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Diplomová práce se bude zabývat eugenickým hnutím v USA a zaměří se na aplikaci jeho ideologických východisek v americké společnosti. Práce bude strukturovaná chronologicky, přičemž nejpodrobněji zkoumaným obdobím bude první polovina 20. století, kdy dosahovalo americké eugenické hnutí největšího vlivu. Stručně zmapováno bude pak i období po druhé světové válce a dozvuky idejí eugeniky v současné americké společnosti. Práce organicky propojí teoretickou a praktickou část zkoumané problematiky. Nejprve se zaměří na počátky eugeniky obecně a představí, jak byly teze jejího britského zakladatele Francise Galtona interpretovány americkými stoupenci teorie eugeniky. Práce se bude věnovat nejvýraznějším osobnostem americké eugeniky, jako jsou například Madison Grant či Henry H. Goddard, a jejich argumentaci pro praktické uplatnění eugeniky ve společnosti.

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Poděkování

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ANNOTATION

The presented thesis examines the social impact of the American Eugenics Movement from the late 19th century until the 1930s. The first chapter provides an ideological context of eugenic thought and the first formulation of eugenics by Francis Galton. The second chapter explores the adoption of eugenics by American thinkers. After the US socio-economic context is discussed, the characteristic features of the American Eugenics Movement are described. The targeted groups are defined and the actual eugenic practices are listed. The last part is focused on opposition to American eugenics. It also describes the fall of the movement and points out the connection to Nazi policies. The theory is linked using analyses of several key works of American eugenicists including Charles Davenport's *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* and Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*.

KEYWORDS

American Eugenics Movement, negative eugenics, Charles Davenport, Madison Grant

NÁZEV

Společenské důsledky amerického eugenického hnutí

ANOTACE

Předložená práce zkoumá společenské důsledky amerického eugenického hnutí od konce devatenáctého století po třicátá léta století dvacátého. První kapitola zasazuje eugenické ideje do kontextu and představuje eugeniku, jak ji formuloval Francis Galton. Druhá kapitola se věnuje převzetí teorie eugeniky v Americe. Po shrnutí socio-ekonomické situace v USA jsou popsány charakteristické rysy amerického eugenického hnutí. Práce definuje skupiny, na něž byla eugenika zacílená, a uvádí její praktické využití ve společnosti. Poslední část práce se zaměřuje na kritiku eugeniky. Dále také popisuje úpadek popularity eugeniky v Americe a upozorňuje na spojení s nacisty. Teorie je provázena analýzami děl americké eugeniky včetně *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* od Charlese Davenporta a *The Passing of the Great Race* od Madisona Granta.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Americké eugenické hnutí, negativní eugenika, Charles Davenport, Madison Grant

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1 INTRODUCTION

The submitted thesis explores eugenic thought in the United States that first appeared at the end of the 19th century and reached its peak between 1920 and 1930. The main goal is to present eugenic ideas of the time, analyze the rhetoric and map the resulting manifestation in American society. The theoretical information is joined by analyses discussing some of the key works of American eugenics. The main publications that are analyzed are Charles Davenport's *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* and Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*. The text also includes additional analyses of primary sources including works of the founder of eugenics Francis Galton or a critical essay by Lester F. Ward. The paper follows the development of eugenics from Darwin's theory of evolution and Galton's concept of eugenics to the American grasp of eugenic ideas and their practical application. The presented text argues that the positive eugenics based on voluntary application in England was transformed into a negative and coercive form in the US. Moreover, while British eugenics was mainly classist, American eugenicists added a racist element to the debate. The idea of a eugenic continuum is introduced as a good way to systematically map the development of the American eugenics movement. It lists the general steps of applied eugenics and when the gradation of the measures is examined, it is evident that the later Nazi policies directly followed the efforts of American eugenicists. Therefore, the thesis also aims to indirectly demonstrate a certain level of responsibility that should be incorporated into the American historical consciousness.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first chapter explores the roots of eugenic thought and the different ideas that preceded it. The history of eugenics starts with the theory of evolution and natural selection that prepared the ground for its wider acceptance. The text then discusses how Darwin's teaching penetrated social thinking and morphed into Social Darwinism. The chapter presents the two ways of understanding human development, the so-called nature versus nurture debate, as well as the laissez-faire approach that was later abandoned and substituted by state interventions. Finally, the ideas of Francis Galton and the birth of eugenics are explained. Some of Galton's essays as well as his work *Hereditary Genius* are analyzed and direct quotations related to the main tenets of the eugenic doctrine are provided.

The significantly longer second part is devoted to American eugenics, which is the central topic of the thesis. First, the American socio-economic background of the time is presented. The main ideologic stream of Progressivism is summarized and related to the

eugenics movement. Next, the distinctive features of the US type eugenics are demonstrated. The American eugenics movement is compared to the original English teaching and the differences are pointed out. The text discusses the tendency to preach negative eugenics leading to its involuntary nature as well as the classism and racism of American eugenicists. The agricultural parallels typical of eugenic rhetoric are also briefly described. The analyses of Davenport's and Grant's work support the claims made. After the theoretical arguments of the American eugenics movement, the focus moves to the actual application of eugenics. As there were two main groups targeted by American eugenics, the feeble-minded and the new immigrants, the text first defines those groups. The implemented eugenic measures are discussed next. The final part of the thesis is devoted to the anti-eugenic voices as well as to the fall of the American eugenics movement. Ward's critical essay *Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics* is analyzed to provide examples of arguments against eugenics. When the fall of the mainline eugenics movement and its reasons are examined, the affiliation with Nazi Germany is also mentioned. At the very end of the chapter, the legacy of the eugenics movement in today's America is reviewed.

The majority of this work attempts to illustrate eugenics as it was at the time without challenging it. Many quotes are included and woven into the text to directly show the rhetoric of the movement so as not to misrepresent it. The assessment of the level of radicalism and bias is, therefore, left to the reader. Many secondary sources are used to gain factual information about the movement. The most valuable for the completion of this thesis was Daniel Kevles' work¹ that offers a comprehensive study of American eugenics, taking into account the complexity of the issue and setting it into a broader context. Concerning the terminology, words such as defective, undesirable, or unfit as well as good, desirable, or proper are used throughout the text without clear explanations of their meaning. The absence of such definitions is, in fact, a typical feature of both British and American eugenics. The usage here, thus, corresponds with this tendency which shows the subjective aspect of eugenics in general.

¹ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 20.

2 BEGINNINGS OF EUGENIC THOUGHT

2.1 Darwin, Social Darwinism, and Nature v. Nurture

It was in the second half of the 19th century when Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882), an English naturalist, published his revolutionary work *On the Origin of Species* (full title: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*) that addressed the theory of evolution. First printed in 1859, Darwin's book introduced the idea of the common ancestry of all species as well as the mechanism of natural selection. As Degler summarizes one of the main tenets of Darwin's theory of natural selection:

... all organisms competed for survival. If the environment changed or if new organisms entered the habitat of established organisms, then those organisms that best adapted to the changed situation would gradually outbreed those less well adapted.²

Based on the statement above, it can be deduced that the nature of an organism is not the sole predictor of evolution. There is also the environment to be accounted for. Those two constituents were later popularly labeled as nature and nurture. The question is, which one is more powerful? And if one of them is the driving force, does it mean that the other one is insignificant? That was the central issue of the debate of different ideological streams of the time including social Darwinists and Lamarckians that will be later discussed. Each grouping was able to find parts of Darwin's work that would, if taken out of context, support their particular view. Darwinism was also frequently used to justify social, political, or economical causes, such as colonialism, laissez-faire economical attitude, or warfare.³

Darwin's complex theory was a frequent target of misinterpretation and oversimplification. Darwin himself clearly stated in the introduction to *On the Origin of Species* that even though he believed natural selection to have been the main means of modification, it was not to imply exclusive.⁴ In the conclusion of the sixth edition, aware of the misinterpretations his work suffered, Darwin highlighted his above-mentioned stance, optimistically adding: "Great is the power of steady misrepresentation; but the history of

² Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.

³ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 6-7.

⁴ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), 6.

science shows that fortunately this power does not long endure.”⁵ As time would show, however, his theory of evolution by natural selection continued to be misunderstood.

The early 19th century thinkers were more concerned with the environment and its impact on society. Nurture, thus, was the main focus of their attention. However, with the publication of Darwin’s theory, importance was placed on nature as the decisive factor.⁶ The late 19th century was marked by the efforts of many to apply Darwin’s theory of natural selection to society, which brought about the emergence of social Darwinism. Social Darwinists concluded that society should be led by Darwin’s principles of evolution and that only *the survival of the fittest*⁷ was in accordance with nature. On the other hand, the allegedly biologically unfit should be eliminated by natural selection, especially since they believed it was a hereditary condition. The category of the unfit was not exactly specified but included a wide range of people of lower classes and people considered to be a burden to society, such as paupers, alcoholics, disabled, or mentally ill.⁸

The most prominent representative and advocate of social Darwinism was an English philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). He strongly believed in the survival of the fittest only and disapproved of welfare systems and social reforms that he claimed were interfering with nature and its sophisticated system of natural selection. In his work *The Study of Sociology*, he considers any protection of the unfit that would be otherwise eliminated by natural selection as a great danger to society “For if the unworthy are helped to increase, . . . , the effect is to produce, generation after generation, a greater unworthiness.”⁹ The economic costs to support the unfit or “the good-for-nothing” as he also calls them are great. They are taking away resources from the fittest while producing no value for the society in reward. As Spencer suggests: “To aid the bad in multiplying, is, in effect, the same as maliciously providing for our descendants a multitude of enemies.”¹⁰ Natural selection as proposed by Darwin is for him a “natural process of elimination by which society continually purifies itself.”¹¹ With his

⁵ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, 6th ed. (London: John Murray, 1872), 421.

⁶ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 5.

⁷ A phrase coined by Herbert Spencer, often mistakenly attributed to Charles Darwin. (Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 11.)

⁸ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 20.

⁹ Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (London: Henry S. King, 1873), 344.

¹⁰ Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, 345.

¹¹ Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, 346.

argumentation, Spencer supported the laissez-faire state policy of minimal interference, which would ensure the unhindered natural course of evolution.

Spencer's beliefs were also partly based on the idea of acquired characteristics connected to a pre-Darwinian theory of evolution originated by a French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Lamarck explained the evolutionary change as a result of an organism striving to flourish in its habitat and, therefore, changing or acquiring new characteristics. Those acquired characteristics could be then passed onto its offspring. An example suggested by Lamarck would be the giraffe's neck. He proposed that as giraffes were trying to reach for food located higher up the trees, their necks gradually elongated as each generation passed the characteristic onto the next one.¹² Although Darwin did not agree with Lamarck on the possibility of self-induced change and, therefore, deliberately caused evolution, he believed that in some cases, inheritance of the behavior of parents could be possible.¹³ This view was also close to some of the social Darwinists. Even though nature was the force eliminating the unfit, acquired characteristics as described by Lamarck were the means to improve the stock of the fittest.¹⁴

The other group of social scientists that drew their ideas from Lamarck's theory of evolution and acquired characteristics were those who put emphasis on man's power to shape its environment and, therefore, significantly determine the fate of humankind. One of such Lamarckians was an American sociologist Lester Frank Ward. In his counterargument against laissez-faire endorsed by Spencer, he acknowledges Darwin's theory. He argues, however, that when applied to humankind, it is not as relevant anymore due to the special abilities of the human mind.¹⁵ He claims that "thinking, reasoning, inventing faculty of human brain"¹⁶ is what makes man unique in regard to evolution by natural selection. Man is above nature or as he declares: "Nature has thus been made the servant of man."¹⁷ Ward believed that by ruling over nature and adjusting the environment, which could either pose a limitation or an opportunity, man could shape his kind. Joined with the notion of acquired characteristics, all

¹² Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 20.

¹³ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 20.

¹⁴ Maurizio Meloni, *Political Biology: Science and Social Values in Human Heredity from Eugenics to Epigenetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 91-92.

¹⁵ Lester F. Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor," *Mind* os-IX, no. 36 (1884): pp. 563-573, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/os-IX.36.563>.

¹⁶ Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor."

¹⁷ Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor."

the benefits and good characteristics could be retained and further improved through generations. With such presupposition, humankind could direct itself towards progress.¹⁸ As he continues his argument against the social application of natural selection and laissez-fair, he expresses his standpoint as follows:

If nature's process is rightly named natural selection, man's process is artificial selection. The survival of the fittest is simply the survival of the strong, which implies, and might as well be called, the destruction of the weak. And if nature progresses through the destruction of the weak, man progresses through the protection of the weak. This is the essential distinction.¹⁹

His view is, therefore, based on social solidarity and humanity. As an opponent to individual laissez-fair principles and society based on competition, he advocates for charity and state protection for the weak members of the society.

Nature versus nurture is an omnipresent topic throughout the history of sociobiology. The different voices and perspectives of the debate from Darwin to the 20th century are thoroughly explored in A. Gillette's *Eugenics and the Nature–Nurture Debate in the Twentieth Century*.²⁰ Gillette covers the important stages and figures of the debate while focusing mainly on the American scene. The book is recommended for further information especially on the nurture side of the debate as the following chapters of the thesis will be focused mainly on the nature force proponents of the eugenics movement.

2.2 Francis Galton

Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is also at the foundation of ideas of eugenics as are the positivist efforts to apply scientific theories to social order. Social Darwinism paved the way for eugenics to be an acceptable and even popular direction of thought, while Lamarckism was slowly losing its appeal. Lamarck's theory of acquired characteristics was scientifically proved to be false by August Weismann in 1889. However, as Degler states, in many countries, including the US, the influence of Weismann's discovery was not felt until the early 20th century when Gregor Mendel's principles of genetics were rediscovered.²¹ In its own time, Mendel's work went unnoticed and was rediscovered only in the 1900s. His findings and

¹⁸ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 21-22.

¹⁹ Ward, "Mind as a Social Factor."

²⁰ Aaron Gillette, *Eugenics and the Nature-Nurture Debate in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²¹ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 22.

conclusions were then reconstructed and applied to the early genetics' issues.²² The new era of biology that connected genetics with natural selection was favorable to the introduction of eugenics into public thought. As Lamarck's theory was not valid anymore and acquired good qualities could not be inherited, nurture no longer seemed to matter. Change of the environment was deemed futile since it was not able to bring about long-lasting improvements. As the result, many social scientists concluded that natural selection was indeed the destiny of humankind and that the only way to progress was the active encouragement of survival and procreation of the fittest exclusively.

Although the basic idea of eugenics goes as back in time as to Plato, until the 19th century, no thinker was able to connect such an idea with science.²³ Francis Galton (1822-1911), an Englishman who was, in fact, Darwin's half-cousin, was the first one to scientifically propose eugenics and as such is considered to be its ideological father. Active in social, political, and scientific fields, he was a regular *Nature* contributor and recipient of several awards for his scientific input.²⁴ Galton first coined the term *eugenics*, as the word for "the science of improving stock"²⁵, in his book called *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* in 1883.²⁶ Coming back to the two terms *nature and nurture*, it was also Galton who first used them to refer to the innate characteristics of a man and the outer influences of an environment in 1874. As a Darwinist, Galton believed that nature was the driving force over which nurture had no power.²⁷ In his scheme, it was the work of eugenicists to intervene and accelerate the process of evolution progressing towards a more perfect human race. In his own words: "What nature does blindly, slowly, and ruthlessly, man may do providently, quickly, and kindly. As it lies within his power, so it becomes his duty to work in that direction."²⁸

Galton was also a strong adherent to hard heredity, a view that strictly divided biological from social maintaining that characteristics of an organism are passed down from parents to their offspring unaltered regardless of the effects of the environment.²⁹ This was, of course, a view directly opposing Lamarck's acquired characteristics. However, Galton's thoughts were

²² Meloni, *Political Biology*, 35-36.

²³ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 67-68.

²⁴ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 41.

²⁵ Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 25.

²⁶ Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 24-25.

²⁷ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 43.

²⁸ Francis Galton, "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims," *American Journal of Sociology* 10, no. 1 (1904): pp. 1-25, <https://doi.org/10.1086/211280>, 5.

²⁹ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 45-48.

framed within the hard heredity context much sooner than those of Lamarck were objectively disproved. In 1869, he published his well-known book *Hereditary Genius*³⁰, in which he used statistical methods to analyze genealogies of successful Englishmen concluding that exceptional men are often related and, thus, their exceptionality must be inborn and inherited.³¹ He presented his findings in support of his view that “characteristics cling to families.”³² An important part of eugenics was, therefore, his belief that both physical and mental characteristics were subject to heredity. Under those of mental character, intellectual, moral, and personality characteristics were grouped.³³

Eugenics might seem very close to social Darwinism and in part it certainly is. However, Social Darwinists proposed the unhindered course of evolution by natural selection of the fittest members of society. As mentioned, they advocated for the laissez-faire principles and refused any interference with the natural process that was considered perfect in itself. On the other hand, eugenics not only supported but demanded human interference in the course of evolution. Social engineering was to be practiced by selective and scientifically based breeding. Galton called for state interventions and social policies that would help speed up the improvement of humankind. Human heredity, thus, was politicized and such tendency was strongly visible until 1945.³⁴ With two-directional interventions, eugenics aimed to improve the human stock. Galton specified its goals as follows:

Its [eugenics'] first object is to check the birth-rate of the Unfit, instead of allowing them to come into being, ... The second object is the improvement of the race by furthering the productivity of the Fit by early marriages and healthful rearing of their children.³⁵

In this quote, Galton describes the two methods used to practically apply eugenic ideas in society. The first one is to prevent those deemed as unfit from propagating their kind. Measures taken to check the birth rate of the unfit were later called negative eugenics. The second method, conversely labeled as positive eugenics, was aimed at the fit ones and represented the encouragement of their procreation, which would supply the human race with their superior genes.

