old customs and adapt to American culture. And they were highly successful in their occupations, be it farming, manual work, or small business ownership. Although these qualities supposedly made them qualify as the sort of "desirable" immigrants which the Dillingham Commission prized, they were categorically barred from naturalization because of their race. Despite – perhaps because of – their being so "desirable," Japanese immigrants faced intense resentment and discrimination from all other groups, natives and immigrants alike.

Japanese immigrants represented a contradiction within the Commission's scheme of racial hierarchy and "desirability" of immigrants. Simply put, whiteness did not, as anticipated, necessarily amount to "desirability"; the Commission found that Southern and Eastern Europeans, who were undoubtedly white, sometimes displayed many unflattering characteristics, whereas Japanese immigrants embodied all of the "progressive," "desirable" qualities worthy of model American citizens. The solution for this contradiction was to invent another standard against which to evaluate Japanese immigrants. Unlike other immigrants, they were not evaluated on the basis of criminal propensities, reliance upon government aid, ability to speak English, or economic prosperity. They were evaluated on the basis of their civic and political participation, areas from which they were excluded because of restrictive naturalization laws and racial resentment, as the Dillingham Commission acknowledged. This formulation of different assessment criteria completed the circle of *different kinds of difference*: not all immigrant groups were evaluated in the same manner; instead, the standard with which to gauge the distance from the Anglo-Saxon Protestant core of the nation changed according to the group being evaluated. In the case of European immigrants, the criteria for desirability had to do with the moral politics of the progressive era, entailing concerns about crime, welfare, economic productivity, and English language acquisition. With time and effort, it was expected that these immigrant groups would improve on these areas. On the contrary, in the case of Japanese immigrants, the measure of successful assimilation was engagement in civic life, for which they had no hope of improving their conditions, because of the racist naturalization laws. Ichihashi's idiosyncratic but passionate definitional argument for Japanese whiteness notwithstanding, the Dillingham Commission made it clear that Japanese did not belong in the nation, because of their "differing so greatly."

This evasive maneuver was employed in the policy recommendation of the Dillingham Commission regarding Asian immigration as well. Contrary to Southern and Eastern Europeans, whose "undesirable" characteristics were documented in detail in the executive summary, the Commission did not say much about Japanese immigrants. Instead, it noted that the current policy regarding Asian immigration – the Chinese Exclusion Act and Gentlemen's Agreement – should stand without modification, as long as they proved to be effective in controlling the additional inflow of Asian immigrants. Here, by not mentioning Japanese immigrants, the Dillingham Commission tacitly owned that the focus of their inquiry was not determining the "desirability" of immigrant groups but reworking and maintaining the boundary of whiteness.

The relationship between Japan and the United States gradually worsened in the three decades after the Dillingham Commission released its report, as Japan pursued an aggressive

expansion policy in Asia. The position of Japanese immigrants, as well as that of Ichihashi, also became more precarious in the 1930s and onward. As a renowned expert on all things Japan, Ichihashi actively engaged in public speaking and writing, advocating for the Japanese perspective. Although he himself was a liberal, fascist takeover of the Japanese government gave him no choice other than to act as its representative, justifying the empire's warmongering. Not too surprisingly, Ichihashi became isolated from his campus and public life, as well as from the Japanese government, which suspected that he had become too close to Americans. From the late 1930s and onward, his identity as a spokesperson for two countries, the position in which he once took a great pride, was not welcome on either side of the Pacific.

Three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ichihashi was sent to an internment camp, along with other Japanese immigrants on the West Coast. He would spend the next three years in the Tule Lake Segregation Center, collecting data on and keeping a diary about the everyday life of internees, in order to one day write about the experience. As he had written in his dissertation, "having been through thick and thin of the life in the United States," Ichihashi increasingly became bitter and withdrawn from the world, rarely speaking to anyone, including his immediate family members. After the war, Ichihashi returned to his house on the Stanford campus, and resumed teaching in his old department. Yet he maintained a low profile until his death in 1963, not publishing anything and turning down any public speaking opportunities.

The Immigration Act of 1952 did away with the naturalization ban for Asian immigrants, and Japanese immigrants could finally obtain American citizenship, as Ichihashi had been advocating for before the war. However, Ichihashi chose not to naturalize; he did not choose to return to Japan after the war, as some internees did, either. He chose to slowly and quietly fade away into obscurity and die as an alien, in the land that he had lived for more than 70 years.

In 1966, three years after Ichihashi's death, William Pettersen published an article titled "Success Story, Japanese-American Style" in the *New York Times*.⁷⁶ This article would again put Japanese immigrants at the center of attention as an exceptional, "model minority," thereby perpetuating the familiar stereotype of being "desirable" and "differing greatly" at the same time.

⁷⁶ Pettersen, William. "Success Story, Japanese-American Style" Jan 9, 1966. *New York Times*.

Conclusion: Difference, Distinction, and Belonging

Difference, Distinction, and Belonging

This dissertation began with questions about the social construction of whiteness, which has often been defined and asserted through multiple criteria that contradict each other. What happens when inevitable contradictions arise between the science of racial classification and “the understanding of the common man”? (see introduction) Faced with empirical evidence that threw their assumptions into question and undermined their convictions, how did the racial ideologues of the early twentieth century contend with the contradictions inherent in their racial ideas? In order to answer these questions, I analyzed the complex connections between racial ideology, state power, and knowledge production put into relief by the work of the Dillingham Commission, focusing on the moments in which the nativists encountered empirical evidence that did not neatly conform to their views about race and identity.

