EUGENICS AND THE IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION MOVEMENT IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

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ABSTRACT

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IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

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For the first century of its history, the United States had an open-door policy and essentially no immigration laws. Subsequently, however, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a eugenics-led Immigration Restriction Movement (IRM) arose and brought about a seemingly improbable, but nonetheless total, reversal of U.S. immigration policy through the enactment of the Immigration Restriction Acts of 1917, 1921, and 1924. Many historians looking at this period recognize the influence of eugenics on the IRM but generally view the new immigration laws as a natural response to the large numbers of poorer immigrants arriving from southern and eastern Europe. It is the thesis of this dissertation, however, that the success of the immigration restriction movement – in a country of immigrants – was not simply a natural outgrowth of nativist sentiment but required, in fact, a highly organized and comprehensive crusade aimed at inducing a nation-wide hysteria, or *moral panic*, to garner widespread public support for laws restricting the entrance the so-called "new immigrants."

This dissertation is essentially a sociological case study of the eugenics-led IRM, using the sociological tools of Moral Panic theory, Collective Action Framing, Resource Mobilization Theory, Pierre Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory, and Howard Becker's concept of *moral entrepreneurs*. I use these tools to analyze the various factors, ideologies, and central persons that contributed to the growth and success of the IRM. The purpose of this research is to outline the fundamental claims of eugenics and other

racially based theories prevalent at the turn of the century, to show their influence on the attitudes of the upper-class elites, and to trace the connections between the elites, the organizations they created, and their overall impact on public opinion and government policy. This research will help illuminate how the original American aristocracy or governing class, which had initially welcomed good-natured and skilled newcomers into their ranks, effectively became a closed caste, restricting access almost exclusively to white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, creating cultural and political divisions that continued to have substantial effects, not only on immigration, but also on the entire society throughout the 20th century.

DEDICATION

I want to express my profound love and affection for my dear wife, Marion, whose patient support has been unending, and to our four children, Godfrey, Roderick, Alexia, and Sunhyun, and their spouses and children (our grandchildren). For me, you have all been an amazing source of encouragement, inspiration, and heart-warming joy. Thank you for believing in me and helping me envision and achieve this joyful conclusion. I could not have done it without you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The United States is a nation of immigrants. The nation was founded by immigrants from Europe and its population was subsequently augmented by waves of immigrants from around the world. The founders of the nation and its earliest Presidents knew that, as a fledgling nation, America would have a very difficult course without a healthy flow of immigrants to help the country grow and expand. For the first one hundred years of its history, the United States had essentially no immigration laws (Daniels, 2004:7). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, an Immigration Restriction Movement (IRM) arose that ultimately led to a near total reversal of U.S. immigration policy through the enactment of the immigration restriction laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924. To illustrate, from 1880 to 1924, more than 24 million immigrants came to America's shores, sometimes more than a million in one year, with the majority arriving from Russia, Italy, and eastern Europe. By comparison, from 1925 to 1943, barely a million immigrants entered the United States throughout the entire period, and these came almost exclusively from western Europe and Scandinavia (Benton-Cohen, 2018:1-2).

Many historians have studied this period and the persons involved in the anti-immigrant crusade, but an in-depth analysis of the IRM using the concepts and analytical framework of social movement theory is absent from the available literature. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the IRM and the various factors that contributed to its growth and success using the sociological concepts and theoretical frameworks of Moral Panic Theory (MPT), Collective Action Framing (CAF), Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), Social Capital Theory (SCT), and the concept of the Moral Entrepreneurs (ME).

One key point that makes this movement of particular interest is that, unlike grassroots protest movements fueled by the discontent of distressed social groups, the IRM was an *elite-driven* movement. It was comprised of academics, politicians, and cultural leaders, many of whom were members of the Progressive Movement. Strikingly, most of these people had previously devoted their lives to the pursuit of social betterment and to uplifting the most vulnerable members of society.

IMMIGRATION – ONGOING CONTROVERSY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF CHANGE

In looking at the history of U.S. immigration policy, a distinction must be drawn between official policy and popular sentiment. Although immigration was virtually unrestricted during America's first century, the popular attitude toward immigration and immigrants varied and was often a source of contention at different periods. In the mid-1800s, for example, there were outbreaks of violence against Jews and Irish Catholics in many cities around the country, and a new political group, the American Party (more generally known as the Know-Nothing Party), arose to oppose the open immigration of non-Protestants into the United States (Daniels, 2004:10-11). A major tenet of the Know-Nothing platform was that only white, Protestant Americans should be allowed to run for political office and that non-Protestants should be barred from entering the country. Nevertheless, neither the platform of the American Party nor any other anti-immigrant hostilities had a significant effect on official U.S. immigration policy during the first half of the 19th century.

However, beginning in the 1870s, political attitudes began to change, bringing about the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This act restricted the immigration of people of Chinese origin into the United States and permanently

prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming U.S. citizens. This prohibition remained in effect until 1952, with the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act (Daniels, 2004:16). The passage of the 1882 legislation was extremely significant, not only because of its inherent anti-Asian bias, but also because it set a precedent for future similar legislation by the U.S. Congress. It is also interesting to note that, although the Chinese Exclusion Act was the first major U.S. effort to keep out foreigners, the act was driven more by political expediency than by an ideological opposition to immigration. According to historian Andrew Gyory, the anti-Chinese vitriol leading to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act arose most strongly after the end of Reconstruction in 1877. At that time, southern, white Democrats were once again allowed to run for office and the balance of power in Congress became evenly divided between Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats. With the completion of the Trans-Continental Railroad in 1869, over 10,000 Chinese laborers who had worked laying the tracks returned to the west coast to compete for jobs there. Because the Chinese laborers would work harder and for less money than most American workers, strong anti-Chinese sentiment spread among white labor union members in that region of the country. The hostile rhetoric and the push for Chinese exclusion can therefore be understood as an attempt on the part of Congressional Democrats and Republicans to win the vote of citizens of the new state of California, the first swing state (Gyory, 1998:169-184).

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO U.S. NATIVISM AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT

Rapid and Sustained Increase in Immigration

Regardless of the impetus behind the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, during the following two decades of the 19th century, intensified, nativistic, anti-immigrant

sentiment began to grow, especially among upper-class whites. This anti-immigrant bias culminated in the Immigration Restriction Acts of 1917 (the Asiatic Barred Zone Act), 1921 (the Emergency Quota Act), and 1924 (the National Origins Act or Johnson-Reed Act) (Daniels, 2004:46-55).

The change in attitude toward immigrants and immigration in the late 19th century was prompted by many factors. The first major factor was that, between 1882 and 1924, the major cities of the United States were inundated with millions of immigrants, Russian Jews, Italians, Irish Catholics, and other poor immigrants migrating from eastern Europe. One contributing cause to this widespread migration was the fact that, economic conditions in these areas of Europe were extremely challenging and political turmoil at that time was deeply unsettling.

Russian Jews had additional reasons to migrate. Following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, his son, Czar Alexander III, blamed the Jews for the assassination and imposed harsh new restrictions on the already oppressed Jewish communities in Russia. The new Czar reportedly wished to remove all Jews from Russia, either through killing them, converting them to Christianity, or driving them out of the country. In response to this persecution, millions of Russian Jews fled to eastern Europe and eventually to the United States (Moses, 2010:360-367).

Another factor fueling increased immigration at this time was the fact that, while eastern and southern Europe were experiencing political and economic woes, the United States was entering the second stage of the industrial revolution and was experiencing rapid economic growth and booming prosperity. The rapid industrialization in the U.S.

acted as a magnet, drawing millions of immigrants to the United States seeking political freedom and improved economic fortune (Leonard, 2016:80-85).

Social and Economic Status of the New Immigrants

A second factor contributing to the change in attitude toward immigrants had to do with the social status of the new émigrés. Most of the original European settlers in the United States were white, educated Protestants from England, western Europe, and Scandinavia. By contrast, most of the new immigrants were lower-class Jewish or Catholic refugees. Members of both these latter groups spoke little or no English, dressed oddly (by American standards), and were considered undesirable by the American upper class (Benton-Cohen, 2018:75-78).

Upper-class Anxiety and Uncertainty

A third element that lead to the growth of anti-immigrant sentiment was upper-class anxiety, i.e., the growing frustration and uncertainty of the old-guard aristocracy who were experiencing a status revolution and an ongoing decline in their social standing. Since the founding of the United States, descendants of the Puritans and other early settlers, whether they lived in Boston or elsewhere, had occupied a position of elevated social esteem and had felt it was their duty and privilege to guide the nation culturally and politically. But in the late 19th century, the new industrialist class was emerging as a potent social force. The Carnegies, the Rockefellers, and other successful industrialists were amassing fortunes that allowed them to wield increasing political and social influence and eclipse the cultural and financial status of the traditional upper-class elites (Hofstadter, 1955:135-140).

In addition to being supplanted as social leaders by the industrialists, the elites were also being pushed aside by the waves of new immigrants. Especially in the eastern cities, the upper-class whites were greatly outnumbered by the immigrants and their children. Richard Hofstadter notes that, in a sense, "the Yankee felt himself pushed into his own ghetto" (Hofstadter, 1955:176-178). To cope with their growing loss of status and esteem, the white, Protestant elites directed their animus at the immigrants and began to call for their exclusion. As the sociologist E. Digby Baltzell notes, "Psychologically, it seems to be tragically true that one tends to turn against one's neighbors when unable to comprehend or cope with outside threats to one's personal security" (Baltzell, 1964:x).

The Influence of the Progressive Movement

Another social force which contributed to the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment was, surprisingly, the growth of the Progressive Movement. In the early decades of the 19th century, white, upper-class elites, influenced by Unitarian beliefs and Transcendentalism, believed in the divinity of the individual and in the corollary that it was their responsibility to reform society and uplift the poor and downtrodden (Solomon, 1989:3-4). In the later decades of the century, in response to the problems associated with unrestrained industrialization, this optimistic attitude of the elite undoubtedly contributed to the growth of the Progressive Movement. The Progressives originally believed that, through voluntary organizations, they could curb the worst excesses of laissez-faire capitalism, reshape American society, and improve social conditions for all. However, over time, as they were increasingly confronted by the specter of crowded inner-city slums and tenements filled with foreigners competing for jobs with white Americans,

Progressives began to call for the exclusion of immigrants as a necessary step to uplift American workers (Hofstadter, 1955:179-180).

The Eugenics Movement's Racial and Ethnic Prejudice

A final nail in the coffin of open immigration during this period was the rise of the eugenics movement (EM) and its theory of genetic determinism. The fundamental tenet of eugenics is that nature trumps nurture, or, in other words, in addition to an individual's physical attributes, a person's mental and emotional characteristics and behavioral proclivities (including a person's industriousness and ability to accrue wealth) are determined at birth by their genetic heritage and cannot be altered by education or environment. Because the theory of eugenics came to be widely accepted among highly educated, upper-class intellectuals – many of them from Harvard University and the other Ivy League schools – the large number of poorer immigrants seeking to enter the United States became a cause for great concern among the white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) elite. In the light of eugenic theory, the elite believed that the uneducated, lower-class immigrants flooding the nation's shores would undermine and destroy the social and political fabric of America and would pollute the germ plasm (i.e., the gene pool) of upper-class families, thus resulting in the degradation of the American ruling class. While the industrialists of this age enjoyed the availability of cheap labor, they did not relish the idea of the new immigrants marrying their sons and daughters. The upshot of this fear was an attempt on the part of the educated members of American society to close the nation's gates in order to preserve white, Anglo-Saxon social dominance and racial purity in the United States.

