

The Myth of Intellectuality and Development: Exploiting the Feeble-minded Subject in Discourses of
American Philanthropy

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a polyvocal archive that approaches developmental and intellectual disability as a category of historical analysis, with a central focus on comparing how U.S. charity and philanthropy discourses have drawn upon, reinforced, or contested configurations of intellectuality and development. This dissertation is a political and intellectual project that seeks to explain the material ways in which the cultural discourses that conjured what I contextualize as the ‘exemplary feeble-minded subject’ have influenced historical and current-day geopolitical practices. Newspaper stories at the onset of the twentieth century normalized the exemplary feeble-minded subject while magazines, print advertising, books, science journals, and motion pictures popularized the idea that the so-called feeble-minded class was both a burden and a threat to national and global progress. Institutions linked the feeble-minded, idiot, imbecile, and moron classifications to physical, mental, developmental, and intellectual disabilities, and the exemplary feeble-minded subject was endlessly adapted in discourses of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.

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Chapter One Material Consequences Why it Matters...

Introduction:

On August 20, 2007, *Mother Jones Magazine* ran an article in its political section under the headline, “The School of Shock: Eight states are sending autistic, mentally retarded, and emotionally troubled kids to a facility that punishes them with painful electric shocks. How many times do you have to zap a child before it’s torture?”¹ In the scathing expose, staff writer and 2015 Pulitzer Prize nominee Jennifer Gonnerman documented the ongoing mental and physical torture of disabled residents at the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Canton, Massachusetts. Gonnerman branded JRC “America’s most controversial ‘behavior modification’ facility,” and she described the residential institution as a self-identified “‘special needs school,’ that takes in all kinds of troubled kids—severely autistic, mentally retarded², schizophrenic, bipolar, emotionally disturbed—and attempts to change their behavior with a complex system of rewards and punishments, including painful electric shocks to the torso and limbs.”³ The article included a brief background on JRC founder Dr. Matthew Israel and offered readers a graphic narrative about the unique ‘graduated punishment system’ that Israel had developed over his forty year career. According to Gonnerman, Dr. Israel justified his “behavior modification system” by calling it a last-ditch treatment for the “more difficult” residents at his facility.⁴ The article made a convincing argument that JRC was torturing its residents and that Israel’s ‘treatment’ tactics were, according to Gonnerman, “a form of punishment not inflicted

¹ Gonnerman 2007

² Gonnerman’s article ran nearly two years prior to the emergence of the End the R Word Campaign in 2009

³ Gonnerman 2007

⁴ *ibid*

on serial killers, child molesters or... inmates now incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons.”⁵ Mother Jones Magazine is a well-established national publication that has received recognition for its journalistic focus on social justice issues, and Gonnerman’s expose undoubtedly helped to alert readers to the horrors that were unfolding at the center. Yet even as Gonnerman’s reporting ripped at the curtain of JRC abuses, she reinforced a hierarchy of deficiency that could lead readers to assume that, at least in some cases, the severity of ‘treatment’ was almost —not quite but almost—justified. In the following segment, Gonnerman constructs a tale of two subjectivities that splits disabled people into dueling categories of difference based on their *perceived* level of emotional, intellectual, and developmental function:

The story of the Rotenberg Center is in many ways a tale of two schools. Slightly more than half the residents are what the school calls “high functioning”: kids... who have diagnoses like attention deficit disorder, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other emotional problems. The other group is even more troubled. Referred to as “low functioning,” it includes kids with severe autism and mental retardation; most cannot speak or have very limited verbal abilities. Some have behaviors so extreme they can be life threatening.⁶

Gonnerman repeatedly characterized JRC’s developmentally and intellectually disabled residents as astonishingly maladjusted even as she continued to document and condemn the long list of agonizing and painful punishments that they endured. The horrific abuses that Gonnerman included in the article involved finger pinches on the skin, days and weeks in seclusion, food deprivation, muscle squeezes, prone restraints, hand restraints, shackles, humiliation techniques, round-the-clock camera surveillance, and randomized electric shocks delivered remotely by staff members through JRC’s Graduated Electronic Decelerators (GRDs).

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

According to Gonnerman's report, six JRC residents died.⁷ In 2011, Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) sent a report to the *United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture or other Cruel, Inhumane, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. In the fifty-seven-page document, MDRI issued an "**urgent appeal** (emphasis original) asking the UN to "initiate an inquiry into the abusive practices perpetuated against the residents of JRC and licensed by the State of Massachusetts."⁸ MDRI's multi-agency investigation included cooperation from Yale University's Human Rights Law Clinic, Senior Attorneys from the Massachusetts Disability Law Center, U.S. and internationally based disability activist groups, and insights from former JRC residents, parents, and staff. According to MDRI, the extensive investigation drew from "the findings of numerous state agencies and licensing boards, judicial decisions, and testimony before the Massachusetts legislature during the consideration of legislation to regulate aversive treatment."⁹ These reports document an astonishing level of legal, political, humanitarian, and public support for JRC and Dr. Israel's methods. In its appeal to the Special Rapporteur, MDRI made note of the unrelenting efforts to protect Israel and to block all efforts to shutter JRC:

Despite the overwhelming evidence of abuse at JRC, domestic remedies to end these abuses have failed. **And in some cases, states have adopted regulations permitting the use of painful aversives, and the courts have upheld such regulations which undermine the protection of children and adolescents at JRC from cruel and inhuman treatment** (original emphasis.)¹⁰

On May 9, 2010, the UN General Assembly sent an official communication to the Obama Administration requesting that the U.S. federal government undertake an immediate investigation into JRC. In 2013, UN Special Rapporteur Juan E. Méndez officially declared JRC's

⁷ Gonnerman 2007

⁸ Ahern and Rosenthal 2010

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

‘treatments’ were “tantamount to torture,” and he was clear in his message to the United States government that JRC was a U.S. institution in violation of the UN Conventions Against

Torture:

The rights of the students of the JRC subjected to Level III Aversive Interventions by means of electric shock and physical means of restraints have been violated under the UN Convention Against Torture and other international standards.¹¹

In the time since the UN put the United States on notice there has been an onslaught of press stories and social media posts about the never-ending human atrocities at JRC, and the center has undergone intense scrutiny from the U.S. Senate House of Representatives, the FDA, DSHS, the U.S. Council on Disability, the ACLU, and numerous state and local agencies. In 2016, the FDA announced a proposed ban on electric shock devices and in March of 2020, the agency finalized a plan for its implementation. Just a month later, the FDA filed an administrative stay on the ban and cited COVID-19 as its reason for the indefinite delay:

Partial stay of the ban on people already at JRC getting the shocks (a) for as long as a public health emergency exists due to COVID-19, and (b) even after the end of the public health emergency, until the FDA either responds to the JRC’s petition or the JRC finishes litigating all its appeals.¹²

After nearly 40 years of public protest, legal battles, and media attention, Israel’s unfettered abuses continue at JRC with the full knowledge of the United States government and its citizens.

I first encountered “School of Shock” in 2010 while I was studying the cultural politics of autism in the United States.¹³ As part of my investigation, I explored JRC and the social movements that have been actively engaged in efforts to shut the center down since the early 1980s. The more I dug into JRC’s history and the transnational struggle to close its doors, the

¹¹ Brown 2020

¹² *ibid*

¹³ Thibault 2014

more evident it became that a powerful constituency of legal, social, political, and economic forces were enjoying an astounding level of success in their efforts to block any attempt to shutter JRC, and these same entities were unyielding in their insistence that JRC continue the use of violent aversive techniques on its disabled residents. But why? Why was society okay with this inhuman treatment of disabled people when, during the same moment, a collective rage was building across nation over the U.S. military torture of Abu Ghraib detainees? What was it about the historical and cultural framing of developmental and intellectual disabilities that made it so easy to dismiss the corporeal violence inflicted on the residents at the Judge Rotenberg Center, and who benefited?

I came to realize the political discourses that surround JRC are complex, multifaceted, and raise more questions than any representational analysis of Gonnerman's article could possibly answer. Neither *School of Shock* nor JRC made an appearance in the published conclusions, but the conflicting relationship between Gonnerman's well-intentioned expose, her pointed reinforcement of the hierarchies of disability and development, and the residents at JRC have remained a driving force throughout my research for this dissertation. In this study, I attend to both discursive and material modes of analyses to trace the 'shadows and imprints' that help us to understand why a well-intentioned Pulitzer Prize winning author like Jennifer Gonnerman would re-inscribe dangerous stereotypes about developmental and intellectual disabilities even as she was deeply critical of the inhuman practices at JRC.

When Gonnerman represented the people living at JRC as ultimate victims, and Dr. Israel as the sole villain of the story, she accomplished four especially important discursive moves that I will explore in this study. First, Gonnerman potentially led her readers to the assumption

that the human rights abuses, while certainly horrific, were isolated to JRC. Second, Gonnerman's victim/villain/pity storyline placed readers—and Gonnerman herself—as the civilized benevolent saviors of JRC's unruly and uncivilized victims. Additionally, by situating Israel as the standalone perpetrator of the abuse without any attempt to explore the historical, social, and political contexts, Gonnerman distanced her readers from their own complicity in the well-established practices that authorized the violent 'treatments' in the first place. Finally, and most significant to this study, Gonnerman made no effort to track the historical, political, and social systems that rely on violent and damaging ideas about the developmentally and intellectually disabled individuals that Israel abused in the name of 'treatment' throughout his career.

Research Contributions: A Polyvocal Archive

Objects comprising an archive—whether manuscripts, court records, periodicals, parliamentary documents—do not simply provide access to colonial history but “themselves were constitutive of the multiple inequalities of that past.”

Risam, 2015 ¹⁴

This dissertation contributes to debates about how national and global charity and philanthropy systems in the United States have historically privileged standards of normalcy that devalue forms of intellectual and developmental difference. This study takes a unique approach to American charity by identifying some of the previously unexplored conjunctural moments when the discourses of U.S. philanthropy and American exceptionalism converged in ways that

¹⁴ Risam 2015

produced long lasting and dangerous misunderstandings about intellectuality, progress, and development. I demonstrate the effects of these critical relationships in three distinctive ways.

First, I have organized a new archive for this project that contains a broad assembly of cultural artifacts that I gathered during my investigation of existing repositories and secondary sources. In my analyses, I place emphasis on the social and political circumstances of the objects situated within the archive, and in doing so, I unravel moments in U.S. history where specific configurations of intellectuality and race progress become condensed within, and essential to, discourses of U.S. charity and philanthropy and American exceptionalism. The time periods studied here consider post-Civil War Reconstruction, the period of Southern Redemption, the emergence of Jim Crow policies and white nationalism (1865-1890), The panic of 1873 and the ensuing Long Depression that placed heavy demands on American charity and international economic systems (1873-1877), the Second Industrial Revolution, which produced advances in technologies, the transnational movement of people and ideas, the rise of capitalism, and great concentrations of wealth (1880-1900), and the development of America's first large philanthropic foundations during the Progressive Era alongside an upsurge in social reform efforts that included the eugenics and social hygiene movements (1900-1930).

The second contribution this project offers is in its attention to cultural and historical erasure. I have intentionally constructed a postcolonial archive that is polyvocal, and as such, a large part of the work that it performs is to locate, and deconstruct, the political spaces and recorded histories that have made attempts to erase, ignore, or make less visible the connections between the cultural production of intellectuality and development in discourses of American philanthropy and white nationalism. To unravel the cultural forces involved in efforts

to maintain these erasures, I analyzed multiple time-periods, a wide range of repositories, and I approached some secondary source texts as primary artifacts within the archive. By taking this multidimensional approach, this project brings new insights into how particular “absences from the cultural record”¹⁵ have impacted the ways that we currently understand and study intellectuality and development.

In claiming this work as postcolonial, I follow Michael Pickering’s argument that the ‘post’ in post-colonial does not imply that colonialism is a discrete set of events from the distant past, nor that dominant colonialist discourses have faded from contemporary contexts. In the segment below, Pickering explains the distinction that I engage in this work:

All that term can sensibly mean is that, coming after formal decolonization, it stands for a critique of the historical formations of colonial domination and of colonial legacies... there is no singular period, condition, subject, or space of postcoloniality. It takes on various forms, and it applies to the formerly colonizing as well as colonised societies.¹⁶

I approach American charity and philanthropy as complex transnational endeavors that have deep roots in colonialist practices, industrialism, modernity, and the American progressive reform movements of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Postcolonial digital humanities scholar Roopika Risam characterizes the postcolonial archive as “comprised of artifacts that may be scattered amid universities, libraries, and databases... they are polyvocal and distributed, decentering the power of a single repository.”¹⁷ I have avoided the pitfalls of the single repository by shifting my investigation between five distinct artifact types stored in four archival collections: —previously digitized online collections—digitized analog historical materials—traditional physical archival materials represented digitally— and secondary source materials in

¹⁵ Kramer 2014

¹⁶ Risam 2015

¹⁷ *ibid*

both digital and text formats. The artifacts that I have collected and analyzed for this study were ‘scattered across’ academic, historical, and corporate digital repositories, philanthropic institutions, popular media and news archives, and physical collections located in traditional archive settings.

Through this attention to polyvocality, I discovered that there are specific stereotypes, stigmas, and representational patterns that persist across time periods, institutional discourses, subjectivities, and geographical locations. This observation brought me to the third issue that I draw out in this dissertation, which involved reexamining the actors and agencies that are considered either complicit or innocent in the discourses that are investigated. Above all, this dissertation is a political project that asks society to pay attention to the people and systems that reinforce an imaginary sense of national, racial, ethnic, gender, and/or class superiority by exploiting and ‘othering’ intellectual and developmental difference. Power is not a strict top-down endeavor and this work raises significant questions about those individuals, social entities, and intellectual projects that think of themselves as innocent actors in the ableist and racialized discourses that I foreground in this study. Throughout history and in current times, there has been a wide constituency of agents that think of themselves as progressive and active supporters in the fight to end social injustices while at the same time they ignore, outright deny, and at times actively participate in the overlapping racist and ableist practices that endanger people and regions represented as somehow intellectually and developmentally inferior. One of the primary outcomes of this work is that it demonstrates that these overlapping discourses paint a broad brush of intellectual and/or developmental inferiority that makes it possible to

wholly delegitimize *given subjects in given conjunctural moments*—whether place, nation, geography, community, group, or individual.

I have been working for over ten years to understand how the early twentieth century discourses that constructed the feeble-minded, idiot, imbecile, and moron classifications have impacted contemporary practices. This investigation has taken unexpected twists and turns and moved through unforeseeable territories that complicated and deepened the scope of the project. In my initial works, I analyzed representations of autism in U.S. charity campaigns while engaged in what I thought was a wholly separate inquiry into the tactics and strategies that are common in humanitarian aid advertisements. While working on these two projects, I noted striking similarities in their cultural logics that warranted further investigation. This is where I encountered a sort of chicken and egg scenario that further complicated the focus of this work.

I initially theorized that the savage/civilized rhetorics that appeared in charity campaigns for autism and developmental and intellectual disabilities in the early 2000s were a call back to mid twentieth century international funding drives produced by organizations like World Vision, UNICEF, Save the Children, and USA for Africa. I became deeply engaged in scholarship that deconstructs the racialized discourses in international humanitarian aid and global development discourses. These works trace the ‘savage, victim, savior,’¹⁸ and ‘dark continent mythologies in nineteenth century colonialism and neoliberal humanitarian thought,’¹⁹ the construction of the discourse of the “West and the Rest,”²⁰ the impacts of settler colonialism in the United States, mediated politics in the disaster relief industry,²¹ and the ideologies of shame in human rights

¹⁸ Mutua 2001

¹⁹ Brantlinger 1985

²⁰ Hall 1992

²¹ de Waal 1997

agendas.²² While this scholarship has proven invaluable in the framing of this project, it oftentimes demonstrates little or no interest in understanding when or how stereotypes of the savage/brute, developed/undeveloped became anchored to developmental and intellectual disabilities in the United States, or for the powerful ways in which these ideologies interact with one another to prop up U.S. ideals of racial, national, and global superiority. Broadly speaking, I found that this absence is a by-product of the systemic eraser of the histories of the eugenics and social hygiene movements in the United States that dominated political, legislative, humanitarian, and popular thought from 1878 through the early 1940s. This discovery led to yet another intriguing absence that I drew out in this project.

An abundance of critical disability studies scholarship over the past thirty years has addressed the relentless use of signifiers of deficiency in contemporary descriptions of developmental and intellectual disabilities, and as of late, there has been an increased interest in historicizing the feeble-minded subject.^{23 24} There is no doubt that disability studies scholars are making significant strides in remediating the absence of developmental and intellectual disability histories from the cultural record yet this important work remains largely unrecognized by critical disciplines outside of the field. Additionally, these analyses have yet to explore how the rhetorics surrounding feeble-mindedness in the United States impact world disability health policies and global development agendas. Stuart Hall defined conjuncture as “the history of the present moment,” and he described conjunctural moments as those periods in history where “very dissimilar currents, some of long duration and some of relatively short

²² Keenan 2004

²³ Fraser 2016; Murray 2008; Thibault 2014

²⁴ See Trent, Carey, Baynton, Black

duration, can defuse or condense... into a particular configuration.”²⁵ I argue that the ableism that persists in current day configurations of intellectuality, disability, race, progress, and development are the product of certain conjectural periods in U.S. history when American charity and philanthropy converged with white nationalist thought. I draw from cultural studies and postcolonial disability studies theory to better explain the links between the degradation of developmental and intellectual disability in white nationalist discourse, and the dehumanization of global humanitarian subjects in rhetorics of American exceptionalism. In mapping these understudied territories, this project demonstrates that the racialized logics that essentialize globally southern regions, and ableist rhetorics that degrade developmental and intellectual disabilities, are mutually informing colonial discourses where, as Sean Grech has explained:

Race and racism... are not only instrumental, but indeed constitutive of the colonial encounter... and cannot be eliminated from the analysis... disabled people, like others, do not exist outside this history... colonial constructions of, and approaches to, disability seep into and make up the contemporary disability landscape.²⁶

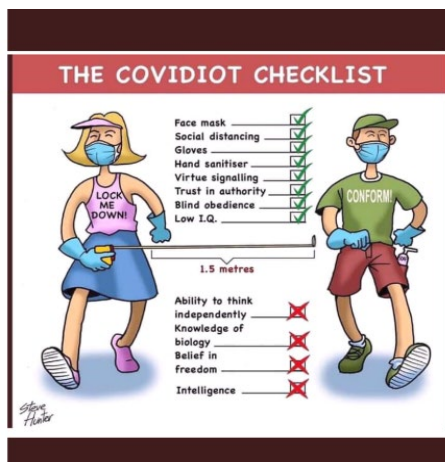
I place the cultural histories of the eugenics and social hygiene movements in the United States as central sites for explaining how, in the name of human progress and scientific development, charity and humanitarian empires conjured the historically specific exemplary feeble-minded subject and its sub-categories imbecile, idiot, and moron. Institutions applied these classifications to physical, developmental, and intellectual disabilities and created an exemplary feeble-minded subject that they conveniently adapted in discourses of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. U.S. government agencies, charity organizations, wealthy philanthropists, and criminal reform leaders all went about the business of

²⁵ Hall, 2004

²⁶ Grech 2012

characterizing an imaginary feeble-minded ‘other’ that was a pure manifestation of crime, degeneracy, race impurity, and a moral and intellectual menace that threatened the very fiber of the nation.

Newspaper stories normalized the concept of the exemplary feeble-minded subject and magazines, print advertising, science journals, and motion pictures popularized the idea that the so-called feeble-minded class was a national threat and a social and economic burden to all ‘normal’ American citizens. Grech has proposed that current frames of deficiency and defectiveness have deep roots in colonialist practice and I draw from Grech in this project to make the case that the early to mid-twentieth century discourses of eugenics and social hygiene were colonial projects that resonate in current day contexts. ²⁷



Covidiot Checklist, Steve Hunter 2020 retrieved on Twitter, December 2021

Discourses of Intellectuality in Contemporary Contexts:

co·vid·i·ot: a stupid person who stubbornly ignores ‘social distancing’ protocol, thus helping to further spread COVID-19. ‘Are you seriously going to visit grandma? Dude, don’t be such a covidiot’. ²⁸ (Twitter, December 6, 2020)

Political and social debates of today regularly devolve into ableist slurs that target the intellectuality of the opposing party, and to be clear, this is not a partisan activity.

Progressives, conservatives, and independents all too

frequently delegitimize those that express views in disagreement with their own by mocking their intellectual capacities and/or physical prowess. Idiot, imbecile, and moron are commonly

²⁷ Grech 2012

²⁸ Hunter, 2020

accepted 'taken for granted' signifiers that are easily weaponized in nearly all social and cultural contexts. During the Progressive Era, the project of modernity alerted the public to the so-called imminent danger posed by the idiot, imbecile, feeble-minded and moron classes by claiming they were lazy, diseased, intellectually inferior, criminal, and socially degenerate. In contemporary times, the idiot, moron, and imbecile signifiers have become culturally mutated stereotypes that no longer require such interpretation or explanation. Labeling someone an idiot, moron, or imbecile is one of the more potent and delegitimizing tactics today and this nearly universal practice goes unchallenged because we have conveniently forgotten their histories of signification—the neatly tucked away ableist genealogies that reside in the dark recesses of the national and cultural record. In the absence of any national education about, consideration for, or acknowledgment of, the relational histories of the eugenics and social hygiene movements in the United States, the feeble-minded idiot, imbecile, and moron classifications have lost any connection to the violent ideologies that generated them.

The October 2017 online edition of NOS Magazine, the self-described magazine for neurodiversity culture and representation, featured the headline "Stop Using Intellectual Disability as an Insult."²⁹ Author Ivanova Smith has self-identified as intellectually disabled, and their article points out that "many autistic and intellectually disabled people were diagnosed as morons during the era of eugenics."³⁰ Earlier the same year, people in the mainstream media, cable news outlets, and on social media reported that President Donald Trump's cabinet members had called him an 'idiot,' 'imbecile,' and 'fucking moron,' and images of the 2017 New

²⁹ Smith 2017

³⁰ Ibid.

Jersey anti-Trump billboard “Our Leader is an Idiot” continue to trend across social media.³¹

The idiocy of Donald Trump, so the popular argument goes, is so self-evident that there is no call to challenge his racist, misogynistic, white nationalist, xenophobic, or anti-LGBTQ policies. He has no history or background, and no responsibility for his own rhetoric because he is simply an incompetent idiot... a ‘fucking moron.’ The ‘idiot/moron/imbecile’ in this instance operates as a representational tactic that ultimately dehistoricized developmentally and intellectually disabled people while dislocating Donald Trump from his own violent and dangerous ideologies.

Allison Carey points to the first decades of twentieth century as a transformative moment when a “radical shift in the nation’s understanding of intellectual disability took place, and the feeble-minded emerged as one of the principal enemies in the nation’s war against population degeneracy and race suicide.”³² In my own cultural and relational analyses, I illustrate that at turn of the twentieth century the historically specific classification of feeble-mindedness brought forth a universal and largely uncontested object of degeneracy that remains a potent weapon in current day political discourse. To be clear, this project does not attempt to tell the story of what it meant to live as someone classified feeble-minded in the 1900s, but instead seeks to explain why multiple and competing discourses found it necessary to conjure what I have defined as an ambiguous yet exemplary feeble-minded subject. It is also important to note that this study does not attach the early twentieth-century categorization of feeble-mindedness onto current day identities or contexts. Here my primary concern is not “whether we are referring to exactly the same physiological condition across the years, but

³¹ Hart 2018, Beinart 2018

³² Carey, 2010, 63-66

whether the terms used to designate a condition are part of repeating, transforming, and interconnected discourses,” and I engage in a cultural and material model of analysis that shifts “from describing a presumed objective condition... to analyzing the terms, the language and structures that articulate the cultural idea” of feeble-mindedness.³³ This approach allows me to explore how what I have identified as the exemplary feeble-minded subject gets articulated *across* populations, time-periods, and geopolitical locations.

I have situated this work as a relational digital historiography grounded in cultural studies and transnational postcolonial disability studies frameworks. To be clear, I work in the archives, but I am not an archival scientist, preservationist, or librarian. While I am deeply invested in relational histories, I am no historian, and even though I curate in digital spaces, I am not a computational or coding expert in any sense. I stake my claim in the interdisciplinarity of cultural studies and its emphasis on questioning the cultural conditions and histories in which institutions, governments, and formal societies construct and reinforce ‘otherness’. To do this work, I explore the processes through which these ideological frames are made meaningful to the public, how “meaning circulates across groups, geographies, and time,” and the very real consequences that these processes impose on people’s lives.³⁴ I approach history as a category of analysis that is neither factually settled in the present nor a fixed point in some archived past, and I embrace Pickering’s contention that “the vitality of cultural studies depends, in one key dimension of its development, on keeping the diverse interactions between ‘then’ and ‘now’ in continual and active view of one another.”³⁵ Doing this historical work means diving headfirst

³³ McDonagh 2008, 17

³⁴ Mitchell 2008, 272

³⁵ Pickering 2008, 107f

into the messy, contested, and alluring spaces of the 'Archive' in its 'traditional' and less conventional forms.

While digital historiographies have the potential for pointing to “the ways in which archives shape our very perceptions of the past,” archivists and researchers must take certain steps to avoid reintroducing the “dynamics of colonialism” that are ever-present in historical objects of analysis.³⁶ Liu believes “the appropriate, unique contribution that the digital humanities can make to cultural criticism at the present time is to... think “critically about metadata” (and everything else related to digital technologies) in a way that “scales into thinking critically about the power, finance, and other governance protocols of the world.”³⁷ For postcolonial digital humanities work, “the relationship between theory and praxis is integral” and I follow the set of methods and standards offered by Hering in this dissertation. Methods of appraisal, meta-data development, and artifact validation are important tools of transparency that can help digital scholars demonstrate how the artifact has traveled while also making their critical analyses accessible (searchable) across a broad audience.³⁸ Hering has defined digital historiography as “the study of the interaction of digital technology with historical practice,”³⁹ while Theimer has underscored the core principles of provenance and digital source/resource criticism to help digital scholars provide critical context to the digital artifacts they work with. Hering believes “the tradition of source criticism in historical theory and methodology complements the archival principle of provenance” and incorporating both methods into the analytical framing for this project ultimately increased its authenticity.

³⁶ Risam 2015

³⁷ Liu 2012

³⁸ Hering, Provenance Meets Source Criticism 2014

³⁹ *ibid*

In the summer of 2014, the *Journal of Digital Humanities* (JDH) published a series of conference presentations given by historians, digital humanities scholars, archivists, and librarians at the annual meeting of the *American Historical Association* (AHA). The JDH article titled “Digital Historiography and the Archives” included a series of after-conference discussions posted on Michael J. Kramer’s blog, *Issues in Digital History*.⁴⁰ According to Kramer, the presenters were, “particularly focused on three keywords: digital, historiography, and the archives,” and the blogposts allowed each to explain how they felt their field was responding to the co-mingling of digital technologies and historical practice in archive research.⁴¹ Kramer is a professor of history and American studies and co-founder of the Digital Humanities Laboratory at Northwestern University, and he has written on topics in counter-culture, the history of technology, and civic engagement. Kramer’s definition of historiography and his regard for theory and praxis in digital historiography are integral components in my own conceptual framing for this project:

The concept of historiography—the history of historical writing itself, from the record of what has been said about a topic to the articulation of debates over interpretations to the awareness of different methods that historians have used to analyze their sources... digital historiography offers a means of more critically connecting archival theory and professional practices to historical theory and professional historical practices.⁴²

Risam argued that the “digital cultural record is being composed in... politically fraught space, shaped by tensions between freedom and restraint, openness and impenetrability, and noninterference and control.”⁴³ In its final form, this project will be accessible in two formats, traditional text and in interactive digital form on *The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture*

⁴⁰ Hering, Kramer, et al. 2014

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² Kramer 2014

⁴³ *ibid*

digital publishing platform known as *Scalar*.⁴⁴ This means that as I work *in* the archives collecting, analyzing, and interpreting cultural, political, and public artifacts, I am simultaneously *building* a polyvocal and postcolonial archive that will shed light on the multiplicity of ways in which the powerful forces of philanthropy, humanitarianism, and development have leveraged the exemplary feeble-minded subject to delegitimize difference at the intersections of disability, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nation.

The number and range of archives relevant to this project are expansive. I have curated and stored four collections on a local hard drive that contain hyper-linked artifacts and objects compiled from existing digital collections, born digital artifacts, and digital surrogates of the historical papers that I studied during my onsite investigation of the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) and the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Archives (CSHL). The first collection contains what archivist Kate Theimer would categorize as “digitized analog historical materials,” and it includes popular media and news documents that are available online in digitized collections that were selected to represent how cultural productions influenced social and political thought in the early 1900s.⁴⁵ American newspapers and magazines expanded their reach in the early moments of the twentieth century, and the pages that follow will examine their interpretations of the exemplary feeble-minded subject in charity and corrections discourse. The search for these objects began with an online exploration of digitized collections that includes the *ProQuest Historical Newspapers and Periodicals*, *The Library of Congress Chronicling America* prints and photographs division, *the Truman Library*, and *Google books*.^{TM46} The second

⁴⁴ At the time of this writing, the *Scalar* site is under construction and not publicly viewable.

⁴⁵ Theimer 2014

⁴⁶ Digitized renderings of texts in *Google Books*. In most cases while reading texts in *Google Play*, the page indicator at the bottom of the *Google Play* screen differs from the page number in the original. Pages cited here match the original text.

repository consists of born digital and “digital historical representations” that I have gathered from the online archives of the *American Philosophical Society*, *Google books*,TM *The Eugenics Records Archives*, *The Rockefeller Archive Center*, and the *Library of Congress*.^{47 48} These materials encompass institution, government, and industry texts that were in most instances made available to the public at or near the time of their creation and have since been digitized and stored in online institutional archives. Materials in this collection include conference proceedings, legislative transcripts, professional book publications, publicity materials, legislation manuals, court proceedings, legislative testimony, and annual reports.

My online search was wide-ranging and allowed me to delve into the public face of Carnegie and Rockefeller, their foundations, and their industrial empires, but the digitized collections that I explored were missing critical context regarding the inner and inter-relational workings of the philanthropic legacies they built. To address this gap, the third repository contains evidence assembled from the onsite repositories of the RAC and CSHL archives. Theimer would categorize the physical collections at ARC and CSHL “traditional archives,” and the images that I collected of select artifacts are “traditional physical archive materials, represented digitally.”⁴⁹ The digital representations gathered for this portion of the study encompass personal and professional correspondences and notes, budget documents, biographical materials, meeting transcripts, foundation and family records, photographs, unpublished writings, charts, and miscellaneous materials of interest. I visually scanned volumes of analog texts while on site and accumulated sets of digital images on my smartphone

⁴⁸ Theimer 2014

⁴⁹ *ibid*

of the paper objects I deemed relevant to the study. I later converted each image to a searchable PDF text, labelled and numbered each by date, location collected, and then sorted artifacts into aggregated folders by topic, and created a written ledger that made note of the artifact institution, relational topics, and my initial field observations. Finally, I performed close readings of each newly digitized artifact, or digital 'surrogate' for the relational analyses.

My search inquiries were at times limited by the structure of the archives and the descriptive metadata assigned to each object. Digital attribution and identification are inherently unstable processes because, as Levi has argued, "archival description and metadata favour the "creator," that is, "the individual, group, or organization that is responsible for something's production."⁵⁰ Keyword searches yield few results if those that regulate the metadata and the metrics for discovery do not appreciate the historical relevance of politically charged topics like eugenics and social hygiene, and most institutional archives have yet to recognize the historically specific feeble-minded, idiot, imbecile, or moron subject. Therefore, working across multiple archival types and administrative locations while attending to the relationship between theory and praxis became another critical strategy for this project. Digital knowledge production is far from a neutral endeavor, and Risam believes that the "effects of compounding oppressions along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and language on the digital cultural record, particularly in relation to colonialism, are in need of dire attention."⁵¹ In her contribution to *Disability and Colonialism: (Dis)encounters and anxious intersectionalities*, Karen Soldatic criticized the lapse of concern for disability as an intersectional category of

⁵⁰ Levi 2019, 127-148

⁵¹ *ibid*

interest in postcolonial works, even as is demonstrated in her comments below, she is hopeful about the increase in disability studies scholarship that employs postcolonial theory:

While remaining critical of postcolonialism's general exclusion of disability, nascent disability scholarship within the area demonstrates postcolonialism's usefulness to explore the complex, nuanced and differing relationship between bodies, minds, borders, and frontiers ⁵²

Humanitarian and global development enterprises of today link to, and are constitutive of, colonialist histories, methods, and discourses and therefore secondary source texts that interpretate, represent, and make certain claims about their genealogies play an important role in whether their subjects are re-authorized or persistently re-erased. Therefore, the fifth and final archive that I have incorporated into my analyses consists of secondary source artifacts in text and digital form.

The archive is both an extraordinary site for exploration and a creative platform to construct an academic argument through digital curation, collection building, comparative analysis, and participatory engagement. Spaces of digital learning deliver what I believe are critical points of contact between records of the past and the present while providing rich and inviting spaces for cultural criticism from divergent perspectives and disciplines. Risam has argued that "reading the postcolonial through the digital, however discomforting, enables scholars to make productive and unlikely connections." ⁵³ The painstaking work involved in digital archive analyses, platform development, and digital knowledge production requires paying close attention to the historical, social, and institutional features embedded in artifacts, and in the archive itself. Paul Barrett makes the case that the recent turn in the digital

⁵² Soldatic 2016, 54-55

⁵³ Risam 2015

humanities towards methods of critical criticism in archive research is in alignment with critiques of colonial histories in knowledge production, and “other relations of domination and exploitation.”⁵⁴ Barret has drawn attention to the “continued salience of the nation as an organizing structure and category of analysis” and he firmly maintains that the nation “however ghostly or marginal a form,” is a rich site of engagement that is generally absent in digital humanities inquiry.⁵⁵ In my initial research plan, I naively believed that the thematic marking of each artifact, creation of topic archives, and the curation of artifacts for analysis would sufficiently prepare me for the writing and analyses phases of the project. What I found instead is that attending to historical accuracy, the rigors of postcolonial materiality, and the systems of cultural representation are particularly complex and time-consuming tasks. I ultimately curated five distinct archive sets that I worked with throughout the project. Analyzing the relational and historical features of these collections required careful and arduous shifting back and forth between each to maintain historical and institutional accuracy. What I have learned about the critical nature of postcolonial archive work is that it is most important to pay close attention to the material ways in which systemic racism and ableism are mutually constructed, which means being mindful of how each artifact frames intellectual and developmental difference in relation to disability, nation, race, gender, and sexual identity. Each chapter of the dissertation will tell a particular story about the discourses that have produced particular configurations of intellectuality and development that have made it possible and acceptable for JRC to torture the disabled students at its facility.

⁵⁴ Barrett 2014

⁵⁵ *ibid*

Chapter Two: *Producing the Feeble-minded Subject* introduces the production of the *idea* of the exemplary feeble-minded subject in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This chapter explores how discourses of the feeble-minded subject in the United States intertwined with racist and imperial ideologies that mythologized Africa as the ‘Dark Continent.’ This chapter will also engage with and explain the theorists, scholarship and research methods that are central to this study.

Chapter Three: *The Organized Charities and Corrections Movement in the United States: The Cultural Production of the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject (1873-1900)* documents the emergence of the formalized Charities and Corrections Movement in the United States in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Less than a decade after the Civil War ended, delegates from state and local boards of charities joined forces with business professionals and an array of specialists to build a new national charity organization movement in the United States that would come to embrace modern ideals in philosophy, science, business, and philanthropy. As the United States moved towards the new century, conference debates over how to execute universal standards on a national scale remained unsettled and discussions over what charity was, what it professed to do, and how to govern its disparate forms continued well into the 1900s. Chapter three will show that by the close of the nineteenth century charity had constructed an imaginary feeble-minded subject that served to create an illusion of commonality between all alleged forms of degeneracy, and the political urgency to safeguard ‘proper’ Americans from all that bore the ambiguous markings of feeble-mindedness began to reach its fevered pitch.

Chapter Four: *The Political Economies of Heredity: Characterizing the Feeble-minded Threat,*

explores the political economies that were a direct result of the financial panic of 1873 and the ensuing Long Depression (1873-1879). The financial panic generated a newfound urgency to categorize, classify, track, and identify aid applicants and there was an increased call for the development of a hierarchy of giving based upon so-called deserving and undeserving subjects. The national charities and corrections movement found itself front and center in the public debate over what constituted charity and the heritability of degenerate traits became of paramount concern in these discussions.

Chapter four also looks carefully at the racialized science of photography and the science of statistics to understand how medical practitioners and scientists at the end of the nineteenth century deployed these tools to categorize feeble-mindedness. Chapter four will demonstrate how the interplay between cultural values (socially constructed meanings, morals, and contexts) and economic value (the power of capitalism) impacted the historically specific construction of the exemplary feeble-minded subject. In the aftermath of extreme declines in the financial sectors, multiple railroads ceased railcar production and slowed railway development, industrial mills and furnaces shuttered, iron workers were laid off or reduced to half-time, and the extension of commercial and personal credit became non-existent. These conditions allowed for industrial giants like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller to monopolize on the failure of small-time manufacturing and accumulate vast wealth through their knowledge of emerging production technologies, aggressive business tactics, political prowess, and their willingness to exploit cheap labor. This capitalist system of accumulated wealth set the stage for the building of philanthropic empire at the turn of the twentieth century that is explored in chapter five.

Chapter Five: *Eugenic Philanthropy, Social Hygiene, & The Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject* This chapter provides a cultural map of the rise of the American philanthropic empire during the Progressive Era and digs into historical and contemporary archives to emphasize how, under the far-reaching auspices of ‘the improvement of and welfare of all mankind,’ the John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie philanthropies contributed to the frenetic cross-pollination of eugenic and social hygiene thought that overshadowed U.S. culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. This chapter traces the relational aspects of the eugenic and social hygiene movements with a focus on John D. Rockefeller Junior’s Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH) and the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Eugenics Records Office (ERO) as central sites for understanding how these movements anchored their discourses to notions of racial progress, American exceptionalism, and rhetorics of intellectuality to the exemplary feeble-minded subject.

Chapter Six: *The Relational Genealogies of Social Hygiene and Eugenics.* This final chapter considers the convergences between these two social reform movements. Eugenics and social hygiene were all-encompassing terms that gained authority during the reform movements of early twentieth century and achieved mainstream popularity through their recurrent appearance in newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, advertisements, and charity publications. This chapter will introduce the ways in which the discourses of eugenics and social hygiene have mutually informed the current day geopolitical environment surrounding intellectual and developmental difference in its many forms.

Conclusion: I originally intended that this work would take as its starting point cultural and historical artifacts produced at the onset of the Progressive Era in the United States and move

through the end of WWII to the Cold War Period. As my study progressed, it became apparent that I would need to shift my period and objects of interest to include policies established by the membership of the National Charities and Corrections movement of the late nineteenth century as they ultimately informed the great philanthropic endeavors of the early twentieth. This dissertation in its final form has addressed a very specific period that begins in the late 1800s and concludes around 1930. This final chapter will make the case for future research in these areas and provide a brief update on the current state of eugenic thought in the United States and international settings.

Chapter Two: Producing the Feeble-minded Subject

The term feeble-minded is now used to cover all grades of idiocy and imbecility, from the child that is simply dull and incapable of profiting by the ordinary school, to the gelatinous mass that simply eats and lives.

Amos G. Warner "American Charities" 1894

THE PINEY FAMILY THE "DARKEST CONTINENT" IN OUR OWN UNITED STATES, TOLD BY MISS O'REILLY



Figure 1. South Bend News, September 2, 1913. Page 10
THE "DARKEST CONTINENT" IN OUR OWN UNITED STATES, TOLD BY MISS O'REILLY.

Did You Know That, Within an Hour of the New World's Biggest City, Divorces Sell for a Quarter; That Men Swap Wives, with a Pint of Rum to Boot; That Stepbrothers Marry Stepsisters; That Nine-tenths of Grown People Are But Little Children; Than in a Clan of 200 Only 13 Are Normal?

Trenton, N.J., Sept. 2 — "Why do the good, civilized folk of America ignore a countryside peopled with adults who are mentally children, strong self-willed men and women of native stock who are without reason judgment or self-control? Miss Elizabeth Kite, state agent for the New Jersey school for the feeble-minded, put the question with a finality that accused "You doubt the possibility? Then come with me to the Pines. You will find the district a plague spot of moral contagion—a feeder for our jails, almshouses and hospitals." Next morning found us motoring through a lonely tract of 2,000 square miles between the barren coast of New Jersey and the fertile Delaware valley. The area of scrub, cranberry bogs and salt marsh is peopled with families of degenerates." ⁵⁶

⁵⁶ O'Reilly 1913

Un-American Families:

There is nothing extraordinary about the image of the ‘typical Piney Family’ that appeared in local and national newspapers in the United States in 1913 (*figure 1*). On the day that the Newspaper Enterprise Association foreign correspondent Mary Boyle O’Reilly, and her companion social worker Elizabeth Kite, visited the Pines region, an unnamed white family stood for the photograph in front of a rural New Jersey landscape. The adult male in the picture held a toddler on his hip while an adolescent girl stood alongside two young children with a fourth cradled in her arms. Some of the family members smiled while others expressed a bored indifference that is familiar in many family portraits. The man offered a slight grin, was well-groomed, and appeared generally agreeable in the moment the photographer captured his image. The father’s workman cap, the ill fitted (although tidy) clothing the children wore, and the bare feet of the toddler are denotational features that could have signified to American readers that the family was economically poor.

The editorial decision to allocate nearly half of the article to the ‘typical Piney Family’ portrait is an indication that the newspaper felt confident the picture and caption would draw readers into the story that followed. There was no visual trace of feeble-mindedness in the image or indication of how Mary Boyle O’Reilly might have defined the term, and neither its contents or framing showed evidence of O’Reilly’s claim that the adult in the portrait was “without reason, judgement or self-control.”⁵⁷ The family portrait offered no hint of the ‘moral contagion’, or the all-encompassing ‘degeneracy’ O’Reilly vividly described in her opening lines. The question then becomes then, if as I have argued there is nothing in the image that is

⁵⁷ O’Reilly, 1913

especially revealing about the intellectual prowess of the anonymous ‘Piney’ family, how was O’Reilly able to paint such a vivid tale of degeneracy in the minds of her readers? Stuart Hall explained that while there are multiple ways to interpret any given cultural representation, “the caption... selects one out of the many possible meanings” and guides the consumer towards the creator/producer’s preferred meaning. Those that generate an image caption or title maintain the power and authority to anchor their own version and interpretation of the events to it.⁵⁸ In addition to her role as a foreign correspondent for *The Newspaper Enterprise Association*, O’Reilly was one of the founders of the *Boston’s Guild of St. Elizabeth Charity Settlement House*, and in her descriptor for the ‘typical Piney family,’ she authorized how readers would interpret the Piney family in a way that fixed a particularly demeaning message about the region into the readers imagination:

A TYPICAL PINEY FAMILY. THE FATHER CANNOT READ OR WRITE. THE CHILDREN ARE ALL FEEBLE-MINDED. THE MOTHER HAD GONE TO TOWN TO BEG WHEN THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS MADE.⁵⁹

When read in conjunction with the image, the caption imposed a particularly pessimistic view of feeble-mindedness-tantamount to degeneracy onto the entirety of the Pines New Jersey region, and this way of representing the Piney men, women, and children ultimately constructed an extreme ‘otherness’ that, according to O’Reilly, would spread a “contagion of evil about unnumbered New Jersey towns.”⁶⁰ The subtitle, “*Nine-tenths of Grown People Are But Little Children; That in a Clan of 200 Only 13 Are Normal*” underneath the bolded title “*The “Darkest Continent” in Our Own United States,*” drove home the Piney regions intellectual ‘Otherness’

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

and positioned its residents in a unending and uncivilized state of abnormacy, degeneracy and backwards development. O'Reilly's implication was clear, the absence of the begging mother, the father's illiteracy and the so-called feeble-minded children were the precise reason that the region of Pine New Jersey was the 'Darkest Continent' in the United States. The narrative that followed weaved a vivid tale of a never-ending lineage of degeneracy in the rural New Jersey town where, according to O'Reilly, "imbecile Betsie married defective Zacher and became the mother of nine feeble-minded children, 12 feeble-minded grandchildren, 22 feeble-minded great-grandchildren... and two normal individuals out of 105 descendants."⁶¹

What did all of this mean to O'Reilly's readership? What exactly is at work in O'Reilly's representation of the Piney family, what were the "good, civilized folk" to do about the "countryside peopled with adults who are mentally children,"⁶² and what was O'Reilly's stake in the matter? The pages of this dissertation will work to answer these questions by pinpointing how common culturally constructed myths about feeble-mindedness, imbeciles, idiots, and degeneracy at the turn of the twentieth century made it possible for O'Reilly—absent context and description—to readily link Piney Ridge to discourses of 'the dark continent of Africa'.

Whiteness, Racial Exploitation, and the 'Civilizing' Discourse of The Dark Continent:

By the time O'Reilly's article published in 1913, European travelers, imperial colonizers, and missionary and medical practitioners from the United States and England had collectively popularized the notion that the entirety of Africa, and all African people, were primitive, savage, intellectually backwards, and ripe for colonial, material, and religious conquest. Historian Patrick

⁶¹ O'Reilly 1913

⁶² *ibid*

Brantlinger found in his study of the origins of the dark continent mythology that “the legacy of the myth of the Dark Continent and, more generally, of imperialism has been massive and impossible to evade,”⁶³ and cultural analyst Michael Pickering has argued, “Africa became known about almost entirely through Western cultural myths.”⁶⁴ It is well known that nineteenth century explorer Henry M. Stanley was an early and widely trusted producer of racialized tales of Africa, and his personal expedition journals, maps, logs, and diagrams reached legendary status after the 1878 publication of his famous text *Through the Dark Continent*. In his chapter *My Primitive Brothers and Sisters*, the famous explorer described his reaction to the South African region of Uhombo, and he shared his visceral and dehumanizing response to the ‘uncivilized’ physical features of the village women:

As I looked at the array of faces, I could only comment to myself—ugly—uglier—ugliest. As I looked at their nude and filthy bodies, and the enormous dugs which hung down the bosoms of the women, and the general indecency of their nakedness, I ejaculate “Fearful! As the sum total of what I might with propriety say, and what indeed is sufficiently descriptive.”⁶⁵

O’Reilly’s 1913 article went to similar lengths to highlight the Piney women’s physical aptitude while deriding their mental and moral capacities:

Among these shacks forgather typical Piney women, perfectly healthy but startlingly repellent low-browed, barefooted women with hoarse voices, rotting teeth, tousled hair and tattered clothing, women lazy, childish, unique in manner and morals... nine in ten are so feeble in mind that they live disorderly lives.⁶⁶

Stuart Hall defined cultural discourse as a “a group of statements which provides a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular

⁶³ Brantlinger 1985, 166-203

⁶⁴ Pickering 2001, 149

⁶⁵ Stanley 1878, 86

⁶⁶ O’Reilly 1913

historical moment.”⁶⁷ Hall further conceptualized discourses as open systems that “go on unfolding, changing shape, as they make sense of new circumstances, they often carry many of the same unconscious premises and unexamined assumptions in their blood-stream.”⁶⁸ In other words, discursive strategies that are effective in one discourse, such as Stanley’s racialized representation of the ‘uncivilized dark continent’, are often deployed in discourses that form in different historical moments like that of O’Reilly’s 1913 ‘typical low-browed’ Piney family. Did readers recognize the imperialist discourse of the dark continent in O’Reilly’s characterization of Piney?

Scholars have firmly established that the myth of the dark continent is an explicitly racialized colonial discourse that “graphically depicted the two extremes of humanity... the black as the racially- low Other and the [white, my insertion] silken baron of civilization.”⁶⁹ Pickering, Hall, Grech, Gates, Bhabha and others have traced the trajectories of racist colonial stereotypes from the discourses of the “great white explorer adventurers,” and the “writers of imperial adventure tales,”⁷⁰ to the “happy go lucky sambo figure,”⁷¹ and “terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy ... in colonial texts.”⁷² In his exploration of the genealogies of ‘the primitive’ in civilizing discourses, Pickering theorized that “the notion of primitiveness... is very much a byproduct of modernity and modern imperialism, or rather of the intersections between them... Western societies classifying themselves as modern and civilized relied heavily on the contrast between their own sense of advancement and the idea of racially

⁶⁷ Hall 2013, 29

⁶⁸ Hall 1992, 314

⁶⁹ Pickering 2001, 60-61

⁷⁰ Hall, 2013, 229

⁷¹ Pickering, 127-128

⁷² Bhabha, 1994, 104

backward and inferior societies.”⁷³ The primitive stereotype is a key component running throughout racist and ableist discourses that are fixated on ideologies of race purity, intellectual prowess, and national dominance.