I introduced the concept of *different kinds of difference* to analyze how, in the early twentieth century, the tension between ideological agenda and empirical commitment was managed through a paradigm shift in race-thinking. Although the Commission was largely controlled by the nativists who wanted to render Southern and Eastern European immigrants as “undesirable races,” different from Northern and Western European immigrants and native-born whites, the empirical data often betrayed their wishes, instead providing a support for the possibility of eventual incorporation of Southern and Eastern European immigrants. Moreover, immigrant intellectuals and activists appropriated the Commission’s data and funding, producing further empirical evidence in favor of immigrants while defying the political aims of the nativists. In this process, the essentialist notion of race underwent a transmutation and came to incorporate a distinction among immigrants, between people who could eventually be assimilated and those who cannot ever be assimilated. The concept of *different kinds of difference* encapsulates this process in which whiteness came to include not only exclusionary but also inclusive boundary-making.

In the course of the five chapters, I pinpointed how these struggles and compromises over empirical data manifested in the Dillingham Commission’s inquiry, and I traced the prehistories and aftermaths of those collisions. The first two chapters provided insights into the historical context for the Commission and its work, specifically the state of discourse in nineteenth-century race-thinking, which undergirded how the nativist members of the Commission perceived immigrants (Chapter 1), and the immediate political, diplomatic, and personal histories leading up to the establishment of the Commission in 1907 (Chapter 2).

As opposed to existing research that tends to simplify nineteenth-century racism and nativism as originating from uninformed, irrational personal-level prejudice in both public and elite consciousness, Chapter 1 highlighted the diversity of race-thinking, ranging from naturalistic obsessions over skull collections to reactionary political ideology based on class antagonism. In other words, racism and nativism did not draw on a bank of hatred and revulsion, but also on the legacies of the past attempts to rationalize and systemize the hatred and revulsion, often through the language and practices of science. At the same time, however, different strands of race-thinking did not always co-exist peacefully with each other: the claims of rationality and scientific value came back to haunt race-thinking, because in many cases empirical evidence did not support the claims originating from hatred and revulsion. Responding to these contradictions, race-thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century came to slowly move away from a rigid, essentialist concept of race focusing on biology to more flexible ways of thinking about group differences, instead highlighting historical and cultural differences among people. Yet the flexible nature of

these differences amplified the contradiction inherent in race-thinking, and as we will see later, the Dillingham Commission was a place in which some of these contradictions became conspicuous.

The contradictions were visible and consequential in the Dillingham Commission because it was supposedly a space of objective and impartial inquiry governed by the logic of empirical data collection. Chapter 2 discussed how this dissonance came about. In the first decade of the twentieth century, anti- and pro-immigrant politicians engaged in repeated legislative battles over immigration restriction, but many “veto-points” in the legislative process prevented significant changes in immigration policy (Tichenor 2002). Meanwhile, the nativist rabble-rousers in California threatened to segregate Japanese schoolchildren in San Francisco, igniting a diplomatic feud with Japan, a powerful, must-retain ally for Theodore Roosevelt, who prioritized American expansion into the Pacific. Brokering a deal between anti- and pro immigrant politicians as well as the California nativists and Japanese government, Roosevelt obtained temporary executive power to control immigration, while promising that he would work towards a permanent solution to “the immigration problem” (Benton-Cohen 2018) after a fact-finding inquiry had been conducted through a congressional commission. In other words, the careful balance of power surrounding the Dillingham Commission rendered it as a space that was fiercely contested yet, because of those contestations, somewhat neutral and contingent on negotiation.

Featuring politicians, bureaucrats, and intellectuals with different backgrounds and expertise, the Dillingham Commission embarked on a data collection effort of an unprecedented scale. As the Commission’s personnel networks expanded, however, the ideological heterogeneity within its organizational hierarchy proliferated: as the personal biographies of the Commission members showcased, not everyone in the Commission adhered to the nativist ideology, although the top leadership positions in the Commission were occupied by the nativist politicians. The clash of perspectives between the people who worked in the Dillingham Commission provided a platform from which the voices of empirical data could resonate.

As Chapter 3 documented, the Commission’s inquiry quickly spun out of nativist control as it began to engage with data from its field sites. First of all, the Commission faced a contradiction in its racial classification scheme for immigrants. Nineteenth-century race-thinking used an overarching category of “white” to denote all Europeans, and further distinctions within the category, such as Southern and Eastern Europeans, were out of its theoretical purview. Thus the Commission had to move away from the essentialist understanding of race – on which the idea of a unified “white” race was based– and embrace cultural factors, such as language and geography, to maintain significant distinctions between different “white” immigrant groups. While this shift enabled the Commission to develop a fine-tuned classification scheme that could capture differences within Europeans or the “white” category, the move away from the classical, essentialist understanding of race also undermined the rigidity of the concept of race, opening up a possibility of boundary-blurring among immigrants, at least in theory. In addition to this conceptual transition, the field agents reported back with information that defied the nativists’ expectations: not only was the classification scheme of “races or peoples” useless in some cases – e.g. “everyone was an immigrant and people did not care where they came from” – but empirical data gathered often showed that Southern and Eastern Europeans were not distinctive, “undesirable” races, as the nativists had imagined. Although the Commission selectively highlighted the evidence that supported the nativist argument, glossing over noisome contradictions, it still published all of the data collected, staying true to the name of empirical inquiry, and immigrant intellectuals promptly seized upon the data to further undermine the nativist cause and advocate for immigrants.