³⁰ Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry Into Its Laws and Consequences*: (London: Macmillan, 1869).

³¹ Philippa Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 25.

³² Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 5.

³³ Diane B. Paul, “Darwin, Social Darwinism and Eugenics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Darwin*, ed. Johnatan Hodge and Gregory Radick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 214-239, 216.

³⁴ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 66-67, 91-92.

³⁵ Francis Galton, *Memories of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1908), 323.

Even though Galton's idea of eugenics started to form in his writings as soon as in the 1860s, as seen above, his ideas were overlooked at first. Most intellectuals as well as the general society were not ready for his extravagant theory of eugenics at that time. However, he did not have to wait too long. The emphasis on science in the 19th century quickly penetrated all kinds of fields including sociology. Darwin prepared the public for the departure away from a religious framework and when early genetics based on Mendel's and Weismann's findings emerged, eugenics seemed to be a logical theory.³⁶ Moreover, in Galton's native country, the Victorian social optimism was no longer popular with social change not seeming plausible. The public was worried about a demographic gap concerning the difference in birthrate between upper and lower classes fearing the degeneration of the nation. There were also economic uncertainties caused by urbanization and industrialism.³⁷ In other words, society was more than ready to accept and even call for eugenics.

2.3 Galton's Foundations of Eugenics

The term Galton used for his ideology of the human race improvement comes from Greek. In his comprehensive work on the topic, Kevles translates eugenics as "good in birth" or "noble in heredity."³⁸ Galton strongly believed that the qualities of individuals are guided by heredity and that selective breeding could improve the course of evolution. Humankind could, thus, be perfected if the procreation of the fittest was encouraged. The ideas formulated in his publications were based on a scientific approach to society. Galton attempted to apply quantitative methods in biology and sociology. In his own words, "It [eugenics] is not contented with such vague word as 'much' or 'little,' but endeavours to determine 'how much' or 'how little' in precise and trustworthy figures."³⁹ The support of allegedly hard data gave his ideas credibility. However, as many scholars point out today, his research often included claims that were erroneous or unsupported.⁴⁰

Another aspect lending validity to Galton's eugenic theory in the eyes of many was its grounding in an already established field of plant and animal breeding. In his works, Galton

³⁶ Degler, *In Search of Human Nature*, 42.

³⁷ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 68-70.

³⁸ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, ix.

³⁹ Francis Galton, "Probability, the Foundation of Eugenics," in *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), pp. 73-99, 81.

⁴⁰ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 17-18.

frames humankind within the natural world where people exist under the same condition as any other organism. The same rules apply to man, horse, or corn. And just as selective breeding is applied in animals and plants, it can also be used to obtain an improved breed of man.⁴¹ The reference to animalia and plantae is frequent in the eugenic rhetoric and Galton is the first one to develop this rhetorical line. Such references allow him to connect the new thought of eugenics with an already established field that had produced tangible results by his time. The accessibility of his thoughts even to nonprofessionals in the field of biology is, thus, much greater. Moreover, Galton often adopts the same terminology that is used with plants and animals, referring to men as *stock* out of which the *best specimens* should be *bred*. This again serves to underscore that natural selection and heredity works on the same principles when applied to humans. In other words, man is subject to the same natural laws and there is no special attribute to humanity in this regard. An incidental effect of such rhetoric is the inevitable partial dehumanization of mankind, which made Galton's ideas less controversial and their reception much easier at the time. The rhetorically appealing analogy between people and animals, in particular, continued to be used by other eugenicists and it became an emblematic feature of eugenic discourse.

Galton's publication *Hereditary Genius* provides an ideological basis for his development of eugenics. In the publication, he summarizes his extensive research into the heredity of intellect. Creating pedigrees of eminent Englishmen, he attempts to illustrate that extraordinary abilities, or *genius* in his terminology, are hereditary. Galton argues that high reputation can be a reliable measurement of high ability⁴² as superior men are bound to overcome any obstacles posed by their environment. Although nurture might influence the speed and level of development of one's abilities, it cannot change the innate capacity of a man.⁴³ The environment is not ultimately limiting for anyone possessing genius, while at the same time social advantages alone cannot help individuals rise.⁴⁴ *Hereditary Genius*, thus, presents the foundation as well as justification of eugenics. First, Galton illustrates his concept of heredity, claiming that intellectual abilities are inborn and transmitted from generation to generation. Second, he highlights nature as the factor predetermining one's qualities and value.

⁴¹ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 1.

⁴² Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 49.

⁴³ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 14.

⁴⁴ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 38-42.

Although the term eugenics had not yet been coined at the time of the publication of *Hereditary Genius*, Galton had already partially articulated some of its tenets and purposes. In his work, he compares men as well as races claiming their inequality.⁴⁵ He unapologetically states in one of the opening chapters to *Hereditary Genius*: “I have no patience with the hypothesis occasionally expressed, and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike.”⁴⁶ As mentioned above, Galton was a proponent of hard heredity. For him, the equality of men was ruled out on the basis of natural laws of heredity. His publication *Hereditary Genius* also includes a chapter called *The Comparative Worth of Different Races*⁴⁷ where he presents his findings on races and their members’ abilities. Galton bases his conclusions on the proportion of eminent men in different races and applies statistical methods in support of his claims. Using his analyses, Galton determines that the most gifted race known is the ancient Greek.⁴⁸ He discusses the reasons for the ultimate fall of the Greek civilization linking it to social failure to maintain racial perfection and purity. The immigration of weak individuals together with the emigration of the gifted ones crippled the nation. Moreover, Greek women were not reproducing enough to supply the race with talented progeny.⁴⁹

In his comparative study of different races, Galton also highlights the superiority of Anglo-Saxon heritage. Out of all the contemporary races compared, the Anglo-Saxon race ranks the highest.⁵⁰ Based on the fate of the ancient Greeks, Galton is logically concerned about the future of his own kind. The issue has to be addressed if the Anglo-Saxon civilization with its prodigies is to be preserved. Galton hints at the possibility of degeneration of the Anglo-Saxon race multiple times.⁵¹ According to his calculations, the least desirable individuals were reproducing too fast, while the most capable ones were failing to multiply their counts.⁵² To keep the Anglo-Saxon population, as well as the other civilized nations, intact, the situation needed to be reversed. For Galton, the practice of what he later named eugenics promised a solution to the problem of future racial decline.

⁴⁵ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 336-362.

⁴⁶ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 14.

⁴⁷ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 336-350.

⁴⁸ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 340.

⁴⁹ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 342-343.

⁵⁰ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 336-362.

⁵¹ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 344-346, 352-357, 360-362.

⁵² Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 352-356.

Although Galton uses the term “race” throughout his works, its definition is not very clear. The exception is the section discussing phenotype-based racial groups such as “the Australian type” or “the Negro type.” In other parts of his texts, his use of race mostly seems to refer to humankind in general. However, when Galton discusses the human race, it can be expected that he understands it in the context of his own cultural environment and experience. He places high significance on the Anglo-Saxon heritage claiming the following in one of his essays. “To no nation is a high human breed more necessary than to our own, for we plant our stock all over the world and lay the foundation of the dispositions and capacities of future millions of the human race.”⁵³ Clearly, he perceives his own nation as the decisive force in the future of humankind. In his case, he also sees the world through the lenses of British imperial culture.

Coming back to eugenics being both the answer to racial degeneracy and a tool to human perfection, Galton encourages society to employ its practices. In definition, its ideas are straightforward. The aims are to multiply the talented ones and to reduce the number of less desirable individuals. Therefore, steps that can facilitate such outcomes need to be taken. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, two approaches to the problem can be adopted. The first one is to come up with measures that would support the reproduction of favored individuals. This concept is called positive eugenics. The second approach focuses on the reduction of the unfit and prevention of their propagation. Such measures are grouped under the term negative eugenics. Of course, both directions can be applied in combination. Within positive eugenics, Kevles mentions especially financial incentives provided to those who were considered capable of contributing to racial improvement. Such incentives were supposed to prompt young people to start families early and encourage their reproduction. It was also suggested to offer financial compensations to modern emancipated women who had to give up their education and employment for race betterment. Moreover, wages of fit family men were proposed to be raised allowing their wives to stay at home with children.⁵⁴ On the other hand, negative eugenics aimed at the unfit mainly included marriage restrictions, segregation based on sex and isolation from the major society, sterilization, and immigration regulation. The most radical negative eugenic practice was euthanasia.⁵⁵

⁵³ Francis Galton, “The Possible Improvement of the Human Breed Under Existing Conditions of Law and Sentiment,” in *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), pp. 1-34, 34.

⁵⁴ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 91.

⁵⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 92.

As most researchers claim, early British eugenicists mainly endorsed positive eugenic means.⁵⁶ The analysis of Galton's works also supports the fact. His ideas are predominantly focused on ways that could facilitate growth of the population with desirable traits. He believes that "The possibility of improving the race of a nation depends on the power of increasing the productivity of the best stock. This is far more important than that of repressing the productivity of the worst."⁵⁷ The tendency to suggest positive eugenic practices is also connected to his view that the application of eugenic demographic planning needs to be feasible as well as in line with the sentiment and practice of the time.⁵⁸ Negative eugenics is, thus, too institutionally challenging and radical to be successfully applied. However, he does not condemn negative eugenic practices. He sometimes mentions and discusses them.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, it seems that he just does not consider negative eugenics to be effective and suitable for his time and place. In his essays, Galton is especially preoccupied with the low fertility rate of worthy individuals⁶⁰ and presents solutions that would help achieve the "augmentation of favoured stock."⁶¹ To summarize the main idea in his own words "Outside influences should hasten the age of marrying and make it customary for the best to marry the best."⁶² The concrete measures proposed by Galton very closely follow those of positive eugenics that are mentioned above, i.e. financial incentives to the fittest. Indeed, Kevles probably based his synopsis on the works of Galton and other British eugenicists.

Another important factor of eugenics in England seems to be its voluntariness. Aimed at desirable individuals, positive eugenics is supposed to encourage their procreation without coercive practices. However, even the limited number of negative eugenic measures that were proposed in England were to be partially voluntary. When the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act allowing for the institutionalization of those considered mentally deficient was introduced, there were also voices suggesting sterilization of such individuals. While it was without any doubt an idea taken from the negative eugenics realm, the proposed sterilization was to be voluntary.⁶³ In the end, voluntary sterilization was not passed. However, the

⁵⁶ Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99-100.

⁵⁷ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 24.

⁵⁸ Francis Galton, "Local Associations for Promoting Eugenics," in *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), pp. 100-109, 101.

⁵⁹ For example: Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 20.

⁶⁰ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 26.

⁶¹ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 24.

⁶² Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 28.

⁶³ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 221.

institutionalization under the Mental Deficiency Act was practiced.⁶⁴ The actual measures applied to British society pose a paradox to the theoretical side of the local eugenic discourse. Although the early eugenicists including the ideological father Francis Galton were mainly focused on positive eugenics, Meloni notes that proposals for positive eugenic measures remained predominantly theoretical.⁶⁵ On the contrary, the influence of eugenics was demonstrated in the later application of negative eugenics in the form of segregation visible in the case of the Mental Deficiency Act.

Galton's proposal of the employment of particular eugenical practices is once again based on mathematical computations. He first classifies individuals based on civic worth constituted by a combination of character, disposition, energy, intellect, and physical power.⁶⁶ He then focuses on their sexual unions and calculates civic worth of their descendants.⁶⁷ The data obtained provide a foundation to Galton's conclusion that positive eugenic efforts have to be concentrated on those of the highest civic worth.⁶⁸ Moreover, he argues against intermarriages between different classes of civic worth as it is "bad economy"⁶⁹ since such unions do not bring about desired numbers of talented children.⁷⁰ Galton's efforts to make use of mathematical and statistical methods in eugenics demonstrate the influence of the cult of science at its best. In one of his essays, Galton even mentions his attempts to estimate the actual financial worth of children based on their fitness.⁷¹ It is, however, important to state again that the quantitative approach employed by Galton was later challenged and oftentimes found unscientific.⁷²

Since Galton based his classification into civic worth groups on either desirable or undesirable hereditary traits, it is important to analyze which traits he considered to be hereditary. In other words, which characteristics could be fostered in the population and which could be eradicated by selective breeding. Three categories of traits are proposed, namely physique, ability, and character.⁷³ Galton elaborates on the subject in his article *Hereditary*

⁶⁴ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 221.

⁶⁵ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 70-71.

⁶⁶ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 3-11.

⁶⁷ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 12-17.

⁶⁸ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 18.

⁶⁹ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 18.

⁷⁰ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 18-20.

⁷¹ Galton, "Improvement of the Human Breed," in *Essays*, 11.

⁷² Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 17.

⁷³ Galton, "Promoting Eugenics," in *Essays*, 104.

Character and Talent.⁷⁴ He claims that it is not only physical features or intellect, as he already discussed in *Hereditary Genius*, that are passed down from parents to their offspring. *Hereditary Character and Talent* aims to extend heredity to other, especially mental and personality, traits. First, Galton proposes that individuals can be predisposed to disease or malformation as well as to premature death or longevity by heredity.⁷⁵ Then he moves on to claim the same about susceptibility to infectious diseases.⁷⁶ Finally, he enumerates the traits that would later become a significant target of eugenical practices. “Craving for drink, or for gambling, strong sexual passion, a proclivity to pauperism, to crimes of violence, and to crimes of fraud”⁷⁷ are all inherited according to Galton. The article also discusses “the innate character of different races”⁷⁸ where Galton insists that each race possesses a characteristic set of physical features, mental abilities, and personality traits that is passed down from generation to generation. Considered innate, this set of racial characteristics is nothing else than a product of heredity and social nor environmental factors are not deciding forces.

Although Galton discusses some of the traits that should be considered hereditary, he does not list them in any ultimate systematic manner. This seems to be a problem of his eugenic rhetoric in general. While he stresses the importance of rigorous research and the exactness of science, his texts are full of unclear expressions. Vaguely defined key terms such as race, civic worth, genius, or talent co-occur with mathematical methods and calculations. Similarly, he does not precisely formulate which traits are desirable or undesirable in individuals. He seems to expect his readers to know what the best stock is as if it was a matter of common sense. The following quote provides an example: “A considerable list of qualities can easily be compiled that nearly everyone except 'cranks' would take into account when picking out the best specimens of his class.”⁷⁹ However, it would be revealed later in the course of the eugenics movement that the definition of the best stock was not so straightforward as Galton had believed. As Meloni explains, the definition of the fittest differed based on the personal and political beliefs of eugenicists.⁸⁰ It is, thus, expected that Galton also projected his origins, social position, culture, and other aspects of his persona into his eugenic concepts.

⁷⁴ Francis Galton, “Hereditary Talent and Character,” *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1865, pp. 157-166, 318-327.

⁷⁵ Galton, “Hereditary Talent,” 320.

⁷⁶ Galton, “Hereditary Talent,” 320.

⁷⁷ Galton, “Hereditary Talent,” 320.

⁷⁸ Galton, “Hereditary Talent,” 320-327.

⁷⁹ Francis Galton, “Eugenics, Its Definition, Scope, and Aims,” in *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), pp. 35-43, 37.

⁸⁰ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 70-71.

As seen in Galton's works, eugenics as science was biased from its very beginnings. Prejudices and absolute conviction of the superiority of whites, namely Anglo-Saxons, are felt throughout his texts. Less worthy races are for Galton those that are less similar to his own. As he argues, "the average intellectual standard of the negro race is some two grades below our own."⁸¹ It also seems that the frequency of his contact with other races influenced his views, ranking "the Australian type" lower than "the African negro".⁸² The creation of worth classification identifying inferior races as well as inferior individuals within his own race helps Galton ideologically maintain the racial and class status quo. Since the classification is predetermined by natural selection and heredity laws, eugenic practices should reinforce and strengthen the hierarchy. With eugenics, the fertility rates can be adjusted not letting the less suitable out-reproduce the best stock. Only in this way can the current social arrangement be preserved for future generations.

As Cowan claims Galton's ideas were based on "socio-political rather than biological imperatives"⁸³ and his works featured racism and classism.⁸⁴ Most scholars focus on the class element of Galton's and British eugenics in general rather than on racial bias.⁸⁵ One of the causes is that the racist views presented in British eugenics are much weaker in comparison with its American counterpart. However, more importantly, as Kevles states, the society in England was to a high level still ethnically homogenous at the time. The country had not yet felt any significant wave of non-white immigration.⁸⁶ The gap between birth rates of upper and lower classes was seen as a greater threat. The industrialization of Britain caused new problems connected to the urban population. A growing pauper population and lumpenproletariat worried many.⁸⁷ It seemed that these lower classes were breeding too fast and might soon jeopardize the position of the British elite and middle class.⁸⁸ Moreover, the high culture of England in general could be in danger. Considering again *Hereditary Genius*, Galton claims that "civilization is the necessary fruit of high intelligence."⁸⁹ Since he links civilization to eminent

⁸¹ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 338.

⁸² Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 339.

⁸³ Richard Cowan, "Nature and Nurture: The Interplay of Biology and Politics in the Work of Francis Galton," *Studies in History of Biology* 1 (1977): pp. 133-208.

⁸⁴ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 42.

⁸⁵ For example: Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 76.

⁸⁶ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 76.

⁸⁷ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 78.

⁸⁸ Paul, "Darwin, Social Darwinism and Eugenics," 216.