THE PUSH FOR IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

In pursuit of the goal of keeping out poorer immigrants, politicians such as Senators Henry Cabot Lodge and William P. Dillingham devoted much of their professional lives to restricting immigration to the United States. Additionally, in 1894, the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) was founded in Boston by three Harvard University graduates, and the founders soon recruited Sen. Lodge and several other prominent scholars and philanthropists to their cause. In the following decades, the widespread acceptance of eugenic theory made racism, ethno-centrism, and xenophobia fashionable. Nativistic, anti-immigrant diatribes, that in earlier decades might have been broadly dismissed, were suddenly upheld as the scientific pronouncements of society's most highly educated leaders (Leonard, 2016:124-136).

Most historians who have examined the events of this period acknowledge that the ideology of the eugenics movement and fears of racial and ethnic miscegenation played an important role in promoting the crusade for immigration restriction. Nevertheless, most textbooks, including Roger Daniels' comprehensive treatise on U.S. immigration policy, *Guarding the Golden Door*, regard the Immigration Acts of 1917, 1921, and 1924 simply as the result of a public reaction to the seemingly excessive immigration of lower-class immigrants during the previous decades and a widespread agreement on the part of most Americans that such immigration had to be curtailed (Daniels, 2004:55-56). A sociological analysis, however, will show that the drive for immigration restriction was not simply a natural outgrowth of nativist sentiment in the general population. Rather, it is the thesis of this dissertation that IRM was the result of a carefully orchestrated and executed campaign by the elite, educated, academic and cultural leaders of society.

IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION AS A MORAL PANIC

I believe a productive approach to studying the IRM will be to view it not simply as a popular response to excessive immigration but instead as an elite-engineered moral panic (MP), i.e., a highly organized and comprehensive crusade, coordinated by leaders of the eugenics movement and other upper-class whites. At the beginning of the 20th century, sociological evidence strongly suggests that the elite members of society, especially those who were active in the eugenics movement and the IRL, combined forces to close the doors to immigrants, particularly those from eastern and southern Europe. The campaign they waged was designed to stimulate resentment and prejudice against the new immigrants in order to sway public opinion to such a degree that sweeping, anti-immigration legislation could be successfully passed.

In terms of their methods and theories, historians tend to approach the study of history inductively, whereas sociologists approach the study of history deductively. In other words, historians look at specific facts, actions, and dates and seek to link them together in order to understand the past. By contrast, sociologists develop models and interpretive frameworks to analyze the actions of various groups and individuals and to see if those frameworks can shed new light on the activities and interconnections of the groups, movements, and events being studied. Both approaches are valuable, and both can uncover different insights into history. Nevertheless, it is my belief that, in relation to the eugenics movement and the push for immigration restriction, many key interconnections have been neglected because the scholars studying these topics lacked an appropriate systematic framework with which to view them.

This dissertation then is essentially a sociological investigation of the IRM and the eugenics movement and their efforts to close the door to immigrants from southern

and eastern Europe during the Progressive Era. By examining this movement as an elite-engineered moral panic, using Moral Panic Theory, Collective Action Framing, Resource Mobilization Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the concept of Moral Entrepreneurs, I will attempt to analyze and explain the worldview of the members of this anti-immigration crusade, along with the strategies, tactics, and social networks that allowed them to achieve such a decisive legislative victory.

WHY IS THIS DISSERTATION IMPORTANT?

Although many facts have been recorded about the Progressive Era, to date there has been no published academic work that examines eugenics-based efforts for immigration restriction in the early 20th century using of the tools and theories that I will rely on in this dissertation. As a result of this gap in the academic literature, there is still much that can be discovered.

Furthermore, the impact of the eugenics movement was significant. Members of the eugenics movement, together with highly educated lawyers and academics, many from the highest levels of society, convinced members of the U.S. Congress to reverse one hundred years of U.S. immigration policy through the passage of sweeping legislative reform acts that effectively closed the nation's doors to all except white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants from England and Northern Europe. In the years prior to the passage of these acts, the number of immigrants entering the U.S., as noted above, was as many as one million per year coming from all areas of Europe as well as other parts of the world. After these acts went into effect, immigration was limited to an annual quota of 150,000 Europeans who came primarily from northern Europe (Daniels, 2004:51-56). The restrictions imposed by these laws remained in place until they were partially rolled

back forty-one years later by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (the Hart-Celler Act) which began to facilitate broader and more geographically diverse immigration once again into the United States (Daniels, 2004:132-140).

BALTZELL AND OPEN UPPER CLASS V. CLOSED CASTE

Another way of understanding the significance of the immigration restriction movement is articulated by the sociologist E. Digby Baltzell in his book entitled *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy & Caste in America* (Baltzell, 1964). Unlike many academics who are fearful of an upper-class establishment, Baltzell believed that an aristocratic class was necessary for the health and stability of a modern society. His ideas are encapsulated in his concepts of 'Democracy and the Open Elite' and 'Aristocracy and the Open Upper Class' (Baltzell, 1964:7-8). In speaking of Aristocracy, he is referring to that set of families who have been societal or national leaders and who continue to produce offspring who have leadership ability and who embody a set of traditional values that command the respect of both the elite and the rest of the population. When he talks of an 'Open Upper Class,' he is referring to a healthy aristocracy that does not form a ruling class so much as an establishment. For Baltzell, a healthy aristocracy, or establishment, is a highly respected, open group of families that allows new individuals and new families to enter its ranks when those individuals and groups consistently display leadership ability and admirable character traits. By allowing an inflow of new families of good character into the upper class, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or social class, such an establishment continues to provide leadership while at the same time remaining representative of the entire population of the country. Baltzell argues that, during the first several decades of U.S. history, the aristocratic establishment embodied a

very robust social system that could absorb newcomers from all walks of life, as is demonstrated by the fact that Abraham Lincoln, a man of very humble origins, could become President of the United States (Baltzell, 1964:9-11).

By contrast, when the elite of society seek to protect their position and power, abandon their fundamental values, and refuse to assimilate new members because of race, class, or religion, Baltzell claims that the aristocratic class ceases to be an open establishment and becomes instead a closed 'caste.' Baltzell further argues that, from the Chinese Exclusion Act until the New Deal, the American aristocracy functioned increasingly as a caste, barring immigrants and non-WASPs from membership in elite educational institutions and professions like medicine and law. From the latter decades of the 19th century through the early decades of the 20th century, there was an intense effort among the educated and powerful elite in the United States to close ranks and do everything possible to keep out Jews, Catholics, and immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. In other words, the upper classes of the United States sought to establish and maintain a race-based, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) caste system (Baltzell, 1964:20-27).

As a result of the nativism and upper-class prejudice exemplified by the pseudo-scientific theories of the eugenics movement, the American upper class, with the support of Congress, established restrictive laws that continued to have a substantial effect not only on immigration but also on American social and political policies throughout the 20th century.

PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

This introduction lays out the purpose, scope, and methodology of the dissertation. The first main chapter is a review of the literature which looks at what has been said about the immigration restriction movement and its relationship to eugenics in the Progressive Era. This chapter also includes a review of texts used in the subsequent sociological analysis.

The second chapter provides a general overview of the Progressive Era, what its leaders were attempting to accomplish and some of the positive goals they managed to achieve. This chapter also points out how the Progressive leaders transformed their original guiding principles of fairness and social uplift into a crusade for white, Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

The third chapter covers the development of racialist genetic theories, particularly that of the eugenics movement. This chapter uses the sociological tool of Collective Action Framing (or Message Framing) to demonstrate how theories of genetic determinism were employed to create hysteria, i.e., a moral panic, regarding those immigrants coming from non-Anglo-Saxon countries.

The fourth and final chapter is a sociological analysis of the eugenics-driven immigration restriction movement, using the tools of Moral Panic Theory, Pierre Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory, Resource Mobilization Theory, and Howard Becker's concept of 'moral entrepreneurs.' This chapter will also discuss how, despite all the positive accomplishments of the Progressive Era, the WASP racialist attitude toward diverse ethnic groups managed to undermine many of their accomplishments and create a society which reinforced racial and social discrimination. The chapter also looks forward

to today's society and how the actions and prejudices of the past are playing out again in the present age.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PROGRESSIVE ERA HISTORY

The following are some of the major historical works detailing events of the 19th and early 20th centuries that involved the rise of eugenic theory and of the immigration restriction movement in the United States.

Roger Daniels' ***Guarding the Golden Door*** **(2004)** presents an excellent overview of U.S. immigration history by looking at the detailed statistics of U.S. immigration, immigration law, and some of the forces impacting immigration policy. Daniels pinpoints the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as the turning point in U.S. immigration policy. Prior to that time, the United States had virtually no laws restricting immigration. However, the completion of the Trans-Continental Railroad in 1869 left thousands of Chinese laborers unemployed. Most of these men returned to California looking for work. Concern over their presence became a source of great controversy and conflict in that state and, subsequently, an issue for politicians seeking re-election (Daniels, 2004:12-15).

In the years following the 1882 act, increasing anxiety began to grow regarding the influx of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Daniels convincingly shows that, while there were some legitimate concerns about the numbers of immigrants that were coming to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the phobias and hysteria surrounding the influx of new immigrants were primarily due to racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice combined with political and media hyperbole. (The tensions related to World War I and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia undoubtedly

played a role in this development.) This growing prejudice led Congress to enact the immigration restriction laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924, laws that were damaging to Jews and others from eastern and southern Europe and which sharply reduced U.S. immigration for the next forty years (Daniels, 2004:45-49).

Guarding the Golden Door is a work of superb scholarship that vividly portrays the United States government's treatment of immigrants, both the good aspects and the bad. But it does not deal specifically with eugenics and the methods used in convincing elected officials to close the country's borders to non-WASP immigrants.

Andrew Gyory agrees with Daniels that the first major U.S. effort at excluding immigrants was the Chinese Exclusion Act. In his book, ***Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*** **(1998)**, Gyory makes the argument that the push to exclude Chinese immigrants was not a grass-roots movement, but rather was a hysteria engineered by politicians to maintain control of the Senate and the House of Representatives. With the end of reconstruction in 1877, the Southern Democrats were able to make large gains in Congress. Overall, there was little anti-Chinese sentiment throughout the United States at that time since most Americans had never met a Chinese person. However, with the large numbers of Chinese immigrants flooding the labor market in California, and since the Chinese were willing to work harder for less pay than the average American worker, there was a strong anti-Chinese bias among labor unions on the west coast. California, having only been admitted to the Union in 1850, became one of the first swing states in a national election. In order to win the vote of the labor unions on the west coast, the Republicans and Democrats sought to outdo each other with their anti-Chinese vitriol – hence Gyory's assertion that the Chinese Exclusion Act was

more about political expediency than about immigration restriction. Nevertheless, the fact that they were able to pass the Exclusion Act confirmed the attitude of the members of Congress that it was their right and their duty to decide who should be allowed to enter the country (Gyory, 1998:160-190).