Sean Grech is director of the *Critical Institute and Global Disability Watch*, and in his work, he applies an interdisciplinary approach to disability that interrogates coloniality, poverty, global development, and transnational intersectionality. Grech situates racism and racial exploitation as central to the colonial encounter and his scholarship demonstrates the material ways that these ideologies are at play in neoliberal global development agendas. Grech reminds us that power and representation link to the *historical* processes of othering where, as Grech points out, “one (civilized) needs the other (uncivilized) for its own existence.”⁷⁴ We see these processes at work in O’Reilly’s application of the binary of the civilized America/uncivilized dark continent in her description of Piney. However, since O’Reilly’s narrative was complicated by the whiteness and geographic location of her subjects, she needed to conjure a way of representing their ‘otherness’ without simultaneously degrading the intellectuality of America’s ‘more acceptable’ citizens. While there are remarkable similarities between O’Reilly’s representation of the ‘savage’ “barefooted women with hoarse voices, rotting teeth, tousled hair and tattered clothing,” and Stanley’s uncivilized “ugly—uglier—ugliest... nude and filthy bodies,” in the segment below, we see O’Reilly attempt to construct a new subject status that sets the white ‘uncivilized’ Piney folk apart from the white “good, civilized folk” of New Jersey:

The present-day inhabitants are entirely native stock two of the Piney families go back to Quaker days and boast William Penn’s name on still typical imbeciles’ ‘husband’ [sic] and [original unreadable] direct descendants of the first governor of New Jersey.⁷⁵

⁷³ Pickering, 2001, 5

⁷⁴ S. Grech 2012, 52-69

⁷⁵ O’Reilly 1913

Although O'Reilly focused on the Piney's intellectual and productive qualities and the "barren" U.S. landscape they occupied, she called up the 'colonial primitive savage' to delegitimize Piney's 'native' stock.⁷⁶ New Jersey is geographically located in the west and Piney's inhabitants were white—but not quite properly white—and therefore O'Reilly and progressive reformers needed a new configuration that would expand the African savage stereotype beyond its commonly understood, geographically distant, and racist "black as the racially low Other" genealogies.⁷⁷ To accomplish this, O'Reilly employed the ambiguous although easily recognized feeble-minded subject to segregate the 'degenerate' white Piney residents from the ideology of the pure white American race. In characterizing Piney as intellectually and morally backwards, O'Reilly employed a discursive tactic to *specifically* link discourses of intellectual degradation to the equally recognizable and racialized 'uncivilized/savage Africa' storyline. In this context, O'Reilly travelled the geographical and racial distance between 'uncivilized' black Africa and the 'childishly immoral' and 'disorderly' white Piney residents by conjuring an 'exemplary feeble-minded subject,' that ultimately became the decivilizing device in her tale of white purity and American intellectual superiority. Additionally, the imaginary feeble-minded subject allowed O'Reilly to ignore the individual experiences and the material needs of the actual people that lived in the Piney region.

Exemplary Refugees and the theory of the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject:

Anthropologist Liisa Malkki introduced the notion of the 'exemplary refugee' In her field study, *Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization*. Malkki was

⁷⁶ Native was used to describe white western European descendants as true "Americans"

⁷⁷ Hall 2013, 228

interested in the relationship between Hutu refugees from Burundi living in Tanzania, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service (TCRS).⁷⁸ During her 1985-86 field research in the Mishamo Refugee Settlement, Malkki observed the ways in which UNHCR and TCRS agents reinforced “certain key features in the constitution of the archetypal refugee” to justify the need for the organization’s particular (western) form of professional humanitarian intervention.⁷⁹ Malkki made note that the UNHCR and TCRS workers had resisted her attempts to foreground the narratives of the Hutu refugees and the “political and moral history of displacement that most Hutu in Mishamo themselves insisted on constructing.”⁸⁰ Aid workers believed that after living in the Mishamo camp for many years, the Hutu’s had become “ungrateful recipients of aid” that no longer appeared or “performed” like exemplary victims or ideal refugees in need of their humanitarian assistance. It was the Hutu’s lack of corporal wounds and their material wellbeing—not the telling of their own history—that the TCRS and UNHCR administrators relied upon to determine whether the Hutu’s fit the “key constitution of the archetypal refugee,” or whether they met the humanitarian standard for what constituted an exemplary victim.⁸¹ The UNHCR and TCRS refusal to embrace the refugee experience followed a well-established pattern in international humanitarianism and development discourses that depoliticize refugees (and aid recipients in general) by ‘leaching out’ their cultural and political histories and by replacing their experiential narrative with universally written notions of ‘refugee-ness.’⁸² The humanitarian workers

⁷⁸ Malkki enters into a complex discussion regarding the tens and thousands of refugees that fled political violence in 1972 in which she contrasts the historical status of what she terms “camp refugees and town refugees.” To understand the political and social intricacies of her argument, see *Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization*.

⁷⁹ Malkki 1996, 385

⁸⁰ *ibid*

⁸¹ Malkki 1996

⁸² Malkki 1996, 388

envisioned the exemplary refugees as perpetual victims crowded into dilapidated spaces that are further framed as a collective “spectacle of “raw,” bare humanity “—dead, wounded, starving, diseased, and homeless.”⁸³ It is Malkki’s argument that humanitarian, charity, and development agencies have labored alongside governments and the media to conjure a northern centric representation of what a refugee is supposed to be, one that bears little or no connection to the actual people they claim to represent:

For the refugee... wounds speak louder than words. Wounds are accepted as objective evidence, as more reliable sources of knowledge than the words of the people on whose bodies those wounds are found. So the ideal construct, the “real refugee,” was imagined as a particular kind of person: a victim whose judgement and reason had been compromised by his or her experiences. This was a tragic and sometimes repulsive, figure who could be deciphered and healed only by professionals, and who was opaque even (or perhaps especially) to himself or herself.⁸⁴

For the 1916 residents of Pines New Jersey, stereotypes of low-intellect, degeneracy, crime, and immorality spoke louder than the circumstances of their own lives, and while the Piney residents were white and geographically located in the United States, they did not rise to the standards of intellectuality and development that were being written by America’s cultural and political institutions. Simply put, they were not ‘real’ *Americans* but rather they constituted the ‘ideal’ un-civilized and exemplary un-American archetype.

What unfolds in O’Reilly’s description is a budding classification much like the ideal refugee described by Malkki, an exemplary feeble-minded subject that O’Reilly readily leveraged to undermine the Piney regions un-American moral and intellectual qualities (uncivilized), without delegitimizing the whiteness (civilized) of the idealized American citizen. This is where

⁸³ *ibid*

⁸⁴ Malkki 1996, 388

we see the critical role that the exemplary, and imaginary, feeble-minded subject performs at the intersections of race, disability, ethnicity, gender, and religion. Returning to Malkki's argument that the ideal refugee was "an object of concern and knowledge for the 'international community,'" in the segment of her work that follows, Malkki argues that the notion of an exemplary and imaginary humanitarian subject is translatable across historical contexts, geographic regions, and objects of humanitarian and global interest:

The issue is that the established practice of humanitarian representation and intervention are not timeless, unchangeable, or in any way absolute. On the contrary, these practices are embedded in long and complicated histories of their own — histories of charity and philanthropy, histories of international law, peacekeeping, and diplomacy, histories of banishment and legal protections, histories of empires and colonial rule, histories of civilization and emancipatory discourses and missionary work, histories of World Bank and other development initiatives in Africa, and much more.⁸⁵

Throughout these pages, I will illustrate that much like the multiple and competing institutional discourses that came to represent the universal refugee described by Malkki, the exemplary feeble-minded subject is historically an equally malleable, necessary, and transferable object of concern, a universal stereotype of degeneracy that remains at the ready to stand in as the uncivilized other in support of racist and ableist discourses.

Theoretical Interventions and the Colonial Archive

Locating the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject as a Political Project

*"If you work on culture, or if you've tried to work on some other really important things and you find yourself driven back to culture, if culture happens to be what seizes hold of your soul, you have to recognize that you will always be working in an area of displacement."*⁸⁶ Stuart Hall 2007

⁸⁵ Malkki 1996, 389

⁸⁶ Hall, 2007, 41

Cultural Locations:

I am a white woman of privilege and a citizen of the United States, and I have benefited from my position in an academic system that has historically ignored the wide-spread abuse, neglect, and marginalization of those categorized as intellectually and developmentally disabled. I have not publicly identified as disabled, and for a short time I was employed by the developmental and intellectual disabilities service sector. I have a deep personal connection to developmental disability, and the personal experiences that brought me to appreciate autistic family life also made possible my engagement with developmental and intellectual disability communities in professional settings. I collaborated with what I assume were well-intentioned practitioners in nonprofit and private sectors where it was our goal to create welcoming and inclusive programs, family education services, and socially and environmentally accessible events. During my tenure in the service sector, I overheard practitioners call up demeaning terms such as 'autistic freak', I sat on the governing board of an county inclusion committee that openly and intentionally excluded individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities from service conversations, I heard testimony in defense of abusive practices across in a wide range of developmental and intellectual disability service settings, and I witnessed state legislators argue against providing essential services to developmentally and intellectual disabled citizens. I grew intensely frustrated throughout these interactions with what I viewed as deep-seated ableist practices of stereotyping and exclusion, and after taking leave of the private and nonprofit sector, I embarked on the ten-year journey that has culminated in this work. Through intense engagement with academic theories and practices, and deep research into the archives of the past that point to contemporary practice, I offer this this dissertation as

a political and intellectual intervention that seeks to explain the material ways in which the cultural discourses of the past have influenced current day practices. This project follows Stuart Hall's guiding recommendations for cultural projects that explicitly focus on representation as both a concept and a material practice:

Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fear and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple common-sense way. This is why we need theories—to deepen our analysis.⁸⁷

Hall is pointing to some of the material and ethical considerations that inevitably surface during the design phase of any critical cultural analysis. Representation is a complex and consequential business and the very act of looking at—and pointing to—cultural artifacts that explicitly dehumanize certain groups and regions can place the researcher at risk of reinforcing the very essentialisms they intend to question. I remain acutely aware of these potential pitfalls and recognize there is a real concern that bringing attention to the institutionalized objectification of 'the exemplary feeble-minded subject' will further embolden the marginalization of people with developmental disabilities, or re-essentialize the people, cultures and geographies that are central to this study. While working with and analyzing the cultural and historical artifacts, I have made every effort to avert the 'gawkers gaze' by incorporating the following methodological interventions into my study design:

- a. I take great care to identify my object of analysis as the *discursive processes* that construct categories of difference rather than simply focusing on the dehumanizing features that are present in the images and texts studied.
- b. I follow Kolářová and Wiedlack's proposals for disability centered research and I foreground disability "as a critical vantage point from which to question the effects of development policies and practices" while I stress "disability as

⁸⁷ Hall, 2013, 216

‘interarticulated’ with other categories that hierarchically organise notions of human worth.”⁸⁸

- c. Finally, to analyze these articulating strategies of representation, I applied “digital source and resource criticism,” the “archival principal of provenance”⁸⁹ and theories in critical postcolonial digital historiography to make sense of the material and genealogical features of the cultural artifacts.

Cultural Studies

Discourse and Representation

Cultural Studies theorist Stuart Hall was profoundly interested in deconstructing the systems of representation—the language, signals, signs, images, expressions, gestures, and broader cultural practices—that make ideologies meaningful within a discourse. The intellectual work of cultural discourse analysis is to locate and question how mechanisms within a representational system “are deployed in particular times in particular places” to define what is knowable, “relevant, useful and true” about a topic.⁹⁰ Throughout these pages, I draw heavily from cultural discourse theory to explore how *stereotyping* and *othering* have historically operated to naturalize and ‘make sense’ of the mythologies that surround the savage, intellectually inferior, and uncivilized feeble-minded subject, and to illustrate how this discourse was imposed onto multiple marginalized groups and regions. Pickering theorized that stereotyping and ‘Othering’ are “mutually complimenting” devices that work as tools of “symbolic expulsion” to eliminate those that fall outside of what constitutes as “normal safe and acceptable ways of being”.⁹¹ I follow Pickering’s call for an “analytical conjunction” of these two critical concepts whereas “stereotypes are one-sided characterizations of others, and as a

⁸⁸ Kolářová and Wiedlack 2016, 125-126

⁸⁹ Hering 2014

⁹⁰ Hall, 2013, 29-33

⁹¹ Pickering, 2001, 47-50

general process, stereotyping is a unilinear mode of representing them.”⁹² Stereotyping *as a cultural process* operates to mark, ‘fix,’ and ‘Other’ difference through the accumulation of “sharply opposed, polarized binary extremes—good/bad, civilized/primitive—” and these extremes are highly ambiguous mechanisms that are both historically dependent and inherently vulnerable to ideological distortions.⁹³ Homi K. Bhabha conceptualized the “analytic of ambivalence” as a way to think through how, as a feature of colonial discourse, the ambiguity of the stereotype “gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it.”⁹⁴ The ambivalence of the stereotype is made meaningful, in part, through the “continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes” that uphold power over difference. Early twentieth century reformers radically condensed the category of feeble-mindedness to a singularity that bore little resemblance to those that had once fallen under its classification. Progressive reformers supported white race purity politics by commingling colonialist tropes of the ‘savage’ inhabitants of the dark continent and stereotypes of the uncivilized, intellectually backwards, and degenerate feeble-minded class in the United States. Bhabha and Hall called for a critical reading of colonial discourse that takes into consideration the inter-textuality and the “politicized means of representation” that aim to maintain power within the discourse:

To understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject representations to a normalizing judgement. Only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse—that ‘otherness’ which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity.⁹⁵

⁹² Pickering 2001, 47

⁹³ Hall 2013, 219

⁹⁴ Bhabha 1994, 110

⁹⁵ Ibid., 97

Bhabha further explained that in practice, the “analytic of ambivalence” involves tracing the “apparatuses of power” that sustain its stereotypical meanings:

My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image (or text, my insertion) on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it.⁹⁶

If we merely point to the racist, ableist, or misogynistic attributes of a representational form, without taking additional steps to look for the institutional and cultural systems that have in some way benefited from its construction, we risk reinscribing the ideologies we intend to critique.⁹⁷ Pickering warns that lack of critical engagement with the systemic racist (and *ableist*, my insertion) issues that are embedded in a cultural object, and any unwillingness to explore our own relationship to those issues, can potentially “provide an alibi for our own freedom from contamination.”⁹⁸ I believe what Pickering is getting at is the issue of culpability and remoteness between a researcher and the representational processes they investigate. This way of analyzing discursive productions can produce judgements similar to those discussed in the preface of this work—such as the ‘fucking idiot’ discourse or the *School of Shock’s* fragmented retelling of the tortures imposed on residents at the Judge Rotenberg Center. A recent example of this distancing in action played out early in 2017, when news reporters and individuals on social media sites criticized then President Donald Trump for mocking a disabled reporters physical features, gestures, and communication style.⁹⁹ Trumps impersonation of the reporter

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ Pickering 2001

⁹⁸ Pickering 2001, 27

⁹⁹ Images and videos of this event went viral on social media, I do not dignify the unfolding discourse by offering links or providing a description of Trumps actual acts here.

rapidly went viral and memes of the president's mocking motions, in juxtaposition with images of the reporter he taunted, were posted and reposted across news and social media sites, along with an onslaught of textual shaming of the president. Even though critics rightly pointed out that the president's actions dehumanized the reporter, their repeated use and reuse of the image capturing Trump's actions only served to reify the common trope of disability as something to be pitied. Those that shamed the president to score political points absent any reflection of disability experience were exploiting the very act that they claimed had earned their outrage. Furthermore, the critical question that this researcher posed in response to many of the critics was to ask whether they were supportive of disability issues or disabled experiences in contexts outside of their eagerness to critique the president. Without exception, this question sparked outrage, accusations about my political agenda, and an unwillingness to engage in broader topics related to disability justice.

I work to avoid analytical distancing between myself and the artifact's aesthetic and material features by confronting the 'regimes of representation' that made its discourse meaningful across broad cultural, geographic, and political contexts. I additionally bear in mind the implicit ways that my own experience and assumptions are entangled in histories of racism, sexism, classism, and ableism. Cultural geographer Don Mitchell has argued that "no decent cultural analysis (geographic or otherwise) can draw on culture *itself* as a source of explanation; rather culture is always something to be *explained* as it is socially produced through myriad struggles over and in spaces, scales, and landscapes."¹⁰⁰ Mitchell's relational approach here is a guiding force throughout this work, and in the following passage, he draws on cultural theorist

¹⁰⁰ D. Mitchell 2008, xvi

Fred Inglis to clarify what culture is and to pinpoint precisely why culture matters in social, historical, and political contexts:

For cultural theorist Fred Inglis (1993: 38), culture “simply *is* the system of humanly expressive practices by which values are renewed, created, and contested.” And in turn, “value” is “the name given to those fierce little concentrations of meaning in an action or state of affairs which fix them as good or important” (1993:11). The “relatively simple starting point” is therefore one of locating, naming, and describing the *conditions* under which “fierce little concentrations of meaning” are fixed as “good and important”; and that starting point must always be followed by the obvious question” “Good and important *for whom*.¹⁰¹

I am specifically interested in Mitchell’s central focus on the relationship between economic *value*, cultural *values*, and the cultural conditions that fix meanings as good or important.

Whether questioning essentialized notions about the exemplary feeble-minded subject and navigating how they have resonated in geopolitical contexts, or facing my own complicity in their ongoing popularity, the relative (and I would argue *not* so simple) starting point is to locate the actual conditions (historical, economic, political, social, cultural) that made way for and continue to encourage their reproduction. Mitchell offers a distinct set of questions that remain in the forefront of this project:

First, just what is the relationship between “physical representations”—the solidity of things—and “aesthetic representation?” Second, how are these “representations produced? What are the conditions under which they are made? And third, how do social values (and economic value) attach to these “representations”? If all we have are representations... then it is important to understand how these signifiers are produced, how they circulate, and how they are consumed.¹⁰²

As I work through each artifact that appears in this study, I dig into the material value (economic) and cultural values (discursive) that are intrinsic to each. This calls for a persistent shifting back and forth between interrogating the artifacts representational features (what it

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 71

¹⁰² D. Mitchell 2008, 68

says, how it constructs meaning, how those meanings get interpreted and why), and its materiality, which transnational feminist disability studies scholar Nirmala Erevelles has defined as “the actual historical, social, and economic conditions that influence (disabled) people’s lives, conditions further mediated by race, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual politics.”¹⁰³ Doing justice to the material and the discursive calls for a very specific lens of interdisciplinarity, one that maintains an alertness to the relationships *between* the textual, the material, the historical, and the subjects produced within a given discourse.

Transnational Perspectives:

Integrating the Textual and The Material

Disability activists, academics, and allies constructed the American social model of disability in the early 1980s to redefine disability identity and counter the dominant medical interpretation of disability as a deficit. The social model of disability seeks to distinguish impairment from disability, frame disability as a culturally and historically specific concept, define disability as relationally constituted through disabling environments and social oppression, and cultivate a disability rights movement centered on civil rights rather than charity and pity discourses.¹⁰⁴ Transnational disability studies scholars argue that at times the social model focus on representation and discourse shows limited concern for the ways in which colonial practices have impacted the material and the embodied features of disability.

Transnational feminist disability studies scholar Nirmala Erevelles has expressed deep concern over the lack of intersectional work in cultural and feminist scholarship that has “effectively critiqued the category of woman upheld by mainstream feminism,” but ignored engaging with

¹⁰³ Erevelles 2011, 119

¹⁰⁴ Shakespeare, 2013

“difference along the axes of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality.”¹⁰⁵ This absence of intersectional work is particularly troublesome because it devalues and ignores those individuals that, according to Erevelles, are “located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, *and* disability.”¹⁰⁶ Erevelles reasoned that disability scholarship in the United States “has leaned so heavily toward cultural/literary studies and the arts (which is brilliant and very necessary work) that it has often failed to interrogate other aspects of disability that are also critical to the field.”¹⁰⁷ While the deconstruction of ableist stereotypes present in cultural representations can be a productive exercise, Erevelles points out that “it does very little to explain how—quite literally—to survive in an ableist world.”¹⁰⁸ Erevelles believes that if critical disability and representational studies intend to expose these types of historical and political violences, these disciplines must first “shift the tenor of the discussion from description to explanation.”¹⁰⁹ While Erevelles does find value in textual methods that “critique the abstract and yet very material concept of normativity,” she has also expressed unease with methods that “think about disability merely as a trope of difference.”¹¹⁰

What Erevelles is suggesting here is that analyses that center on the mediated and textual representations of disability (by strictly focusing on the deconstruction of pejorative signifiers and stereotypes) often give little thought to the actual embodied experience of disability and impairment, or the political, historical, and social structures that continue to oppress disabled lives. Erevelles’ critique of textual analyses reinforces Bhabha and Pickering’s

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ Erevelles and Kafer 2010, 129

¹⁰⁷ Erevelles, 2011, 23-25

¹⁰⁸ Erevelles and Kafer, 2010, 207

¹⁰⁹ Erevelles 2011, 25

¹¹⁰ Erevelles and Kafer, 2010, 204-205

theorization of the ambiguity of the stereotype by emphasizing the need to move beyond simply pointing to dehumanizing features in any given representation. In this work, I specifically explore charity and philanthropy as a formalized and influential ‘society’ that has played a large part in the construction and reinforcement of negative stereotypes that at times endanger the populations they serve. Stuart Hall and the field of cultural studies also wrested with the tension between the textual and the material—what Hall theorized as the relationships between the “constitutive and political nature of representation.”¹¹¹ In his critical 1996 essay *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*, Hall was deeply introspective about what he called “a decisive turn” in his own theoretical work and what he identified as the “deadly seriousness” of intellectual work and critical reflection in cultural studies praxis.¹¹² *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies* was an intentional response to questions (much like those posed by Erevelles and postcolonial disability studies scholars today) that were generated from both within and outside of cultural studies regarding the field’s legitimacy as an academic discipline. Hall argued for, struggled over, wrestled with, and theorized about the efficacy of cultural studies, about “textuality as a source of meaning,” and “the point of the study of representation.”¹¹³ In the passage below, Hall speaks to the significance of the textual and he addresses the historical linkages between how power constructs difference, and the material ways those representational forms are felt:

There’s always something decentered about the medium of culture, about language, textuality, and signification, which always escapes and evades the attempt to link it, directly and immediately, with other structures. Yet, at the same time, the shadow, the imprint, the trace of those other formations, of the intertextuality of texts as sources of

¹¹¹ Hall, 2007, 41

¹¹² Hall 2007, 36-39

¹¹³ *ibid*

power, of textuality as a site of representation and resistance, all of those questions can never be erased from cultural studies.¹¹⁴

This project is concerned with building a genealogical archive of the discourses that conjured the exemplary feeble-minded subject, while it remains sensitive to how the ‘shadows and imprints’ of feeble-minded rhetorics are felt in very real, material, and current day contexts. In his interrogation of the relationship between disability histories, colonialism, and the neoliberal agenda, Grech draws heavily on the interdisciplinary notion that “discourse, power and knowledge are intertwined, interdependent, and inseparable... exposing the relation between power, meaning and practices.”¹¹⁵ For Grech, exploring how generalized meanings about disability operate within a discursive system is an essential step in understanding how certain structures of power maintain control over disabled lives and bodies. Grech’s ongoing interrogation of the ways in which colonial and neoliberal “foundations and practices” have produced “unequal trade policies, environmental degradation, widespread community displacement, extreme global poverty, war, racial and ethnic nationalism, and gender oppression” are essential sites for contextualizing the materiality that Erevelles calls for.¹¹⁶

Pickering broadly defined cultural representations as those “words and images which stand in for various social groups and categories... ways of describing and at the same time of regarding and thinking about these groups and categories.”¹¹⁷ Images, texts, movies, social media posts, commercials and all forms of mediated and textual representation (and, Hall was explicit that representation includes all forms of communication such as gestures, sounds,

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Grech, 2012, 87-90

¹¹⁶ Grech 2012, 86-88

¹¹⁷ Pickering, 2001, xiii

pictures, symbols, and other ways of expressing meaning), are all in some manner *consumed* by a multiplicity of identities and embodied forms. Antonio Gramsci's conceptualization of cultural hegemony helps us to destabilize and complicate the location of power in any given cultural representation. Gramsci theorized that the forces of hegemony "alter their content as social and cultural conditions change: they are improvised and negotiable, so that counter-hegemonic strategies must also be constantly revised."¹¹⁸ Prevailing hegemonic structures do not coerce or force people to submit to dominant value systems, but rather those existing systems actively engage the spaces of culture to persuade society to consent and accept the status quo as a natural 'common sense' state of affairs. The eugenics movement of the Progressive Era is one important focus in this work, and Mitchell and Snyder have situated eugenic thought as the "quintessential example of hegemony," whereas "the intersection of contingent social forces that coalesce, for a time, in a unified movement of collective objectives... of exclusionary practices based on scientific formations of deviancy."¹¹⁹ I underscore the importance of Gramsci and Mitchell and Snyder's conceptualization of hegemony here because I believe the theory responds to Erevelles' critique of discourse and representation. If we consider Gramsci, Foucault, and Hall's approach to power, that is to say that power circulates and is embedded in all social, political, familial, and cultural structures, and Mitchell and Snyder's construct of eugenics as a hegemonic formation, it can then be argued that deconstructing *how* systems write, interpret, stereotype, and explain—how they represent—disability is one key step in *changing* those very systems that perpetuate negative myths and stereotypes.

¹¹⁸ During 1993, 5

¹¹⁹ Mitchell and Snyder, 2015, 82-83

In the introduction to *"Cultures of Representation Disability in World Cinema Contexts,"* Benjamin Fraser highlighted disability politics in global media spaces and he emphasized the need to explore and "respond to struggles that appear, morph, and reappear in specific places and at specific times—always with human consequences."¹²⁰ This is the point of representational analysis and the intervention that cultural studies can offer to critical, transnational, and postcolonial disability studies scholarship. Surviving in an ableist world means access to healthcare, fair and appropriate education, safe and affordable housing, equal employment, freedom from war, abuse, and neglect, and a host of additional consequences that, while governed by bureaucracies and structural systems, demand some level of social and cultural consent. In Hall's final thoughts from "Theoretical Legacies," he gave a direct response to questions of life, death, and representational practice, and he explained that in his view, cultural studies, "holds the theoretical and political questions in an irresolvable tension... I have been reminded of this tension very forcefully in the discussion on AIDS."¹²¹ Hall underscored the seriousness of the question of representation by asking, "What in God's name is the point of cultural studies? What is the point of the study of representation if there is no response to the question of what you say to someone who wants to know if they should take a drug and if that means they'll die two days later or a few months earlier?"¹²²

The pages of this dissertation will offer new insights and present different ways of looking at how the discourses of the exemplary feeble-minded subject relate in real-world contexts, and why we should care about the historical formation and the subsequent cultural

¹²⁰ Fraser 2016, 1-3

¹²¹ Hall, 2007, 44

¹²² Ibid

erasure of those labelled idiot, imbecile, moron and feeble-minded in the first place. This study brings to the surface the patterns and representational forces that run through O'Reilly's version of Piney, the current day naming of a political leader a fucking idiot, and the electric shocks administered at the Judge Rotenberg Center. In his final reflection, Hall specifically addressed this question of "textuality as a site of life and death" when he asked the critical question, "how can we say that the question of AIDS is also not a question of who gets represented and who does not?"¹²³ We have the benefit of hindsight to understand the legacy of the 1980s HIV/AIDS movement, its influence on the media, and the profound representational shifts the movement instigated in the news media, film, television, educational settings, and in the public arena. These representational 'slippages' had a profound impact on the outcomes of many HIV positive individuals. The questions in the context of this study then become, how does the discourse of the imaginary feeble-minded subject influence the treatment of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities today, how does the focus on intellectuality and 'development' influence geopolitical practices and debates, and what are the broader long-term implications? Why does pointing to the historical violences imposed on the feeble-minded, imbecile, and idiot classes cause such frustration and anger across political, ideological, and cultural contexts? And finally, why does calling out someone's use of derogatory terms regarding the intellectual and developmental prowess of an individual, community, or region incite resentment, outrage, and indignation?

¹²³ Hall, 2007, 42

Intellectuality, Development & Archives of American Exceptionalism:

U.S. Humanitarian, global development, and charity discourses, the media, governments, and public institutions have historically drawn from the myth of the savage, uncivilized, and undeveloped subject to promote national and racial supremacy, target and expel so-called undesirable identities, categorically restrict civil liberties, and to pathologize people, nations, and geographies. In my analysis of the artifacts that appear throughout this study, I engage with theories in cultural representation and transnational and postcolonial disability studies to explain the material, historical, and discursive ways in which these institutions and social structures have persistently drawn on arguments of intellectuality and development to delegitimize nations and depoliticize social groups and identities. Grech has argued that “the discourse that demeans the Southern space and subject is critical because it deflects attention and even occults the ill-treatment, oppression, and subjugation of disabled people in the global North, while perpetually (re)constructing the latter as infinitely more ‘civilised’, ‘caring’, ‘developed’, ‘human’ – and indeed with civilized/civilising baggage to prove it.”¹²⁴ The cultural processes that have historically diminished developmentally and intellectually disabled people in the United States have also produced a definitive, universal, and *imaginary* subjectivity—a signifier of degeneracy, improper development and absolute ‘Otherness’—that has taken shape in a multitude of ideological oppressions across disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, nations, cultures, and geographies. Bhabha defined the postcolonial perspective as a mode of analysis that “attempts to revise those nationalist or ‘nativist’ pedagogies that set up

¹²⁴ Grech 2015, 25

the relation of 'Third World' and 'First World' in a binary structure of opposition."¹²⁵

Postcolonial and transnational disability studies scholars also accentuate the historical significance of the colonial encounter, and they highlight the material and embodied consequences that colonialism imposes on disability experiences.¹²⁶

Tsitsi Chataika suggests that colonialism "cannot be shed like the skin of a snake and then tossed away and forgotten," and Chataika's scholarship challenges global development strategies that impose their own universal definitions and methodologies onto regions written as 'globally southern'.¹²⁷ The exploitation of disability plays a recurring and rarely deliberated role in the aesthetics of pity, fear and national belonging; whether summoned to incite the benevolent supremacy of a nation, or to justify the expulsion of so-called undesirable identities, leveraging disability is a powerful representational tactic that has travelled across time periods, global localities, cultures, and populations.

Stewart Murray and Clare Barker have expressed their belief that "Disability Studies has the potential to make a more urgent intervention into contemporary Postcolonial studies and vice versa," and they have stated their concerns about the limited interest in global politics in disability studies, and postcolonial tendencies to undermine disability through metaphoric representations and universal definitions.¹²⁸ Disability scholars and Crip activists Kolářová and Wiedlack have also questioned the critical silences regarding disability in postcolonial and global development discourses, and they in fact have suggested that "overlooking disability in the intersectional equation reinforces persistent epistemic coloniality... [that] undermine[s] the

¹²⁵ Bhabha, 1994, 281

¹²⁶ Barker and Murray 2013, Chataika 2012, Grech 2012, Erevelles 2011

¹²⁷ Chataika 2012, 254

¹²⁸ Mitchell and Snyder 2013, 61

critique of much current post-and de-colonial work".¹²⁹ Kolářová and Wiedlack draw on postcolonial geographies, cultural studies, critical disability studies and Crip development theory to explore how global development, as they suggest, "utilizes and leans against disability, race, gender, caste, social status, hierarchical notions of 'difference'" to construct a fantasy of development that promotes the continued colonization of disabled and racialized communities, individuals, and cultures.¹³⁰ From their very foundations, philanthropy and charity organizations have performed a key role in the framing of American nationalism and the ideologies that Gerstle suggests have "propagated a racial nationalism that conceived of the country in racial terms, as a home for white people... of European origin and descent."¹³¹ In her study of citizenship and developmental and intellectual disability in the United States, Carey found that "people with intellectual disabilities tend to be characterized by their deficiencies... thus, when judged by the standards of the ideal citizen the person with an intellectual disability may appear unworthy, at best, and a threat to the nation... at worst."¹³² Here we see once again that disability and race are the critical signifiers that sustain discourses of American charity and philanthropy and white nationalism.

American sociologist Craig Calhoun described nationalism as discursive concept "rooted in industrialization, state formation, the rise of new communications media ... and the development of new rhetorics for collective identity and capacities for collective action."¹³³ In the historical context of immigration, race, and citizenship politics in the United States, disability

¹²⁹ Kolářová and Wiedlack 2016, 126

¹³⁰ Ibid., 125

¹³¹ Gerstle 2006, 270-274

¹³² Carey 2010, 1-2

¹³³ Calhoun 2007, 7

has been a powerful marker of exclusion and according to Douglas Baynton, “when categories of citizenship were questioned, challenged, and disrupted, disability was called on to clarify and define who deserved, and who was excluded from, citizenship.”¹³⁴ As the U.S. settled into the politics of the Progressive Era, modernity, capitalism, and a new era in social sciences, the national focus shifted to metrics of normalcy, productivity, and American intellectuality. To better understand the significance of the exemplary feeble-minded subject in the formation of the national identity, I approach nationalism as “organizing and energizing force”¹³⁵ shaped by spatial, temporal, material, and cultural relations and a “discursive formation” that “grows in relationship to other political cultural and ethnic projects.”¹³⁶ Political scientist Benedict Anderson famously proposed his definition of the nation as an ‘imagined community,’ whereas the nation is “*imagined* because the members... will never know most of their fellow-members... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”¹³⁷ Pickering argued that national identity, primarily in its modern and western form, is also an imagined territory “that has become collectively revered, exalted, even sacralised as a historic homeland.”¹³⁸ Cultural representation plays a significant role in how individuals come to imagine place within the national membership, and the consumption of mass-media, press, and communication technologies greatly influence how people situate their own sense of belonging as “good and decent people” within the broader construct of the ideal nation.¹³⁹ Fousek believes that if the nation is indeed an imagined community, place, and territory, it is also discursively “imagined

¹³⁴ Baynton 2013, 17

¹³⁵ D. Mitchell 2008, 272

¹³⁶ Calhoun 2006, 7

¹³⁷ Anderson 1983, 24

¹³⁸ Pickering, 2001, 85

¹³⁹ Ibid

through public culture... in print, on the airwaves, and in the meeting hall.¹⁴⁰ Nationality and nationalism function through culturally mediated and politically organized characteristics of belonging that must maintain a “negative counterpart of not belonging.”¹⁴¹ Nationalism, as a culturally produced phenomenon, has the power to categorize what kinds of people, things, and ideologies fit the ‘authentic’ character of the nation and the classification of difference for exclusionary purposes is necessary to this process. Nationalism then, as Don Mitchell points out, “tends to incorporate inequality... right at its center.”¹⁴²

Nationality is a concept and idea that is “understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the *large cultural systems* (my emphasis) that preceded it.”¹⁴³ Modernity and Progressive Era politics ushered in a new focus on the removal of racial difference from America’s national body politic, and the eugenics and social hygiene movements played a large part in the national platforms that centered on the breeding of so-called superior, white, American stock. In their critical essay “The Eugenic Atlantic: race, disability, and the making of an international Eugenic science: 1800-1945,” Mitchell and Snyder re-imagined Gilroy’s conceptualization of the Black Atlantic to support their central analysis of “disability and race as mutual projects of human exclusion.”¹⁴⁴ Mitchell and Snyder argue that the Eugenic Atlantic seeks to “fold disability into this cross national-equation” and their essay draws much needed attention to the erasure of disability history and the “truly trans-Atlantic affair” of American and European eugenics in western systems of education. Mitchell and

¹⁴⁰ Fousek 2000, 8

¹⁴¹ Pickering, 2001, 107

¹⁴² D. Mitchell 2008, 273

¹⁴³ Anderson 1983, 29

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell and Snyder, 2003, 843

Snyder underscore that “while fears of racial, sexual and gendered ‘weakness’ served as the spokes of this belief system, disability... functioned as the hub that gave the entire edifice its cross-cultural utility.”¹⁴⁵

Throughout the pages that follow, I take great care to engage in the intersectional work that postcolonial and transnational disability scholars claim has yet “to find a legitimate and stable place in humanitarian issues” and global development scholarship.¹⁴⁶ Don Mitchell believes culture is always political, that cultural representation is “‘language’” or “‘text’” or “‘discourse’” - but it is also the social, material construction of such things as ‘race’, or ‘gender,’”¹⁴⁷ and here I add disability. The chapters that follow explain how governing forces ‘make words and images meaningful’, how interpretations come into being, how individuals and society come to accept these interpretations as true knowledge, and in turn, how these (mis)understandings impose real-lived consequences onto the people they represent.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell and Snyder 2010

¹⁴⁶ S. Grech 2017, 9

¹⁴⁷ D. Mitchell 2008, 64

The Cultural production of the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject 1873-1900

Robert Treat Pain
1895.¹⁴⁸

59

life, not only in Western Europe but elsewhere, and the globalization of the world economy and western ways of life rapidly reshaped world history.¹⁵⁰

In her exhaustive works on the legacy of the American Red Cross (ARC), Julia Irwin determined that American charity began to take shape as a professional industry after President Lincoln signed the U.S. Sanitary Commission (USSC) Act into law in 1861.¹⁵¹ It was at this time that a conglomeration of women's aid societies, doctors, religious leaders, and the American public worked in partnership with the War Department to tap into "the religious and civic volunteerism of American women and medical men," to strengthen the ongoing effort to provide aid to Union soldiers and their families.¹⁵² The USSC established new training procedures for nurses, set technical standards for hospital sanitation, and devised novel methods for gathering and disseminating charitable donations.¹⁵³ The USSC approach was well-received by the American public and the success of its collaboration had proven that in the commission of charity and aid work, there was value in pooling private, local, religious, and government resources. In addition to its cross-sector cooperation, the USSC also cultivated a working relationship with members of the press that helped the agency to build public awareness and generate financial support.¹⁵⁴ The popularity and success of the USSC cross-agency model meant that U.S. charity was beginning to take shape as a recognized 'modern' profession while Americans were just starting to expand their notion of charitable giving beyond the missionary works that captivated the national imagination prior to the Civil War. Since these earliest moments, U.S. humanitarian and charity enterprises have maintained mutually

¹⁵⁰ Hall 1992, 15

¹⁵¹ Irwin 2013, 18-20

¹⁵² Ibid, 18-20

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 20

beneficial (although at times contentious) affiliations with the press, governments, and with each other. One outcome of these complicated relationships is that the historically specific discursive representations they generate —such as the exemplary feeble-minded subject— maintain influence over current day contexts.

In *Formations of Modernity*, the authors characterized social formations as those “societies with a definite structure and a well-defined set of social relations... articulated into distinct, clearly demarcated zones of activity or social practice.”¹⁵⁵ Less than a decade after the Civil War, delegates from state and local boards of charities joined forces with business professionals and an array of specialists to build a new national charity organization movement in the United States that would eventually come to embrace modern ideals in philosophy, science, business, and philanthropy. In his study of the history of the organized Freak Show in the United States, Robert Bogdan determined that social structures in the late nineteenth century shifted from farm and family based to a national society “in which formal organizations like schools, factories, businesses, hospitals, and government agencies would dominate.”¹⁵⁶ Local and state-run charities and their related enterprises responded to this push to formalize by transforming their disjointed undertakings into a modern American industry that would quickly gain a certain level of authority in both domestic and international matters. Many of the social entities that were ultimately placed underneath the umbrella of organized charity and corrections were involved in formalization processes of their own, and the techniques that they established would ultimately inform the operational and ideological frames of the charities and

¹⁵⁵ Hall 1992, 7

¹⁵⁶ Bogdan 1988, 20

corrections movement. The ever-expanding list of formalizing institutions that would come to enjoy tremendous authority over the systematization of charity and corrections included federal, state and municipal courts, immigration systems, census boards, state asylums and farm colonies, hospitals, reformatories, penal systems, law enforcement, poorhouses, churches, state and national government agencies, labor unions, local and state boards of charities and corrections, social workers, reform movements, wealthy philanthropists, academics, and education. This 'executive force' realized that if their odd amalgamation were to succeed in the mission to reduce the nation's social problems they would need to standardize their distinct methods for counting and classifying the dependent, delinquent, and defective classes. One of the agreed upon solutions was to expand the professionalization of charity and corrections and, as Mitchell and Snyder put it, "the management of "social dependents" became legitimated as an occupation and provided stable professional careers for middle-class professionals."¹⁵⁷ In post-Civil War America, newly designated specialists in professional 'zones of activity' became the authorities that set the universal standards for identifying categorizing, and tracking what, or whom, constituted as an economically and socially viable American citizen.

In the pages that follow, I map the political, the economic, the social, and the cultural processes that generated the Charities and Corrections movement and the birth of charity empires in the United States in relation to the exemplary feeble-minded subject. I perform a close relational reading of digitized editions of *The Annual Proceedings of the National Conferences of Charities and Corrections* (1874-1920), the *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* (1875-1920),

¹⁵⁷ Mitchell and Snyder 2015, 20

Amos G. Warner's critically celebrated text *American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics* (1894), and news articles and editorials related to the National Charities Organization Movement in the United States (1873-1920).¹⁵⁸ From the first official meeting under the banner of the *American Social Science Association* in 1874, and throughout its history as an independent enterprise, delegates from "all charitable and correctional institutions and societies of the United States" gathered to share their expertise at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections.¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰ Additionally, media savvy conference organizers invited journalists to the annual meetings and their news stories and editorials provide a window for tracing how the exemplary feeble-minded subject became culturally recognized as one of the key degenerative barriers to any civilized nation's economic, social, and moral development.

Just two years after the first official Charities and Corrections Conference, the *Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* announced they would hold their first official session "on the occasion of the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, bringing together people of all classes, from all parts of the country... to call an assemblage of representatives of institutions devoted to the care and education of idiotic and feeble-minded children."¹⁶¹ In the mid-to late 1800s, Dr. Isaac Kerlin from Media Pennsylvania, Dr. E. Seguin, of New York, Dr. C.T. Wilbur, of Jacksonville Illinois, and Dr. H.M. Knight from Lakeville, Connecticut, were recognized by society, politicians, and professionals as experts in the care and training of the idiot, feeble-minded, and imbecile

¹⁵⁸ located in Google Books Digital Archives and the Archive of National Conferences on Social Welfare

¹⁵⁹ Standing Committee on State Boards of Public Charities 1895, 28

¹⁶⁰ Graduate Library University of Michigan genealogy of naming conventions; Conference of Boards of Public Charities: 1875-1879, Conference of Charities; 1880-1881, Conference of Charities and Correction: 1882-1916, National Conference of Charities and Correction; 1917-1956, National Conference of Social Work.

¹⁶¹ I. N. Kerlin 1876, 4

classes. These dominant voices worked in partnership to form the *Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* and they established yearly gatherings for national stakeholders to confer over “all questions relating to the causes, conditions, and statistics of idiocy, and to the management, training, and education of idiots and feeble-minded persons.”¹⁶² In the decades that followed the opening conference sessions, they became a primary source for all entities with a stated claim in the management and control of the idiot, feeble-minded, and imbecile classes.¹⁶³ One conference presenter even went to great lengths to validate the association by authorizing their work as the “Godlike... highest expression of Christian Civilization... bringing light out of darkness... in kinship with God.”¹⁶⁴

Ian Tyrrell has written an extensive historiography of the United States that dives into the “broad movement of world history such as the development of the nation-state, the movement of peoples, imperialism, economic growth, and the struggle for humanity.”¹⁶⁵ Tyrrell situates his studies as relational analyses of transnational histories he defines as “the movement of peoples, ideas, technologies and institutions across national boundaries that concerns the period since the emergence of nation-states as important phenomena in world history.”¹⁶⁶ Transnational and disability genealogies have at times overlooked developmental and intellectual disabilities, and they have failed to explore how the discourses of American intellectuality fit into Tyrrell’s stories of “imperialism, economic growth, and the struggle for

¹⁶² Committee 1877, 31

¹⁶³ See Trent 1994, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*. Trent gives a well-documented account of the legacies of Kerlin, Wilbur, and Seguin and their influence on the feeble-minded, imbecile, and idiot classifications from the mid-1800s to the turn of the twentieth century.

¹⁶⁴ Cite: Pickett, 1881

¹⁶⁵ Tyrrell 2015, 3

¹⁶⁶ Ibid

humanity.”¹⁶⁷ Scholars interested in transnational disability studies are emphatic that “understanding the disability narrative in the global south means (re)positioning it and understanding it as a *global historical narrative* (original emphasis).”¹⁶⁸ An important step in understanding this globally historic narrative is to make a thorough assessment of the ways in which discourses of *developmental and intellectual* disabilities are linked to the people that are diagnosed, and while this is a good first step, it is not a sufficient intervention. It is imperative that we also acknowledge that *any given subject at any given moment*—whether place, nation, geography, community, group, or individual—can be wholly delegitimized if painted with the broad discourse of intellectual or developmental inferiority. Any serious exploration of the former that does not attend to the latter will simply reinforce the ongoing degradation of, and misunderstandings about, all forms of developmental and intellectual difference. My aim here is not to deny intellectual difference or to refute the richness of the lived experiences of developmentally and intellectually disabled people. My argument is to instead show that the ambiguous and villainous characterization of intellectual and developmental differences has propped up a multiplicity of powerful historical and contemporary discourses.

The creation of mythical opposites was one of the more powerful discursive weapons in modernity’s playbook and universal standards for categorizing, measuring, and managing what constitutes normal/abnormal, productive/primitive, intellectual/degenerate, developed/undeveloped and savage/civilized can be traced, at least in part, to the discourses that unfolded within the late nineteenth and early twentieth century charities and corrections

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Kolářová and Wiedlack 2016, 132

movement in the United States. The philanthropic productions that are the focus of this work began to take shape at the end of nineteenth century, came into full bloom in the earliest moments of the twentieth, and have proven time and again to be steadfast conduits for propagating American ideals in international settings. To better understand how American charity empires have impacted the global past and present, I employ Tyrrell's conceptualization of transnational histories, with the caveat that all histories are necessarily, as Erevelles aptly stated, "rooted in a particular social and economic order that depended on the devaluation of

racial, female, and disabled bodies to sustain that order."¹⁶⁹

Charity as Social Reform: Mythologies and The Queue of Intellectual and Developmental Progress

As post-Civil War society went about the business of

formalizing U.S. social institutions, and the United States

expanded its global reach, average Americans flocked to dime

store museums to gawk at "alleged and real physical, mental, or

behavioral anomalies (*aka disabilities, my insertion*) for

amusement and profit," while white elites displayed 'freak images'

in their parlor albums, and Wild Bill's astonishingly racist traveling

'Indian Savage' shows were all the rage domestically and

abroad.¹⁷⁰ Cultural industries in the United States were an integral

part of a broader national system that was centered around



Figure 2. Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth La Crosse, Wisconsin, July 17, 1897. Milner Digital Collections.

¹⁶⁹ Erevelles 2011, 147-149

¹⁷⁰ Bogdan 1988, 20

missionaries, showmen, journalists, social reformers, and politicians expanded on preexisting ableist and racist repertoires to exalt themselves and their primarily white consumers through narratives that devalued difference at the intersection of disability, intellectual and developmental disabilities, race, gender, ethnicity, and nation. These cultural productions based their derogatory interpretations on a politic of representation that, as Pickering argued, depended upon “the spectacle of the primitive Other, with its accompanying narrative and commentary... mediating the imagined civilised/savage divide.”¹⁷¹ P.T. Barnum’s freak shows, American Dime Store ‘living human curiosities and medical monsters,’ racist exhibitions that featured ‘savage, exotic, and cannibalistic primitives,’ and ‘missing link’ displays that exploited developmentally and intellectually disabled people were popular entertainment spaces where audiences learned to devalue difference at the intersections of disability, race, ethnicity, gender, and geographic location (*figure 2*).¹⁷²

In his recent chronicle, *Stony The Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*, critically acclaimed author, activist, and filmmaker Henry Louis Gates, Jr. documents the rapid uprise in the use of derogatory anti-black imagery during the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), and the insufferable “explosion of white supremacist ideology across a baffling array of media” that hit an especially disturbing climax with the rise of Jim Crow policies during the ‘Redemption Period’ (1877-1915).¹⁷³ Gates painstakingly documents the dominant frames in literature, media, and product advertisements that imposed a wide scope of malicious tropes,

¹⁷¹ Pickering 2001, 59

¹⁷² The history of the freak show and exhibits of ‘exotic’ others is violent, ongoing, and complex and is not adequately addressed here. For a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which disability and race intersect in freak show and sideshow representations and in current day contexts: See; Hall, *Representation* 2013, Bogdan 1988, (Cassuto 2015), (Nussbaum, Patsavas and Sandahl 2020); (Lehrer 2020).