⁸⁹ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 336.

men of reputation⁹⁰, it can be inferred that if such men, in other words, men of upper classes, were outbred by lower classes, it could mean the end of civilization. When Levine comments on class and its influence on eugenics, she summarizes this idea claiming that “privilege was an index of eugenic fitness.”⁹¹

A key element of Galton’s eugenic rhetoric is the emphasis on its larger-than-life objective. This is something that would be later echoed by other eugenicists as well. Galton sees eugenics as something noble, a “pursuit of ... perhaps grandest of all objects”⁹² He believes eugenics to be a kind of philanthropy,⁹³ “full of hopefulness, and appealing to many of the noblest feelings of our nature.”⁹⁴ Eugenics is, thus, a scientifically based act of kindness towards humanity. Galton also makes an appeal to social responsibility.⁹⁵ In this regard, it is interesting to juxtapose Galton’s and Darwin’s perceptions of eugenics. After Galton’s publications on heredity, it seemed that Darwin was convinced about the arguments made about individuals’ inborn character predetermined by natural laws of heredity. He also agreed with the notion that the less fit were breeding at a faster pace than the fit ones, one of the reasons being that society prevented the weak from dying by establishing charities and welfare systems.⁹⁶ However, Darwin did not wholeheartedly applaud the idea of eugenic practices. In his work *The Descent of Man*⁹⁷, he claims that it is sympathy that makes humanity unique⁹⁸ and that “love for all living creatures, [is] the most noble attribute of man.”⁹⁹ Although Darwin mentions that it would be good if marriages of the weak were less common, he does not suggest any forced restrictions.¹⁰⁰ He presents the situation more like one that has to be accepted. As Darwin believes “if we were intentionally to neglect the weak and helpless, it could only be for a contingent benefit, with a certain and great present evil.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁰ Galton, *Hereditary Genius*, 337.

⁹¹ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 81.

⁹² Galton, “Improvement of the Human Breed,” in *Essays*, 2.

⁹³ Francis Galton, “Eugenics as a Factor in Religion,” in *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), pp. 68-72, 70.

⁹⁴ Galton, “Eugenics in Religion,” in *Essays*, 70.

⁹⁵ Galton, “Eugenics,” in *Essays*, 42.

⁹⁶ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 32.

⁹⁷ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871).

⁹⁸ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selections in Relation to Sex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 101.

⁹⁹ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 105.

¹⁰⁰ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 169.

¹⁰¹ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 169.

For Galton, eugenic teaching and practices were of high importance. He believed that once people recognized eugenics' significance, it could gain a status of a scientifically based religion¹⁰². As he had seen science in general replace traditional religion, he wished the same would happen with eugenics.¹⁰³ Galton openly expresses the idea multiple times in his texts. As he states, eugenics "must be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion"¹⁰⁴ as it is bound to become "an orthodox religious tenet of the future."¹⁰⁵ The parallels to religion can be traced in Galton's ideas. The new secular religion of eugenics should, just as other religions, stand at the foundation of society. It should be practiced routinely and followed dogmatically. Although the results of eugenic practices do not generate the desired effect right away, they accumulate just as good deeds do and the reward is to be enjoyed later. There is, thus, the notion of hope and an optimistic outlook. Finally, in a society following eugenic principles, God's teaching would be replaced by the doctrine of science.

¹⁰² Galton, "Eugenics," in *Essays*, 43.

¹⁰³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ Galton, "Eugenics," in *Essays*, 42.

¹⁰⁵ Galton, "Eugenics," in *Essays*, 42.

3 AMERICAN EUGENICS

3.1 Socio-economic Background and Progressivism

Galton's concept of eugenics as a man-operated evolution soon gained prominence abroad. On the other side of the Atlantic, eugenic ideology quickly found its devotees who took it upon themselves to disseminate the creed and preach its importance. As will be demonstrated later, the popularity of eugenics in American social thought was extensive and its influence much more virile than in England where the thoughts originated. Moreover, the support of the American scientific community and the general public led to the application of eugenic principles in the form of a number of official policies. There are several reasons for the success of eugenics and its nearly universal acceptance in the US. A comprehensive overview of the American social, economic, and political background at the time of the emergence of eugenics is offered by Allen in his article *Eugenics and American social history, 1880-1950*.¹⁰⁶ The analysis of the situation of the period can help understand and rationalize why eugenic ideas achieved such popularity in the US. The most important factors include economic problems caused by industrialization and a subsequent reaction in the form of progressivism, deep-rooted racism, and a demographic change connected to growing immigration.

The decades after 1870 were marked by significant economic hardships and social unrest felt throughout the US. The successful industrialization and laissez-faire capitalism of the Gilded Age had their dark side. First of all, the urbanization of America and the establishment of a distinctive class of factory workers created new problems connected to social inequity, while it deepened the already existing ones. Large parts of cities became centers of poverty where living conditions were dreadful and labor was exploited.¹⁰⁷ This became a source of major social instability. In response to their exploitation, workers started forming radical labor unions and staging militant strikes. The growing power and extremist nature of the unions created new problems for the upper classes.¹⁰⁸ Allen also points out that the fears of the wealthy elites were heightened as the popularity of socialist political leaders in America

¹⁰⁶ Ted L. DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables: The Eugenics Movement During the Progressive Era," (Las Vegas: University of Nevada, 1978), 1.

¹⁰⁷ Garland E. Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History, 1880-1950," *Genome* 31, no. 2 (1989): pp. 885-889, <https://doi.org/10.1139/g89-156>, 886.

¹⁰⁸ Garland E. Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, 1910-1940: An Essay in Institutional History," *Osiris* 2 (1986): pp. 225-264, <https://doi.org/10.1086/368657>, 256.

kept increasing between 1900 and 1920. Moreover, the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 seemed to justify their profound concerns.¹⁰⁹ The customarily proposed solutions that were supposed to alleviate social problems such as private charities or religious organizations appeared to achieve little. However, the laissez-faire approach and the evolutionary concept of survival of the fittest did not work to the elites' satisfaction either. Similarly as in England, the American upper and upper-middle classes identified themselves as the fit ones, while lower classes were believed to be the less fit. There was also an analogous notion of a declining birthrate among the elites. Therefore, the wealthy felt that they were being outreproduced by unfit individuals. What is more, the unfit were organizing against them in unions.¹¹⁰

As Allen enumerates in his article, there were further economic issues that made Americans question the laissez-faire system and unregulated capitalism. Price fluctuations and inflation led to the bankruptcy of countless smaller businesses, which in turn created perfect conditions for the rise of monopolies. There was also a series of economic depressions throughout the period from the 1870s till the 1900s.¹¹¹ Given the economic instability and civil unrest that posed a threat to an established social order, American elites started to move away from laissez-faire towards the idea of managed capitalism during 1890-1920.¹¹² Not only the wealthy were in support of state regulations, though. Lower classes were also responding to the idea as it could finally make the world more predictable and their lives better.¹¹³ State regulations and interventions were also a significant part of the reforms endorsed by the Progressive Movement. Progressivism works as an umbrella term for social, economic, and political reform efforts between the 1890s and 1920s that were supposed to address the acute issues caused by the industrial revolution.¹¹⁴ State regulations were to be implemented in all areas possible to fix the acute problems American society faced. At the outset, progressives focused mainly on social inequities, labor exploitation, and unequal wealth distribution. They also sought to fight monopolies that had too much power.¹¹⁵ Progressive reforms were, thus, bringing hope to those lower classes as well as to the middle class. Therefore, the majority of American society was in favor of state interventions advocated by the Progressive Movement

¹⁰⁹ Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History," 888.

¹¹⁰ Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History," 886.

¹¹¹ Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 255-256.

¹¹² Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 256.

¹¹³ DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 1.

¹¹⁴ DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 1.

¹¹⁵ Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History," 886.

in hopes of solving social and economic problems of the time. In spite of the presence of a common goal, individual reasons differed depending mainly on the class membership.

Increasing immigration from non-Nordic countries was another feature of the period in which eugenics entered American social thought.¹¹⁶ There was rising animosity towards immigrants, which can be ascribed to deep-rooted racism within the traditional American society. Race was one of the main determinants of an individual's worth and white supremacy was prevalent. The traditional social stratum of an Anglo-Saxon origin considered itself superior to other races, mirroring British sentiments as seen in Galton's work. Consequently, immigrants of non-Anglo-Saxon, or more generally non-Nordic, ancestry were perceived as inferior. As DeCorte states, the old Americans started getting anxious as the numbers of immigrants with different cultural values and customs kept rising.¹¹⁷ Immigrants constituted a majority of the unskilled labor force¹¹⁸ and, therefore, also made up a great portion of the lower classes. In other words, their inferiority was based both on their race and their class and those elements were inseparably tied. Moreover, old settlers associated immigrants with a wide range of social ills such as crime, alcoholism, or prostitution. They also feared the radicalization of immigrants in labor unions and their alleged socialist inclinations.¹¹⁹ According to Allen, immigrants easily became the scapegoats of American society.¹²⁰ As urban workers living in city slums, immigrants embodied the problems and suffering of lower classes caused by industrialization. Consequently, immigration and its effects needed to be addressed in some way by progressive reformers. They could either help immigrants improve their situation or try to stop their influx.

Some progressive thinkers who were particularly conservative in their views used the reform movement to endorse racial purity.¹²¹ They argued that the social problems and poverty that the immigrants faced were caused by their racial inferiority. According to them, immigrants were not able to keep up with the old Anglo-Saxon stock and, thus, successfully assimilate to American life. Moreover, they generated social problems as a result of this inability.¹²² Woodrow Wilson described the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe as "men out

¹¹⁶ Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History," 886.

¹¹⁷ DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 1-2.

¹¹⁸ Allen, "Eugenics and American Social History," 886.

¹¹⁹ DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 1-2.

¹²⁰ Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 258.

¹²¹ DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 1.

¹²² Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 260.

of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence.”¹²³ The hostility towards new migrants that could be observed in progressive American society contributed to the advocacy for immigration restriction based on the country of origin.¹²⁴ As a result, the Immigration Restriction League was established in 1894 that disseminated anti-immigration thought and lobbied for the passage of immigration restriction acts.¹²⁵ The consequent immigration quotas were again a part of broader efforts to plan and regulate American society and economics.

When the majority of Americans concluded it was time to abandon the laissez-faire system and embrace the concept of state regulation by targeted interventions, the question was who was going to be in charge of the management. As previously mentioned, the gospel of science was strong and dominated British as well as American thinking of the time. Therefore, it also influenced the Progressive Movement and dictated that the planners of interventions should be trained professionals and scientists. As Allen introduces the scientific managers of progressive reforms, they were professionals, usually from the middle class, that were supposed to use their knowledge for long-range planning. Since the national improvement was in their hands, they created a new significant managerial class.¹²⁶ The scientific planning and professional class became well established by 1905.¹²⁷ Logically, eugenics developed by Galton was an ideal science based on which demography and social sphere could be planned. Heredity rules were to be the handbook and eugenicists were the guides. As Allen puts it, eugenics was a “‘progressive’ view of approaching problems rationally and seeking long-range solutions.”¹²⁸ It was seen as a science that was able to treat social problems at their roots and not merely mask the symptoms of degenerating society. Eugenics also highlighted the need for action towards a common goal of national betterment.¹²⁹ Additionally, the Progressive Movement was attracted to the idea of high efficiency and directly targeted eugenic practices allowed just that.¹³⁰ The widespread popularity of eugenics and the application of eugenic measures were made possible by the American progressive thought of the time. Many

¹²³ Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People. Reunion and Nationalization* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), 212.

¹²⁴ Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office,” 260.

¹²⁵ DeCorte, “Menace of Undesirables,” 1.

¹²⁶ Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office,” 256-258.

¹²⁷ Allen, “Eugenics and American Social History,” 888.

¹²⁸ Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office,” 264.

¹²⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), chap. 8.

¹³⁰ Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office,” 256.

progressive thinkers supported eugenics and believed that the reforms should target both nature and nurture. Vice versa, many eugenicists, especially the later ones, were in favor of progressive reforms.¹³¹ Richard T. Ely, one of the leaders of the American Progressive Movement, was an advocate of eugenics. His article *Social Progress*¹³² is frequently cited in relation to his views on eugenics. In the text, he declares: “The great word is no longer natural selection, but social selection.”¹³³ As Miller explains, Ely believed that natural selection and evolution created man as a specimen, however, the social selection was to perfect man using the maximum of his potential. It was time for society to strive for the achievement of the ideal man and eugenics was supposed to help with the quest.¹³⁴

Many historians characterize the Progressive Era as a period of search for order in the fragmented and class polarized society that resulted from industrialization. However, they also stress that the Progressive Movement was not ideologically unified. Some ideas endorsed by Progressivists were, in fact, in direct contradiction. Moreover, scholars argue that many of the reforms were far from progressive.¹³⁵ However, there were underlying concepts that tied the Movement together. Progressives strived to find solutions to issues caused by industrialization and laissez-faire capitalism and they believed that scientific planning was the answer. The Movement managed to join people using a common goal of a stable and improved society. Still, the individual ideas, visions, and agendas differed. Allen concludes that eugenics was a natural outcome of the change of general sentiments. Just as Darwin’s theory of natural selection coincided with the laissez-faire attitudes in economics and social Darwinism in the social sphere, regulationist nature of Progressivism was mirrored in planned capitalism and eugenics.¹³⁶ The principle of self-regulation was, thus, replaced by man-managed regulation in most areas related to American life. Eugenics was in line with many of the progressive reform ideas and consequently penetrated American Progressive Movement. The above-mentioned overview discussing Progressivism is limited. As the Movement was remarkably varied, the text features only the most important concepts that are related to eugenics. The agreement between eugenics and progressive thought can be summarized as follows. Eugenics promised

¹³¹ Allen, “Eugenics and American Social History,” 886.

¹³² Richard T. Ely, “Questions of the Day: Social Progress,” *The Cosmopolitan*, 1901, pp. 61-64, 61.

¹³³ Ely, “Social Progress,” 62.

¹³⁴ Tiffany Jones Miller, “Freedom, History, and Race in Progressive Thought,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 29, no. 2 (2012): pp. 220-254, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265052511000276>.

¹³⁵ Allen, “The Eugenics Record Office,” 255.

¹³⁶ Allen, “Eugenics and American Social History,” 888-889.

a social reform based on the regulation of population and its reproduction. It offered a long-lasting solution to those social problems which were believed to be connected to industrialization. Based on science, eugenics met the requirements to become a discipline to design progressive social reforms marked by high efficiency. As it was both classist and racist, eugenic ideas appealed to conservative Progressive thinkers who advocated racial purity. The class bias of eugenics was also advantageous for elites allowing them to maintain the established social order and curb the rising influence of lower classes. Finally, eugenics rejected individualism and stressed working towards a common end in the same way the Progressive Movement did.

3.2 American Eugenics Movement

Although the American eugenics branch rested on the tenets set down by Galton, it had its distinctive features. Eugenic rhetoric in England and the US varied in several aspects. While British eugenicists focused mainly on positive eugenic practices, their American colleagues were advocates of negative eugenics. Their efforts were aimed at reducing the undesirable individuals in society. As a result of them operating within the frame of negative eugenics, most of the proposed measures were of an involuntary nature. As mentioned in the analysis of Galton's ideas, British eugenic thought was above all class-biased. Although racist rhetoric was present, the racial struggle was not an acute issue in England at the time. However, the situation in the US was much different due to high immigration rates. In America, lower classes as well as what eugenicists called *lower races* were the main targets of eugenics. Moreover, there was a major difference in the actual application of eugenics in England and the US. British eugenics was mostly limited to theoretical discourse and its ideas were rarely used in practice. On the other hand, American eugenic thought significantly influenced local legislation and introduced eugenic practices into society. In the US, eugenics gained widespread popularity. The chapter that links eugenics to progressive thought can give a hint as to why eugenic ideas held an attraction for many different reformers of the time. Ultimately, eugenics served and catered mainly to the needs of the white upper and upper-middle classes. It highlighted the superiority of the old Anglo-Saxon stock and the inferiority of other races and classes using allegedly scientific research. The following chapters will deal with the American eugenics movement. Ideas of prominent American eugenicists will be discussed as well as their materialization in social and political spheres. The analyses of primary sources will serve to underscore the

arguments. The publication *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*¹³⁷ by Charles Davenport will be used to demonstrate the approach of a professional eugenic community. To examine how the cultural counterpart absorbed eugenic doctrine, Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race*¹³⁸ will be analyzed. To a limited degree, the text will also work with additional primary sources.

After Galton published his works on eugenics in England, his ideas quickly started spreading to other countries. By the 1900s, eugenic thought was established within the American scientific community. Its popularity had kept growing since then hitting its peak in the 1920s and the 1930s.¹³⁹ The start of the American eugenics movement coincided with the early genetic accomplishments of American biologists. In 1902, Walter Sutton, a Columbia University researcher, reported findings that confirmed those of Mendel. Other supporting data generated from similar research soon followed. American scientists, thus, had their own proof of heredity laws.¹⁴⁰ The popularity of animal breeding was high and the question of whether it could be possible to improve humankind in a similar way appeared more and more frequently. Early geneticists were confident that human breeding was not only possible but also desirable. They adopted eugenics, disseminated its doctrine, and lobbied for its application.¹⁴¹ Charles Benedict Davenport was one of the most prominent figures of the American eugenics movement. In his *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* published in 1911, he describes eugenics as “the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding”¹⁴² that could ultimately become “the salvation of the race through heredity.”¹⁴³ Based on his statements, he believes that there are compelling reasons why the race is in desperate need of salvation. Undesirable elements within American society are threatening the established social order and *polluting the gene pool* that was once so noble. Those undesirable elements include “about half a million feeble-minded, epileptic, blind and deaf, 80,000 prisoners and 100,000 paupers”¹⁴⁴ present in the country that, according to him, keep increasing.¹⁴⁵ In the text, Davenport evaluates the

¹³⁷ Charles Benedict Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911).