Thomas C. Leonard's book, ***Illiberal Reformers* (2016)**, is an overview of the rise and development of the progressive movement and its relationship to economic reform, eugenics, and immigration restriction. Leonard points out that, in the late 19th century, the United States' laissez-faire economic policy produced what many perceived as the greatest economic and social miracle in all of human history. Between 1870 and 1905, America's economy quadrupled in size. As a result of this extraordinary growth, industry's need for labor pulled in 15 million immigrants during this period, mostly from eastern and southern Europe. By 1900, three-quarters of the population in many east coast cities consisted of immigrants and their children – and, while nation-wide, twenty-two percent of the workforce were immigrants, that number was forty-one percent in the cities. This situation created a backlash among American workers who felt that their jobs were threatened, and stimulated the growth of labor unions in this county (Leonard, 2016:3-4)

The booming economy of this period created incredible wealth for some but also produced great wealth disparity between factory owners and workers and led to the growth of slums in major cities. Educated elites and Protestant evangelicals, seeking to curb some of the worst excesses of the unbridled economy, joined together to create the Progressive Movement. Progressives sought to uplift the poor and the factory workers and transform the economy, initially through the vehicle of voluntary organizations and

then later through government regulatory agencies. These regulatory agencies were to carry out their tasks under the objective and dispassionate guidance of university-trained economists and social scientists (Leonard, 2016:17-32).

Leonard does not discuss directly the immigration restriction acts of 1917, 1921, or 1924, but he does identify many of the major advocates of immigration restriction and details how they were heavily influenced by the theory of eugenics. By espousing this pseudo-scientific theory, which claimed that all non-Anglo-Saxons were genetically defective, progressives turned "illiberal" and discarded compassion for those they deemed unredeemable. Despite their rhetoric of seeking to uplift the downtrodden of society, progressives turned against the poorer immigrants from eastern and southern Europe and, instead, promoted policies of segregation, sterilization, and immigration restriction. Rather than viewing this new brand of scientific racism as abhorrent, Leonard explains that, during the first three decades of the 20th century, the educated elite believed that espousing eugenics was a mark of superior intelligence and cultural sophistication (Leonard, 2016:109-128, 141-168).

Richard Hofstadter's ***The Age of Reform*** **(1955)** is another book that deals with the changing attitudes of American upper-class elites during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Hofstadter covers a range of topics and social changes that were occurring during that period. With regard to the old-guard, upper class in the United States, he points out that they were facing a status revolution. Since the founding of the United States, the descendants of the original settlers had felt it was their privilege and duty to guide the nation culturally and politically. The rising owners of industry, however, were usurping their leadership positions, both in the business community and in the dominant

institutions of civil society (Hofstadter, 1955:130-140). At the same time, the major cities on the east coast were being inundated by millions of immigrants fleeing poverty and political oppression in eastern and southern Europe. The language and customs of these newcomers were strikingly different from those to which the elite were accustomed. Moreover, the new immigrants had no respect for the Pilgrim and Puritan descendants since they were ignorant of the background, history, and social status of the elite classes (Hofstadter, 1955:170-180).

The educated classes, in order to gain some sense of control, felt the need to reform society and reverse the problems they associated with the rapid growth of the cities and burgeoning industrialization. This urge for reform found its identity in the Progressive Movement which initially sought to improve the lot of the poor through voluntary organizations, such as Women's Clubs, settlement houses, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), etc. Eventually, these reformers realized that voluntary organizations alone could not rein in the power of industry. Consequently, they changed strategies and worked to create an elite, educated class to strengthen the power of the federal and state governments through the creation of regulatory agencies. The progressives originally felt that they could uplift the poorer classes of all backgrounds and sought to help immigrants through education in the English language and civics instruction. In the end, however, they came to believe that, in order to lift up America's working poor, the door to immigration had to be closed (Hofstadter, 1955:180-185).

While Hofstadter does not discuss the political strategies and organizations by which the elites sought to exclude the new immigrants, his book very masterfully

displays the social and emotional forces that drove the upper-class whites to seek substantial social change at the turn of the century.

Wendy Kline's book, ***Building a Better Race*** **(2001)**, provides great detail as to why eugenic theory was so important to the Progressive Movement. Beyond their concern for improving society, the upper-class elite were even more concerned about the possible demise of Anglo-Saxon families. The moral evils associated with city life and unrestrained prosperity were of paramount concern to the elite, especially with the threat that such evils posed to the stability of the nuclear family. Eugenicists had been arguing for the importance of improved breeding since the 1870s, but it was not until Gregor Mendel's laws of genetic inheritance were rediscovered in the early 20th century that eugenics took on the appearance of real science.

Kline explains that it was psychologists – especially Henry Goddard, the Director of the New Jersey Training School in Vineland, NJ – who used eugenics to claim that moral and mental defects were the result of defective genes. It was the view of Goddard and his colleagues that both a person's intelligence as well as their emotional and moral character traits were determined completely by genetics, and that intelligence, in particular, was a fixed quantity that could not be altered by education or any other program of social uplift. Using French psychologist Alfred Binet's intelligence test (contrary to the way that Binet himself intended it to be used, i.e., as an assessment tool to better understand what help a student needed), Goddard claimed he could identify the mental age of those he tested and classify them according to different fixed categories. Goddard asserted that idiots (mental age of two or less) and imbeciles (mental age of three to seven) were not great threats to society because they were easily identifiable,

could be institutionalized, and were thus avoidable. However, individuals of a mental age between eight and twelve (whom Goddard termed 'morons') were the greatest danger to good families. Goddard claimed that although morons were mentally and genetically defective, they could appear normal, and therefore could marry into an elite lineage, thus polluting the offspring. Better Baby and Fitter Family competitions were developed to educate the general populace on eugenic theory and to warn them of the threat posed by "dysgenic" individuals (i.e., individuals with defective genes) (Kline, 2001:7-31). Kline discusses progressive efforts toward segregation and sterilization of the so-called unfit, but she does not deal with issues surrounding immigration or immigration restriction.

Edwin Black's ***War Against the Weak*** **(2012)** provides an excellent overview of the eugenics movement, both in the United States and in Europe. He covers the origin of eugenics with Sir Francis Galton, its growth after the rediscovery of Mendel's laws of inheritance, and the development of *negative eugenics* in the United States (Black, 2012:3-41). The book also covers the relationship between Charles Davenport, Harry Laughlin, Madison Grant, and Albert Johnson and their efforts for immigration restriction (Black, 2012:85-215). Most of the book, however, focuses on the eugenic crusade for the sterilization of those that were deemed unfit, both in the U.S. and in Germany. It also covers Margaret Sanger's birth control efforts and her relationship to eugenics. Although Black enumerates the many activities, conferences, and publications that the eugenicists used to promulgate their theories, he does not explain how they were able to radically alter U.S. immigration policy.

Stephen J. Gould's book, ***The Mismeasure of Man*** **(1996)**, is his effort to refute theories of biological determinism that seek to rank human beings based solely on genetic

inheritance. According to Gould, biological determinists assert that each specific individual, race, and ethnic group can be ranked according to their specific worth and that, to a large extent, their worth is determined wholly and completely by a single measurable, unchangeable, inherited genetic trait, namely, their intelligence. The theory of biological determinism promotes the belief that an individual's mental capacity and other physical, mental, and emotional traits are unalterably fixed at birth due to heredity. Gould states clearly his view that, while genetics plays a significant role in an individual's mental development, there is no evidence that there is any specific substance or gene immutably fixed at birth that determines a person's intelligence in some unalterable fashion (Gould, 1996:51-61). Although Gould does not discuss eugenic theory directly, he does review the history of biological determinism and the work of a number of determinists, focusing most strongly on the theories of the early 20th century American psychologists Henry. H. Goddard, Lewis M. Terman, and Robert M. Yerkes (Gould, 1996:176-263). All three of these men promoted the use of Alfred Binet's IQ test (contrary to Binet's intended use) as a means of establishing a fixed, linear intelligence ranking of individuals, races, and ethnic groups. In assessing the work of these men, as well as the work of the many others who sought to demonstrate that intelligence was a quantity fixed by one's heredity, Gould shows through careful analysis that, in every case, their methods and results were deeply flawed. The scientists who did the research on intelligence began with a predetermined outcome in mind – the superiority of Anglo-Saxon whites – and then sought examples that supported their conclusion while rejecting any samples that undermined or conflicted with their theory. Gould points out that the research of these three American psychologists, especially their IQ testing of Army

recruits in World War I, despite being badly designed and highly prejudiced, offered significant support to the immigration restriction movement and the immigration restriction Acts of 1921 and 1924 (Gould, 1996:254-262). He also notes that some researchers, including Goddard, who had insisted so vehemently on the solid scientific basis of their findings, later reconsidered their previous assertions and admitted that their claims were unmerited. In spite of their change of opinion, the immigration restriction laws that their research had helped to promote remained in effect for more than forty years (Gould, 1996:262-263).

E. A. Carlson's ***The Unfit: The History of a Bad Idea*** **(2001)** presents an overview of the genesis and development of the idea that certain individuals and groups of individuals are degenerate and are thus unfit for human society. Carlson traces the development of this concept from Biblical times up through the twentieth century and the Holocaust. The author devotes only a few pages to the efforts for immigration restriction (Carlson, 2001:257-261), but provides a very thorough account of the growth and development of the American branch of the eugenics movement. He describes the efforts of David Starr Jordan (Stanford University's first president) to promote negative eugenics, i.e., the view that segregation and sterilization of the unfit are the preferred methods of insuring that the unfit do not contaminate the rest of society or become an economic burden on healthy, hard-working Americans. He also details the relationship between Jordan, Charles Davenport, founder of Cold Spring Harbor genetic research laboratory, Harry H. Laughlin, Superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office (a subdivision of the Cold Spring Harbor laboratory), Prescott Hall, founder of the Immigration Restriction League, Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great*

Race, and other prominent members of the eugenics and immigration restriction movements.

Daniel J. Kevles' ***In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*** **(1999)** is an historical overview of the origin and development of eugenics and the consequences of eugenic theories and policies from the late 19th century to the late 20th century. Kevles presents a brief biography of the founder of eugenics, Sir Francis Galton, and of his primary disciple, Karl Pearson. While Galton hoped his ideas would bring attention to the possibility of improving human mating choices and the production of superior offspring, Kevles makes it clear that one of the biggest advances of eugenics in England was Pearson's development of statistical methods of research. Although Pearson had socialist leanings, he was personally reluctant to get involved in political activity, and as a result, eugenics, according to Kevles, did not have a major impact on British government policy (Kevles, 1999:1-40).

