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Nightmares Born of Dreams: Eugenics in Illinois

BY

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography

Eugenics, more so than many other topics of history, has been subject to drastic oversimplification. Current studies of eugenics focus primarily on a few concepts and examples such as sterilization, association with the Nazis and other flashier subjects. Eugenics is far broader than merely its legacy of sterilization, and the motives driving it were much more varied than can be analyzed solely through perceived ties with abhorrent Nazi ideology. Eugenics stemmed from a desire to improve the world, to bring science and progress instead of the pain and suffering that has come to define it. Eugenicists were never more than a small minority of the population, pushing faulty solutions drawn from poorly supported science. To achieve any measurable impact they had to gain the backing of groups that did not entirely support their goals. By connecting with other groups—social reformers, legal professionals, and medical experts-- they were able to implement eugenic policies that far outreached the scope of their own limited influence.

Dreams and good intentions, clouded by poorly defined notions of progress, became nightmares for those who were targeted by eugenicists: individuals labeled as epileptic, insane, and feeble-minded. Examining the motives of eugenicists and those who were often unwittingly dragged into their actions reveals a more in-depth story. It also reveals an important lesson, one that suggests that horrible things rarely have sinister origins. The desire for scientific progress can be misguided, leading to horrible results. Oversimplification and generalization have obscured this lesson within the wider historical narrative. When the eugenics movement is simply labeled evil, disconnected from historical realities and sensibilities, its goals can appear naïve and incompressible. By its nature eugenics is a complex subject, and therefore it has generated studies that span various topics and centuries done by experts from numerous fields

such as sociologists, psychologists, and historians. A number of previous works have sought to condense rather than expand the scope of the eugenics movement, simplifying it in order to place it within a wider historical context. Studies tend to highlight key events and actions, such as the 1927 landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Buck v. Bell* and the state sterilization laws that this ruling allowed, and associate these events with the broader narrative of the rise of Nazism in Germany. This interest in a general, broad analysis of eugenics and its most iconic moments has been detrimental to the study of the movement's specifics, leaving a gap in our historical understanding. Eugenics became much more than the idea that Francis Galton conceptualized when he coined the term in 1883; it became an abhorrent embodiment of a range of ideas about politics, science, law, and human rights. Central to the course of the eugenics movement was a fundamental shift, from traditional ideas about individual autonomy and self-determination, to a new interest in the ways that individuals were intrinsically linked to each other and to the state. At the turn of the twentieth century individual rights and liberties were reconsidered in light of their larger effects on society. This opened the possibility for greater government interference into the lives of citizens to in order to facilitate social progress, sometimes to the detriment of the individual, as in the case of eugenics.

The incomplete historical picture has also neglected a key example, the role played by the State of Illinois in the eugenics movement. Illinois, and more specifically Chicago, was the epicenter for progressive ideology materialized into action. It likewise spearheaded the push for eugenic policies around the country and the world. Chicago was the pioneer in implementing many progressive reforms, providing a framework for the rest of the country to follow. These reforms would go on to redefine the relationship between the individual and state, creating many elements indicative of modern governmental structures. They both allowed for the creation of

eugenic policies and were at least partially driven by eugenic principles. The chosen period for this study is the early twentieth century, as it was the height of progressive reform and played host to the most quintessential event for eugenics in Illinois, the Act To Better Provide For the Care and Detention of Feeble-minded Persons. This law, enacted in 1915, allowed for the permanent institutionalization of the feeble-minded. While the eugenics movement in Illinois was multifaceted, this thesis focuses on the relationship between three different groups as the driving forces behind many of the state's eugenic actions. These groups are the Chicago Municipal Court, and its Chief Justice Henry Olson; medical professionals, in particular psychologists, such as Dr. Clara Town; and lastly, progressive reformers, such as the Chicago Women's Group. Additionally, the two most prominent state institutions for those targeted by eugenics, the Lincoln State School and Colony and the State Training School at Geneva, will be analyzed to illustrate ways in which eugenics manifested itself in the lives of those affected by it.

Some historians have sited state attempts to forcibly vaccinate its citizens in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an important antecedent to eugenic programs. Historians Michael Willrich and Karen Walloch detail America's first attempts at compulsory vaccination and how such events went on to define notions of individual bodily autonomy. Vaccination faced numerous issues in achieving widespread acceptance and usage in the United States. Compulsory vaccination took forty-three years longer to show up in America as compared to Europe, even then not appearing on a wide scale until the 1890s.¹ By then smallpox had already mutated to a less potent form.² Furthermore, at that time smallpox vaccines carried considerable risks, leading many to avoid the procedure. Meanwhile, the medical community and

¹ Michael Willrich, *Pox: An American History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 37-38.

² Karen L. Walloch, *The Antivaccine Heresy: Jacobson v. Massachusetts and the Troubled History of Compulsory Vaccination in the United States* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 11.

the emerging pharmaceutical industry quickly latched onto vaccination, seeking to make it compulsory for a hesitant population. This led to a divide between the medical community and general society, facilitating a mistrust which to some extent persists to this day in the form of modern antivaccination movements. Doctors' willingness to push vaccinations onto the populace coincides with the rise of the progressive movement, which saw drastic increases in states' police powers to intervene in the lives of citizens. Compulsory vaccination led to resistance. In the landmark 1905 case *Jacobson v. Massachusetts* the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed states' powers to mandate vaccination but simultaneously created a precedent for the notion of personal privacy and bodily autonomy.³ This served to make states hesitant to employ their police powers in the future, requiring future measures to be tested in court.

Willrich described the antivaccination movement as a *response* to the state and the medical communities' infringement on the rights of its citizens. Labeling them radical libertarians, they consisted of numerous notable figures, including doctors who had an issue with the changing relationship between the individual and the medical community. Walloch mirrored many of Willrich's sentiments, but argues against such political labeling, instead of focusing on the reasonable risks perceived during that time. Both Willrich and Walloch cite compulsory vaccination as an important precedent for the eventual rise of eugenics, as increased government involvement in the bodily autonomy of individuals served to support eugenic arguments for sterilization and institutionalization for the good of society. Their books highlighted how the United States was becoming a nation that would eventually facilitate eugenic actions. *Jacobson*

³ Walloch, *The Antivaccine Heresy*, 211-212.

v. Massachusetts would be used as a legal precedent for eugenics in the cases of *Buck v. Bell* (1927) and *Skinner v. Oklahoma* (1942).

These landmark sterilization cases became the principle moments that define the eugenics movement within the historical narrative. Legal scholar Paul A. Lombardo describes how eugenicists struggling to achieve widespread sterilization laws targeted Carry Buck, a girl unfairly deemed to be feeble-minded and used as a test case for the constitutionality of state sterilization laws. The Supreme Court supported the Virginia compulsory sterilization law and expanded the state's power to intervene on the grounds of protecting public health and safety. Lombardo argues that *Buck v. Bell* opened the door to further government intrusion into the bodily rights of its citizens through eugenic policies.⁴ Later, *Skinner v. Oklahoma* somewhat mitigated *Buck v. Bell*. Victoria Nourse, however, presents it as less of a direct response to *Buck v. Bell* because the Supreme Court largely left the prior ruling untouched and focused instead on the arbitrariness of sterilization laws. The poor were always disproportionately targeted throughout the history of eugenics and Nourse details just how discriminatory such laws were. White-collar crimes such as embezzlement were never punished by sterilization while petty crimes generally associated with poor individuals, such as stealing a chicken, could lead to sterilization. Nourse explains that it was this discriminatory aspect of sterilization laws that the Supreme Court struck down rather than states' more general powers to forcibly sterilize people. Lombardo, Nourse, and other scholars relate American eugenics directly to Nazi Germany, a connection that has garnered historical attention in recent years.⁵

⁴ Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 268.