Chapter 4 studied this process from a different angle, through the case of Franz Boas and his theoretical contribution to the development of assimilation theory. With funding from the Commission, anthropologist Franz Boas collected data on head shapes – supposedly the most stable indicator of “racial type” – of the children of European immigrants in New York City. The data showed that bodily traits could change rather rapidly under environmental influences. Boas used his finding to criticize the rigid racial assumptions underlying the contemporary caricature of the “new immigrants,” and envisioned the possibility of their eventual assimilation. Whereas the nineteenth-century concept of assimilation was tied to a racial hierarchy of civilization, Boas used Commission funding to render the previous definition obsolete, reworking the concept to denote the process through which a “new American type” would emerge. Using the nativists’ conceptual tools – as seen in Chapter 1, head measurements were nativists’ favorite indicator of racial difference – Boas effectively deconstructed their ideology built around rigidity and purity of racial categories, instead portraying the American immigration experience as a laboratory for racial intermixture and emergence of a new kind of people. By doing away with the biological definitions of race and assimilation from nineteenth-century race-thinking, Boas would pave the way for assimilation theory to develop into a narrative of incorporation for the “new immigrants.”

Whereas Chapters 3 and 4 described the process through which the boundary against Southern and Eastern Europeans was blurred, Chapter 5 turned attention away from the interior structure of national belonging to its margins, and showed how the bright boundary between whites and non-whites was rigidly maintained even amid the contradictions endemic to the Commission’s project. The Commission’s study of Japanese immigrants on the West Coast revealed that they were in many aspects more “desirable” than European immigrants: The Japanese were educated, hard-working, law-abiding, and family-oriented farmers who were willing to speak English and follow American customs. In order to address the decoupling of desirability and whiteness, the Commission had to argue that although the Japanese were not necessarily inferior to whites, they were too different to assimilate, and therefore should be excluded from citizenship. Yamato Ichihashi, a Japanese immigrant who worked as a research assistant collecting data from the study, begged to differ: just like other pro-immigrant intellectuals, he used the Commission data to argue in support of Japanese immigrants, especially for their naturalization rights. Unlike his European-immigrant counterparts, however, his passionate plea did not result in blurring boundaries to the advantage of Japanese immigrants: although he had a few influential sympathizers, such as Theodore Roosevelt and David Starr Jordan, empirical data without an elaborate support network did not lead to effective dismantling of the boundary separating whites and non-whites.

Throughout these five chapters, I traced the process through which the concept of *different kinds of difference* emerged from the Dillingham Commission’s sometimes troubled inquiry. Unexpected results in data collection forced the Dillingham Commission members to rework their nativist ideology, leading them to detach from the rigid, essentialist elements of race-thinking and contemplate a more flexible, cultural way of thinking about group differences, as well as engaging in a theoretical exploration of how those differences could be overcome. The move towards flexibility and fluidity, however, was not extended to all groups, and as Chapter 5 has demonstrated, the boundary between whites and non-whites remained intact, even against the empirical data showing the “desirability” of some non-white immigrants. The full circle of *different kinds of difference* was completed when the Dillingham Commission distinguished between assimilable and non-assimilable immigrants, combining an exclusionary and inclusionary approach to immigration through the mechanism of categorization. As the subtitle of this dissertation suggests – “difference, distinction, and belonging” – the Dillingham Commission, reworking the definition

of racial *difference*, distinguished between two different kinds of difference, one that could turn into a basis of national *belonging* and one that could not. The associative chain of difference, distinction, and belonging made up the operational logic of whiteness, and filled the void between the science of racial classification and “the understanding of the common man” used to define and justify the categories that allowed for calibration of exclusion and inclusion. Documenting the role of theory, data, and experts in this process was the primary goal of this dissertation.

Although I have introduced the concept *different kinds of difference*, analyzing its components to demonstrate how a new way of thinking about race emerged from a historical clash between racial politics and empirical method, the question still remains as to the practical implication of the conceptual developments I narrated through five chapters. In other words, do ideas matter in the making of racial categories, and if so, how? The next section focuses on this question. By reviewing the legislative history around immigration during the decades following the Dillingham Commission, I show how *different kinds of difference* became the key principle around which the restrictive immigration policy of the 1920s was designed and implemented. The Commission members had a clearly defined policy agenda, and their intent in participating in the Commission was to procure empirical data that would support their pre-defined policy goals. However, the unexpected results of the Commission’s inquiry would inspire a new policy idea, national quotas, which eventually became the most effective and powerful immigration policy of the nation. As one legal historian has observed, the Dillingham Commission’s “influence on legislation was somewhat slower in developing” (Hutchinson 1981: 149) but still proved to be crucial in the long term.