Kevles notes that Galton's hope for improved human breeding, however, found an ardent follower in Charles Davenport in the United States. Davenport was an established scholar who became director of the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory for the study of evolution as the result of a generous grant from the Carnegie Institution of Washington. He later established the Eugenics Record Office and appointed Harry H. Laughlin, a staunch eugenicist, as its superintendent (Kevles, 1999:40-48, 100-110).

Although Kevles does not delve deeply into the history of the IRM, he does recount the many areas in which eugenicists successfully implemented eugenic policies in the U.S., such as the sterilization and incarceration of those deemed mentally unfit as

well as the passage of immigration restriction laws (Kevles, 1999:96-112). He also identifies many of the critics of eugenics, such as Walter Lippman, who voiced their criticisms of eugenics and the eugenicists' use of science to support racial, ethnic, and social prejudice. *In the Name of Eugenics* then traces the many ups and downs of eugenics and genetic research throughout the 20th century (Kevles, 1999:148-302).

In her book, ***Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (2018)**, Katherine Benton-Cohen makes the point that, while the eugenics movement played a key role in the passage of the immigration restriction laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924, eugenics was not the original starting point of immigration restriction. The starting point, rather, was racial and ethnic prejudice toward the so-called 'new immigrants,' i.e., those who had arrived in the last decades of the 19th century. Benton-Cohen explains that the Dillingham Commission, operating from 1907 to 1911, was convened to investigate the nature and extent of problems created by unrestricted immigration and was one of the first government entities to use the newly developed tools of social science. The commission relied on data retrieved from field studies rather than on Congressional hearings. The commission's elected members, particularly Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and commission chairman, Senator William P. Dillingham, had championed immigration restriction for several years even before the beginning of the commission's inquiries. Two unelected members of the Commission, Jeremiah Jenks, and W. Jett Lauck, voiced concern about preserving America's commitment to fairness and equality. Yet even they did not comprehend the degree to which the Commission's pre-determined anti-immigrant attitudes influenced the statistical inquiries and findings about the negative consequences of immigration.

Deciding *a priori* that immigration was a problem created a cognitive bias, such that the staff members who investigated immigrants and immigration merely sought to find the evidence to support the original negative attitudes of the Commission toward immigrants (Benton-Cohen, 2018:1-17). The report of the Dillingham Commission was instrumental in pushing Congress toward greater immigration restriction. The result was the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917, which expanded the Chinese Exclusion Act to restrict immigration from most of Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. It also included a literacy test which was intended to keep out uneducated immigrants and a provision barring political radicals and anyone with mental defects, contagious diseases, or moral defects, i.e., anyone involved in prostitution (Benton-Cohen, 2018:235-237).

Oscar Handlin's book, ***The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (2002)**, tells the story of the millions of immigrants forced to flee from Europe due to poverty and persecution throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. His book is less like a history book and more like a novel, describing the numerous economic and political changes as well as the famines and diseases that led European farmers and workers from Ireland, Italy, Poland, Russia, and other nations of eastern Europe to make the heart-wrenching decision to leave behind their natives lands and sail to the United States in order to find a stable and economically viable situation in which to support themselves and their families. Handlin explores the innumerable difficulties and hardships faced by these immigrants as they broke with the past in order to start a new life in America (Handlin, 2002:34-57, 231-254).

Handlin devotes only a brief chapter to immigration restriction, in which he describes how the Immigration Restriction League sought to prevent the influx of those

immigrants they deemed inferior. The claim of this elitist group was that the so-called 'new immigrants' were not the kind who could be assimilated by the American people. Handlin points out that, rather than encouraging the immigrants to accept American customs and traditions, the restrictionist movement pushed the new immigrants toward greater seclusion and isolation. He does not describe the methods used by the restrictionists, but he does point out the ironic fact that the push for restriction became increasingly aggressive, even as World War I and other political events were causing a steep drop in the numbers of immigrants arriving in the U.S. (Handlin, 2002:255-267).

Another book by Oscar Handlin, ***Race and Nationality in American Life*** **(1957)**, covers a broad range of topics related to racial and ethnic prejudice. He does not discuss eugenics per se, nor does he cover the immigration restriction movement in depth, but he does explain that, in the early 20th century, both the upper classes and the labor unions had decided that the new immigrants were a threat and that immigration needed to be curtailed. The elite felt that the new immigrants were of inferior stock and threatened the purity of their families, while the labor unions saw immigrants – who worked harder for less pay – as a threat to their jobs (Handlin, 1957:75-78). Handlin does spend a great deal of time, therefore, summarizing the findings of the Dillingham Commission on Immigration. Handlin explains that the Commission utilized fact-finding experts to gain data on immigrants, but rather than producing an objective account, the Commission's report merely summarizes the same preconceived prejudices that prompted the Commission work in the first place. Handlin also points out that the publication of the Commission's report led to the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1917 (Handlin, 1957:78-104).

Handlin further explains that, since the 1917 act was not considered restrictive enough by many in Congress, additional hearings were called for. The result was that Congress brought in Harry H. Laughlin, superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office, to present expert testimony on immigrants. In a fashion similar to the findings of the Dillingham Commission, Laughlin presented a plethora of facts and reports and expressed his opinion that, for a number of reasons, the new immigrants were indeed inferior to those arriving earlier in the 19th century. Handlin makes clear that Laughlin's reported data do not support his conclusion. Nevertheless, since Laughlin was considered an expert on genetics and immigration, his testimony was critical to the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 (Handlin, 1957:104-110).

Jerome Karabel's ***The Chosen*** **(2005)** deals with the role of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) elites during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly with regard to the education of the upper classes. Karabel explains that the Patrician WASP elite, the descendants of the early settlers, had become the established ruling class in the United States by the last decades of the 19th century. But, as chronicled by Hofstadter, the elites, who considered themselves "the Chosen," were becoming increasingly anxious about their social status due to the rise of the industrialists and the fact that millions of immigrant laborers and farmhands were crowding them out of the major cities on the east coast. In order to maintain their social prominence, the upper class developed all types of patriotic and social clubs and organizations to bolster their position and self-esteem. One of the major methods for solidifying their position was to send their sons to elite boarding schools and then to one of the Big Three Ivy League universities: Harvard, Yale, and Princeton (Karabel, 2005:23-38). These universities,

then, acted as country clubs for the male offspring of the very wealthy. Attendance at one of the Big Three allowed the children of the rich to make and maintain lasting friendships with members of their social class, something that was an important foundation for a future role as a leader of society. These universities were viewed as leadership training centers. The three Progressive presidents Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson had all graduated from them (Karabel, 2005:52-60).

At the turn of the century, there was an effort, on the part of the universities, to open their enrollment to promising students from public schools by administering standardized entrance exams. Problems arose, however, because antisemitism was growing among the upper classes, and yet increasing numbers of Jewish students began passing the exams and entering the universities. While Karabel spends a few pages describing the activities of the members of the Immigration Restriction League (Karabel, 2005:104-105), the main emphasis of the book is a detailed look at how Harvard, Yale, and Princeton changed the basis of their admission policies from academic accomplishment and merit to subjective assessments of intangible elements such as character and good breeding. The purpose of this change was to permit the Big Three to restrict the number of Jewish students in each class without exhibiting a policy of blatant discrimination. The irony of the situation described by Karabel is that these admission policies, which touted such ideals as diversity, balance, and inclusiveness, were specifically designed to allow the universities to discriminate against Jews and other supposedly inferior groups, without appearing to be prejudiced. For example, Walter Lippman, a distinguished Harvard alumnus of German-Jewish descent, was asked by the president of Harvard to help design admissions policies to limit the number of Jewish

applicants who were of eastern European or Russian heritage. It should be noted that those policies developed by the elite universities in the early decades of the 20th century, although tailored for different times and different needs, are the same opaque admission policies still used by universities across America today (Karabel, 2005:110-138**).**

Jonathan P. Spiro's, ***Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant*** **(2009)**, is a biography of Madison Grant, the man who became the godfather of the eugenics and immigration restriction movements in the United States. Spiro explains how Grant, a graduate of Yale University and Columbia Law School, whose ancestors were among the first settlers in America, became passionate about conservation, working to preserve America's historic flora and fauna (Spiro, 2009:6-8). Then, from 1908 onward, he switched his focus and became obsessed instead with preserving the purity and dominance of the Anglo-Saxon (Nordic) race from pollution by the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe (Spiro, 2009:92-117). While Spiro does discuss Francis Galton and the origins of the eugenic movement, he does not dwell on the origins or development of the IRM. Instead, Spiro summarizes the racial arguments contained in Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* and explains how this book became a veritable bible for the eugenics and immigration restriction movements (Spiro, 2009:143-166). He details how Grant, once he had taken up the challenge of immigration restriction, became the central figure of the movement, the lynchpin working behind the scenes, who skillfully brought all the major anti-immigrant actors together to promote and pass immigration restriction legislation (Spiro, 2009:196-233). Spiro makes it clear that, while Grant never sought political office or ostentatious public acclaim, he was nevertheless a very persuasive individual who possessed a genius

for strategy and organization, and that, without his input, the restrictionist movement might not have been able to achieve its goals.

John Higham's ***Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925*** **(2002)** is a very thorough overview of American xenophobia and nativism from the mid-19th century through the year 1925. A repeated theme in the book is how nativistic fervor rose and fell with economic uncertainty: the greater the economic stress, the more Catholics and Jews and other immigrants became the focus of hostility. Higham points out that, despite periods of intense xenophobic rhetoric, for several decades the anti-immigrant forces were unable to sway public policy (Higham, 2002:68-158). This fact, Higham attributes to two cultural forces at work in America:

> The ancient Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man proclaimed the ultimate similarities between all peoples and their capacity for dwelling together in unity. The democratic values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence postulated an equal opportunity for all to share in the fullness of American life (Higham, 2002:20).

Based on these two fundamental ideas, two very different forces arose at the turn of the century to help lessen hostility toward immigrants and aid them in their efforts to adjust to American life. The first, based on humanitarian compassion and democratic ideals, was the settlement movement together with the Protestant Social Gospel, a movement which maintained that Christians had a moral responsibility to lift up the poor and oppressed of society. Through efforts such as Jane Addams's Hull House and other settlements, middle-class volunteers would live with immigrants in various poorer urban areas and would seek to understand their economic and cultural challenges and offer help through such things as education and healthcare. The most prominent of the Social Gospel efforts was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1907 the YMCA

began to offer classes in English and civics for immigrants, and, by 1914, its students numbered more than thirty thousand.

The second force, motivated by fear of European radicals, was the efforts of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and other patriotic organizations to educate immigrants on American history, law, and government. The DAR, the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), and other such groups believed that education was the best way to ensure that immigrants became law-abiding citizens rather than disaffected radicals. The patriotic groups felt that, without proper education, the immigrants would fall prey to the influences of vice so prevalent in American cities, particularly saloons and prostitution, which could easily undermine their Christian virtue (Higham, 2002:234-241).

Strangers in the Land acknowledges the influence of the eugenic movement in increasing the strength of the IRM in the early decades of the 20th century and takes particular note of the racial theories of Madison Grant (Higham, 2002:149-157). The author also describes the activities of Grant, Charles Davenport, Harry Laughlin and others in their efforts to support Congressman Albert Johnson in his bid to pass a restrictionist immigration bill. But in the final analysis, Higham seems to attribute the passing of the immigration restriction laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924 to the resurgence of racial nativism, a growing isolationism, and anti-Semitism without reference to the role the eugenics movement played in causing this decided shift in public opinion (Higham, 2002:308-315).