⁵ Victoria F. Nourse, *In Reckless Hands: Skinner v. Oklahoma and the near Triumph of American Eugenics*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 86-87.

Many of these concepts are further developed by historian Wendy Kline, who examines eugenics as it changed over time as eugenicists adopted a more state-oriented approach, modifying various government entities and laws in order to facilitate mandatory sterilization policies, known as “negative eugenics.” After Nazi Germany, however, the movement was forced to distance itself from previous direct methods and instead focus on encouraging procreation by desired groups, an approach known as “positive eugenics.” Kline also argues that the American eugenics movement, while sharing certain similarities with Nazi Germany, was actually based upon markedly different beliefs, allowing American eugenics to continue after World War Two. Among the most prominent states was California, which sterilized an average of 2,273 people a year. While these works examining compulsory sterilization have done a great service to the historical study of eugenics, they have left out other aspects of the topic. Certain locations such as Illinois, as well as other implementations of eugenic policy such as institutionalization, have been relatively neglected by historians.⁶

Sterilization of undesirables, while indeed the primary goal for many within the eugenics movement, was only one of many facets of eugenic policies. Illinois utilized institutionalization rather than sterilization as its primary and most visible implementation of eugenics. After the passage of the 1915 commitment law for the feebleminded, Illinois institutionalized unprecedented numbers of people on ill-defined legal grounds to prevent them from reproducing. This, as shall be seen, was no less eugenic in nature than was sterilization. It was often more so, as it characterized individuals’ perceived shortcomings as dangerous and sought to protect the general public from both their deviant behavior and their potential offspring. Sterilization

⁶ Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 4, 124-126.

achieved the desired result of blocking propagation but left people free to live in society, while long-term institutionalization permanently deprived people of their liberty.

One institution stands out for its central role and significant effect on the wider eugenics movement: the Chicago Municipal Court. This court served as the standard, which the rest of the country followed, in centralizing and modernizing local law. The Chicago Municipal Court, itself a progressive invention, went on to act as a eugenic agency for much of the early twentieth century, especially under the direction of its first chief justice Henry Olson. Olson, a fervent eugenicist, went on to create the first court-affiliated Psychopathic Laboratory. This laboratory served as a testing ground for eugenic theory, seeking to prove hereditary links between criminality, feeble-mindedness and mental disorders. The findings of this laboratory were used to scientifically support many eugenics theories, leading to many future eugenic measures and policies.

The importance of the Chicago Municipal Court, its first chief justice, and the Psychopathic Laboratory in the formation of the eugenics movement has not gone unnoticed. Michael Willrich's book *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* and his article, "The Two Percent Solution: Eugenic Jurisprudence and the Socialization of American Law, 1900-1930" stand out as the most prominent works on this topic. "The Two Percent Solution" in particular is a detailed yet concise examination into what Willrich terms the "eugenic jurisprudence" of the Chicago municipal court, which he defines as "the aggressive mobilization of government and legal institutions in pursuit of eugenic goals."⁷ Willrich shows how the municipal court served as the institution from which the eugenics movement could

⁷ Michael Willrich, "The Two Percent Solution: Eugenic Jurisprudence and the Socialization of American Law, 1900-1930." *Law and History Review* Volume 16, number 1 (1998): 63-111.

dictate policy and intervene in the lives of those within its jurisdiction, a model which was then imitated by other jurisdictions. *City of Courts* goes into depth about the intent behind the judicial reforms of the early twentieth century, placing them into historical context and highlighting the goals set forth by those who lobbied for the court's creation. Willrich argues that changes within the legal system, coinciding with the progressive and eugenic movements, led to a system built for greater government interference and therefore it was perfect for instituting eugenic measures at the discretion of those leading it. This study expands upon many of Willrich's arguments, highlighting ways in which judicial matters within the state of Illinois permeated into every other aspect of eugenics within the state.⁸ The court system, while hugely influential, was largely dependent upon various other groups to function as a eugenic agency. In this thesis these groups will be termed the "progressive reformers," which encompasses various charities, political affiliates, and movements in Progressive-era, and the "experts," individuals within the legal and medical community who were vital for giving eugenic policy credibility. Most prominent among the progressive reformers were various women's groups that were vital in promoting and implementing eugenic policies. Among the experts, psychologists and psychiatrists played a major role in dictating the course of the eugenics movement. Previous scholars have documented the importance of both groups within both Illinois and the country at large, to the eugenics movement.

Patrick Almond Curtis and Michael A. Rembis, are among the few historians to have written about eugenics in Illinois. Both fixate heavily on the involvement of experts and progressive reformers in the movement. In a 1994 article entitled "*I Ain't Been Reading While*

⁸ Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

on Parole': Experts, Mental Tests, and Eugenic Commitment Law in Illinois, 1890-1940,"

Rembis discusses the important and often unappreciated role of women in shaping the eugenics movement. Several prominent organizations such as the Chicago's Women's Group were vital in lobbying for progressive reform in Illinois. Progressive reformers played an interesting role within the eugenics movement because they often supported eugenic measures due to their concern with the rehabilitation of downtrodden individuals. Rembis details progressive reformers' often contradictory actions in support of eugenic policies, as well as the gradual incorporation of eugenic ideas into the various groups.⁹ Curtis's 1983 Ph.D. dissertation, *Eugenic Reformers, Cultural Perceptions of Dependent Populations, and the Care of the Feeble-minded in Illinois* remains one of the most comprehensive analyses of eugenics within Illinois. Curtis details ways in which reformers both successfully lobbied for laws and carried out eugenic actions in conjunction with other institutions such as the Lincoln State School, the largest institution for the feeble-minded in Illinois and the second largest such institution in the country. The connections among institutions, government agencies, and reformers reveals their cooperation in pursuit of progressive social goals including those of a eugenic nature.¹⁰

Anne Meis Knupfer discussed similar matters in her 2001 book, *Reform and Resistance* and her 2000 article, "To become good, Self-Supporting Women": The State Industrial School for Delinquent Girls at Geneva, Illinois, 1900-1935." These works concerning the care of feeble-minded children in early twentieth-century Illinois examine the goals of and ideologies of various reformers, experts, and institutions. Institutions such as the Illinois State Training School

⁹ Michael A. Rembis, "'I Ain't been Reading while on Parole': Experts, Mental Tests, and Eugenic Commitment Law in Illinois, 1890-1940." *History of Psychology* Volume 7, number 3 (2008): 225-247.

¹⁰ Patrick Almond Curtis, "Eugenic Reformers, Cultural Perceptions of Dependent Populations, and the Care of the Feeble-minded in Illinois, 1909-1920." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago 1983.

for Girls at Geneva were frequently visited and discussed by reformers. Knupfer argues that the reformers played a substantial role in the care of, and decision-making for, targeted youth. She also shows how reformers acted in conjunction with court entities, such as the juvenile court, as they sought to introduce a more individualized rehabilitative approach within the legal system. Knupfer connects issues that were important to reformers of the time such as deviance, delinquency, and sexual promiscuity to eugenic policy, demonstrating the wide range of topics that encompassed the Illinois eugenics movement.¹¹

Both Rembis and Curtis discuss the influence of experts on the eugenics movement. However, Ingrid G. Farreras' article, "Clara Harrison Town and the Origins of the First Institutional Commitment for the 'Feeble-minded': Psychologists as expert diagnosticians," serves as a far more comprehensive examination into the extensive influence psychologists and other experts had on eugenic policies. Farreras, a psychologist who has written extensively on the early history of American psychology, makes an interesting and well researched argument that although the new field of psychology was unprepared to make meaningful distinctions in matters such as intelligence and other heritable factors, psychologists were still eager to assert themselves within a medical community that was skeptical about their utility. She argues that these psychologists were pressured to render diagnoses to explain behavior they were poorly equipped to understand.¹²

¹¹ Anne Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance: Gender, Delinquency, and America's First Juvenile Court* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹² Ingrid G. Farreras, "Clara Harrison town and the Origins of the First Institutional Commitment Law for the 'Feeble-minded': Psychologists as Expert Diagnosticians. *History of Psychology*, Volume 17, number 4 (2013): 14-16.