¹³⁸ Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race: Or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919).

¹³⁹ Karen Norrgard, “Human Testing, the Eugenics Movement, and IRBs,” Scitable (Nature Education, 2008), <https://www.nature.com/scitable/topicpage/human-testing-the-eugenics-movement-and-irbs-724/>.

¹⁴⁰ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Norrgard, “Human Testing, the Eugenics Movement, and IRBs.”

¹⁴² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 1.

¹⁴³ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 260.

¹⁴⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 261.

American population and the effectiveness of society that supports the existence of such defective individuals. Estimating the national costs of care for the above-mentioned groups of people, he points out the economic burden they pose.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, there are also the lowly immigrants that pose a growing and serious menace to the *old American stock*.¹⁴⁷

However, the existing need to care for the defectives was not the main concern. As eugenics was based on the natural laws of heredity, the possibility of transmission of the undesirable traits to next generations and, thus, the multiplication of faulty population was the real problem eugenicists wanted to tackle. In *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, as expected given its title, Davenport uses a significant space to explain which traits are hereditary and in what way. Similarly to Galton, Davenport claims that not only physical features such as eye or hair color are inherited. Mental traits including memory and abilities such as musicality or artistic composition are passed down from generation to generation as well. Among other hereditary elements, mentions temperament, handwriting, or bodily energy are also mentioned.¹⁴⁸ According to Davenport, various defects of the body and the mind frequently run in families. Brain disorders grouped under the term epilepsy and mental issues labeled commonly as insanity¹⁴⁹ need to be eugenically treated. At the time, the laws of heredity were also applied to the social ills pervading American society. Davenport's text is not an exception as he highlights the frequently hereditary nature of pauperism, narcotism, and criminality. Poverty is in his words "relative inefficiency" that "usually means mental inferiority."¹⁵⁰ Although it can be stimulated by outside influences such as a sudden accident, it will only manifest if there is innate inferiority that renders the individual unable to overcome unfavorable conditions.¹⁵¹ Similarly, he links alcoholism and criminal tendencies to bad heredity and innate predisposition.¹⁵² The acknowledgment of some level of influence that the environment can have is slightly more pronounced than in the case of Galton. While it seemed that Galton believes that the hereditary element will always demonstrate itself, Davenport argues that the final outcome is "the reaction of a specific sort of protoplasm to a specific stimulus."¹⁵³ In other words, an individual has an innate predisposition to develop a trait that sometimes needs

¹⁴⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 219.

¹⁴⁸ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 60-63.

¹⁴⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 72,77.

¹⁵⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 80.

¹⁵¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 80.

¹⁵² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 82-83.

¹⁵³ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 252.

to be triggered to actually manifest itself. However, Davenport still maintains that nature is more significant than nurture and the application of eugenic principles is required.¹⁵⁴ As a scientist, he is convinced that the existing knowledge of heredity and sound judgment need to guide American society. “[H]ow great is the folly, yes, the crime”¹⁵⁵ when the laws of heredity are not taken into account, he exclaims.

Davenport strongly preaches the application of eugenic practices to reduce those “special classes” that “seem to be the main hindrance to our social progress.”¹⁵⁶ He claims that defective individuals are not responsible for their inferiority and, as such, for the problematic demonstrations their genetic makeup can cause and bring to civilization.¹⁵⁷ However, the culture is to a certain degree determined by this genetic material. Therefore, the heavy responsibility falls on society that is bound by duty to act in the best interest of the fit population.¹⁵⁸ Davenport exclaims that first and foremost “the mating that brings together the antisocial traits” needs to be prevented.¹⁵⁹ However, if society fails and a defective element is brought into this world, it has to secure “the highest development of the good traits and the inhibition of the bad”¹⁶⁰ within such an individual. Here, Davenport once again recognizes the environmental impact on human development. Nonetheless, he still believes that it is very much limited by the innate nature of an individual.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the natural side of the problem is the major concern of eugenics. In his own words: “The eugenical standpoint is that of the agriculturalist who, while recognizing the value of culture, believes that permanent advance is to be made only by securing the best ‘blood’”¹⁶² Seeing eugenicists as human agriculturists is tied to the rhetorical course first taken by Galton. However, Davenport noticeably intensifies the set analogy with plants and animals. The improvement of the “human harvest”¹⁶³ is to be achieved in a similar way with the science of breeding used by agriculturalists.¹⁶⁴ In his text, Davenport states that human babies are “the world’s most valuable crop.”¹⁶⁵ It is, thus, logical

¹⁵⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 252-254.

¹⁵⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 67.

¹⁵⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 261.

¹⁵⁷ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 260.

¹⁵⁸ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 265-266.

¹⁵⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 266.

¹⁶⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 266.

¹⁶¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 255.

¹⁶² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 1.

¹⁶³ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 6.

¹⁶⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 2.

that at least the same but preferably much larger scientific attention should be paid to their quality. Even though the parallel to agriculture is applied mainly in the opening chapter of Davenport's work to set eugenic thought within a familiar field, it is a constant element of his rhetoric. By using it throughout the whole text, he eagerly attempts to answer the question of whether it is possible to breed the perfect type of man. Ultimately, Davenport is positive in his conclusions believing that it is possible to improve humankind with eugenics as a means "of saving it from imbecility, poverty, disease and immorality."¹⁶⁶ The fundamental question having been settled, it was the matter of finding the most effective eugenic methods that would be able to advance society towards perfection.

As claimed in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, the American eugenics movement concentrated its efforts primarily on negative eugenics. A particularly interesting systematization that shows the negative direction of American eugenic thought is offered by Markfield.¹⁶⁷ Her eugenic continuum shows the gradual development and introduction of eugenic ideas into American social consciousness, which can be applied more broadly to other countries as well. There were five main steps: differentiation, alienation, sterilization, and elimination. In the phase of differentiation, the concerned individuals needed to be convinced that they are in a significant way distinct from others.¹⁶⁸ In the case of American eugenicists, they tried to demonstrate differences in the physical and especially mental capacity that were inherently tied to family ancestry or often more generally to race. The second step Markfield mentions was alienation. Once the individuals were aware of the differences between them and others, they were asserted that the group they belonged to was the dominating "proper" one and the others did not fit. At that stage, the distinction had been made and a problem of what to do with those others arose. Therefore, eugenicists transformed their ideas into actual social policies and measures. In American eugenics, the first solution to the problem at hand was segregation. Segregation was a means of protection of the "proper" society. Naturally, it included segregation of individuals in institutions such as prisons, asylums, or specially created colonies. Markfield, however, augments the meaning of segregation extending it to immigration reduction, or marriage restrictions. For Americans, immigration restrictions put in place were, in fact, a form of self-segregation. Marriage restrictions, on the other hand, served as an

¹⁶⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 260.

¹⁶⁷ Miriam H. Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America," NAELA, 2019, <https://www.naela.org/NewsJournalOnline/OnlineJournalArticles/OnlineApril2019/Eugenics.aspx?subid=1063>.

¹⁶⁸ Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America."

officially set boundary for those already living on American soil. They segregated certain individuals by not allowing them to live side by side as they could create undesirable offspring.¹⁶⁹ Going one step further in the continuum, sterilization was introduced. Even though segregation was practiced to shield the population from defective individuals, it still placed a significant burden on American society, especially in the economic sense. The costs of segregation management were high and could be easily avoided by compulsory sterilization of institutionalized individuals. Moreover, it was seen as even more effective as it would ultimately lead to the complete eradication of undesirable elements from the American social order.¹⁷⁰ Sterilization was the final officially and widely applied step in American eugenics. However, theoretical discourse did not stop there. Some eugenicists' ambitions went as far as to the final phase, later in history labeled as the final solution, which was elimination. Although it was not as frequently and as openly expressed thought as the previous eugenic means, it would be false to say that the idea of extermination did not enter the American eugenics movement. Besides, as Markfield argues, the precedent of the authorized killing of criminals had already existed in American society.¹⁷¹

The continuum presented by Markfield shows the American inclination towards negative eugenic practices. As already mentioned, negative eugenics was aimed at preventing the appearance of undesirable elements in society. Therefore, the measures applied within the negative eugenic spectrum targeted those individuals deemed defective and were usually involuntary. In the US, the coercive nature of negative eugenic practices often led to their legal grounding as the state was seen as responsible for the interventions. Eugenicists of the time did not seem to find the coercion problematic. Davenport believes that "the commonwealth is greater than any individual in it"¹⁷² and that society has limitless rights over its members. In fact, it is a duty to enforce eugenic measures benefiting society and, in such case, "society may take life, may sterilize, may segregate..., may restrict liberty in a hundred ways."¹⁷³ Although he endows society with the right to take life in the name of its improvement, he is not in favor of abortion nor euthanasia. When he describes the general procedure in applied eugenics, he directly states that the management of the propagation of the undesirable "does not imply

¹⁶⁹ Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America."

¹⁷⁰ Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America."

¹⁷¹ Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America."

¹⁷² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 267.

¹⁷³ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 267.

destruction of the unfit either before or after birth.”¹⁷⁴ While Davenport definitely endorses negative eugenics, he is not a radical. He is focused on prevention rather than on elimination advocating for the avoidance of the “unfit matings.”¹⁷⁵ In his *Passing of the Great Race*, Madison Grant shows what a radical approach to negative eugenics of the time looked like. He argues that “human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race.”¹⁷⁶ Therefore, it is foolish to support the unfit who are, according to him, “of no value.”¹⁷⁷ Grant accuses altruism, philanthropy, and sentimentalism as well as Christianity and charity of hindering the natural process that would otherwise penalize the weak. Moreover, the same sentiments also limit human efforts to restore the natural order.¹⁷⁸ As Grant claims, “the sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life tend[s] to prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults.”¹⁷⁹ Similarly to Davenport, he feels that ignoring the laws of heredity and their eugenic conclusions is criminal. To be more specific, “it is a crime against the race.”¹⁸⁰ According to Grant, there is no justification for the old-fashioned charity anymore since the hereditary laws are clear. The modern charitable deeds are those that can ensure that the unfit along with their suffering will not be multiplied. It is imperative that their defective lineage be discontinued. Once this is secured, preferably by sterilization, the undesirable individuals can be provided care and sympathy.¹⁸¹

Although it can be said that negative eugenic focus is one of the features of the American eugenics movement, positive eugenics was also part of the discourse. However, it remained mainly theoretical as it was not easy to enforce. Both Grant and Davenport agree that a low birthrate among the fit is a part of the problem that needs to be addressed. Together with a rapid reproduction of the undesirable elements, the lowering numbers of more valuable individuals are leading to degeneracy.¹⁸² According to Grant, both phenomena result from prosperity and oppose nature. The prosperous fit, that are in his work synonymous with upper classes, tend to have fewer children as they realize the economic burden. On the other hand, the unfit, ignorant of the fact, do not cease to procreate and the prosperous society interferes with the natural

¹⁷⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 4.

¹⁷⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 49.

¹⁷⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 49.

¹⁷⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 48,50.

¹⁷⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 49.

¹⁸⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 49-50.

¹⁸¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 50-51.

¹⁸² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47. Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 212.

selection.¹⁸³ Grant warns that such development “becomes extremely injurious to the race if unchecked.”¹⁸⁴ Therefore, applied eugenics needs to revert the current trend. Positive eugenic measures that can contribute to the improvement of humankind are discussed by Davenport. He believes that apart from the prevention concerning the multiplication of the weak, the increase in the birthrate of the fittest is another major goal of eugenics. The way to achieve this is by supporting those marriages that can supply society with “the healthiest strongest children.”¹⁸⁵ Davenport wants to “improve the race by inducing young people to make a more reasonable selection of marriage mates; to fall in love intelligently.”¹⁸⁶ This intelligent selection is crucial, he argues, because the future of the nation is built upon the reproduction of the best human material.¹⁸⁷ The problem with Davenport’s argumentation is the unclear definition of what he calls *the best protoplasm*, a rhetorical defect similar to that of Galton. Even though Davenport lists a limited number of particularly valuable traits such as grasp of details, organizing ability, inventiveness, and artistic ability,¹⁸⁸ he does not clarify any other characteristics of the fittest. He does claim, however, that their fitness needs to be based on family history that should be thoroughly researched and recorded. Only when the most valuable individuals are known and located can their marital unions be supported in a responsible and effective manner.¹⁸⁹ Davenport also believes that a social position and affluence of an individual can be indicative of his or her fitness since “success means the presence of certain effective traits in the stock.”¹⁹⁰ This is analogous to Galton’s claim that a high reputation points to high intellect. In regard to positive eugenics, Davenport concludes that “marrying health, wealth, and wisdom is a rough eugenic ideal.”¹⁹¹ To achieve this ideal, he campaigns for the dissemination of eugenic teaching that would heighten the awareness of the principles of heredity and stimulate a sense of duty among valuable individuals. Moreover, as he highlights the need for the creation of pedigrees that would track all the important traits found in families, he urges couples to seek professional “advice as to the consequences of proposed marriage matings,”¹⁹² which can be considered a sort of premarital genetic counseling.

¹⁸³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47.

¹⁸⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47.

¹⁸⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 26.

¹⁸⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 248.

¹⁸⁸ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 267.

¹⁸⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 249.

¹⁹⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 8.

¹⁹¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 8.

¹⁹² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 271.

Positive eugenics is given even less attention in *The Passing of the Great Race*. Even though Grant lists positive eugenics as one of the two methods of race improvement, he does not believe in its effectiveness being sufficient. According to him, the elimination of the worst is currently “the most practical and hopeful method”¹⁹³ as to “breed from the best”¹⁹⁴ is significantly more difficult. However, he does not discard the thought of positive eugenics completely. Grant’s work is primarily focused on the comparison of different races and their value, which will be discussed in detail later. Therefore, his first prescription within positive eugenics is to multiply members of the worthy races. In his interpretation, it concerns individuals of Nordic ancestry. It is not sound, though, to just carelessly support the reproduction of all such individuals. Defective elements can be present within the superior Nordic races as well.¹⁹⁵ For Grant, the undesirable Nordics are, for the most part, of the lower classes. Based on his beliefs, he calls for “an increase in the desirable classes, which are of superior type physically, intellectually and morally.”¹⁹⁶ He highlights that “improvement in quality rather than quantity” is what a state should strive for because “[t]he proportion of men of physical and intellectual vigor”¹⁹⁷ determines its value. It is clear that Grant’s ideas regarding positive eugenics are built upon a deep-rooted racial and class bias. Although the same feature is visible in Davenport’s work, its level seems to be significantly lower. Moreover, while Davenport believes positive and negative eugenic measures should be applied simultaneously, Grant is rather skeptical about such a possibility and puts his hopes almost solely on negative eugenics. The American society, however, did adopt a small number of what could be called positive eugenic practices. It largely rested on raising awareness about the importance of eugenic fitness.

As Kevles mentions, public lectures were organized to make society more eugenic-minded. Pamphlets and study materials were distributed and young people received special sex education that was supposed to help them understand how to make proper eugenic choices related to their reproduction. During the 1920s and 1930s when American eugenics reached its highest popularity, the American Eugenics Society, as well as many local groups, were established intensifying national eugenic efforts. *A Eugenic Catechism*¹⁹⁸ was published by the

¹⁹³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 53.

¹⁹⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 51-52.

¹⁹⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47.

¹⁹⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47-48.

¹⁹⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 48.

¹⁹⁸ *A Eugenic Catechism* (New Haven, Conn.: American Eugenics Society, Inc., 1926).

American Eugenics Society to answer the most pressing questions of the American public.¹⁹⁹ Eugenic exhibits that aimed to encourage the multiplication of the strongest American types were frequent. They often featured baby health and family fitness competitions. “Better baby” contests were first organized as a response to high infant mortality and as such were supposed to promote healthy child development. However, they gradually evolved into purely eugenic baby competitions. Based on the concept of eugenic better-baby competitions, “fitter family” contests were organized in the 1920s. First held at the state fair in Kansas in 1920, the fitter-family contest evaluated family history from a eugenic standpoint. The competition judges examined the physical fitness as well as mental abilities of related individuals and subsequently graded the participating families.²⁰⁰ The winning families were awarded a fitter-family trophy and their members received a Grade A Individuals medal.²⁰¹ The fitter-family competitions became regular at agricultural state fairs where human fitness was judged in the same way and at the same place as the quality of livestock²⁰², which once again demonstrates the tendency to set eugenics within the familiar animal breeding frame. Although the above-mentioned applications are of positive eugenic nature, ultimately, they seem to only complement the main negative eugenic objectives. Therefore, it can be agreed with Kevles who states that the efforts to foster positive eugenics were at the same time intended to strengthen negative eugenic sentiments already present among Americans.²⁰³

3.3 Negative Eugenics – Targets and Application

When Grant declares that the most effective eugenic solution is “the elimination of the least desirable elements in the nation by depriving them of the power to contribute to future generations,”²⁰⁴ he epitomizes the tendencies of American eugenics. Before analyzing the applied negative eugenic measures, it is important to examine who were those least desirable elements that were targeted. The possibility to determine the undesirable is, however, partially limited as the definition is closely tied to the agenda of a eugenicist. As Kevles says, human perfection, and consequently imperfection, varied among the eugenic community as well as

¹⁹⁹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 59-60, 66.