Unintended Consequences: Literacy Test and Quotas

The Literacy Test

In the executive summary of its report, the Commission argued for the saliency of its racial project without hedging: “[T]he new immigration as a class is far less intelligent than the old, approximately one-third of all those over 14 years of age when admitted being illiterate. Racially they are for the most part essentially unlike the British, German, and other peoples who came during the period prior to 1880” (DCR, vol.1: 14). Although, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the actual data from the field did not warrant such a clear-cut division, the Dillingham Commission firmly stood by its own racial ideology. The “new immigrants” were different “races or peoples,” and a literacy test, the Commission argued, was the most effective means of reducing their numbers.

The proposal for a literacy test was not a novel idea. Henry Cabot Lodge, the mastermind behind the Commission, had introduced the proposal for the first time in 1891 as a first-time congressman in the House. Since then Lodge and his nativist allies had engaged in numerous attempts to pass the proposal (Hutchinson 1981: 465; see also Zeidel 2004), only to encounter entrenched opposition in Congress and the executive branch. As seen in Chapter 2, the Dillingham Commission itself was an outcome of one of those failed attempts: in the last minute negotiations around the Immigration Act of 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt made a deal with the opposition by replacing the literacy test measure with a bill for a Congressional commission to study the immigration problem (Benton-Cohen 2018). To appease angry nativists, Roosevelt named Lodge, Dillingham, and Burnett to serve in the Commission, assuring them that the inquiry would support their policy proposal. The Commission would take some time but the nativists would gain empirical data to support the literacy test. After the Commission had completed its work, the executive committee fought vigorously to keep this original plan intact, challenges from

empirical data notwithstanding. The executive summary, with its determined endorsement of the literacy test proposal, reflected these struggles. The nativists' goal was to lend their policy goal an aura of a scientific validity.

The authority of science did not help the nativists much in the ensuing legislative battles, however. In 1913, the nativists managed to pass the literacy test bill in Congress, only to face another defeat with a veto from President William Howard Taft. The Senate, led by Lodge and Dillingham, swiftly overrode the veto, yet the House failed to follow the suit by a margin of a mere two votes (Hutchinson 1981: 154). The nativists had to wait another four years, till the end of World War I, to push one more time. In 1917, Congress successfully overrode a veto by President Woodrow Wilson. Finally, the literacy test was implemented as a part of the official immigration policy of the nation: immigrants arriving after the war had to demonstrate that they were capable of reading and writing in their native language in order to enter the United States.

As it turned out, the measure that took 25 years to pass did not last long. In the 1890s and 1900s, a significant divide existed between the industrial nations of Western Europe and less developed, largely agricultural nations of Southern and Eastern Europe. Compulsory general education, a hallmark of industrial capitalism and modern state-formation, was a novel institution, and Southern and Eastern European countries lacked the capacity to teach their population on basic skills such as reading and writing. The literacy test proposal was designed to exploit this divide, as a means to exclude immigrants from rural areas of "backward" nations without singling out certain nationalities. By the time the proposal was implemented in 1917, however, this divide had largely disappeared, with many of the "backward" nations catching up to their developed neighbors in compulsory general education. As soon as the Immigration Naturalization Service started to examine the literacy of the incoming immigrants, it became clear that the test had a minimal impact on the overall flow of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The nativists had to go back to their policy playbook once again to come up with a different idea to curb immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The national quotas were their answer.

National Origin Quotas

Previous historiography highlights the role of the Census Bureau and its Quota Board chairman, Dr. Joseph A. Hill, in shaping the national origin quota restrictions (Ngai 2005: 25-37). As an expert in census and demographic data, Hill did much to *make possible* the national quotas: drawing on his experience with population data, he came up with specific numbers for each national origin group, providing an empirical basis for the administration of the quota law.

The *idea* of using numerical quotas, however, did not originate from his work. In fact, the national quotas emerged out of the Dillingham Commission's inquiry, as a backup plan for the literacy test. The executive summary of the Commission featured a number of policy proposals for immigration restrictions, as following:

The following methods of restriction immigration have been suggested:

- (a) The exclusion of those unable to read or write in some language
- (b) The 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 (DCR vol.1:47-48).

As discussed in the previous section, proposal (a) had been the longtime goal of the nativists since the 1890s, and Henry Cabot Lodge strongly supported the idea. Proposal (b), on the other hand, contained marks of the Dillingham Commission's inquiry, with its obsession with defining "race" and keeping count by category. Still, the formula – the "percentage of the average of that race

arriving during a given period of years” – was somewhat different from the national origin quotas we would see in the 1920s: in the actual law, the quotas were allotted to each national origin group according to the number of group members already residing in the United States in a certain time period. But its most critical feature, “percentages” – rationing a number for incoming immigrants based on the number of resident immigrants of the same category, whether it was “race” or national origin – first saw light in the Dillingham Commission’s recommendation.