While previous studies have gone a long way to document Illinois' importance, there is still much to be discussed. Eugenics played a much broader role in defining the course of American history than the attention it has received would indicate. Likewise, Illinois played a large role in shaping American eugenics, deserving further exploration and examination. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate that case. Placing Illinois within the wider study of eugenics allows for an analysis that goes far beyond the topic of sterilization, which currently dominates much of the historical narrative.

Chapter 2: Systems Built by Reformers Become the Tools of Eugenics

America, especially its urban centers, strained mightily under the pressures inflicted upon it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fears abounding from rising crime and antagonistic anarchistic and socialist groups served to spark unease throughout the country, amplified by rising child mortality and rampant disease, all of which began to influence the image of industrial cities.¹³ Progressive reformers, while relatively small in number, had disproportionate influence throughout this period, particularly in Chicago. They were united in their desire to address the issues that plagued society. Rejecting prior laissez-faire attitudes that defined civic philosophy, progressives sought to mobilize government and private philanthropic organizations to combat their targeted issues. The perception that the urban environment had degraded consumed traditional concepts of individual responsibility; the downtrodden individual was no longer perceived as being capable of handling his own affairs and instead needed aid and intervention. This intervention, conceived to be benign, instead would open individuals to harm, setting the precedent for further intrusion by groups such as eugenicists into private affairs. Reformers created a system of intrusive government, ushering in experts of various kinds including psychologists, with the goal of bringing about a transition to a compassionate society based upon ideals of science and progress.¹⁴

Notions of self-reliance with little government interference in social welfare dominated government policy for most of the previous history of the United States. The individual, perceived as having a large degree of self-determination, was deemed responsible for his own

¹³ Duncan McKim, *Heredity and Human Progress*. (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1900), 30-35.

¹⁴ Joan Gittens, *Poor Relations: The Children of the State in Illinois, 1818-1990*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 5-7.

decisions and their outcomes. Governments and the judicial system paid little attention to environmental factors that influenced these actions and outcomes, and treated individuals as being directly responsible for their own behavior and welfare. The community's welfare fell within the realm of private entities, religious institutions, and charitable organizations. But during the latter half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century waves of immigration and escalating urbanization challenged traditional notions of limited government interactions with the individual. Private entities and an apathetic governmental structure increasingly became perceived as incapable of coping with a changing America. Crime, poverty, and disease brought about by cramped, inhospitable urban living conditions began to concern many Americans. There was a growing fear that such observable changes were indicative of a general national degradation. Disfranchised urban masses started to be viewed as an existential threat which, if left unaddressed, would spell doom for the nation. Events such as the violent Pullman Strike in Chicago in 1894 reinforced such fears.¹⁵ Laissez-faire approaches to addressing social problems were no longer considered adequate. Instead, such problems required a more hands-on approach, utilizing modern science and technology to address social concerns.

The progressive reformers who advocated this hands-on approach were largely white, middle- to upper-class, and Protestant. While termed progressive by name, they were often somewhat socially conservative, lamenting the loss of a prior morality and social stability brought on by the myriad changes taking place in American society.¹⁶ Progressive reformers saw a way to better the situation of the impoverished but also to improve them morally, by extension improving society. Both the people who embodied social ills and the environment that caused

¹⁵ McKim, *Heredity and Human Progress*. 31.

¹⁶ Edwin Sutherland, *Criminology* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924), 128-133.

them needed reform. To progressives reformers, the government and the judicial system would have to address these facts, a view that led to the movements for reform that would define the era. Illinois, and particularly Chicago, was a hotbed of progressive action, being both a driving force and an example the rest of the nation soon followed. Chicago, the second largest city in the country at that time, had no shortage of associated societal ills to stir up enthusiasm for progressive action. Reformers, eager to utilize the power of the government to address their growing concerns, quickly sought to rework the government for such purposes. In particular, the judicial system's need for reform was prioritized. Reformers believed that concern for the situation of the individual was sorely lacking in the court system, which penalized individuals but made little effort to render any form of treatment for those it punished.

Within the court system, the situation of children, in particular, was perceived as abhorrently unjust, as at that time children after the age of ten were tried as adults.¹⁷ This led to the placement of a significant number of children within the criminal justice system, which to progressives irrevocably damaged their prospects of becoming functioning members of society.¹⁸ Underlining this concern was the belief that children could not be held completely responsible for their actions. In a just society dependents, especially children, should be treated with care, not simply given meaningless punishment. The judicial system therefore needed to be changed, making it more concerned with the welfare of the individual. In Illinois this idea materialized in the 1899 Juvenile Court Act, which created the nation's first juvenile court in Chicago. This legislation, spearheaded by various reform groups, legal professionals, and social science experts, brought about the realization of many progressive goals. The juvenile court marked one

¹⁷ Victoria Getis, *The Juvenile Court and the Progressives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 44.

¹⁸ Edwin Sutherland, *Criminology*, 283-288.

of the first major transitions that would eventually facilitate subsequent eugenic actions because it brought into public view many of the individuals who would be targeted by eugenicists.

While the new juvenile court represented a considerable increase in government involvement in the lives of children, it did little to dissuade progressives from their philanthropic endeavors and instead worked with them toward common goals. Charitable groups even supplemented government spending, paying the salaries of parole officers during the first years of the court's operation and at times working side by side with them.¹⁹ Interaction with parolees and their assigned officers constituted a large part of progressives' involvement with the court. Reformers perceived their involvement as necessary to ensure proper care and guidance for at-risk children and to steer children away from their prior bad behaviors and toward more productive actions, leading to their eventual integration into proper society. This demonstrates a change in focus, from punishing individual behavior to treating the causes of such behavior.²⁰ Progressive reformers and the new juvenile court sought to understand the reasons that led to negative behaviors. To this end, they sought assistance from those within the scientific community, in particular psychologists, to conduct an examination into the causes of deviancy and delinquency.

The desire to identify causal factors of negative behaviors led to the creation of the Psychopathic Laboratory, which was adjoined to the juvenile court in 1909 and funded by progressives for its first five years.²¹ The new laboratory was headed by William Healy, a prominent psychologist with connections to the eugenics movement. Seeking to pinpoint the

¹⁹ Gitten, *Poor Relations*, 40-48.

²⁰ William Healy, "The Individual Study of the Young Criminal." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* Volume 1, number 1 (1910): 50-62.