²⁰⁰ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 514-515.

²⁰¹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 62.

²⁰² Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 514-515.

²⁰³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 89.

²⁰⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 53.

society in general.²⁰⁵ Nonetheless, there are certain definite groups of individuals that were at the time considered as undesirable. It was believed that those people posed a threat to American social stability. Moreover, as the laws of heredity could be applied not only to physical fitness but also to intelligence, personality traits, criminal behavior, or poverty, they were deemed responsible for rousing national deterioration. The undesirable group included in particular the disabled, the poor, the immoral, and the new immigrants. Black lists the ten categories of defective individuals as proposed by American eugenicists in 1911: the feeble-minded, the pauper class, alcoholics, criminals, epileptics, the insane, the constitutionally weak, those with a predisposition to certain diseases, the deformed, and those with impaired sense organs, i.e. the deaf, blind and mute.²⁰⁶ For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the eugenic targets discussed in the following parts of the text will be divided into two major groups, the feeble-minded and the immigrants. As individuals falling into these two groups were usually also considered defective in other aspects that were listed, such division does not pose many limitations. Those regarded as physically defective or as having a hereditary tendency to certain diseases were generally treated similarly to the feeble-minded.

As Levine explains, the wealthy and privileged were usually shielded from eugenic practices, while the lower classes were affected the most.²⁰⁷ Eugenic practices mostly appealed to white Anglo-Saxon descendants of the middle or the upper class. The audience were usually educated believers in science interested in public affairs of the time.²⁰⁸ The American eugenics movement was greatly supported by wealthy elites. In their philanthropic efforts, rich families such as the Rockefellers or the Carnegies funded eugenic institutions and research. According to Allen, apart from a charitable cause, they saw eugenics as a way to preserve their own values and maintain their social position.²⁰⁹ Social control in the form of eugenics also allowed them to suppress political radicalism in the form of militant labor unions.²¹⁰ Using financial funding from the economic elites, different institutions such as the Eugenics Record Office were operated.²¹¹ The Eugenics Record Office was established at Cold Spring Harbor in 1910 and became the most influential eugenic institution in the US. Under the management of Charles

²⁰⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 147.

²⁰⁶ Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (Washington, DC: Dialog Press, 2012), 58.

²⁰⁷ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 81.

²⁰⁸ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 64.

²⁰⁹ Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 257.

²¹⁰ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 45.

²¹¹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 54-55.

Davenport and his superintendent Harry Laughlin, both of whom will be discussed later, the institution disseminated eugenic knowledge and influenced national politics.²¹² Additional information on the Eugenic Record Office can be found in Allen's work.²¹³

The feeble-minded and the new non-Nordic immigrants were both considered responsible for the so-called *race suicide*, a term used to describe the phenomenon of Anglo-Saxon population decline in the US.²¹⁴ The fall in numbers and quality of the old American stock was seen as a great threat to American civilization. The phrase *race suicide* was first used by the influential sociologist Edward A. Ross in 1901 when he described his fears about the future of the American race.²¹⁵ According to his remarks, the growing numbers of foreign elements along with the stagnant fertility of the old stock could ultimately lead to a non-violent disappearance of the superior American nation.²¹⁶ The concept of race suicide was popularized by Theodore Roosevelt a few years later. Roosevelt frequently addressed the issue of racial decline and believed that "the inescapable duty of the good citizen of the right type is to leave his or her blood behind him in the world."²¹⁷ In his speech before the National Congress of Mothers, he blamed fit American women who remained childless and, therefore, were partially responsible for race suicide of the old white American stock.²¹⁸ As implied, race in the context of American eugenics applied to the white Anglo-Saxon race, or in general to the Nordic race as will be discussed in relation to Grant's *Passing of the Great Race*. Therefore, when American eugenicists discussed topics such as race suicide, racial degeneration, or improvement of the race, they had in mind the so-called old stock Americans.

3.3.1 The Feeble-minded

The eugenic division into the fit and the unfit was also based on the division into the standard population and minority groups. At the time, minorities were unwanted social phenomena and American society strived for homogenization of the population. Consequently, members of

²¹² Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office," 226, 245-247.

²¹³ Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office."

²¹⁴ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 86-87.

²¹⁵ Edward A. Ross, "The Causes of Race Superiority," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 18, no. 1 (1901): pp. 67-89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271620101800104>, 88.

²¹⁶ Ross, "The Causes of Race Superiority," 86-89.

²¹⁷ Samuel Totten, William S Parsons, Israel W Charny (eds.), *Century of Genocide: Eyewitness accounts and Critical Views* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 213.

²¹⁸ Adam Hochman, "Race Suicide," *The Eugenics Archives*, April 29, 2014, <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/535eedb87095aa0000000250>.

minorities were targeted by eugenicists because their fitness was believed to be impaired. The American eugenics movement ultimately grouped most minority groups under the feeble-minded label. Although feeble-mindedness was originally linked to decreased mental capacity, it became an inclusive term grouping all kinds of undesirable traits that were often considered dangerous to society.²¹⁹ The term was first used in England to describe individuals who were able to care for themselves and carry out everyday tasks in spite of their mental deficiency. The feeble-minded were, thus, able to support themselves and function outside of institutions.²²⁰ American eugenicists adopted the term as well. According to Hofstadter, the rapid urbanization of America led to increased visibility of mental disorders and deficiencies, which increased interest in the field of psychiatry after 1900. Moreover, this increased visibility made eugenically minded thinkers conclude that the mentally defective were increasing in numbers.²²¹ As a result, the feeble-minded became a major target of the American eugenics movement.

Owing to the fact that feeble-mindedness was rather vaguely defined, it was gradually expanded to other individuals who displayed anti-social behavior. When Grant discusses negative eugenic measures, he recommends their application “to an ever widening circle of social discards, beginning always with the criminal, the diseased and the insane and extending gradually to types which may be called weaklings rather than defectives.”²²² As a matter of fact, the types of individuals he mentions were frequently grouped under the feeble-minded label.²²³ The situation is similar when Davenport lists some of the antisocial traits that need to be eugenically eradicated “such as feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, delusions, melancholia, mental deterioration, craving for narcotic, lack of moral sense and self-control, tendency to wander, to steal, to assault and to commit wanton cruelties upon children and animals.”²²⁴ While Davenport addresses the problem of unclear definitions including feeble-mindedness²²⁵ claiming that the current classification is “lagging far behind scientific knowledge,”²²⁶ he still

²¹⁹ Meloni, *Political Biology*, 80.

²²⁰ Kristan A. Moore and Jennifer L. Lux, “Eugenics and Crime: Early American Positivism,” *Encyclopedia of Criminological Theory*, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412959193.n84>, 3.

²²¹ Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, chap. 8.

²²² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 51.

²²³ Norrgard, “Human Testing, the Eugenics Movement, and IRBs.”

²²⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 267.

²²⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 8-10.

²²⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 24.

reinforces it by using it. Therefore, his efforts to be scientifically exact and objective end up compromised.

As eugenics rested on the laws of heredity, feeble-mindedness was of course believed to run in families. That is why Davenport stresses the need to keep eugenic family records that would feature both good and bad characteristics. According to him, such records would help eugenicists locate the hereditary traits and allowed for their elimination if deemed defective.²²⁷ He regards the compilation of family pedigrees as a patriotic duty²²⁸ and at the same time discards objections related to the privacy of family histories. As Davenport argues, “the collective traits of any person ... may be passed on to thousands of the persons who will constitute the social fabric of a few generations hereafter.”²²⁹ Anybody is, thus, a potential creator of the future and a common end has to be prioritized over individualism. To demonstrate “the influence of the individual on the race,”²³⁰ Davenport uses eugenic family studies popular at the time that were supposed to show how feeble-mindedness and social ills “can be traced back to a single ancestor.”²³¹ The first of such family studies was Richard Dugdale’s *The Jukes* published already in 1877.²³² Dugdale toured county jails where he studied the ancestries of the inmates. He documented their family histories and based on his research concluded that some of the inmates were blood-related. After he created detailed pedigrees, Dugdale determined that more than 700 individuals whose lives were characterized by criminality, immorality, poverty, or disease had a shared ancestor that he named *Margaret, the mother of criminals*.²³³ It is a paradox that *The Jukes* was used by eugenicists including Davenport to demonstrate the hereditary nature of criminality and other negative social traits. As Kline explains, Dugdale’s work was, in fact, intended to show the environmental effects on human development.²³⁴ According to Kevles, the gross misinterpretation of *The Jukes* resulted from the all-penetrating hereditary ideas of the time.²³⁵ With eugenicists eager to prove their doctrine, several family studies allegedly exposing the transmission of antisocial traits in

²²⁷ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 267-268.

²²⁸ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 248.

²²⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 269.

²³⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 225.

²³¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 233.

²³² R. L. Dugdale, *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1877).

²³³ Black, *War against the Weak*, 24.

²³⁴ Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), 25.

²³⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 71.

families were published.²³⁶ Probably the most influential was *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness* by Henry Goddard.²³⁷ Goddard worked at the training school for feeble-minded when he decided to trace the family history of a local student. With his work, he attempted to prove the hereditary basis of feeble-mindedness. He followed two lines of descendants of Deborah's great-great-great-grandfather who was a Revolutionary War hero. The first family line originated from his sexual encounter with a feeble-minded woman, while the second one started later with his marriage to a respected Quaker woman. Goddard claimed that the illegitimate union with the feeble-minded girl ultimately produced generations of feeble-minded, corrupt, and socially undesirable individuals many of which became criminals, prostitutes, or alcoholics. On the other hand, the marriage to the proper Quaker woman bore remarkable American citizens.²³⁸

According to Kline, Henry Goddard was a significant figure of American eugenics that gave the movement additional scientific credibility by employing standardized intelligence testing. As already mentioned, mental abilities were considered hereditary and a link was established between a wide range of feeble-minded behavior and intelligence. When Goddard worked at the training school for the feeble-minded, he wished to establish a standard procedure that would measure the level of mental deficiency.²³⁹ Around the same time, French psychologist Alfred Binet and his colleague Theodore Simon came up with a systematic method of measuring intelligence of school children through a series of different tasks. The final result then showed their mental age. Although their aim was not eugenic as they created the test mainly to determine which children needed a change in environment to prosper, Goddard was excited by the Binet-Simon test and decided to use it as a eugenic diagnostic tool.²⁴⁰ He later claimed the testing proved that 75% of criminals and 50% of prostitutes, the poor, and alcoholics in America were feeble-minded.²⁴¹ According to Kevles, the results of intelligence testing led Goddard to conclude that there were many different levels of feeble-mindedness present within the American population.²⁴² Goddard was especially preoccupied with those

²³⁶ Amy Samson, "Henry Herbert Goddard Publishes *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*," *The Eugenics Archives*, March 15, 2014, <https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/53246c10132156674b00025e>.

²³⁷ Henry Herbert Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

²³⁸ Samson, "Henry Herbert Goddard Publishes *The Kallikak Family*."

²³⁹ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 21.

²⁴⁰ Samson, "Henry Herbert Goddard Publishes *The Kallikak Family*."

²⁴¹ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 39.

²⁴² Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 78.

individuals whose mental age was estimated between eight and twelve because they were not easily spotted in everyday life. Since they managed to live their lives without any significant assistance, they were often considered normal. For that reason, he believed them to be a hidden threat to American society. Goddard called this group of the feeble-minded *morons*. By defining the moron class, he believed that it would be easier to identify and eugenically target them reducing the danger they posed. Morons along with other types of the feeble-minded were according to Goddard mentally underdeveloped and childlike.²⁴³ While the testing, which itself was flawed, was applied to some, others were marked morons on a basis of a subjective evaluation only. Therefore the variety of people that could be given the feeble-minded label was extended once again.²⁴⁴

The reoccurring claim that social empathy and pity interfered with merciless natural selection was part of American eugenic rhetoric. Eugenicists blamed society that protected the feeble-minded and, therefore, enabled their unhindered multiplication.²⁴⁵ As Kevles describes, the sexuality of feeble-minded individuals was an important eugenic topic. The feeble-minded women in particular were presumed to be promiscuous with a tendency toward debauchery and lasciviousness.²⁴⁶ What Davenport calls the *menace of the feeble-minded* was believed to be great as eugenicists also linked feeble-mindedness both to immorality and criminality. According to the American eugenicist and psychologist Lewis Terman, “Not all criminals are feeble-minded, but all feeble-minded are potential criminals.”²⁴⁷ Kevles claims that there was undisputable circularity in American eugenics. Immoral acts were considered to be the manifestation of feeble-mindedness, while, at the same time, feeble-mindedness was believed to predispose an individual to immorality.²⁴⁸ Moreover, American eugenicists also attributed poverty to some degree of mental inferiority.²⁴⁹ Thus, the majority of social ills and inequalities were seen as having biological rather than social roots. Davenport highlights that the undesirable traits are perceived as negative only in relation to a highly civilized society. The “unfortunate traits for a twentieth-century citizen” were once “a first-rate mental equipment for our remote ape-like ancestors” and some of such traits are still visible in infants whose

²⁴³ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 22,24.

²⁴⁴ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 24-25.

²⁴⁵ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 15-16.

²⁴⁶ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 107.

²⁴⁷ Lewis Terman, *The Measurement of Intelligence* (Houghton: Mifflin and Company, 1916).

²⁴⁸ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 107.

²⁴⁹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 114.

development mirrors human evolutionary stages.²⁵⁰ Similarly, behaviors considered criminal are normal for apes and common in infancy.²⁵¹ Davenport, just as Goddard, thus, alleges that the extensive group of the feeble-minded is not properly developed and its members are stuck in an earlier evolutionary stage. He believes that feeble-mindedness and other antisocial traits are remnants of our wild ancestors just as hairiness or the third set of teeth. By likening the feeble-minded to apes and infants, Davenport degrades them in the eyes of society and prepares the ground for the social acceptance of negative eugenic practices. As he proclaims: “If we are to build up in America a society worthy of the species *man* we must take such steps as will prevent the increase or even the perpetuation of animalistic strains.”²⁵²

The eugenic steps that were supposed to prevent the reoccurrence of the animalistic strains were all tied to the management of reproduction. By making parenthood a special privilege, a fitter society was to be guaranteed²⁵³ and “the perpetuation of worthless types”²⁵⁴ to be halted. The three basic ways of demographic management that American eugenicists endorsed were marriage restrictions, segregation, and sterilization of undesirable individuals. Euthanasia nor abortion, on the other hand, were not frequently supported. One of the first attempts to deal with the alleged proliferation of defective traits was marriage regulation that is discussed by Bashford. In 1895, the first state to pass a eugenic law banning marriages among the undesirable was Connecticut. By the mid-1930s, more than forty American states illegalized unions of such individuals.²⁵⁵ Many states also introduced laws requiring couples to be tested for sexually transmittable diseases before they could get married.²⁵⁶ According to Kevles, a forced delay between an official marriage application and the wedding was frequently required to prevent reckless marital contracts.²⁵⁷ Although statutes restricting unions among the various types of feeble-minded persons were passed, they did not achieve the desired results as procreation of the unfit could not be avoided simply by denying them a marriage license. They could still reproduce out of wedlock. According to Kevles, since the extensive group of the feeble-minded was associated with immorality, banning their marital unions would not have

²⁵⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 262.

²⁵¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 262.

²⁵² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 263.

²⁵³ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 2.

²⁵⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 49-50.

²⁵⁵ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 120.

²⁵⁶ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 47.

²⁵⁷ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 100.

prevented them from sexual activity.²⁵⁸ Therefore, segregation of the unfit was another popularly proposed measure that promised greater efficiency and easier enforcement. First, the individuals considered feeble-minded were isolated from the general society by institutionalization, which was a common practice long before eugenics. This, however, only prevented the intermixing of the unfit with the proper types. Davenport warned that the institutions where defective individuals were housed side by side “constitute[d] one of the country’s worst dangers.”²⁵⁹ According to American eugenicists, segregation of sexes during the reproductive period was needed within institutions.²⁶⁰

By the institutionalization and segregation of the sexes, the feeble-minded were both supervised and prevented from breeding. According to Levine, the 1910s and 1920s saw a sharp increase in institutional confinement as during those years commitment laws ordering permanent institutionalization of certain individuals were introduced.²⁶¹ Under the influence of eugenic thought, institutionalization in the form of colonies was established at the time. Colonies were essentially small villages for long-term confinement of the unfit. They were self-supporting centers cut off from the regular world.²⁶² One of such places was the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded that housed nearly 900 undesirable individuals by 1926.²⁶³ Even though the colonies were for a great part economically self-sufficient, the operation of other institutions for the feeble-minded such as asylums or poor houses was expensive. The American eugenics movement, thus, turned its hopes to sterilization. Stripping the undesirable individuals of their reproductive power was, according to Lombardo, considered the most efficient and economical way of dealing with the carriers of defects.²⁶⁴ As the majority of the institutionalized feeble-minded could be released back into the general society after sterilization, the burden falling on the taxpayer would be reduced. Although Davenport believed in the high efficiency of sterilization, he was careful about its endorsement. He felt that science had not yet answered all the questions needed to take such irreversible steps. His main concern was the right selection of individuals for sterilization. Therefore, Davenport

²⁵⁸ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 92-93.

²⁵⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 70.

²⁶⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 259.

²⁶¹ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 37-38.

²⁶² Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 118.

²⁶³ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 38-39.