Daniel Okrent's ***The Guarded Gate: Bigotry, Eugenics, and the Law That Kept Two Generations of Jews, Italians, and Other European Immigrants out of America*** **(2019)** is an excellent and detailed history of eugenics and the anti-immigration movements of the early 20th century. The author identifies the many connections linking the major figures of the immigration restriction movement and the eugenics movement and clearly spells out their philosophies and prejudices. Nevertheless, as a historian of the period, Okrent necessarily employs an inductive approach to his subject matter, explaining how various situations, actions, and events led, in a somewhat linear manner, to subsequent events. One result of this approach is that Okrent's book, as excellent as it is, presents the radical shift toward racial and ethnic prejudice during this period as simply a normal development stemming from people's attitudes of the time. For example, in speaking of the sudden spike in anti-Semitism that occurred among the upper classes at the turn of the century, the author presents his viewpoint that: "This seemingly new anti-Semitism among the Protestant upper classes wasn't entirely a product of the 1890s as much as it was the newly overt expression of an attitude both normative and persistent" (Okrent, 2019:75). While there may be some truth to this observation, Okrent's assertion that the Protestant elite had simply always been antisemitic fails to acknowledge the impact of the eugenics and restrictionist movements in helping to create the environment in which overtly racist and anti-Semitic statements came to be regarded not only as socially acceptable, but, more importantly, as fashionable.

Okrent's book and all the above resources, though extremely informative, fail to answer an important question: how did this radical shift in the attitudes of America's social, political, and economic leaders come about? The shocking change in sentiment of

the American elite on issues of race, ethnicity, religion, and class are perhaps best elucidated by E. Digby Baltzell's ***The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy & Caste in America*** **(1964)**. Baltzell's book is an insightful analysis of the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment and the efforts for social control that occurred in the U.S. during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Unlike many academics who are fearful of an upper-class establishment, Baltzell believed that an aristocratic class was necessary for the health and stability of a modern society. His ideas are encapsulated in his concepts of 'Democracy and the Open Elite' and 'Aristocracy and the Open Upper Class' (Baltzell, 1964:7-8).

By 'Democracy and the Open Elite,' Baltzell meant that in order for a society or country to progress, it must reward ability and merit. In other words, it must leave open elite positions of leadership in all areas of society to anyone who is qualified, regardless of their social or ethnic origin. When he talks of an 'Aristocracy and the Open Upper Class,' he is referring to a healthy aristocracy that does not form a ruling class so much as an establishment, i.e., a highly respected group of families that allows new individuals and new families who consistently display leadership ability and admirable character traits to enter its ranks. By allowing an inflow of new families into the upper class, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion, such an establishment continues to remain representative of the entire population of the country.

Baltzell claims that, in contrast to an open upper class, when the elite of society seek to protect their position and power, abandon their traditional values, and refuse to assimilate new members because of race, class, or religion, the aristocratic class ceases to be an open establishment and, instead, becomes a closed 'caste.' Baltzell goes on to document how, in the mid-19th century, Abraham Lincoln, a man of very humble origins

could become President of the United States, whereas, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, there was an intense effort among the elite in the United States to close ranks and do everything possible to keep out Jews, Catholics, and people from southern and eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. In other words, beginning in the 1880s, the upper classes of the United States sought to establish and maintain a race-based, upper-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) caste system (Baltzell, 1964:26-34).

Baltzell does not explain precisely how the IRM succeeded in passing legislation to keep out immigrants they considered less desirable, nor does he deal specifically with the issue of eugenics, but he does outline the fact that the United States went from being a country with an open elite class, to a society with a closed caste-like system dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

Barbara Miller Solomon's book, ***Ancestors and Immigrants*** (1989) lends credence to Baltzell's thesis as it explores the slow but fundamental change in the worldview of the Boston and New England aristocracy from the early 19th to the beginning of the 20th century: from a belief in the idea of the perfectibility, or at least improvability, of the entire human race, to the assumption of it being impossible to improve the lives of less desirable immigrants (Solomon, 1989:3-8, 43-81). Solomon explains how this change in philosophy led to the formation of the Immigration Restriction League and ultimately to the passage of the Johnson-Reed Restriction Act of 1924 (Solomon, 1989:82-210).

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Despite the useful facts and observations presented in the works referenced above, it is the methodological assumption of this present dissertation that there are important insights to be gained by looking at this period of history from a sociological perspective. In other words, striking new conclusions may be obtained by analyzing the people, trends, events, and networks of relationships during this era as part of a highly orchestrated social movement. With this in mind, I will use sociological theory to provide the framework for an analysis of the people, the social relationships, and the organizations that made it possible for the U.S. educated upper classes to create an elite-engineered, nation-wide moral panic of such great intensity that it convinced the leaders of this nation – a nation consisting of immigrants and the children of immigrants – that immigration was a deadly peril and a threat to the very existence of the United States as a nation.

A key text for my analysis is Goode and Ben-Yahuda's ***Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*** **(1994)**. According to the authors, moral panic theory (MPT) is based on the observation that a disproportionate and dramatic societal action or reaction is often caused by a kind of temporary social hysteria, i.e., a moral panic (MP) regarding some situation, action, occurrence, or lifestyle that appears to be out of step with, or even injurious to, the status quo. MPs can be triggered by a grassroots over-reaction to something reported in the news or can be created by special interest groups aiming to sway public opinion or public policy.

The authors point out that there are several elements involved in identifying a public reaction as an MP. They are: 1) an intense anxiety or *concern* regarding the

negative effect that the offending activity or group will have on society; 2) an increasing *hostility* toward the offending group, such that a clear division forms between "us" and "them;" 3) a *consensus,* i.e., a widespread acceptance, at least among select groups of society, that the threat is real, serious, and caused by the wrongdoing group members and their behavior; and 4) *disproportionality*. In other words, one of the hallmarks of a MP is the fact that the alleged threat or damage caused by the perpetrators is perceived to be, or is at least claimed to be, far more substantial than a realistic or objective appraisal would reveal (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994:33-41).

One important factor that can help explain the emergence of MPs is the "availability bias," i.e., a faulty heuristic or faulty interpretation of reality, which has been described by Tversky and Kahneman in their 1973 article **"Availability: A heuristic for judging frequency and probability"** (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973:207-232). The availability bias is a bias that seems to be latent in all human beings such that the more often we hear of an event or situation, the easier it will be to remember, and the easier it is to remember, the more important and serious it will appear to us to be. The availability bias can be activated and thus MPs can be created when certain situations or events – even those that are infrequent and relatively non-threatening – are characterized as threatening by news media organizations and are reported on repeatedly. To paraphrase the political sociologist E. E. Schattschneider: *all politics is the mobilization of bias* (Schattschneider, 1988:69). Thus, in addition to being caused by spontaneous popular reactions to news reports, moral panics are commonly the instruments that politicians and cultural elites manufacture and then use to mobilize the masses to support their agenda.

Another essential component of my sociological analysis is Resource Mobilization theory (RMT), as articulated in McCarthy and Zald's 1977 article entitled **"Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory."** During the middle years of the 20th century, analyses of social movements focused on grievance and the psychology of the aggrieved group, the theory being that social movement activity emerged when the oppressed group became sufficiently enraged to burst into action. Eventually, some analysts, most notably McCarthy and Zald, decided that group psychology and grievance simply did not explain the success of a number of important social movements. Their response was RMT, which focuses not simply on social movements, but on social movement organizations (SMOs). McCarthy and Zald define a social movement as a set of beliefs or opinions in a segment of the population desiring change. A SMO, on the other hand, is a formal organization that identifies with the goal of the social movement and works to implement the goals of the movement. RMT looks at the ability of SMOs to secure financial and human resources, i.e., the money to support the group's activities and the adherents to do the footwork, along with the organizational skills necessary to draw in, organize, and mobilize supporters in order to effect the desired social change. While all social change involves some degree of dissatisfaction with the status quo, an RMT approach, rather than looking at the degree of grievance, aims to look at the leadership, the ideology, and the financial and political resources of the organizations involved, as well as their adherents, their connections to sympathetic networks of people and groups, and finally at the strategies employed for obtaining public and elite support to enact change (McCarthy & Zald, 1977:1212-1241).

An excellent example of the use of RMT to analyze an effective social movement is Aldon Morris's ***The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*** **(1984)**. Unlike other analyses of the Civil Rights Movement, Morris does not focus exclusively on the grievances of Black Americans in the 1950s and '60s. Instead, he demonstrates that the overwhelming success of the movement relied heavily on the organizational skills and charisma of Black pastors such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, and C.K. Steele. Equally important were the culture and unity of the Black church communities themselves, with their history of inspiring sermons and music. What made the Civil Rights movement possible, however, was the fact that the pastors and other leaders in the Black community met with each other and created ministerial alliances and other grassroots anti-segregation organizations which eventually led to the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The SCLC and other anti-segregation organizations that emerged (NAACP, SNCC, CORE, etc.) are what enabled the Black community to create the communications and funding networks that enabled them to successfully pursue their goals. The fact that they were united, militant, and highly organized in opposing segregation, but at the same time non-violent in their tactics, eventually won them the sympathy of the nation. In addition, the Black Church provided an ideological legitimacy to the Civil Rights Movement since segregation violated the teachings of Christianity (Morris, 1986:77-119).

Another theory which can be used to analyze the IRM is the Social Capital Theory (SCT) of Pierre Bourdieu, which he succinctly outlined in his 1986 essay **"The Forms of Capital."** Bourdieu explains that capital is simply the power to create or move things or to influence people's behavior. He posits that, in addition to monetary capital as

identified by Marx, there are several other forms of capital, most notably, cultural capital, symbolic capital, and social capital. Cultural capital is largely determined by the things you have accomplished or the awards you have been given that bolster your status in society. Symbolic capital is the influence or power wielded by those who profess a disinterestedness in their pronouncements. This would include scientists or religious leaders, i.e., people who claim that their statements are not made for the sake of personal gain but only to report the truth. Social capital is based upon the other three types of capital – monetary, cultural, and symbolic – as well as the extent of an individual's social network and one's ability, through friendship or mutual exchange, to leverage that network to accomplish their goals (Bourdieu & Richardson, 1986:241-258). This theory will be particularly useful in analyzing the top-down, elite-driven IRM of the early 20th century.

One additional idea that will be helpful in understanding how social movements and SMOs function is Howard Becker's concept of *'moral entrepreneurs.'* In his 1995 essay **"Moral Entrepreneurs: The Creation and Enforcement of Deviant Categories,"** Becker explains that, when any portion of society feel threatened via a particular group or that group's behavior, certain individuals – moral entrepreneurs – feel that it is their responsibility to crusade for laws ensuring that the offensive behavior is restricted and, if necessary, that the offending individuals are banned (Becker et al., 1995:169-178).