²¹ Gittens, *Poor Relations*, 121.

nature of deviancy and its causation, as well to suggest potential treatments, Healy coordinated with his wealthy progressive benefactor Ethel Dummer to devise several tests for children.²² These included several iterations of intelligence tests, special cognitive tasks, and family histories in an attempt to isolate variables unique to deviant individuals and determine whether they were of a hereditary or environmental nature. The cooperation between progressives and experts in investigating the cause of societal problems mirrors events at the state level, as at that time increasing pressure was being placed upon psychology to explain behavior so that new measures could be implemented to rein in a perceived rampant rise in deviancy. This interest in causation led to progressives rubbing shoulders with eugenicists, as such concepts elicited discussions of hereditary causes, which was a topic eugenicists were eager to discuss. Eugenicists used rhetoric disguised as science to argue that feeble-mindedness, insanity, and epilepsy were responsible for the degradation, deviancy, and poverty that progressives wanted to reform. Although they were more inclined to presuppose the environmental causes of social ills, progressives nevertheless placed eugenicists into positions of authority, who then used their powers to commission official studies and used state outlets to push out eugenic propaganda. In turn progressives, having confidence in expertise and seeking to be in line with scientific reasoning, became susceptible to various eugenic arguments.²³

Like dependent children those with mental illness also caught the attention of progressives who then turned to experts in order to formulate systems for their proper care. Previously the care of the mentally ill had been largely done by private institutions. However, these institutions often resorted to placing patients in public almshouses, which gave little

²² William Healy, *The Individual Delinquent: A Text-Book of Diagnosis and Prognosis for All Concerned In Understanding Offenders* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917), 35-37, 124,141.

²³ Gittens, *Poor Relations*, 184-185.

consideration for their conditions.²⁴ The lack of government action in caring for the mentally ill, like the care of dependent children, was an affront to progressive sensibilities. In 1907 a coalition of experts, reformers and legal professionals supported the passage of new legislation that allowed the transfer of insane individuals from almshouses and private residences to state hospitals and institutions, often by force.²⁵ This law formalized the progressive principle that insane dependents fell within the state's responsibility and encouraged families to give up their loved ones to state care in order to treat their mental diseases.²⁶ The labeling of mental illness as a disease furthered reformers' interest in studying its causation. They believed that, like deviancy, insanity was on the rise and represented a public safety concern.²⁷ This in turn advanced the integration of experts drawn increasingly from the booming new field of psychology, who moved into what was previously deemed to be the realm of charity. The transition from charity to identifying and treating the causes of mental illness brought in discussions of heredity. Eugenicians integrated themselves into institutions of care and became involved in discussions surrounding the causes of dependency and deviancy. With their integration came opportunities for eugenicians to commandeer platforms that were initially designed to care for society's weakest members and turn them into ways to assert the danger that such individuals posed to society.

Eugenicians' subversion of progressive reforms often occurred through their integration alongside legitimate scientific experts. Eugenicians masquerading as experts were brought in to address areas of concern for progressives, and concerns regarding the care of the feeble-minded

²⁴ Albert Deutsch. *The Mentally Ill in America: A History of Their Care And Treatment From Colonial Times*. (Garden City NJ: Doubleday, Doren & Company, 1938), 246-251.

²⁵ *Twenty-First Fractional Biannual Report of the Board of State Commissions of Public Charities of the State of Illinois* (1908-1909): 330-333.

²⁶ *Twenty-First Biannual Report*, 301-302.

²⁷ *Twenty-First Biannual Report*, 303.

provided them with ample opportunity. Defining “feeble-mindedness” is mostly an exercise in futility. It was often most closely associated with subpar intelligence, the determination of which was made through the application of various intelligence tests, most often derived from Henry Goddard’s translation of the Binet Simons Test.²⁸ However, the tests eugenicists utilized were a very poor indicator of intelligence because they were not actually designed to measure what those applying who applied the tests sought to examine. Healy described the situation neatly:

Those who think that this measures general ability apart from schooling and other advantages should read Binet himself on the subject. He goes so far to say that the scales as he produced it embodies the norm for schools of Paris and poorer districts. He finds that easy circumstance is correlated with higher intellectual development, the pupils of a private school, for instance, showing an average of a year and a half advance on his norms. The findings are always to be interpreted in the light of physiological conditions and of influence of past poverty and other experiences. Binet would have been one of the first to agree to this.²⁹

When this test was given to several prominent city officials it showed most of them to be subpar. Nevertheless, such testing constituted a substantial portion of examinations for feeble-mindedness. Healy, while at times an advocate of eugenics, eventually broke from the movement, which led to him becoming a counterweight to other examiners such as Dr. Town. Healy’s reluctance to trust intelligence testing as his main indicator put him in the minority among his peers, however, as intelligence testing dominated discussions of feeble-mindedness for

²⁸ James Mursell, *Psychological Testing* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1947), 100-101.

²⁹ Healy, *The Individual Delinquent*, 80-81.

most of the early twentieth century. Feeble-mindedness was truly an arbitrary label. It became associated with numerous unassociated factors including sexual promiscuity, alcohol use, laziness, poverty, disobedience, deviancy, tuberculosis, syphilis, and countless others. It was deemed at different times as a cause, product, or indicator of feeble-mindedness, often interchangeably if doing so was convenient.³⁰ The mere indication of an ailment could lead to intelligence testing, carried out in schools, hospitals, courts, or a number of other institutions that made up the newly forming progressive government apparatus. These tests, at best very poor descriptors of intelligence, failed to account for factors such as culture, reading comprehension, or English language skills, undoubtedly leading to numerous faulty diagnoses targeting the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.³¹

But it was the very arbitrariness of the term “feeble-mindedness” that appealed to eugenicists, who used it as a catch-all phrase and claimed it to be responsible for all manner of social ills. They believed both that subpar intellect was genetically transferable to offspring and that feeble-minded people reproduced exponentially faster than normal populations due to their innate degeneracy.³² This then led to an increase in the population of individuals who could not tell right from wrong, good choices from bad, inflicting on society the various ills which progressives intended to stamp out.³³ The problem of feeble-mindedness would, therefore, have a cascading effect through future generations, as the guiding force of natural selection no longer served its purpose in a modern setting.³⁴ It would lead to ever-increasing numbers of individuals whom eugenicists believed were responsible for disproportionate crimes, diseases, and other

³⁰ Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance*, 148-151.

³¹ Healy, *The Delinquent Individual*, 81-82.

³² Alexander Johnson, “Institution Quarterly,” 227.

³³ Henry H. Goddard, *The Hereditary Factor in Feeble-mindedness*, 11-12.

³⁴ McKim, *Heredity and Human Progress*, 3.

social ills.³⁵ The proposed solution to the feeble-minded was institutionalization, as only that could protect both the present society and the society of the future as well.

Feeble-minded individuals therefore became the primary targets of eugenic measures. The proposed solution was segregation from the general population through institutionalization rather than sterilization, a measure that never caught on in Illinois due to a wide variety of factors. Some perceived the surgical sterilization methods used in states such as Indiana to be barbarous. Many within the progressive and scientific communities doubted that such drastic measures being carried out in many states were constitutional.³⁶ In Illinois, eugenicists and progressive reformers alike preferred to create institutions and then find a way to force the feeble-minded into them. This, however, posed a problem because there existed only one major institution for the feeble-minded in the state, the Lincoln State School and Colony, which although it was the second most prominent institution of its kind in the country still housed only a few thousand people. Additional institutions would be needed to fulfill the new demand for institutionalizing the feeble-minded. Compounding this issue was the fact that the Lincoln School was unable to permanently accommodate its juvenile residents, housing them only until they were eighteen. Changes to both the laws and the number of institutions were needed, and eugenicists believed they needed to compile enough supporting research to influence public support for such measures. This research would come primarily from places where they already had considerable influence, most prominently the Chicago Municipal Court and its Psychopathic Laboratory, headed by the ardent eugenicist Chief Justice Harry Olson.

³⁵ Nicole Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 37, 137-140.

³⁶ *Institution Quarterly* (1910), 36.

