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## Comments on Brian Gratton's "Race or Politics"

This essay does what it intends to do. It clearly shows that the immigration restrictionist movement benefited from Republicans wooing urban "Old Immigrant" workers from Northern and Western Europe to the cause. Scientific racism was a latecomer to the table, and not a major driver of the forces that led to the 1917 and 1924 acts. This, on its own, is an achievement and a vital corrective to less rigorous sociological and historical accounts based more on theory than historical sources.

The essay nicely illustrates the extent to which organized labor, even in urbanized, high-immigrant locales such as Lowell, Massachusetts, played a signal role in supporting anti-immigration politics. Leading politicians adjusted their positions on immigration to cater to this political demand. The author shows how figures such as Lodge initially read the foreign-born vote as uniformly pro-immigration, until they realized that many "Old Immigrants" were strongly motivated to limit labor competition. The Literacy Test was ideally suited to peel the generally literate Old Immigrants away from the Democrats on the grounds that the Test would not prevent their co-ethnics being admitted but would keep southern and eastern European labor competitors out.

This political trope had become well established prior to the vogue for eugenics, which is largely a twentieth-century development. So the author is on solid ground here, and he makes a very convincing case that subsequent academic commentators have viewed the events of the period through a late twentieth-century lens. In addition, scientific racism was poorly grasped by the mass of voters at this time, few of whom were well educated.

I have two comments posed in the spirit of being matters for further investigation. First, how important are elites versus masses? That is, apart from the most recent immigrant voters, most citizens may have been latently anti-immigration. But if the elite of all parties, and at the highest echelons of society, were in favor of open immigration due to an ideological consensus, it is arguable that this could have been a barrier to restriction—enough, in combination with business pressure—to keep the gates open.

The increasingly secular nature of elite discourse by the 1890s frowned on anti-Catholicism, and so eugenics—seen as forward-looking—may have been important in a minor sense in paving the way for elite acceptance of restriction. Legitimation is important in making the case in Congress and in the public sphere. So eugenics might have had a small effect on elite legitimation among peers rather than mass-mobilization. That is, the fact that eugenics was respected among intellectuals of all political persuasions (i.e., the left-wing Fabians in Britain) may have helped win over some initially *laissez-faire* opinion formers.

That said, I agree that the electoral rewards of restriction for Republican politicians were the more important driver. And there were other intellectual resources that were more prominent among elites. Indeed, the Social Gospel movement (i.e., Josiah Strong, Theodore Parker), in sympathy with the AFL/craft unions, had made the intellectual case on the basis of averting social ills and advancing the rights of workers (Kaufmann 2004). Thus I would tend to side with the author in downgrading the importance of scientific racism in explaining restriction.

My second point is that the article may have placed the accent rather too strongly on the importance of Old Immigrant support. Rural America was still the majority at this time. The large-scale mobilization of Anglo-Protestant Americans by the APA, patriotic societies like the DAR or GAR, Freemasons, Populists, and, at its most extreme, the second Klan (6 million members) arguably provided the shock troops advocating for restriction. Old Immigrant support may have been important for generating the necessary votes in urban areas, but it is not immediately clear from the article that this won the day.

For instance, support in high-immigrant states (i.e., Ohio, South Dakota, and Illinois) for restriction could also have come from a more mobilized WASP minority in line with threat theory (i.e., Key 1949; Blalock 1967). Canadian and British immigrants should not be linked with Germans and Irish as they may have identified with the Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority. In addition,

German and Swedish Protestants may have identified with anti-Catholicism. So it is not clear that worker interests alone rather than the old anti-Catholic motivations were key to getting the mass of votes. Think of the success of Prohibition in 1920 (Gusfield 1963). After all, the shift from basing the quotas on the 1890 immigrant population to the 1920 resident population, between 1924 and 1929, was won over the objections of Irish, Scandinavian, and German representatives.

Today, survey data show that Trump would not have won without the backing of anti-immigration, Republican Latinos. But it is not necessarily the case that the same was true in 1924. These small questions should not, however, detract from my general opinion of this article, which is that it does us a tremendous service in showing how Labour and Old Immigrant interests were a key aspect of the restrictionist coalition. It also nicely contests extant, often unexamined, predilections for assuming that scientific racism was key to the politics of immigration in the 1890–1925 period.

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