¹⁷³ Gates defines the Redemption Period as the time after the Civil War and Reconstruction when “Former Confederate states redeemed themselves at the expense of black rights, especially the right of black men to vote.”

such as degenerate, ignorant, imbecile, violent, savage, and immoral, onto post-Civil War, “freedmen and freedwomen”:

By the 1890s—precisely when Jim Crow was hardening—one of the most popular means of advertising products to American consumers was to juxtapose the product or its virtues with supremely demeaning images of African Americans. So popular were they with the public, so widespread was their utilization, in the South, the North, and beyond the nation’s borders, that virtually anywhere a white person saw an image of an African American, she or he was encoded in one of these stereotypes as somehow laughably ignorant, subhuman, devoid of thought and reason, ruled by one’s senses, as would be an animal.¹⁷⁴

Rhetorics of intellectually and development, or a prescribed lack thereof, were manifest in the “omnipresent visual representations of black people as Sambos in popular art,” and the media relentlessly exposed America to highly charged racist representations that were meant to stabilize the myth of the genetic/intellectually superior ‘Anglo Saxon’ race.^{175 176} White northerners were as much the consumers of these racist depictions as those that lived in the deep South, and in fact, Gates made note that it was “entirely possible for many in the country, even some abolitionists, to detest slavery... yet at the same time to detest the enslaved and the formerly enslaved with equal passion.”¹⁷⁷ In campaigns that represented Black men as instinctually threatening to the purity of all white women (including those in the northern regions of the country), southern Redemptionists bitter over the loss of the Confederacy employed a “sheer range of racist vehemence and terrorism” to justify their unyielding campaign to reverse post-Civil War voting and property rights legislation.¹⁷⁸ In addition to the wholly conjured threat of barbarism, white supremacists blended commodity racism with

¹⁷⁴ Gates 2020, 144

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*, 37)

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*, 23

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*, 38

ableist rhetorics of the exemplary feeble-minded subject to gain alliances in white northern abolitionist communities. Racist and ableist coding in product images, storybooks, novels, and entertainment venues represented Black people in America as too ignorant, uncivilized, and genetically impure to warrant equal representation in 'civil' society. Profoundly racist and ableist intellectuals and researchers hid behind post-Civil War scientific racism, the science of heritability, anthropology, and social Darwinism to embed fiercely destructive portrayals concerning the intellectuality of the black race into the cultural psyche.¹⁷⁹ Gates discovered one especially racist phrenologist that claimed to have made the 'scientific' determination that the entirety of the Black race was physically and mentally diseased. Gates made note of the 'scientist' use of his own self-generated racist interpretation of Black bodies as observable evidence of the presence of imbecility and intellectual inferiority:

The night-born ogre stands before us: we observe his low, receding forehead; his broad, depressed nose; his stammering, stuttering speech; and his general actions, evidencing monkey-like littleness and imbecility of mind... the negro (in America) is the sick man of the West.¹⁸⁰

This is but one example of many instances where in the 'name of science,' racist practitioners systematically degraded all Black men through stereotypes of intellectual and physical inferiority. Scientific racism and scientific ableism were mutually informing discourses, and their ideologues were eager to trade representational tactics in the name of their version of humanity, progress, patriotism, and white nationalism, and the height of this cooperation is

¹⁷⁹ Gates makes note that in light of the current uprise in white supremacist ideology, "the rise and fall of Reconstruction and the surge of white supremacy in the former Confederate states following the end of the Civil War are especially relevant subjects for Americans to reflect upon at this moment in the history of our democracy." There is an especially urgent need for Gates' perspective at the time of this writing as Critical Race Theory has become the latest target of white supremacist discourse.

¹⁸⁰ Hinton Helper, 1867. Cited by Gates p. 78-79

most evident in the relationship between the early twentieth century ‘science of eugenics’ and ‘science of social hygiene.’

The racist configurations of the Post-reconstruction/Redemption Era were an extension of the colonialist ‘great imperial adventurer’ tales that had been making a regular appearance in the press and popular literature since the mid-1800s. Americans eagerly consumed Henry Morton Stanley’s imperial musings in *Through Dark Continent*, and more than a few were exposed to James Johnston’s benevolent reflections in *Missionary Landscapes in the Dark Continent*, where the reverend and appointed member of the 1884 *British Commission on Education in India* glorified the American and European missionary as the very “strength prowess and Christian chivalry... steadfastly resisting the horrors of tribal savagery... of Africa’s dusky children.”¹⁸¹ The American media kept its readers up to date on the latest correspondences they received from Henry Morton Stanley, and their reports consistently sanctioned the famous explorer’s imperialistic interpretation of Africa (*Figure 3*).¹⁸² The *New York Herald* segment below illustrates the aggrandizement of the iconic ‘great adventurers’ by news writers that positioned the white explorer as a fantastical hero, tamer of savages, authoritative cartographer, and discoverer of rich resources that were ripe for the taking:

Explorations and discoveries therein of the last twenty-five years has become, to the scientific and commercial world, to the philanthropist and the general reader of the daily newspaper, the most interesting region on the face of the earth...The march of Stanley on this expedition of the East African coast through a wilderness of 700 miles of difficult swamps, jungles, malaria and hostile tribes of savages, furnishes one of the most remarkable examples of military sagacity, discipline and heroism, fortitude and successful perseverance of all the heroic adventures.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Johnston 1892, vii

¹⁸² The New York Herald 1875

¹⁸³ *ibid*

In the 1875 *New York Herald* piece, *African Exploration: Corrected Map of Central Africa*.

Showing the Livingston, Baker, Speke, Stanley, and Other Routes (figure 3), the writer goes to great lengths to reconfigure the Central and East African landscapes based upon the “results of various explorations,” and to explain to readers that Victorian adventurers in Central Africa had

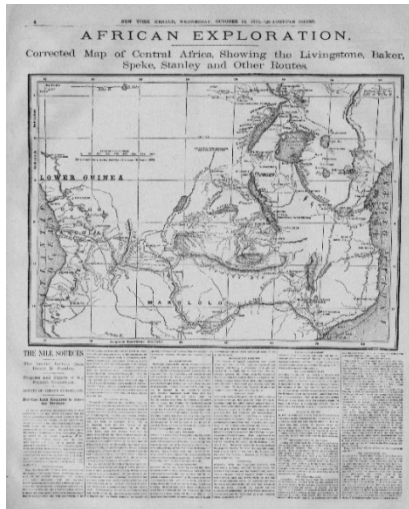


Figure 3: *The New York Herald*, October 13, 1875

AFRICAN EXPLORATION

Corrected Map of Central Africa. Showing the Livingston, Baker, Speke, Stanley, and Other Routes.

THE NILE SOURCES- The recent letters from Henry M. Stanley. Progress and Objectives of Present Expedition. Results of Various Explorations. But One Link Required to Solve Mystery.

“recently impressed... tribes with the invincible power of the white man.”¹⁸⁴ *The Herald* infused themes of empire, paternalism, and white intellectuality in its telling of the tale of Sir Samuel Baker’s “famous military expedition of the Nile in the services of enlightenment,” whereas Baker, so the story went, was so thorough in his “wholesome chastisement” of the “treacherous and warlike savages” that relative peace followed.¹⁸⁵

African Exploration is a prime example of the wild,

fanciful, racialized and ableist storytelling that appeared

with great regularity in newspapers and magazines in the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and maintains

a presence in various publications today. Based upon the

recurrence of this one-dimensional narrative, American readers could readily assume that the

whole of Africa was a brutal and uncivilized place, populated with dark, imbecilic, simple-

minded brutes that were solely reliant on their savage instincts, and that remained idle while

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*

white western “scientists, commerce, and philanthropists,” civilized their home and harvested their commodities.¹⁸⁶

The national obsession with rhetoric of the ‘dark continent’ coincided with the move to universalize state and local charity, the rise in American expansionism, and the nation’s emergence as a world power.¹⁸⁷ It was during this same era that the U.S. Senate voted to ratify the Geneva Treaty that authorized the organization of the American Red Cross while American missionaries “sought a hegemonic position...across the Euro-American world and it’s colonies,” and moral reformers like John D. Rockefeller Jr. donated heavily to the newly formed Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) that according to Tyrrell, “was particularly keen to advance the cause of... Christian Manhood” domestically and abroad.¹⁸⁸ Additional non-state actors and American missionaries in “Burma, China and the Middle East,” provided channels for the United States to spread its ideologies across transnational settings.¹⁸⁹

As the United States extended its global reach social and moral reformers were gaining ground in international spaces, many of these same actors were entrenched in domestic charity and corrections enterprises. In his examination of American expansionism and the transnational “drive toward American imperialism” in the final decades of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, Terrell found that American moral reform groups “fashioned their own version of a non-territorial empire grounded in networks of moral reform organizations... across the Euro-American world and its colonies.”¹⁹⁰ Moral reform organizations like Woman’s

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ Tyrrell 2010, 16

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*

¹⁸⁹ Tyrrell 2015, 33-36

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*

Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) were keen to promote their distinctly Christian version of American exceptionalism in China, Russia, Mexico, Africa, Japan, India, the Philippines, and elsewhere around the globe.¹⁹¹ The American branch of the WCTU formed in 1874 with the dual aim of promoting abolitionism and temperance across the globe, and when American suffragist Frances Willard became the newly elected president in 1879, the WCTU expanded its platform to encompass women's equality and labor and prison reform. In 1893, Willard spoke before the *Second Biennial Convention of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Conference* in Chicago, and underscored the interdependencies within the ongoing fight for women's rights, labor issues, and the WCTU's stance on global prohibition:

The ballot for woman is part and parcel of our Prohibition cause; the two sink or rise together. I do not know a White Ribbon woman who is not a Prohibitionist, a Woman Suffragist, a Purity Worker, and an earnest sympathiser with the Labour movement. These four corner stones of the new Temple of the people's liberties, are being hewn out of the same quarry, and whoever works for one works for the other.¹⁹²

In her reading of "eugenic feminisms" of the late nineteenth century, Stephanie Athey reasoned that although historians have often positioned Willard and her white northern WCTU elite counterparts as "strong advocates of women suffrage and champions of women's political organization," these accounts overlook the overtly racist and class-driven ideals that the WCTU traded on in sponsorship of the temperance movement's version of American purity and Christian civilization.¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴ In 1890, *The New York Voice* published an interview with the WCTU leader under the headline, *The Race Problem: Miss Willard on the Political Puzzle of the South*

¹⁹¹ Tyrrell 2010, Irwin 2013

¹⁹² Willard 1893

¹⁹³ Athey defines eugenic feminism as "The deliberately discomfoting concept of "eugenic feminisms" refers to a wide variety of arguments and organized efforts, any of which firmly incorporate eugenic logics as means to claim women's empowerment."

¹⁹⁴ Athey 2000

that sheds some light on the cultural disconnect between Willard's public persona and her internalized racist beliefs. In the now infamous exchange, Willard drew from a host of racist and colonialist tropes" in response to the reporter's first question, "what do you think of the race problem and the Force bill?"¹⁹⁵ ¹⁹⁶ In her response, Willard attempted to reinforce the public perception that she was indeed an advocate for all forms of human equality by leveraging her self-proclaimed abolitionist history:

I was born and abolitionist... so far as I know I have not an atom of race prejudice... with me the color of the heart and not of the skin is what settles a human being's status.¹⁹⁷

Despite her claim to be free from prejudice, throughout her interview Willard summoned imperial notions of white saviorhood and the dark continent while she effortlessly invoked the 'dark mob' dog whistle of American Jim Crow ideologues. The passage below illustrates Willard's mobilization of the racist language of the white nationalist "back to Africa" movement under the arrogant pretense of admiration for the continent and its people:

It seems to me that Africa, the youngest of the continents, will someday be the greatest. Centuries from now that poetic, musical, kindly, intuitional people may lead the civilization of the globe. If I were black and young, no steamer could revolve its wheels fast enough to convey me to the dark continent. I should go where my color was the correct thing and leave these pale faces to work out their own destiny; and I should build in my life to make my color fashionable by as much as one individuality could do it.¹⁹⁸

Willard's sweeping racial arrogance is indicative of what geographer Doreen Massey has identified as the 'evasive imagination' of "the modernist grand narratives... of Progress" that she

¹⁹⁵ Black activist and journalists Ida B. Wells openly criticized Willard's anti-black ideology and her critique of Willard has inspired important scholarly works and discussions. See (Tyrrell 2010); (Durst 2017); (Athey 2000); (Frances Willard House Museum 2021) (Baynton 2013)

¹⁹⁶ The Force bill, or the Lodge bill, was under consideration in the U.S. Congress at the time of Willard's interview and it would have afforded the federal government supervisory powers over the election process in the former Confederate states. Due to major pushback from Southern democrats, the Senate rejected the Force bill.

¹⁹⁷ The New York Voice 1890

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

theorized can discursively “*turn space into time, and geography into history* (emphasis original).”¹⁹⁹ When Willard named Africa “the youngest of all continents” and offered her prediction that African people might, in some far-off century, catch up to the ‘civilized world,’ she managed to instantaneously disregard African histories, refute the contemporary agency of African people, and delegitimize all Black Americans. Massey believed this kind of “evasive maneuver” was meant to reorganize time and place in such a way that the western (white) authorities that employed its ideology were situated at the temporal and geographical apex of progress, civilization, and race development:

The whole uneven geography of the world is effectively reorganized (imaginatively) into a historical queue. There is a turning of geography... into history (itself seen as a single succession) ... temporality is reduced to the singular: there is only *one* historical queue (one model of development) and it is one defined by those ‘in the lead’ (there is one voice.)²⁰⁰

Returning for a moment to Willard’s astonishingly racialized advice for young black Americans. It is here that the WCTU leader performed a second evasive imagination that Massey conceptualized as, “*the strategy of thinking of space as a surface*” (emphasis original), in which the “classically colonial imagination” envisions spatial and geographic relationships as flat, one-dimensional, and unchanging.²⁰¹ Thinking of space as a surface is a common narrative tactic of the tales of the dark continent where imperial adventurers were glorified for their so-called discovery of faraway lands over there, and that situated the people ‘discovered’, “on the spatial surface which has been crossed, implicitly awaiting the arrival of the voyager.”²⁰² Taken in conjunction with the ‘historical queue’ of the first evasive imagination, thinking of space as a

¹⁹⁹ Massey 2004, 92

²⁰⁰ *ibid*

²⁰¹ *ibid*

²⁰² *ibid*

fixed surface reinforces the ‘us/them,’ and ‘developed’/‘backwards’ storyline. It was in this spirit that the WCTU leader executed her near-complete erasure of *all* Black histories when she recommended African Americans “convey” themselves to “the dark continent” (read the backwards, storiless, flat surface ‘over there,’ where their race (not white, not American) would be “the correct thing” (Black, African, lacking in history, agency, and spatial development).²⁰³

I submit that there is an additional and equally ‘evasive imagination’ that is imperative to the modernist reconfiguration of space and time. In this third maneuver that I propose, an imaginary ‘queue of intellectual and developmental progress’ operates as a convenient instrument for weeding out and eradicating multiplicities of difference. Massey theorized that attempts to turn space into time and geography into history are “frequently constructed around notions such as ‘they are behind,’ ‘give us time,’ ‘they will catch up.’”²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the so called undeveloped ‘others’ in the discourse of progress must ‘catch up’ in the developmental queue by traveling a singular path that adheres to standards set by western scientists, educators, politicians, philosophers, economist, and humanitarians. As we have already seen throughout these pages, there is ample evidence that each of these western driven discourses were, and are, closed to the potentialities of the feeble-minded, imbecile, moron, and idiot classes. Recall the white family from Piney New Jersey discussed in chapter one. Piney is situated on the ‘modern’ civilized American landscape, but the news story represented the Piney family as backwards, feeble-minded, and all-encompassing degenerates. O’Reilly conceptualized the residents of Piney as so far behind in the queue of intellectual and

²⁰³ Willard 1893

²⁰⁴ Massey 2004, 92-98

developmental progress that although they were in racial alignment with the nations imagined white superiority, and they resided in a U.S. territory of self-proclaimed civility, O'Reilly delegitimized their intellectual and developmental features, and folded the people and the region into the discourses of the 'dark continent' to overshadow their geographical and temporal reality. In this example, O'Reilly invoked the queue of intellectual and developmental progress to refuse the national status of the Piney residents regardless of their geographic (spatial) location, and to deny their capacity for progress alongside more civilized (white) Americans. In this context, the queue of intellectual and developmental progress performed a tactic of reversal on the white community of Piney that—but for their brazen intellectual, economic, agricultural, and moral shortcomings—would have been included among the 'good and decent' citizens in O'Reilly's narrative. Simply put, Piney was 'among' us, but not 'us.'

In this third 'evasive imagination' that I propose, dehumanization by intellectual, cognitive, or rational capacity operates as the ultimate tactic for refuting the agency or autonomy of *any given subject*, historically or otherwise. Absent the civilized beneficence of outsiders, there is no 'catching up' for the perpetually 'undeveloped' intellect or the barren landscapes on which they live. Reformers like Willard operated with impunity under the shroud of equality and justice while they deliberately exploited intellectuality to degrade and Other difference based on race, nation, region, gender, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. This is the crucial point of this work because as we will see in the chapters that follow, vague and flexible accusations about the perceived intellectual, cognitive, and development state of any given subjectivity was foundational to the eugenics and social hygiene movements of the early twentieth century. This elusive and nimble tactic was evident in Willard's professed support for

women's suffrage, even as she made it abundantly clear that only certain *types* of people should be afforded the privilege of full participation in American democracy. I include a lengthy segment of the *New York Voice* interview below to illustrate the ableist undercurrent of intellectuality in Willard's attempt to bury her racist ideologies:

The fact is that illiterate-colored men will not vote at the South until the white population chooses to have them do so, and under similar conditions they would not at the North... I think we have wronged the South, though we did not mean to do so. The reason was in part, that we had irreparably wronged ourselves by putting no safeguard on the ballot-box at the North that would sift out alien illiterates.... It is not fair that they should vote, nor is it fair that a plantation Negro, who can neither read nor write, whose ideas are bounded by the fence of his own field and the price of his own mule, should be entrusted with the ballot... The Anglo-Saxon race will never submit to be dominated by the Negro so long as his [altitude] reaches no higher than the personal liberty of the saloon and the power of appreciating the amount of liquor that a dollar will buy. New England would no more submit to this than South Carolina. ²⁰⁵

Willard accomplished a great deal of work in this passage. First, she emphasized that the "Anglo-Saxon race" was the dominant voice and final arbiter of what constituted fair democratic participation. She then shifted her attention to deny the *southern* Black man the right to vote by anchoring him to negative (although commonly accepted) stereotypes related to illiteracy, ignorance, and *locality* (the fence of his own field). In her next discursive move, Willard exploited the North's distrust of 'illiterate alien immigrants' and drew on their established fears to encourage a strategic alliance between northern ethnocentric rhetorics of American nationalism, and the southern Redemptionists disdain for the so-called "plantation negro."²⁰⁶ Finally, by invoking America's impulse to cast-off all *perceived* forms of intellectual and

²⁰⁵ The New York Voice 1890

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

developmental difference, Willard successfully destabilized the existing spatial and ideological divisions between the white northern abolitionists and southern white Redemptionists.

Willard and the WCTU regularly leaned on intellectuality and developmental progress to intensify their own democratic standing and separate themselves from the social groups that they believed society had *legitimately* marked as unworthy to participate in the American democratic process. Henrietta Briggs-Wall was a member of the *Kansas Equal Suffrage Association* and an active participant in the state and national chapters of the WCTU when she commissioned artist W.A. Ford to create the pastel titled: *American Woman and Her Political Peers* (Figures 4-6). *American Woman and Her Political Peers* is an important artifact for understanding how the less distant past—and the present—interpret cultural productions, how these various interpretative stances tend to erase the violent supremacist histories that are embedded in the legacies of American intellectuality, and the ways in which these exclusions reinforce misunderstandings in contemporary times. Digital humanities scholar and historian Michael J. Kramer framed the work of digital historiography as messy, complex, and “sensitive to competing versions of the past,” and he argued “the past arrives to us through layers of interpretation... the past *is* interpreted.”²⁰⁷ I located digitized reproductions of *American Woman and Her Political Peers* in a range of national, state, and locally supported digital repositories, online catalogues, and digitized exhibitions. A sampling of these repositories includes: The Library of Congress Online Exhibition titled, *Women Fight for the Vote: New Tactics for a New Generation 1890-1915*; the Kansas Historical Society: Kansas Memory Online Collection; and a digital reproduction of the original WCTU postcard is on display in the Kansas City Library Online

²⁰⁷ Kramer 2014

Women's Suffrage Collection.²⁰⁸ While metadata in these repositories contain a set of common historical attributes, there are interesting omissions, contradictions, and interpretations in the written summaries that warrant critical attention. In the context of this discussion regarding the WCTU's framing of *American Woman*, I include the digitized artifacts and their accompanying summaries below (*Figure 4-6*).

In the 1893 pastel, Ford portrayed Willard in a classic high collar Victorian garment, her hair conservatively pinned, wearing glasses, with an unsmiling expression. Ford placed Willard in the center of the portrait and relegated each of the four men that Briggs-Wall meant to represent "idiots, convicts, the insane, and Indians" to one of the four corners of the canvas (*figure 4*). The Kansas Historical Society determined that Willard "cooperated with Henrietta Briggs-Wall on the portrait by providing several images of herself" for Ford's reference while he worked on the painting.²⁰⁹ The archive descriptions in all three repositories reinforce Willard's legendary status as "one of America's most well-known women,"²¹⁰ "an excellent speaker, dean of woman at Northwestern University and president of the WCTU and the National Council of Women,"²¹¹ and they frame Willard as "accomplished and respectable... representing American Woman."²¹² None of the digitized materials in these repositories address the historical, institutional, or social violences that were being inflicted on idiot, insane, Indigenous, and convict populations. We see in the text below that the Kansas Historical Society does address

²⁰⁸ See sample repository's below

²⁰⁹ The Kansas City Public Library 1911; Kansas Historical Society 1999.

²¹⁰ Kansas Historical Society 1999.

²¹¹ The Kansas City Public Library 1911

²¹² Library of Congress 1898/1911

where and how Briggs-Wall located the subjects in the painting that she selected to represent the lower dredges of society:

Briggs-Wall tracked down photographic models for the portrayals of the four men. The convict was said to have been modelled after a real-life criminal. Briggs-Wall and Ford compiled several photographs for the mentally disabled man and the Indian, and the madman was drawn from memory.^{213 214}

Ford's original 58-inch x 48-inch pastel was on display at the *1893 World's Columbian Exhibition* in Chicago, and according to the Kansas Historical Society, Briggs-Wall provided postcard copies "for purchase during and after the fair." The legend on the postcard read as follows:

The American Woman and her Political Peers. In many states women are classed politically with idiots, convicts, the insane and Indians--not allowed to vote. Women do not, however, escape taxation. Taxation without representation is tyranny. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.²¹⁵

Briggs-Wall acknowledged that she designed *American Woman and Her Political Peers* to shock the American public into realizing that the WCTU leader and icon of 'American womanhood' had been unjustly banished alongside social degenerates. According to the Kansas Historical Society, Briggs-Wall was fully aware of the provocative messaging in *American Woman and Her Political Peers*:

Briggs-Wall said of *American Woman* in 1894:

It strikes the woman every time. They do not realize that we are classed with idiots, criminals, and the insane as they do when they see that picture. Shocking? Well, it takes a shock to arouse some people to a sense of injustice and degradation.²¹⁶

American Woman made no attempt to explain why Willard's placement amongst the "idiots, convict, insane person and Indian" was unjust or degrading. There was no need for such

²¹³ Kansas Historical Society, 1999

²¹⁴ Note the erasure of "idiot and convict" in the historical society description that instead refers to these two men as "mentally disabled, and criminal.

²¹⁵ Kansas Historical Society, 1999

²¹⁶ Ibid

clarification because the coded discourse embedded into the portrait design, and its accompanying text, spoke for itself. American consumers were well-versed in the long-standing and intersecting ideologies of intellectual development that had historically deprived idiots, convicts, the insane, and Indigenous people of their political standing. Here we witness a historical moment where the exemplary feeble-minded subject was an integral piece of the connecting tissue that held these ideologies in place.

Source Archive #1: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Exhibit Title: *Women Fight for the Vote Exhibition: New Tactics for a New Generation 1890-1915*

Artifact Name: American Woman and Her Political Peers

Medium: Print

Description: Frances E. Willard (1839-1898) turned the Woman's Christian Temperance Union into a powerful source for social reform, including women's suffrage. In a painting displayed at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the accomplished and respectable Willard, representing the "American Woman," was surrounded by exaggerated stereotypes of other disenfranchised citizens of society—"idiots, convicts, the insane, and Indians" Henrietta Briggs-Wall, of member of the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association, commissioned the provocative painting and sold photographic postcards of it for years thereafter.

Image Details: Postcard Replica of Original 1893 pastel. 1911 Postcard text written by Briggs-Wall: (copyright 1911 by Henrietta Briggs-Wall. AMERICAN WOMAN AND HER POLITICAL PEERS.

"In many states woman are classed politically with idiots, convicts, the insane, and Indians—**not allowed to vote**. Women do not, however, escape taxation. "Taxation without representation is tyranny" "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God"



Source Archive #2: The Kansas Historical Society

Exhibit Title: American Woman and Her Political Peers Painting

Artifact Name: American Woman and Her Political Peers

Medium: unlisted

Description: Full description is 2 pages. A portion appears here and the full text is available in the Scalar Description

This pastel titled American Woman and Her Political Peers was designed as a lesson on the relative political status of women in the 1890s. Pictured in the center is Frances E. Willard, American educator and reformer. Portrayed around Miss Willard (clockwise from upper left) are a mentally disabled man, a convict, a madman, and a disenfranchised Native American. [2 full paragraphs do not appear here for space reasons.]

Although this painting depicts Frances Willard in an unflattering light, she apparently cooperated with Henrietta Briggs-Wall on the portrait by providing several images of herself from which Briggs-Wall and the artist chose. The completion of the portrait was held up while Briggs-Wall tracked down photographic models for the portrayal of the four men.

Briggs-Wall said of American Woman in 1894: "It strikes the women every time. They do not realize that we are classed with idiots, criminals, and the insane as they do when they see the picture. Shocking? Well, it takes a shock to arouse some people to a sense of injustice and degradation."



Figure 5

Source Archive #3: The Kansas City Public Library

Exhibit Title: Kansas City History

Artifact Name: American Woman and Her Political Peers, 1893

Medium: Image of Postcard

Description: Pro-suffrage postcard showing women's suffragist and temperance reformer, Frances E. Willard, alongside her political peers--outcasts of society ineligible to vote.

Article Description Segment: The heavy cardboard post card was copyrighted in 1893 (and again in 1911) by Henrietta Briggs-Wall of Hutchinson, Kan. It sold for 5 cents or eight for 25 cents; \$2.50 per 100. The legend beneath the picture reads: The American Woman and her Political Peers. In many states women are classed politically with idiots, convicts, the insane and Indians--not allowed to vote. Women do not, however, escape taxation. Taxation without representation is tyranny. Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God. The woman in the center of the group is Frances E. Willard, an excellent speaker, dean of women at Northwestern University and president of the WCTU and the National Council of Women in 1888. Kathryn Hanks of Smithville supplied the post card. Kansas City Times, November 28, 1980.



Figure 6

Charity's Universal Subject

Science, Business, and Politicizing the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject

The organized charities and corrections movement of the late nineteenth century wanted its disparate agencies and professionals to come to a consensus about what a proper and deserving aid recipient should look and act like. In his opening speech to the 1897 National Conference of Charities and Corrections, chairman and attorney Alfred Crozier outlined the authoritative scope of the movement:

Definite steps should be taken to crop the entire field of unorganized charity with the seed of organization and systemization; that it should not be left to accidental contagion or spontaneous propagation; that if we have a good thing, we should intelligently offer it to others; that organized charity will not reap its best fruits until every city and hamlet is in harmonious cooperation. This system should extend from the national government down through the state, county, city, village, and private charities to the individual.²¹⁷

Business practitioners, scientists, social workers, politicians, and religious leaders assembled at the national conferences to agree upon and mobilize a universal system of governance based on criteria that reflected their (primarily) upper/middle-class white American values. In his remarks to the national conference, Crozier advocated for a special commission to investigate the “present quantity and status of the defective, delinquent, and dependent classes,” and he urged the U.S. congress to fund the project:

The time has come when we should take an inventory of the doubtful assets of society, and know who they are and where they are, that we may determine what to do with them, and evolve sufficiently adequate remedies. We should first bring to bear on the entire situation the most powerful searchlight we can obtain, in order to reveal the exact existing conditions and all of the facts relating thereto... The congress of the United States should make an adequate appropriation and provide for... competent persons to extensively and thoroughly investigate the present quantity and status of the defective, delinquent, and dependent classes.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Crozier 1897, 7

²¹⁸ Ibid, 5-14

Conference Leaders assigned delegates from State Boards of Charities to govern at the national level, and under their direction the national delegation established what I have identified as eight key sectors in universalized charity management:

1. Investigation (science)
2. Administration (business)
3. Relief Distribution (material and financial)
4. Professional Knowledge Production and Dispersal (national central repository)
5. Cooperation (cross agency and state to state and national reporting)
6. Public Awareness and Support (marketing and newspapers)
7. Professional Education (training centers and university curriculum)
8. The Prevention, Removal, and Control of all Social Evil (legislative influence)

Over the course of the annual proceedings, the national delegation continued to debate and refine the material ways in which all charitable sectors should integrate universal standards into their own management systems. With the above aspirations in mind, topics in the medical and social sciences held enormous influence over the conference proceedings, and the reform ideologies that came to dominate the first decades of the twentieth century such as eugenic science, social and mental hygiene, and race purity began to take shape. In their quest to classify the most “doubtful assets of society,” charity agents agreed with Carson and set out to categorize all feeble-minded, idiots, and imbeciles as a singular causal class that should be expunged from the American landscape: ²¹⁹

With reference to the wide-spread army of degenerates scattered here and there throughout the land, and who are annually adding to the general plethora of feeble-mindedness, we believe that humanity, economy, the protection of society, and the prevention of degeneracy demand the permanent sequestration of the entire body of feeble-minded within our borders in institutions.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Carson, 293-295

²²⁰ Carson, 293

The above statements are illustrative of the over-generalization of feeble-mindedness that was commonplace, held little or no resemblance to any person diagnosed, and regularly conflated the feeble-minded subject with the rhetoric that surrounded the classification. As is evident in Carson's commentary below, the exemplary feeble-minded subject was beginning to emerge as an illusory object of evil—an army of degenerates— wholly responsible for the perpetuation and spread of all forms of social corruption:

The existence of so many feeble-minded establishes a centre from which emanates an almost endless chain of evil... a burden and a menace to the public by their reproduction of other mental weakness—insanity, epilepsy, pauperism, illegitimacy, *and every form of degeneracy* (my emphasis). ²²¹

One result of placing the feeble-minded in some imagined 'center of evil' was a double dipping effect where for the purpose of justifying the fiscal needs of their programs, service agencies counted each feeble-minded, idiot, and imbecile as an *individual* dependent in their statistical reporting, even as they represented the *whole* of the feeble-minded class as a chief causal factor on a broad list of topics. Experts believed that the exemplary feeble-minded subject was almost exclusively responsible for the nation's increasing crime, pauperism, prostitution, homelessness, sexual licentiousness, intemperance, and unemployment. In 1898, one of the founding members of the *Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* employed modernity's discourse of the 'queue of intellectuality and development to permanently deny full human status to the recently conjured exemplary feeble-minded subject:

The pauper can sometimes be made self-supporting, the incorrigible, so called, may sometimes be given a new start, the insane have a chance of recovery. Every other class of dependent and delinquent has one or more chances of altering his condition. The

²²¹ *ibid*

feeble-minded alone is the exception. He, unfortunately, is handicapped from the cradle to the grave. When you have done your very best for him, his highest attainment is to become what someone has called “two thirds of a man.”²²²

In the 1898 article *Charities Conference Ends: Interesting Papers on the Prevention of Feeble-Mindedness and the Right to Public Welfare*, the New York Sun reiterated Knight’s “two thirds a man” assessment and echoed his conclusion that the feeble-minded and imbecile classes were uneducable, “wholly illegitimate” and the principal source of all vice and crime in New York City.²²³ News stories, editorials, and popular media reports were largely uncritical of the hierarchical interpretations of degeneracy that played out at the conferences, and the American public gained their knowledge about the dangers posed by the exemplary feeble-minded subject through the stories written by journalists that attended the conferences.

In her opening statement at the twenty-second National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Mrs. (original naming convention) C.R. Lowell laid out her vision of charity as ‘moral oversight for the soul’ and described her plan to rank the management of pauperism, tramps, crime, insanity, and degeneracy in a manner that would separate the potentially productive from the helplessly unproductive. In accordance with the political moment, Lowell drew on social fears to situate the idiot and feeble-minded classes at the bottom of the social and biological ladders:

The public relief I advocate would consist of three stages; the first, a decent lodging place... where men and women might remain for seven days. Second, a Farm School, where training lasts from six months to two years should be given to fit its inmates for country life; and third; what General Booth has called an asylum for moral idiots where men and women who have proved themselves incorrigible shall be shut away from harming themselves and others. As General Booth says, “It is a crime against the race to

²²² G. H. Knight 1898, 306

²²³ The New York Sun 1898

allow those who are so inveterately depraved the freedom to wander abroad, infect their fellows, prey upon society, and multiply their kind.²²⁴

The movement did refine and formalize standards for investigating, defining, categorizing, classifying, counting, and tracking the subjects of charity and corrections, and through their “harmonious cooperation,” the feeble-minded, idiot, and imbecile became officially recognized as an increasing threat to the nation’s economy. The 1890 U.S. Census report indicated that the number of feeble-minded had increased significantly since the census first published its national counts in 1880 when the report noted the presence of “76,000 feeble-minded persons in the United States,” while the 1890 numbers indicated an “increase of 2,000 a year” with a final tally of 96,000 feeble-minded accounted for nationally.²²⁵ While there was some level of disparagement over the validity of the numbers, and much heated discussion over the reason for the increase in the feeble-minded population, there was resounding agreement that something needed to be done to protect society from what was increasingly being represented as “a class who are found in every condition of life—a burden upon the home, a tax upon the community,”²²⁶ and “prolific in the production of crime, pauperism, illegitimacy, prostitution, insanity, and epilepsy.”²²⁷ Crozier believed that modern science was the link between abstractions over what to do with the feeble-minded and the development of concrete plans to remove the exemplary feeble-minded subject from American culture:

The design has been to select practical rather than theoretical subjects and have them presented by those who could suggest definite places and improved methods for inauguration in the various communities whose charities are as yet unorganized along modern scientific lines.²²⁸

²²⁴ Lowell, 1895

²²⁵ G. H. Knight 1895 149-156

²²⁶ *ibid*

²²⁷ Carson 1898, 77

²²⁸ Crozier, 1897, 5-14

Locating the practical subjects that Crozier called for meant that disparate agencies in charge of allocating material and financial support would need to devise a science-based system that embraced heredity and degeneracy theories, statistical methodologies, and the expertise of social scientists. I find that as the nineteenth century concluded, the national charities and corrections movement had come to the following consensus about what measures to take to serve the poor, protect society, and strengthen American democracy:

1. Apply modern methods in medical, social, biological, and political sciences in charity research and in the administration of charity and corrections measures.
2. Integrate 'modern' business practices, systems, and measures of accountability into private, state, and national charities and corrections systems.
3. Construct and execute a counting structure based on the science of statistics for naming and categorizing dependents, delinquents, and degenerates.
4. Develop a national system of registration for cross-agency reporting and the tracking of all aid recipients, institutionalized subjects, and those arrested and/or charged with criminal conduct.
5. Build a central repository for disseminating professional and academic literature.
6. Specify recipients by aid and agency type, either public, private, or individual charity.
7. Once the above criteria were set in place, authorities would employ the agreed upon measures to influence legislative measures, public policy, and social and political thought related to the 'dependent, degenerate, and defective' classes.²²⁹

Media savvy charity reform leaders understood the role that the press could perform in helping them to convince the American public that charity, business, and science were not contradictory terms. In 1897, Frances R. Morse recommended that organization members should prepare to "do direct propagandist work," by inserting the charities and corrections perspective into "matters constantly claiming public attention in the newspapers which might advantageously considered from the charity organization point of view."²³⁰ Morse also believed that national charity and corrections should seek "businessmen and women" to "write on

²²⁹ These lists are based on my reading of the national conference proceedings from 1874-1900.

²³⁰ Toronto, 62

charity organization and on all coming within its scope,” for publication in newspapers and magazines.²³¹ Legislative influence was another core principle of the movement and leaders believed that consistent exposure in the press could help them to influence public opinion on the legislative issues they promoted. The chapter that follows will explore how, in their attempt to apply the above strategies and practices, the charity and corrections movement, government agencies, social reformers, and medical practitioners of the late nineteenth century worked with the press to shape the cultural logics that generated the social hygiene and eugenic movements that reigned over the first quarter of the next century.

Between 1874 and 1900, the tone of charity reform shifted from that of education and rehabilitation of the feeble-minded class to questions about how to best protect society from what was quickly becoming redefined as “dangerous hordes of feeble-minded.”²³² In his speech to the 1898 National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Dr. Knight seamlessly integrated topics in humanitarianism, reform, imbecility, and biology into a heredity-based argument that openly targeted feeble-minded imbeciles for extermination:

The question we must face in view of this terrible yearly increase of this class is not, What shall we do with this fraction of humanity, but How shall we get rid of it? How shall we cut off the supply? That insanity, pauperism, and crime produce imbecility we know. That imbecility produces these in turn we are beginning to find out. That heredity is a direct cause of imbecility no one denies who has given the problem intelligent study. How shall we wipe out heredity? ²³³

As the nineteenth century came to an end, getting rid of developmental and intellectual differences in their many forms was now a central aim of the charities and corrections movement. Scientific principles, the science of charity, scientific philanthropy, the science of

²³¹ *ibid*

²³² G. H. Knight 1895, 149-156

²³³ G. H. Knight 1898, 305

heredity, scientific Christianity, and sanitary science became dominant topics of discussion, and as charities and corrections became comfortably placed under the domain of the modern sciences, the feeble-minded found themselves of “special scientific interest to the profession,” the press, and the American imagination.²³⁴

²³⁴ Powell, 1886, 386-398

Chapter Four: The Political Economies of Heredity

Characterizing the Feeble-minded Threat

The National Conference of Charities and Corrections held its first official meeting in New York City in May of 1874, a full nine years before British sociologist and statistician Sir Francis Galton crafted the infamous neologism *eugenics* to define the study of heritable traits and “the conditions under which men of high type are produced.”²³⁵ While scholars across multiple disciplines have rightfully identified the turn of the twentieth century as a key period in the *cultural* rise of the U.S. eugenics movement, my analyses of the papers presented at the National Conference of Charities and Corrections shows that charity and humanitarian reformers were in full debate over eugenic ideals (while not yet labelled as such) regarding the heritability of degenerate traits well before eugenic thought formally erupted into a full-fledged national movement in the United States.²³⁶ Contemporary Theologist Dennis Durst believes that a more nuanced history of the rise of eugenic principles in the United States should take into account that the escalation of eugenic discourse in the early 1900s was an extension of French psychiatrists Benedict Morel’s effort to link undesirable biological traits to the dogma of original sin.²³⁷ In Morel’s 1857 text *Treatise of Degeneracy*, the renowned psychiatrist introduced his “degeneration theory” as a framework for explaining that all human abnormalities were incurable tragedies triggered by original sin and further accelerated by heredity factors.²³⁸ According to Durst, Morel defined degeneration as a “morbid deviation from the primitive human type,” and psychiatrists, journalists, and politicians applied his

²³⁵ Galton 1883, 46

²³⁶ (Durst 2017) (Erevelles 2011) (Bogdan 1988) (Mitchell and Snyder 2015) (Trent 1994) (Dolmage 2011) (Smith 2004) (Longmore 2001)

²³⁷ Durst 2017, 13-18

²³⁸ Ibid

degeneration theory to define the immoral nature of so-called human deficiencies such as insanity, criminality, and pauperism.²³⁹ In his analysis of the historical and geographical reach of Morel's 1850s philosophy, Durst found that the dogged ideology of degeneracy was utilized, altered, and deployed in numerous contexts and time periods:

Transatlantic fascination with heredity would only grow in the ensuing decades, and versions of degeneration theory spread across many disciplines. The discordant ways degeneration was deployed by Protestant theologians and scientists in American context add yet more layers to a multi-layered historical narrative of degeneration.²⁴⁰

It is evident from the proceedings of the national charities and corrections conferences that popular topics for discussion included social progress and reform, degeneracy, and an unrelenting fascination with human heredity as a causal factor of a myriad of national social problems. Charities and corrections presenters endorsed Morel's idea that heredity traits were one metric for tracking degenerate populations, but many strayed from his foundational argument that degeneracy was *caused* by the taint of original sin and *maintained* by heredity factors. Reform agents instead favored a slightly more secular approach to degeneracy that, although still based in Christian values, relied on the science of heritability (later known as eugenics) to support their claim that biological factors were the primary cause of degeneracy, and to promote the idea that restrictive breeding and segregation policies would purge the American gene pool of all degenerate types. Charity and social reform agents conceptualized heredity theory (soon to be named eugenics) and social reform measures (reclassified as social hygiene by eugenicist and sociologist Havelock Ellis in 1912) as complementing strategic devices for furthering their pursuit and vision for social and biological progress in the United States.

²³⁹ Durst 2017, 11-12

²⁴⁰ Durst 2017, 14

Amos G. Warner was a prominent political economist, respected practitioner in the fields of charity reform and philanthropy, and a leading supporter of the charity organization movement. In the introduction to the fourth edition of Warner's 1894 text *American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics*, sociologist Mary Jo Deegan praised the interdisciplinarity of his work, recognized Warner as one of the nation's leading late nineteenth century political economists, and claimed that his book *American Charities* had "crystalized the views of men and women working in economics, sociology, history, and philanthropy... [that] defined the approach on problems of poverty, mental illness, public child care, and philanthropy."²⁴¹ Warner firmly believed that the longevity of the emerging national charities and corrections movement was dependent upon resolving what he identified as a "direct collision" between economic and philanthropic approaches to relief work. These politically driven debates centered on whether heritable degeneracy or social conditions were to blame for the recent surge in U.S. aid recipients; if almsgiving lifted the impoverished or nurtured their dependency; the comparative benefits of curative and/or preventative measures; whether philanthropy's primary function was to protect the nation or relieve individual suffering; and finally, best methods for identifying, enumerating, and tracking the dependent and degenerate classes. Warner argued for both the rational and the compassionate approaches to resolving these philosophical divisions and he was of the philosophy that the relational distance between the emotional instincts of the so called 'humanity-mongers' and the rational backers of the 'dismal science' of

²⁴¹ Deegan 1930, ix-xxviii

political economy were actually integral to furthering, in his words, “sense and sympathy in the direction of human affairs.” ²⁴²

It was Warner’s recommendation that sustainable solutions to pauperism, crime, and degeneracy in the United States would require experienced field workers to labor alongside the philosophers of science (primarily the science of biology, statistics, and social research), leaders in business, religious leaders, and wealthy philanthropists. The resolution to the philosophical divisions over the distribution of charity was, as Warner saw it, to integrate deep compassion for the needy with equal emphasis given to both the rational dispersion of material relief and the elimination of causal factors:

If our instincts were all healthy, or our intellects all perfect, we could rely upon either side of our nature without fear of blundering... so each man, in threading his way along the devious paths of conduct, must sometimes put rational restraints on his emotions, and at other times be content to let his instincts save him from his intelligence. This principle, which holds in national and personal affairs, holds also in the formulation of a true social philosophy. ²⁴³

Even as Warner advocated for the co-mingling of rational intellect and sympathetic instincts, his chapter titled *The Feeble-Minded and Analogously Degenerate Classes* characterized feeble-minded idiots as degenerate ‘stock’ that ranged from “the child that is simply dull... to the gelatinous mass that simply eats and lives.”²⁴⁴ Warner admitted that he struggled to define what constituted feeble-mindedness while at the same time he readily cited feeble-mindedness as a causal factor of crime, dependency, and pauperism—all of paramount concern to the national charities organization movement:

If it is difficult to give an exact definition of insanity, it is manifestly more difficult to give an exact definition of feeble-mindedness... in this particular class, which is commonly of

²⁴² Warner 1894, 18-19

²⁴³ Warner 1894, 275-277

²⁴⁴ *ibid*

very degenerate stock, or made up of degenerate individuals, a study of the cases of feeble-mindedness or idiocy will give much help in the appreciation of pauperism. It therefore seems advisable to enquire what has been ascertained in this matter, although we have not considered the causes of dependency in other groups.²⁴⁵

Warner's conflation between cause and effect in relation to feeble-mindedness was a standard and unchallenged practice, and this professional uncertainty over diagnostic terminologies spilled into American culture for decades. Although in the late 1800s society continued to operate under the common misperception that feeble-mindedness was a personal moral failing, the charities and corrections movement, press, and American public struggled to pinpoint whether feeble-mindedness was symptomatic of environmental and social circumstances, or the central source of all dysgenic characteristics. The emergence of heredity theories, statistical measurements, and the social scientists that purported to explain that feeble-mindedness passed from generation to generation—and that the feeble-minded were the cause of destructive and degraded environments—were influential factors that helped to alleviate any lingering disparities in the symptom v. cause divide.

²⁴⁵ Ibid

Poor Brains & The Discourse of American Intellectuality:



Figure 1

On July 29, 1885, Honolulu's Daily Pacific Commercial Advertiser ran the storyline: "POOR BRAINS: BRAINS OF CRIMINAL AND OF THE IDIOTIC AND IMBECILE"

"It is not, perhaps, as universally understood that poor brains burden society with imbecility and idiocy not only, but with criminality as well. Enlightenment has wonderfully modified the estimate of the root of evil in humanity, and that the human heart is by nature "desperately wicked" is, if not an absolute tenet, quite a frail article of belief, and well-nigh gone to pieces as a basis of ethical or religious teaching. The study of poor brains is helping to advance general intelligence toward the re-ordering of society that will eventually eliminate them."²⁴⁶

Columnist Lucinda B. Chandler was vice-president of the

Woman's Christian Temperance Alliance of Illinois, a well-known

lecturer, political economist, author, and according to the *College*

Equal Suffrage Club: Women and Her Work, "a militant

suffragist... that identified with every progressive movement of the day."²⁴⁷ In 1893, WCTU

president Frances Willard spotlighted Chandler a her biographical sketch of nineteenth century

American women where she touted Chandler's devotion to Christian socialism and the "total

abstinence principle."²⁴⁸ Chandler regularly contributed to national and local newspapers and

magazines and her columns included topics in moral hygiene, humanitarianism, and the

women's reform movement.²⁴⁹ In her *Honolulu Daily Pacific Commercial* article entitled *Poor*

Brains (figure 1), Chandler shared her insights from the 1884 St. Louis National Conference of

Charities and Corrections and she wrote a particularly favorable review of a small segment of a

paper presented by Dr. Isaac Kerlin, where he explored recent theories that claimed to have

located similarities in the criminal brain and the brain of the idio/imbecile.

²⁴⁶ Chandler 1885

²⁴⁷ College Equal Suffrage Club 1919

²⁴⁸ Willard and Livermore 1893

²⁴⁹ ibid

Dr. Kerlin was superintendent of the Institute for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children at Elwyn, PA, co-founder *the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions: Idiot and Feeble-Minded Persons*, and the author of multiple texts on idiocy and feeble-mindedness that included the widely referenced text—and the subject of Chandler’s “*Poor Brains*” column—“*Provision for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children*.”²⁵⁰ Kerlin was a formidable actor in the charity field, arguably one of the foremost medical authorities on the topic of idiocy and feeble-mindedness in the second half of the nineteenth century, and his theories on the heritability, environmental influences, and congenital degeneracy in relation to feeble-mindedness are explored throughout this chapter. At this juncture, navigating the ways in which popular columnist and ‘militant suffragist’ Lucinda Chandler explained Kerlin’s presentation to her readers will provide insight into how the press and popular culture helped spread perilous generalizations about the feeble-minded and imbecile classes.

In *Poor Brains: Brains of Criminals and the Idiotic and Imbecile*, Lucinda Chandler limited her commentary and her conclusions to small and out of context segment of Kerlin’s talk, where he addressed the *possibility* of, “analogies between the brains of criminals and the brains of idiotic and imbecilic persons not under criminal accusation.”²⁵¹ In the final paragraph of her column, Chandler underscored that any state that wished to rid itself of all criminality should make a concerted effort to avert the reproduction of any future idiot, insane, or feeble-minded persons:

To eliminate poor brains must be considered a vital and paramount service. If the state may sequester criminals for the safety of society, and sequester the insane, imbecile,

²⁵⁰ I. N. Kerlin 1884

²⁵¹ Kerlin, cited in Chandler 1885

and idiot for their own protection, the next step in order is to summon science and study to ascertain the avertible causes of idiocy, insanity, and crime.²⁵²

A few months prior to the release of Chandler's newspaper column, *The Standing Committee to the Eleventh National Conference of Charities and Reforms* published the seventeen-page transcript of Kerlin's paper presentation, *Provision for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children*. In my close reading of the transcribed text, I found that Chandler omitted substantial portions of Kerlin's talk and she failed to address his attempts to persuade the national conference to acknowledge the financial and social needs of idiotic and feeble-minded children. While Kerlin did recognize what Chandler claimed was "an interesting and highly suggestive point" regarding the similarity of the brain in idiots and criminals, he made no reference to "poor brains" nor did he recommend, as Chandler suggested, "to eliminate poor brains must be considered a vital and paramount service."²⁵³ ²⁵⁴ In his opening comments, Kerlin announced the recent founding of the *Standing Committee on the Provision for Idiot and Feeble-Minded* and he chided members of the *National Conference of Charities and Corrections* for their disinterest in helping feeble-minded individuals:

It is not strange that the claims of idiotic and feeble-minded children should have waited a hearing until your twelfth conference; for this clientage is almost a voiceless one, hidden away often from its nearest neighborhood, shunned of companionship, and until the last census but half reported. ²⁵⁵

Chandler disregarded Kerlin's concern for the care of feeble-minded and idiotic children and instead supported her point by exploiting small segments of his analyses concerning Russian pathologists Moroz Benedickt's *Anatomical Study of the Brains of Criminals*, and Richard

²⁵² Chandler 1885

²⁵³ *ibid*

²⁵⁴ In later works, Kerlin became a staunch advocate for the permanent segregation of the feeble-minded.

²⁵⁵ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 3

Dugdale's now infamous publication *The Jukes: A study of Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity*.²⁵⁶ Chandler drew from selected excerpts of Kerlin's description of these works to highlight what Benedickt defined as a "confluent fissure type... altering the normal formation of the surface (active) part of the brain," and to bolster her own claim that "both imbecile and criminal brains posed equal danger to society."²⁵⁷ In focusing on Benedickt's theory of the criminal brain, Chandler lost sight of Kerlin's primary point, which was more a political and social statement than a medical conclusion, and mischaracterized his motives for bringing the two studies into his discussion in the first place.