Chapter 3: The Court

If, as so argued in the previous chapter, the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century was the natural extension of elements within progressive ideology and reforms, the court system was the primary way in which such eugenic elements were manifested. Although most studies concentrate on Supreme Court rulings, and *Buck v. Bell* was undoubtedly the most important example of judicial involvement in eugenic policy, the primary interactions between the population and eugenic policy took place in state courts, especially in Illinois. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Illinois pioneered various court reforms that were, in turn, implemented throughout the nation. As the first state to create specialized juvenile courts, integrated psychiatric laboratories, and a municipal judicial system, Illinois was the model for the rest of the states' court structures. Progressives, encouraged by their desire to address the causes of societal ailments, adapted notions of the state's police power responsibilities to mobilize the courts of Illinois against deviancy and its perceived genetic root cause. This intrinsic link between reforms implemented in Illinois and eugenic policies would subsequently spread to the states that followed its example. The courts, their policies, and eugenic intentions are therefore key examples of the wide-reaching eugenic influence of Illinois.

Before the introduction of juvenile court systems, those accused above the age of ten were tried in traditional courts. This was a shocking notion to progressive sensibilities, which in turn mobilized a collective movement of prominent individuals, including Jane Addams of Hull House, to push for a separate court for accused youth.³⁷ The desire for a separate court entity was based on the reasonable belief that youth could not be held to the same standard of

³⁷ Knupfer, "Reform and Resistance", 1.

responsibilities as adults and courts must take into consideration the personal situations, struggles, and aptitudes of young offenders. It is important to highlight the fundamental shift from traditional principles of individual determination to an adherence to a more humanitarian style of reforms, which began here, as it set up an essential transition for eugenic action to come. In the opening years of the twentieth century Chicago was a city on the rise. Its population was growing rapidly, with new arrivals coming from throughout the United States and the world. While the population boom coincided with a rise in importance for Chicago, it also presented various difficulties of legally administering a population of two and a half million inhabitants. The sheer size of the city began to overwhelm traditional courts, which coincided with a view by many that such courts were not correctly serving local needs. This then led to a coalition of reformers and legal professionals to lobby for the creation of a centralized municipal court system for Chicago, which was proposed in 1905.³⁸ The bill was supported by seventy-two members of the Chicago Bar, including the future Chief Justice of the proposed court, Harry Olson.³⁹ The bill was ambitious in scope, as it sought wide-ranging jurisdiction and privileges for its judges, especially the Chief Justice, who would be entrusted with immense sway over the proposed court and municipality. Olson was previously an assistant state's attorney who attempted a run at being Chicago's mayor with the backing of various progressive groups and individuals. In that venture Olson was unsuccessful and instead he found himself Chief Justice of the first municipal court, with unprecedented power compared to his contemporaries.⁴⁰ This power was augmented by the support of his fellow judges, as Olson's political party, the Republicans, who at that time were the party for the progressively minded electorate, won all but

³⁸ Gilbert *Municipal Court of Chicago*, 27.

³⁹ Gilbert, "Municipal Court of Chicago," 75.

⁴⁰ Willrich, "The Two Percent Solution," 5.

one of the initial associate judge positions in the November 1906 elections.⁴¹ With like-minded judges and a city ready for reform, Olson used his new position and its various outlets as a platform to advocate for his progressive views, chief among them being his deeply rooted eugenic principles.⁴²

Expounding upon principles first highlighted in the 1899 establishment of the Juvenile Court, Olson used his role as Chief Justice to create various other entities to better serve the perceived vulnerable members of society, namely women and underaged dependents. Regarding adolescents, Olson created the aptly named Boys Court to hear cases of individuals beyond the age of sixteen, which was the cutoff age for trial in the juvenile court. This court enlarged the segments of society deemed unfit to be tried by the full extent of the law and granted the presiding judge more leeway in administering sentences on an individual basis.⁴³ Similar examples could be observed in the 1913 creation of the Morals Court, which primarily handled cases of prostitution, and the Domestic Relations Court, which handled family matters such as divorce. The latter two examples highlight concepts displayed frequently within progressive ideology, concern for the degradation of society and particularly of family units.⁴⁴ The purpose of such courts was primarily rehabilitative, seeking to address societal issues in a more carefully focused manner.⁴⁵ Before permanent institutionalization was possible very little could be done eugenically within the court besides collecting data to eventually support a correlation between crime and genetics and to report on such information.

⁴¹ Gilbert, *"Municipal Court of Chicago,"* 85.

⁴² Willrich, *"The Two Percent Solution,"* 2.

⁴³ Willrich, *The Two Percent Solution*, 6.

⁴⁴ Amelia Sears, "The Needy Family and the State" *Institution Quarterly (1915)*: 210-213.

⁴⁵ David Tanenhaus, *The Constitutional Rights of Children: In re Gault and Juvenile Justice* (Lawrence KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 4.

In terms of its effect on the overall trajectory of eugenics in Illinois, the creation of the Psychopathic Laboratory within the juvenile court by Chief Justice Olson and his associates marks a turning point. In 1909 Illinois became the first state to create a psychopathic laboratory that operated within a court. The program was headed by Dr. William Healy, a prominent figure within eugenic circles, who also served on the Eugenics Committee of the Illinois State Conference on Charity and Corrections.⁴⁶ However, the juvenile court's laboratory was largely overshadowed in terms of research and data collection initially by the rise of the municipal court's laboratory under Dr. William Hickson. Hickson, when compared to Healy, was a more adamant eugenicist, being far more interested than Healy was in making a clear connection between deviancy and genetics.⁴⁷ Both Hickson and Olson saw criminal behavior and various social issues as the result of genetic abnormalities. The solution to the crime problem therefore was not the traditional system of law enforcement and judicial procedure. Instead, it was a matter of treating the root causes inflicting the population through the application of the emerging science of psychology.⁴⁸ Before appointment on the municipal court, Hickson had spent considerable time working in various institutions throughout Europe and worked under Henry Goddard at an institution for the feebleminded.⁴⁹ This gave him a wide range of experience with the type of tests he would be administering for the municipal court, although he was not scared to put his own spin on them nor to draw his own conclusions. These varied somewhat, but primarily encompassed a series of memory tests and an iteration of the Binet Simons test to check for mental aptitude, as well as various examinations for other mental ailments. While controversial,

⁴⁶ Willrich, *The Two Percent Solution*, 10.

⁴⁷ Anne Knupfer. *Reform And Resistance: Gender, Delinquency, And America's First Juvenile Court*. (New York: Routledge), 35-37.

⁴⁸ *Tenth and Eleventh Annual Reports of the Municipal Court of Chicago: For the Years December 1915 to December 1918, inclusive* (Chicago: Municipal Court of Chicago), 124-125.

⁴⁹ Willrich, "Two Percent Solution," 11.

these tests and their results were later used by the court as a determinant for institutionalization, and were purported to be scientific evidence supporting connections between deviancy and genetic causes.

Under Olson's direction and Hickson's administration, the laboratory took on a more significant role than the testing of deviants for signs of feeble-mindedness or other mental impairments. Most importantly it served as the nation's foremost data collector regarding eugenic matters. As Hickson stated in the *Report of the Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago*, "The work of the laboratory has been not only of a practical but also of an experimental or research nature."⁵⁰ The laboratory of the municipal court, being one of the earliest and the largest of its kind, was in a unique position to chart the course of the eugenics movement. The laboratory could run experiments and collect data at a level Hickson claimed "no medical school could afford," benefiting from a substantial judicial budget of over seven million dollars.⁵¹ With a police force of five thousand he equated to agents "bringing the material to the laboratory," tens of thousands of individuals were subjected to his wide range of tests.⁵² From the first of May 1914 to April 30th 1917 the laboratory inspected over four thousand cases, the bulk of which emerged from Chief Justice Olson's specialized courts, with the Boys Court itself accounting for around half of the cases reviewed.⁵³ The great latitude afforded to Hickson and Olson, especially after the 1915 commitment act which allowed for permanent institutionalization of feeble-minded at the discretion of the judge, as well as access to the criminal population of America's second largest city, provided the chance to collect data in order

⁵⁰ *Municipal Court Records*, 124.