The final arrow in my quiver of theories to help analyze SMOs is Collective Action Framing (CAF) or message framing. An overview of this theory is presented in Benford and Snow's article, **"Framing Processes and Social Movements" (2000)**. In

psychology and sociology, *frames* are schemata or conceptual frameworks for interpreting reality. Collective Action Frames (CAFs), however, are different from the ordinary schemata or heuristics that we all carry around in our minds to help us navigate through daily living. CAFs are the specific sets of beliefs and meanings developed through collective negotiations by the members and leaders of SMOs to guide their adherents, supporters, and the general public in understanding the issues they are contesting or promoting. In other words, CAFs are designed to create meaning. They frame an event or situation and essentially tell us how to understand it – what to focus on and what to ignore.

The two main purposes of CAFs are to create consensus among followers and to foster action. To achieve this, SMOs must accomplish three core framing tasks. *Diagnostic Framing* explains what the problem is, who or what is causing it, and who is to blame. *Prognostic Framing* explains what needs to be done to remedy the problem and bring about a more desirable state of affairs. *Motivational Framing* is essential for prompting sympathizers to get involved in the struggle for social change. Motivational framing often involves, for example, emphasizing the seriousness of the problem and pointing out the regrettable consequences if immediate action is not taken.

The central thrust of CAF theory is simple: the same situation or event can be reported in any number of ways; the key to mobilizing support is choosing the right descriptive language. Successful SMOs are able to reduce complex social issues to repeatable phrases or sound bites that are easy to remember (Benford & Snow, 2000: 611-639).

I will be using the sociological theories of Moral Panic, Resource Mobilization, Social Capital, and Collective Action Framing, along with the concept of Moral Entrepreneurs, to analyze the efforts of those involved in the immigration restriction and eugenics movements. Through this analysis I will seek to identify further insights into how the leaders of these movements succeeded in obtaining the passage of the immigration restriction laws of 1917, 1921, and 1924, thus turning their vision of a white, Anglo-Saxon America into national policy.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

Although different authors may choose slightly different starting and ending dates, the period from the 1890s to the 1920s in U.S. history is generally known as the Progressive Era. It was a very turbulent time, a time of dramatic economic, political, and cultural change. Businesses were rapidly developing, cities were growing, and immigrants were flocking to the nation's shores. It was during this turbulent period that a sustained movement for immigration restriction began to develop and intensify. To better understand what prompted the growth of the immigration restriction movement (IRM), its significance, and the role that eugenics played in its development, it will be helpful first to provide a general overview of the Progressive Era and the developments it entailed.

UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH OF INDUSTRY

Cities Become a Magnet for Immigrants and Rural American Youth

During the Progressive Era, the United States was entering the second stage of the industrial revolution. As noted earlier, during the last years of the 19th century through the opening decades of the 20th century, the U.S. economy expanded at a rate unparalleled in human history, with American industrial output quadrupling in size (Leonard, 2016:3). This rapid expansion of the economy brought substantial change, especially in major cities. It drew millions of young people from the farms and countryside to urban areas in search of better jobs and broader opportunities. In addition, this rapid growth of industry, coming at the same time as growing poverty and political unrest in eastern and southern Europe, acted as a powerful magnet, attracting millions of new immigrants to America to seek greater freedom and wealth. Unlike the mostly

middle-class, northern European immigrants of previous decades, who had spread out across the United States, settling both in cities and in rural areas, the immigrants of the latter 19th and early 20th century were predominantly poorer, less skilled, and less educated. Furthermore, they congregated primarily in the cities along the east coast and in the Midwest. This created a phenomenal demographic change. The percentage of urban dwellers in the major east coast cities who were either immigrants or the children of immigrants went from twenty percent in 1880 to seventy-five percent by 1915 (Leonard, 2016:3-4).

Vast Disparity in Wealth Between Owners and Workers

Booming industries created enormous wealth for the factory owners, but, at the same time, they produced dismal conditions for most workers. In many cases, workers were paid barely enough to live on, and those with families, especially immigrants, lived in squalid and crowded tenements. Not only men, but women and children as well – even children as young as nine or ten years of age – had to work ten to twelve hours every day, six days a week for their families to survive. Given that, at that time, there were no regulations concerning health or safety in the tenements or in the factories, and that there was no such thing as health insurance or worker's compensation, an accident or severe illness could be devastating to any individual or family affected (Gould, 2001:4-5; McGerr, 2003:15-25).

Status Revolution Among the Older Upper Class

While the lower classes were suffering from painfully distressing living and working conditions, the surge in industry created a new upper class of business magnates who were amassing wealth to a degree far beyond anything dreamed of in earlier

generations. As a result, it was not only the lower classes who were negatively affected. These rapid economic and social changes contributed to a status revolution upsetting the older upper classes as well.

For two centuries, the American aristocratic class, the so-called Boston Brahmins and New York Patricians, the wealthy and educated Anglo-Saxon descendants of the original settlers, were highly esteemed and respected by the rest of society. For more than a century, these natural aristocrats had felt it was their position in society to guide the country morally, politically, and culturally. But by the end of the 19th century, they saw themselves being pushed aside and displaced socially by the nouveau riche, the captains of industry, who surpassed the aristocracy both in terms of wealth and in their influence in politics and public affairs. To add insult to injury, the new immigrants flooding the cities were largely ignorant of American history and had little respect or concern for the aristocratic class and thus paid them little regard. In previous decades, if the average citizen had met one of the social elites on the streets of Boston or New York, they would have respectfully acknowledged them and happily moved aside for them if necessary. The new immigrants, however, were oblivious to the status of these aristocrats and, when encountering them on the street, might literally push them aside or elbow them out of the way. This perceived lack of respect contributed significantly to the antipathy the upper classes felt toward the new immigrants (Hofstadter, 1955:137-145, 176-178).

Even though the middle-class and the aristocratic leaders of society were themselves enriched by the increasing prosperity of the time, they still felt a sense of having been outranked when comparing their social position to the new upper-class. On top of this, the national focus toward the cities and away from rural settings also seemed

to lessen the prestige of lawyers, doctors, pastors, and merchants in the smaller towns and villages. So, even though the country overall was growing in wealth, the old guard and the middle classes felt they were being eclipsed socially and economically. There was also a sense that American culture was changing too rapidly and that greed and the desire to get ahead at any cost were replacing traditional virtues such as honesty and goodwill (Hofstadter, 1955:141-143).

Cities Viewed as Centers of Crime and Immorality

In addition to these dislocations, the cities, swarming with displaced youth and seemingly uncivilized immigrants, were seen as hotbeds of crime, moral decay, alcoholism, and political corruption. There was a growing concern that young men who migrated to the cities were being seduced by the attractions provided by brothels and ale houses. What made the situation of even greater concern was the fact that the very wealthy were using their power and money to buy influence and to control politicians. Politicians, in turn, were buying the support of voters through deals reached in the smoke-filled back rooms of bars and saloons (McGerr, 2003:81-89).

THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT – A QUEST FOR FAIRNESS AND DECENCY

A Fight Against Organizational Bigness

In the face of all these changes, the initial impetus for the progressive movement was a general desire to bring back some kind of normalcy to daily life and to preserve moral decency. Progressive leaders professed a desire to bring back fairness and a sense of equality to society by opposing organizational bigness – a desire to make the free market even more free. They saw themselves as the champions of the little man. They

opposed the unrestrained growth of large corporations and trusts and sought to undermine the power of the political machines in the cities. Many progressives felt a need to restore the economic and political freedom of average citizens and to give them greater control over their lives. Theodore Roosevelt, the first progressive U.S. President, saw this unrest as a kind of grassroots movement fueled by a general anger, or as he called it, "a fierce discontent" with a society which seemed to be slipping out of control (McGerr, 2003:i). Ultimately, the progressive movement was not a single effort but was a series of diverse social actions seeking to address problems caused by industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and political corruption (Gould, 2001:7-9).

In the latter part of the 19th century, federal and state governments had maintained a laissez-faire attitude toward business. The federal government had believed that its primary job was to encourage economic growth. For this reason, the biggest debates of the 1890s were about whether or not to impose tariffs on foreign goods in order to protect American businesses and stimulate domestic productivity. But as industries grew, many middle and upper-class Americans felt that the laissez-faire style of government was not contributing to a truly free market. Large corporations were joining together to create trusts and monopolies with the result that they were squeezing out smaller businesses and preventing them from participating fairly in the marketplace (Gould, 2001:x).

In the cities, large political organizations, fueled by bribes, graft, and corruption, were undermining fair elections. In addition, the influx of millions of immigrants contributed to the rise of these political machines. The older aristocratic, Anglo-Saxon view of government was that government needed to be based upon the rule of law, guided by well-educated, virtuous citizens who would elect leaders and representatives of sound

moral character. The new immigrants, by contrast, were concerned with their own livelihood, and guided by an ethic of loyalty rather than one of honesty, they would gladly give their vote to whichever politician offered to help take care of them and their families. This attitude enabled politicians essentially to steal elections by giving handouts to new immigrants and by having local judges grant citizenship – and thus the right to vote – to hundreds or thousands of them just before an election (Hofstadter, 1955:176-178; Gould, 2001:10-12, 25-27).

Progressive Movement Funded by Upper-Class Wealth

There are two points that need to be clarified in order to understand the progressive movement more clearly. The first is that, though it is often referred to in the literature as a middle-class movement, it was hardly middle-class. It is true that the progressive movement was not a lower-class revolt against oppression, and it is true that many in the middle class undoubtedly supported various social reforms of the progressive movement. Nevertheless, the leaders of the progressive movement were predominantly upper-class, or at the very least, upper middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), who considered themselves the rightful leaders of society, and who were deeply dissatisfied by many of the social changes taking place. And, except for the extremely prosperous industrialists, the progressive leaders were by and large the wealthiest and most highly educated members of society. Many of them could trace their ancestors back to the original American settlers and most were educated at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, or one of the other highly esteemed colleges or universities of the time. As one mid-century history professor put it, "'few reform movements in American history have had the support of more wealthy men.'" (Hofstadter, 1955:143-145).

As an example, Madison Grant, one of the most influential leaders in the movement for immigration restriction, had inherited great wealth from his family and could trace both his maternal and paternal ancestors back to the earliest settlers. He was educated at Yale and then received his law degree from Columbia Law school. Although he briefly practiced law, he soon closed his law office so he could devote himself to social reform. First, he launched a crusade to clean up corruption in the New York City government, and then he fought for the conservation of America's flora and fauna, especially the American bison and the giant redwoods. Unfortunately, following his amazing successes in these very laudable campaigns, in his later years, he became obsessed with preserving the status and genetic purity of white, upper-class Americans and focused his effort on restricting immigration from southern and eastern Europe. He was independently wealthy enough that he could pursue all these campaigns without ever having to work again for the rest of his life. Most other progressive leaders had similar social status, and many had similar wealth (Spiro, 2009:*passim*).