²⁶⁴ Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 14.

preferred the more expensive eugenic segregation.²⁶⁵ Other eugenically minded figures including Grant²⁶⁶ strongly advocated for forced sterilization of the unfit. Harry Laughlin considered by Carlson as the greatest American proponent of negative eugenics gathered evidence allegedly proving that sterilization was the only real solution to the menace of the feeble-minded. He was a propagator of sterilization among the general public as well as the legal community providing expert testimonies in court. Since women were the ones who gave birth to the unfit offspring, Laughlin saw them as the main source of the defect.²⁶⁷ This approach was popular and women ultimately became the main target of forced sterilization. For further information on the relation of eugenics and womanhood, Kline's work is recommended.²⁶⁸ However, that is not to say that the laws did not apply to men. In fact, historically, men were the first ones to be affected by sterilization as the medical procedure was much easier performed in men than in women.²⁶⁹

The first sterilization law was passed in Indiana in 1907. According to Bashford, it targeted all sorts of individuals including criminals, the insane, epileptics, or mentally retarded.²⁷⁰ Between 1907 and 1937, more than thirty states made sterilization legally enforceable. With more than 20 000 sterilized individuals, California was at the negative eugenic pinnacle.²⁷¹ Levine presents the results of a 1937 Gallup poll exposing that 84 percent of the respondents supported sterilization of the chronically mentally ill. The poll shows the level of popularity sterilization laws achieved in the US. However, there were also opponents of the practice. Sterilization laws were challenged at court several times and the critics even won some of the legal cases. However, their victories were often short-lived as more sterilization laws were passed subsequently.²⁷² The best-known legal battle related to forced sterilization on eugenic grounds took place in Virginia and became known as the *Buck v. Bell* case. As Carlson explains, the Sterilization Act of Virginia passed in 1924 was actually challenged by eugenicists themselves to test whether it could hold in court. Carrie Buck, a teenage patient of a state colony for the feeble-minded, was selected as the first person to be

²⁶⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 256-259.

²⁶⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 51.

²⁶⁷ Elof Axel Carlson, *The Unfit: A History of a Bad Idea* (Cold Spring Harbor, NY: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2001), 241-242.

²⁶⁸ Kline, *Building a Better Race*.

²⁶⁹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 93.

²⁷⁰ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 221.

²⁷¹ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 63-64.

²⁷² Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 65-66.

compulsorily sterilized under the Virginia Act. Her sterilization was then brought to court where the legality of the procedure was sustained. The final test for the Virginia sterilization law was its presentation to the U.S. Supreme Court.²⁷³ According to Kevles, Carrie Buck was defined as a moral imbecile. Her mother was also an inpatient at the colony and, just as Carrie, she was declared feeble-minded. For eugenicists, this was evident proof of the feeble-mindedness running in Buck's family. Moreover, Carrie had an illegitimate baby girl that was also found feeble-minded.²⁷⁴ The family records of Carrie were analyzed by Laughlin who provided expert testimony about her hereditary feeble-mindedness that needed to be addressed by sterilization. It is important to state that Laughlin did not examine any of the individuals in question personally and relied only on second-hand information. In fact, Laughlin's analysis of Carrie's daughter rested on an unsupported claim that was originally made when the baby was only seven months old.²⁷⁵ This assessment practice was frequent among American eugenicists, which led to individuals being deemed defective based on gossip or first impressions of others.²⁷⁶

Ultimately, the alleged hereditary nature of Carrie's defectiveness led the Supreme Court to a decision to uphold the sterilization law by a vote of 8 to 1 in 1927.²⁷⁷ When Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. delivered the Court's decision, he infamously declared: "Three generations of imbeciles are enough."²⁷⁸ In his speech, he stresses that the public welfare outweighs individual interests, which entitles authorities to perform sterilization in those who "sap the strength of the State."²⁷⁹ He also seems to believe that sterilization is in its essence an act of kindness. In his own words: "It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind."²⁸⁰ Such rhetoric was characteristic when talking about negative eugenic measures. To diminish the injustice done in the name of eugenics, the benefits for the society as well as for the targeted individuals were often emphasized. Therefore, neither sterilization was considered punitive unless it was performed in sex offenders. Rather, it was claimed to be beneficial for the individual in question as it often

²⁷³ Carlson, *The Unfit*, 250-254.

²⁷⁴ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110-112.

²⁷⁵ Carlson, *The Unfit*, 253-255.

²⁷⁶ Norrgard, "Human Testing, the Eugenics Movement, and IRBs."

²⁷⁷ Carlson, *The Unfit*, 254.

²⁷⁸ *Buck v. Bell Decision* (Supreme Court of the United States, May 2, 1927).

²⁷⁹ *Buck v. Bell Decision* (Supreme Court of the United States, May 2, 1927).

²⁸⁰ *Buck v. Bell Decision* (Supreme Court of the United States, May 2, 1927).

allowed his release into the normal population and relieved him of the reproductive responsibility. As Baynton adds, eugenicists declared their efforts humanitarian, alleviating suffering and eliminating misery.²⁸¹ The Supreme Court decision in *Buck v. Bell* heightened the confidence of American eugenicists and forced sterilization of the undesirable became one of the most poignant features of the movement. As Cohen points out, the ruling of the Supreme Court was never officially overturned. The number of involuntarily sterilized individuals in the US between 1907 and 1983 has been estimated to reach 60,000-70,000. Although this period also covers the decades after World War II in which eugenics was frowned upon by the majority of Americans, even the post-war sterilizations were, in fact, performed under the mentioned eugenic statutes.²⁸²

3.3.2 The New Immigrants

As already mentioned, immigration into the US was increasing when eugenic thought was introduced into American thought. The immigration of the time was characteristic by high numbers of individuals coming from southern and eastern Europe who were considered inferior to the original Anglo-Saxon settlers. Racial stereotypes dominated among the old stock American elite and the new immigrants were believed to be the main cause of growing social ills and lowering the intelligence of the population. This is where the notions of the new immigrants from non-Nordic countries crossed with the menace of the feeble-minded. Most American eugenicists, in fact, claimed that a significant part of the new immigrants fell into the feeble-minded group. Edward Ross described this new wave of immigration as “beaten members of beaten breeds.”²⁸³ These newcomers to America were seen as carriers of diseases, hereditary mental and physical conditions, immorality, and criminality. In other words, they became scapegoats for whatever problems American society faced.²⁸⁴ Immigration, thus, became a central issue to many American eugenicists. As Gillette points out, most eugenically minded thinkers were themselves of what was considered an innately superior ancestry. They were usually Nordics, more exactly white Anglo-Saxons, belonging to the upper-middle class that believed that they possessed scientific proof for white supremacy.²⁸⁵ One of such eugenicists

²⁸¹ Douglas Baynton, *Defectives in the Land: Disability and Immigration in the Age of Eugenics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 13.

²⁸² Cohen *Imbeciles*, 318-320

²⁸³ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 93.

²⁸⁴ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 93.

²⁸⁵ Gillette, *Eugenics and the Nature-Nurture Debate*, 122.

was Madison Grant who with his work *The Passing of the Great Race* laid the foundations of the American version of what is called scientific racism. According to Spiro scientific racism as employed by Grant has three main axioms. First, the human population is divided into biologically distinct races and their hierarchy is created with the Nordic race being the most superior. Second, intellect, morals, temperament, and cultural distinctions are associated with physical features and the whole bundle of traits is hereditary. At the same time, the genes predisposing to these traits are not affected by the environment. Third, the mating of individuals of two different races results in offspring belonging to the inferior race type. The application of eugenics is, thus, necessary to save the superior race.²⁸⁶ The mentioned tenets distinguish scientific racism from popular racism that rested solely on unsubstantiated prejudices. Grant, on the other hand, offers a scientific explanation justifying the animosity towards the racial other. In Spiro's opinion, Grant's work combines physical anthropology, Darwinian evolution, and Mendelian genetics to show the biological inferiority of non-Nordic races.²⁸⁷

The three axioms of Grant's scientific racism are clearly visible in *The Passing of the Great Race*. In his work, Grant discusses race in the European context and sees America as a continuation of European history that could have been glorious but is instead plagued by race suicide of the superior types. Conforming with the first axiom, Grant divides the European population into three basic races claiming that the popular concept of race is misleading. He attempts to define race claiming that it is "entirely distinct from either nationality or language."²⁸⁸ While it is true that in Europe race can sometimes correspond to these elements, it is not the rule. Grant goes on to demonstrate the fact: "here in America we hear daily the English language spoken by many men who possess not one drop of English blood."²⁸⁹ Instead, in his view, race is constituted by the physical and psychical characteristics of its members and the quality of the characteristics determines which races are superior or inferior.²⁹⁰ His approach is different than the one of British eugenicists such as Galton who used the term race without clarification. By giving race a clear meaning and setting boundaries by division into different races, American eugenics gets less abstract and even more socially relevant. The three European races are Nordics originating in Northern Europe, Alpines connected to central

²⁸⁶ Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2009), 138-139.

²⁸⁷ Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 139.

²⁸⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, xxi.

²⁸⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 4.

²⁹⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, xix.

Europe and Mediterraneans inhabiting southern European lands. According to Grant, the Nordics are at the very top of the evolutionary scale. This can be demonstrated historically and “the lesson is always the same, namely, that race is everything,”²⁹¹ declares Grant. Given their superior physical and mental abilities, Nordics were always the ruling and the intellectual elite of any developed civilization. At the same time, he claims that many powerful empires such as Spain or France fell when they lost this superior Nordic aristocratic element.²⁹² He believes the fact to be still visible in Europe of his time as “the amount of Nordic blood in each nation is a very fair measure of its strength in war and standing in civilization.”²⁹³ It was also the strong and yet noble Nordics who managed to build the British Empire and founded America.²⁹⁴ Moreover, the superiority of the Nordic race is also widely culturally acknowledged. Heroes of modern authors are nearly always tall and blond, which are typical Nordic features. Villains, on the other hand, are depicted as small and dark. Similarly, angels are also blond and fair, while it is easy to recognize demons by their brunet features.²⁹⁵

The next axiom relates to the characteristic racial traits and applies the popular hereditarian perspective. Grant correlates physical features to mental abilities and ascribes a distinctive set of both to the three European races.²⁹⁶ As Kevles claims, attempts to associate physical traits with mental development were common at the time.²⁹⁷ In the European context, Grant considers the cephalic index calculated based on the proportions of the skull to be “the best method of determining race.”²⁹⁸ There are also additional physical features that are indicative of race membership. According to Grant, the northern Nordic race is “long skulled, very tall, fair skinned with blond or brown hair and light colored eyes”²⁹⁹ and they are “distinguished by great stature.”³⁰⁰ The members of the southern Mediterranean race are, on the other hand, “long skulled like the Nordic race but the absolute size of the skull is less. The eyes and hair are very dark or black and the skin more or less swarthy.”³⁰¹ Moreover, in comparison with Nordics, “the stature is distinctly less ... and the musculature and bony

²⁹¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 100.

²⁹² For example: Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 193, 197.

²⁹³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 193.

²⁹⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 207.

²⁹⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 229-230.

²⁹⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 227.

²⁹⁷ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 77.

²⁹⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 19-20.

²⁹⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 20.

³⁰⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 29.

³⁰¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 20.

framework weak.”³⁰² Lastly, he describes the centrally located Alpine race as “round skulled, of medium height and sturdy build both as to skeleton and muscles. The coloration of both hair and eyes was originally very dark and still tends strongly in that direction.”³⁰³ The fairness of Nordics is a very important feature to Grant as it seems to indicate their higher position in the evolutionary process. According to him, the pure Nordic race represents “the white man par excellence.”³⁰⁴ As he argues, “dark colored eyes are all but universal among wild mammals and entirely so among the primates.” The same could be said for hair and skin color.³⁰⁵ Thus, not only the feeble-minded but also certain races are closely similar to apes. It is then no wonder, that the majority of the new immigrants were considered to have low intellect and fall into the wide feeble-minded category. As seen when Grant’s and Davenport’s work is combined, those beliefs were all inherently intertwined. Being a hard hereditarian, Grant insists that members of non-Nordic races are predetermined to inferiority by their genes. The traits that characterize each race are passed down from generation to generation and cannot be altered by the environment. He feels that unless the myth of the power of the environment is dispelled, society will have to face serious consequences.³⁰⁶ According to him, Americans can learn from their own history as they had already learned that “speaking English, wearing good clothes and going to school and to church does not transform a Negro into a white man.”³⁰⁷

The last axiom as proposed by Spiro is directly linked to the already discussed concept of race suicide. Grant claims that when two races live side by side and mix, the progeny will always consist of inferior hybrids and a “population of race bastards” will be created.³⁰⁸ Since the higher the race, the younger it is in the evolutionary timeline, Grant alleges that the traits of superior races are “highly unstable and when mixed with generalized or primitive characters tend to disappear.”³⁰⁹ The cross between a white man and a non-white man is always a non-white man, he concludes.³¹⁰ Therefore, racial mixing can only lead to the extinction of the superior race and, consequently, to the destruction of any higher civilization. Similarly to Galton, Grant once again claims that there are lessons to learn from the history of great

³⁰² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 20.

³⁰³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 21.

³⁰⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 27.

³⁰⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 25-27.

³⁰⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 16.

³⁰⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 16.

³⁰⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 77.

³⁰⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 17-18.

³¹⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 18.

civilizations. As he believes that the Nordic branch of Anglo-Saxons is similarly threatened, he advocates for the application of eugenics in American society so as not to let history repeat itself.³¹¹ However, it is not only racial mixing that poses a great risk. Grant repeats the common narrative of the time about the growing gap in fertility rates integrating it into his racial theory. The inferior races tend to breed faster due to their mental incapacity to realize the economic disadvantages of large families. On the other hand, the higher races lower the quantity of the next generations to ensure greater individual prosperity. The result then is that the lower races breed the superior individuals out.³¹² As nature is not allowed to maintain racial harmony “by her own cruel devices,” the superior are free to commit the atrocious race suicide.³¹³

When Grant discusses the, according to him inferior, races that are migrating to the American continent, he is very negative. Both Europe and America are already to a high degree hybridized and the superior race of Nordics is gradually dying out.³¹⁴ The results of the Melting Pot, the great error of judgment, are severely affecting the old American stock of Nordics. What Grant calls the native American, or in other words the original Anglo-Saxon settler, is bound to disappear.³¹⁵ According to Henry Fairfield Osborn who wrote the preface to *The Passing of the Great Race*, the Anglo-Saxon strain of Nordics essentially invented culture upon which any great civilization including America is built. Anglo-Saxon America could have been a miniature of a perfect world had it retained the racial composition of the first settlers. However, the new non-Nordic immigration disrupted this perfection importing defects and causing degeneration.³¹⁶ According to Grant, the new immigration constituting from Alpines and Mediterraneans “prevented the fixing of a definite American type.”³¹⁷ The American prosperity, a result of the hard work of the original settlers, attracted all types of immigrants. At the same time, Europe “took the opportunity to unload upon careless, wealthy and hospitable America the sweepings of their jails and asylums” that filled the country.³¹⁸ “New York is becoming a *cloaca gentium*,” a sewer of the nations, Grant says.³¹⁹ The worst types of Europe are coming in and America is slowly changing into a dumping ground.³²⁰ The beginnings of

³¹¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 14-16.

³¹² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 46-49, 77.

³¹³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 47.

³¹⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 14-15.

³¹⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 92.

³¹⁶ Henry Fairfield Osborn, preface to *The Passing of the Great Race*, by Madison Grant, viii.

³¹⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 86.

³¹⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 89.

³¹⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 92.

³²⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 211.

the American type seemed to be bright, as Grant declares, “New England during Colonial times and long afterward was far more Nordic than the old England.”³²¹ The first settlers were usually the best of the Nordic race that itself is on the evolutionary top. The Nordic race, according to Grant, is a “strong, virile and self-contained race” that developed through a rigid natural selection due to the harsh conditions of Northern Europe.³²² In America, a distinctive type of a Nordic started developing, however, he had “an imperfectly developed national consciousness” with no “instinct of self-preservation in a racial sense.”³²³ This American welcomed all the new immigrants. He “taxed himself to sanitize and educate these poor helots” and, what is even worse, “encouraged them to enter into the political life.”³²⁴ Thus, Grant believes that the American continent could have been the racially pure city upon a hill created by the evolutionary highest Nordics. As he states: “Nature had granted to the Americans of a century ago the greatest opportunity in recorded history to produce in the isolation of a continent a powerful and racially homogenous people...”³²⁵

In his work, Grant also equates race and class. It is visible when he discusses racial hierarchy and then suddenly switches the terminology using lower and upper classes as synonyms to inferior and superior races.³²⁶ He actually forthrightly states that “in many cases these racial lines...correspond closely with the divisions of social cleavage.”³²⁷ This is, thus, the reason why the old Anglo-Saxon stock is found mainly in the higher strata of society. The native Americans should rightfully constitute the aristocracy of the country because they “supplied the leaders in thought and in the control of capital as well as of education.”³²⁸ His beliefs of privilege indicating eugenic fitness correspond with those of Galton or Davenport. According to Grant, however, it is also the first-rate American stock that is responsible for its downfall. The industrialization and the following urbanization created a pressing need for a workforce, which led the original American stock to support the immigration of lower races to their continent. “The refusal of the native American to work with his hands when he can hire or import serfs to do manual labor for him is the prelude to his extinction,”³²⁹ claims Grant. He

³²¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 83.

³²² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 170.

³²³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 90.

³²⁴ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 90.

³²⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 90.

³²⁶ For example: Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 48.

³²⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, xix.

³²⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 5.