Kerlin was frustrated over the lack of interest in whether the subjects of either study exhibited traits of feeble-mindedness, imbecility, or idiocy, and he pointed out that both investigators focused exclusively on the 'criminal brain', and so far as Dugdale's Jukes were concerned, the heritability of criminal and deviant behaviors. Chandler relied heavily on her own reading of Benedickt's 'pathology of twelve criminal brains,' yet she failed to include Kerlin's argument that the scope of Benedickt's study was far too limited:

He [Benedickt] found... a marked peculiarity, --a tendency of the principal fissures to run into each other producing what he terms a "confluent fissure type" ...unfortunately, brief mention is made of the mental abilities of these twenty-two cases. In seven, the men are described as excessively ignorant or of weak mental power.²⁵⁸

Kerlin believed it possible that the subjects of both investigations were "not so much criminals as mental and moral imbeciles," and he proposed that it was likely the criminal tendencies Dugdale found in his study were the result of inadequate social supports during childhood that compelled the feeble-minded into a life of crime as a matter of survival in their adolescent and

²⁵⁶ Dugdale's work continues to appear in research projects today and is discussed in depth later in this work.

²⁵⁷ Chandler 1885

²⁵⁸ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 12

adult years.²⁵⁹ Chandler's readership had limited (if any) access to Kerlin's transcript and they could reasonably assume, based upon Chandler's omissions, that Kerlin had also come to the conclusion that the 'Jukes' criminality was a foregone conclusion, that all idiots and feeble-minded people were destined to a life of crime, and that all criminals were feeble-minded. Chandler avoided Kerlin's lengthy pathology on the degrees and grades of idiocy, ignored his plea for social supports, and her narrative lapses reinforced the logistical impasse that Kerlin drew out in his full presentation—that in their resolve to focus solely on criminal behaviors both researchers failed to adequately quantify the presence of feeble-mindedness or idiocy in the subjects they studied:

In social and government dealing with the defective classes, it is all-important that a right interpretation be put upon observed phenomena; for, if a mistake be made in the premises, the sequences of the relief or correction administered may be most detrimental. To illustrate what I mean, I cannot do better than to note the so-called Juke family from a point of observation which does not seem to have been hitherto taken... any close study of this unfortunate people reveals clearly the existence of a neurotic taint as the rational explanation of their crime, pauperism, and bestiality, and suggests all through their needed protection against themselves.²⁶⁰

Richard Dugdale first presented the study referenced by Kerlin, *Heredity Pauperism: As Illustrated in the 'Juke' Family*, during the 1877 Annual Conference of Boards of Public Charities and Corrections in Saratoga. Dugdale was deeply invested in the social sciences and he spent his early years as merchant, manufacturer, and proprietor of his family linen shop in New York City, where he later was said to have embraced "the opportunity for study of a distinct social class of social phenomena and the promise of earning means for future freedom of investigation."²⁶¹ Dugdale fostered his interests in social sciences and business through his affiliation with

²⁵⁹ Ibid

²⁶⁰ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 10-13

²⁶¹ Cited in Estabrook 1916, 2

organizations such as the New York Sociological Club, the Civil Service Reform Association, The New York Association for the Advancement of Science and Arts, and the American Free Trade League, and, at the age of 27, he was appointed to his position as Secretary of the Prison Association of New York, where he later claimed to have attended “every executive committee meeting from 1868 to 1880.” ²⁶²

Forty years after Dugdale received high acclaim and widespread public recognition for *Heredity Pauperism: As Illustrated in the “Juke” Family*, Arthur Estabrook of the Eugenics Records Office and its subsidiary the Eugenics Research Association (ERA) revisited the ‘Jukes’ lineage in his 1915 investigation of criminal traits and feeble-mindedness. In his introductory chapter, Estabrook drew from writer George H. Putnam’s memoirs, wherein the publisher eulogized Dugdale as “an Englishman who had inherited a small competency that saved him from giving daily hours to business work... he had large ideal for the education of the community.”²⁶³ According to Estabrook, it was in July of 1874 that Dugdale was appointed to “inspect thirteen of the county jails of the State of New York,” and after careful study of the inmate surveys that he had designed, Dugdale was inspired to broaden the scope of his family history studies to include those living in the general population of Ulster County. Dugdale introduced his now infamous “Jukes of Ulster County” in a presentation he gave at the 1877 charities and corrections conference:

The “Jukes” is a pseudonym which was given to a numerous family living in Ulster County, N.Y., who came under the observation of the reader of this paper while making an official examination of the county jails in 1874, in behalf of the Prison Association of New York.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Estabrook 1916

²⁶³ Estabrook 1916

²⁶⁴ R. Dugdale 1877

Although Dugdale made brief mention of one nameless study, “conducted with a degree of zeal and exactness which established, beyond dispute, that heredity also transmits chronic constitutional affections, insanity, idiocy, disease, longevity, temperament instinct and passion,” he did not mention any observed presence of idiocy or imbecility in the ‘Jukes,’ other than by secondary descriptions offered in their criminal histories.²⁶⁵ Returning to Kerlin’s paper presentation at the charities and corrections conference in 1884, the superintendent of the Institute for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children at Elwyn discussed his frustration over the limits of Dugdale’s study:

The percentage of Idiocy and Insanity as presented by Mr. Dugdale’s Table VII. on diseases, malformations, and injuries, bad as it is, is manifestly short of the truth; for an analysis of the specific tables furnishes larger proportions. Blindness, an evident physical infirmity, is reported, because so evident; feebleness of mind and insane conditions, less readily distinguished, are passed over in silence; while this bias of study, being the detection of pauperism, crime, and prostitution, gives comprehensive figures. We cannot believe that less idiocy and less insanity existed in the Juke family that pertains to the general population... I submit that there is free in the community a host of crime-doers who are not so much criminals as mental and moral imbeciles.²⁶⁶

Dugdale was interested in “the correlation which exists between physical, biological, and social phenomena,” with a specific focus on heredity pauperism and whether a link could be made between generational pauperism and prostitution, laziness, licentiousness, alcoholism, vice, and crime.”²⁶⁷ While by his own admission, Dugdale’s conclusions were mixed, he did state with certainty that “both heredity and variation were true,” and he went to great lengths to describe the “inferior” geographical and social factors that he believed held a strong influence over the ‘Jukes’ criminal tendencies.

²⁶⁵ Ibid

²⁶⁶ I. N. Kerlin, 1884

²⁶⁷ R. Dugdale, 1877

Dugdale's research and theories of heredity pauperism ultimately became convenient fodder for the early-twentieth century eugenicists and social hygiene reformers that fought for the elimination of the exemplary feeble-minded subject. In the period between 1877 and 1940, social service manuals, charity grant applications, scholarly articles, civil rights and feminist leaders, newspapers, philanthropists, lawyers, and educators cited Dugdale's 'Jukes' as definitive evidence that feeble-mindedness and degeneracy traits were causal factors of criminality that passed from generation to generation. In truth, Dugdale focused his study on pauperism and crime and made little attempt to explicitly link features of feeble-mindedness or idiocy to the 'Jukes' so-called criminality.²⁶⁸ In the following segment of his 1877 conference presentation, Dugdale explained how he interpreted the relationship between heredity, environment, and pathological conditions, and he stressed that while there was scientific evidence to support the inheritability of physical traits he believed the evidence was less definitive in features of intellectuality:

We have remarked that the law of heredity is much more firmly established in the domain of physiological and pathological conditions than it is as respects of the transmission of intellectual and moral aptitudes. In proportion as we approach features which are moulded (original spelling) by education, they are less transmissible, and more completely governed by the laws of variation, which are largely referable to environment.²⁶⁹

Returning to Chandler's *Poor Brains* article, in her representation of Kerlin and Dugdale, the columnist accentuated the 'Jukes' criminality and drew on sensational rhetorics to make the leap between their criminality and feeble-mindedness. Much like the popular press and the delegates at the annual national conference of charities and corrections, Chandler's article

²⁶⁸ Dugdale does address this connection in his 1877 presentation to the conference of charities and corrections.

²⁶⁹ Dugdale 1877

avoided any specific definition of idiocy, feeble-mindedness, or imbecility and instead emphasized ambiguous anti-social stereotypes that gave the impression that criminality defined feeble-mindedness, and feeble-mindedness was what defined criminality. In his conference presentation, Kerlin went to great lengths to counter this type of “popular and prejudiced sentiment springing from inadequate knowledge of the subject,” and he walked his audience through the four “chief varieties or grades of idiocy,” (none of which included “poor brains”) grouped under the following categories: ²⁷⁰

- 1) Idiocy: (a) *Apathetic* (b) *Excitable*
- 2) Idio-imbeciles.
- 3) Imbeciles: (a) *Lower Grade* (b) *Middle Grade* (c) *High Grade*
- 4) Juvenile Insanity. ²⁷¹

Kerlin explained the features of each group and he began by describing what he called the less common, “saddest and lowest group... a helpless gelatinoid creature... a profound idiot,” and the similarly framed “*apathetic idiot*,” and “*excitable idiots*,” and he stated this classification of individuals were “taxing the ingenuity of their present caretakers after wasting the best life of their families.” ²⁷² He also blamed popular ignorance and overuse of the generic term ‘idiocy’ on “accidental and imperfect acquaintance” with the profound, apathetic, and excitable idiots in this first category. ²⁷³ Kerlin discussed this second group in more affectionate terms, and characterized those individuals that fell in the “idio-imbecile” category as follows:

Many have the facial appearance, the deformed heads, the dwarfishness of body, the narrow buccal arches, the imperfect teeth of very imperfect creatures; but there is a dawning intelligence... they feebly grasp, through their shyness and sensitivities, for the better things about them. Expecting them to do little or nothing, the trainer is daily

²⁷⁰ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 4

²⁷¹ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 5

²⁷² *ibid*

²⁷³ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 6

sustained by successes... as their capacity is gradually developed, they are carried forward into the higher ranks, to become our most interesting children.²⁷⁴

Kerlin held equal hope for “*middle-grade imbeciles*,” that he indicated were “orderly and neat... from habit training... patient under the discipline of light work, many of them becoming useful drudges and domestic servants.”²⁷⁵ Finally, Kerlin characterized his last grouping, the ‘*high grade imbecile*,’ as a class that would align with more ‘normal’ individuals if not for their lack of moral judgment:

The mental deviation or deviation is often so slight, with the imperfection is found in such a limited range, perhaps involving only the power to form judgement of social properties, or a judgment of moral risk, or a judgment of the prevalent wickedness outside of asylums, that it may seem strange that several... should be under the care of an institution.²⁷⁶

In his 1844 presentation to the national conference of charities and corrections, Kerlin argued that all of the classes he described had the capacity to improve in institutional care and he advised conference members that the “wisdom and economy of their training and education are no longer in question in those communities where institutions have been established.”²⁷⁷

By 1890, Kerlin had shifted his thinking drastically and he designated a new classification that he called “the moral imbecile,” and he stated to the national charities and corrections conference the classification constituted “a group of cases quite distinct in their symptoms of derangement, and requiring forms of discipline quite unusual compared with those... ordinarily recognized as idiotic”²⁷⁸ By 1876, Kerlin and *The Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* agreed upon a set of definitions and they assigned

²⁷⁴ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 4-7

²⁷⁵ Ibid

²⁷⁶ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 3

²⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁸ I. Kerlin 1889, 244

symptomatic features for each category that were later shared by Kerlin at the association conference:

Idiocy and imbecility are conditions in which there is a want of natural or harmonious development of the mental, active, and moral powers of the individual affected, usually associated with some visible defect or infirmity of the physical organization and functional anomalies, expressed in various forms and degrees of disordered vital action... idiocy and imbecility are dependent *generally* on hereditary or prenatal causes; *occasionally* on the diseases or accidents of infancy, *rarely* also, upon certain debilitating influences of childhood (emphasis original).²⁷⁹

When C.T. Wilber spoke to the association in 1881, he objected to popular overgeneralizations that ignored the nuance of the medical sciences:

What is called idiocy is a mental state. This is true, no matter what our idea may be of the nature of mind. It is true, whatever may be the physiological or pathological conditions associated with it. Thus, when we speak of idiocy, or imbecility, of fatuity, or feeble-mindedness, we refer to grades and shades of mental states below the normal standard of human intelligence... The term idiot, then, however originally used, has acquired a popular meaning... used in a generic sense, covering the whole range referred to... there is a mental image formed of an individual thoroughly stamped with the peculiar features of the class.²⁸⁰

In 1889, in his article *The Moral Imbecile*, Kerlin took a decidedly different tone and approach to the classifications that he once argued were susceptible to improvement. He now argued that moral imbecility was a congenital condition and, in defense of his change in thinking, he suggested that during the years since his early commentary on the subject of idiocy, “a marked change in professional opinion had been noted, so that it is no longer hazardous to reputation to believe in the existence of a condition termed “moral insanity” nor to refer to it as of commonly congenital origin, and hence better denominated “moral imbecility.””²⁸¹ This new category of individuals were, according to Kerlin, violent, criminal, devoid of moral center with

²⁷⁹ I. N. Kerlin 1876

²⁸⁰ Wilbur 1881

²⁸¹ I. Kerlin 1889, 245

“souls as impressionable to gratitude as the granite slab to the rays of the sun.”²⁸² Even as he argued that this new class was “the worst form of moral perversion” and responsible for the “apparent degradation of our race,” Kerlin still advocated that the state provide them with proper supports. In the years that followed, the ‘moral imbecile’ was placed within the overarching classification of ‘feeble-mindedness’ and, as we will see in the following chapters, the public, press, and government agents consistently conflated the two categorizations and anchored both to criminality, prostitution, degradation, and deviancy. In his 1898 paper presentation *The Prevention of Feeble-mindedness from a Moral and Legal Standpoint*, James Carson applauded Kerlin’s efforts to educate the feeble-minded class, but Kerlin and his colleagues had “failed in realizing an original hope—of qualifying a large number of these unfortunates for safe citizenship.”²⁸³

Even though in her column Chandler exploited Kerlin’s talk to make the case that, “poor brains burden society with imbecility and idiocy not only, but with criminality as well,” Kerlin made no such distinction in his presentation. Kerlin instead suggested that a more realistic explanation for the ‘Jukes’ criminal history was their inability to support or care for themselves *because they were feeble-minded*.²⁸⁴

Any close study of this unfortunate people reveals clearly the existence of a neurotic taint as the rational explanation of their crime, pauperism, and bestiality, and suggests all through their needed protection against themselves.²⁸⁵

What Kerlin believed, and the point Chandler misrepresented in her column, was that there was practical evidence that indicated any link between feeble-mindedness and crime, prostitution,

²⁸² *ibid*

²⁸³ Carson, 1898, 292-303

²⁸⁴ Chandler, 1885

²⁸⁵ I. N. Kerlin, 1884

vagrancy, alcoholism, and/or pauperism was a direct result of environmental conditions and inadequate social supports *in addition to* the heritability of the classification or, congenitally present in Kerlin's later classification of the 'moral imbecile.' In his concluding statement to the conference, Kerlin offered a set of recommendations for the development of institutional settings that were as "homelike as possible" for each classification. Kerlin's ambitious wish list suggested each institution should be housed on at least fifty-acres, include large windows in each sleeping quarter, entertainment space, and dayroom, and provide "five hundred cubic feet of air per inmate," as well as cheerful decorations throughout each dormitory.²⁸⁶ In his final statement, Kerlin argued that once the government, philanthropists, and society addressed the needs that he outlined in his paper, the so-called criminal features of feeble-mindedness and idiocy would eventually fade from view:

There is not field in political economy which can be worked to better advantage for the diminution of crime, pauperism, and insanity than that of idiocy. The early recognition of some of its special; upper, and more dangerous forms would be followed by their withdrawal from their unwholesome environments, and their permanent segregation before they are pronounced criminals.²⁸⁷

While Kerlin called for a system of support for the feeble-minded that would encompass more precise diagnostic measures, care funded by the state, and a social systems that would recognize their potential for improvement, his successor at the Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded held a much less favorable view of his subjects and their future.

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ I. N. Kerlin 1884, 14

The Racist Science of Photography and the Statistical Sciences: *Identifying, Classifying, & Documenting the Exemplary Feeble-minded Subject*

In 1893, Dr. Martin Barr succeeded the late Dr. Isaak Kerlin as Chief Physician and Superintendent at the Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded. Barr was a recurring

90 EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION.

EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION
OF
THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

	<p>IDIOT.</p> <p>Profound. { Apathetic. } Unimprovable. { Excitable. }</p>
<i>Asylum Care.</i>	<p>Superficial. { Apathetic. } Improvable in self-help only. { Excitable. }</p>
	<p>IMBECILE.</p> <p>Improvable in self-help and helpfulness. Trainable in very limited degree to assist others.</p>
	<p>MORAL IMBECILE.</p> <p>Mentally and morally deficient.</p> <p>Low Grade: Trainable in industrial occupations; temperament bestial.</p> <p>Middle Grade: Trainable in industrial and manual occupations; a plotter of mischief.</p> <p>High Grade: Trainable in manual and intellectual arts; with a genius for evil.</p>
<i>Outward Life and Perpetual Guardianship.</i>	
	<p>IMBECILE.</p> <p>Mentally deficient.</p> <p>Low Grade: Trainable in industrial and simplest manual occupations.</p> <p>Middle Grade: Trainable in manual arts and simplest mental acquisitions.</p> <p>High Grade: Trainable in manual and intellectual arts.</p>
<i>Long Apprenticeship and Colony Life Under Protection.</i>	
	<p>BACKWARD OR MENTALLY FEEBLE.</p> <p>Mental processes normal, but slow and requiring special training and environment to prevent deterioration; defect imminent under slightest provocation, such as excitement, over-stimulation or illness.</p>
<i>Trained for a Place in the World.</i>	

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Figure2, M. Barr Mental Defectives: Their History, Treatment, and Training. p. 90. Educational Classification of The Feeble-Minded.

speaker at the national conferences of charities and corrections, the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutes for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons, and meetings of state and national medical societies. Like Kerlin, Barr regularly interacted with the residents of the training school, and Barr selected several to be the subjects of his studies on heredity transmission and feeble-minded traits. In his later years, Kerlin had become less focused on habilitation and training and instead directed his efforts on forming a national strategy that would strengthen the severely underfunded state

systems for maintaining the permanent segregation of the whole of the feeble-minded class. In his 1904 study, *Mental Defectives*, Barr spoke with reverence about his former advisor's legacy, philosophy, and eventual call to improve the health of the nation by permanently sequestering of all feeble-minded, idiots, and imbeciles:

Dr. Kerlin in the name of science, of sociology, as a matter of political economy, of the protection of homes, and all that man holds dear. Through the press, on the platform and in his official reports as in private conversations, he did not cease to press home this

truth, that a truly healthful status of the nation depends upon eliminating from its arteries this most pernicious element... the only feasible plan; the gathering of these unfortunates into homes... protected from the world and the world from them.²⁸⁸

Medical professionals and charity workers accepted the expert etiologies that Barr put forth in his published papers, books, and conference presentations. Between 1898 and 1904, Barr designated and published five main typologies for individuals classified as mentally defective—*idiot, idio-imbecile, imbecile, moral-imbecile* and *backward or mentally feeble*. Barr extended Kerlin's classifications by demarcating five categories into sub-classifications by moral and behavioral characteristics for the purposes of recommending what kind of institutional setting was appropriate for each typology.²⁸⁹ Barr pushed for the material exile of all feebleminded from society, and he was emphatic that his grading system should serve as a reference to determine the category, mode, and geography of their expulsion. In a statement cited in Trent, Barr envisioned an ideal world where all of the feebleminded classes would be "housed by grade and segregated from society—on a reservation of an island, or in some other isolated place."²⁹⁰ Barr grounded his pathology in the data he gathered during his observations of the residents housed at the Pennsylvania Training School, and he based his study conclusions on his own qualitative and quantitative survey of family histories, physical examinations, physiological measurements, and subject photographs that he presented as 'evidence' of their degenerative features. Barr held to his doctrine that there was no 'cure' for feeble-mindedness, idiocy, or imbecility and he argued for their "separation, asexualization (by which he meant involuntary sterilization), and permanent sequestration" in training schools, reform institutions, and farm

²⁸⁸ M. W. Barr 1904, 68

²⁸⁹ cited in Trent 1994, 143.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

colonies.²⁹¹ Barr's *Mental Defectives* was commonly recognized as an authoritative text and one of the premier medical manuals related to degeneracy, mental defect, and feeble-mindedness. Barr's classification schedule (*figure 2*) reappeared in documents through the 1940s, and it continues to make an appearance as a discursive artifact in current day research. In the chart that appeared under the title *Education Classification of the Feeble-Minded*, Barr illustrated his hierarchy of The Feeble-Minded, with sub-categories based upon the type of institution he recommended for each classification.

Barr organized his manual into distinct sections. Chapters I-IV are a useful starting point for contemporary researchers interested in exploring the histories of idiocy as a globally recognized phenomena and for understanding how the classificatory systems shifted between the late 1600s and 1904. In chapters I-IV, Barr's genealogy of idiocy and feeble-mindedness begins in the year 1544 when according to Barr, "the Ancients" believed mental defectives were "objects of derision, aversion, or persecution."²⁹² In his exhaustive account of the phenomena of idiocy in the "genus Homo," Barr invoked discourses of the uncivilized savage as he guided readers through ten case studies that spanned geographic and temporal locations from 1544 Germany, Lithuania in 1661, Ireland circa 1700s, the region that became the United States in 1724, and France's famous Savage of Aveyron of the late 1800s.²⁹³ ²⁹⁴ After sharing his complex rundown of multiple and shifting definitions and the "various titles of mental defect," Barr settled on two important points regarding feeble-mindedness that are of particular interest to this study. First, Barr acknowledged the overarching application of the term 'feeble-mindedness'

²⁹¹ M. Barr 1899, 2

²⁹² Barr, 1904, 24

²⁹³ See: Losure, & Ering, Timothy, 2013, *Wild boy: the real life of the Savage of Aveyron* (1st ed.). Candlewick Press.

²⁹⁴ M. W. Barr 1904, 31

in the United States and admitted “the term feeble-mindedness is now much used... in legal and medical documents, to denote both idiots and imbeciles.” Barr then laid out his own all-encompassing hierarchy of “The Feeble-Minded” that simply deepened the common catch all terminologies he had previously criticized for their overgeneralizing tendencies.²⁹⁵ Barr hoped that his classificatory system would establish with finality that “The Feeble-Minded” was the principal category, and his various iterations of idiocy and imbecility belonged in their own sub-classifications. The definitions that Barr outlined in *Mental Defectives* were ambiguous at best and did little to settle public confusion or to stymie the systemic conflation of the types and categories. In much of his writing, Barr wrote as if there was little distinction between his own classifications and in the early pages of *Mental Defectives*, he stated “feeble-mindedness, including idiocy, and imbecility, is defect either mental or moral or both, usually associated with certain physical stigmata of degeneration,” which seemed to group them into a singular category of mental defect.²⁹⁶

In chapters V-XVIII, Barr took a decidedly different tone as he shifted from historical description to explaining his conceptual frameworks and interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data that he drew from as he constructed his ‘science-based’ classification system. In the second section of his book, Barr stated he set out to pin down “an educational classification, giving the extremes, and intermediate grades of mental defect; and not only defining the status of the individual, but indicating methods of training together with future possibilities.”²⁹⁷ In the forward to *Mental Defectives*, Barr previewed his statistical methods, stated his study intent,

²⁹⁵ M. Barr 1899

²⁹⁶ M. W. Barr 1904, 23

²⁹⁷ M. W. Barr 1904, 89

and explained his outcomes, which deviated significantly from the rehabilitation model laid out by his mentor and predecessor, Isaak Kerlin. In his opening paragraph, Barr accentuated that it was futile to train idiots and he turned to what he called prophylactic measures:

No effort has been spared to render all the statistics accurate, and the statements trustworthy, all doubtful data have been unhesitatingly discarded. In endeavoring to emphasize the utter hopelessness of cure, and also the needless waste of energy in attempting to teach an idiot, I have sought to make clear the possibilities that may be attained in the training of the imbecile, the urgent need of preventing the backward child from degenerating into imbecility and of safeguarding the absolutely irresponsible and immoral from crime and its penalty.²⁹⁸

Barr's 368-page research archive contains photographic plates of subjects he selected to represent "illustrative cases" from his studies at the Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded.²⁹⁹ Barr expected that the photographs he had taken of his students would convince his readers of the degenerative features of his subjects and he was hopeful that this would convince them that *all* idiots, imbeciles, and feeble-minded people should be kept separate from open society (*figure 2*). The writing in Barr's subject notes is ableist, racist, ethnocentric, and misogynistic, and he relied upon ambiguous assessments of his subjects that were in contradiction with his claim to have scientifically "rendered all the statistics accurate."³⁰⁰

Shawn Smith is a visual cultural studies scholar and her research explores the histories of photography in relationship to race and gender. In 2004, Duke University published Smith's work, *Photography on the Color Line, W.E.B. Du Bois, Race and Visual Culture*, and her project illustrates how racist science photography and science archives of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew on vulgar and racist descriptions to bolster the projects of

²⁹⁸ M. W. Barr 1904, vii

²⁹⁹ M. W. Barr 1904, ix

³⁰⁰ *ibid*

nationalism, eugenics and social hygiene. *Photography on the Color Line* is an extraordinary cultural analysis and an archive in its own right that contextualizes W.E.B. Du Bois' 1900 Paris Exposition *American Negro Exhibit* as a "counterarchive," that according to Smith, "shifted the apex of normalcy to rest squarely on an African American middle class by reimagining the racist features of scientific photography."³⁰¹ Smith's project is a comparative archive analysis that considers photography collections that W.E.B. Du Bois curated in the early 1900s as a method of countering the "scientific, institutional, and sensational photographic archives" of the same period.³⁰² More specifically, Smith studied "Du Bois Georgia Negro photographs against archives that sought to pose African American bodies and African American identities in service to racial hierarchies at the turn of the century."³⁰³ Smith maintains that in his archive titled, *Types of American Negroes* and *Health and Physique of the Negro*, Du Bois intentional reimagining of the photographic techniques employed in biological racism was a powerful strategy and it allowed him to "reanimate the African American body, transposing it from the realm of (racist) science to that of class and culture."³⁰⁴ Smith found that scientists of the early 1800s through the early twentieth century were fixated on "inscribing assumptions about Negro inferiority onto bodies of color," and she demonstrates her point in her analysis of the South Carolina slave archive that was commissioned by Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz in 1850. Smith explains that Agassiz commissioned his racist collection of photographs in the hope that they would provide visual support for his theory that the white and Black races were distinct from one another, that white people were inherently more developed than Black people, and that

³⁰¹ Smith 2004, 9

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Smith 2004, 23

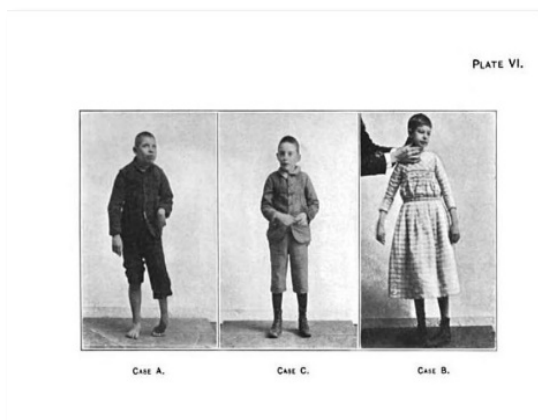
³⁰⁴ Ibid

“different races constituted different species.”³⁰⁵ According to Smith, the racist portraits conjured the “power of the scientific gaze,” and the exploited “the explicitly violent facts of objectification and the literal ownership of the body photographed.”³⁰⁶

Agassiz organized his archive around the classification of the “fifteen daguerreotypes,” that were staged through the dehumanizing racist frames that Smith describes below:

Agassiz hoped to use the photographs to support theories of polygenesis... full-body images of men standing, completely naked, posed in direct frontal, profile, and rear postures, and half-body images of men and women sitting, naked from the waist up, in direct frontal and hard-profile poses. The daguerreotypes demonstrate how quickly photography became harnessed to the sciences of biological racialism in efforts to provide “evidence” of racial difference and inferiority... They jar and disturb... clearly, these images were not made for intimate eyes, but for the cold, hard stare of the laboratory.³⁰⁷

Barr’s framing of his subject photographs in *Mental Defectives* is suggestive of the techniques employed in the South Carolina Slave archive that Smith analyzed in her work. Smith argued that Agassiz’s photographer positioned his subjects through the racist frame of “Negro Savagery”³⁰⁸ and the textual descriptions that he anchored to the images imposed racist



stereotypes onto the people in the photographs.

Barr’s photographic notes similarly relied on dehumanizing terms that encompassed “weak and feeble,” “backward,” “erratic,” “unmanageable,” “animalistic,” “filthy,” “savage,” and “brutish,” and his

Figure 3: 1904 Martin Barr, “Types of Mental Defectives” Plate VI Idiots: Superficial Apathetic., 44.

³⁰⁵ Ibid 44-46

³⁰⁶ Smith 2004, 23-25

³⁰⁷ Ibid

³⁰⁸ Smith 2004

archive served as scientific evidence to bolster eugenic arguments through the mid-1900s.

Barr included diagnostic records that corresponded with each subject photograph and his entries were prescriptive texts that documented whether the subjects pictured belonged in *Asylum Care*, *Colony Life Under Protection*, *Perpetual Guardianship* or, in rare instances, *Trained for a Place in the World*. (figure 2). Just as Smith argued that Agassiz's photography of "daguerreotypes demonstrate how quickly photography became harnessed to the sciences of biological racism,"³⁰⁹ Barr similarly offered his photographs as definitive scientific proof that the feeble-minded and imbecile classes were biologically untrainable, backward, animalistic, and



Figure 4: 1904 Martin Barr, "Types of Mental Defectives" Plate XXXI
Negroid Type, CASE A. P. 181
Digitized by Google, my screenshot.

unfit for general society. According to Smith, Agassiz did not

have to ask his subjects for their permission to be

photographed, and as Smith accurately pointed out, this

practice is illustrative of the "extreme differences in power

between the photographer and the subject."³¹⁰ Barr's subjects

were inmates under his control and he therefore required no

permission to exploit their portraits for his scientific purposes,

and in fact, handlers can be seen physically restraining their

subjects by grasping them by the neck or shoulder to force them into the portrait frame (figure

3). Many of Barr's photographs follow the frontal and hard profile poses described by Smith,

with the subjects standing erect in front of a stark gray or black background, some naked, and

most are shown with forward and expressionless stares. Barr identified each subject by

³⁰⁹ Smith 2004, 47

³¹⁰ Ibid

pseudonym, made note of their physical features, and included family and social histories that tended to inscribe ableist and racist stereotypes rather than including diagnostic specificities that might have supported his classificatory configurations. In *Photography on the Color Line*, Smith explained that race scientists attempting to show proof that African Americans were inferior to whites were “apparently intrigued by the seeming objectivity of the photograph, and yet frustrated by the actual difficulty of standardizing such images.”³¹¹ Similar incongruities are present in Barr’s archive, for instance, in his description of “Various Types: Cretinoid; Negroid” Barr imposed a confusing and racialized imprint on his subjects that he phrased as scientific observation. In Case A, seen below, under the sub-category “idio-imbecile; negroid type,” as Barr made note of a young girl’s physical characteristics, he called out her white heritage and struggled to link her apparently low intellect to his “Cretinoid; Negroid” classification:

Case A.-R. L. Low – grade girl, 16 years old. Negroid cast of countenance. Skin “mulatto-colored.” Hair black, coarse and straight. Eyes black, large and prominent. Head “bullet shaped,” frontal region comparatively undeveloped. Flat nose, thick lips, often apart, teeth defective. Tone of voice guttural, and articulation imperfect in the very few words attempted...little known of family history, except that her people were not negroes, but ignorant whites.³¹²

Mental Defectives, Figure 4, Plate XXXI, Case A is one of only two instances in his archive when Barr’s ambiguous classification the ‘negroid type’ appears. It is unclear why Barr saw fit to reference her physical features in the context of his classification, why he emphasized her “ignorant white” parents, or how any of these comments were meant to adhere to his ‘science based’ imbecile classification. Similar inconsistencies are apparent in *figure 3* Case C, “American Indian,” with Barr’s descriptive focus again falling on physical traits that he loosely ascribed to

³¹¹ Smith 2004, 46

³¹² Barr 1904, 304

the subject's Indigeneity without providing any clarity that would establish why he assigned the subject to the high-grade imbecile classification. Barr's text often included sweeping and unsubstantiated claims regarding the "recognizable" ethnic types of mental defectives that were absent of any clear evidence beyond his own racialized and vague descriptions:

In considering physical characteristics of mental defectives, the various ethnological types are easily recognizable: the dark skin, curled hair, and thick negroid lips of the Ethiopian; the prominent cheek bones, and deep-set eyes of the American Indian; and the tawny skin, coarse hair and peculiar Chinese cast of countenance of the Mongolian. The cretin who is sometimes confounded with this last named may be distinguished by the short squat figure and pendulous abdomen, wide mouth, flat nose, etc.³¹³

Barr claimed that he had developed "a classification system that shall at once be simple and comprehensive," while he later argued himself into a logistical corner when he stated that the "diversity of times and nationalities... has so far prevented... one common order of classification."³¹⁴ In his own work and writings, Barr did little to interfere with the very ambiguities that he often critiqued.

The National Charities and Corrections movement also struggled to produce a strict scientific classification system that would easily translate across multiple contexts. Paupers, tramps, vagabonds, the insane, and the revision of settlement laws were leading matters of interest at the first annual national charities and corrections conference held in New York City in 1874. At the inaugural conference, R.T. Davies read from his recent report to the *New York Department on Pauperism* that centered on the causes and prevention of pauperism, the problems of "indiscriminate charity," the "statistics of pauperism, crime, insanity" and strategies for "harmonizing" the efforts of local and state boards of charities.³¹⁵ Davies announced that he

³¹³ Ibid., 26

³¹⁴ Barr, 1904

³¹⁵ R. Davies 1874

and other conference leaders believed “it was desirable to have the statistics of pauperism, crime, insanity... made as completely as possible upon a uniform plan.”³¹⁶ To this end, one of the first official organizing acts of inaugural National Charities and Corrections Conference was to form a *Committee on the Plan for the Uniformity of Statistics* that was tasked with developing a universal science-based system to identify, count, and geographically track all the defective and degenerate classes in the United States. The appointed committee members consisted of Franklin B. Sanborn who was an abolitionist, journalist, editor of Boston’s *Commonwealth* newspaper and founder of the *American Social Science Association*, and William P. Letchworth who was a businessman and wealthy philanthropist, president of the *First National Conference of Charities and Corrections*, and founder of *Letchworth Village*. Henry H. Giles of Wisconsin also served on the committee. In their initial report to the conference, the committee vehemently agreed that degeneracy was a problem of inheritance. During their second day of meetings, the committee drafted a general intake form for all charitable agencies that included questions related to the applicant/recipient’s demographic information such as age, name, employment type, and birthplace. When the committee later presented their questionnaire to the conference attendees, they advised that each recording agent should note the presence or history of “mental or moral perversion,” “impairment of the senses”, and/or any “morbid and debasing conditions of mind.”³¹⁷ Of the thirty-five questions that appeared on the recommended form, nineteen made direct reference to heritability while the remainder related to the applicants environmental, social, legal, economic, or physical status.³¹⁸ Under “Section

³¹⁶ Ibid

³¹⁷ R. Davies 1874

³¹⁸ Note* the form appears on pages 88-89 of the conference proceedings. The Preservation Division University of Michigan Libraries contains the sole copy of this document. The bibliographic record notes that pages 90-91 are missing. The intake form

One, *Registered No. of the Individual*," questions seven through nine indicate that the committee was interested in building a permanent record of the 'moral and mental' state of all the nation's charity and corrections subjects while the remainder of the survey addressed the heritability of degenerate traits. Below is a sampling of the final recommended survey questions:

Select Survey Questions by Number:

- 7. What kind of mental or moral perversion, or what morbid and debasing conditions of mind?
- 8. (To what causes are these mental and moral states attributed?)
- 9. Is there proof of insanity, inebriety, epilepsy, paralysis, special feebleness of mind and body, or any other entailment of bodily misfortune from parentage in this person's history? (Illegitimacy, syphilis, and crime should be noted, if in any way concerned with this case.
- 28. Total number of such unfortunates in the three generations, living and dead?
- 30. Total idiotic or weak-minded in three generations.
- 32. Total who have been in penitentiaries or State prisons in three generations (living and dead). ³¹⁹

These questions are especially revealing because they indicate that as early as 1873, there was a concerted effort to quantify a measurable association between 'special feebleness of mind and body,' and heredity. The survey bias conjoined 'moral' and 'mental' qualities and pathologized what any given surveyor might subjectively perceive as the presence of physical, mental, and/or intellectual disabilities.

One of the primary motivations for creating the generalized intake form was to make use of the data collected to build a national clearinghouse for the tracking of all aid recipients, institutionalized subjects, and those arrested and/or charged with criminal conduct. Dr. Elisha Harris, Secretary of the Prison Association of New York, wrote a "concise and clear summary"

referenced above begins on page 88 and question 35 appears at the bottom of page 89. It is possible that the intake form included more than 35 questions.

³¹⁹ R. Davies 1874

that was included in the *Uniformity of Statistics* survey under the heading, Point IV. *Vices and Wrongs which Induce PAUPERISM and the Increase of the Public Burden Caused by DEPENDENT CLASSES (emphasis original)*. Dr. Harris cited intemperance, idleness, debauchery/self-indulgence, and the abandonment of children as four primary causes of pauperism, and in the fifth and final point (below) social hygiene and heredity are discussed as theoretical considerations for determining the cause and cure for dependency, degeneracy, and delinquency:

Permitting the lines of hereditary pauperism, imbecility, insanity, crime, intemperance, and ignorance, to continue in successive generations, without interrupting them by the proper and available remedies and preventative means; these are *wrongs* as well as *vices* of society and individuals (*italics original*).³²⁰

In his follow-up, *Section V. Points to be Noted*, three of Harris' six points explicitly targeted disability, heredity, and degree of idiocy, and directed the intake recorders to "carefully take notice of the following points, respecting the different classes of persons who are dependent": -

The Pauper should have the question of actual misfortune and disability directly answered, respecting the positive causes of such disability; so of the questions concerning idleness, sensuality, vagrancy, or spiritless social and personal degradation. *The Imbecile* should have the questions of consanguinity of parents, of inebriety of either one, their pauperism and condition, and the degree of idiocy of the person or persons in question stated... *The Insane* should have the immediately active, and the remote and determining (physical or moral) causes and obviously connected circumstances carefully stated. The family or heredity causes should be accurately given.³²¹

Neither the survey nor Harris' follow-up advisory section offered guidelines explaining how the survey recorders should make the qualitative judgements that the committee asked them to address. How were social workers, prison professionals, religious charities, and institution intake

³²⁰ Ibid

³²¹ For the complete list of Harris' eight points see *Proceedings of the First Annual Conference of Charities*

employees to determine if their subjects were “openly immoral, sensual, and debased,” by what measure were they to calculate the “total of idiotic or weak-minded in three generations (living or dead),” and, what constituted as “proof of insanity, inebriety... special feebleness of mind and body?”³²² In the years that followed the inaugural gathering, experts at the national conference of charities and corrections struggled to pin down scientific methods for answering these critical questions and the distinction between feeble-mindedness and the evils of society grew more imperceptible each year.³²³

Transnational Economies and The Cultural Production of Intellectual Superiority and Race Progress: *The Rise of the America’s Philanthropic Empire*

As the nation’s first charity organizers travelled to New York City in the spring of 1874, the United States was in the first throws of the Long Depression (1873-1879) that preceded the crash of 1893 and that was caused in part by the international financial panics that began in Vienna in early 1873, followed by the United States and Germany later that same year.³²⁴

Although the underlying economic, social, and political issues that triggered the panics of 1873 and 1893 were multifaceted and they varied between nations, historians largely agree that European overspeculation in U.S. railroads and the announced bankruptcy of the Philadelphia based investment bank *Jay Cooke and Sons* were chief contributing factors.³²⁵

The consequences of the transnational crash and the Long Depression were ongoing, and they are impossible to adequately address in the confines of this project. However, an array

³²² R. Davies 1874

³²³ In 1909, Psychologist and ERO contributor H.H. Goddard introduced the new classification of the moron into the categorization of feeble-mindedness. This introduction was informed by eugenic discourses and will be covered in chapters 5 and 6 of this work.

³²⁴ H. C. Davies 2020, Giroux 2013

³²⁵ See Giroux 2013 and Davies 2020

of studies that have documented the histories of the economic downfall are relevant to this work. In his academic text *Business Scandals, Corruption, and Reform: An Encyclopedia*, economic Historian Gary A. Giroux described the disastrous events of 1873 that unfolded in the financial sectors, and he points out some of the social, cultural, and economic consequences of the Long Depression that lasted through the turn of the twentieth century:

The failure of Jay Cooke triggered the panic. Banks called in their loans, depositors demanded cash, and speculators sold stocks and bonds. The New York Stock Exchange closed for 10 days. Money and credit dried up and hundreds of banks and brokers failed, followed by some 18,000 businesses. Another deep depression followed, during which the first widespread doubts about the inevitable benefits of unfettered capitalism took root in the United States.³²⁶

Americanist Scott Reynolds Nelson studied what he finds to be “troubling similarities” between the transnational panics of 1873 and the global financial crises of 2008. In *A Storm of Cheap Goods: New American Commodities and the Panic of 1873*, Nelson agreed with other historians that the failure of U.S. railroads and banking institutions heavily influenced the 1873 crash, but he went further by insisting that the financial decline in the United States was only one of several “transmission mechanisms” responsible for the globally expansive economic downturn:

The Panic of 1873 is a perennial topic for American historians... it serves as one of the boundary lines for what historians think of as Modern America. It is the beginning of the end of Reconstruction; it is the explanation for the so-called Great Strike of 1877; it has stood as a convenient starting point for industrial histories of Andrew Carnegie, John Rockefeller, and Cyrus McCormick. The trouble with this story is that it begins in September of 1873 and credits the entire thing to the failure of Jay Cooke and his speculative railroad adventure, the Northern Pacific Railroad.³²⁷

The industry failures that followed the economic crash may have indeed elevated industrialists like Carnegie and Rockefeller, but the demise of small capital placed charity systems under

³²⁶ Giroux 2013, 429

³²⁷ Nelson 2021, 447

immense pressure to relieve the suffering of millions of Americans. In early 1874, The New York Herald expose *The Coal Regions: Poverty and Distress Near the Mines*, gave a visceral account of the lived consequences the depressed economy had imposed on residents and laborers in Scranton Pennsylvania:

Too much cannot be said in behalf of the poor men, women, and children of this district, many of whom are utterly destitute already, and all of whom must become so before spring. Destitute of means as well as credit, with no work and with large families to support, these men must have assistance, or they will starve. ³²⁸

Newspapers bombarded the American public with one story after another that reported on yet another industry, family, or region that had experienced catastrophic losses, and there was much debate in the press about the ‘pauperizing influences’ of the crash and whether the charitable act of giving aid to thousands would create a new and possibly permanent pauper class. In a letter to the editor of the *Portland Daily Press*, one New Yorker criticized the recent “epidemic of benevolence” that they believed was unable to differentiate between “the most deserving object of benevolence” and “the beggars who alms on the street, or tramp from door to door... generally lazy and shiftless creatures.”³²⁹ The open and public objection to the distribution of aid through almsgiving was three-fold; first, the kitchens were open daily and they welcomed an increasing number of the unemployed and homeless, and their critics therefore believed that it was nearly impossible to discriminate between “those who could but will not, and those who would but cannot earn their bread.”³³⁰ The second objection to indiscriminate relief was driven more by ideology than concern for practicality, and it reflected the belief that almsgiving would likely “create a community of beggary and thus deprive that

³²⁸ The New York Herald 1874

³²⁹ Press, The Portland Daily 1874

³³⁰ Ibid

last resort of want, or the repulsiveness, which should make it impossible, except when it is the only alternative by which starvation can be averted, or suffering alleviated.”³³¹ These objections sparked a public call for an organized national approach to charity that, as one anonymous author argued, would be “liberally endowed and capably managed,” responsible for supporting the worthy, and its practitioners could also be charged with locating, counting, and transporting the “wretched and unwilling” to jails, institutions, or to the rural midwestern regions of the country.³³²

The fallout from the crash of 1873 weighed heavily over the National Conference of Charities and Corrections that year and there was as much debate about the givers of charity as conversations over the objects of their benevolence. At the inaugural conference, social economist Dr. R. Davies of the *New York Department on Pauperism* reiterated the theme of “generosity without discretion,” that was appearing with some regularity in the press and in political and social circles:

Large numbers of workingmen... have been thrown out of employment. On the other hand, the fortunate class of the United States is one of peculiar philanthropy and benevolence... their charity, too, has much impulse in it, and little reflection, so that often, through their very kindness of heart, they plant evils which they are trying to prevent.³³³

The problems faced by charity and corrections were political, economic, cultural, and global in scope. In his transnational exploration of the 1873 panic, Nelson drew attention to what Europeans saw as an “American Commercial Invasion” in 1871-72 when the European markets found themselves flooded with an abundance of low-priced American produced wheat, grain,

³³¹ Ibid

³³² Ibid

³³³ R. Davies 1874

canned beef, and kerosene. According to Nelson, England, France, Germany, and Russia, (the primary wheat export nation prior to the U.S. drastically undercutting prices), believed that this recent onslaught of U.S. imports indicated that “a new industrial superpower had arrived, one whose low costs threatened European trade and European way of life.”³³⁴ Historian Hannah Catherine Davies argued that some historians and economists represent a U.S. centric view of the events that provoked the “transatlantic financial calamity” that occurred during a time when “globalization compared to earlier decades was rapidly gaining in speed and visibility.”³³⁵

Davies is interested in whether the three nations most immediately impacted (Germany, Austria, and the United States) had *initially* interpreted the economic crash as a nationally isolated incident distinct from the market failures of the other nations, or, if any of the three perceived the crisis as a generated by the global interconnectedness in commercial manufacturing and trade industries. After combing through “investment manuals, newspaper articles, advertisements, pamphlets, legal treatises, and parliamentary debates,” Davies concluded that while each nation acknowledged varying degrees of transnational interconnectedness, the United States, Germany, and Austria generally perceived their initial market failures as primarily domestic occurrences, with little or no connection to international events. Nelson also found that in addition to reductionist views coming from the United States regarding the origins of the 1873 panic, some German historians have applied a “simplistic historical narrative” that overly centralized the roots of the financial calamity in their own geographic history.³³⁶ Nelson and Davies each present a relational view of the events of 1873

³³⁴ Nelson 2021, 448

³³⁵ H. C. Davies 2020, 293

³³⁶ Nelson 2021, 448

that realizes even though disparate nations experienced the crises in their own cultural and political contexts, the budding railways, transnational cable communications, and expanding international financial markets at the time of the panic created a new type of global interconnectedness that shaped global and national relationships in profound ways. The crash slowed international trade, caused the suspension of many European imports from the United States, and triggered a “harvest of mercantile failures” that led to a lasting debt crisis in several Latin American countries.³³⁷

The 1873 crash and the lingering Long Depression deeply altered the scope and the structure of U.S. domestic charity and international humanitarianism well into the twentieth century. The United States felt this influence in two especially important ways that illustrate how the interplay between cultural values (socially constructed meanings, morals, and contexts) and economic value (the power of capitalism) impacted the historically specific construction of the exemplary feeble-minded subject. First, the need for public assistance increased exponentially in the years following the economic crash and this surge put a drain on already depleted public and private charity revenues. Social and public institutions looked to the national organized charities and corrections movement to assess who rightly deserved public assistance, and to tell them what to do about, with, or to, those considered unworthy of certain public supports. It was through these processes that the newly constructed exemplary feeble-minded subject became a primary concern.

The second significant consequence of the Long Depression considers the post-crash political economies that were to some degree made possible by the industrial breakdown that it

³³⁷ H. C. Davies 2020, 306-309

caused. In the aftermath of extreme declines in the financial sectors, multiple railroads ceased railcar production and slowed railway development, industrial mills and furnaces shuttered, iron workers were laid off, transportation of Midwestern farm products ceased almost entirely, cotton prices plunged, the manufacturing sectors went into dramatic decline, wholesale and retail markets dried up, and the extension of commercial and personal credit became non-existent.³³⁸ On November 4, 1873, *The New York Herald* devoted four pages to the cascading aftershocks in and around New York State and in the segment below, the author describes a co-dependent financial ecosystem with a number of its industrial sectors deeply invested in the success of the railroad industry:

All the brass and sheet iron and copper workers, manufacturers of smokestacks, steam gauges, &c. (original) auxiliary to and dependent upon the locomotive establishments for their existence, are, of course, materially affected by the shutting down of their godfather shops. Every branch of industry has been affected more or less, so closely the different branches seem to be intertwined.³³⁹

In his chronology of financial disasters in the United States, Nelson found that even while the crash bore down heavily on the U.S. labor force and small manufacturing industries, the panic was “golden for the largest manufacturing companies in the United States” and especially so for industrialists John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie who maintained enough capital reserves to self-finance their burgeoning steel and oil enterprises.³⁴⁰ Carnegie and Rockefeller monopolized on the failure of small-time manufacturing, “bought out their competitors for fire sale prices,” and accumulated vast wealth through their knowledge of emerging production technologies, aggressive business tactics, political prowess, and their willingness to exploit

³³⁸ See Davies 2020, Giroux 2013, Nelson 2021.