The idea of using percentages of “race,” and not “race” per se (i.e. denying entry to the entirety of a certain group), was developed by William W. Husband (1871-1942), the executive secretary who oversaw the Commission’s inquiry. In an unpublished memo, he claimed that he was the one who originally came up with the idea of quotas, circa 1913.⁷⁷ His job in the Dillingham Commission was an arduous one, involving extensive expert networks and a myriad of issues related to personnel and fieldwork. Husband’s well-organized personal paper collection documents the daily tasks and challenges of his job during the four years of the Dillingham Commission: he had to gather busy executive members in one place for regular committee meetings; he had to correspond with independent investigators, many of whom had their own questions and misgivings about the Commission; he had to oversee the staff at the Commission’s Washington DC headquarters, making decisions about their hiring and salary; when there was a trouble with other federal agencies, it was Husband who took the responsibility of writing letters and sorting things out. As Zeidel (2004) has described, the last days of the Commission were a hectic affair, in which 27,000 pages of empirical data were rushed to print in order to meet the deadline imposed by Congress. One can only imagine the intensity of work Husband did in those days, as the last line of defense against various political pressures and nexus for a multitude of issues around data collection. After the publication of the Dillingham Commission Report in 1911, he moved to the Department of Labor, where he assumed the position of Commissioner-General of Immigration (1921-1924) and Assistant Secretary of Labor (1924-1935) until he retired.⁷⁸

In 1941, Husband wrote a memo detailing the exact moment in which he came up with the idea of national quotas. “One evening in the spring of 1913, probably April,” he recalled, “my brother-in-law...[and I] were discussing the immigration problem before a wood fire in the house on Highland Place, Washington[.]” Husband had just finished his work in the Dillingham Commission. He was taking a much-needed break, spending time with his family members and casually discussing politics. By “the immigration problem,” he must have meant the literacy test bill, which was going through another round of debate in Congress in 1913. As discussed above, the Dillingham Commission championed the proposal as the most effective means to control immigration; John Burnett, a Commission member and representative from Alabama, sponsored the proposal containing the literacy test, and the restrictionists were once again facing the oppositions from pro-immigrant politicians. With inside knowledge from working in Commission for four years, Husband might have been talking to his brother-in-law about what he expected to come out of the debate.

While talking, Husband had a moment of epiphany: “It suddenly occurred to me that some percentage system based on the foreign-born population of the United States might afford a means of accomplishing what was desired, which admittedly was to cut down the great influx of aliens from Southern and Eastern Europe.” The system was especially appealing because it provided “the

⁷⁷ William W. Husband, Sept. 4. 1941. “How the Quota Limit System of Regulating Immigration Happened.” Husband files, box 2, folder 1. Husband Papers. Chicago History Museum, Chicago, IL.

⁷⁸ Biographical information obtained from the official homepage of United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (“Agency History”, <http://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history-25>).

desired solution of the troublesome problem without a logical suggestion of discrimination among the various nationalities concerned.” He immediately went up to his study to write down his idea. In the following days, he was able to calculate the exact number of immigrants allocated to each nation, based on the data that he had on his hand.⁷⁹

Husband took his idea to his boss, Dillingham, and after a few weeks the two men distributed a press release with the proposed quotas. The quota proposal officially first saw the light on June 2nd, 1913. The restrictionists were not so excited; they were still attached to the idea of a literacy test, which they had been advocating for over two decades, and were unsure of the new idea. Dillingham proposed a bill for quotas in 1913, even though it received virtually no support from either restrictionists or their opponents. The proposal died without receiving much attention. In the debate over the literacy test in 1917, Dillingham again brought up quotas, although he confessed that he himself was not fully committed to the idea (Hutchinson 1981: 166).

The quota proposal finally received support in 1921, when the nativists witnessed the ineffectiveness of the literacy test and were looking for an alternative. Eventually, the national origin quotas became the most consequential immigration policy for the United States, selectively restricting immigration from the 1920s to 1965, until the Hart-Cellar Act finally struck the system down, opening the gates for a new wave of immigration to the country.

Inspirations from the Dillingham Commission

What propelled Husband to come up with the idea of quotas? In his memoir, he does not specifically describe his thought process, other than presenting it as a sudden moment of revelation. In 1913, he had just finished the Dillingham Commission’s project, which had consumed four full years of his life. He was in a position to review almost all of the materials generated from the Commission’s inquiry, so it is fair to assume that he was aware of all of the troubles arising from the Commission’s data collection process. His papers show that Husband was the person in charge of dealing with many of these issues. The executive members, committed to nineteenth-century race-thinking, were often busy with other issues; the staff members were occupied with the practicalities of the operation; it was Husband who had to fill the gaps in the Commission’s work and deal with its failures and blunders.

In the process, he must have seen what worked and what did not in the Dillingham Commission. His moment of epiphany, then, can be understood as a result of reviewing the Commission’s successes and failures. He realized that the clear-cut division between “races or people” did not work; the proposed racial hierarchy privileging the WASP was too unstable to build a feasible immigration policy around. Yet, he found one thing that constantly proved to be fail-proof: numbers, represented by two-way cross tables that filled the 27,000 pages of the Commission report, were the strongest part of the Commission’s work, Husband thought. As documented in Chapters 3 and 4, asserting a clear-cut divide between Southern and Eastern Europeans and others was untenable, especially considered against empirical data. His idea of circumventing direct use of an individual’s “race” – “percentages” – originated from witnessing the practical failures of nineteenth-century race-thinking.