A Hydra-headed Movement Seeking Social Reform

A second important point to understand about the progressive movement was that it was not in any way monolithic but was rather a hydra-headed movement that sought to reform various aspects of society, initially through voluntary organizations and then, ultimately, through government regulation. Since women could not vote or hold public office, many women, particularly those of the upper classes, devoted themselves to establishing or supporting these grassroots, voluntary associations in order to bring about positive social change (Hofstadter, 1955:5-6; Gould 2001:10-15).

For example, the Connecticut chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) commissioned scholars to author books in various languages to help immigrants learn how to become American citizens. The DAR's position was that, regardless of what one thought of immigrants, since they were already here, we should try to help them adapt to our society. A more intimate and sympathetic approach was launched by reformers such as Jane Addams and Ellen Starr who founded Hull House in Chicago, the first settlement house in the United States. Through the settlement house movement, Addams, and others like her, such as the sisters Grace and Edith Abbot, lived amidst the immigrants in their tenements to better understand their plight and to offer assistance in helping them adjust to life in America (Okrent, 100-101).

Eventually, as the settlement house movement progressed, this secular reform effort spilled over into the religious sphere influencing ministers of the Protestant Social Gospel. The Social Gospel was a Protestant reform effort that sought to uplift even the poorest in society in order to make America into a truly Christian and charitable society. Although the religious reformers had initially voiced concern and anxiety about the influx of immigrants, Protestant ministers, and eventually Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis, determined that much more could, and should, be done to help alleviate the suffering and alienation of the immigrant community. Both the secular and religious reformers advocated on behalf of immigrants and against efforts to restrict immigration (Gould, 2001:6-8; Hofstadter, 1955:148-152).

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League, however, had different perspectives and different concerns. They sought ostensibly to promote moral reform by closing bars and saloons and prohibiting the sale

of alcohol. They advertised their movement as a campaign against drunkenness and depravity. A second but equally important goal of this crusade, however, was to disable the political machines that controlled city and state governments. The machines often ran their campaigns through saloons, where they bought the support of voters and made backroom deals with their constituents. Immigrants, whose vote the politicians sought, were viewed by the crusaders as being open to bribery and corruption, and in that regard, as being anti-American (Gould, 2001:81-89).

In addition to the call for prohibition, which was finally achieved nationally with the enactment of the 18th Amendment in 1919, there were many other changes that progressives sought in order to control corruption and to make politics more responsive to public concerns. Among other changes of this period, the efficiency movement, launched by Frederick W. Taylor, was becoming influential across various industries. So, while many progressives lamented the power of the large corporations, at the same time, they admired the efficiency of large business organizations. As a result, many progressives decided that not just industry, but government as well, should be guided by the quest for efficiency, based on demonstrable facts (Leonard, 2016:60-64). Across the country, numerous changes were enacted to give voters greater input in the choice of political candidates. Among these changes were: the direct primary, making it possible for voters to elect candidates by ballot in primary elections, rather than having candidates chosen by the party; the referendum, in which voters could make their opinions known to politicians regarding important issues being discussed; the initiative, a campaign in which voters, by obtaining a requisite number of signatures, could cause a law to be adopted or a referendum called; and the recall, whereby a politician who was not doing his job well

could be ousted from office (Gould, 2001:36-38). There was also the long ballot, which listed several issues on one ballot. This was aimed supposedly at giving voters more detailed input on various candidates or their positions, but, in reality, it was designed to limit the ability of immigrants, since many struggled with English, to affect the outcome of elections. Finally, there were the council manager and commission forms of government, which sought to make local government more business-like, thus taking it out of the hands of strong mayors, city councils, and career politicians. In other words, progressives sought to reform government by shifting power from partisan officials into the hand of non-partisan, bureaucratic civil servants (Gould, 2001:27-28)

Voluntary Organizations were not Enough

While progressive leaders made efforts to reform city politics, they eventually realized that voluntary organizations alone were not powerful enough to contend with trusts, monopolies, and other major players in the economy and that government intervention would be required. The historian Lewis Gould views the Progressive Era as a time when there was a gradual shift from debating how government could best promote economic growth to debating where and how government should intervene in the economy to regulate and rein in the worst excesses of unchecked industrial greed. (Gould, 2001:x) However, even though the Sherman Anti-trust Act was passed in 1890 to prevent anti-competitive business practices, this law was not generally utilized until the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), who brought forty-four antitrust cases against large industries during his time in office (Ruddy, 2016:99-101).

POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OFFSET BY RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION

On the positive side of the ledger, progressive leaders pushed through reforms in local and state governments to reduce political corruption. Also, besides the 18th Amendment instituting Prohibition, their efforts resulted in other constitutional amendments, such as the 17th Amendment in 1913, which established the direct election of Senators by popular vote, and the 19th Amendment in 1920, which finally gave women the right to vote. However, despite the lofty rhetoric of the progressive leaders about making the United States a fairer nation and lifting up the poorer classes, the underlying goal of many of the elite was always to cement their position of WASP privilege and their status as the ruling social caste of America. Indeed, despite Northern criticism of southern racism, the Supreme Court ratified Jim Crow laws and the South's practice of segregation with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896. This decision ruled that "separate but equal" did not violate the constitutionally mandated legal equality between whites and Blacks as established by the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. And again, although racial integration had gradually become the norm in the Federal government following the Civil War, when the second progressive president, Woodrow Wilson, was elected in 1912, one of his first acts was to re-institute racial segregation as a federal policy. Noticeably, neither of these racially discriminatory actions aroused significant opposition from the so-called progressive leaders of the day (Gould, 2001:45-48, 66).

Despite these two blatant efforts to keep non-whites in a subservient position, the upper-class elites were not satisfied. They became increasingly concerned with their position in society due to the number of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants who were entering the country. The elites believed that the lower-class immigrants of that era, especially

those from Russia, eastern Europe, and Italy, were a threat capable of undermining their social status, polluting upper-class families through intermarriage, and destroying the political fabric of the nation. Ultimately, they determined that what America needed more than fairness, equality, or social uplift, was a WASP-controlled caste system that excluded all non-whites and all immigrants except those from England, Germany, and Scandinavia. As a result, they launched an all-out crusade to permanently keep out of America all immigrants whom they deemed undesirable. In the 1932 edition of Madison Grant's magnum opus, *The Passing of the Great Race*, in which he outlined what he believed were the major ethnic groups of Europe, Grant warned that, if America did not close the gate to the lower-class hordes of immigrants coming from eastern and southern Europe and other places in the world, America as a nation would be finished (Grant, 1932:xxxiii).

So, it is true that progressives took positive steps in terms of making politics and the economy fairer for the average white American, making it possible for women to vote, and helping to make factories and businesses safer for the working class. However, in terms of racism and ethnic discrimination, the progressive era was one of the most regressive periods in U.S. history. The question of how the upper-class elites convinced a nation of immigrants and descendants of immigrants that immigration was a mortal threat to the survival of America is the focus of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREATION OF A MORAL PANIC

As mentioned above, by the late 19th century, the United States had gone through several cycles of xenophobia alternating with more tolerant periods of acceptance of immigrants. Nevertheless, except for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, no amount of nativist agitation nor any other public demonstration of hostility toward immigrants had succeeded in causing the Federal Government to enact wholesale immigration restriction. The upper-class white elites, however, felt increasingly threatened by the massive numbers of immigrants flooding into the major cities and were determined to find a way to close the gates to the "new" immigrants.

THE IRM FACED AN UPHILL BATTLE

Immigration Restriction Viewed as Un-American

The historian John Higham points out that a large percentage of the American public in the 19th century were not overly concerned with immigrants or immigration restriction. In fact, the owners of industry were extremely happy to have immigrants flooding into the country to work for lower wages in their factories and mills. In addition, the immigrants already living here began to organize to lobby their political representatives to allow their relatives to join them in the United States. But beyond this, Higham notes that many Americans had a great confidence in the "melting pot" concept, i.e., *e pluribus unum* – "from many one." Most Americans, in this era, felt that going to public schools and receiving a traditional education would help newcomers to blend into American society. No doubt this confidence stemmed partly from the fact that nearly all Americans were themselves descendants of immigrants, some of whom may have arrived

only a few decades earlier. Another reason for this confidence, according to Higham, was a certain faith in the spirit of fairness expressed in the Declaration of Independence, that all are endowed with the same basic inalienable rights.

In addition to this basic American confidence, Higham cites two other forces that opposed immigration restriction. One was the Progressive humanitarian ideal of compassion for the downtrodden. As was said earlier, the Progressive Movement was a hydra-headed entity. So, while some of the very wealthy were trying to restrict immigration or even segregate those newcomers they deemed less worthy, many progressives felt great empathy and sympathy for the plights of immigrants. As an example of this latter group, Jane Addams and Ellen Starr founded Hull House, the first settlement house in the United States, and many other reformers followed with similar programs soon after. The members of the settlement house movement lived in the same tenements as the immigrants. Their aim was to understand the problems and obstacles faced by immigrants and to seek ways of helping them cope with their challenges (Higham, 2002:106-120) .

Immigration Restriction Viewed as Unchristian

The second force noted by Higham was the Protestant Social Gospel movement. According to the American theologian and ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr, the Social Gospel was the theological descendant of the Second Great Awakening. As Niebuhr explains in his *The Kingdom of God in America* (1959), the Second Great Awakening was a period of intense religious revivalism that spread throughout the northern tier of the country during the first two-thirds of the 19th century. One of the most prominent evangelists of the period was Charles Grandison Finney. Although ordained as a Presbyterian

(Calvinist) minister, Finney rejected the Calvinist doctrine of salvation by Divine grace alone. Finney preached that, to become a Christian, one had to willingly accept the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. But more than that, Finney also taught a doctrine of Christian Perfectionism, i.e., that salvation was not a one-time event and that a true Christian had also to endeavor to live a Christ-like life. What this meant, according to Finney, was that a true Christian, imbued with the spirit of God, would automatically reject the social and personal sins of immorality and racial discrimination. Although Finney is not known as an abolitionist, per se, his disciples – especially Theodore Dwight Weld and his fellow abolitionists – were instrumental in spreading the anti-slavery message throughout the country in the mid-19th century. As a result of Finney's brand of Christianity and the forcefulness of his crusade, many Americans came to understand that being a Christian was incompatible with racial and ethnic discrimination (Niebuhr, 1959:150-163).

In Strangers in the Land, Higham explains that the Social Gospel was a social reform movement based on the idea that the message of Jesus was a call to build the foundation for God's kingdom in America by spreading Christian love and by lifting up the poorer elements of society. Its most prominent proponents had initially had some misgivings about the more recent immigrants since those from eastern and southern Europe were mostly Jews and Catholics and, because of political turmoil in Europe, there was the growing fear of anarchists and revolutionaries. However, according to Higham, as the 20th century dawned, prominent Protestants, such as Josiah Strong and Walter Rauschenbusch – leaders of the Social Gospel movement who had initially opposed the new immigrants – began to feel an increasing need to embrace all members of society.

Additionally, they began to realize that the newcomers might possibly be converted to Protestantism (Higham, 2002:120-122).