³³⁹ The New York Herald 1873

³⁴⁰ Nelson 2012, 293-295

cheap labor.³⁴¹ At the onset of the new century, Carnegie and Rockefeller retired from their industrial empires and began to employ their vast financial resources, their domestic and international business acumen, and prominent social status, as they formed two of the largest international philanthropic empires in history.

The public loved and reviled Carnegie and Rockefeller and the press simultaneously vilified and applauded both men. These individuals, their vast corporations, their philanthropies, and their collaborative relationships were responsible for, or heavily involved in: restrictive immigration legislation, the eradication of certain infectious diseases domestically and abroad, the exploitation of labor, U.S. empire building, the material and conceptual construction of the United Nations, the establishment of universal crime recording systems, forced sterilization policies, population control, and a myriad of long lasting social and cultural influences that are felt to this day. The biographies of these icons of American industry and philanthropy are rich and multidimensional, and while contentious debates over the nature of their legacies continue, most would agree that it is difficult to overstate the significance (positive, negative, or otherwise) of their continued impact on the national identity and the shape of domestic and international humanitarian affairs during the first decades of the new century.

³⁴¹ Ibid

Chapter Five: Philanthropy on a Colossal Scale

If economics has had some influence on philanthropy, the philanthropic instincts of men are finally coming to have some influence in compelling the broadening of the science. They dominate too much legislation and the using of too much wealth to be left out of account in the science of wealth. As we have seen, they are not only powerful, but at times indispensably helpful; and, even if it were possible to ignore them, it would be unwise to do so.

Amos G. Warner, *American Charities: A Study in Philanthropy and Economics*
1894 ³⁴²

Mapping the Rise of Philanthropic Empires in the United States:

The historical record is thick with biographical sketches that characterize John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and Andrew Carnegie as luminaries of American industry while amplifying their near-

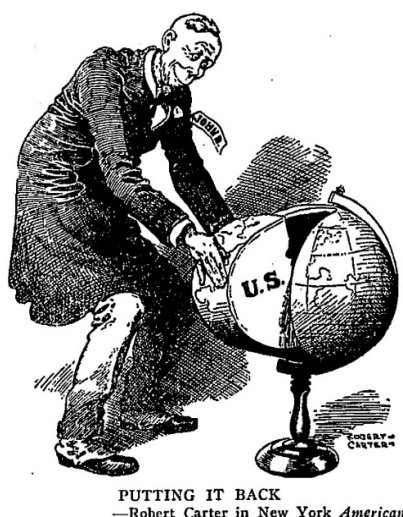


Figure 1 Robert Carter, New York American "Putting it Back" April 1910

mythological status as philanthropic icons. On the other hand, a broad scope of critical scholarship has positioned both Rockefeller and Carnegie as ruthless entrepreneurs that eliminated their industrial competitors, exploited and abused their labor force, engaged in price conspiracies, and monopolized the field of philanthropic giving in their later years. Some economic historians provide yet another perspective that situates Carnegie and Rockefeller as innovators in science, business, and industry, and as financiers of industrial

technologies that led to lower production costs, increased efficiencies, and the streamlined

³⁴² Warner, 1894, 247

production of U.S. iron, steel, and oil. Many of these varying historical accounts take a top-down approach that concentrates on Carnegie and Rockefeller’s personal and professional storylines, while little attention is given to the people these men entrusted to execute their vision. Cultural studies scholar Kit Hughes has conceptualized an approach to archive appraisal that underscores the metaphor of mapmaking as a way to “emphasize the cultural functions of the archive.”³⁴³ In the text below, Hughes describes cultural mapping as an effective method for moving beyond the standard top-down approach to archive appraisal:

Just as land maps indicate how tributaries connect to rivers that empty into oceans, cultural maps can indicate how the general links up to the particular—how the economic links to the social... and how global systems and pressures are revealed in individual experience.³⁴⁴

Traditionally, methods of archive appraisal tend to favor the voice of the institution over the individuals that made the organization meaningful in broader contexts, and as Hughes explains, cultural mapping draws out the less recognized voices that have made a significant impact on the organizations in which they operated:

Using a cultural studies approach trained on the metaphor of mapmaking enables appraisal archivists to locate gaps and undefined terrain in the documentary universe, incorporate multiple viewpoints through collective documentation, and account for the nonrational, idiosyncratic, and personal.³⁴⁵

Cultural mapping is a productive “tool for finding our bearings amid an otherwise impossible-to-navigate sea of records and evidence,”³⁴⁶ and in the context of this work, cultural mapping is employed to navigate the vast territories related to the Carnegie and Rockefeller philanthropies, while shedding light on their less documented voices of influence. In this chapter, I map the rise

³⁴³ Hughes, 271.

³⁴⁴ Hughes, 274.

³⁴⁵ Hughes, 293.

³⁴⁶ Hughes, 274.

of American philanthropy during the Progressive Era, and I move deep into the historical archives to emphasize how, under the far-reaching auspices of ‘the improvement of and welfare of all mankind,’ the John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie philanthropies contributed to the frenetic cross-pollination of eugenic and social hygiene discourses that shaped the construction of the exemplary feeble-minded subject.^{347 348}

To better understand the impact that the Rockefeller and Carnegie philanthropies had on the eugenic and social hygiene movements of the early twentieth century, this chapter introduces digitized copies of physical artifacts collected from the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Archives (CSHL). These material artifacts extend the scope of the study in significant ways. First, the historical documents studied are representative of the ‘unpublic’ face of each foundation, and they reveal how internal conversations on topics related to eugenics, social hygiene, and the exemplary feeble-minded subject shaped philanthropic policies and practices. Additionally, RFF and CSHL artifacts provide solid evidence of the ways in which wealthy foundations and their affiliates responded to the social and cultural politics of the moment, while they also reveal how the Rockefeller and Carnegie organizational approaches were structured in relationship to one another. Finally, a close examination of select RAC and CSHL handwritten memos, internal meeting transcripts, budget drafts, and recipient feedback forms broadens our current understandings about the material ways these philanthropic giants responded to and influenced political and social conversations. The Carnegie and Rockefeller philanthropies were (and still are) a formative political and

³⁴⁷ The Rockefeller Foundation, Carnegie Institute of Washington, Russel Sage Foundation and others each employed their own version of “in service to all mankind” in their mission and publicity statements.

³⁴⁸ Figure 1., *A Review of the World*, 1910

humanitarian force and the materials collected from these archives show that they enjoyed an astounding magnitude of power and influence over legislative and social policies, global relationships, humanitarian strategies, and the cultural logics of the early twentieth century.

The range of available archive materials from the Progressive Era that connect to topics in charity and philanthropy are expansive. Here I focus on a set of artifacts that represent the relationship between the public face of the philanthropic foundations that gained a foothold in global humanitarianism during the Progressive Era and their less studied impact on legislative measures, institutional systems, and geopolitical relationships. This portion of the study encompasses curated collections that include hyper-linked artifacts of the objects collected from existing digital repositories, born digital artifacts, secondary source artifacts, and digital surrogates of the historical papers studied during the onsite investigations at RAC and CSHL.

The first collection involves what Kate Theimer would categorize as “digitized analog historical materials,” in the form of popular media and news documents found in digitized online collections.³⁴⁹ American newspapers and magazines spanned from coast-to-coast at the onset of the twentieth century, and the pages that follow continue to examine how they interpreted and reported on issues related to the exemplary feeble-minded subject. Americans in this time period enjoyed a newer and wider variety of news and information sources that, according to historian Laurie Hillstrom, were made more affordable to the general public through increased advertising revenue and “improvements in printing technology, paper manufacturing, and photo reproduction.”³⁵⁰ America’s recently expanded national readership

³⁴⁹ Theimer, 2014.

³⁵⁰ Hillstrom 2010, 20-27

found itself exposed to a rapid upsurge in magazine exposés and investigative reports that intended to steer their interest towards some of the nation's more pressing social concerns. *McClure's Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Weekly*, *The Chicago Day Book*, *The Commoner*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other nationally circulated publications wrote articles that exposed dangerous working conditions in industrial environments, the exploitation of child labor, deficient infrastructures in swiftly growing poor urban communities, migration and immigration, women's suffrage, the fight for prohibition, and controversial business practices employed by 'robber barons' like Andrew Carnegie, the Rockefellers, and J.P. Morgan.³⁵¹ Hillstrom argues that progressive reformers and their "muckraking allies" were largely successful in drawing attention to major social problems like poverty, child labor, and issues related to urban crowding, but they were "considerably less successful... in dealing with the issue of race equality."³⁵² In my own exploration of press archives, I found that reports on issues related to disability and the abuses experienced by intellectually and developmentally disabled people were extremely limited, and in fact, stories regarding social reform issues often included eugenic mythologies that favored a national ideal of white intellectual and physical superiority.

As in the previous chapters, I initiated my online search with an assessment of *ProQuest Historical Newspapers and Periodicals*, *The Library of Congress Chronicling America* prints and photographs division, *the Truman Library*, and *Google books*.TM The second repository consists of born digital and "digital historical representations" that were gathered from the online

³⁵¹ Tyrrell 2015, Hillstrom 2010, Giroux 2013

³⁵² Hillstrom 2010, 47

archives of the *American Philosophical Society*, *Google books*TM, *The Eugenics Records Archives*, *The Rockefeller Archive Center*, and the *Library of Congress*.³⁵³ These now digitized materials include texts that were generally made available to the public in document form at or near the time of their creation. The initial widespread search generated valuable information regarding the public face of Carnegie and Rockefeller, their foundations, and their industrial empires, but these publicly accessible digital repositories lack sufficient context for questioning the inner and inter-relational workings of the philanthropic legacies they built. To address this gap, the third repository contains documents that I collected from RAC and CSHL archives, which Theimer would classify as “traditional archives,” and the images of the objects contained within them are known in the digital humanities as “traditional physical archive materials, represented digitally.”³⁵⁴ This digitized archive set includes personal and professional correspondences and notes, budget documents, biographical materials, meeting transcripts, foundation and family records, photographs, unpublished writings, charts, and miscellaneous materials of interest.

Philanthropic, humanitarian, academic, and global development enterprises of today inextricably link to, and are constitutive of, colonial histories, methods, and discourses. Kramer believes that digital historiography work should “confront the whole assemblage of the history of history” and he argues that secondary sources that make certain claims about history play a key role in whether—and how—a given subjectivity gets reinscribed or re-erased from the cultural record.³⁵⁵ Therefore, the fourth and final archive studied here consists of what Trouillot

³⁵³ Theimer, 2014.

³⁵⁴ Theimer, 2014.

³⁵⁵ Kramer, 2014.

regarded as “material already produced as history,” or secondary source artifacts in text and digital form.³⁵⁶

Interpreting the Colonial in the Archive:

“Historians build their narrative on the shoulders of previous ones... to contribute new knowledge and to add new significance, the narrator must both acknowledge and contradict the power embedded in previous understandings.” Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.³⁵⁷

In 1997, Johns Hopkins University Press published historian Judith Sealander’s book *Private Wealth and Public Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*. Sealander is a prominent American historian, professor of history at Bowling Green State University, and the author of four books on topics in U.S. history that span the Progressive Era through the turn of the twenty first century. Sealander received acclaim for *Private Wealth, Public Life* from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Association of Colleges, the Indiana University Center for the Study of Philanthropy, and the Rockefeller Archive Center. *Private Wealth and Public Life* received the 1998 Ohio Academy of History Book Prize, and according to Google Scholar, the text is cited in 227 scholarly works.^{358 359}

In digital historiography, analytical approaches need to shift between “primary sources—often archival ones—to “secondary” sources—or the historical arguments, interpretations, and interventions that use the archives to mount claims about the past.”³⁶⁰ When I first discovered

³⁵⁶ Trouillot 1995, 42

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 44

³⁵⁸ Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child* 2003

³⁵⁹ Google Scholar n.d.

³⁶⁰ Hering, et al. 2014

Private Wealth and Public Life, it seemed obvious that that it would serve as a durable secondary source for this project since its topic matter was in alignment with my own interest in the relationship between America's philanthropic empires and the eugenic and social hygiene policies of the Progressive Era.³⁶¹ *Private Wealth* is a secondary source that explores the archives of wealthy philanthropic foundations and makes specific claims about their influence on public policy from the turn of the twentieth century through President Herbert Hoover's defeat in 1932.³⁶² I first encountered *Private Wealth and Public Life* while undergoing background research in preparation for my onsite examination of the archives at RAC and CSHL. I was primarily interested in learning about Sealander's experience as a respected historian in residence at RAC and I was eager to examine how she analyzed, interpreted, and integrated RAC artifacts into her account of the rise of U.S. philanthropies during the Progressive Era. I was drawn to Sealander's opening claim that her book was in-depth exploration into how wealthy foundations had influenced "the arenas of government at local, state, and federal levels and... the public decision-making process."³⁶³ Sealander's book is broad in scope, provides an exemplary genealogy of certain aspects of the Rockefeller Foundation (RFF), and it is chiefly interested in the public policy activities of the RFF subsidiary projects of the General Education Board (GEB), the International Health Board (IHB), the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM), and the Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH). In her acknowledgments, Sealander speaks highly of RAC and the award-winning historian made the ambitious—if not over-grandiose—claim that the RAC repository is "by far the most important archive available to any serious

³⁶¹ Sealander 1997

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Sealander 1997

student of the history of American philanthropy.”³⁶⁴ But, important for whom and in what contexts?

In the first chapter of *Private Wealth*, Sealander revealed that she intentionally excluded all Carnegie philanthropies from her study and her six-page justification for her omission is as openly contemptuous of Carnegie and his charitable works as it is in awe of the Rockefellers and their foundations. Sealander is deliberately harsh in her characterization of Carnegie, and *Private Wealth and Public Life* makes serious claims about the lack of respect he received from his associates and colleagues in both philanthropy and industry. In her discussion of differing approaches to philanthropic leadership, Sealander emphasized that, “Rockefellers Senior and Junior *oversaw* (italics mine) the incorporation of the Rockefeller Foundation,” and that Rockefeller Senior’s contemporaries found him “an eager collaborator... fearsomely efficient, coolly organized builder of systems.”³⁶⁵ At the same time, Sealander maintained that Carnegie had “*interfered* constantly” (italics mine) in the work of the charities that he founded, and she further alleged that the philanthropists she studied had consistently ridiculed Andrew Carnegie in private.³⁶⁶ On Carnegie’s famous 1889 essay *Wealth*, now published under the title *The Gospel of Wealth*, Sealander denigrated Carnegie’s core belief that the rich should distribute their wealth to charitable causes while they were alive rather than to their heirs upon death, and she maintained that that early twentieth century philanthropists were suspicious of Carnegie’s motives for his philosophy of giving. In support of this rather extreme interpretation, Sealander explained that it was, “the fact that the Scot had no children of his own led others, at

³⁶⁴ Sealander 2003, ix

³⁶⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁶ Ibid p. 12-18

least privately, to speculate about the purity of his motives.”³⁶⁷ If true, the birth of Carnegie’s daughter Margaret Carnegie Miller in 1897, years before Sealander’s stated period of study, should have quelled any suspicion regarding Carnegie’s motives in relation to his parental status.³⁶⁸ On January 16, 1912, The Carnegie Corporation of New York Board of Trustees approved its proposed resolution to include the following “statement of appreciation” to Carnegie’s wife and daughter:

Mrs. Carnegie, and Miss Margaret Carnegie, who, with cheerful and active sympathy, have approved and promoted the diversion of a vast fortune from the ordinary channels of family distribution to the benefit of mankind.³⁶⁹

Margaret Carnegie Miller went on to serve as a trustee of the Carnegie Corporation from 1934 to 1973, yet *Private Wealth and Public Life* does not recognize her birth, life, or position in the organization. This oversight is one of many in Sealander’s book that demonstrates her elimination of not only the Carnegie philanthropies, but the Carnegies themselves.

Private Wealth and Public Life does attempt to support Sealander’s claim that the Carnegie philanthropies were absent from public policy making at the turn of the twentieth century, however the supporting arguments are reliant upon—and in fact reinforce—a complete lack of appreciation for the central role that the Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW) Station for Experimental Evolution (SEE), or its Eugenic Records Office (ERO) played in the development and promotion of the violent eugenic policies of the period. We will learn in the chapters that follow that CIW, SEE, and ERO were Carnegie endeavors that, despite Sealander’s

³⁶⁷ Ibid p. 17

³⁶⁸ Carnegie did indeed give away most of his wealth while he was alive, leaving his daughter and wife a decent but not excessive inheritance upon his death.

³⁶⁹ Carnegie Corporation of New York 1919, 291

contentions, enjoyed the respect of the public, wealthy foundations, and federal legislators from early 1900 to around 1935 when the term eugenics fell out of public favor and organizations like CIW (mostly) replaced eugenic terminologies with the newer and more culturally palatable language of genetics. A limited listing of some of the official institutions that formally *invited* CIW, SEE, and ERO into public policymaking debates includes, the Bureau of the Census, the U.S. Army, U.S. Department of Labor, the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, the International Labor Office of the League of Nations, and the Federal Crime Bureau.

In the bibliography for *Private Wealth and Public Life*, Sealander's robust source citations include RAC manuscripts, organization records, personal papers, family archive materials, and additional items collected from the National Archives, the National Library of Medicine, the University of Minnesota, Smith College, Berea College, the Labor Management Documentation Center, and the University of Michigan Library. Given the brazen nature of Sealander's critique of Carnegie philanthropies, it is particularly jarring that her archive source pages do not reference the Carnegie Institution for Science, Carnegie Science Administrative Archives, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Carnegie Institute of Washington, the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Archives, or the American Philosophical Society's Eugenics Records Office History collection.

In the introductory chapter of *Private Wealth*, Sealander identified eight premises "upon which *Private Wealth and Public Life* rests," and the final two chapters of this project will offer ample evidence to counter the following three supporting points from Sealander's *fifth premise*:

“Scholars have overestimated the importance of the Carnegie Philanthropies on public policy making before 1932.”³⁷⁰

Point One: That the Carnegie philanthropies lacked interest and influence on public policy during the Progressive Era.

Point Two: The Carnegie organizations had little or no relationship with RFF affiliates.

Point Three: Rockefeller was the dominant generator of the standards and principles that brought science and philanthropy into alignment in the twentieth century.³⁷¹

In the four premises leading up to this fifth argument, Sealander focused on issues of restricted access to philanthropic records, the type and structure of charity scholarship, and the relational aspects of the foundations she argues were involved in public policy making at the turn of the twentieth century. In the text below, Sealander acknowledges the research bias that is apparent in her fifth point:

The following chapters will analyze the successes and failures of some of the “experiments” conducted by John D. Rockefeller and his son, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Olivia Sage, Edward Harkness, and Julius Rosenwald... however, the following chapters will devote little attention to the work of the several charitable organizations created by Andrew Carnegie. This demands explanation.³⁷²

In her first explanatory point, Sealander supports her contention that Carnegie philanthropies had little influence on public policy by broadly criticizing, and at times belittling, the motives, scope, and significance of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the Carnegie Hero Fund while making no mention of SEE, CSHL, or ERO. Perhaps more significant than her silence regarding the Carnegie philanthropies, Sealander’s intentional slippage here makes it possible for *Public Wealth and Private Life* to

³⁷⁰ Sealander 1997, 15-17

³⁷¹ This list represents my summary of Sealander’s points, located on pages 16-24

³⁷² Ibid, 16

avert any serious inquiry into the role that the Rockefeller entities might have played—whether positive, negative, impartial, or nonexistent—in relationship to CIW, ERO, and Progressive Era eugenic policies.³⁷³ The following two chapters will demonstrate that U.S. law makers, popular media, charitable foundations (including Rockefeller philanthropies), and the public gave considerable weight to the research conclusions (many centered on the exemplary feeble-minded subject) that were generated by the eugenic investigators at Carnegie’s ERO and SEE. Additionally, we will see that far from having no influence in the politics of policy making, the United States Congress appointed CIW and ERO directors to prestigious positions on their committees and these official testimonies weighed heavily over the decision-making processes concerning some of the more restrictive legislative measures in U.S. history.

In her second point, despite dedicating an entire chapter to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH), Sealander argued that the Carnegie organizations had little or no relationship with RFF affiliates. My research into the RFF archives revealed lengthy communications and professional collaborations between JDR, Jr., and BSH general secretary Katharine B. Davis,³⁷⁴ and SEE and ERO founder Charles Davenport and director Harry Laughlin, as well as evidence of shared resources and training programs between RFF, ERO, CIW and BSH. The cultural maps that follow will provide evidence of these important relationships and their connection to national culture, social structures, and government agencies. The maps also

³⁷³ Sealander includes three brief entries related to eugenics in her text, two short sentences on pages 119 and 120 that address eugenic marriage laws, and four paragraphs that span pages 67 and 68 on “the harsh pseudo-scientific jargon of eugenics,” in which she largely excuses the significance of eugenics by suggesting that scholars have exaggerated its importance to the Progressive Era.

³⁷⁴ Sealander devotes much of chapter six to the BSH and its general secretary, Katharine Davis without mention of her involvement in eugenics, her position on the Eugenics Committee of the United States, or her collaboration with Charles Davenport on eugenic training procedures for field workers at the BSH Laboratory of Social Hygiene, located at the New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills where she served as superintendent.

perform the critical work of “acknowledging and contradicting” the power embedded in Sealander’s historical narrative, while intervening in the gaps and erasures that are evident in her interpretation of the events of the period studied. The analyses contained in this dissertation bring into sharp focus the wide-ranging influence these institutions enjoyed over legislative measures and public debates concerning race purity, criminal justice, immigration, national and international birth and population control, and world government agendas.

In point three of her justification for excluding Carnegie philanthropies from her study, Sealander claims that Carnegie endowments exemplified traditional distributive charity, rather than “scientific philanthropy,” and that “John D. Rockefeller, Sr., not the more publicly accessible Andrew Carnegie, outlined the principles of “scientific giving.”³⁷⁵ This assessment once again falls short in its interpretation of the Carnegie philanthropies overwhelming presence in the field of scientific giving and policy making at the turn of the twentieth century. In the passage that follows, Sealander intimates that Carnegie’s philanthropic interests were largely vanity projects with little scientific focus:

In theory, Carnegie established boards of trustees and delegated authority. In practice, he interfered constantly. The Carnegie Corporation, the largest of the Carnegie philanthropies, established in 1911, spent great amounts of its funds building libraries and purchasing the pipe organs Carnegie loved... the aptly named Hero Fund awarded prizes to those whom Andrew Carnegie found admirable.³⁷⁶

If we assume that Sealander is referencing The Carnegie Corporation of *New York*, indeed established in 1911, the organization could be situated as “by far the largest” Carnegie endeavor at the time it was founded, in part, because according to first report of *The Carnegie*

³⁷⁵ Sealander 1997, 18-19

³⁷⁶ Ibid

Corporation of New York, the five previously established Carnegie philanthropies that Sealander mentions were broadly included under the umbrella of the newly established organization:

The five organizations previously endowed by Mr. Carnegie are the Carnegie Institute, at Pittsburgh... The Carnegie Institution of Washington devoted to scientific research and discovery, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace... the Carnegie Corporation may aid the five institutions already founded by Mr. Carnegie to develop and extend their work.³⁷⁷

The *Constitution for the Carnegie Corporation of New York* stipulated for the provision of “nine Trustees, of whom five are ex-officio, the Presidents of the five other organizations founded by Mr. Carnegie,” and the *Carnegie Corporation Charter* further specified that the presidents of each of the five previously established organizations would maintain their own board of directors, while the trustees of the newly formed Carnegie Corporation would “keep the five organizations in close touch with the Carnegie Corporation of New York.”³⁷⁸ The Carnegie Corporation appropriations report for 1919 indicated a scope of giving that went well beyond what Sealander framed as “purchasing the pipe organs Carnegie loved,” and the report instead documented fifteen major benevolences that totaled nearly fifty million dollars and encompassed \$1,500,000 to the American Red Cross, \$300,000 to CIW, \$250,000 to the War Work Fund, nearly sixteen million to Carnegie’s Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and \$190,000 given to the Carnegie Study of Methods of Americanization.³⁷⁹ In Sealander’s restricted account of the organizational structure of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, her reductionist view of Carnegie’s love for pipe organs and libraries, and in removing CIW and its subsidiaries SEE and ERO from her narrative, Sealander paves a path for her contention that

³⁷⁷Carnegie Corporation of New York 1919

³⁷⁸ Ibid

³⁷⁹ Ibid

Carnegie's approach to giving was a.) not in keeping with scientific philanthropy, and b.) a simple reflection of Carnegie's limited personal interests.

In CIW's fourth report, *Scope and Organization*, the board members explained, "the Carnegie Institution of Washington originally founded in 1902 under the laws of the District of Columbia and reincorporated by an act of the Congress of the United States, approved April 28, 1904, under the title of The Carnegie Institution of Washington."³⁸⁰ Carnegie initially endowed ten million dollars in registered bonds to CIW, and ten million again in 1907 and 1911, which was valued at around "twenty-two million dollars" when the fourth issue of the annual report published in 1915.³⁸¹ CIW research facilities were, according to its charter, "devoted to scientific research and discovery," spread out across the country, and they included the *Department of Botanical Research* in Tucson, *Department of Embryology*, at the John's Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, the *Department of Marine Biology* in New Jersey, the *Nutrition Laboratory* located in Boston, the *Department of Terrestrial Magnetism* headquartered in Washington, D.C., and on the chartered vessel, *Galilee* in San Francisco, and the focus of this work, *The Department of Experimental Evolution* at Cold Spring Harbor, New York. In 1904, when newspapers across the country reported that congress had reincorporated the recently formed Carnegie Institution into the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the press christened CIW "one of the premier scientific organizations of the world."³⁸² The Rockefeller and Carnegie philanthropies applied their scientific philanthropy in vastly different settings and the international scope of RFF

³⁸⁰ Carnegie Institution of Washington 1902

³⁸¹ Carnegie Institution of Washington 1915

³⁸² Black, 2003, 31.

projects exceeded Carnegie's, but it is disingenuous to suggest that the Carnegie philanthropies cannot be situated under the auspices of early twentieth century 'scientific philanthropy.'

Private Wealth and Public Life is both a valuable secondary source for historical reference and cultural artifact of interest to this study. In due course, the evaluation that follows will push against Sealander's justifications for dropping one of the two largest and wealthiest global philanthropies of the Progressive Era from her study. The goal here is not to undermine Sealander, delegitimize the valuable and expansive work that *Private Wealth and Public Life* does accomplish, or to necessarily agree or disagree with its pointed characterization of Carnegie and Rockefeller. This project will instead employ the polyvocal archives described earlier to illustrate that Sealander's book is indicative of a well-established pattern in mainstream academia that tends to minimize eugenics-driven policies in the United States that can be directly associated with eugenic history and the misrepresentation and mistreatment of people and regions categorized as developmentally and intellectually inferior.

Charters, Trusts, & Foundations: Endeavors in American Exceptionalism

Beginning in 1874, representatives from state boards of charities, business professionals, political economists, scientists, charity workers, the press, and a collection of formalized social reform organizations assembled at the *Annual National Conferences of Charities and Corrections* to agree upon a universal set of standards and practices that they hoped to implement across all charities and corrections systems in the United States. As the U.S. moved into the new century, conference debates over how to execute universal standards on a national scale remained unsettled and heated discussions over what charity was, what it professed to do, and how to govern its disparate forms continued well into the 1900s. Even though there was residual

dissent over what types of aid (material, financial, or institutional) to disseminate to what populations, by the turn of the century there was general agreement that heredity was the prime cause of degeneracy in America, and that a growing and unchecked, 'horde of feeble-minded degenerates' was exacting a heavy economic and social toll on the nation.

In November of 1900, an article written by Charles R. Henderson, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, appeared in the Washington D.C., *Evening Star* under the headline *Within a Century: How the Spirit of Modern Philanthropy Has Developed - Caring for the Unfortunates, Wider and Nobler Views*. Henderson's 'wider and nobler' view addressed what he described as promising turn-of-the-century approaches to philanthropy that he felt were better equipped to respond to the "vast increase of population, the congestion of cities, the vicissitudes of speculative commerce, the swift changes," that had overwhelmed nineteenth century social service and charity sectors.³⁸³ Henderson's article repeated the familiar complaints about indiscriminate giving that reverberated throughout the charity and corrections conferences and he argued that in preceding decades, "charity often created a demand for itself, and sanitary science spared the weak from elimination by disease and hardship."³⁸⁴ In Henderson's estimation, a "genius" and more modern philanthropy had "marched forward with discovery and invention, with science and art... not without lavish expenditures of generous individuals," and he listed five established areas of specialization that he believed exemplified the new kinder, scientific, and "humane" charity.³⁸⁵ Henderson's lengthy opinions regarding each category were situated underneath the following bolded title

³⁸³ Henderson 1900

³⁸⁴ *ibid*

³⁸⁵ *ibid*

headings: Care of the Insane, Colonies of Epileptics, For the Feeble-minded, Prison

Improvement, and Care of Children. Henderson praised colonies for epileptics for their system of institutionalization in “quiet seclusion and open air” of the “farm garden and shop,” and in his judgement, the “best minds” in anthropology and psychology were making vast improvements in penitentiary systems, while he reasoned the care of children was “most enlightened” by the supervision and control of all “public and private institutions.”³⁸⁶ As for the feeble-minded, Henderson explains in the passage below why he believed their permanent institutional segregation was ‘modern philanthropy’s most ‘humane’ option:

Of the feeble-minded idiots and imbeciles... they are generally incapable of self-support in competitive life. Recently this fact has been practically recognized... all of this class would be happier in colonies where their labor would produce the cost of subsistence in a simple and comfortable way of life. This is the best example of the growing determination of society to eliminate the unfit and consciously give preference to the capable. A humane method has been found for exterminating gradually the vicious stock, and this method will doubtless be extended to habitual drunkards and criminals.³⁸⁷

Henderson failed to explain what authorized him to decide the whole of the feeble-minded class would be happier permanently laboring in institutions to, as he put it, “produce the cost of subsistence in a simple and comfortable way of life,” nor does his narrative indicate that he engaged with any real person classified as feeble-minded. Henderson’s ‘wider and nobler view’ communicated to America’s wealthy philanthropists that the current methods for controlling the feeble-minded and eliminating those “unable to meet the demands of struggle in industrial society” could serve as a seamless model for increasing national productivity in the new century.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Ibid

³⁸⁷ Henderson 1900

³⁸⁸ Ibid

By the close of the 1800s, the national charities and corrections movement, academic scholars like Henderson, the public, the press, and the U.S. government had constructed a discourse of heritability with a newly conjured imaginary feeble-minded subject at its center. Henderson's 'wider and nobler view' was modelled on the commonly accepted practice of institutionalizing the feeble-minded class, and his article speculates that philanthropy should apply the 'more humane' approach of "exterminating gradually the vicious stock" to all criminally deviant populations. This is but one example of the many ways that the radically historicized feeble-minded subject became strategically placed within discourses of heritable deviancy to create an illusion of commonality between all alleged degenerate subjects; that is to say, the imaginary feeble-minded subject became the *personification* of all notions of degeneracy.

As the new century unfolded, the political urgency to safeguard America and its international reputation from all that bore the ambiguous markings of feeble-mindedness and "consciously give preference to the capable" began to reach its fevered pitch.³⁸⁹ Remembering that Stuart Hall theorized "discourse draws on elements in other discourses, binding them into its own network of meanings,"³⁹⁰ the evidence explored in this research has demonstrated that racist rhetorics of U.S. white nationalism drew from colonialism's dark continent discourse—with the savage degenerate Other at its core—to ultimately produce the new, potent, and equally dangerous discourse of eugenics. In turn, eugenic ideologies drew from the 'science of heritability' and its newly constructed exemplary feeble-minded subject to form their own

³⁸⁹ Henderson 1900

³⁹⁰ Hall 1992, 292-293.

alarming network of meanings regarding the purity of the white 'American' race. Press articles reported that it was in the nation's best interest to remove all alleged forms of intellectual, physical, moral, and racial weakness from the body politic, and their stories parroted the rhetorics of American civilization, intellectual strength, and race superiority that journalists had overheard in the national charities and corrections conference spaces. Although they had yet to agree on how to *implement* universal practices at the charities and corrections conferences, the movement did unite in key areas that would influence the new generation of wealthy philanthropic foundations that came to dominate humanitarianism in the twentieth century. By 1900, national charities and corrections had settled on a universalized philosophy of giving that was of the conviction that all charitable agencies should employ scientific methods, engage in the practical application of business strategies, promote the progress of the nation, and foster long-lasting relationships with the press. These core values were set in place as American charity shifted once again into a new era of beneficence, and the nation's wealthiest men and



Figure 2: Loyalty to one means loyalty to both/ Gordon Grant.1914-1918
American Red Cross: Library of Congress
Prints and Photographs, Washington,
D.C.

women focused their vast capital resources on executing what one news reporter aptly named—"philanthropy on a colossal scale."³⁹¹

Relational Geographies: *American Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of American Philanthropy*

In 1904, President Roosevelt signed a congressional charter directing the American Red Cross (ARC), arguably the nation's first and largest organized humanitarian agency, to

³⁹¹ Irwin, 32

“carry on a system of national and international relief in time of peace.”³⁹² The charter expanded the ARC’s capacity to distribute international aid to civilian populations while it also granted the U.S. State Department new and broader authority over ARC practices and policies, particularly in times of war.³⁹³ Four years after the reorganization, *Outlook* magazine explained to the American public that the American Red Cross had “taken a decisive step toward importance and national usefulness” when it was “reincorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia and brought directly under government supervision.”³⁹⁴ In the years leading up to WWI, Presidents Taft and Wilson each served terms as president of the ARC and in a rare moment of bipartisanship, they agreed the ARC had demonstrated “a certain and effective means of relieving human misery in their own country and around the world.”³⁹⁵ Olivia Sage formed the Russell Sage Foundation (RSF) in 1907, and although the organizations stated interest was “the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States,” RSF gave generously to ARC global relief efforts under the condition that the ARC appoint RSF and RFF members to its board, and that they come together in cooperation with local charities to develop an international relief model based on the U.S. business and science methods. In 1908, the ARC hired Ernest P. Bicknell, the former superintendent of the *Chicago Board of Charities*, and acting secretary of the *National Organization of Charities and Corrections*, to lead the agency in its mission to build strong ties with local volunteer groups, national charities, and U.S. finance and industry professionals. When Bicknell accepted the lead position at the ARC later the same year, he did so during a time when America’s expanding philanthropic empire was

³⁹² Ibid

³⁹³ Irwin, 32-34.

³⁹⁴ The Outlook Magazine, 1908

³⁹⁵ Irwin, 34

coming to enjoy a broader relationship with local charity and corrections systems, and authorities in the “Departments of State, War, Navy, Treasury, and Justice.” ³⁹⁶ According to Irwin, Bicknell “earned a national reputation in the period’s scientific charity movement, known for his systematic efforts to reform philanthropy, corrections, public housing, and other municipal concerns.” ³⁹⁷ In his position as secretary of *National Organization of Charities and Corrections*, Bicknell headed the first charity and reform movements in the United States to characterize the exemplary feeble-minded subject as the personification of social degeneracy.

Between 1901 and 1913, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., established the *Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research* (1901), the *General Education Board* (1902), the *Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease* (1909), and in 1913, *The Rockefeller Foundation* became a New York State Charter through Act of Congress (see RFF timeline). As internationally recognized leaders in medical relief, the Rockefeller philanthropies partnered with the ARC to globally distribute medical, material, and economic relief, while Andrew Carnegie personally donated to support ARC efforts domestically and abroad. These foundations, philanthropists and the U.S. government believed that the ARC should serve as “the one organization for relief purposes... through which all agencies... would work,” and the RFF board requested that the ARC “give most considerate and sympathetic attention to taking on civilian assistance... [and] noncombatant relief on a large scale.” ³⁹⁸ The American press rallied the nation around ARC relief efforts and journalists pressed the idea that donating time or money to relieve foreign and domestic suffering was the patriotic duty of all Americans. Ian

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 37

³⁹⁷ Irwin 2013, 13

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 37-39.

Tyrell defined transnational histories as those “broad movements of world history such as the development of the nation state, the movement of peoples, imperialism, economic growth, and the struggle for humanity,”³⁹⁹ Racism and racial exploitation are central to the colonial encounter, and racism’s ableist ideologies resonate throughout neoliberal global development and humanitarian agendas of today. Critical disability studies scholar Shaun Grech has reasoned that contemporary frames of deficiency and defectiveness have deep roots in colonialist practice and he argues that disabled people continue to endure the consequence of colonial actions that are stubbornly present in modern day neoliberal contexts.⁴⁰⁰ Antonio Gramsci reasoned that prevailing hegemonic structures do not coerce or force people to submit to dominant value systems, but rather those existing systems actively engage the spaces of culture to persuade society to consent and accept the status quo as a natural ‘common sense’ state of affairs.⁴⁰¹ The rise of American philanthropy in the period leading up to and throughout WWI is an optimal historical site for exploring the ways in which the ‘net-like organization’ of American philanthropy worked to persuade the global public that the United States was destined to occupy a dominant space in all matters related to international aid, the quest to control degeneracy in all of its various forms, and the civilization of far-away nations.⁴⁰²

In the years leading up to WWI, agency campaign posters, field reports, news stories, and lengthy feature articles told the story of a developing spirit of cooperation between America’s wealthy philanthropists, large humanitarian agencies, and world governments. Popular culture and the press systemically represented this relational discourse as the

³⁹⁹ Tyrrell 2015, 3

⁴⁰⁰ Grech, *Disability in the Majority World: A Neocolonial Approach* 2012, 44-45

⁴⁰¹ Hall, *Representation* 2013, 34-35

⁴⁰² *Ibid*

personification of the American spirit, and the message of American exceptionalism intensified during and after WWI. Whether in ARC marketing posters, news stories, popular culture, or the word of American presidents, the message was clear—the nation’s burgeoning philanthropic empire was now an icon of American patriotism and benevolence, and those that contributed to its newly organized effort to save the world embodied everything it meant to be an ideal and American citizen.^{403 404}

WWI placed heavy demands on American charity systems and in collaboration with the government and RFF, the ARC continued to build upon the training procedures, technical standards, and cross-agency efforts that the United States Sanitary Commission (USSC), various women’s societies, and the ARC initiated during the American Civil War.⁴⁰⁵ With the former secretary of the National Organization of Charities and Corrections as its newly appointed national director, and with the backing of the press and government agencies, the ARC and its associates were poised to transfer to international contexts the ‘universal’ value systems that the national charities and corrections movement had begun to develop in the later decades of the nineteenth century. At the onset of WWI, the press reported on the domestic and international activities of the ARC and RFF, and both organizations quickly became globally recognized symbols of American strength, national unity, and U.S. patriotism. In 1914 *Puck Magazine* published its headline declaring that the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research was “*The Greatest Thing in America*,” and the accompanying narrative described the RFF/ARC collaboration as “the finest flower of a spirit of co-operation blooming everywhere... modelled

⁴⁰³ Portions of pages 18 and 19 were edited from my previous writings in my dissertation proposal.

⁴⁰⁴ See Irwin 2013, Tyrrell 2015.

⁴⁰⁵ The USSC and ARC were not free of controversy and there were social reform activists that pushed against some of their strategies.

on the American spirit... that all hope will exist in Europe at the end of this war.”⁴⁰⁶ Just a year later, *New York Magazine* dubbed the RFF Commission on Medical Work, “China’s Salvation,”⁴⁰⁷ and in the final year of WWI, the *El Paso Herald* report titled *Tuberculosis Is the Most Gaping Wound in Bleeding France America to the Rescue*, offered a lengthy account of the ARC/RFF community health and hygiene education programs that had successfully mitigated the rampant spread of the disease.⁴⁰⁸

The Outlook magazine was a national weekly publication based in New York City that was primarily interested in reporting on the political and social issues of the moment, and in the period leading up to and throughout WWI, the popular newspaper often posted article updates on the combined activities of the ARC, RFF, and the U.S. State Department. In the October 20, 1915, edition, *The Outlook* editorial that appeared under the headline, *Noble Relief Work*, gave readers a broad view of the cooperative wartime works of the ARC and RFF. In this in-depth feature, American readers would learn that the Rockefeller Foundation had given financial aid to help ARC and the U.S. government meet the “cost of sending American Red Cross physicians and nurses to Europe,” that RFF was heavily involved in helping the *Belgian Relief Fund* overcome the logistical problems it ran into while attempting to ship supplies overseas, and that RFF had established its own official *Commission to Europe* earlier that same year. The report went on to explain that RFF appointed the director of its Institute for Medical Research, Wickliffe Rose, to head the newly formed commission alongside Henry James, Jr., and ARC national director Ernest P. Bicknell, who had gained national attention for his work as

⁴⁰⁶ Puck Magazine 1914

⁴⁰⁷ The Outlook Magazine 1915

⁴⁰⁸ El Paso Herald 1917

superintendent of the *Chicago Board of Charities*, and secretary of the *National Organization of Charities and Corrections*. In December of 1917, eight months after the United States Congress voted to declare war on Germany and the nation officially entered WWI, *The Outlook Magazine* featured a report written by Eliot Wadsworth, in which the former Vice-Chairman of the *Central Committee of the American Red Cross* laid out in some detail the “unprecedented range of activities” that the ARC and RFF had mobilized for “the safety and welfare of the millions who are fighting in Europe” and in service to U.S. soldiers and their families on the domestic front.⁴⁰⁹ Wadsworth’s account of the “swiftly organized expedition of mercy” is a glowing review of the cooperation between the ARC/RFF campaign against tuberculosis and the United States Army Medical Corps, and relief workers in the United States, France, Belgium, Russia, Italy, and Serbia.⁴¹⁰

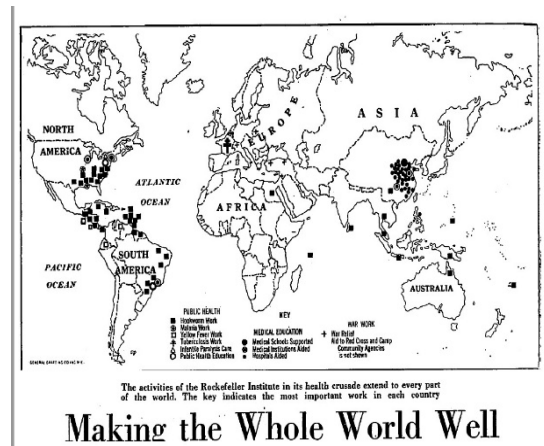


Figure: 3 Making the Whole World Well, *The Independent*, June 1919. P. 406

On June 14, 1919, just two weeks before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles marked the official end to WWI, the internationally distributed news publication *The Independent* ran a four-page feature article that included a map illustration of the foundation’s international projects. (figure 3). RFF President George E. Vincent was the author of the article and his narrative included extensive summations on the foundations past, present, and future efforts to “to promote The Welfare of Mankind Thruout

⁴⁰⁹ Wadsworth 1917

⁴¹⁰ Ibid

(spelling original) the World.”⁴¹¹ *Making the Whole World Well: What the Rockefeller Foundation Is Doing for Humanity*, placed a spotlight on the international scope of ARC and RFF field efforts in a pictorial spread that included images of children receiving dental care in North Carolina, house calls to fisherman families in Brazil, a visit with kindergarteners in France, political leaders in the fight against yellow fever in Guatemala, and the material construction of the RFF “anatomy building” in Peking, China.⁴¹² Vincent proudly reported on the “organized team play” between the *Rockefeller Commission for the Prevention of Tuberculosis*, and the *Tuberculosis Foundation of the American Red Cross*, and he underscored their collaborative spirit was a uniquely American trait. While Vincent heaped praise on French scientists for their expertise in understanding the disease of tuberculosis, its causes, and the principles that could control it, he also stated that he found the “boosting spirit... largely lacking in the Gallic character,” and went on to boast that the “American contribution, then, has been a demonstration of organized team-play.”⁴¹³ Vincent professed in his writing that it was only by practicing the American ‘invention’ of standardized and unified methods that the French government, ARC, RFF, and French civilians had come together in “mutually reinforcing cooperation” to build dispensaries, train French nurses, construct open-air schools and hygiene education centers, and distribute food.⁴¹⁴ It is also evident in Vincent’s description of the Rockefeller Foundation’s “*Medicinal Tank*” program that RFF was adept at gaining public trust and attracting local community support for the foundation’s health and hygiene programs:

An invention of the Rockefeller Foundation. This tank rolls over the roads of France, bearing signboards... Behold this tank entering a city—or a village... Delegates cover the

⁴¹¹ Vincent 1919

⁴¹² Ibid

⁴¹³ Ibid

⁴¹⁴ Ibid

city with posters. And such posters! Barnum and Baily would not be ashamed of them... the legends and designs make people laugh... they are amused and instructed.⁴¹⁵

RFF traveling exhibits featured “groups of lecturers,” hygiene education handouts, poster campaigns and “postcards and games widely distributed thruout (spelling original) the whole of France,” and RFF applied similar tactics in its *International Health Board* (IHB) anti-malaria campaigns in the southern United States, the fight against yellow fever and hookworm infections “in almost all tropical and semi-tropical lands, in the southern states of America and in mining districts in several European countries,” and, the foundations international and domestic social hygiene education campaigns.⁴¹⁶ The *Independent* included a sizeable world map of the Rockefeller Foundation’s “health crusade” that was positioned above the article’s large and bolded headline, with a descriptor underneath that read, “the activities of the Rockefeller Institute in its health crusade to extend to every part of the world, and a map key indicating the most important work in each country”⁴¹⁷ (*figure 3*).

While it would be difficult for any supporting artifact to fully substantiate Vincent’s ambitious claim that RFF was “making the whole world well,” the sheer magnitude of the Rockefeller Foundation’s international reach in its earliest years is evident in the many documented projects that appear under the headings, PUBLIC HEALTH; MEDICAL EDUCATION; and WAR WORK. Map markers indicate RFF public health programs for hookworm, malaria, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and infantile paralysis that spread across the United States, Australia, South America, regions of Africa, and in China, and medical schools and hospitals are marked in North and South America and China. The Rockefeller map represented its war relief work in

⁴¹⁵ Ibid

⁴¹⁶ Ibid

⁴¹⁷ Ibid

France, Belgium, Russia and scattered throughout Europe, and the legend explains that RFF “aid to Red Cross and Camp Communities is not shown.”⁴¹⁸ Leading up to and throughout U.S. involvement in WWI, reports like *Making the Whole World Well* made a common appearance in local, national, and international publications and most made little distinction between RFF, ARC, and/or government relief. The ARC and RFF distributed membership and marketing materials that showcased icons of American patriotism, loyalty, and national generosity and Americans responded with an overwhelming show of support for their noncombatant war relief and civilian assistance projects (figure 2, 4,5). In her strikingly comprehensive documentation of the history of the American Red Cross, Julia Irwin found that between 1914 and 1917, an astounding number of Americans signed up for ARC membership and “American donors gave over \$400 million in 1917 and 1918 alone.”⁴¹⁹ Irwin believes the history of the ARC in the early decades of the twentieth century can be told as a “story about the American people—their relationship to the state and civil society, the participation in foreign aid enterprises, and their beliefs about the value of international humanitarianism.”⁴²⁰ While it is true that the ARC was all of the things Irwin suggests, the ARC was also a major international humanitarian organization that was taking part in a broader cultural project in the United States that was busy carving out a national identity that it hoped



Figure 4 Join Red Cross symbol, America's answer to humanity's challenge 1917. Hayden; Snyder & Black Inc. N.Y.

⁴¹⁸ Vincent 1919

⁴¹⁹ Irwin 2013, 5-7

⁴²⁰ Ibid

would set the country and its citizens apart from all other nations. Political scientist Benedict Anderson defined nation as an ‘imagined community,’ whereas the nation is “*imagined* because the members... will never know most of their fellow-members... yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”⁴²¹ Pickering extended Anderson’s notion of the ‘imagined community’ when he argued that that national identity, primarily in its modern and western form, is also an imagined territory that he argued, “has become collectively revered, exalted, even sacralised as a historic homeland.”⁴²² Culture, media, and representation play a significant role in how individuals come to imagine their ‘shared communion’ with the national membership. Fousek argued that that if the nation is indeed an imagined community, place, and territory, it is also discursively “imagined through public culture... in print, on the airwaves, and in the meeting hall.”⁴²³ In the years preceding WWI and throughout the Great War, Americans consumed an abundance of media that reiterated time and again the story of how the ARC,



Figure 5 The spirit of America--Join / Howard Chandler Christy 1919; Forbes. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington,

wealthy philanthropists like Rockefeller, Sage, and Carnegie, and the United States government had joined together in the uniquely American mission to ‘make the whole world well’. These sometimes overtly grandiose tales of national munificence had an impact on how American consumers imaged themselves in relation to other nations and geographies.