In other words, categorical thinking around “race” or whiteness was unsustainable, at least in regards to European immigrants. Their differences were gradual — i.e. they were different from other Europeans in a way that was acceptable, since the difference could transform over time through a process of assimilation. Numbers, “percentages,” provided a means to convert the

⁷⁹ Husband, “How the Quota Limit System of Regulating Immigration Happened.” The press releases and other related materials are also included in the same folder.

categorical variable of “race” into a continuous variable, in terms of the likelihood of assimilation for each group. The bigger the size of the group in the United States, the more likely the newcomers would assimilate faster, hence the higher numbers for immigrants with a sizeable and established presence in the U.S., and the lower numbers for the “new immigrants,” most of whom were recent arrivals. Without categorically deciding who the “undesirable races” were and rejecting them outright, different quota allocations would naturally take care of the problem of policing national identity: the WASP immigrants would receive higher quotas, reinforcing the WASP cultural hegemony, whereas the “new immigrant,” with their small numbers, would succumb to such hegemony and assimilate. In short, Husband’s epiphany encapsulated the transformation of the nativist thinking in the Dillingham Commission: categorical rejection of target groups was untenable; and selective incorporation of some groups, while maintaining the existing WASP hegemony, was the way to move forward.

At the same time, however, as Chapter 5 has demonstrated, the power of categorical thinking did not lose its hold on public policy. The national quota restrictions firmly rejected all non-white immigrants, as aliens incapable of assimilating. Combined with the naturalization laws that banned naturalization of any non-white residents, the Asiatic Barred Zone ensured that the United States remained a white-majority nation. The key contribution of the Dillingham Commission, as well as the national quotas, was that it simultaneously laid out a conceptual means to reinforce whiteness (through assimilation of European immigrants) while securing its boundary (through exclusion of non-white immigrants). My concept of *different kinds of difference* denotes these two corresponding trends in knowledge production and immigration policy-making.

Although no one involved in the Dillingham Commission realized its potential at the time, the Dillingham Commission proved to be a crucial catalyst for this transition in nativist thinking by introducing and advocating for the idea of national quotas. But this was only possible because the Commission opened itself up to the contingency inherent in a large scale fact-finding project, exposing Husband to the failures and blunders of the racial ideology of nativism. By appreciating the contingent dimension of the Dillingham Commission’s project, we obtain a more accurate picture of how immigration restriction progressed in the early twentieth century U.S.

Now we understand the implications of the Dillingham Commission’s inquiry, and what it achieved for whiteness in the United States. We also understand its significance in terms of historiography, as the source of inspiration for the national quota legislations that defined American immigration policy during the first half of the twentieth century. The concluding section of this dissertation focuses on the last remaining question: what is the sociological importance of the Dillingham Commission? Why should we care?

Coda: Questioning American National Identity

Who is, and who is not, “American”? There are multiple ways of answering this seemingly innocuous question. The most obvious answer is to invoke the cultural trope of “nation of immigrants,” and argue that anyone, regardless of their origins, can *become* American, provided that they aspire to be so and meet necessary qualifications. Along with the popular notion of “American dream,” or upward socio-economic mobility through individual effort, this narrative proscribes aspiration and hope to the American nation: it is an open-ended civic community to which anyone willing can belong (Smith 1997). Here, the focus of the discussion is on how those aspirations can be realized, or the *means of becoming* American (Shklar 1991; Bloemraad 2006). A more legalistic answer, on the other hand, could invoke the notion of citizenship, noting that “American” denotes persons who hold rights as citizens of the United States, either by birth or

through naturalization (Zolberg 2006). Those who do not hold citizenship rights are, therefore, not “American.” Here the aspirational dimension is present – mainly through naturalization – but the emphasis is certainly on the *boundary* dividing citizens and foreigners, and on how they differ in terms of their respective rights and privileges. Hence the focus becomes an effective means of marking and maintaining the boundary (Honig 2001; Bosniak 2008).

The debates around national identity, or the meaning of being “American,” have constantly oscillated between these two poles. Generations of immigrants have gradually become “American” through naturalization, incorporation, and assimilation, however one chooses to call their lived experience of adapting to their new surroundings (Bloemraad 2011). On the other hand, today’s undocumented immigrants, who make up more than 3 percent of the overall US population⁸⁰, are living examples of the contradiction between these aspirational and legalistic answers, as their “lives in limbo” (Gonzales 2018) attest to the gap between substantial and formal belonging.

On top of this opposition between inclusive and exclusive notions of being “American,” the tumultuous political developments of the 2010s added another layer of complexity. Associated with specific race, generation, and political leanings, the “American” label is now most forcefully claimed by those who feel threatened by the demographic and cultural transformations of the twenty-first century. As Arlie Hochschild suggested, the people who feel that they are “strangers in their own land” (2016) now rally around the banner of “American” to assert themselves against cosmopolitan urban elites on the one hand, and to repulse the horde of immigrants supposedly invading the country, on the other. As this use of the “American” label abounded, historical debates around the national identity were eclipsed by rampant labeling and finger-pointing, followed by legal and cultural exclusion of those bearing the marks of difference.