⁵¹ *Municipal Court Records*, 10.

⁵² *Municipal Court Records*, 10.

⁵³ *Municipal Court Records*, 12.

to substantiate controversial eugenic actions, including institutionalization in Illinois as well as sterilization programs outside that state.⁵⁴ It was the purported task of the laboratory to accumulate evidence in order to both validate eugenic actions and remove doubts obstructing the further expansion of such measures.⁵⁵

To this end, both Olson and Hickson frequently engaged in open dialogue about the municipal court's laboratory findings. Large portions of the court's annual reports were transformed into blatant propaganda supporting court actions regarding eugenics while presenting evidence to support the perceived link between inherited genetic features and various forms of deviancy. Judges from the various municipal court subdivisions lent their support to eugenic measures and the findings of the laboratory. Harry P. Dolan and John A. Swanson of the Boys Court reported that "the key to the big and vital problem of the Boys Court is the problem of checking and stamping out crime in its beginning by segregating those who have been marked with a sinister heredity as a certain and dangerous menace to society."⁵⁶ Here there can be seen a clear movement away from matters of rehabilitation. Prior measures such as probation were increasingly becoming discredited as eugenicists claimed such policies were nearly completely ineffective when applied to individuals suffering from ailments such as dementia praecox or feeble-mindedness.⁵⁷

As the laboratory staff worked tirelessly to collect useable data, they also sought to expand the descriptors of those deemed deviant or unfit to the point of arbitrariness.⁵⁸ For

⁵⁴ Robert H. Gault, "Prospective Laboratories for the Study of Criminals," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 3 (1913).

⁵⁵ Foley, Edward A. "The Value of Vital Statistics to the Eugenic Movement." *Institution Quarterly* (1913)

⁵⁶ *Municipal Court Records*, 80.

⁵⁷ *Municipal Court Records*, 91-92.

⁵⁸ J. E. Wallace Wallin. "Who Is Feeble Minded?" *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* Volume 6, number 5 (1916).

example, tuberculosis became a hereditary indicator of feeble-mindedness.⁵⁹ Additionally, being related to a prostitute or getting poor results in school were factors the laboratory sought to connect with feeble-mindedness and by extension the “correlated field of delinquency.”⁶⁰ The nature of what indicated a suitable reason for the court to test an individual expanded during Hickson’s tenure. Most of the individuals who were given intelligence tests received low scores; among twenty thousand subjects who appeared in the Boys Court, seventy percent were classified as “high-grade moron” or lower.⁶¹ This conflicted with data from Hickson’s contemporary, however. When comparing similar sample sizes Hickson’s rate of feeble-mindedness was thirty points higher than Healy’s, perhaps indicating the variability between tests or else the unreliability of their testing methods, or more likely, bias by one of the researchers.⁶² Regardless of the validity of their methods of testing, the effect of the laboratories was the institutionalization of thousands and the perception among significant segments of the American public that crime and hereditary were intrinsically linked. The number that would have been institutionalized was much smaller than it could have been as well, as the real deterring factor to mass institutionalization for the municipal court was restraint due to limited resources for the laboratory to conduct further tests and a shortage of institutions and funds to house and provide for large numbers of individuals they would institutionalize otherwise.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Municipal Court Records*, 152.

⁶⁰ *Municipal Court Records*, 131.

⁶¹ Annual Report 161 See also; Anne T. Bingham, "Determinants of Sex Delinquency in Adolescent Girls Based on Intensive Studies of 500 Cases," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 13 (1923).

⁶² William Healy. "The Problem of the Causation of Criminality." *Institution Quarterly* 3 (February 1913) 108.

⁶³ "How Easy to Commit a Sane Person." *Institution Quarterly* 7 (June 1916) 12.

Chapter 3: Utilizing New Connections

Data compiled and published by the Chicago Municipal Court was directly responsible for swaying public opinion regarding the necessity for eugenic action. Portrayals that supposed genetic deficiencies, particularly feeble-mindedness, to be an existential threat while such individuals were free, as well as the potential of their progeny overtaking society, began to find legitimacy within public discourse. The flare-up of eugenic fervor that was instigated by the court's findings and rhetoric was amplified by concurring information from those leading the state's institutions, which eugenicists had also commandeered.

Reforms pushed by progressives to increase state involvement in charitable institutions and to better incorporate experts, namely psychologists, many of whom were sympathetic to the eugenics cause, led to a sharp increase in eugenic rhetoric coming from such institutions. This change was observable in the publications issued by these institutions as well as reports from the newly formed Board of Administration that superseded authority from the State Charities Commission in 1910. Direct supervision of state charitable institutions rose from five to seventeen, bringing nine thousand more residents under state authority.⁶⁴ *Institution Quarterly*, the new publication from the Board of Administration, filled the first of its volumes with a discussion about hereditary versus environmental factors in deficient individuals, heavily favoring the side of heredity.⁶⁵ The publication went on to endorse segregation as a substitute for natural selection and urged cooperation with private groups and charities in compiling data in an effort to prove casual heredity links. It is clear that the eugenic tone already present in prior state charities' publications was further amplified after the transition to a more centralized state

⁶⁴ *Institution Quarterly* 1910 1-4.

⁶⁵ *Institution Quarterly* 1910 1-4.

authority.⁶⁶ The 1913 report, for example, contained an entire section devoted to a symposium on eugenics, compiled and partially authored by Dr. Clara Harrison Town, a prominent advocate of eugenic policy.⁶⁷ Town, who was the residing psychologist at the Lincoln State School and Colony, had greatly influenced the treatment of the feeble-minded, was regarded as one of the state's foremost experts on the topic. Her enthusiastic eugenic support proved crucial in implementing eugenic policies which were beginning to gain momentum. Progressives, being linked through their charitable work in both the courts and the institutions, likewise took notice of Town's findings. Overwhelmingly the institutions they created, financed, and gave credibility to were beginning to become agencies for eugenic policy. This had considerable effects on the ongoing actions of various progressive entities.⁶⁸ Although many progressives remained tied to notions of environmental rather than hereditary causation, the persistence of eugenic rhetoric amounted to the tacit approval of many prominent organization and reformers.⁶⁹ Further, increased public confidence in institutions and expert evaluations of the feeble-minded also led to an increase in rhetoric, which soon became action. Eugenicians, perceiving an opportune moment, ramped up discussions about measures they had so long requested. Believing they had public support, eugenicians began openly discussing the passage of a commitment law and plans to greatly increase the number of institutions for the groups they targeted, most notably the feeble-minded.

Institutionalization was the main way in which eugenicians sought to address the problem of the feeble-minded in Illinois. Its potential use as a eugenic measure was widely recognized by

⁶⁶ *Institutional Quarterly*, (1910) 34, 37.

⁶⁷ Clara E. Hayes, "Segregation of Mental Defectives as a Preventive of Crime, Immorality and Inefficiency," *The Institution Quarterly* 6 (1915): 97.

⁶⁸ Willrich, "Two-percent solution."