⁴²¹ Anderson 1983, 24

⁴²² Pickering, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* 2001, 85

⁴²³ Fousek 2000, 8

The 1917 WWI American Red Cross poster shown in *figure 5*, exhibits large, bolded text that calls on the American people to: *JOIN! America's Answer to Humanity's Challenge!* The poster illustration foregrounds a white, rosy cheeked American Red Cross nurse with a slight smile looking directly towards the reader, dressed in a professional white nursing uniform with a simple Red Cross collar pin. The nurse stands in front of a large American flag with one arm reached out to her American audience, while the other sweeps upwards to the sky in front of the universally recognized Red Cross symbol. With her open arms, welcoming smile, and instantly recognizable professional attire, the ARC nurse reassured an American public that was anxiously consuming daily news reports about the war that they too could join "America's answer to Humanity's Challenge." While *Humanity's Challenge* was a direct appeal to American benevolence, themes of American patriotism were front and center in the 1914 campaign design for *Loyalty to One is Loyalty to Both* (*figure 2*.) In this early WWI ARC poster, two men stand in formation, wearing military uniforms with identical styling and colors and matching liberty bell helmets. The poster represents one of the men with a Red Cross patch on his arm as he carries a flag that displays the universal Red Cross emblem against a white background field, while the other man appears as the standard bearer for the American Flag. The large red caption, **LOYALTY TO ONE IS LOYALTY TO BOTH!** is representative of the perceived near inseparability of ARC relief work, U.S. military support, and individual American's patriotic responsibilities during wartime. After the signing of the *Treaty of Versailles*, the ARC recognized that in post-war times it would need to expand its marketing tactics if it were to continue to generate the same level of interest and donations that it had during the war.⁴²⁴ The ARC was

⁴²⁴ See Irwin, 2013.

particularly adept at commissioning visual designs that leveraged its reputation as an American icon while appealing to different audiences depending on the organizations motive and/or mission at any given moment. In 1919, the ARC commissioned artist Christy Howard Chandler to create its post-war membership drive poster campaign titled, *The Spirit of America* (figure 5).

Chandler's illustration showcased a deliberate red, white, and blue pallet and replaced the practical white nurse uniform seen on display in the wartime poster *America's Answer to Humanity's Challenge* (figure 3), with a sheer silky white lower cut V-neck gown/nightgown. The flowing material of the stars and stripes has engulfed the white cherub faced nurse and a sizeable Red Cross symbol sits in the lower foreground of the poster, nestled next to an enlarged caption that simply reads, JOIN! THE SPIRIT OF AMERICA!. Chandler positioned the nurse

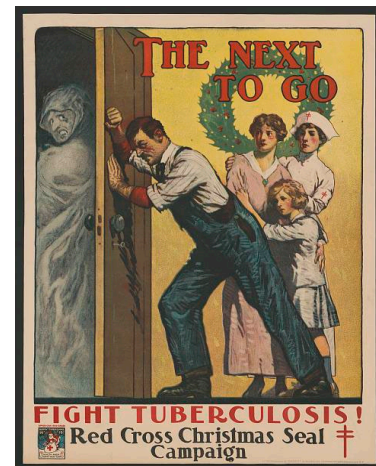


Figure 6: *The next to go. Fight Tuberculosis! Red Cross Christmas seal campaign, 1919*
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division
Washington, D.C.

in an 'inward' passive stance with an upward almost dreamlike gaze, while her left arm is swallowed into the prevailing folds of the American flag, and her right hand clutches her breast. The docile and sexually charged post-war representation of the nurse in *Spirit of America* set forth a gendered appeal that was in stark contrast to the active professional wartime woman of strength depicted in *Humanity's Challenge*.

The ARC released its Christmas Seal campaign *THE NEXT TO GO! FIGHT TUBERCULOSIS!* (figure 6) the same year as *Spirit of America*. The sensational themes in *The Next To Go* called up American notions of masculinity and strength, female passivity, and national concerns over the growing potential for the rapid spread of infectious diseases, particularly in urban settings. *The*

Next To Go presents its metaphorical 'ghost' of tuberculosis as a shadowy figure that attempts to breach the front door of a (presumably American) home. Inside, a young white girl clings to a white American Red Cross nurse alongside a second white woman as they collectively shrink behind their stern white male protector, represented in heavy navy-blue work overalls, thick work boots as he forcibly leans his body against the door to keep the symbolic ghost of tuberculosis at bay. A noticeably understated Red Cross emblem appears in the lower quadrant of the poster, situated next to the red-letter captioning: "FIGHT TUBERCULOSIS! Red Cross Christmas Seal Campaign." The sensational imagery and big red lettered title *THE NEXT TO GO* signaled to the American people that even in peacetime, the ARC remained at the ready to rally a benevolent and superior nation against whatever harms it might face.

Connecting Intellectuality and Development in Discourses of American Charity and Philanthropy:

There was seeming disconnect between cultural values in the United States that on one hand placed high worth on the nation's perceived position as a benevolent, kind, and generous international leader, while at the same time, the delegitimization of national, intellectual, economic, gender, physical, ethnic, and racial difference was gaining popularity. This dissertation demonstrates that these mutually informing discourses drew from each other to reinforce the binaries of intellectuality and development that were embedded in American culture. In 1913, the *Washington Post* reported on the ninth annual meeting of the American National Red Cross in Washington, DC., where in addition to his role as the newly inaugurated President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson accepted the ARC's invitation to continue to serve as its president. The *Washington Post* column titled, *Red Cross Heroes: Wilson Proud to be*

Connected with "Mighty Society," discussed Wilson's praise for the many "brave deeds" performed by the ARC and recounted that the executive committee had expressed their gratitude for the substantial financial gifts received from "John D. Rockefeller, Mrs. Sage, Mrs. E.H. Harriman, and James Scrymer."⁴²⁵ In his speech before the annual gathering, Wilson expressed his approval of the ARC's efforts "towards the elimination of human misery," and stated he was "really glad... because of the office I hold, to be connected with the work of this great society, for in common with all other American citizens, I am an admirer not only of the work done, but the way in which it is achieved."⁴²⁶ Yet, according to ERO Superintendent Harry Laughlin's genealogy of U.S. sterilization laws, in 1911, just two years prior to his expressed commitment to end human misery, then Governor of New Jersey Woodrow Wilson signed legislation to "authorize and provide for the sterilization of feeble-minded... and other defectives."⁴²⁷

President Theodore Roosevelt made statements to the press and in personal correspondences that demonstrate the moral disconnect between the picture of America as a nation of international benevolence, and its institutions that were actively seeking to eliminate those believed to be impeding its intellectual progress. Even as Roosevelt enthusiastically endorsed the ARC, he penned a letter to ERO director Charles Davenport offering his full-throated support for eugenic policies, and in his letter, Roosevelt grumbled to Davenport that

⁴²⁵ The Washington Post 1913

⁴²⁶ Ibid

⁴²⁷ H. H. Laughlin, 1922

society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their own kind.”⁴²⁸ ⁴²⁹ American benevolence and concern for the welfare of *all* mankind clearly had its limits.

While the American press admired the nation’s spirit of generosity abroad, journalists were equally captivated by the social and philanthropic reformers that believed it was their duty to educate the American public on matters related to national belonging, and a vision of America that functioned in great part by leaning on the culturally mediated exemplary feeble-minded subject. Michael Pickering anchored the concepts of stereotyping and the Other to, “questions of power and authority in the contexts of nation-building, colonialism and imperialism,” and he underscored the historical deployment of the ‘stereotypical Other’ in “processes associated with building a national identity and nationalist sense of belonging.”⁴³⁰ The critical component in this process is the construction of some vague ideal of normalcy that the public can ultimately accept as a natural ‘truth,’ followed by the production of systems of representation that classify and stereotype ‘the Other’ as ‘undesirably different,’ and that then seek social consent for the material control and exclusion of those forms of difference. Nationalism then, as Mitchell points out, “tends to incorporate inequality... right at its center.”⁴³¹ Nationalism has been theorized across academic disciplines as “simultaneously a way of constructing groups and a normative claim,”⁴³² and an ideology that “tells people who they are and who belongs,”⁴³³ and a “style of thought about identity, loyalty, and solidarity that values nation above all other sources or objects of identity.”⁴³⁴ In pre-and-post WWI America, as

⁴²⁸ Ibid

⁴²⁹ American Philosophical Society Archive (cite)

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 49

⁴³¹ Ibid

⁴³² Calhoun 2006, 27

⁴³³ Doyle and Pamplona 2006, 9

⁴³⁴ Fousek 2000, 18

the national identity shifted a different configuration of intellectuality and development began to emerge. The Progressive Era was a new conjunctural moment that was in many ways marked by the reform movements that were fighting to change the social problems brought on by the rapid increase in industrial capitalism, urban population growth, and the wealth disparities that defined the previous decades. Between 1905 and 1920, the eugenics and social hygiene movements became new operational forces in the discourses of charity, humanitarianism, and philanthropy, and eugenicists and social hygiene practitioners had a lot to say about the character of the nation and its ‘undesirably different’ elements.

In June of 1913, just a year before her death, First Lady Ellen Wilson attended the first gathering of the *Society for the Promotion of Education in Sex Hygiene and Practical Eugenics*, held in Washington, D.C. The meeting took place at the home of Natalie Hammond, who was president of the *Woman’s Welfare Department of the National Civic Federation* and the wife of the wealthy mining engineer and founder of the *Hammond Radio Research Corporation*, John Hays Hammond. The *New York Sun* was a nationally distributed newspaper known for its “literary craftsmanship... feature editorials, society news, and human-interest stories,” and in 1913, the “newspaperman’s newspaper” published its report on the Hammond’s social gathering under the headline, *Mrs. Woodrow Wilson Enlisted in National Crusade for Preventing the Marriage of the Unfit: Wife of the President Takes Part in Movement in Washington to Organize National Society for the Promotion of Practical Eugenics—Many Prominent Women Interested*.⁴³⁵ ⁴³⁶ According to the author, the Hammonds regularly opened their home to “to

⁴³⁵ Library of Congress 2022

⁴³⁶ The Sun 1913

all properly accredited Americans,” and “women of practical experience, balanced judgement, and unselfish devotion to the cause of human progress” attended the D.C. event to promote sex hygiene and eugenics.⁴³⁷ The human-interest piece suggested that the ‘national crusade’ to sterilize the ‘unfit’ and prevent the marriage of “persons physically and mentally unsound” was “backed by social leaders of national prominence and women of the Cabinet Circle and endorsed by the wife of the President of the United States.”⁴³⁸ Women of social, political, and academic standing joined The First Lady at the Hammond home, and the press coverage of their collective presence legitimized their mission to set “a single standard of morals” and promote the “universal adoption of those segregation and sterilization laws which already exist in a number of states.”⁴³⁹ The near full page spread included official portraits of the First Lady, the event host “Mrs. John Hays Hammond,” and Dr. Elnora C. Folkmar. The article introduced Dr. Folkmar as a graduate from the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons, suffragist, and the leader of the ‘crusade against the unfit’ in Washington, D.C. The report stated that when Folkmar spoke to the women at the gathering, she talked about her plans for implementing the new national crusade:

How much longer I wonder, will we sit idly by and watch the propagation of blind, epileptic, and feeble-minded children?... a thorough system of instruction and education in sex hygiene is the surest means of remedying present evils the National Society for the Promotion of Practical Eugenics will undertake an education campaign by means of literature and illustrated lectures... we also intend to secure legislation which will prevent the marrying of the unfit.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Ibid

⁴³⁸ Ibid

⁴³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid

Folkmar was an advocate of woman suffrage and her speech called for women's equality while she simultaneously advocated for ableist measures to control the bodily autonomy of disabled and feeble-minded women and men:

“While the ballot in the hands of women would not bring about complete reforms it would at least hasten the day of effective legislation against the marriage of men and women who are physically unfit.”⁴⁴¹

In case readers still harbored doubts about the legitimacy of Folkmar or her campaign, the author went on to reinforce the national authenticity of the movement by reminding readers that the First Lady had “signified her interest in and approval ... the President's wife... expressed herself as being strongly in favor of this phase of social reform.”⁴⁴²

In addition to its growing popularity in the press and social circles, the coupling of eugenic theory with social hygiene methods received attention from nationally recognized economists, world finance entrepreneurs, and well-respected politicians and academics. Irving Fisher was the leading scholar of monetary economics at the turn of the twentieth century and he enjoyed a lifelong career as professor of political and social science at Yale University (1894-1935). Economic scholars in contemporary times argue that Fisher is “widely regarded as the greatest economist America has produced,” and he has been described as “a prolific, versatile and creative scholar... famous for his methodologies of quantitative empirical research.”⁴⁴³ Biographers continue to document the continuing impact of Fisher's mathematical theories on *capital and economics* and *debt inflation* on global economies, but far too many ignore or downplay his involvement in eugenics by labeling the staunch eugenicist “a colorful and

⁴⁴¹ Ibid

⁴⁴² Ibid

⁴⁴³ Tobin 2005, 19

eccentric figure,” and lightheartedly brushing aside his dangerous ideologies regarding the inheritability of degenerate traits and the economic drain the feeble-minded placed on society as his mere involvement in the “various social fads... of eugenics and health food diets.”⁴⁴⁴

Fisher’s involvement in official organizations of the eugenics movement was far from a simple passing fancy as he was a member of the CIW and SEE *Eugenics Records Office Board of Scientific Directors* alongside Alexander Graham Bell, T.H. Morgan, and Charles Davenport, where he helped to establish the *American Eugenics Society*. Fisher also co-organized the *First*

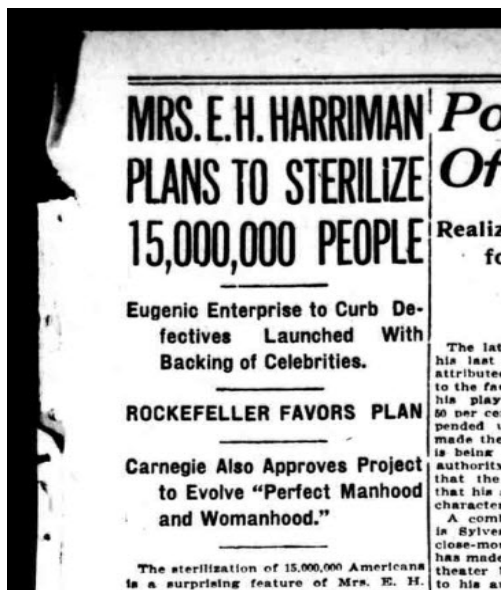


Figure 7 The Washington Times, Friday September 3, 1915. Sensational headlines and press coverage of the ERO’s stated plan to purify the “human race” by the year 1980.

National Conference on Race Betterment, co-founded the *Life Extension Institute*, and was Chairman of the *Eugenics Committee of the United States of America* and the *International Commission on Eugenics*. In 1913, Fisher authored an editorial for *Good Health Magazine* simply titled *Eugenics*, where he ardently, and publicly, proclaimed, “eugenics is hygiene raised to the highest power,”⁴⁴⁵ and later that year while speaking to the

National Conference on Race Betterment, Fisher announced that “after hygiene, as the crowning

element of the health movement, is eugenics... simply the hygiene of future generations.”⁴⁴⁶

American disdain for the so-called racially unfit is painfully evident in the onslaught of sensational headlines that appeared in 1915 and aggrandized the ERO for its newly launched

⁴⁴⁴ Institute for New Economic Thinking 2023

⁴⁴⁵ Fisher, *Eugenics* 1913

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

“campaign for the sterilization of 15,000,000 Americans.”⁴⁴⁷ *The Hopkinsville Kentuckian* opted to grab readers attention with its lengthy and overstated headline: *Scheme of Mrs. Harriman—To Find Out What’s The Matter With Human Race Nobel Men to Assist Project of Purifying By Eugenic Methods on a Big Scale.*⁴⁴⁸ *The Washington Post* made similarly outrageous claims about ERO’s potential ‘race purification’ program in its long-winded headline, *Plans To Better Race: Mrs. Harriman’s Society Bans 15,000,000 From Parenthood—10 Percent in U.S. Defective: Eugenic Organization Makes Report After Four Years’ Investigation, Which Contains Amazing Revelations—Expects Perfect Manhood and Womanhood, if Plans Rule, in 1980.*⁴⁴⁹ In one final example, *The Washington Times September 3rd Edition* (figure 7) treated the ERO with Hollywood like grandiosity in what the newspaper framed as the launch of “a great laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., to ascertain what is the matter with the human race,” in the caption that was placed under its upper case bolded headline that exclaimed — MRS. E.H. HARRIMAN PLANS TO STERILIZE 15,000,000 PEOPLE, followed by the garish sub-headlines—Eugenic Enterprise to Curb Defectives Launched With Backing of Celebrities: ROCKEFELLER FAVORS PLAN: Carnegie Also Approves Project to Evolve Perfect Manhood and Womanhood.⁴⁵⁰

In each of the above examples, journalists appeared excited to share with the American public that the ERO had received substantial funding from the Mary Harriman, widow of the railroad tycoon and philanthropist Edward H. Harriman, and additional financial support from John D. Rockefeller, Sr., and Andrew Carnegie. The journalists all stated that with the science expertise from Alexander Graham Bell and economic guidance from Irving Fisher, the Carnegie

⁴⁴⁷ Hopkinsville Kentuckian 1915

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁴⁹ The Washington Post 1915

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid

Institution Station for Experimental Evolution now had “an army of investigators” trained and ready to locate all exemplary feeble-minded subjects and mark them for involuntary sterilization and institutionalization.

The Benevolent Carnegie: *Intellectuality, Capitalism & Conceptualizing the Eugenics Records Office*

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Andrew Carnegie began to devote his attention and vast financial resources to the doctrine of benevolence he had articulated in two parts for *The North American Review*. Carnegie’s now famous piece, *The Gospel of Wealth* was first published in June of 1889 under the more simply titled *Wealth*, and his follow up *The Best Fields for Philanthropy* appeared in the literary magazine’s December edition of the same year.⁴⁵¹ ⁴⁵² Carnegie was a fierce capitalist and *Wealth*’s popularity afforded him a wide audience to share his particular take on the rich and poor in America, the relationship between industry and labor, international development and civilized society, and his ideals concerning “the proper administration of wealth.” ⁴⁵³ While *The Gospel of Wealth* remains a celebrated reading in philanthropy, business, American history, economics, and in public circles there is a tendency in contemporary times to romanticize Carnegie’s prolonged musings on indiscriminate charity, his patriarchal regard for intellectual superiority, and his unyielding defense of the free play of economic forces through his reductive witticism vis-à-vis the legacies of wealthy men:

The man who dies leaving behind him millions of available wealth, which was his to administer during life, will pass away “unwept, unhonored, and unsung,” no matter to what uses he leaves the dross which he cannot take with him. Of such as these the public verdict will be:

⁴⁵¹ Andrew Carnegie, *Wealth*, *The North American Review*. Vol. 148, No. 39 (June 1889), pp. 653-64.

⁴⁵² Andrew Carnegie, *The Best Fields for Philanthropy*, *The North American Review*. Vol. 149, No. 397 (December 1889), pp. 682-98

⁴⁵³ Carnegie, 1889, 1

“The man who dies thus rich, dies disgraced.”⁴⁵⁴

Although Carnegie argued in *Wealth* that the law of competition was one of the highest achievements of mankind he did concede that successful market competition necessitated low wages, difficult working conditions, and enormous wealth disparities that he reluctantly acknowledged, “may be sometimes hard for the individual.”⁴⁵⁵ In defense of the economic and social inequalities that were directly attributable to his own industrial practices, Carnegie went on to say that the concept of industrial competition, scientific innovations leading to the manufacture affordable goods, low labor costs, and America’s increased access to “cheap comforts and luxuries” was in reality “best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department.”⁴⁵⁶ While Carnegie did acknowledge the ever-present “friction between the employer and employed, between capital and labor, between rich and poor,” he was of the belief that these were necessary material components for any thriving civilization where, as he stated, “the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race.”⁴⁵⁷ Carnegie felt that all individuals possessed the right to accumulate vast amounts of capital, but he also assumed that only clever men who were biologically endowed with special physical and intellectual abilities, and a particular “talent for organization and management,” were actually entitled to do so.⁴⁵⁸ A strong thread of social Darwinism, ableist paternalism, and classist thinking appears throughout the pages of *Wealth*,

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 15

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 3

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 15-16.

⁴⁵⁷ Carnegie 1889, 3

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 5-6

and in several passages, Carnegie exerts a tremendous amount of effort attempting to justify his stated position that, “not evil, but good, has come to the race from the accumulation of wealth by those who have the ability and energy to produce it.”⁴⁵⁹ In the passage below, Carnegie claimed that the survival of the whole of civilization rested on capitalism’s devotion to the law of competition, individualism, and the right to accumulate wealth:

Individualism, Private Property, the Law of Accumulation of Wealth, and the Law of Competition... these are the highest results of human experience, the soil in which society so far has produced the best fruit... they are, nevertheless, like the highest type of man, the best and most valuable of all that humanity has yet accomplished.⁴⁶⁰

The Gospel of Wealth is an exercise in contradictions where Carnegie venerated his own experience as an impoverished youth while expressing scorn for charitable endeavors that involved any form of indiscriminate ‘almsgiving’ to the poor. Much like those involved in the national charities and corrections movement, Carnegie insisted that the poor fell under one of two distinct categories where the ‘deserving’ showed a demonstrated potential to produce and perform—to manage on their own—in capitalist society, whereas the undeserving were shiftless, lazy, slothful, degenerates unwilling to labor alongside more willing and productive citizens. Carnegie was famous for his clever phrasing, captivating anecdotes, and his verbal pomposity, and in addition to his oft cited idiom regarding the rich man dying rich, his rhetorical musings about the ‘undeserving poor’ somehow impeding the forward progress of the greater civilized race received high acclaim in some philanthropic, political, and social circles:

One of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity. It were better for mankind that the millions of the rich were thrown into the sea than so spent as to encourage the slothful, the drunken, the unworthy.”⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 5

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 6

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 13

According to Carnegie's gospel, American millionaires had proven they possessed the inheritable intellect, business acumen, and sheer American grit needed to accumulate immense capital resources, and therefore readers should accept that rich philanthropists—and only rich philanthropists—were competent to dispense wisdom and distribute material resources to recipients they deemed “the best and most aspiring poor.”⁴⁶² For Carnegie, those with immense fortunes were obliged to disseminate their wealth to the needy, but only those poor and needy individuals with the demonstrated potential and willingness to produce in America's capital systems:

The man of wealth thus becoming the mere agent and trustee for his poor brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could for themselves.⁴⁶³

Throughout his life, Carnegie heartily recited his prescriptive doctrine in his writings, formal addresses, casual conversations, and in press interviews. Several news stories reported on one specific occasion in New York City where Carnegie had addressed a young men's bible class on the topic he ostentatiously named “*The Blessed Heritage of Poverty*,” and where according to *The New York Tribune*, John D. Rockefeller was in attendance as “an interested listener.”⁴⁶⁴ The *Tribune* reporter was also present for Carnegie's talk and they claimed to have witnessed a level of comradery between Carnegie and Rockefeller, whereas “Mr. Rockefeller suggested that everybody shake hands with the speaker,” and the reporter also noted that the great philanthropist received “three cheers in his honor” when his talk concluded.⁴⁶⁵ The article cited

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 12

⁴⁶³ Ibid

⁴⁶⁴ New York Tribune 1900

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid

at length one of Carnegie's more controversial takes regarding what he called the 'virtue of poverty':

I was born to the blessed heritage of poverty. I hope the burden of riches has not fallen on the young men here... You hear a great deal about poverty nowadays, and the cry goes up to abolish poverty, but it will be the saddest day of civilization when poverty is no longer with us. It is from the soil of poverty that all the virtues spring. Without poverty where will your inventor, your artist, your philanthropist come from? God does not call His great men from the palaces of the rich.⁴⁶⁶

In January 1900, *The Times* (Washington D.C.) printed a brief paragraph description of Carnegie's speech under the headline *Charity and Justice* and the tone of the article crystalized the nation's enduring hierarchies of individual worth by stating there was "a great deal of force" behind the rules Carnegie had laid out for the nation's wealthiest givers regarding the unworthy poor:

Andrew Carnegie made the startling assertion that "\$950 out of every \$1,000 spent in charity had better be thrown into the sea" adding, "Don't help the submerged tenth: help the struggling tenth." His meaning was that the proper persons to help are those who are willing to help themselves, and there is a great deal of force in that position.⁴⁶⁷

Many in the mainstream press described Carnegie as "a man of ideals," "an outstanding public servant," "a man of humble beginnings," and a "great humanitarian," and while more than a few found his charitable values "most remarkable and most wholesome,"⁴⁶⁸ not all journalists were impressed with his ponderings on the laws of industry or his dogmatic take on charitable giving. Publications like the *Kansas Agitator*, *The Commoner*, and the *Chicago Day Book* targeted their content towards the working class and in their frequent editorial condemnation of America's 'captains of industry, they were especially critical of Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Sr.,

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid

⁴⁶⁷ The Times, Washington D.C., 1900

⁴⁶⁸ The Conservative 1900

and later, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The *Kansas Agitator* was directly affiliated with the populist political organization known as the People's Party⁴⁶⁹ and the newspaper operated under the slogan "A Fearless, Aggressive, Progressive Advocate of All Reforms."⁴⁷⁰ From 1900 to 1904, the *Agitator* engaged in a direct attack against Carnegie and his *Gospel of Wealth* in a series of columns published under the byline, *Jo McDill's Musings*. In March of 1901, *Musings* acknowledged that by providing pensions for his "old employees who are indigent, disabled or too old to work" and through his endowment to several libraries, Carnegie had begun to follow through on his "intention of giving away his fortune before his death."⁴⁷¹ However, the author posed a set of additional inquiries that were well-known to labor unions and environmental and industry reformers that had for many years questioned the means by which Carnegie gathered his excessive wealth in the first place:

Would it not have been more in keeping with true benevolence for Carnegie to have paid better wages for the services rendered him by his employees, and charged less to his customers for what he sold? To put it in other words, would it not have been more God-like for him to have retained no more capital than was necessary to keep his manufacturing plants in operation? ⁴⁷²

According to Giroux, by the late 1890s Carnegie was "the largest producer of coke, pig iron, and steel rail" in the United States, and as "one of the world's largest freight customers," Carnegie's industrial empire received secret railroad rebates that allowed him to charge lower prices for his products, and ultimately chase his competitors out of business. ⁴⁷³ In the years before and after the official release of *Wealth*, Carnegie and his steel empire regularly received heated criticism

⁴⁶⁹ See Hillstrom, pp. 16-18. The Populist Party was also known as the People's Party wanted to limit corporate power, get rid of government corruption, place the nation's railroads and communication industries under federal control, and restrict immigration into the United States.

⁴⁷⁰ Library of Congress 2022

⁴⁷¹ *Kansas Agitator* 1901

⁴⁷² *Kansas Agitator* 1901

⁴⁷³ Giroux 2013

in press reports that accused him of mistreating his workers and corrupt business practices. Carnegie's reputation was severely damaged in 1892 when "one of the largest and bloodiest strikes in labor history" took place at his steel plant in Homestead Pennsylvania that ended in the death of seven people. Carnegie was in Scotland when negotiations with the Amalgamated Steel Workers union broke down, and his anti-labor boss Henry Frick locked out the union workers, brought in outside laborers to replace the striking workers, and "hired Pinkerton agents to protect the plant."⁴⁷⁴ Giroux argues that the Homestead strike "set back the organized labor movement in basic industries for decades," and ruined the image that Carnegie had previously enjoyed as an employer who treated his employees "better than most semi-and unskilled workers."⁴⁷⁵ The press wrote scathing accounts of the incident that criticized Carnegie for his lack of response and being "culpable and cowardly" for agreeing to Frick's strike busting strategies.⁴⁷⁶ In 1904, years after the Homestead strike, *Jo McDill's Musings* went right at Carnegie's famous "to die rich is to die a disgrace" ideology and countered with a lengthy list of grievances that had been levied against Carnegie for years, including his lack of action during the events that unfolded at the Carnegie Steel Company in 1892:

If Carnegie had said it's a disgrace to hire Pinkerton thugs, cheat the government on contracts, manufacturing cheap by beating down the price of labor, and selling dear by having a corner and getting rebates from railroad companies which are the hair of the same dog, then, Carnegie would have come so near to the truth that he might be able to pass into history as a man of considerable veracity.⁴⁷⁷

Carnegie's public reputation began to shift in a slightly more favorable direction between 1904 and 1910 as the mainstream press focused its reporting on Carnegie's benevolences, and

⁴⁷⁴ Giroux 2013, 277-279

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 279

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 278

⁴⁷⁷ Kansas Agitator 1901

popular magazines featured glowing biographical accounts of his early years as a bobbin boy, his jovial nature, his 'brilliant' industrial strategies, and his expressed interest in ridding the human race of all forms of suffering.



Figure 8, The Spanish American. (Roy, Mora Co., N.M.), 11 Feb. 1911. Who Will Give The Most? Chronicling American Historic American Newspapers.

Carnegie's earliest benefactions (1896-1902) included donating buildings and land to help communities across the United States and Scotland develop free public library systems, fiscal endowments to American colleges, retired steel worker pensions, pensions for teachers, and the founding of the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Mellon University) in

1896. Volumes could be written (and have) about Carnegies complicated presence in the cultural development of the nation during the Progressive Era, but for the purposes of this work, his founding of the Carnegie Institution of Washington in 1902 marks a significant moment when Carnegie's fondness for intellectual and biological greatness began to take material form. When Carnegie spoke to the trustees of the newly founded Carnegie Institution of Washington, he pledged the transfer of "Ten Millions of Registered Five Per Cent Bonds of the United States Steel Corporation," in the form of a Trust Deed to the CIW board, with the following aims in mind:

1. To promote original research, paying great attention thereto as one of the most important of all departments.
2. To discover the exceptional man in every department of study whenever and wherever found, inside or outside of schools, and enable him to make the work for which he seems specially designed his life work.
3. To increase facilities for higher education.

4. To increase efficiency of the Universities and other institutions of learning throughout the country.
5. To enable such students as may find Washington the best point for their special studies... to enjoy the advantages of the Museums, Libraries, Laboratories, Observatory... and kindred institutions of the several departments of the Government.
6. To ensure the prompt publication and distribution of the results of scientific investigation, a field considered highly important.⁴⁷⁸

By the design of his trust, Carnegie agreed that CIW affairs would be handled by a board of trustees not to exceed thirty members, and that in the interest of public transparency, the board would include “the President of the United States, The President of the Senate, The Speaker of the House of Representatives, The Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and the President of the National Academy of Sciences.”⁴⁷⁹ In the early months of 1904, the Executive Committee approved the development of the Station for Experimental Evolution (SEE) and appointed Dr. Charles Davenport, the man responsible for its vision, structure, and development as its director. Davenport was the head of the University of Chicago Zoological Laboratory and a recognized expert in the fields of biological and statistical sciences when he began sending numerous formal financing requests to CIW for his proposed experimental station at Cold Spring Harbor. One of Davenport’s proposals made a strong impression on the CIW committee, and in its 1902 yearbook, Roswell H. Johnson urged CIW to take up his cause:

Our Knowledge of the processes of evolution has been greatly retarded by lack of experimental investigation. Nearly all of the post-Darwinian writing has been either largely deductive or else upon the variation of individuals at a particular time and place *i. e.*, static. Evolution above all requires dynamic studies... so clearly has this been seen that hardly an evolutionary writer of prominence has not appealed for such work... Professor Davenport in his course on evolution at Harvard made a strong plea for experimental work.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Carnegie Institution of Washington 1902, xiii-xiv.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ The Carnegie Institution of Washington 1902

The executive committee approved Davenport's plan for the facility and the Department of Experimental Evolution officially opened its doors in 1904 "on a small island in Long Island Sound known as Goose Island."⁴⁸¹ The department's initial investigative focus encompassed the biological aspects of flora and fauna, the study of "normal variation... as associated with geographical distribution," and the "experimental study of the causes of specific differentiation—of race change," in small animals, marine organisms, and plants.⁴⁸² In one of several correspondences to CIW trustee Dr. John S. Billings, Davenport confidently boasted that "no one in the country is as well prepared for experimental and quantitative studies in evolution as I am."⁴⁸³ Davenport emphasized his unique interdisciplinary training in the fields of civil engineering, statistics, biology, and zoology, and he reasoned with Billings that if CIW did fund the station, he was the best choice to serve as its director.⁴⁸⁴ Under Davenport's guidance, in its early formation SEE concentrated its science-based investigations on the study of biological factors in plants, animals, fish, and micro-organisms, and by 1905, Davenport demonstrated a particular interest in the eugenic science of human improvement by better breeding.⁴⁸⁵

Davenport believed that American philanthropists should hold the nation's racial integrity as their upmost concern and the national charities and corrections membership saw great promise in the eugenic studies at SEE. In 1910, the Carnegie Institution of Washington published Davenport's book, *Eugenics the Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, and in doing so, the world's "premier scientific organization" afforded Davenport the space he

⁴⁸¹ Ibid

⁴⁸² Ibid p. 281

⁴⁸³ MacDowell, *Charles Benedict Davenport, 1866-1944: A Study of Conflicting Influences*, *Biological Society* (March, 1946.)

⁴⁸⁴ MacDowell, 18.

⁴⁸⁵ Davenport and his long-time career at SEE and ERO are discussed at length in chapter 6.

needed to promote his doctrine of eugenic philanthropy under the pretext of legitimate scientific thought. The press kept the public informed about the research activities at SEE and journalists recirculated Davenport's call for American philanthropists to segregate and/or remove degenerate individuals that failed to demonstrate they were sufficiently motivated by duty to their country. In *Eugenics the Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, Davenport echoed the national charities and corrections emphasis on degeneracy theory, the heritability of feeble-mindedness, and the dangers of unwise philanthropy:⁴⁸⁶

Shall we as an intelligent people, proud of our control of nature in other respects, do nothing but vote more taxes or be satisfied with the great gifts and bequests that philanthropists have made for the support of the delinquent, defective and dependent classes... the weak and the criminal will not be guided in their mating by patriotism or family pride, more powerful influence or restraints must be exerted... vastly more effective than ten million dollars to "charity" would be ten millions to Eugenics. He who, by such a gift, should redeem mankind from vice, imbecility, and suffering would be the world's wisest philanthropist.⁴⁸⁷

The charities and corrections movement applauded Davenport's training in biology, botany, zoology, and statistical methods and its leaders believed that Davenports work would prove a welcome addition to the type of scientific expertise that they had been clamoring for since the late 1800s. Philanthropist Mary Harriman took up Davenports call to purify the American race when she donated a substantial endowment to fuel his ambition to build a eugenic records office that, as Davenport stated in the Eugenics Records Office Report No. 1., "would serve eugenical interests in the capacity of repository and clearing house."⁴⁸⁸ In 1910, with the Harriman endowment, financial support from RFF and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., CIW

⁴⁸⁶ See Warner, American Charities

⁴⁸⁷ C. Davenport, *Eugenics the Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*, (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1910, 31-35.

⁴⁸⁸ H. H. Laughlin, Eugenics Record Office Report No. 1 1913

funds, and publicity backing from the Russell Sage Foundation, Davenport opened the ERO at Cold Spring Harbor, as he put it, “to develop the utmost work of the physical and social regeneration of our beloved country.”⁴⁸⁹

The ERO was located on Harriman land adjacent to the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s Station for Experimental Evolution and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (BIAS) Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor, and in its early years, the ERO was formalized “under the auspices of the American Breeders Association.”⁴⁹⁰ A quick note about the relationship between the American Breeders Association, BIAS, CIW, SEE, ERO, and the Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor; while on paper these entities appeared as distinct projects, they operated simultaneously under the directorship of Charles Davenport, shared resources and facilities, and CIW published papers and books that were the outcome of research undertaken by all of the organizations.

In 1890, Davenport was instructor of zoology and morphology at Harvard University when he accepted an additional summer teaching position at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor. In 1890, the BIAS *Annual Yearbook* listed Davenport as General Director of the laboratory and instructor in comparative biology, in 1902 Davenport’s name appeared under the Board of Managers heading, and the BIAS yearbook emphasized his new position as the “Director of the Station for Experimental Evolution of the Carnegie Institution of Washington.”⁴⁹¹ Davenport continued to instruct courses in zoology, marine biology, and morphology at the summer school at Cold Spring Harbor even as his

⁴⁸⁹ cited in Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign To Create a Master Race* 2003, 48

⁴⁹⁰ MacDowell 1946, 31

⁴⁹¹ Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences: Department of Biological Laboratory Yearbook 1890 - 1927

administrative duties as director of SEE and the BIAS laboratory significantly increased. After the CIW officially opened SEE in 1904, Davenport became increasingly involved in the activities and interests of the American Breeders Association and he was particularly enamored with the works of the English eugenicists Francis Galton and Karl Pearson.

In 1907, Harry H. Laughlin was the former Superintendent of Public Schools for Kirksville Missouri and a current Ph.D. student of biology at Princeton when he completed 250 hours of laboratory fieldwork and summer coursework at BIAS under Davenport's mentorship.⁴⁹² After Laughlin ended his classes at Cold Spring Harbor and returned to Missouri, he continued his correspondences with Davenport. In March of 1910, Davenport wrote to inform Laughlin that he was included in the roster of part time instructors for the BIAS summer program for that year. Davenport took the time in his letter to praise Laughlin for the work he had recently accomplished in the study of family records, and he advised Laughlin that Andrew Carnegie had viewed Laughlin's lantern slide presentation at a recent exposition in Washington, D.C.:

The lantern slides were received in time for an exhibit in Washington and Mr. Carnegie had a chance to look at them. I have since shown them to a large audience in John Hopkins University. I may say that the collection of Family Records returned is the largest received from any collaborator, I thank you very much for your activity in this respect.⁴⁹³

Davenport was impressed with Laughlin's interest in family histories and just three months after he sent his letter proposing Laughlin teach a summer course in agriculture at BIAS, Laughlin received a second note from Davenport updating him on recent developments at BIAS and SEE, dated June 27, 1910:

⁴⁹² Davenport, Chalres. 1908. "Letter to Iowa State College President, A.B. Storms." *CSHL Archives, RG:1, H.H. Laughlin 1907-1970, Correspondence*. Long Island, February 10.

⁴⁹³ Davenport, Charles. 1910. "Letter to H.H. Laughlin." *CSHL Archives, RG:1, H.H. Laughlin 1907-1970, Correspondence*. Long Island, March 3. Accessed August 12-16, 2019.

I should like to propose that instead of the course in agriculture you give with me a joint course on eugenics... when you arrive I shall want to have a talk with you concerning plans for future work in eugenics. It seems quite probable that there is going to be a considerable development in this line and that a position will be offered you to put in your whole time in the work... if our plans carry out it would involve your permanently associating yourself with some of the works at Cold Spring Harbor.⁴⁹⁴

In 1910, just four months before the official opening of the ERO, Laughlin and Davenport began their co-instruction at Cold Spring Harbor on courses in the training of field workers in eugenics, and in his report to the CIW board of directors that same year, Davenport wrote, “the work in human heredity has grown to such proportions and its outlook is so vast that it became evident that the Director of the Department (Davenport) could not cope with it alone.”⁴⁹⁵ In June of 1910, Laughlin was appointed “in charge of training course for Field Workers in Eugenics,” and by October, Davenport designated Laughlin the first (and only) superintendent of the ERO. Laughlin held the full-time superintendent position until 1921 when ERO, SEE, and the Biological Laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor reorganized under the umbrella of CIW’s newly formed Department of Genetics, with Davenport as its Director and Laughlin in the assistant director position.⁴⁹⁶

In 1918, Harriman turned the official ownership of the ERO over to CIW along with a substantial endowment to support its ongoing work. Board members from the ARC, RFF, Russell Sage Foundation, and the YMCA served on the governing board of the ERO, and the ARC Scientific Director served as active member of the RFF advisory committee. These relationships and their outcomes are studied with greater specificity in chapter six.

⁴⁹⁴ Davenport, Charles. 1910. "Letter to H. H. Laughlin." *CSHL Archives, RG:1, H.H Laughlin 1907-1970, Correspondence*. Long Island, July 27. Accessed August 12-16, 2019.

⁴⁹⁵ MacDowell 1946, 29

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 30

Numerous academics and activists over the past three decades have authored critical genealogies of Davenport's work in the field of eugenics, and others have documented his tenure at CIW, his involvement in the founding of the ERO, and his now infamous status as the 'father of the eugenics movement in the United States'.⁴⁹⁷ A list recent and important scholarship on Davenport's eugenic legacy includes: Historian James Trent's record of Davenport's role in the construction of the discourse of the 'burden of the feeble-minded' in *Inventing the Feeble Mind*;⁴⁹⁸ American Cultural History and Disability Studies scholar Douglas Baynton's account of Davenport's racial categories in *Defectives in the Land*;⁴⁹⁹ Critical Visual Studies analyst Shawn Michelle Smith's evaluation of Davenport's relationship to the 'art of scientific propaganda' in *Photography on the Color Line*;⁵⁰⁰ American Literary Critic and Historian Henry Louis Gates Junior's remarks on Davenport's lasting impact on white racist ideologies in *Stoney Road*;⁵⁰¹ the meticulous attention that sociologist Allison Carey has given to Davenport's impact on race and citizenship debates in the United States;⁵⁰² and, conservative author and Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute William A. Schambra's critique of Davenport's commitment to a merger between U.S. philanthropy and 'the science of eugenics' in *Philanthropy's Original Sin*.⁵⁰³ These diverse and multidisciplinary studies are strong historicizing assets for this project because they each help to explain a particular aspect of Davenport's lasting cultural influence; however, a majority of these 'views from the outside' are

⁴⁹⁷ see also: Baynton 2016; Black, 2003; Carey, 2010; Cohen, 2016; Dolmage 2011; Lombardo, 2008; Mitchell and Snyder, 2003 and 2006; Murray, 2008; Shambra; 2013; Trent, 1994.

⁴⁹⁸ Trent 1994

⁴⁹⁹ Baynton 2016

⁵⁰⁰ S. M. Smith 2004

⁵⁰¹ Gates 2020

⁵⁰² Carey 2010

⁵⁰³ Schambra 2013

focused on the eugenic discourse at the turn of the twentieth century and therefore take as their starting point Davenport's narrow-minded interest in purging the American gene pool (and ultimately, the whole international sphere) of all 'degenerate' traits.

In March of 1946, CIW published a remarkably revealing biographical account of Davenport's personal life and his notorious professional legacy. It was just two years after Davenport's death that his longtime colleague and fellow investigator at SEE, Dr. Edwin Carleton MacDowell, authored the extensive biographical project he titled *Charles Benedict Davenport, 1866-1944: A study of Conflicting Influences*. MacDowell was a fellow zoologist, Harvard trained biologist, and resident investigator at SEE from 1915 to his retirement in 1955. Through his investigative role at SEE, MacDowell worked alongside Davenport and became known for his study "of leukemia in mice, size inheritance in rabbits and the influence of alcohol on prenatal mortality"⁵⁰⁴ and, in his own words, he "lived in continuous personal contact with Doctor Davenport during most of the second half of his life and... had access... to official files and an extensive collection of person letters, autobiographical sketches, diaries, and other... documents going back to [Davenport's] childhood."⁵⁰⁵ *A Study of Conflicting Influences* covers the range of Davenport's activities from childhood to his death in 1944, and MacDowell's biographical presentation tells a painstaking story that sheds some light on how and why Davenport became known as "the pioneer American eugenicist."⁵⁰⁶ Davenport graduated with his B.S. degree in Civil Engineering from the Polytech Institute where he learned the latest quantitative methods in civil engineering and mathematics, and after he struggled to find gainful employment,

⁵⁰⁴ Special to The New York Times, 1973.

⁵⁰⁵ MacDowell 1946

⁵⁰⁶ Schambra 2013

Davenport shifted his attention to his lifelong interest in the biology and the natural world.

MacDowell believed that when CIW officially opened the Station for Experimental Evolution and put Davenport in charge, the organization “gave Davenport a position of extraordinary influence and power, and gave his name a lasting place in the history of science”⁵⁰⁷

In 2021, the president of the Carnegie Institution for Science (formerly CIW) posted an announcement on the institution’s website under the title, *Statement on Eugenics Research*. In the official declaration, Eric D. Isaacs acknowledged CIW’s involvement in “the morally reprehensible endeavor” of eugenic research and he apologized for the ableist and racist policies that were a direct result of the institutions eugenic programs.⁵⁰⁸ Isaacs pledged that his institution will not only “bear witness to our own past, but to stand up and speak out whenever the cause of science is distorted by personal prejudice.”⁵⁰⁹ I cite a substantial portion of Isaac’s apology here because it illustrates a rare moment in history when a long-established institution attempts to remediate its past behaviors:

Statement From Carnegie President Eric D. Isaacs:

At this pivotal moment in our nation’s history, it is appropriate for us, both as individuals and as institutions, to reflect on our pasts and take responsibility for the ways in which our actions have contributed to our society’s systemic racism. For the Carnegie Institution, this process of discernment requires us to grapple with our history of eugenics research. Our involvement in eugenics dates back to 1902, when zoologist Charles B. Davenport received Carnegie support to establish a “Biological Experiment Station for the study of evolution.” His stated aim was the “analytic and experimental study of the causes of specific differentiation—of race change.” This became the Eugenics Record Office, and for more than 30 years thereafter, Carnegie researchers helped to lead the eugenics movement, with the expressed support of America’s mainstream scientific community. It was not until 1935 that a review panel convened by

⁵⁰⁷ Davenport Biography by Carleton MacDowell, Carleton. 1946 . "Charles B. Davenport, 1866-1944: A Study of Conflicting Influences." *BIOS*. Vol. XVII. Beta Beta Beta Biological Society, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Repository, Charles B. Davenport Special Collections, Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

⁵⁰⁸ Isaacs, 2021

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid*

the Carnegie Institution concluded that our eugenics research lacked scientific merit; Carnegie closed the Eugenics Record Office in 1939 and wound down all eugenics-related research by 1944.

Since then, we have expressed our institutional distress over the impact of these actions by attempting to distance ourselves from our involvement in this morally reprehensible endeavor. There is no excuse, then or now, for our institution's previous willingness to empower researchers who sought to pervert scientific inquiry to justify their own racist and ableist prejudices. Our support of eugenics made us complicit in driving decades of brutal and unconscionable actions by governments in the United States and around the world. As the President of the Carnegie Institution for Science, I want to express my sincere and profound apologies for this organization's past involvement in these horrific pseudoscientific activities.⁵¹⁰

The statement is a first step towards remediation, but, as the institution moves through their stated goal of self-reflection a more thorough intervention would acknowledge the very real, direct, violent, and racist consequences of the "brutal and unconscionable actions" that CIW eugenic research inspired.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., & Social Morality: *Conceptualizing the Bureau of Social Hygiene*

Biographies and timelines that are produced by an organization or institution often serve as directional guideposts for memorializing how the foundation interprets its own place in



Covid-19 Resp



history. The artifact in *figure 8* represents a

screenshot taken in 2022 of an entry in the

Rockefeller Foundation website *about*

us/history page featuring one of ten timeline

segments the foundation selected to highlight

RFF activities during its inaugural year. The

website text entry below is illustrative of how

Figure 8: The Rockefeller Foundation.Org "Our History," March 2022 Researcher generated screenshot.

⁵¹⁰ Isaacs 2021

the foundation historically places itself in affiliation with the Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH), the private organization founded by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., that formally incorporated the same year the New York State legislature passed the Act to Incorporate the Rockefeller Foundation:

1913 - The Foundation begins its 20-year support of the Bureau of Social Hygiene. Its mission: research and education on birth control, maternal health, and sex education. The Foundation also helps establish the American Social Hygiene Association to direct scientific study of biological and social factors that influence human sexual conduct.⁵¹¹

This biographical entry could leave those interested in the history of both organizations with the limited notion that RFF was a leading driver of BSH projects, that the BSH was a division of RFF, and that the sole function and dominant interest of BSH was the “scientific study of biological and social factors that influence human sexual conduct.”⁵¹² While the statement is historically accurate it is largely incomplete and the records located in the BSH special collections at RAC reveal a more nuanced story of the relationship between RFF and BSH. BSH operated near exclusively on private monies contributed by its founder John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and from its first unofficial gathering as *The Committee of Three* in 1911, through the incorporation as BSH Inc., in 1913, and its certificate of reorganization in 1929, RFF channeled limited funds through the BSH budget for dissemination to outside projects of interest to both organizations. While BSH was a financial backer for several long-term projects dedicated to ‘birth control, maternal health, and sex education,’ in his press announcement of the Bureaus formal incorporation, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., described the organizations broader mission:

The conviction grew that in order to make a real and lasting improvement in conditions, a permanent organization should be created, the continuation of which would not be dependent upon a temporary wave of reform, nor upon the life of any man or group of

⁵¹¹ The Rockefeller Foundation 2022

⁵¹² Ibid

men, but which would go on, generation after generation, continuously making warfare against the forces of evil.⁵¹³

Rockefeller, Jr., established BSH after serving as foreman for the New York grand jury investigation into white slavery in 1910. It is difficult to determine an exact meaning of the term 'white slavery,' and BSH documents and press stories generally defined white slavery as 'organized prostitution.' In the NIH public manuscript attributed to Smolak titled, *White Slavery, Whorehouse Riots, Venereal Disease, and Saving Women: Historical Context of Prostitution Interventions and Harm Reduction in New York City during the Progressive Era*, the author claims that white slavery "was the term used for sexual slavery... not indicative of race, but simply referred to the practice of organized coercion of unwilling persons into prostitution."⁵¹⁴ In the wider context of the Bureau of Social Hygiene and the social hygiene movement, white slavery became a catch all phrase that encompassed 'the forces of evil, 'crime, 'prostitution,' and 'vice.'

In its near 30-year history, the structural, individual, and personnel boundaries between BSH and RFF remained ill-defined and ambiguous at best. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., served as a trustee of the RFF board, trustee and secretary to the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, he was trustee and president of the Rockefeller General Education Board, and founder and president of the BSH. In the early 1900s, Rockefeller, Jr., stepped away from his administrative position in the Rockefeller business interests to assume a leading role in the distribution of the Rockefeller wealth, and according to the biography written by his close friend and RFF President Raymond B. Fosdick, Rockefeller, Jr., performed an "intimate and direct" part in the

⁵¹³ Press Release "The Origin, Work, and Plans of the Bureau of Social Hygiene" by John D. Rockefeller Jr., FA060, series 1, box 1, folder 2, Bureau of Social Hygiene Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York.