As its title suggests, this dissertation is a historical inquiry into the process of distinguishing who is “American,” and, consequently, who is not. This dissertation does not attempt to define what being “American” means; neither does it presume to take a side in the continuing debates around substantial and formal belonging, or to resolve the thorny question of whether citizenship rights in the United States and elsewhere should be contracted or expanded. Instead, it presents a historical sociology of the foundation on which the question of national identity rests: on what basis do we assess being “American”? What made it possible for us to even contemplate the question, and where does the toolkit we use to answer the question come from? A cursory look at American history will reveal that the question of national identity and membership haunted the nation from its founding, and that there is no shortage of anecdotes representing the tension embedded in what it means to be American, such as Benjamin Franklin’s rant against German immigrants and Teddy Roosevelt’s tirade against “hyphenated Americans.”

From a sociological perspective, one may even argue that posing the question should be regarded as a repeated pattern of behavior that deserves an explanation. Why do we even bother asking the question about being “American”? Why is it so important to tell Americans apart from others, and what are the consequences of such act of differentiation? And more importantly, how do answers to these question undergird how we accept and reject new members to our community, and thereby shape the becoming of “we”? As the case of the Dillingham Commission shows, the obsession over race, immigration, and national identity throughout American history says much more about the American psyche than the imagined figure of “immigrants.” Perhaps this lesson applies to the immigration debate in the early twenty-first century as well.

⁸⁰ “Unauthorized immigrant population trends for states, birth countries, and regions” November 3, 2016. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-trends/>

Contemporary sociology of immigration has largely revolved around two competing theoretical paradigms addressing the relationship between race and immigration: assimilation and racialization (Waters and Jiménez 2005; Jung 2009; Sáenz and Douglas 2015). Focusing on the contemporary “new immigrants” – those who entered the country after the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 – and their children, scholars debated how they would transform the racial boundary entrenched in American society. Would they strengthen the saliency of the racial divide by remaining distinctive, disadvantaged minority groups, or would they embody the possibility of ethnic mobility and assimilation through successful integration? According to optimistic commentators, many of today’s “new immigrants” and their children are “doing well,” (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, and Holdaway 2008) in terms of their socio-economic status, transforming the U.S. into a more open, tolerant society befitting of a “nation of immigrants”; however, some groups are falling behind, and these scholars argue that more attention should be paid to their plight. Frank Bean and Jennifer Lee call this juxtaposition the “diversity paradox,” noting that not all groups fare equally within an increasingly diverse and tolerant yet at the same time unequal and competitive society (Bean and Lee 2012; Kasinitz et al 2008; Alba and Nee 2003; Jiménez 2017). Whereas immigration takes center stage and race is a subtext in these discussions, other authors put race and racism at the foreground in discussing immigrants. They argue that contemporary immigrants are indeed part of a racialized minority, and their life chances are governed by the same kind of racial boundary that determined those of African Americans and third- and fourth-generation Mexican Americans throughout the twentieth century (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Telles and Ortiz 2008; Jiminez 2009).

An exchange between these two perspectives (Haller, Portes and Lynch 2011a; 2011b; Alba, Kasinitz, and Waters 2011) led one commentator to argue that the debate was not about “whether the glass [is] half full or half empty” (Haller et al. 2011b: 775), but one cannot help feeling that this might as well be the case, especially in the face of recent political developments. The nation’s most prestigious office has become a bully pulpit for early twentieth-century style nativist agitation, and every day we witness the rhetoric of dog-whistle politics invoking the most inimical sort of racial fear and resentment. With increased funding and manpower, Immigration and Customs Enforcement is *de facto* becoming a paramilitary force, once again showing under broad daylight the state’s capacity to terrorize the bodies it deems as “foreign” or “illegal.” Expectedly, the optimism among intellectuals for immigrant incorporation is rapidly being replaced by moral outrage and indignation, moving immigrants and their allies to engage in novel forms of collective action against the state. And needless to say, all this is happening as many people suffer gravely and a minority benefits from these nativist developments in immigration politics. The question of American identity has literally become a matter of life and death.

This dissertation does not directly engage with these developments; nor does it intervene in the debate concerning the plight of today’s immigrants, at least not in the sense of presenting a new evidence that will settle the score on the question of “the glass” being “half full or half empty.” Instead, it concerns the question of discursive foundation: why do we talk about immigrants in a specific manner, and what does it tell us about the people who do the talking? The conceptual apparatus that buttresses contemporary immigration discourse – race, ethnicity, assimilation, and national identity – originates from, I argue, the Dillingham Commission and its time, the period in which American politicians, intellectuals, and bureaucrats attempted to find “facts” about immigrants and, supposedly, let those “facts” guide them in developing an effective immigration policy.

Today's sociologists are much different from the intellectuals of the Dillingham Commission in the sense that we are equipped with much more sophisticated tools of data collection and analysis, not to mention the fact that, in most cases, we share an unwavering liberal commitment to defy nativism and seek a humane solution to "the immigration problem" of our times. However, the way we go about achieving these goals is not very different from how the nativists in the Dillingham Commission went onto find "facts" to support their racial ideology. Arguing that particular immigrants were disqualified as "undesirable races" did not prove to be a very effective strategy for immigration restriction, as the Dillingham Commission's fraught inquiry shows; our task of informing the public about the virtues of today's immigrants – e.g. how they are well-educated, love their family, work hard, do not take welfare benefits and do not commit crimes, etc. – seems to be at least equally challenging, if not more. Meanwhile, the immigration debate is increasingly moving away from any substantive consideration of the "facts" to the domain of emotionally charged moral politics, as one side sees immigrants as less than human beings and the other side calls them inhumane for doing so.