⁶⁹ Gittens, *Poor Relations*, 38.

eugenicists and those associated with such institutions. Town, a prominent eugenicist and figure within the institution community due to her position at the Lincoln School, frequently made this clear saying “These institutions are, however in position to assist the eugenics movement most vitally- by totally and permanently segregating their charges and thus preventing further propagation from these feeble-minded stocks.”⁷⁰ This potential would largely be left dormant before the eventual passage of the 1915 commitment act. Utilizing institutionalization as a eugenic measure was hindered by the lack of institutions and the ability to get people within them. For the insane, a group of interest to eugenicists, it was somewhat easier because there had been various lunacy laws set forth previously that allowed the forceful placement of individuals into institutions.⁷¹

To eugenicists, however, this group was not enough. They wished to see the feeble-minded, who constituted a much larger targeted group because the condition was so vaguely defined, forced into institutions. This was not possible, however, as there were no laws like those governing cases of insanity and institutions for the feeble-minded were quite limited in Illinois. Additionally, admittance to such institutions could only be done voluntarily, and family or individual approval was necessary to keep individuals there; furthermore, individuals could not be kept past the age of eighteen.⁷² The focus of such places was care for the feeble-minded individual throughout their early years and teaching them how to adapt to life in society before releasing them into society. This care-focused approach, however, did little to limit their reproduction, as most of their reproductive life cycle would take place outside the institution.

⁷⁰ *Institution Quarterly* (1913) 52.

⁷¹ *Twenty-First Biannual Report*, 330.

⁷² Clara E. Hayes, “Segregation of Mental Defectives as a Preventive of Crime, Immorality and Inefficiency,” *The Institution Quarterly* 6 (1915): 96-98

Permanency and the ability to target feeble-minded individuals were lacking, and therefore this is what eugenicists targeted with their proposed measures. Town said it most succinctly:

Confronted with the fact that there exists among us an appalling multitude of feeble-minded individuals, unprotected and restrained and that feeble-mindedness is a hereditary condition it becomes the plain duty of society to segregate these feeble-minded, for their protection, the protection of the community and above all, for the prevention of feeble-mindedness in the next generation.⁷³

Eugenicists, and those that supported the legislation, saw the 1915 commitment act as a way to make existing institutions for the feeble-minded into eugenic agencies. They made this abundantly clear in their publications and discussions about the necessity for such legislation.⁷⁴ While support for the permanent institutionalization of the feeble-minded was sometimes portrayed as a concern for their care, it is impossible to deny that those who supported the merits of such legislation were aware of the eugenic nature of the proposition. Discussions about the need for a commitment law greatly increased in the run-up to the bill's passage in 1915. In the years 193-1915 *Institutional Quarterly's* was virtually a continuous advertisement for the institutionalization law. However, a belief in the necessity of such legislation can be observed previously in *Institutional Quarterly's* predecessor, the State Charities Commission reports, which frequently cited it as a needed change.⁷⁵

Propelled by the courts, belief in the potential of such measures reached an all-time high, with a substantial coalition of groups supporting the proposed legislation. The enthusiasm for

⁷³ McKim, "Heredity and Human Progress," 182-183.

⁷⁴ *Institution Quarterly* (1913), 11-66.

⁷⁵ *Twenty-First Biannual Report of the Board of the State* (1910): 34.

eugenic institutionalization laws, although proposed in different iterations previously, reached enough support to come to pass. Illinois, disproportionately to the rest of the country, was greatly influenced by lobbyists such as medical organizations, reform groups like the Chicago Women's Club, and various legal associations. Groups that were in some way involved in or supportive of the Chicago Municipal Court were the major lobbying powers and determined state actions to a significant extent.⁷⁶ The success of lobbyists in Illinois during this period often involved such groups banding together to push legislation using their combined influence. Obtaining as many groups as possible to lobby for proposed measures greatly increased their potential for success. In and of themselves eugenicists were not numerous enough to see through these measures. By intertwining themselves with progressive reformers, experts, and legal organizations, however, eugenicists were able to gain the political power they needed. They were able to push eugenic rhetoric past mere publication in *Institutional Quarterly* and other eugenic literature to the floor of the state legislature.

These precipitating factors led to a meeting on March 27th, 1915, where reformers, experts and legal professionals, brought together by their connections to the eugenics movement, devised a plan to formulate the bill and get it through the legislature. Notable attendees were Town, Olson and representatives from the Chicago Women's Club and other progressive reform organizations. Coordinating these differing groups was not a simple task, as there was hardly a consensus about how they should proceed. Town sought to bring psychology to the forefront of care for the feeble-minded in Illinois, making psychologists into legal experts in determining their fate.⁷⁷ Legal professionals such as Olson were openly concerned that the advancement of

⁷⁶ "Commitment of the Feeble-Minded." *institution Quarterly* 6 (1915), 50.

⁷⁷ *Getis, The Juvenile Court*, 108-109.

psychology would bring about serious legal challenges, threatening the viability of the bill.⁷⁸

Who would steer the proposed implementation of eugenic institutionalization through to its passage was clearly a point of contention. The process went on rather smoothly, with an agreement that Henry Schofield, the dean of the Northwestern Law School, would author the bill in cooperation with Town and Olson in order to manage the competing interests.⁷⁹

The bill which was eventually agreed upon would have wide-ranging consequences for the course of eugenics in Illinois. The proposed law, consistent with the eugenic goals outlined in its founding, set out permanent institutionalization for the feeble-minded, enforceable by the law and no longer voluntary. Courts would be able to test and inquire into suspected feeble-minded individuals and if they were deemed to be feeble-minded the judge had the authority to place them into an institution permanently. This allowed the judge a wide degree of flexibility and discretion in handling such cases, having the final say in determining these individuals' futures. Psychologists were made legal experts in the realm of feeble-mindedness and allowed to make formal recommendations and diagnose individuals to support the judges in their decisions.⁸⁰ Illinois was one of the first states to establish such a process and many were hesitant to trust the diagnoses of psychologists, especially when in legal proceedings. This bill formally brought together the courts and psychological experts to determine the fate of the feeble-minded, mirroring what was previously arranged in the Chicago Municipal Court. The bill also solidified the definition of "feeble-minded" with the help of Town, which by the very nature of its arbitrariness had proved difficult to legally define previously.⁸¹ A clear definition of

⁷⁸ Farreras, Clara Harrison town and the origins of the first institutional commitment law for the "feeble-minded": Psychologists as expert diagnosticians. *History of Psychology*, 17(4), (2013): 14-16

⁷⁹ Farreras "Psychologists as experts", 15.

⁸⁰ Farreras "Psychologists as experts", 13,16.

⁸¹ Farreras "Psychologists as experts",15

feeble-mindedness was instrumental in securing the bill's passage because legal determinations were based on its diagnosis. The term was left just vague enough, however, to leave room for interpretations by psychologists and judges. Diagnosing someone with feeble-mindedness now carried legal weight, and rarely before had psychologists seen such importance placed on their profession's findings. To some extent, the new law raised them to a level equal to that of other medical professionals.⁸²

This legislation was therefore a major win for psychology, appeasing the interests of Town and her contemporaries. The courts also had much to gain from this legislation because they now firmly held the power to determine the fate of those deemed feeble-minded. Judges alone would determine if individuals would be institutionalized and if they could leave.⁸³ Furthermore, the judge possessed great latitude in making his determination and was allowed to either accept the psychologists suggested actions or else entirely ignore them. Under this bill, for the first time the state would be able to institute widespread eugenic measures, enforceable by the courts. The aspirations of Illinois eugenicists had materialized into legislation, with broad implications for the course of eugenics in Illinois.