³²⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 11-12.

believes American citizenship should be a privilege reserved only for the best Nordics.³³⁰ However, since “the American sold his birthright in a continent to solve a labor problem,”³³¹ the country is infested with races and individuals that are weakening it. Moreover, the native Americans not only basically invited the inferior individuals to their continent, but they also promoted the false idea of their equity. According to Grant, inequality is natural and inherent.³³² This has interesting implications for democracy as a tool that aims to equalize the population. Democracy only creates artificial equality, which is ultimately bound to be destructive.³³³ In 1914, Davenport declared that “[t]he idea of a 'melting pot' belongs to a pre-Mendelian age.”³³⁴ Grant seems to view democracy in the same way.

He claims that democracy is an old-fashioned concept based on the presupposition of equality and as such does not fit the scientific knowledge of the time. The outdated “philanthropy and noble purpose dictated the doctrine expressed in the Declaration of Independence” and made the “dogmas of equality” guide American institutions and society.³³⁵ The result of the democratic political approach is a loss of effectivity and degeneration of the whole political system as “the average man” is favored rather than “the man qualified by birth, education and integrity.”³³⁶ Democracy destroys genius with its “tendency toward a standardization of type,”³³⁷ which might ultimately lead to “cacocracy and the rule of the worst and put an end to progress.”³³⁸ Therefore, Grant believes that the new self-evident truth of modern society is inequality and the same resources and opportunities cannot be allocated to everyone. The social and economic gap between classes is natural and should not be artificially reduced. Grant’s discussion of democracy clearly demonstrates how strongly he associates superiority with the upper classes. Instead of democracy, he prefers “true aristocracy or a true republic[, which] is a government by the wisest and best, always a small minority in any population”³³⁹ While Galton or Davenport believed in the leadership of experts, they did not address the system of state government in such extensive and critical manner. In *The Passing of the Great Race*, Grant managed to relate eugenics to statesmanship. What further appalls him

³³⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 12.

³³¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 12.

³³² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 79.

³³³ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 5.

³³⁴ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 47.

³³⁵ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, xx.

³³⁶ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 5.

³³⁷ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 5.

³³⁸ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 79.

³³⁹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 7.

is that the superior stock not only lifts the inferior up but is actually dying for the sentimental notion of equality. According to Grant, “the Civil War was fought almost entirely by unalloyed native Americans”³⁴⁰ and “put a severe, perhaps fatal, check to the development and expansion of this splendid type by destroying great numbers of the best breeding stock.”³⁴¹ As expressed in *The Passing of the Great Race*, the native Americans are committing race suicide systematically and in multiple ways. They consciously limit their birthrate letting the inferior outreproduce them. At the same time, the numbers of individuals of lower races keep increasing due to unrestricted immigration. Moreover, democracy and wars fought by the best types are fundamentally dysgenic and cause racial decline. According to Grant, “race lies at the base of all the manifestations of modern society”³⁴² and if that society is to be successful, the best stock has to be preserved. To save the native American and Nordics in general before it is too late, eugenics needs to be implemented. In the preface, Osborn hails Grant’s eugenic conclusions believing that “conservation of that race which has given us the true spirit of Americanism is not a matter either of racial pride or of racial prejudice; it is a matter of love of country, of a true sentiment which is based upon knowledge and the lessons of history.”³⁴³

Davenport also addresses the problem of immigration. As the incoming individuals “are to proliferate and to affect the future of this country for better or worse,”³⁴⁴ their quality has to be controlled. In *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, he divides immigration to America into early and recent. Similarly as Grant, Davenport sees the early immigrants as the best and strongest types. What Grant calls the white man par excellence is to Davenport the “crème de la crème”³⁴⁵ of humanity. However, the recent immigration to America from South-eastern Europe is, according to Davenport, inferior to the original English settlers. Just as Grant, he associates the new immigrants with criminality, immorality, insanity, or poverty.³⁴⁶ However, he recognizes that certain individuals can also enrich American society with their positive traits.³⁴⁷ More importantly, he states that “no race *per se*, ..., is dangerous and none undesirable,” rather the threat is constituted by “those individuals whose somatic traits or germinal determiners

³⁴⁰ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 86.

³⁴¹ Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 88.

³⁴² Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, xxi.

³⁴³ Osborn, preface to *The Passing of the Great Race*, by Madison Grant, viii.

³⁴⁴ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 183.

³⁴⁵ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 211.

³⁴⁶ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 219.

³⁴⁷ For example: Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 218.

are...bad.”³⁴⁸ Although Davenport shows a strong tendency to racial stereotyping, he does not build his arguments for eugenics on a straightforward racist narrative that is present in Grant’s work. Still, even Davenport believes that the numbers of undesirable individuals among the new immigrants from southern and eastern parts of Europe are remarkably high.³⁴⁹ Adding to the issue is the fact that “the immigrant to the US in a large measure assists as well as advises his friends in the Old World to emigrate.”³⁵⁰ Therefore, Davenport points out the phenomenon today referred to as chain migration. “[T]he problem is real and urgent,”³⁵¹ he warns and offers eugenic solutions. While Davenport claims that “the immigration problem [cannot] be solved by excluding on the ground of race or native country,”³⁵² it is exactly the method the US later introduced with its immigration quotas.

The alleged scientifically based racial hierarchy as maintained by Grant penetrated the American immigration debate of the first half of the 20th century.³⁵³ Eugenicists as well as many prominent figures of the American elites claimed that the influx of inferior races from Europe along with the low fertility of the superior old stock Americans was causing race suicide. The trend, thus, needed to be reverted and American racial purity salvaged. The occasionally used eugenic measure that was supposed to protect those of the superior stock from the inferior racial strains already present in the country was the prohibition of interracial marriage. According to Levine, interracial marital unions were permitted only in nine states and the District of Columbia. The anti-miscegenation laws were introduced in the majority of American states and were legally valid until 1967. Such laws actually predated eugenic thought and, consequently, targeted only unions of whites with colored individuals and not the intermixing of superior and inferior races as defined by Grant. However, eugenicists liked to use the laws in their rhetoric to prove their point.³⁵⁴ While the anti-miscegenation laws had some effect inside the country, eugenicists believed the root cause, immigration, had to be addressed. According to Kevles, immigration was responsible for about half of the total population increase in the first fifteen years of the 20th century.³⁵⁵ The threat of immigrants outbreeding the original Americans was seen as very real.

³⁴⁸ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 222.

³⁴⁹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 219.

³⁵⁰ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 219.

³⁵¹ Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 221.

³⁵² Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*, 221.

³⁵³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 97.

³⁵⁴ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 48-50.

³⁵⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 94.

The radical American eugenicists claimed that not only were the new immigrants inferior, but there was also a high rate of feeble-mindedness present among them. When Henry Goddard studied the immigrants arriving to Ellis Island in 1913, he concluded that the individuals from southern and eastern Europe were remarkably often feeble-minded.³⁵⁶ Therefore, support for selective immigration policies that would allow only non-defective newcomers into the country was strong. Baynton presents a newspaper headline that expressed the attitude of the time: “Government Stands as ‘Doctor of Eugenics’ at Portals of Nation.”³⁵⁷ Eugenics was, thus, to serve as a foundation of the modern immigration policy and guard the nation against any destructive influence in the form of inferior human elements. The selective approach was in line with Davenport’s idea that not particular races but rather defective traits should be weeded out. The doctor of eugenics was working diligently. As Levine explains, upon their entry, immigrants were screened for defects that could cause their deportation.³⁵⁸ The inspection singled out individuals with mental or moral defects who were mandatorily rejected entry. Any perceived flaw, however, would lead to more detailed scrutiny, which could result in exclusion.³⁵⁹ Baynton stresses that although the selective immigration policy might seem more reasonable than the later national quotas, it was in no way less biased. Immigrants had to undergo an examination by immigration officials who then gave their subjective verdict. Moreover, the legal prescriptions were ambiguous and could be applied to a variety of individuals.³⁶⁰ The first law addressing undesirable immigrants was passed in 1882. It stated that if a newcomer is found to be a “convict, lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge,” he or she “shall not be permitted to land.”³⁶¹ Since then, the list of subjects to exclusion under the immigration law gradually extended.³⁶²

In 1917, the immigration officers were to ban any individual from an over a page-long list that included: the feeble-minded, epileptics, criminals, prostitutes, immoral individuals such as alcoholics or those practicing polygamy, the mentally and physically deficient whose defect might affect their ability to earn a living, anarchists and those in opposition to organized

³⁵⁶ Saran Ghatak, *Threat Perceptions: the Policing of Dangers from Eugenics to the War on Terrorism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 40.

³⁵⁷ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 14-15.

³⁵⁸ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 93.

³⁵⁹ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 13.

³⁶⁰ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 18.

³⁶¹ An Act to Regulate Immigration (1882).

³⁶² Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 18.

government, contract laborers, assisted immigrants, natives of specified islands not possessed by the US, and many more.³⁶³ The 1917 version of the immigration act also implemented a compulsory literacy test.³⁶⁴ According to Baynton, racist eugenicists and other opponents to immigration of allegedly inferior races were disappointed. While they hoped that the literacy test would curb the influx of both lower races and lower classes, the result was not as significant as expected. Since public education in Europe had improved, the undesirable managed to pass the literacy test and invade the country.³⁶⁵ Therefore, they were determined to push for more restrictive measures. Eugenic arguments merged with popular racism, hostility toward alien cultures, and a Red Scare climate, which ultimately led to new immigration policies and quota systems.³⁶⁶

Although the first law banning entry based on the country of origin was the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, it only targeted one particular and fundamentally non-white nation and as such did not address the more general fears of later immigration. It did, however, set a precedent for the following restrictionist policies.³⁶⁷ In 1921, an emergency act restricting immigration from each country to three percent of the immigrants of the corresponding nationality already present in the US was passed. However, many did not find it sufficient and advocated for even stricter restrictions.³⁶⁸ Harry Laughlin was one of such advocates. He was appointed as an expert eugenical agent by the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization and provided testimonies in favor of restrictive quotas. He claimed that south and east European immigrants, as well as Jews, were filling up American prisons and asylums. Additionally, those new immigrants were extremely fertile.³⁶⁹ As Kevles explains, Laughlin became quickly recognized as a specialist in the immigration debate offering scientific facts.³⁷⁰ In 1924, the emergency act was replaced by the *National Origins Act* that tightened the quotas. The number of immigrants allowed in the country was reduced from three percent to two percent of the corresponding nationality. Moreover, the final number was calculated from an earlier population census than before, which caused a further reduction as at that time there were fewer

³⁶³ An Act to Regulate the Immigration of Aliens To, and the Residence of Aliens In, the United States (1917).

³⁶⁴ An Act to Regulate the Immigration of Aliens To, and the Residence of Aliens In, the United States (1917).

³⁶⁵ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 40.

³⁶⁶ Carlson, *The Unfit*, 258.

³⁶⁷ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 9-10.

³⁶⁸ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 96-97.

³⁶⁹ Harry Bruinius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 255-259.

³⁷⁰ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 103.

immigrants in general.³⁷¹ The 1924 *National Origins Act* was a significant victory for American eugenicists. It represented eugenics at the level of national politics, recognizing its importance and promising its continuous application. On the other hand, to the majority of non-Nordic immigrants, the restrictive policy closed the door to their target country.

3.4 Criticism of American Eugenics, Its Fall and Legacy

The above-mentioned measures represent the materialization of eugenic thought in American society at the time of its popularity. Coming back to Markfield's eugenic continuum, American eugenicists managed to get the penultimate step of sterilization implemented into official social policies. Where the American eugenics movement stopped, the Nazis took up. While the horrors of the holocaust are well-known today, its roots starting with Galton and continuing in the US are rarely, or rather never, discussed. The relation of American and German eugenics is, however, real and is sometimes referred to as the *Nazi connection* by American cultural scholars.³⁷² Kline discusses the situation in the 1930s and points out the most important links between the US and Germany. In 1933, soon after Hitler rose to power, a eugenic sterilization act was introduced in Germany. Similarly as in the US, it aimed to sterilized mentally and physically defective. In fact, California eugenicists had a direct influence on the enactment of the law. They communicated with Germans discussing eugenics and even sent them a copy of an American eugenic work titled *Sterilization for Human Betterment* which Germans praised.³⁷³ Moreover, Black also mentions that in his 1924 *Mein Kampf*, Hitler quoted American eugenicists and looked up to the American application of eugenics. Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* belonged to his favorite works,³⁷⁴ which is no wonder as Grant's pure Nordic type equaled the Aryan type celebrated by Nazis. As Kline claims, certain American eugenicists were overjoyed by the successful implementation of eugenic measures in Germany and defended Nazi policies facing international criticism.³⁷⁵ American eugenicists believed that Nazi Germany was on the right track claiming that "the Germans are beating us at our own game."³⁷⁶ To support the German eugenic program, Americans provided generous

³⁷¹ Baynton, *Defectives in the Land*, 40.

³⁷² Kühl Stefan, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁷³ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 103.

³⁷⁴ Black, *War against the Weak*, 354-357.

³⁷⁵ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 105.

³⁷⁶ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 133.

funding. By the mid-1920s, about \$410,000 (equating to almost \$4 million in the 21st century) were donated to German eugenics by Rockefeller.³⁷⁷

As the Nazi policies had gotten more and more focused on Jews and the international opposition was mounting, American eugenicists stopped openly supporting Germans fearing it might tarnish their reputation.³⁷⁸ The Nazi regime in Germany and its application of eugenics did discredit the movement in the eyes of many and American eugenics started losing support. As the reports from Germany were coming in, the number of performed sterilizations in the US kept decreasing.³⁷⁹ However, Markfield makes a strong claim when she discusses the American position on the eugenic continuum. She believes that the US eugenics would not have stopped at sterilization and have had a similar parallel to Hitler's final solution, had it not been for the deterrent example of Nazi Germany.³⁸⁰ It is true that the American eugenics movement, especially its radical members such as Grant, seemed to be following the exact same path on the continuum as the Nazis and only stopped prematurely due to World War II. Even though Americans did not reach the final step, they cannot deny certain responsibility not only nationally but also internationally. As Lombardo points out, the Nazi doctors accused of crimes against humanity cited the *Buck v. Bell* opinion at the Nuremberg trials claiming it provided a precedent for their practices.³⁸¹ The Nazi ideology and its connection to eugenics significantly contributed to the fall of the American eugenics movement. Additionally, new findings in the field of biology and genetics refuted many of the main eugenic tenets. However, some critics confronted eugenic thought much sooner. The opposition came from different groups both religious and secular which are listed by Kevles. Some disagreed with eugenic biological reductionism or criticized the limitless authority of science over an individual. There were also supporters of the environmental side in the nature vs. nurture debate. Others were concerned that eugenics could lead to the rejection of democratic principles and the establishment of a rigid caste-like system. There were also those working with the targeted individuals such as social workers whose experience did not support eugenic claims.³⁸² Gilbert K. Chesterton was one of the most notable critics of eugenics. Although an Englishman, his essays were popular

³⁷⁷ Edwin Black, "The Horrifying American Roots of Nazi Eugenics," History News Network, September 2003, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/1796>.

³⁷⁸ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 104.

³⁷⁹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 169.

³⁸⁰ Markfield, "A More Perfect Union: Eugenics in America."

³⁸¹ Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles*, 13.

³⁸² Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 118-121.

among the anti-eugenic groups both in England and America.³⁸³ He declared eugenics a tyranny of science³⁸⁴ and emphasized its susceptibility to abuse for a personal agenda.³⁸⁵

Another of the early critics was Lester F. Ward who published an essay titled *Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics*³⁸⁶ in 1913. Ward was an early American progressivist, which demonstrates that not all progressive thinkers were in favor of eugenics. While Ward believes in state interventions and the possibility of scientifically based progress, he regards nurture to be the driving force of human development claiming that “the utilization of any law of nature consists simply in so adjusting the environment that the law shall operate in his [man’s] interest.”³⁸⁷ He considers the natural processes of self-regulation perfect “constantly pushing higher and higher structures into existence,”³⁸⁸ which means that eugenics is not needed to improve humankind. Moreover, Ward believes that eugenic efforts are not only unnecessary but also unattainable because heredity is “a fixed quality which no human power can change.”³⁸⁹ According to him, “the assumption of a wisdom superior to that of nature” is a plain egotism.³⁹⁰ Ward claims that the only sensible way towards social betterment is euthenics, or the improvement of the human environment so that each person can achieve his or her highest development. Adopting the agricultural rhetoric of American eugenicists, he states that “every plant and every animal possesses potential qualities far higher than its environment will allow it to manifest.”³⁹¹ Therefore, “all that the agriculturist or the horticulturist can do, all that he needs to do, is to remove the hostile influences.”³⁹² Ward uses the term *biological imperative* to summarize all the ways of nature that help maintain and improve the human race. Among others, he claims that nature strives “to prevent all extremes” including the extraordinary intellect and that “the normal becomes the ideal.”³⁹³ He, thus, denounces eugenic attempts to breed prodigies. Moreover, as much as eugenicists stress

³⁸³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 120.

³⁸⁴ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils* (London, New York, Toronto & Melbourne: Cassell and Company, 1922), 76.

³⁸⁵ Chesterton, *Eugenics and Other Evils*, 61.

³⁸⁶ Lester F. Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” *American Journal of Sociology* 18, no. 6 (1913): pp. 737-754, <https://doi.org/10.1086/212155>.

³⁸⁷ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 748.

³⁸⁸ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 746.

³⁸⁹ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 749.

³⁹⁰ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 746.

³⁹¹ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 748.

³⁹² Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 748.