In short, we face a daunting challenge: how should we talk about immigration and immigrants, against the tide of nativism and racism that defies all of the relevant facts and denies productive and empirically responsive civic discourse? Whereas the Dillingham Commission's data rendered Southern and Eastern Europeans as worthy of sympathy (e.g. "they are human beings, just like us"), "post-facts" politics portrays today's immigrants as demonic figures who deserve no response other than force.

What should we do, both as scientists and advocates? I can only answer for the former, and the answer is not very promising: not only should we concern ourselves about producing "facts" about immigration and building a narrative that humanizes immigrants, but we should also pay attention to the larger structure of knowledge production that we rely on. What are our assumptions in producing knowledge about immigration? Are we really different from the members of the Dillingham Commission, because we do not subscribe to their nativism and racism? Are we really controlling the process and results of the knowledge production as much as we would like to? What are some other ways of studying immigration and immigrants, and what can we gain by broadening our perspective? Do our "facts" really persuade people who hold negative opinions about immigrants?

These were some of the motivating questions for this project in its initial stage. Although I do not have firm answers for all of them, I would like to emphasize one theoretical stance: namely that immigrants are, just like any other sociological objects of analysis, a product of knowledge production, a result of our theorization. Immigrants do not exist on their own; we do not "go out" and collect data on them. Instead, we categorize and identify them, usually following the state's lead, substantiate their existence through various forms of empirical data, and make inferences about who they are. Inevitably, our own politics and morality creeps in throughout the process, although the commitments certainly do not completely dictate the process of our theorization. Much of sociology of immigration has focused on finding "facts" about immigrants while blanketing the process of theoretically constructing them as an object of analysis. Recent scholarship in history and sociology has begun to pay more attention to this premises, highlighting both macro- and micro-scale dynamics that constitute the boundary separating immigrants from non-immigrants, correctly emphasizing how social science research itself has played a role in the construction and maintenance of American national identity (FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014; Perlman 2018; Benton-Cohen 2018). I hope this dissertation contributes to this conversation.

I do understand that many sociologists are weary of meta-level analyses, because such analyses often lead to an infinite questioning of foundation without any substance and, as a consequence, a nihilistic denial of any possibility of progress. This dissertation, however, argues that sometimes meta-level questions are necessary to change the course of things, and the early twenty-first century — when we are witnessing the demise of facts and the return of the nativism from the previous century — is probably a good time as any for us to engage in some soul-searching. By placing the idea of whiteness at the center of analysis, this dissertation, in its own way, attempted to problematize some of the assumptions we employ in studying race, immigration, and national identity.

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Appendix. The Titles of the Dillingham Commission Reports⁸¹

- Volumes 1-2: *Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission, with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority.*
- Volume 3: *Statistical Review of Immigration, 1820-1910. Distribution of Immigrants, 1850-1900.*
- Volume 4: *Emigration Conditions in Europe.*
- Volume 5: *Dictionary of Races or People.*
- Volumes 6-7: *Bituminous Coal Mining.*
- Volumes 8-9: *Iron and Steel Manufacturing.*
- Volume 10: *Cotton Goods Manufacturing in the North Atlantic States; Woolen and Worsted Goods Manufacturing.*
- Volume 11: *Silk Goods and Manufacturing and Dyeing; Clothing Manufacturing; Collar, Cuff, and Shirt Manufacturing.*
- Volume 12: *Leather Manufacturing; Boot and Shoe Manufacturing; Glove Manufacturing.*
- Volume 13: *Slaughtering and Meat Packing.*
- Volume 14: *Glass Manufacturing; Agricultural Implement and Vehicle Manufacturing.*
- Volume 15: *Cigar and Tobacco Manufacturing; Furniture Manufacturing; Sugar Refining.*
- Volume 16: *Copper Mining and Smelting; Iron Ore Mining; Anthracite Coal Mining; Oil Refining.*
- Volumes 17-18: *Diversified Industries.*
- Volumes 19-20: *Summary Report on Immigrants in Manufacturing and Mining.*
- Volumes 21-22: *Recent Immigrants in Agriculture.*
- Volumes 23-25: *Japanese and Other Immigrant Races in the Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain States.*
- Volumes 26-27: *Immigrants in Cities: A Study of the Population of Selected Districts in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Milwaukee.*
- Volume 28: *Occupations of the First and Second Generations of Immigrants in the United States; Fecundity of Immigrant Women.*
- Volumes 29-33: *The Children of Immigrants in Schools.*
- Volumes 34-35: *Immigrants as Charity Seekers.*
- Volume 36: *Immigration and Crime.*
- Volume 37: *Steerage Conditions, Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes, Immigrant Homes and Aid Societies, Immigrant Banks.*
- Volume 38: *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants: (Final Report).*
- Volume 39: *Immigration Legislation.*
- Volume 40: *The Immigration Situation in other Countries: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil.*
- Volume 41: *Statements and Recommendations Submitted by Societies and Organizations Interested in the Subject of Immigration*

⁸¹ The title of the volumes were obtained from the opening pages of volume 1. Volume 42, which was supposed to include index, was planned but never printed