⁵¹⁴ Smolak 2013, 498

development and launch of the four main Rockefeller boards.⁵¹⁵ Starr J. Murphy was a longtime Rockefeller family advisor, close friend to John D. Rockefellers, Sr., and, Jr., council to the Rockefeller business and philanthropic empires, founding member and chair of the RFF executive committee, and one of the three co-creators of BSH. The third founding member, Paul M. Warburg, was also a close confidant to Rockefeller, Jr., a top authority on central banking systems, one of the key creators of the 1913 *Federal Reserve Act* and he was appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to the first Federal Reserve Board in 1914.⁵¹⁶ Warburg was also treasurer of the philanthropic organization known as the New York Foundation and in 1911 he managed to procure a large grant to cover some of the first year expenditures for the exploratory phase of the BSH, known as the Committee of Three.⁵¹⁷ In January 1912, the Committee of Three met in New York and formally agreed to elect Dr. Katharine Bemet Davis, Superintendent of the New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills, to its membership, and in 1919, BSH appointed Dr. Davis as its full-time director and general secretary.⁵¹⁸

In the fall of 1912, the same year that she was elected to BSH membership, Dr. Davis served as Third Chair Officer of the Conference at the *Thirteenth New York State Conference of Charities* held in Saratoga, where she was one of two speakers (Charles Davenport was the second) to address *Eugenics in Relation to Social Problems*.⁵¹⁹ In early 1924, Davis received a

⁵¹⁵ Fosdick 1956, 109-111

⁵¹⁶ Federal Reserve History 2020

⁵¹⁷ Murphy, 1911 typewritten meeting transcript, "Committee of Three" by Starr J. Murphy, SPC.FA060, Record Group; Bureau of Social Hygiene, Box 2, Folder 23, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York.

(Bureau of Social Hygiene 1929) Annual Report, by the Bureau of Social Hygiene, SPC FA060, Record Group, Bureau of Social Hygiene, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2. Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown NY

⁵¹⁹ Thirteenth New York State Conference of Charities and Correction 1912

personal correspondence from Irving Fisher informing the BSH General Secretary of her recent nomination to the *Eugenics Committee of the United States of America*. As is addressed in the final chapter, through the course of its operations Katharine Davis, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and BSH became heavily involved in defining what interests would fall under the auspices of ‘social hygiene.’

Modernity and Progressive Era politics at the turn of the twentieth century had ushered in a new, relational, and a more collaborative focus on removing and/or controlling all perceived forms of racial and social difference. Eugenic science, social hygiene and social control policies, Jim Crow, and the nation’s myopic focus on breeding superior human stock served to worsen the already heated racialized national discourse. In the name of American patriotism and racial purity, the nation’s wealthy philanthropists, the national organized charities and corrections movement, social reformers, science and political leaders, and government agencies demonstrated robust and contradictory support for both international humanitarian generosity and white nationalism’s racist policies. In the first, second, and third decades of the new century, the Eugenic Records Office at Cold Spring Harbor and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s., Bureau of Social Hygiene blossomed into formidable forces for reform and in the next chapter, we will explore the ways in which John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Katharine B. Davis, Charles Davenport, and Harry H. Laughlin drew from the discourse of the exemplary feeble-minded subject to shape charity and philanthropy into the next century.

This work is far from complete, and the documents are analyzed here represent just the tip of the iceberg in an ever-expanding repertoire of material that is meaningful to the construction and deployment of the exemplary feeble-minded subject. Therefore, the cultural

maps in the remaining pages of this work will emphasize the need for ongoing studies, while also *gesturing* to a sampling of artifact sets that are indicative of the interactions between RFF, CIW, the Bureau of Social Hygiene, the Eugenics Records Office, and the construction of the exemplary feeble-minded subject.

Rockefeller Philanthropies: Progressive Era Study-Specific Timeline				
1889 - 1900	1901 – Present	1913 - Present	1903 - Present	1911 - 1940
Early Private Charities	Pre-Foundation & Distinct Large-Scale Philanthropies	The Rockefeller Foundation	The Rockefeller Foundation	The Bureau of Social Hygiene
<p>1889: The American Baptist Education Society: JDR Sr., endowments in support of local Baptist schools and academies across the U.S.</p> <p>1889: The American Baptist Home Mission Society: JDR Sr. endowments to help build U.S. schools and churches.</p> <p>1881: Spelman College Founded by Sophia Packard and Harriet Giles. Incorporated in 1884 and after generous JDR Sr. endowments, the name changed to honor JDR Sr. parents.</p> <p>1889- Present: The University of Chicago: Founded by JDR Sr., who initially donated 6k to the Baptist Education Society and provided several large endowments between 1890 and 1910.</p> <p>1895- Present: The Social Settlement “Alta House” established by JDR Sr. and daughter, Alta in Cleveland’s Italian District. Settlement house in service to Italian immigrants. Now “Northern Ohio’s Italian Cultural Center.”</p>	<p>1901 - Present: The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research and Hospital. Now <i>The Rockefeller University</i> (1955). Founded by JDR Sr., and JDR Jr., to study public health problems and disease. Simon Flexner, first director.</p> <p>1902-1964: The General Education Board (GEB) Created by Act of Congress, to “aid education in the U.S. without distinction of race, sex, or creed,” with a main emphasis on the southern states.</p> <p>1909-1914: Rockefeller Sanitary Health Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease. 1914: Incorporated as the RFF division of the International Health Board (IHB). Developed departments in health and sanitation in 41 countries.</p> <p>1923-1938: The International Education Board (IEB)</p> <p>Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial (LSRM) (1918-1929): Founded in honor of JDR Sr. late wife. JDR Jr, ran the foundation programs for education, social sciences, race relations etc.</p>	<p><i>“To Promote the well-being of mankind around the world”</i></p> <p>1913- Present JDR Sr., and JDR Jr. established RFF under NY State charter approved by Act of Congress with JDR Jr. elected president and with the following divisions: The International Health Commission/Board (1913) An expansion of the Sanitary Health Commission to include international locations. China Medical Board (1915): RFF founded to develop modern medicine in China in cooperation with existing Chinese agencies. War Relief Commission (1914): RFF humanitarian missions and aid began at the onset of WWI in partnership with ARC and U.S. military</p> <p>School of Hygiene and Public Health at John Hopkins University (1916) RFF funded institute of hygiene on JHU campus. Laboratories in sanitary chemistry, physiology, hygiene, bacteriology, epidemiology, mental health etc.</p>	<p>RFF Major Funding and Research Support to:</p> <p>The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research</p> <p>*See pre-foundation</p> <p>Rockefeller General Education Board (GEB) *See pre-foundation</p> <p>National Committee for Mental Hygiene: RFF established Psychopathic Clinic at Sing Sing Prison to “separate the feeble-minded and degenerate from normal.</p> <p>The American Social Hygiene Association (ASHA) RFF funded ASHA programs related to “the diffusion of public health knowledge.” JDR Jr and BSH support after 1910.</p> <p>Spelman Fund of New York (1928-1949) LSRM folded into RFF in 1928. *See LSRM pre-foundation.</p>	<p><i>“The Study, amelioration, and prevention of those social conditions, crimes, and diseases which adversely affect the well being of society.”</i></p> <p>1910: JDR Jr. foreman of the Special Grand Jury to investigate white slave traffic. 1910: JDR Jr., Paul Warburg, Star Murphy formed The Committee of Three to Investigate solutions to prostitution and ‘social evil’. 1911: Katharine B. Davis, Superintendent NY State Reformatory for Women, elected aa member. 1912: Committee of Three renamed The Bureau of Social Hygiene 1913: The Bureau of Social Hygiene, Inc. formalized under Certificate of Incorporation in New York. Funded by contributions from JDR Jr. Social evil, prostitution, narcotic drugs. 1913-1918: BSH Laboratory of Social Hygiene at Bedford Hills Reformatory criminalistic institute to diagnose, classify, determine the intelligence of, observe, count, and study female ‘social misfits and delinquents.’ 1919: Katharine B. Davis voted BSH Director 1928 KBD resigned and BSH reorganized its charter to focus exclusively on delinquency, criminology, and criminal justice administration.</p>

Carnegie Philanthropies: Progressive Era Study-Specific Timeline				
1896 - Present	1902 – Present	1903 - Present	1903 - 1939	1910 - 1939
The Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh	The Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW)	CIW Research Departments	CIW Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor (SEE)	CIW Eugenics Records Office at Cold Spring Harbor (ERO)
<p>Established in 1896, the Institute is now part of Carnegie Mellon University.</p> <p>The Institute grew to include Carnegie Institute of Technology, School of Applied Industries, Department of Fine Arts, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Department of the Museum, Carnegie Library School, and Carnegie Music Hall.</p> <p>During the Progressive Era, The Carnegie Institute of Technology's primary interest was in technical education, science and engineering, and chemical, civil, and sanitary engineering.</p> <p>Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1906-1924) Sources: <i>A Manual of the Public Benefactions of Andrew Carnegie</i>, 1919.</p> <p><i>Carnegie Institution of Washington Scope and Organization</i>, 1909. <i>Charles Benedict Davenport, 1866-1944 A study of Conflicting Influences</i>, 1946.</p> <p><i>International Conciliation</i>, published by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924.</p>	<p><i>“To encourage in the broadest and most liberal manner investigation, research, and the application of knowledge to the improvement of mankind.”</i></p> <p>1902: Now the Carnegie Institution for Science. CIW was initially incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia.</p> <p>1903: CIW trustees applied for a more comprehensive charter.</p> <p>1904: The Fifty-eighth Congress approved an “Act to Incorporate the Carnegie Institution of Washington.”</p> <p>The President of the United States, Speaker of the House and the President or the National Academy of Sciences were among its designated members.</p>	<p>1902: Solar Observatory. Pasadena, California.</p> <p>1903: *The Department of Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York.</p> <p>1903: Department of Historical Research. Washington, D.C.</p> <p>1904: The Department of Botanical Research in Tucson, Arizona</p> <p>1904: Geophysical Laboratory, Washington, D.C.</p> <p>1904: Department of Marine Biology. Tortugas, Florida</p> <p>1907: Department of Meridian Astrometry. Albany, N.Y.</p> <p>1904: Department of Terrestrial Magnetism</p> <p>*of primary interest to this study</p>	<p>1903: The Station for Experimental Evolution (SEE) was established at the location of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (BIAS) Marine Biological Laboratory (1898-1923) at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island, New York.</p> <p>1921: The Station for Experimental Evolution merged with the Long Island Biological Associations (LIBA) Biological Laboratory under its current name “Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL).</p> <p>1903-1934: Charles B. Davenport served multiple and simultaneous roles as director of SEE, the BIAS Laboratory, LIBA, the Eugenics Records Office (ERO) and later the Department of Genetics of Carnegie Institute of Washington.</p> <p><i>* CIW and ERO are the prime Carnegie Philanthropies of interest to this study</i></p>	<p>1910: The Eugenics Records Office (ERO). Founded by SEE Director, Dr. Charles Davenport, the Eugenics Records Office at Cold Spring Harbor was built with support from Mary A. Harriman, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller.</p> <p>M. Harriman donated eighty acres of land located at Cold Spring Harbor and was the primary funder for the establishment of the ERO.</p> <p>1917: Harriman donated her ERO interests and land to the Carnegie Institution of Washington.</p> <p>1921: The Department of Genetics of Carnegie Institution of Washington. The ERO, SEE, and the Division of Animal Biology merged into the Department of Genetics with Charles Davenport as its director.</p> <p>Harry H. Laughlin served under Davenport as ERO Assistant Director/Superintendent until its closing in 1932.</p> <p><u>*Scalar Link to Complete Timeline</u></p>

Chapter Six: The Relational Genealogies of Social Hygiene and Eugenics

We organize today and place in full operation in the field of philanthropy a new force. The field is the world of degenerate humanity and the force is the regenerating power of applied science. ⁵²⁰

Stephen Smith, President's Address to the First National Conference on Race Betterment, 1914

The 'Americanization' of Eugenics:

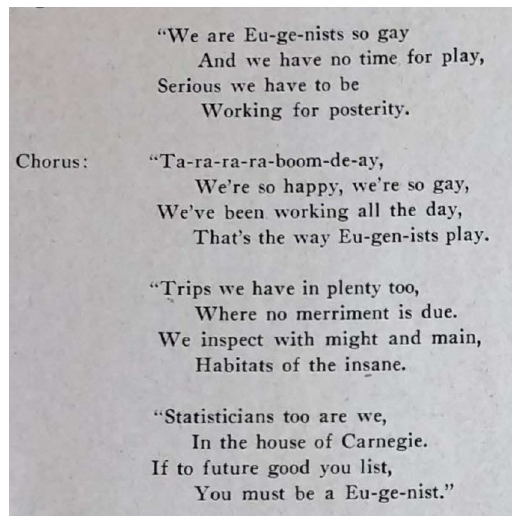


Figure 1, "A course for field workers in eugenics was announced by the Biological Laboratory, and the workers that summer ran their calculating machines in the Carnegie building; in the evening, exhausted, they flippantly sang" (MacDowell 1946)

Conservative economist William A. Schambra is a former member of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, historian of philanthropy, and Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute. Schambra has long questioned philanthropy's enmeshment in national and global economies, and he believes that wealthy foundations that entangle themselves in government affairs are at least partially responsible for what he claims are long-running inefficiencies in the local charity sector. In his article, "*Philanthropy's*

Original Sin, Schambra quite unapologetically accuses philanthropic foundations of being "notoriously reticent" to talk about the part they played in the cultivation and development of eugenic programs at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵²¹ It is with some skepticism that

⁵²⁰ The Race Betterment Foundation 1914, 22

⁵²¹ Schambra, 5

Schambra claims he finds it “understandable that foundations would wish to protect their good reputation by downplaying their involvement in eugenics as an early and naïve mistake,” and in *Philanthropy’s Original Sin*, Schambra is intent on extinguishing this dismissal by naiveté defense.⁵²² Schambra offers a conservative stance on issues that are important to this project; first, he argues that wealthy foundations in contemporary times cannot simply dismiss their participation in the advance of eugenics as some antiquated mistake borne from the unsophisticated ignorance of less worldly thinkers. Additionally, Schambra accurately points out that in the early decades of twentieth century, the Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Russel Sage foundations each championed eugenic ideology as a “a cutting-edge scientific discipline backed up by a growing political and social movement.”⁵²³ Finally, Schambra is resolute that eugenics was “very much an essential feature of the American progressive movement” that took hold in the early 1900s and allowed philanthropists, social systems, and governments alike to foster strategies of ‘care’ that would in his words, “prevent anyone from becoming a sufferer in the first place—by cutting off suffering at its supposed root.”⁵²⁴ The primary point here is that eugenics in the United States, while oftentimes framed as backwards snake oil pseudo-science of the past (when acknowledged at all,) was widely accepted as legitimate theory, based upon scientific methods, and publicly understood as developed by highly respected scientists, medical practitioners, philanthropists, and social reform theorists. Furthermore, the ways in which early twentieth century eugenicists and social reformers framed issues of race, disability,

⁵²² Ibid., 6

⁵²³ Ibid., 4

⁵²⁴ Ibid

intellectuality, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nation are far from a thing of the past and they continue to resonate throughout our current day structures.

Large philanthropic organizations are certainly not alone in their ongoing resistance to engage any manner of self-reflection over their involvement in promoting eugenic beliefs and practices. In her global genealogy of the eugenics movement, Philippa Levine found that “by the late 1920s, more than 375 U.S. colleges and universities as well as many high schools had incorporated eugenics into the curriculum, and most high-school textbooks endorsed eugenic principles.”⁵²⁵ In another recent study, *Eugenics and Education in America*, Ann Winfield draws a critical line from the prevalence of eugenic practices in education at the turn of the century and our current education system’s “obsessions with “standards” and “accountability.”⁵²⁶ Winfield also provides evidence that “between 1914 and 1928 the number of colleges offering courses in eugenics increased from 44 to 376,” and institutions involved in teaching and promoting eugenic methods included, “Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Brown, University of Wisconsin.”⁵²⁷ There is archive evidence that supports Winfield and Levine’s statements, for instance, in 1913, ERO superintendent Harry H. Laughlin boasted, “the universities of Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, Brown, Wisconsin, Northwestern, and possibly others are offering courses in whole or in part devoted to eugenics,” and offered his gratitude to those institutions of higher learning that were taking part in training America’s future humanitarians to identify and catalogue the biological features of human heredity.⁵²⁸ Academia’s broad imprint reverberates throughout the history of eugenics and its institutional influence goes well beyond a few course listings or the simple

⁵²⁵ Levine 2017, 17.

⁵²⁶ Winfield 2007, 70

⁵²⁷ Ibid

⁵²⁸ H. H. Laughlin 1913

insertion of eugenic terminologies into existing course curricula. The archives contain ample proof that leading academics from highly respected universities and colleges applied eugenic principles to their studies with the objective of improving and purifying the 'American' race.

Paper presentations at the 1914 *Proceedings of the First National Conference on Race Betterment*,⁵²⁹ and the roster of speakers at the *First International Congress of Eugenics* held at the University of London in 1912, and the *Second, and Third International Congress* gatherings at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, in 1921, and 1932, highlight a robust catalogue of academic institutions and scholars that were eager to apply their interpretation of eugenics across a wide variety of topics and disciplines.^{530 531 532} Professionals and academics hailing from Brown, Stanford, Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Smith, Fargo College, Northwestern University Medical School, University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin, Albion College, Olivet College, Oberlin College, University of Michigan, New York University, Michigan State College, University of California Berkley, Holyoke College, University of Wyoming, Hamline University, University of Texas, and N.Y. Post-Graduate and Medical School⁵³³ are each listed as having representatives from their institutions attend at least one of the above conferences. An abridged listing of some of the more historically notable scholars that made a regular appearance in eugenic related archive materials includes; professor of economics at Yale University, Irving Fisher; the founding president of Stanford University, David Starr Jordan; Morris Steggerda of Smith College and CIW; President Emeritus of Harvard

⁵²⁹ The Race Betterment Foundation 1914

⁵³⁰ Davenport, Osborn, et al. 1923

⁵³¹ Laughlin and Perkins 1934

⁵³² First International Eugenic Congress 1912

⁵³³ I include this long list here because in the interest of brevity, many of these institutions are often omitted from scholarly works.

University, Dr. Charles W. Eliot; and, Harvard trained biologist, director CIWs Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, and founder of the Eugenics Records Office, Charles B. Davenport, who also served as instructor at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences and as professor of biology at the University of Chicago.

Eugenics grabbed the fascination of a nation that was at the same moment captivated by ideologies of normalcy that, as disability studies scholar and historian Douglas Baynton has argued, were reinforced by a “pervasive belief in progress” of the human race.⁵³⁴ Sir Francis Galton’s vocabulary of eugenics made its first appearance in his 1883 text *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, where he explained that his newly formed lexicon would help to establish a clear distinction between his primary interest in the “varied hereditary faculties of different men,” and anthropometric race experiments that aimed to quantify “differences of race.”⁵³⁵ Galton believed that he had developed a nascent science that would, in his words, “touch on various topics more or less with the *cultivation of race* (emphasis added), or as we might call it, with “eugenic questions.”⁵³⁶ Since *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* was Galton’s first public overview of his eugenic etymology, the well-recognized English statistician, sociologist, Victorian explorer, and anthropologist wrote a protracted footnote explaining its origins and logic, cited below at length for accuracy and scope:

That is, with questions bearing on what is termed in Greek, *eugenēs*, namely good in stock, hereditarily endowed with noble qualities. This, and the allied words, *eugeneia*, etc., are equally applicable to men, brutes, and plants. We greatly want a brief word to express the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they

⁵³⁴ Baynton 2016

⁵³⁵ S. F. Galton 1883

⁵³⁶ S. F. Galton 1883, 24-25

otherwise would have had. The word *eugenics* would sufficiently express the idea; it is at least a neater word and a more generalized one than *viriculture*, which I once ventured to use (*italics original*).⁵³⁷

Galton continued to refine his eugenic concepts and methods in scientific papers, conference speeches, essays, books, and other publications until his death in 1911.⁵³⁸ Whether he intended to or not, when Galton wrote that he believed eugenic studies should encompass “*all influences that tend in however remote a degree* (emphasis added) to give the more suitable races... a better chance of prevailing,” he fashioned an air of ambiguity around his eugenic ‘science’ that would in due course clear a path for the onslaught of eugenic platitudes that consumed the next three decades. In the earliest moments of the twentieth century, governments, philanthropists, academics, scientists, and social reformers from “Latin America to the Middle East...Europe and the United States”⁵³⁹ began to craft social reform and control policies around their unique and often narrow interpretations of Galton’s work.

In 1909, Galton wrote that while he recognized eugenics had in recent years “obtained a considerable hold on popular estimation,” and he was pleased that eugenics was “steadily acquiring the status of a practical question, and not that of a mere vision in utopia,” he also complained that his “views upon its aims and methods... have been absurdly misrepresented.”⁵⁴⁰ Two years before his death, Galton selected six core publications that he believed best represented the progression of his eugenic ideas and republished them in

⁵³⁷ Galton 1883

⁵³⁸ Galton wrote over 300 publications on topics in eugenics, statistical techniques, anthropology, heredity, population, fingerprinting techniques, mathematical methodologies, and more. Galton was influential, he was racist, and his eugenic methods and theories were formative. Many biographers have written extensive histories of Galton’s work. This project is interested in his framing of eugenics as it relates to the ways in which the eugenics movement in the United States grabbed onto portions of his ideologies in the development of their own eugenic practices.

⁵³⁹ Levine 2017, 1-3

⁵⁴⁰ Galton 1909, vii

chronological order under the single title, *Essays in Eugenics*.⁵⁴¹ This collection paints a picture of the evolution of Galton's eugenic principles, and it is therefore quite useful for pinpointing the origins of thought that practitioners, scientists, and philanthropists in the United States drew from as they collectively developed and Americanized eugenics.

Although Galton's theories were wide ranging and he intentionally warned fledgling eugenicists that they should "move discreetly and claim no more efficacy on its behalf than the future will confirm," Americans became enamored by his push to introduce, in his words, a "National Eugenics... into the national conscience, like a new religion."⁵⁴² According to Galton, under its prime objective of raising the racial qualities of future generations, 'National Eugenics' would stimulate a "higher conceptualization of patriotism," "promote a far sided philanthropy," and favor "the heritage of a high character, capable brains, fine physique, and vigour."⁵⁴³ Since this project is interested in how eugenicists and social hygiene reformers in the United States have impacted national and global politics, I wanted to gain a fuller appreciation for the scale of Galton's imprint on American eugenics, and to accomplish this, I performed a survey of his writings against American news stories, conference presentations, and institutional texts that addressed eugenic topics between 1900 and 1930. Through these comparative analyses, I found three underlying themes in Galton's writings that American eugenicists, writers, and advocates relentlessly modified, narrowed, and repurposed to suit their momentary political, social, and/or program agendas. In 1908, Galton spoke to the *Eugenics Education Society* where he discussed the two distinct means that he believed should be the target of any practical eugenics

⁵⁴¹ Galton 1909

⁵⁴² Ibid., 42

⁵⁴³ Ibid

program. The first he called 'constructive eugenics, which he explained should focus on educating the public on the importance of encouraging breeding in "families of those who are exceptionally fit for citizenship," and the second eugenic purpose was, in Galton's estimation, "well termed by Dr. Saleeby "negative" eugenics, namely the hindrance of the marriages and the production of offspring by the exceptionally unfit." ⁵⁴⁴ In 1912, just one year after Galton's death, Dr. Saleeby submitted the following three 'principles of eugenics' to the Eugenics Education Society's *First International Congress of Eugenics*, held at the University of London:

Positive eugenics, the encouragement of worthy parenthood.

Negative eugenics, the discouragement of unworthy parenthood.

Preventative eugenics, the protection of parenthood from racial poisons... lead and alcohol are the most noteworthy. ⁵⁴⁵

Dr. C.W. Saleeby of the Royal Institution in London was an adamant supporter of Galton's work, an English physician, author, journalist, founding member of the Eugenics Education Society, and a strong proponent of the racist science of craniotomy and race biology. Saleeby's allegiance to Galton is manifest in the dedication page for his book, *Parenthood and Race Culture: An Outline of Eugenics*, where Saleeby penned the single attribution, "This Book is Dedicated to Francis Galton The August Master of All Eugenicists."⁵⁴⁶ Saleeby wanted *Parenthood and Race Culture* to serve as a general introduction to eugenics, which he defined as, "the selection of parenthood based on the facts of heredity."⁵⁴⁷ In reality, the book was an expression of Saleeby's personal and at times rambling philosophical views on the wealth of nations, the moral duty of parenthood, preserving the Empire, the heredity of nations, alcohol

⁵⁴⁴ Galton 1909, 100

⁵⁴⁵ Saleeby 1912, 309. Although Saleeby submitted his principles in 1912, they were officially published in the proceedings of the *Second International Congress of Eugenics* held in New York in 1921.

⁵⁴⁶ C. W. Saleeby 1909, vii

⁵⁴⁷ C. W. Saleeby 1909, xiv

consumption, race mixture, the laws of natural selection, and human intellectuality. Even though in the appendix to *Parenthood and Race Culture*, Saleeby wrote, “it would have been presumptuous and absurd to attempt ... the great question of human parenthood in relation to race,”⁵⁴⁸ his overtly racist views made an appearance in the introductory chapter where he expressed distrust for humanitarians and sociologists in the United States that he protested, “would almost have us believe that the negro is mentally and morally the equal of the Caucasian.”⁵⁴⁹ In his chapter on negative eugenics, Saleeby was deliberately caustic towards the feeble-minded and in his conceptualization of the scope of negative eugenics he in fact exploited the now commonly understood discourse of the imaginary and exemplary feeble-minded subject:

Negative eugenics will seek to define the diseases and defects which are really hereditary... only thus can certain of the gravest evils of society, as, for instance, feeble-mindedness, insanity, and crime due to inherited degeneracy, be suppressed... I trust far more in the influence of an educated public opinion than in legislation; though there are certain forms of transmissible disease... the transmission of which should be visited with the utmost rigor of the law and regarded as utterly criminal no less than sheer murder.⁵⁵⁰

In 1909, Saleeby wrote a series of articles in ten parts for the *New York Times Sunday Edition* with headlines that included, *Brain versus Brawn*, *The Root of the Drink Problem*, *Twin Factors*, *Fittest and the Best*, *An Indictment of Physical Culture*, *Progeny and Progress*, *The Burden of Empire*, *The Fate of Empires*, and, *The Problem of the Unfit*.⁵⁵¹ In the widely circulated *New York Times Sunday Edition*, the editors identified Saleeby as a “distinguished physician and author,” and the weekly series gave him ample space to expose American audiences to his

⁵⁴⁸ C. W. Saleeby 1909, 212

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xii

⁵⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁵¹ C. Saleeby, *The Problem of the Unfit* 1909

ideological stance on topics he believed were related to eugenics. In the first of the series, *The Problem of the Unfit*, Saleeby derided what he called “the improvident humanitarian with his feeling heart” for extending sympathies to the feeble-minded, permitting the unfit to live and to breed, and for promoting the ultimate destruction of the race by means of their continued survival.⁵⁵² In *The Problem of the Unfit*, Saleeby explained that the feeble-minded were incapable of appreciating the liberties of American democracy and he bitterly complained that, “to the law of love, we take care of feeble-minded children, yet in general we give them, when they grow up, the liberty, which of course is no more than a name to them and permit them to multiply their kind.” Saleeby then offered eugenics as the singular resolution to the perceived race degeneration problem:

There is only one solution, and that is the eugenic solution. Nature can preserve a race only by destroying the unfit. We who are intelligent must preserve and elevate the race by preventing the unfit from coming into existence at all. This is merciful; it is supremely moral; it means vast economy in life and money and time and suffering; it is natural at bottom; but it is Nature raised to her highest power that almost supernatural fact—the moral intelligence of man.⁵⁵³

While American eugenicists did acknowledge Galton and Saleeby’s ‘constructive’ or ‘positive’ eugenics, they latched onto ‘negative’ eugenics in their unrelenting campaign to rid the American gene pool of all degenerate traits, i.e., the exemplary feeble-minded subject. Shortly after the ERO opened its doors in the autumn of 1910, director Charles Davenport sent a note to Francis Galton to thank him for his most recent correspondences, and to update Galton on the launch of the ERO. In the letter dated October 26, 1910, Davenport wrote:

I must tell you of recent events here... there has been started here a Record office in Eugenics- so you see the seed sown by you is still sprouting in in distant countries. And

⁵⁵² C. Saleeby, 1909

⁵⁵³ Ibid

there is great interest in Eugenics in America, I can assure you... though our work is mostly in "negative Eugenics", we should put ourself in a position to give positive advice... in this country we have run "Charity" mad. Now, a revulsion of feeling is coming about, and people are turning to your teaching. With best wishes for continued strength and health and expression of my profound esteem, Yours faithfully, Charles B. Davenport.⁵⁵⁴

As will become evident through the remaining pages of this project, various iterations of the following three segments of Galton's writings appeared with great frequency in Davenport and his fellow eugenicists writings, and in American newspapers, legislative policies, charity agendas, academic writing, and in popular culture:

- 1) *Eugenics, Its Definition, Scope, and Aims*: The second Huxley Lecture of the Anthropological Institute, delivered by Francis Galton, D.C.L., F.R.S., on October 29, 1901:

Eugenics is the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage. The improvement of the inborn qualities, or stock, of some one human population.⁵⁵⁵

- 2) *Studies in National Eugenics*, Galton speech delivered at the meeting of the Sociological Society held in the School of Economics and Political Science University of London, 1905:

Eugenics... promotes a far-sighted philanthropy, the acceptance of parentage as a serious responsibility, and a higher conception of patriotism. The creed of eugenics is founded upon the idea of evolution; not on a passive form of it, but on one that can to some extent direct its own course.⁵⁵⁶

- 3) *Probability, The Foundation of Eugenics*, Herbert Spencer Lecture delivered before the University at Oxford, June 5, 1907

The phrase 'National Eugenics' is defined as 'the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generation, either physically or mentally.'⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ Davenport, Charles B. 1910. "Charles Davenport Letter to Francis Galton, about opening the Eugenics Recor Office and the debt to him as founder of eugenics." *University of College London, ID# 2094FG, 235*.

⁵⁵⁵ Galton 1909, 35

⁵⁵⁶ Galton 1909, 69

⁵⁵⁷ Galton 1909, 81

Themes of patriotism, economics, the development of civilization, civic worth, national duty, white purity, and the intellectual and physical capacity to take part in the capital development of the nation dominated the discourse of American eugenics. Dr. J.M. Murdoch was superintendent of the *State Institution for Feeble-minded* located in Polk Pennsylvania, and in June of 1909, he served as head of the *Committee on Defectives* at the *National Conference of Charities and Corrections* held in Buffalo, N.Y. In his annual report to the committee titled *Quarantine Mental Defectives*, Murdoch voiced his contempt for social welfare measures that hung their hopes for the ‘American race’ on the practical application of positive eugenics. Murdoch argued it was not “feasible to apply positive eugenics to the human race,” and in his plea to the conference for the quarantine of all defective classes he explained, “in the upbuilding of our race... negative eugenics... by the control of the unfit members of society, is entirely feasible... nothing would be more economical, more sensible, more patriotic, or more kind, human and christian... the quarantine of the mental defective... not for forty days but for life.”⁵⁵⁸

Religious morals like those expressed by Murdoch factored into many eugenic discussions and when Dr. Martin Barr shared his pathology of feeble-mindedness with audiences at the *Annual National Conference of Charities and Corrections*, he preached with a tone of righteousness against the “evils of heredity” and in his zeal to advance the dogma of negative eugenics, he demanded that all of society should come to recognize the need to legislate “the separation, segregation and asexualization of the unfit in one generation.”⁵⁵⁹ In the sermon-like

⁵⁵⁸ Murdoch 1909, 64-66

⁵⁵⁹ See chapter 4, pp. 22-26)

lecture, *The Prevention of Mental Defect: The Duty of the Hour*, Barr proved he was eager to demonize 'degenerate' classes as he invoked God, heredity, the birthright of man, and race purity in his eugenics driven speech:

Honest, rational eugenics is an absolute necessity to stem the tide of degeneracy, now steadily on the increase. Life stands not as a product of the Demogorgons, but as a gift of the King Himself... heredity, the law of life for human, as truly as for beast, or plant life, is clearly proven. To be born aright, one must be born again; but the inception must be with the forefathers. Degeneracy, once permitted to invade a lineage can never be *wholly* (emphasis original) eradicated... in one generation or another, a defective is bound to appear.⁵⁶⁰

Dr. Raymond Pearl was head of the biological department of the Agricultural Experimental Station in Maine and one of several American representatives in attendance at the *First International Eugenics Congress* in London. In September of 1912, the weekly magazine *The Independent* published Pearl's report on the conference, which brought to light one of the chief criticisms coming out of the proceedings was, as Pearl explained, "the congress was dealing with *problems*, not *solutions*... "What are we going to *do* about it?" (emphasis original).⁵⁶¹

Davenport was also strong proponent for eugenic measures that would correlate with, as Barr put it, 'stemming the tide of degeneracy,' and he was hopeful that opening the ERO at Cold Spring Harbor would result in the promotion of solution-based methods that Pearl and others were demanding. In 1910, Davenport introduced his frameworks for the development and application of eugenic based strategies in his book *Eugenics: The Science of Human Improvement by Better Breeding*. *Eugenics* was another publication of the Carnegie Institution of Washington that had yet again afforded Davenport an opportunity to rehash his

⁵⁶⁰ Barr 1915, 361-363

⁵⁶¹ Pearl 1912

unsubstantiated theories regarding, “the qualities or characteristics of organisms,” the inheritability of specific ‘unit traits’ in humans, and to reiterate the eugenicists all too familiar call to restrict degenerate reproduction. In his final paragraphs, Davenport contemplated the future of eugenics and argued that its practical applications “could be summed up in three words: investigation, education, legislation.”⁵⁶²

Three years after the ERO began operations, Superintendent Harry H. Laughlin submitted his first project summary, *Eugenics Record Office Report No. 1*, where he expanded on Davenport’s three primary objectives and finalized the organizations ‘ten core purposes of the ERO.’ Although it is not feasible in the confines of this project to fully address each meticulous, extended, and often tedious description that appeared underneath Laughlin’s ten purposes, some explanation here is warranted given the rapidity in which the ERO achieved international status as a premier research institution. In *Report No. 1*, Laughlin offered his revision of Galton’s definition of eugenics before he moved on to explain his ten purposes of the ERO:

Eugenics is that science which studies the factors of race betterment. It is therefore largely but not wholly concerned with human heredity. As an art applicable to human affairs, it is concerned with the improvement of the inborn traits of the race.⁵⁶³

Laughlin and Davenport’s “methods of studying human heredity” were central to each of the ten core purposes, with the first four involving the collection, analysis, registration, and storage of the heritable traits of every family in the United States. According to the report, Davenport designed the ‘official family traits survey’ that he and Laughlin offered to share with any institution willing to investigate the characteristics that they considered eugenically relevant.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² C. Davenport 1910, 26

⁵⁶³ H. H. Laughlin 1913, 2

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid

In his fifth, sixth, and seventh objectives, Laughlin focused on how he and Davenport imagined their work benefited outside institutions and the public. Laughlin claimed that the eugenic experts at the ERO were best suited to “advise concerning the eugenical fitness of proposed marriages,” “train field workers to gather data of eugenical import,” and “maintain a limited field force actually engaged in gathering data for eugenic studies.”⁵⁶⁵ Field trainees at the ERO fell into one of two categories with the first group under the direct employ of the ERO, and a secondary set of trainees that were, according to Laughlin, “employed jointly by the Eugenics Record Office and other institutions.”⁵⁶⁶ In keeping with its myopic emphasis on negative eugenics, the ERO directed all trainees to concentrate their studies on degenerate, dysgenic, or cacogenic traits:

They are taken on practical field trips into isolated communities known to possess some defective families, and to institutions for the insane, feeble-minded, epileptic and for the dependent and delinquent classes, where at first hand they observe expert clinicians examine into the traits of the person studied.⁵⁶⁷

Laughlin’s report contained a catalogue of 24 institutions that he claimed were associated with his “plan of joint employment,” and the ERO gained national and international notoriety through its affiliation with well-known organizations like the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bureau of Social Hygiene, state hospitals and feeble-minded institutions, boys’ and girls’ homes, and state prisons and psychopathic institutes.⁵⁶⁸ Laughlin held that the longevity of eugenics was wholly dependent upon the approval and consent of an informed public, and he made it abundantly clear that he was irritated by journalists that he felt had deliberately and publicly

⁵⁶⁵ H. H. Laughlin 1913, 10-14

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-15

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁶⁸ One important relationship that will be explored later in this chapter was the ERO’s collaboration with Katharine B. Davis and the BSH Laboratory of Social Hygiene at Bedford Hills Reformatory, New York.

misrepresented what fell under the auspices of the science of eugenics. In the tenth and final purpose for the ERO, Laughlin outlined a plan to set the record straight that included programs aimed at cross-institutional cooperation, public education, the development of eugenic clubs and societies in small towns and large municipalities, and for the ERO to take the lead in the national and international promotion of eugenics. In purpose number 10, *To publish the results of researches and to aid in the dissemination of eugenical truths*, Laughlin lodged a litany of bitter complaints about what he viewed as the broad misrepresentation of eugenic science by the American press:

Both facts and “near facts” or untruths readily become disseminated in America. Of late the subject of eugenics has become a popular one for newspaper topics. A careful examination of the clippings supplied by one of the professional clipping bureaus makes it clear that the American reporter of to-day does not trouble himself to find out the truth concerning the aims, and methods, of eugenical study. Anything remotely related to sex hygiene, infant mortality, birth marks, baby culture, sex control, parental influence, or to care, “cure” or treatment of defectives is given a heading entitled “Eugenics”—this or that.⁵⁶⁹

As Laughlin went on to defend what eugenics was, and vehemently argue what it was not, he ironically validated many of the eugenic links that the press had been making on a catalog of topics related to birth rates, eugenically unfit marriages, the consequences of migration and immigration, the “intelligent management of defectives,” and eugenical aims to “classify the human stock as to its social fitness.”⁵⁷⁰ While Laughlin’s diatribe against American journalists may have reinforced a segment of the very claims he protested, he was correct in his observation that eugenics had become a watered-down topic in newspapers and magazines and by the mid 1920’s, debates over ‘the true meaning of eugenics’ dominated the cultural sphere.

⁵⁶⁹ H. H. Laughlin 1913, 22

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid

Eugenics first appeared with regularity in American newspapers around 1900, became a 'catch all phrase' in the 1910s, and eugenic terminology permeated nearly every aspect of American culture by 1920. Popular magazines and nationally syndicated newspapers frequently sought 'experts' to explain some aspect of eugenics and these wide-ranging opinions scattered across the American landscape. In just two decades eugenics had flourished into, as Levine so accurately points out, "a set of both scientific and social practices, and the line between them blurred over time."⁵⁷¹ America commercialized its version of eugenics in product advertisements, works of fiction, published poetry, 'eugenic plays,' human interest stories, fashion and health magazines, and in popular self-help books. The health insurance industry exploited the popularity of eugenics in its advertising and the medical profession benefited from public fears over eugenic based marriage laws that required both bride and groom undergo a thorough medical examination before obtaining a license to marry. Journalists and magazine writers called eugenics "an academic distraction,"⁵⁷² "child welfare by prevention,"⁵⁷³ "the improvement of parenthood,"⁵⁷⁴ "a lopsided fad,"⁵⁷⁵ "the hope of the human race,"⁵⁷⁶ "biology turned toward the future,"⁵⁷⁷ "a definite and dignified science,"⁵⁷⁸ "feminist propaganda,"⁵⁷⁹ and, "a tragic blunder."⁵⁸⁰ Eugenics became attached to a multitude of social and political causes, and popular culture was rife with a hodgepodge of 'expert' opinions on

⁵⁷¹ Levine 2017, 2

⁵⁷² The Salt Lake Tribune 1913

⁵⁷³ Read 1912

⁵⁷⁴ Dawson 1912

⁵⁷⁵ The Irish Standard 1912

⁵⁷⁶ The Arizona Republican 1913

⁵⁷⁷ The Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram 1914

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid

⁵⁷⁹ Good Housekeeping Magazine 1914

⁵⁸⁰ Evening Times-Republican 1914

topics such as, ‘industrial eugenics,’ ‘moral eugenics,’ ‘social eugenics,’ ‘cultural eugenics,’ ‘rural eugenics,’ ‘eugenic philanthropy,’ ‘humanitarian eugenics,’ and ‘religious eugenics.’ In an extensive piece that ran in the *New York Tribune* titled “Saving the Middle Class from Extinction,” the author went so far as to claim that by encouraging “the most fit to carry on the race,” eugenics would save the American middle class from certain annihilation:

The Great Middle Class has found a friend at last. The eugenicists are going to try to do something for it before it rolls over on its collective back, curls up its toes and gently expires.⁵⁸¹

Headlines across the United States proposed that eugenic methods would, among other things, “purify the human stream,” and “save the American race,”⁵⁸² while they also pushed the notion that eugenic programs were “perpetuating the physical and intellectual character of the American people,”⁵⁸³ “the best weapon to fight social evil in all its ramifications,”⁵⁸⁴ “based on immutable scientific principles, its laws... as certain as the laws of the stars,”⁵⁸⁵ and

finally, “a definite and dignified science and one to which many of the mightiest minds are now devoting themselves.”⁵⁸⁶ By 1915, the idea of eugenics had become a symbol of purity and strength as well as a fashionable marketing point for a variety of products that had little or no connection to Galton’s defined “study of agencies under social control that may improve or

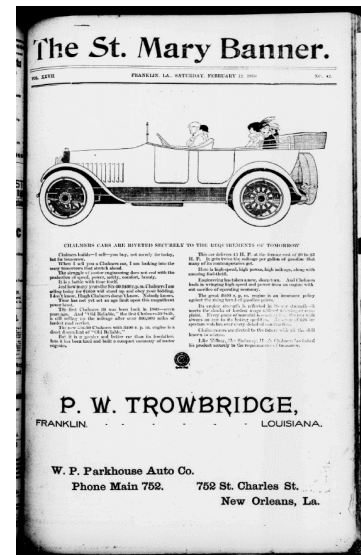


Figure 2 The St. Mary Banner. Advertisement P.W. Trowbridge: “It is a greater and better car that its forefather. Into it has been bred and built a compact summary of motor eugenics. Franklin, L.A. 1916

⁵⁸¹ Denny 1921

⁵⁸² The New Britain Herald 1923

⁵⁸³ The Conservative 1901

⁵⁸⁴ The Sun 1913

⁵⁸⁵ The Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram 1914

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid

impair the racial qualities of future generation.”⁵⁸⁷ In 1916, the *St. Mary Banner* ran an advertisement for W.P. Parkhouse (*figure 2*) in which the auto company bragged that the latest model Chalmers automobile was, “a *greater* and better car than its forefather... bred and built a compact summary of *motor eugenics* (emphasis mine).”⁵⁸⁸ The ad copywriters did not expand on what they meant by “motor eugenics” because in the years leading up to its 1916 appearance in the *St. Mary Banner*, the *idea* of eugenics had been mythicized in American culture to such a degree that the term had come to mean nearly everything and almost nothing all at once.

Mary L. Read was the director of the School of Mothercraft and a member of the *First International Eugenics Congress* and her marketing campaigns for the School of Mothercraft appeared in national magazines and newspapers across the United States. The School of Mothercraft print campaigns targeted American housewives by encouraging them to sign up for day courses in the “practical instruction in the care and training of children, eugenics, and other vital problems,” and in July of 1912, the *Good Housekeeping Magazine* advertised Read’s school alongside campaigns for the College and Academy of St. Genevieve For Young Ladies, the Western College for Women, and the Shudder School for Private Secretaries (*figure 3*).⁵⁸⁹ The School of Mothercraft’s marketing pitch claimed that Read’s day courses were “in line with the present-day movement for efficient home-making,” with a focus on “practical work in nursery, households and kindergarten, and... the biology, sociology, and ethics of the family.”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Galton 1909

⁵⁸⁸ The St. Mary Banner. 1916. "P.W. Trowbridge." *The St. Mary Banner*. Compiled by Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. Franklin, Parish of St. Mary: Banner Print and Pub. Co.

⁵⁸⁹ The St. Mary Banner 1916

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid

American eugenicists like Read, Laughlin, and Davenport were acutely aware that popular culture in America was exposing the public to ideas about eugenics that were not in keeping with the ‘eugenic truths’ that they had established as self-proclaimed founders of the American eugenics’ movement. In 1912, the *Washington Herald’s* full page Sunday section “A New Kind of Page for a New Kind of Woman” gave Read and the entire executive committee of the First International Eugenics Congress an opportunity to educate American readers about what they believed to be the ‘true’ meaning of eugenics. In her brazenly titled article “What is The Real Meaning and the Use of Eugenics?,”

the director of the School of Mothercraft vigorously argued that the laws and principles of eugenics had decisively established that one feeble-minded parent and one ‘normal’ parent had a one-to-three chance of breeding a “mentally unsound” child.⁵⁹¹ Read’s article

explained that the current and prevailing thought amongst American eugenicists was that Mendel’s experimental study of inherited traits in plants, Darwin’s theory of evolution, Galton’s analysis of human genealogies, and Davenport’s description of human ‘unit characteristics’ had brought scientists to realize certain and absolute ‘truths’ regarding the heritability of feeble-mindedness and degenerate traits in humans. Read believed that the “richest endowment” a

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Figure 3: Good Housekeeping Magazine; New York Vol. 55, Issue. 1, (Jul 1912): 54. Photographs. The School of Mothercraft advertisement.

⁵⁹¹ Read, 1912

child could receive was for their parents to be “at least sound physically and mentally... in the vigor of manhood and womanhood,” and that the practical application of this singular eugenic principle would prove to be the savior of the human race.⁵⁹² Read maintained that while some eugenicists still referenced eugenics as an “infant science,” most agreed that “some of the principles were firmly established,” and the exemplary feeble-minded subject was one of their most dire eugenic concerns:

It is child welfare by prevention, the saving from even the inception of life of multitudes who could only be incorrigible criminals, driveling idiots, spiritual lepers, shiftless paupers, tortured madmen, silly imbeciles, maimed, crippled, blinded derelicts... baby martyrs to human ignorance, thoughtlessness, or sin.⁵⁹³

Read praised Davenport and the “Carnegie Institute” for their studies in experimental biology and human heredity and she applauded the ERO’s continuing effort to collect genealogical data “regarding the strong and weak heritable qualities” of America’s family stock. Read concluded her extensive piece by explaining that she defined eugenics as “well-born children.”⁵⁹⁴

Between 1900 and 1920, in addition to their repeated attempts to defend eugenic science, eugenicists endeavored to pin down a classificatory system for feeble-mindedness that was accessible to the public and would provide some clarity regarding the idiot and imbecile sub-classifications that Kerlin, Barr, and their colleagues had authorized at the turn of the century. In 1911, the *American Association for the Study of the Feeble-minded* commissioned Henry H. Goddard, the notable eugenicist, psychiatrist, segregationist and Director of the Research Laboratory of the Training School at Vineland, to refine the existing classificatory

⁵⁹² Ibid

⁵⁹³ Read 1912

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid

system for the feeble-minded.⁵⁹⁵ Goddard, along with E.R. Johnstone, one of his colleagues at the training school, and four additional committee members devised a new and elaborate classificatory system that involved a series of symbols, letters, and lines for indexing feeble-minded traits, the lineage of feeble-mindedness in families, and a litany of additional heredity features. In May of 1911, the ERO published the committee's "methods of collecting, charting, and analysing data" in *Eugenics Record Office Bulletin No. 2, The Study of Human Heredity*, co-authored by Davenport, Laughlin, Dr. David Weeks of the New Jersey State School for Epileptics, Johnstone, and Goddard.⁵⁹⁶ The authors of the ERO bulletin made note that at the time of publication, the methods described in *The Study of Human Heredity* were "in use at the Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor... The New Jersey State Village for Epileptics... and The Training School for Backward and Feeble-Minded Children, at Vineland, New Jersey."⁵⁹⁷ In my study of eugenics related archives, I found that eugenic field workers used the committee charting methods across a variety of institutional, community, and home settings through the mid-1930s.