³⁹³ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 741.

intellectual genius, they forget about other human qualities.³⁹⁴ Ward believes that there are many different forms of genius that are “scattered somewhat uniformly through the whole mass of the population.”³⁹⁵ The greater part of this genius, however, “lies latent in the great mass” because the restrictive environment does not allow for its demonstration.³⁹⁶ Ward also attacks eugenic prejudices and classism. He points out the paradox of the term eugenics meaning, in fact, well-born but its doctrine being so preoccupied with the allegedly ill born.³⁹⁷ However, he claims that the lower classes associated by eugenicists with degeneracy and feeble-mindedness are, in fact, the strong ones. Unlike the privileged elites, they have to undergo rough natural selection and they demonstrate healthy variety.³⁹⁸ To Ward, eugenics is the teaching by and for American elites. However, “these swarming, spawning millions, the bottom layer of society, . . ., all these are by nature the peers of the boasted “aristocracy of brains” that now dominates society and looks down upon them, and the equals in all but privilege of the most enlightened teachers of eugenics.”³⁹⁹

Although there were critical voices from the beginnings of the eugenics movement, the opposition did only start to have a real impact in the 1930s. As Bashford describes, the condemnation of Nazi policies was accompanied by campaigns of social scientists, modern geneticists, and psychologists who demonstrated the scientifically flawed ideas of the movement. They asserted that there was no hierarchy of human races and refused the eugenic biological determinism.⁴⁰⁰ Kevles adds that the idea of intellectual and moral deterioration was also refuted. Many of the earlier demographic assumptions were results of eugenicists’ tendencies to bend the facts, which was shown when the figures were properly set against the total population. Moreover, by the 1920s more and more American psychologists started to recognize that intelligence was too complex to be easily and reliably measured. In the following decade, psychologists also concluded that the performance on intelligence tests was significantly influenced by education as well as the social and cultural environment of the subject.⁴⁰¹ According to DeCorte, another phenomenon that contributed to the fall of American eugenics was the Great Depression. In the 1930s, all strata of American society were affected

³⁹⁴ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 741-742.

³⁹⁵ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 744.

³⁹⁶ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 744.

³⁹⁷ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 742.

³⁹⁸ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 750, 752-754.

³⁹⁹ Ward, “Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics,” 754.

⁴⁰⁰ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 88.

⁴⁰¹ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 129-134.

by the Depression. The whole American population felt the blow no matter the eugenic fitness. Americans, thus, realized that poverty and social failure were not the results of heredity.⁴⁰² While many considered eugenics an unfortunate pseudoscience of the past, some did not reject it in its entirety. The latter ones are called reform eugenicists and they are the reason why many scholars claim that eugenics did not disappear with the mainline eugenics movement.⁴⁰³ The reformists sought to redefine eugenics and dissociate it from the strong racial and class bias.⁴⁰⁴ Although the biological improvement of humankind was still their main goal, they recognized that the laws of heredity were not as straightforward as the mainline eugenicists of the earlier decades claimed. Moreover, they believed that the environment did count and social reforms that would improve it were needed.⁴⁰⁵ Literature recommendations for the more recent periods can be found in Kevles.⁴⁰⁶

The development of eugenic thought after 1945 is also discussed by Levine.⁴⁰⁷ As she offers the overview of eugenic thought after World War II, cycles of higher and lower popularity can be observed. The legacy of the American eugenics movement is visible even in the 21st century. Although the repeal of the eugenic sterilization laws began in the 1970s,⁴⁰⁸ the practice of coercive sterilization did not completely disappear. Recently, a shocking documentary *The Belly of the Beast*⁴⁰⁹ revealed involuntary sterilizations of female inmates in California prisons. According to its creator, about 1,400 coerced sterilizations were performed in California prisons between 1997 and 2014. Meanwhile, the infamous *Buck v. Bell* decision has yet to be overturned.⁴¹⁰ Another report from Oklahoma exposed a controversial plea deal taken by a woman accused of fraud. The judge in her case offered her a reduction of the sentence if she agreed to undergo sterilization. Although some argue the sterilization was not forced, the degree of voluntariness is questionable.⁴¹¹ Also contested, the new genetic technologies make

⁴⁰² DeCorte, "Menace of Undesirables," 6.

⁴⁰³ For example: Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 99-101. or Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 170.

⁴⁰⁴ Bashford et al., *The Oxford Handbook*, 216.

⁴⁰⁵ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 170-173.

⁴⁰⁶ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*.

⁴⁰⁷ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*.

⁴⁰⁸ Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 116.

⁴⁰⁹ *The Belly of the Beast* (ITVS, 2020).

⁴¹⁰ Craig Phillips, "Filmmaker Exposes Shocking Pattern of Illegal Sterilizations in Women's Prisons," PBS, November 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/filmmaker-exposes-shocking-pattern-of-illegal-sterilizations-in-womens-prisons/>.

⁴¹¹ Tom Jackman, "Judge Suggests Drug-Addicted Woman Get Sterilized before Sentencing, and She Does," *The Washington Post*, April 1, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2018/02/08/judge-suggests-drug-addicted-woman-get-sterilized-before-sentencing-and-she-does/>.

interventions and partial selection of the genetic makeup of unborn children possible. Some practices are not even offered to the prospective parents as they are considered highly unethical.⁴¹² Dolmage examines the eugenic legacy in connection to immigration. He claims that the animosity towards immigrants that led to the restrictive laws starting in the late 19th century never fully vanished. Exclusionist policies are still used and high numbers of immigrants are detained out of which plenty suffer from mental illnesses. Just as in the eugenic period, there is no focus on the treatment of such individuals. Instead, they are removed as an alleged national threat.⁴¹³ Dolmage also discusses Trump's immigration policy and its similarities with the period of eugenics. He highlights the ban of Syrian refugees that were specifically targeted because of their country of origin while their individual cases were not assessed individually. Moreover, Trump's promise to make America great again mostly resonated with those concerned about the immigration issue.⁴¹⁴ The phrase also signifies some kind of deterioration that needs to be solved, which was also one of the main claims of American eugenicists. In general, Trump built his popularity using hatred toward minorities and different nationalities. Quoted in Black, Charles Davenport, even though less radical than Grant but still not immune to racial bias, once said: "Can we build a wall high enough around this country so as to keep out these cheaper races...?"⁴¹⁵ Hundred years later, the wall has almost been completed.

⁴¹² Levine, *Eugenics: A Very Short Introduction*, 111.

⁴¹³ Jay Dolmage, *Disabled upon Arrival: Eugenics, Immigration, and the Construction of Race and Disability* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2018), 136-143.

⁴¹⁴ Dolmage, *Disabled upon Arrival*, 141-143.

⁴¹⁵ Black, *War against the Weak*, 37.

4 CONCLUSION

The presented master's thesis examined the American eugenics movement and the practical demonstrations of eugenic thought in American society. The development of eugenics was presented from its very beginnings in England to its heritage reverberating in America of today. The eugenic roots go back to Darwin and his theory of evolution by natural selection. Not only did Darwin prepare the ground for the acceptance of eugenics as a secular religion, but he also provided eugenicists with a strong ideological basis. Eugenics was considered to be a credible science largely built on Darwin's conclusions. The line of thought preceding eugenics was simple. Darwin's natural selection was first applied by social Darwinists who did not believe in the improvement of the environment. According to them the process of natural selection must be unhindered to eliminate the unfit. The nature believers in the nature v. nurture debate started winning. When Francis Galton coined the term eugenics, the world was ready for it. Social problems were mounting and the non-interventionist approach did not seem to be working. Eugenics offered a solution and hereditary perspective the justification.

While in England eugenics with its promise to maintain status-quo offered solace to the upper classes, Americans modified its doctrine and added the dogma of the Nordic racial superiority. In the US, race was inherently connected to class and the American form of eugenics, thus, dealt with both. American eugenicists did not believe that all men were created equal and lobbied for official acknowledgment of the fact in the form of various eugenic measures. The lower classes and the allegedly lower races already present in the country were often labeled feeble-minded, which allowed eugenicists and their wealthy supporters to suppress them and take away their rights in the name of eugenics. Marriage restrictions made those considered feeble-minded unable to freely choose their partner and their segregation in asylums restricted their freedom. Finally, their forced sterilization took away the right to produce life. To American eugenicists and elites, there was also the threat of immigration. They did not want to let more inferior people in the country that could destabilize it and accelerate the so-called race suicide. Eugenics allowed white Americans of Nordic descent to claim their superiority, declare the inferiority of others and, thus enforce their will upon them.

The coercive nature of American eugenics was what made it effective. British eugenics did not reach the popularity of its American counterpart and this might be one of the reasons. Galton was a positive eugenics proponent and a believer in the principle of voluntariness. His approach, however, also meant that it was hard to achieve visible results. This problem was

recognized by American eugenicists and they decided to follow the path of negative eugenics and apply such measures that could be enforced. Although some eugenicists such as Davenport seemed to be more careful about irreversible eugenic methods, the actually applied eugenic practices were based on the opinions of the more radical ones such as Grant or Laughlin. While the common goal of eugenic programs was stressed, eugenics served only a fraction of the American population. Those who profited were the old stock privileged Americans, the white men par excellence as Grant calls them.

The American eugenics movement preached science and misused it to advance its own agenda. Many eugenicists surely believed that the aims of their teaching were noble, it seems, however, that the movement became corrupted. American eugenicists liked to bend the facts to their advantage. They also did not like to question the doctrine and presented eugenic tenets as dogmas that had to be accepted. As demonstrated, the American eugenics movement had direct ties to Nazi Germany and the policies in both countries followed the same line. However, the topic is rarely discussed and the part played by American eugenicists goes unrecognized. Despite the uncovered continuation of coerced sterilizations, the *Buck v. Bell* decision remains effective. Moreover, the anti-immigrant rhetoric resting on racial bias is not only frequent but also applauded as was seen during Trump's presidency. The legacy of eugenics is still strong and prevalent in the US. Interestingly, however, the period of the eugenics movement seems like a forgotten part of American history.

RESUMÉ

Vypracovaná magisterská práce se zabývá společenskými důsledky amerického eugenického hnutí, které se v USA objevilo na konci devatenáctého století a dosáhlo vrcholu své popularity mezi dvacátými a třicátými lety dvacátého století. Text organicky propojuje teoretickou a praktickou část tak, aby analýzy primárních zdrojů podporovaly faktické informace. Práce si klade za cíl představit eugeniku ve své dobové formě. Jedním z úkolů je tak analyzovat rétoriku amerického eugenického hnutí. Dalším cílem je pak propojit eugenické myšlenky s jejich reálnou aplikací v americké společnosti. Hlavní analyzované publikace v amerických představitelů eugeniky jsou *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* od Charlese Davenporta a *The Passing of the Great Race* od Madisona Granta. Práce je pak doplněna dalšími primárními zdroji a jejich analýzou. Mimo jiné jde o eseje zakladatele eugeniky Francise Galtona nebo například kritické argumenty, které publikoval Lester F. Ward. Předložená práce mapuje vývoj eugeniky a poukazuje na spojitosti mezi myšlenkovými proudy doby, jež lze vysledovat. Prvotním milníkem byla Darwinova evoluční teorie a zákon přirozeného výběru. Myslitelé se poté snažili aplikovat nové poznatky na společnost a ekonomiku v podobě sociálního Darwinismu a laissez-faire. Jelikož se však tento přístup neukázal jako příliš funkční, začaly se objevovat stále silnější argumenty pro státní zásahy. Eugenika slibovala odstranění společenských problémů způsobených z velké části industrializací. V době, kdy byla společnost stále více nakloněná řízeným zásahům do ekonomiky i společnosti, se tak eugenika zdála jako ideální řešení.

První kapitola diplomové práce se věnuje právě zmíněnému myšlenkovému přerodu, který byl eugenice nakloněn. Nejprve je představena Darwinova teorie, která připravila společnost na ideje eugeniky, které by před Darwinem pravděpodobně nenašly pochopení. Dále se kapitola věnuje teorii sociálního Darwinismu a zmiňuje i protichůdné názory Lamarckismu. Oba proudy představují dvě strany debaty o tom, zda je člověk již od narození predeterminován genetikou, nebo zda je formován prostředím. Následně se text obrací k prvotním eugenickým myšlenkám Francise Galtona. Představena je částečná analýza jeho díla k podpoření teorie a informací čerpaných ze sekundárních zdrojů. Konkrétně se jedná o jeho sbírku esejí či dílo *Hereditary Genius*. Eugenika jako teorie stojí na rozdělení společnosti na jedince s kvalitní genetikou a na ty se špatným genetickým základem. Základní tezí navíc je, že téměř všechny vlastnosti, ať už se jedná o fyziologii, intelekt či temperament, jsou dědičné. Za vrozený element je však považována i kriminalita, špatné mravy nebo chudoba. Britská eugenika viděla

společnost především třídní optikou a přiřazovala genetickou nedostatečnost nižším vrstvám společnosti. Cílem eugeniky je zlepšení společnosti následováním poznatků o dědičnosti. Existují tedy dva základní společnosti, jak lze stanoveného cíle dosáhnout. Jedním z nich je podporovat jedince s kvalitní genetikou a zvyšovat jejich počty. Tento přístup se nazývá pozitivní eugenika. Druhou cestou je pak negativní eugenika, která se snaží zredukovat počet jedinců, kteří společnost podle eugeniků poškozují. Galton a britská eugenika se zaměřují na pozitivní eugeniku. Obecně také kladou důraz na její dobrovolnost.

Americké eugenické hnutí, kterému se věnuje druhá kapitola, se však od britského liší zaměřením na negativní eugeniku. Z principu se tak jedná především o nucené vymáhání eugenických praktik. Dalším typickým rysem amerického eugenického hnutí je jeho rasismus, který se propojil s antipatií vůči nižším vrstvám společnosti. Americké elity anglosaského původu se pomocí eugeniky ujišťovali ve své výjimečnosti a v méněcennosti ostatních národů. Druhá kapitola práce je její stěžejní částí. Nejprve je představen socio-ekonomický kontext, do kterého americká eugenika zapadá. Ideologicky se jedná především o široké hnutí progresivismu. Stručně jsou tedy zmíněny spojitosti mezi eugenikou a progresivismem. Dále se pak text věnuje již zmíněným charakteristickým rysům amerického eugenického hnutí, tedy zaměření na negativní eugeniku, její nedobrovolnost a rasistický element. K analýze jsou využity především díla Charlese Davenporta a Madisona Granta. S jejich pomocí jsou pak také definovány skupiny, na které byla americká eugenika zacílena. Jednalo se především o novou vlnu imigrantů z východní a jižní Evropy a tzv. slaboduché jedince. Vzhledem k nejasné definici slaboduchosti bylo do této skupiny možné zařadit téměř kohokoliv. S obecným vymezením těchto skupin pak souvisí aplikovaná eugenika, kterou text zkoumá dále. V USA se jednalo především o restrikce v imigraci, segregace slaboduchých a jejich povinná sterilizace.

Finální část práce je mimo jiné věnovaná kritice eugeniky. Nesouhlas s eugenikou vyjadřovali náboženské i sekulární skupiny, avšak jejich hlas nebyl příliš silný. Pro ilustraci některých argumentů, které opozice používala, je analyzována esej Lestera F. Warda *Eugenics, Euthenics, and Eudemics*. Ward byl jedním z raných kritiků eugeniky, který věřil, že jakýkoliv zdokonalení společnosti může vycházet jen a pouze z vylepšení prostředí a odstranění škodlivých vnějších vlivů. Mezi poslední témata práce patří také úpadek popularity amerického eugenického hnutí. Valná většina historiků uvádí jako klíčový důvod nástup Hitlera a jeho využití eugeniky k odstranění Židů. Nacistické Německo nastavilo americké eugenice zrcadlo,

kteře bylo velmi nelichotivé, a eugenika tak ztratila mezi Američany popularitu. Někteří američtí eugenici navíc Hitlera zpočátku podporovali a byli v kontaktu s německými tvůrci nacistické eugenické politiky. Sám Hitler obdivoval Američany a jejich eugenické praktiky. Ztráta vlivu eugenického hnutí souvisela také s novými objevy v genetice, které poukázaly na chybné vědecké závěry, kterými eugenici podkládaly jejich ideologii. Velká hospodářská krize třicátých let navíc mnohé přesvědčila, že chudoba a její následky nejsou dědičné a mohou zasáhnout všechny vrstvy a rasy. I přesto, že americké eugenické hnutí ztratilo svou roli ve společnosti, některé jeho pozůstatky převzali reformní eugenici. Ty však věřili, že eugenika může být zodpovědně praktikovaná pouze po vyrovnání společenských rozdílů a poskytnutí stabilního a stimulačního prostředí všem. Téma, které práci uzavírá, je odkaz eugeniky v dnešní americké společnosti. Šokující dokument z roku 2020 odhalil nucené sterilizace ženských vězňů v Kalifornii, které probíhaly ještě během prvních dvou dekad dvacátého prvního století. V americké legislativě je navíc stále platné rozhodnutí Nejvyššího soudu, které legalizovalo nedobrovolnou sterilizaci slaboduchých. Mezi další dědictví amerického eugenického hnutí pak patří vztah americké společnosti k přistěhovalcům a stále běžnou restriktivní imigrační politiku. Jak silné jsou tyto tendence se ukázalo zvolením Donalda Trumpa americkým prezidentem. Jeho rétorika se totiž velmi silně podobala té, kterou používali američtí eugenici ve dvacátém století. Historie a odkaz amerického eugenického hnutí nejsou v USA příliš známé. Tato práce však ukazuje, jak vlivné eugenické myšlenky byly a jak podstatnou část nejenom americké historie představují.

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