Higham points out that one of the most successful outreach programs of the Social Gospel movement was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In 1907, the YMCA started an education program for immigrants to help them learn English and to gain an understanding of American law and history. By 1914, the program had more than 30,000 students. As noted earlier, such groups as the DAR and the SAR, whether prompted by Christian charity or fear of immigrant extremists, also developed educational programs to help immigrants more easily assimilate into American culture. The result of all the above – a combination of American national confidence, Progressive humanism, and Christian charity – was resistance, on the part of many Americans, to the idea that all non-Anglo-Saxons should be excluded from the United States (Higham, 2002:234-240).

THE IRM NEEDED AN IDEOLOGY

A Successful SMO Requires a Persuasive Message

In the face of resistance from the social forces that opposed immigrations restriction, it became clear to the WASP elite that they needed a more convincing message to persuade the masses, or at least the leaders of the masses, to side with them. In other words, for the elite to convince the American cultural, economic, and political leaders to change their perspective, the upper-class whites needed moral authority. And, as was noted earlier, to gain moral authority, they needed to create a social movement organization capable of creating a nation-wide hysteria or moral panic. In looking at the Progressive Era through the lens of Collective Action Framing, or message framing, it

becomes clear that the leaders of the IRM were looking for a very compelling ideology that would explain the dangers of unrestricted immigration, would identify the solution to those dangers, and would paint a very clear picture of the horrors that would ensue if dramatic action was not taken.

The Search for a Theory of Scientific Racism

in light of the advances in science and technology at the close of the 19th century, many immigration restrictionists were looking for a more cogent, more scientific approach for persuading the American populace that the so-called "new immigrants" were defective and dangerous. One of the first major attempts at scientific racism was constructed prior to the Progressive Era and came not from America but from Europe. The French aristocrat (or aristocratic pretender) Count Arthur de Gobineau published his *Essai sur l'inégalité des Races Humaines* in 1855. This work was subsequently translated and edited by two racially motivated Americans, Josiah Clark Nott and Henry Hotze, and published in the United States in 1856 under the title *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (Nott et al., 1856).

Gobineau was deeply distressed by the revolutions which shook Europe in 1848. As a response, his book was essentially an essay claiming that the Aryan or Teutonic race was the originator of all civilization and the supreme embodiment of all that is valuable in the civilized world. Gobineau asserted, furthermore, that the dissolution of European society was the result of the intermixing of the Aryan race with lesser races. Gobineau's work was well received by Kaiser Wilhelm II and later by Adolf Hitler. His ideas were also very popular in the American South, but his book did not have great influence overall in the United States, primarily because his thesis had very little actual scientific

evidence and because of the growing antipathy toward Germans following World War I (Okrent, 2019:86-90).

The Impact of Darwin and Galton

There were others, besides Gobineau, such as Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Frenchman Georges Vacher de la Pouge, who wrote essays on the superiority of the Aryan race, and MIT Professor Charles Z. Ripley, who catalogued the different ethnic groups of Europe (Okrent, 2019:88-94,154). But the greatest impact of a new scientific approach to the study of race was brought about by Charles Darwin and his cousin Francis Galton.

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was a scientific and theological bombshell. By positing the descent of species from a common origin by means of gradual evolution, Darwin's theory made it possible to draw the conclusion that human beings were not created by God and that, therefore, we are not all part of one family. This acknowledgement led various people to completely different conclusions regarding race. Darwin himself was an abolitionist, and there are those who saw his theory as antiracist since it suggests that we are all descended from a common ancestor (see, for example, Randall Fuller's *The Book That Changed America*, 2018). Others interpreted Darwin's theory through the lens of Herbert Spencer's concept of social Darwinism or "survival of the fittest," indicating that those who ruled society were meant to rule by virtue of their greater genetic fitness, and that the successful and wealthy should not waste their time or money on those of inferior breeding (Okrent, 2019:15-20).

The greatest impact on the search for a scientific theory of race and ethnicity, however, was produced, not by Darwin, but by his cousin Francis Galton. Galton was

inspired by Darwin's work and, as a result, began searching genealogies to see the connections in the lineages of famous men. In 1869, Galton published *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into Its Laws and Consequences* in which he made the claim that many prominent British men had equally prominent relatives. Based on this observation, in subsequent writings he claimed that 'nature triumphs over nurture,' or in other words, that heredity, not education or social environment, determines a person's physical and intellectual traits, as well as their moral inclinations. Then in 1883, Galton published *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development*, in which he gave his new science the name *eugenics*, meaning "wellborn" or "of good stock" (Okrent, 2019:10-24).

Despite the fact that the upper classes in both England and America were very interested in Galton's work, he had trouble explaining exactly how physical and mental characteristics were inherited. However, in 1900, Gregor Mendel's research on dominant and recessive characteristics in pea plants (originally published in 1866) was rediscovered, and soon thereafter, eugenicists were speaking fervently about the unit characteristics (soon to be labelled 'genes') that could be transmitted from parent to child (Okrent, 2019:28-32).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUGENICS IN THE UNITED STATES

Galton's Theories Blossom in America

Galton's assistant, Karl Pearson, was a brilliant mathematician and scientist who contributed greatly to the fields of statistics and biometrics. Nevertheless, even though he considered himself a socialist, he did not wish to get personally involved in British politics. This may help explain why Galton's theory of eugenics had very little impact on the policies of the British government.

Galton's impact in America, though, was quite different. Charles Benedict Davenport was a Harvard-trained biologist who idolized Galton and who developed a religious zeal for the theory of eugenics. In 1904, the Carnegie Institute of Washington, established the Station for Experimental Evolution (SEE) in Cold Harbor, New York and appointed Davenport as director. The SEE, however, was not set up for the study of human evolution. Because of his burning desire to understand how eugenics could benefit humankind, in 1910, with a very generous donation of several million dollars from Mary Harriman, the widow of railroad magnate H.E. Harriman, Davenport established the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) as a subdivision of the SEE for the purpose of gathering genealogical and eugenic data on American families.

Davenport was not originally motivated by race in his study of eugenics. He thought that every race and ethnic group had superior and inferior individuals. His primary purpose in studying eugenics originally was to see what means could be developed to promote the pairing of morally, intellectually, and physically healthy men and women to produce increasingly better offspring ('*positive eugenics*'). He was also interested in finding methods to discourage those who were physically, intellectually, or morally defective from reproducing ('*negative eugenics*').

Nevertheless, as he began to interact more regularly with other eugenicists, especially those promoting immigration restriction, Davenport's views began to change, and he began to view certain ethnic groups, namely, Anglo-Saxons, as being superior and all the rest as being inferior. As evidence of this fact, the man Davenport appointed as superintendent of the ERO, Harry H Laughlin, was one of the most unabashed racists of the Progressive Era (Okrent, 2019:118-131).

The Development of Negative Eugenics

While Galton's eugenical efforts in England had focused primarily on positive eugenics, discussions of eugenics in America during the Progressive Era focused increasingly on negative eugenics. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and other members of the Immigration Restriction League, along with Senator William Dillingham, Stanford University President David Starr Jordan, prominent conservationists Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn, and other extremely wealthy and prominent members of upper-class society began to complain vigorously of the dangers presented by the immigrants coming to America from eastern and southern Europe. Sensing the growing, and very public, racial and ethnic prejudice of the academic and cultural elites, scientists and researchers in a number of different disciplines all began to publish reports claiming to show that entire European ethnic groups were genetically inferior to the white Anglo-Saxon ancestors who had originally settled in America (Cohen, "Harvard's Eugenics Era," 2016).

EUGENICS: THE OPTIMAL IDEOLOGY FOR IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION

As was noted in the first chapter, for any social movement to be successful, the leaders must craft a very public message in such a way as to provide three things. First, their message must provide a diagnosis of the social problem, i.e., who is causing the problem and how they are causing it. Second, they must provide a prognosis of the problem, or what needs to be done to solve it. And third, the leaders of the SMO must provide a motivational message that will move society to take action by explaining the benefits of solving the problem as well as the dreadful consequences that will ensue if prompt action is not taken (Benford & Snow, 2000).

For the IRM, eugenics was the ideal theory. Eugenics was advanced as a scientific theory and had the support of dozens, if not hundreds, of psychologists, biologists, and anthropologists in America and around the world. This fact alone gave eugenic theory substantial credibility in the eyes of the public. In America, in the early 20th century, espousing eugenics was culturally fashionable and was considered a sign of superior intelligence.

Secondly, eugenics was supported and promoted by some of the wealthiest people in America and England. Prominent scientists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and researchers all subscribed to the tenants of eugenics. Furthermore, because the upper-class elite who advocated eugenics and immigration restriction were so wealthy and so well connected socially, they had no problem ensuring that eugenic-inspired books and articles would be disseminated to every area of society (Hofstadter, 1955:143-145).

Finally, eugenics was the perfect vehicle for the diagnosis and prognosis of society's ills as delineated by the upper classes. On top of that, those who advocated eugenics and immigration restriction were masters at describing the destruction that would come to America, not only to our political system, but to the purity of America's white Anglo-Saxon families as well, if America did not close its gates (Okrent, 2019:350-355).

Eugenics, Immigration Restriction, and Moral Panic

The immigration restrictionists asserted that all the problems of society, e.g., social disruption, inequality, corruption, and moral depravity in the cities – as well as anything else that was causing social anxiety and uncertainty – all these were the result of the unrestricted immigration of inferior groups coming from eastern and southern Europe.

Eugenic theory also provided the obvious solution to these problems, which was immigration restriction. The eugenics claim was that, if these immigrants were not allowed to enter the country, they would not be able to pollute our families nor undermine our democracy. And finally, according to the eugenicists, if the lower-class immigrants could be kept out, American workers would not have to compete with workers willing to accept wages that would barely keep them alive. American laborers would make more money, our cities would become less crowded, political corruption would dwindle and disappear, and honest, hard-working, civilized American families would not have to lock up their sons and daughters to keep them from being tainted by the blood of degenerate foreign families. At the same time, the eugenicists were experts at sowing fear in hearts and minds as to the dreadful consequences of not taking immediate action (Hall, 1906:*passim*). For example, one of the primary leaders of the immigration restriction movement, Madison Grant, in the introduction to the fourth edition of his anti-immigrant magnum opus, *The Passing of the Great Race*, wrote:

> The days of the Civil War and the provincial sentimentalism which governed or misgoverned our public opinion are past, and this generation must completely repudiate the proud boast of our fathers that they acknowledged no distinction in "race, creed, or color," or else the native* American must turn the page of history and write: "FINIS AMERICA" (America is Finished) [by “native,” Grant means *white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants*] (Grant, 1921:xxxiii).

Because the elite were all so very wealthy and highly connected – thus possessing an enormous degree of social capital – they were in a very advantageous position to launch the Immigration Restriction crusade, a crusade which had the backing of some of the wealthiest individuals as well as many of the most notable scientists of the day. As a result of the connections and influence of the upper class, newspapers and magazines were continually bombarded with articles and editorials decrying the large numbers of

immigrants entering the country. The plan of the restrictionists was to create a hysteria, or moral panic, so that the political leaders would be unable to resist the pressure and would severely curtail immigration from Europe (Spiro, 2009:297-327).

The way the crusade was organized and executed, who its leading figures were, and how they achieved their goal is the subject of the next chapter.

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