Goddard later explained in his 1927 article, *Who is a Moron*, that the 1911 committee based their new classifications on the breakthrough "*Binet-Simon Tests of Intelligence*" that Goddard had recently brought into to the United States from France. According to Goddard, the committee chose to integrate the language of the new intelligence testing instrument into their previously accepted standards for determining feeble-mindedness because, in his words, "the Binet-Simon tests of intelligence with their age grading had just come into use and it seemed

⁵⁹⁵ H. H. Goddard, 1927

⁵⁹⁶ Davenport, Laughlin, et al. 1911

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid, 1

feasible to use the terms already referred to for defectives of different age levels.”⁵⁹⁸ In 1910, Goddard spoke at the *Meeting of the American Association for the Study of the Feeble Minded*, where he explained that he had translated and published a portion of Binet’s “study of methods of measuring intelligence” into English, and integrated his translations into the methods of measurement and classification that had been in place at the Vineland Training School for several years.⁵⁹⁹ Goddard’s talk appeared in *The Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* later that same year under the title “Four Hundred Feeble-Minded Children Classified by the Binet Method,” and this new system became widely accepted by social workers, psychologists, philanthropists, and educational institutions across the country. Goddard argued that the *Binet-Simon* system included “a very remarkable set of questions that... work out with amazing accuracy,” and he went on to explain that the practitioners at Vineland had successfully applied the *Binet-Simon* methods in their testing of the 400 subjects of the Vineland study. Goddard also stated that in addition to the introduction of *Binet-Simon* methods into existing protocols, he had integrated yet another layer of inquiry that “would be able... to check up the results... in light of our experience” as experts in mental deficiency.^{600 601}

After they applied Goddard’s adjustments to the *Binet-Simon* system, the *Committee for the Classification of the Feeble-minded* settled on three mental age categories for ‘defectives’ (regardless of biological age), with the *idiot* described as possessing the equivalent mentality no higher than a two-year old child, while the *imbecile* ranked in the second grouping with an

⁵⁹⁸ H. H. Goddard, 1927, 41

⁵⁹⁹ H. H. Goddard, 1910

⁶⁰⁰ H. H. Goddard, 1914

⁶⁰¹ The system that Goddard designed and implemented was infinitely more complex than is described here. For more details on his methods and integration of Binet-Simon into his own studies, see (H. H. Goddard, *Four Hundred Feeble-Minded Children Classified by the Binet Method* 1910); (H. H. Goddard, *Feeble-Mindedness its Causes and Consequences* 1914); (Trent 1994).

equivalent mental intellect from three to seven years.⁶⁰² Goddard characterized the individuals that tested into the low grade imbecile and idiot categories as, in his words, “the loathsome unfortunate that may be seen in our institutions... somewhat difficult to take care of; nevertheless, he lives his life and is done... he does not continue the race with a line of children like himself,” and he suggested that idiots and imbeciles were easily recognizable as they “plainly show in their countenances the extent of their mental defect.”⁶⁰³

According to Goddard, the committee labored to come to a consensus over what to call their third grade of individuals, or those that tested with a “mentality from eight to twelve,” because even though they felt this group fit the definition of feeble-mindedness that the English had established years earlier, the term as it was applied in the United States had come to signify all defective categories:

A third group with a mentality of eight to twelve. It was at first thought that we could call them feeble-minded... but unfortunately for our plan, in the United States the term feeble-minded had come to be applied generically to the entire group of mental defectives and every state institution in the country was called an institution for the feeble-minded.⁶⁰⁴

According to Goddard’s writings, after the committee considered naming conventions that included, “expressions such as “deviates,” the “almosts,” and others,” they settled on a resolution that allowed them to maintain the American understanding of feeble-mindedness “it its generic sense... covering the entire group of mental defectives,” by creating an entirely new etiology that separated those in the eight to twelve mental equivalencies from the idiot and the imbecile classifications:

⁶⁰² H. H. Goddard, 1927

⁶⁰³ H. H. Goddard, 1912, 141-144

⁶⁰⁴ H. H. Goddard, 1927

The term “fool” in its good ol English signification seemed to be exactly what we wanted... it is nevertheless taboo in modern usage... consequently, our highest group of the feeble-minded was called “moron” in the report of the committee on classification. The report was accepted by the association and the classification adopted.⁶⁰⁵

In his conceptualization of his new moron classification, Goddard qualified intellectuality in relation to his test subject’s level of “responsibility,” “capacity,” and “sensibilities,” and he theorized that measuring their intelligence in accordance with the new grading schema would demarcate their *degree* of defectiveness and social functioning:

There are all responsibilities, from zero to the highest; or there are all grades of intelligence from practically none up to that of genius or the most gifted. Responsibility varies according to intelligence... the problem for society to solve is to give some intelligent direction to this grading of responsibility so that it may be less bungling and more practical. We must measure intelligence.⁶⁰⁶

It is important to note that the definition of intelligence that Goddard relied on in his theorization of the moron subject was by his own admission, “more the popular understanding of the term” and his stated approach to intelligence encompassed wide-ranging, ambiguously defined, and ‘up for interpretation’ traits:

Intelligence as here used connotes more than the psychological *intellect*, (emphasis original) ... when reduced to psychological expression, means all of the essential mental processes in such proportion as to render the possessor able to adapt himself to his environment. It thus includes not only the intellect but the sensibilities and the will.⁶⁰⁷

Goddard indicated that he had arrived at two breakthrough conclusions after applying the new testing and classification systems to the ‘mentally deficient’ residents at Vineland. First, he believed that the *Binet-Simon* testing instruments would offer social workers, government agencies, courts, immigration officers, and charity systems a method to locate and classify the

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 41-42

⁶⁰⁶ H. H. Goddard, 1914, 2-3

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 572

large number of feeble-minded individuals that had gone previously unrecognized because they presented as 'too normal' to the untrained eye:

Morons are often normal looking with few or no stigmata of degeneration frequently able to talk fluently; their conversation while marked by poverty of thought or even silliness nevertheless commonly passes as the results of ignorance.⁶⁰⁸

The second breakthrough that Goddard attributed to the use of the *Binet-Simon* was related to the practical application of the testing outcomes and how he believed society should respond to the results. Goddard concluded that since the new system of testing would draw out a large portion of the population that were previously thought of as "dull or slow but not actually defective," that society would come to realize that it was the moron group, rather than the idiot or the imbecile, that posed the greatest danger to society:

So strong is their resemblance to the normal person that although they are well understood by those who have studied them and have deal with them in Institutions, yet there are many people even to-day who refuse to admit they cannot be trained to function like normal people. Yet they are the persons who make for us our social problems.⁶⁰⁹

Goddard found Alfred Binet's methods "marvelously fruitful", and he believed that implementing the test methods in American institutions, jails, almshouses, court systems, and schools would go a long way towards locating "high grade type of feeble-mindedness," and for realizing the broader mission of understanding the moron's "relation to crime, pauperism, intemperance, the social evil, incompetency, and disease."⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 7

⁶⁰⁹ H. H. Goddard 1914, 7

⁶¹⁰ Ibid. 19



Figure 5, New-York Daily Tribune "Eugenists Would Improve Human Sock by Blotting Out Blood Taints: Menaces to Society" 1912.

The American press picked up on Goddard's new terminology and they regularly exploited the moron classification in their sensationalized reporting on eugenic practices in the United States. In February of 1912, the *New-York Daily Tribune* published a full-page spread titled *Eugenists Would Improve Human Stock by Blotting Out Blood Taints: Menace to Society*, that featured a large profile photograph of Goddard,

situated underneath a pictorial spread of the three women and one man that the newspaper showcased to represent the "high grade imbecile," idiot, feeble-minded, and moron categories of defectives. The article's dramatic sub-headings proclaimed, "Scientists are Studying How to Cut Down the Awful Cost to Mankind of Bad Heredity, Which Often Swells from a Tiny Pool to a Black Ocean of Mental Defectiveness", and, "Startling Examples are Many—A Single Instance, Here Recorded, Reveals the Extension of a Crop of Wild Oats Into a Morass of Hundreds of Wretched Lives."⁶¹¹ The report included an interview with Goddard, where in responding to the reporter's question about what eugenicists had learned about heredity traits, Goddard clarified that "the ideal of eugenics seems to me to be the building up of a higher race by the elimination of the defectives and the improvement of the stock," and he explained to the reporter that

⁶¹¹ The New York Tribune, 1912

improving the nations 'stock' was a matter of public safety that would involve demarcating a clear line between the moron, the idiot, and the imbecile:

Until recently we have never included among the mental defectives the high grade group... that group is made up of at least 25 per cent of all the feeble-minded... he is a marked menace to society. Relative to this moron group the imbecile is not so great a menace, for he is more apt to be placed in some institution. These types are capable of giving birth to children. It is questioned by some whether the low grade idiot has the power to bring children into the world.⁶¹²

In the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century, America raised its eugenic ideologies to new heights in sensational headlines, pop-culture, and in public debates over fair labor practices, crime, women's rights, immigration restrictions, temperance, birth and population control, race legislation, police reform, urban planning and development, and corporate transparency. It seemed there were few social ills that the practical application of eugenics could not solve, and with limited exceptions, the proposed methods involved the exploitation, dehumanization, and expulsion of the exemplary feeble-minded subject.

The American Social Hygiene Movement:

If the civilization of the white race is to survive, it must be saved through the diffusion and adoption of sound policies in regard to social hygiene (in its larger meaning) carried out enthusiastically and persistently into action.

The American Social Hygiene Second Annual Report, 1915 ⁶¹³

Like eugenics, social hygiene was an all-encompassing term that gained traction during the reform movements of early twentieth century and achieved mainstream popularity through its recurrent appearance in newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, advertisements, and

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ The American Social Hygiene Association 1915

charity publications. According to the *American Social Hygiene Association* (ASHA), reformers positioned social hygiene in its earliest formations as a national health and welfare program with a specialized focus on 'sex hygiene' and "the elimination of prostitution, venereal disease and pathological sex conditions, whatever type."⁶¹⁴ According to the ASHA document, social hygiene formalized as its own field in 1905 when the *New York Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis* reorganized under the title of the *New York Social Hygiene Society*, and cities and towns across the United States rapidly followed suit to form their own social hygiene associations:

The agencies at work in the field of social hygiene are the United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, The United States Public Health Service, The American Social Hygiene Association, the state boards of health, and many local organizations. The League of Women's Voters and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union through their state and local committees have pledged the influence of thousands of women to the campaign.⁶¹⁵

As the movement grew, it gained traction with the American public and the field of social hygiene broadened its interests well beyond initial concerns over the "rampant spread" of venereal disease and social vice. Between 1905 and 1930, social hygiene agents situated a multitude of social welfare issues under the conceptual umbrella of 'social evil' and they became heavily involved in projects related to legislation and law enforcement, sex education, social maladjustment, protection of the family unit, disease prevention, temperance, universal methods in criminology, protective social measures, collection of family statistics, international

⁶¹⁴ American Social Hygiene Association NA 1916-1918

⁶¹⁵ American Social Hygiene Association 1921

relations, public health services, eugenics, and, “the examination and commitment of feeble-minded persons.”^{616 617}

In 1918, the United States Congress created *The United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board* “for the purpose of protecting the civil population of the United States against venereal disease and for meeting the immediate emergencies of the war,” and by 1921, “39 colleges, universities, and normal schools” had integrated social hygiene programs into their curricula.⁶¹⁸ Eugenacists and social hygiene reformers considered English physician, eugenicist, and progressive reformer Havelock Ellis an expert in both fields, and each gained certain authority by integrating his approach into their conceptual frameworks. In his 1912 publication titled, *The Task of Social Hygiene*, Ellis offered the protracted history of the four stages of social reform in England with the first being the “sanitary effort to clear away the gross filth from our streets,” and followed by “the great system of factory legislation,” national systems of education. The fourth stage, according to Ellis, was “the most fundamental of all and last to appear, the effort to guard the child before school age, even at birth, even before birth, by bestowing due care on the mother.”⁶¹⁹ In *The Task of Social Hygiene*, Ellis lectured that “the old conception of social reform” had become stagnant through its emphasis on fixing the material conditions “under which life is lived,” without further considering the sources of “bad conditions” or methods of their prevention.⁶²⁰ Ellis argued that the term ‘social reform’ was antiquated and static and he advocated for a shift in terminology, whereas, “Social Hygiene, as it

⁶¹⁶ Ibid

⁶¹⁷ American Social Hygiene Association NA 1916-1918

⁶¹⁸ American Social Hygiene Association 1921

⁶¹⁹ Ellis, 1912

⁶²⁰ Ellis 1912, vi

will be here understood, may be the development, and even a transformation, of what was formerly known as Social Reform.”⁶²¹

The study of social hygiene means the study of those things which concern the welfare of beings living in society... all social hygiene, in its fullest sense, is but an increasingly complex and extended method of purification—the purification of the conditions of life by sound legislation, the purification of our own minds by better knowledge, the purification of our own hearts by a growing sense of responsibility, the purification of the race itself by an enlightened eugenics, consciously aiding Nature in her manifest effort to embody new ideals of life. ⁶²²

Although social hygiene and eugenics in the United States converged in ways that would mutually reinforce the national politics of belonging, it is evident in their ongoing deliberations that they were at times fractured over reform issues such as access to birth control, the regulation of the world population, the deserving and underserving poor, and what types of individuals were worthy of aid and/or American citizenship. For the most part, both fields agreed about what specific social problems demanded their immediate action, but they struggled to find common ground over who, or what, was to blame. Social hygiene and eugenics experts did collectively argue for more extensive science-based investigations into crime, prostitution, alcoholism, population and birth control, delinquency and degeneracy, the family unit, and the preservation of ‘American civilization; however, while the movements agreed on *topics*, there were a few glaring dissimilarities in how each professed to go about the business of eliminating social evil. Social hygiene and eugenic representatives were at times in vehement disagreement over the objects and subjects of social reform, who to blame for the nation’s growing economic and social problems, and how to apply their contrasting study interpretations in real-world contexts. Social hygiene agencies were intent on maintaining on the ground social

⁶²¹ Ibid

⁶²² Ellis 1912, v-vi

programs that they believed would benefit the health and welfare of the American people that included, maternal health and birth control clinics, programs for the prevention of venereal diseases, and public education campaigns to reduce the stigma surrounding sex. In contrast, eugenicists centered their agenda on the singular goal of preserving the 'human race' by designing programs that intended to locate, diagnose, categorize, and systematically segregate, ban, and/or expel all of their perceived forms of degeneracy from the national and international landscape.

By 1910, there was a growing contingent of social hygienists, biologists, and social welfare agents that questioned eugenicists claims to have established a scientifically based link between heritability and the ambiguously defined characteristics of pauperism, criminality, inebriety, delinquency, dependency, and constitutional weakness but to be absolutely clear, leaders of the eugenics and social hygiene movements shared dominant spaces across both fields, and many unproven eugenic theories ultimately gained renewed authority under the auspices of social hygiene. Despite their differences, social hygiene and eugenic agents were in absolute, resounding, and unflappable agreement that the exemplary feeble-minded subject, whether inherited or not, was public enemy number one.

Broadly speaking, social hygiene specialists believed it was their duty as patriotic minded Americans to "cure the terribly destructive evils which threaten the life of modern civilization,"⁶²³ "strengthen the family as a basic social unit," "encourage all means which tend to build up healthy, happy, and socially wholesome life," and "advocate the highest standards of private and

⁶²³ American Social Hygiene Association 1915

public morality.⁶²⁴ With its broad focus on crime, social pathology, and “the civilization of the white race,” social hygiene, much like eugenics, forged a swift, direct, and unrelenting path to the exemplary feeble-minded subject with a particular interest in prostitution, vice, and crime.⁶²⁵ In its 1921 manual, the ASHA advised its readers that prostitution and feeble-mindedness were inseparable characteristics and that feeble-minded women posed a danger to the health and welfare of the American public:

Mental examinations of arrested prostitutes show that a considerable percentage of them are feeble-minded or of low-grade mentality. Such women must be isolated. They are not only the most careless, habitual, and dangerous carriers of venereal diseases, but they present a serious problem from the point of illegitimacy... the growing realization that most prostitutes are either feeble-minded or otherwise abnormal in mind, give increased interest to this type of work.⁶²⁶

The ASHA published the genealogy of its foundation in *The American Social Hygiene Association History and Forecast*, a document that is now located on the *Social Welfare History* website with a cited publication date of “sometime immediately after World War I.”⁶²⁷ According to the ASHA document, in 1913, individual organizations from around the country that were “dedicated to fighting prostitution and venereal disease... joined together to form the American Social Hygiene Association,” with the following mission in mind:

The association was established to stop the venereal disease epidemic by educating the public about sexually transmitted infections, working to break down the social stigma attached to VD, and encouraging high moral standards.⁶²⁸

Known eugenicist, race purist, and Stanford University chancellor David Starr Jordan, and fellow Stanford professor and Secretary of the California State Board of Health, Dr. William Snow, were

⁶²⁴ American Social Hygiene Association 1921

⁶²⁵ Ibid

⁶²⁶ Ibid

⁶²⁷ Ibid

⁶²⁸ American Social Hygiene Association NA 1916-1918

among the men of high prominence listed as founders in *The American Social Hygiene Association History and Forecast*. Both men served as advisors to the *Eugenics Committee of the United States of America*, and were in regular contact with the BSH, RFF, CIW, and ERO.

The ASHA officially organized two years after John D. Rockefeller, Jr. founded his Bureau of Social Hygiene and the ASHA *History and Forecast* cited Rockefeller as one of the “key figures of the organization” and its primary “financial contributor.”⁶²⁹ It is noteworthy that while Rockefeller, Jr. frequently discussed the ASHA in private correspondences, his name rarely appears in the association’s formal reports or documents. Remembering that Rockefeller Jr. had by this time abandoned his official status in the Rockefeller businesses in order to lead the RFF philanthropies, it is curious that he chose to distance himself from the public activities of the ASHA, even as he was a principal funder and the *Bureau of Social Hygiene Report for the Year 1929* documents donations to the ASHA of nearly two million dollars over a ten year period.⁶³⁰ It is possible that Rockefeller’s lack of willingness to openly associate himself with the ASHA is related to the organization’s public status, whereas Rockefeller’s press announcement for the opening of the BSH stated that while he believed public organizations had their place, the Bureau of Social Hygiene would have a more lasting effect because it would operate as a privately funded institution:

The forces of evil are never greatly alarmed at the organization of investigating or reform bodies of ephemeral character... in order to make a real and lasting improvement in conditions, a permanent organization should be created, the existence of which would not be dependent upon a temporary wave of reform nor upon any life of any man or group of men, but which would go on generation after generation continuously making

⁶²⁹ Ibid

⁶³⁰ The Bureau of Social Hygiene. 1929. *A Report for the Year 1929*. FAO60, series 1, box1, folder 2 Bureau of Social Hygiene Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center. Tarrytown. Annual, New York: Bureau of Social Hygiene. Accessed August 17, 2019

warfare against the forces of evil... a private organization would have, among other advantages, a certain freedom from publicity and political bias.⁶³¹

Even though in private Rockefeller, Jr., and his organization, at times expressed support for eugenic related reforms, the public distance that he created between the ASHA was in keeping with the measures he took to disassociate the BSH from some of the more controversial eugenic ideologies of the ASHA.

In 1932, in the organization's final year of operations, director Lawrence B. Dunham repeated the long standing claim that BSH had never been involved with, or demonstrated any interest in, the field of eugenics. In communications with his secretary concerning a request for financial support from the *International Federation of Eugenic Organizations*, Dunham stressed that, "the bureau's field of activities, as authorized by the Trustee's, has never included eugenics,"⁶³² and he later repeated this stance in a rejection letter to Dr. Ernst Rüdin of the University of Munich, where he "regretfully declined" the Nazi eugenicists application for research funds and clarified to Rüdin that "the work of the Bureau of Social Hygiene is quite restricted in scope, and we have never entered the field of eugenics."⁶³³ Despite Dunham's timely denials during the moment when eugenic ideologies and practices were just starting to fall out of favor in the United States, records show that BSH and its agents were oftentimes in direct alignment with eugenic policies and practices as they related to the investigation and reduction of prostitution, crime, intemperance, and degeneracy. According to meeting notes taken during the first gatherings of the *Committee of Three*, those involved in organizing what

⁶³¹ J. D. Rockefeller, 1913

⁶³² 1932. correspondence with Miss Topping regarding Cora B. Hodson. Dunham, Lawrence B., FAO 60, series 3, box 8, folder 178, Bureau of Social Hygiene Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center. Tarrytown, New York. Accessed August 16, 2019.

⁶³³ 1932. personal correspondence with Ernst Rudin. Dunham, Lawrence B., FAO60, series 3, box 8, folder 178, Bureau of Social Hygiene Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center. Tarrytown, New York, January 6. Accessed August 16, 2019.

would soon be known as the Bureau of Social Hygiene wanted to develop the criminalistic institute at Bedford for the purposes of researching, classifying, and diagnosing women held at the Bedford State Reformatory for Women, and all women processed within the New York state and municipal criminal justice systems.⁶³⁴ In 1910, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. sought advice from the director of the Eugenics Records Office regarding the bureau's intention to develop a criminalistic institute based on BSH general secretary Katharine Davis's, "Alternative Plan for the Treatment of Women Convicted in the Courts of New York City."⁶³⁵ Records show that between 1910 and 1916, Rockefeller, Jr., and Charles Davenport corresponded about the BSH laboratory, social reform and social hygiene, the ERO, and Davenport's expertise in the field of practical eugenics. In 1912, with full funding from Rockefeller, Jr., the bureau initiated the development of the institute at Bedford under the name "The Laboratory of Social Hygiene," and Davenport and Laughlin consulted with Davis on laboratory operations, while the ERO provided training for the field workers involved in the BSH studies.⁶³⁶

Davis received national and international attention for her work in criminal justice, her research into sex factors in women, and her study of social delinquents at Bedford, and in 1914, in addition to her governing role at the BSH, the state of New York appointed Davis as its first female Commissioner of Corrections. In 1924, renowned economist and eugenicist Irving Fisher informed Davis that the *Eugenics Committee of the United States of America* had elected her to serve on its advisory council and in her letter of acceptance, Davis informed Fisher, "I recognize

⁶³⁴ The Committee of Three. 1910-1911 Minutes of the Meetings. FA060, series 1, box 2, folder 23, Bureau of Social Hygiene Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center. Tarrytown, New York. Accessed August 17, 2019.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

the importance of the matters with which your committee is dealing... I shall be glad to accept the appointment.”⁶³⁷ ⁶³⁸

Raymond B. Fosdick was one of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s. closest confidants and another predominant BSH agent that served on the advisory council to the *Eugenics Committee of the United States of America*. In his administrative and research roles at BSH, Fosdick worked closely with the RFF and the ASHA, and he received international notoriety after the BSH sponsored and published his “exhaustive studies of police systems” in the United States and Europe.⁶³⁹ According to the BSH report for the year 1929, Fosdick’s primary interest in performing comparative studies on policing in Europe and the United States was to investigate “the conditions which conduce to delinquency, criminality, and other destructive social evils.” The BSH summary report from 1929 outlined Fosdick’s prison studies and stated that his deep personal and professional connection to New York Police Commissioner Colonel Arthur Woods would eventually lead to “a significant enlargement of the Bureau’s field of interest.” ⁶⁴⁰ When Davis resigned from BSH in 1928, Lawrence Dunham became the new director and the bureau’s tone and interests shifted significantly. In the BSH report for 1929, Dunham explained that since its reorganization, the bureau had initiated the “research and application of proved remedies in matters relating to social welfare resulting from disease, delinquency, and unenlightened treatment of social maladjustments.”⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁷ Fisher, Irving. 1924. correspondence from Irving Fisher to Katharine B. Davis. FA060, eugenics record group, series 3, box 8, folder 181, Rockefeller Archives, Tarrytown, New York . Tarrytown, November 26. Tarrytown, November 26.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ The Bureau of Social Hygiene. 1929. "Report for the Year 1929. FA060, Bureau of Social Hygiene record group, series 1, box 1, folder 2, Rockefeller Archives." Tarrytown: Bureau of Social Hygiene. Accessed August 17, 2019.

⁶⁴⁰ The Bureau of Social Hygiene. 1929. "Report for the Year 1929. FA060, Bureau of Social Hygiene record group, series 1, box 1, folder 2, Rockefeller Archives." Tarrytown: Bureau of Social Hygiene. Accessed August 17, 2019.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

Material Consequences: *The Intersecting and Competing Strategies of the Bureau of Social Hygiene and the Eugenics Record Office*

BSH operated under Davis's guidance until the bureau *reorganized* in 1928, and according to committee reports, under her leadership, "considerable attention was given to scientific studies of sex and narcotic drugs," while, "particular attention was paid to commercialized prostitution and allied social problems."⁶⁴² By stating that its open-ended mission was to tackle "allied social problems" related to prostitution, the BSH widened its scope beyond its special interest in the white slave traffic in New York City. In addition to Davis's prison studies at Bedford, and Fosdick's long term interest in prison and police systems in the United States and Europe, BSH provided funding for the research and publication of projects concerned with topics related to social delinquency that included: Howard Woolston's *Prostitution in the United States*, Hayes Fernald's *A Study of Women Delinquents in New York State*, Jean Weidensall's *The Mentality of Criminal Women*, and famed educator, administrator at the Carnegie Foundation For the Advancement of Teaching and RFF board member, Abraham Flexner's book, *Prostitution in Europe*.⁶⁴³

In his letter to Davenport dated January 12, 1912, Rockefeller, Jr. informed the ERO director that the bureau was planning to open the laboratory at Bedford, and when he introduced Davis to Davenport in his letter, Rockefeller, Jr. demonstrated his respect for the woman he would later appoint as General Director of the Bureau of Social Hygiene:

The State Reformatory for Women at Bedford, New York, is one of the best, if not the best, reformatory in this country. Miss Katharine Bement Davis is its head and has been since its establishment eleven years ago. She is a Vassar graduate, has done post graduate work at Chicago, and also in several cities of Germany... she is a woman of rare

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

mental endowment, combined with deep human sympathy and an unusual amount of common sense and knowledge of practical things.⁶⁴⁴

It is important to take a moment to note that although Dr. Davis earned her PhD, was appointed to head the largest prison system in the United States, published several books on the topic of human sexuality, and prison systems, was given the title “woman of the year” by the press, and Rockefeller, Jr. considered her “a woman of rare mental endowment,” her peers, colleagues and the press still insisted on addressing her as ‘Miss Davis.’

On May 8th, 1912, Rockefeller sent a letter informing Davenport, “Miss Davis’ Alternative Plan for the Criminalistic Institute... is being worked out and will be realized.”⁶⁴⁵ In November of 1912, just months after Rockefeller, Jr. made Davenport aware that the Bedford plan was moving forward, Davis and Davenport presented papers at the *Thirteenth New York State Conference of Charities and Corrections* in Syracuse, where Davenport addressed the topic of *Eugenics in its Relation to Social Problems*, followed by Davis’s presentation, *Eugenics in its Relation to Mental Defectives*. Davis argued that while she believed eugenic studies had yet to determine with any degree of scientific accuracy that the laws of heredity in animals were applicable to humans, she was on board with eugenic thought in relation to the heritability of feeble-mindedness. Davis took the opportunity during her speech to promote the studies that she oversaw at Bedford, and to argue that Goddard’s *Binet-Simon* testing scheme for the classification of the mentally deficient at Vineland was insufficient in scope:

In any field of work the proofs of feeble-mindedness must come from a variety of sources more or less trustworthy and not as the direct result of the observation of the worker himself. The Binet tests of intelligence given in a school or laboratory, or in fact

⁶⁴⁴ Rockefeller, John D. Jr.: Davenport, Charles B. 1910-1929. "John D. Rockefeller Jr. Correspondences with Charles B. Davenport." *Charles B. Davenport Papers*. Compiled by The American Philosophical Society. New York.

⁶⁴⁵ Rockefeller, John D. Jr.: Davenport, Charles B. 1910-1929. "John D. Rockefeller Jr. Correspondences with Charles B. Davenport." *Charles B. Davenport Papers*. Compiled by The American Philosophical Society. New York.

any set of laboratory experiments given under conditions which cannot be accompanied by more or less prolonged observation, fails in that it can take no account of adaptability to the environment.⁶⁴⁶

According to Davis, the core difference between her plan for identifying and classifying feeble-mindedness and the accuracy of the methods applied by eugenicists like Goddard and Davenport was a simple matter of time spent with the study subjects, and the environmental conditions in which the observations took place. Davis maintained that “the real test of normality is conduct,” and she believed the only method for accurately identifying feeble-minded types was to hold them in institutional settings “under careful observation for considerable periods of time.”⁶⁴⁷ Davis then attempted to validate her call for longitudinal studies by quite unironically drawing on the Binet grading system to delineate the Bedford women in her own study:

Let us consider by way of illustration, some of the results of observation and experiment on a group of seven girls at the Bedford Reformatory all of whom by Binet and other laboratory tests were about nine years of age mentally and who physically ranged from fifteen to twenty-four years of age.⁶⁴⁸

Having ostensibly established the feeble-mindedness of her subjects, and despite her protestations over the scientific authenticity of some eugenic applications, Davis went on to explain that the heredity features of the Bedford group were under current investigation. Davis’s tone regarding the women in her study was very much in keeping with the demeaning rhetorics that were commonplace in eugenics discourse, as she indicated that the Bedford inmates studied were “shiftless,” “dishonest,” “unstable,” “immoral,” “criminal,” “serious sexual offenders,” and that they were the descendants of “degenerate families” and “neer-do-wells.”

⁶⁴⁶ Davis, 1912, 148

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid

According to Davis, feeble-minded women were likely to have what she termed 'illegitimate' feeble-minded children, and on this point, she praised Davenport and Goddard for their efforts to illustrate "the social and economic results of allowing women like these to go on having large families of defectives."⁶⁴⁹

Davis argued that any state, charitable, or private body dealing with the feeble-minded should, "damn at the fountainhead the largest contributing stream to what seems to be growing into a flood of socially unfit," and she recommended that agencies and the government should take immediate steps to test, identify, and institutionalize the feeble-minded classes "during their reproductive period at least, or better by far, their entire lifetime."⁶⁵⁰ In his January 1912 letter to Davenport, Rockefeller, Jr. mentioned that he agreed with Davis's desire to "undertake the study of the blood lines which have produced our defectives and delinquents," and he asked Davenport if he thought the plan "was worth trying on an experimental scale at Bedford... if it can be financed privately." Davenport was happy to oblige Rockefeller's request and his lengthy response addressed the factors he believed were characteristic of anti-social behaviors, the high rates of crime perpetuated by the feeble-minded class, and the heritability of mental deficiency, and he offered to send a trained field worker to Bedford should Rockefeller's plan come to fruition.⁶⁵¹

In the 1916 post presentation discussion session held at the National Conference of Charities and Correction in Indianapolis, Davis informed the committee on Public and Private Charities that she wanted all public and private institutions related to crime and delinquency in

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 154-158

⁶⁵¹ Rockefeller, John D. Jr.: Davenport, Charles B. 1910-1929. John D. Rockefeller Jr. Correspondences with Charles B. Davenport. *Charles B. Davenport Papers*. Compiled by The American Philosophical Society. New York.

the United States to serve as laboratories for the scientific study of the nation's criminal and delinquent classes. In her arguments, Davis stated that the nation was "coming to recognize our state institutions as human laboratories," and she believed inmates and delinquents housed in the institutional system in the United States were "human material" that presented a prime opportunity to learn more about what was causing the nations increase in crime and delinquency, and to lay "a foundation not only for more efficient work in dealing directly with the problems in, but also eradicating its cause."⁶⁵² Davis included prisons, juvenile facilities, state court systems, and feeble-minded institutions among her list of facility types that she believed were best suited to adequately perform the scientific studies that were called for.

In the winter of 1915, BSH and RFF leadership initiated a dialogue regarding the feasibility of converting BSH and its many projects into an entity of the RFF. The purpose of the gathering was to explore the existing overlaps between the two organizations, determine and define future directions for the fields of social hygiene and "social engineering", and to outline potential areas for their expansion.⁶⁵³ In the end BSH remained its own agency, however, since those involved in the discussions held leadership positions at both organizations, BSH and RFF would separately take on several of the proposed projects that emerged during their discussions. One important outcome from their collaborations was that the RFF board agreed that Fosdick should put together an outline of what the agency would look like and the document that Fosdick submitted to the board indicated that there were four categories of social problems that the newly formed agency should target:

- 1) The Research and Application of Programs in Scientific Criminal Statistics

⁶⁵² Davis, 1916, 387

⁶⁵³ Cite 1915 conference held at the offices of the Rockefeller foundation, 1915. RAC archives.

- 2) Social causes of delinquency
- 3) Psycho-physical Causes of Delinquency
- 4) The Scientific Aspects of Crime Detection.⁶⁵⁴

When Fosdick elaborated on the second and third categories, he reiterated the age old topic that charity and philanthropy discourses had been attempting to pin down since the first charities and corrections conference in 1874 regarding the classification and categorization of feeble-mindedness. In reference to his third category, the psycho-physical causes of delinquency, Fosdick explained that the work would involve:

Analysis of feeble-mindedness as a causal factor in delinquency... it would include, among other things:

- a) Studies of inheritance in groups of feeble-minded delinquents.
- b) Studies of groups of feeble-minded delinquents.
- c) Studies of glandular functions in feeble-minded delinquents.
- d) Development of a single standard of tests for determining the mental level and capacity delinquents above the age of twelve years.⁶⁵⁵

Fosdick clarified that the type of investigation he envisioned was already underway at Bedford Hills, but that the broader mission of locating and categorizing the feeble-minded class needed, as he put it, “an authoritative standardization... so that it can be placed in the hands of prison officers, police departments, and students through-out the United States.”⁶⁵⁶

A survey of BHS projects between 1929 and 1935 indicates that the organization targeted the bulk of its grant monies and material efforts towards “the broad field of delinquency, criminology, and criminal justice administration.”⁶⁵⁷ It was during this second phase of its operations that the bureau cultivated important relationships with national and

⁶⁵⁴ Fosdick report to BSH and RFF, SPC.FA060, 1915 Record Group; Bureau of Social Hygiene, Box 2, Folder 23, Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid

⁶⁵⁷ The Bureau of Social Hygiene, 1929

international leaders and organizations, and through these interactions, BSH became recognized as one of the more influential agencies in areas related to international crime reporting and statistics, the international survey of traffic in women and children, world narcotic drug legislation, experimental prison colonies in the United States, maternal health in the United States and abroad, world population, and clinical research on birth control.

In the first part of the twentieth century, scientists, eugenicists, social hygienists, charity workers, and philanthropists were in search of an archetype of degeneracy to represent the ultimate 'Other' in their quest for racial and global superiority. In her brief genealogy of eugenics, Philippa Levine found that in the development of a classifying what constituted as an ideal American citizen in the Progressive Era, "intelligence was a key variable... a means to measure intelligence and identify feeble-mindedness was central to the policies that eugenics promoted."⁶⁵⁸ For ERO and BSH, the purity of the national politic was of paramount concern and advancing a pure race meant supporting programs that would promote the genetic evolution of a physically vigorous, mentally and intellectually superior white stock. The ambiguous and repetitive rhetoric that surrounded the exemplary feeble-minded subject was one of the central components of this discourse.

⁶⁵⁸ Levine 2017, 17-20

Conclusion: *A Final Reflection*

Google Digitized Books provides a rich archive of difficult to locate historical materials that the

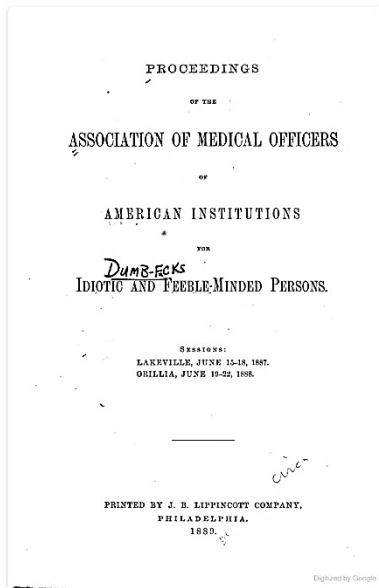


Figure 1. Digitized by Google. Altered front page of the *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers, 1889*. Screenshot by Thibault.

corporation houses and maintains in its *Google My Play* repository. Academics and archivists have raised important questions about the ethics, stability, and reliability of the *Google Digitized Books* platform, and while these debates are critical, here I am more interested in sharing my reflections about how one of the objects stored in my *Google My Play* archive brought me to important realizations about this project. *Google My Play* creates a digitized snapshot of an artifact's front page that serves as a placeholder, or icon, for future access (see *figure one*). This means that each time

I returned to my collection of materials in the *Google Play* archive, I viewed the many 'icons' that represent the *Google Digitized* artifacts that I drew from in this study. I share the following reflection here because I believe that it demonstrates the choices that confront researchers as they think through what, and *how*, to include or exclude certain materials in their analyses.

The image above (*figure 1*) shows one of the icons that appeared each time I opened the *Google My Play* archive, and it is a digitized representation of a textual copy of the front page of the 1889 *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions*. Here we see that in the document version *Google* selected to digitize, someone at some point, and for some unknown reason, made the decision to scrawl and underline the word **DUMB-FuCKs** right above "Idiot and Feeble-Minded" in the original title of the text. There are places in this

dissertation where analyzing this object would have productively moved the conversation forward, but each time I viewed it, I would become so outraged that time and again I avoided any confrontation with the serious implications that it represents. I also wrestled with the image because even though some might view it as simple text scrolled indiscriminately over a few antiquated words born from another time, I believe it is one of the more violent artifacts in my archive, because of what the act of altering the original text *represents*. I did not want to reinforce or highlight the violence of the artifact, but its existence does raise important questions. When did someone etch the words onto the page? Who made the conscious decision to perform what I insist is a deliberately violent act, and for what purpose? When was the document altered, and did the *Google* archivist notice? Have other researchers noticed, and if they did, should they have intervened? If the archivist made a different choice and selected a ‘clean’ page from the article to serve as its digital icon, would this be an act of erasure? Would *Google* use this as its location icon if the alteration was blatantly racist, homophobic, misogynistic, or ethnocentric? What can we make of the fact that the party that scrawled the words onto the page deliberately attempted to revise the word f-ck, yet found it perfectly acceptable to use upper case letters for Dumb and F-ck, and permanently ascribe their derogatory insult onto the document? There are examples throughout this dissertation that do illustrate the type of representational violence that is visible in this artifact, for example, the Mother Jones’ representational analysis of Gonnerman’s story on the abuses at JRC that appears in the introductory chapter, the 1893 pastel “American Woman and her Political Peers,” discussed in chapter three, and the extended deconstruction of Mary O’Reilly’s Piney family in

chapter two. Why then was I so reticent to examine *this* artifact and avoid confronting the meanings and implications behind its altered message?

I eventually realized that deconstructing this image and questioning the circumstances behind it is what this project is uniquely qualified to do. This cultural object exemplifies what Stuart Hall was talking about when he placed such high value on locating the “history of the present” in discursive analyses. In figure one, **DUMB-FuCKS** signifies a moment when past and recent (or more recent) configurations of intellectuality came together in such a way as to perfectly illustrate that we still have much work to do if we are to shift understandings about intellectual and developmental difference. The document, and the writing on it, represent a space in between histories that thanks to *Google Digitized Books* has been memorialized in digital form, and while it might be tempting to dig into the mystery behind how, when, and why the words became part of the artifact, this dissertation makes the argument that the critical work is to instead investigate the powers, processes, and institutional ableism’s that have emboldened the act of alteration in the first place. Furthermore, I argue that an important and often overlooked part of this process is in how we address those actors that have ignored and reinforced its meaning and allowed its dangerous message to live on in the digital sphere. Ultimately, the vile and ableist slur that we see in this artifact is a product of the cultural patterns, representational practices, and systemic refusals that I have unraveled in the pages of this dissertation.

Throughout the pages of this dissertation, I have engaged with the objects in its archive to arrive at new and different understands about how national and global charity systems in the United States have come to privilege configurations of normalcy that devalue and degrade

forms of intellectual and developmental difference. I have unraveled the ‘history of the present’ by drawing attention to cultural artifacts that demonstrate the way particular configurations of intellectuality, development, and race progress have become condensed within, and essential to, discourses of U.S. charity and philanthropy and American exceptionalism. I approach American charity and philanthropy as complex transnational endeavors that have deep roots in colonialist practices, industrialism, modernity, and the American progressive reform movements of the late 1800s and early 1900s. One of the primary outcomes of this work is that it demonstrates that these overlapping discourses paint a broad brush of intellectual and/or developmental inferiority that makes it possible to wholly delegitimize given subjects in given moments—whether place, nation, geography, community, group, or individual.

I have challenged many of the ways that we think through these conjunctural moments in American history by deconstructing the lingering effects of their previously unanalyzed discourses of intellectuality, development, and progress—in relation to what I have conceptualized throughout these pages as an imaginary and exemplary feeble-minded subject. I introduced the exemplary feeble-minded subject in my analysis of the ways in which predominantly white charity workers, news reporters, and popular entertainment spaces in the late 1800s and early 1900s called on imperialism’s racialized ‘dark Africa’ mythology to delegitimize the intellectual and developmental features of the people and regions that they wanted to represent as somehow less desirable.

To make the connection between the dark continent discourse and the exemplary feeble-minded subject, I analyzed reformer Mary O’Reilly’s interpretation of an anonymous family that lived in Pines, New Jersey in 1913. I chose to introduce my conceptualization of the

exemplary feeble-minded subject in my analysis of O'Reilly's article because her narrative illustrates how ideals of intellectual difference that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were in large part a product of a comingling of American race purity politics and the racialized and ableist discourses of the mythical 'savage,' 'uncivilized,' and 'backwards' African subject of the mid-1800s. O'Reilly's narrative brought to the surface another significant point that I bring out in this dissertation, and that is that there were certain racial and geographical contradictions in Progressive Era configurations of intellectuality and progress that reformers needed to contend with that they were able to resolve by conjuring the exemplary feeble-minded subject. New Jersey is geographically located in the west and Piney's inhabitants were white—but not quite properly white—and therefore O'Reilly needed to expand the African savage stereotype beyond its commonly understood, geographically distant, and racist "black as the racially low Other" genealogies.⁶⁵⁹ Here is where the discourse of charity and Americanism drew on privileged notions of intellectuality that would serve to vilify forms of intellectual difference, without delegitimizing America's perceived racial superiority.

The creation of mythical opposites was one of the more powerful discursive weapons in modernity's playbook, and I demonstrate in the first three chapters of this work that the organized charities and corrections movement that emerged in the United States in the late 1800s was a powerful force behind the development of universal standards for categorizing, measuring, and managing what constituted normal/abnormal, productive/primitive, intellectual/degenerate, developed/undeveloped and savage/civilized in American charity and philanthropy systems. By the close of the nineteenth century charity had constructed an

⁶⁵⁹ Hall 2013, 228

imaginary feeble-minded subject that served to create an illusion of commonality between all alleged forms of degeneracy, and the political urgency to safeguard 'proper' Americans from all that bore the ambiguous markings of feeble-mindedness began to reach its fevered pitch.

In my analysis of the conjunctural moments that I have examined in this work, I employ cultural representation, in both theoretical and practical contexts, to gain new insights into how lesser examined discourses of intellectuality are adapted in the more commonly explored racialized regimes of representation. I place questions of intellectuality, development, and progress at the forefront in my analysis of how imperial explorers, white American businessmen, missionaries, showmen, journalists, social reformers, southern Redemptionists, suffragists, feminists, and politicians each expanded differently on preexisting ableist and racist repertoires to exalt themselves and their agendas.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the national charities and corrections movement came to embrace modern ideals in philosophy, science, business, and philanthropy, and the nation's obsession with the racist and ableist rhetoric of the 'dark continent' coincided with the rise in American expansionism, and the United States emergence as a world power. White supremacists blended commodity racism with ableist rhetorics of the exemplary feeble-minded subject to gain alliances in white northern abolitionist communities, and racist and ableist coding in product images, storybooks, novels, and entertainment venues represented Black Americans as too ignorant, uncivilized, and genetically impure to warrant equal representation in 'civil' society. Profoundly racist and ableist intellectuals and researchers hid behind post-Civil

War scientific racism, the science of heritability, anthropology, and social Darwinism to embed fiercely destructive images of Black intellectuality into the cultural psyche.⁶⁶⁰

Between 1874 and the early 1900s, the national delegation at the annual proceedings of the national charities and corrections conferences continued to debate and refine the material ways in which all charitable sectors should integrate universal standards into their own management systems. It was during this time that topics in the medical and social sciences held related to heredity and intellectual development began to hold an enormous influence over the gatherings, and the reform ideologies that came to dominate the first decades of the twentieth century such as eugenic science, social and mental hygiene, and race purity began to take shape. The panic of 1873 and the Long Depression that followed is another critical and understudied historical conjuncture that that I have addressed with specificity in this dissertation. The financial panic generated a newfound urgency to categorize, classify, track, and identify aid applicants, and there was an increased call for the development of a hierarchy of giving based upon so-called deserving and undeserving subjects. The national charities and corrections movement found itself front and center in the public debate over what constituted charity, and the heritability of degenerate traits became of paramount concern in these discussions. I demonstrate through my deep analysis of materials related to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections that charity and humanitarian reformers were in full debate over eugenic ideals regarding the heritability of degenerate traits well before eugenic thought formally erupted into a full-fledged national movement in the United States at the turn of the century. Conversations at the conferences show that as early as 1873, there was a

concerted effort to quantify a measurable association between ‘special feebleness of mind and body,’ and heredity.

The 1873 crash and the lingering Long Depression deeply altered the scope and the structure of U.S. domestic charity and international humanitarianism well into the twentieth century. I have argued in this work that America’s reaction to the damaging economic downturn that followed the Long Depression permanently altered the charity and philanthropy landscape in ways that impacted the historically specific construction of the exemplary feeble-minded subject. The need for public assistance increased exponentially in the years following the economic crash, and this surge put a drain on already depleted public and private charity revenues. Social and public institutions looked to the national organized charities and corrections movement to assess who rightly deserved public assistance, and to tell them what to do about, with, or to, those considered unworthy of certain public supports. It was through these processes that attitudes about the newly constructed exemplary feeble-minded subject took a dangerous turn. The movement did refine and formalize standards for investigating, defining, categorizing, classifying, counting, and tracking the subjects of charity and corrections, and through the feeble-minded, idiot, and imbecile became officially recognized as an increasing threat to the nation.

To illustrate the second significant consequence of the Long Depression, I considered the post-crash political economies that were to some degree made possible by the industrial breakdown that it caused. While the crash bore down heavily on the U.S. labor force and small manufacturing industries, it was a golden opportunity for the largest manufacturing companies in the United States, and especially so for industrialists John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie

who maintained enough capital reserves to self-finance their burgeoning steel and oil enterprises.⁶⁶¹ The post-crash economy created the precise conditions that paved the way for industrial giants like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller to monopolize on the failure of small-time manufacturing and to accumulate wealth through their knowledge of emerging production technologies, aggressive business tactics, political prowess, and their willingness to exploit cheap labor. At the onset of the new century, Carnegie and Rockefeller had both retired from their industrial empires and begun to employ their vast financial resources, their domestic and international business acumen, and prominent social status, to form two of the largest international philanthropic empires in history. By 1900, national charities and corrections had settled on a universalized philosophy of giving that was convinced that all charitable agencies should employ scientific methods, engage in the practical application of business strategies, promote the progress of the nation, and foster long-lasting relationships with the press. These core values were set in place as American charity shifted once again into a new era of beneficence, and the nation's wealthiest men and women focused their vast capital resources on executing what one news reporter aptly named—"philanthropy on a colossal scale."

I have constructed a cultural map of the rise of American philanthropy during the Progressive Era that is a deep exploration of the historical and relational aspects of the eugenic and social hygiene movements. Here I placed emphasis on how, under the far-reaching auspices of 'the improvement of and welfare of all mankind,' the John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie philanthropies contributed to the frenetic cross-pollination of eugenic and social hygiene thought that overshadowed U.S. culture in the first decades of the twentieth century,

⁶⁶¹ Nelson 2012, 293-295

and I argued written histories of the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations overlook this critical connection. After first exploring the cultural politics that surrounded Carnegie and Rockefeller as they developed their massive philanthropic empires, I introduced John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his Bureau of Social Hygiene, and the Carnegie Institution of Washington Eugenics Records Office as central sites for understanding how these movements operated within the broader discourses of U.S. charity and American exceptionalism. The artifacts selected for this portion of the analyses demonstrated that U.S. law makers, popular media, charitable foundations, and the public gave considerable weight to the research conclusions generated by the eugenic investigators at Carnegie's ERO and SEE, and the social hygiene practitioners at BSH.

The final contribution I have made in this dissertation is in its study of the relational aspects of eugenics and social hygiene. Leaders of the eugenics and social hygiene movements shared dominant spaces across both fields, and many unproven eugenic theories ultimately gained renewed authority under the auspices of social hygiene. Social hygiene and eugenic agents were in absolute, resounding, and unflappable agreement that the exemplary feeble-minded subject, whether inherited or not, was public enemy number one. Eugenics and social hygiene were all-encompassing terms that gained authority during the reform movements of early twentieth century and achieved mainstream popularity through their recurrent appearance in newspapers, magazines, motion pictures, advertisements, and charity publications. The BSH and ERO continued to try to pin down a universal categorization and classification system for feeble-mindedness that would transfer across institutional contexts. The desire to categorize, classify, count, measure, and scientifically universalize intellectuality and development was a persistent theme throughout the conjunctural moments and

configurations that I have studied in this dissertation. Without exception, the systems and cultural forces studied in this work exerted tremendous resources and energy while attempting to build, an agree upon, a system for measuring the intellectual and developmental features of the body politic. The press, public, and the popular media were all too happy to adapt each new “configuration of the moment” into their own political discourses and agendas. One of the things that I set out to accomplish when I started this project was to not only demonstrate how these multiple and at times competing configurations of intellectuality and development have impacted the national charity and philanthropy discourse in the United States, but to also provide insights into their global reach. While I have touched on global politics throughout the pages of this dissertation, understanding how the discourses I have discussed here transfer globally is a rich area for future study. Periods and configurations of interest moving forward would include a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between the social hygiene and eugenic movements (1910-1940) and their impact before and after WWII, Harry S. Truman’s Point Four Program and global development policies, and the Cold War Period.

Above all, this dissertation is a political project that asks that we all pay attention to our own complicity and raise serious questions about those individuals, social entities, and intellectual projects that think of themselves as innocent actors in the ableist and racialized discourses that I have foregrounded in these pages. This dissertation is a political project that asks society to pay attention to the people and systems that reinforce an imaginary sense of national, racial, ethnic, gender, and/or class superiority by exploiting and ‘othering’ intellectual and developmental difference.

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