House Bill 655 was passed unanimously by the state legislature.⁸⁴ The following years were the most prominent time for eugenic action in Illinois. The bill paved the way for a major increase in the institutionalization of the feeble-minded. A second concern of those lobbying for the new law had been the need for the creation of more institutions and a higher allocation of funds to those already in operation. The new law, however, did nothing to add increase the

⁸² Walter Barton, *The History and Influence of the American Psychiatric Association* (Washington: American Psychiatric Press, 1987), 140-143.

⁸³ Willrich, "Two Percent Solution", 81.

⁸⁴ *Journal of the House of Representatives of The Fourth General Assembly of The State of Illinois*, (January 1915): 790-795.

state's capacity to house the individuals who were to be committed. Plans for further institutions to specifically serve the feeble-minded, particularly near Chicago, were frequently discussed frequently but never materialized.⁸⁵ All this meant that the institutions in place such as the Lincoln State School, which was already short staffed and inadequately funded, were now expected to house, feed and care for the thousands of feeble-minded individuals who would be sent to them after implantation of the commitment law.⁸⁶ Clearly, this posed a major challenge to the aspirations of those desiring eugenic institutionalization. Stresses on institutions for the feeble-minded proved to be so severe that many individuals were sent elsewhere, such as the Geneva School for Girls.⁸⁷

After the commitment law's passage the major influx of feeble-minded children at the Lincoln State School was a prevalent issue cited throughout its official reports, and shortages of both funding and housing were featured heavily. Potentially most troubling was that the rapid increase of children to the school led to rampant diseases, especially tuberculosis, which had already been a concern at the institution.⁸⁸ Tightly packed populations naturally create conditions where contagious diseases can thrive, and Lincoln more so than other institutions was disproportionately affected, for various reasons. Tuberculosis itself was a hot topic among eugenicists, who held varying opinions about the disease, such as whether it was heritable or at least whether genetics made individuals more susceptible to infection; some believed tuberculosis in itself caused feeble-mindedness.⁸⁹ The wide range of opinions on the topic serves to remind us that eugenicists were far from united in their opinions on a variety of factors. It also

⁸⁵ A. L. Bowen, A. L. "Legislative Provision" *Institution Quarterly* 7 (1916) 66.

⁸⁶ "One Year of the Commitment Law." *Institution Quarterly* 7 (1916) 69.

⁸⁷ "The Story of Four Girls," *Institution Quarterly* (1912) 28.

⁸⁸ "Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of The Lincoln State School and Colony," (1916): 5.

⁸⁹ William Healy, *Mental Conflicts and Misconduct*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917).

demonstrates that eugenic thought was largely devoid of real substance and was based more on correlations than any real evidence of causation. The predominant view held by eugenicists was that tuberculosis was an indicator for, rather than a cause of, feeble-mindedness. It was commonly associated with poverty and urban squalor, and therefore it was also associated with locations where feeble-mindedness was also believed to be rampant.⁹⁰ The connection between these factors led many eugenicists to presuppose a link, with various researchers seeking to prove or disprove connections.⁹¹ This meant that a disproportionate number of people suffering from tuberculosis were diagnosed as feeble-minded. The Lincoln School therefore received a disproportionately high number of individuals infected with tuberculosis. The institutions' facilities, however, were poorly equipped to deal with the disease. A lack of options for segregating infected individuals allowed the disease to spread through the institution at an alarming rate.⁹² So widespread was tuberculosis at the Lincoln School that it became a major part of that institution's legacy. Some even believed that inmates were purposefully exposed to the disease in order to kill large numbers of feeble-minded people, although there is no evidence to suggest that there was ever an intentional exposure of individuals. On the contrary, numerous portions of the biannual reports indicate that institution's leaders were aware of the problem and attempted to resolve it.⁹³

Numerous biennial reports from the Lincoln School stated tuberculosis posed an inherent risk due to the nature of the institution, calling for further funding to create special housing locations for those afflicted.⁹⁴ After securing such funds and implementation of programs to

⁹⁰ L. Bowen, "Legislative Provision for the Feeble-Minded: What Should it Be?" *Institution Quarterly* 7 (1916): 66-71.

⁹¹ "Reports of Inspections: Lincoln State School and Colony." *Institution Quarterly* 7 (1916): 93.

⁹² "Twenty-sixth Biennial Report of The Lincoln State School and Colony," Lincoln III (1916): 8.

⁹³ "Twenty-fifth Biennial Report of the Lincoln State School and Colony," Lincoln, III (1914): 5-6.

⁹⁴ "Twenty-sixth Biennial Report of The Lincoln State School and Colony," Lincoln III (1916): 12.

prevent the illness, disease rates went down, and survival rates increased. Reports of high death rates at Lincoln are not connected with purposeful attempts to harm the residents, as a disproportionate number of those dying from the disease arrived at the institution already infected.⁹⁵ There is no reason to suggest any neglect or foul play as a causal factor in these deaths. There is an excellent indication that those running Lincoln were both aware of the problem and sought to handle it promptly but they were held back by a lack of funding and resources, which had already plagued the institution for decades prior to the new commitment law's passage.⁹⁶

Eugenicists' theories of genetics, behavior, and feeble-mindedness were wrong, based upon faulty logic and bad science, and this led directly to many people suffering horrible consequences. This does not necessarily mean, however, that those who sent individuals to these institutions had bad intentions; they often had good ones. These intentions came to mean little, however, as people confined within the institutions were forced to live their lives in isolation, exposed to disease, and subjected to constant testing. Eugenics in Illinois is not a tale of murder and conspiracy. Instead, it is the story of good intentions, from progressive reformers, experts, legal professionals, and even eugenicists themselves. These groups let poor logic, inadequate research, and an unquestioning acceptance of eugenic theory get the better of them, leading to horrific consequences that affected the lives of thousands of people. It is a story worth remembering.

From eugenicists' perspective the Lincoln School served as the most essential institution in the state, yet it was far from the only one which elicited their interest. The State Industrial

⁹⁵ *Twenty-sixth Biennial Report of The Lincoln State School and Colony*, (1916): 8.

⁹⁶ Getis, *The Juvenile Court*, 20-24.

School for Girls in Geneva, while not conceptualized initially for eugenic purposes, or even for treating feeble-minded individuals, ended up being associated with both due to the changing nature of institutions throughout the state. Analysis of the Geneva school shows the lengths eugenicists and psychologists would go to in order to link negative behaviors and breaches of societal norms to hereditary deficiencies. Unlike Lincoln, Geneva was not often perceived as a location for permanent institutionalization for those living there, serving more as a transitional location where deviants would be kept and treated and often studied in the attempt to link their behaviors to genetic traits. Girls who rebellious, difficult, or feeble-minded would find themselves sent to Lincoln.⁹⁷ Various reformers had an interest into rehabilitating these girls, which contrasted with the psychologists' experiments and the numerous reformers who abandoned any notions of rehabilitation.⁹⁸ This shows that, while such groups advanced eugenic measures such as the 1915 commitment law, there was still a vast divide in opinion on the treatment of targeted individuals. Geneva shows the struggle of psychologists to substantiate their claims and reveals the lengths they would go to defend their belief that genetic defects were responsible for various behaviors.

Finding connections between heredity and behavior was always a principal goal to eugenicists as their policies were sold to the American public as counter measures for social ills. Much of their support therefore depended on substantiating their claims. Deviancy and delinquency were the cause of great concern among progressive-minded individuals and by extension were also the focus of many eugenic studies, including studies conducted at Geneva. Psychologists at that institution were under enormous pressure to diagnose the girls sent there,

⁹⁷ Knupfer, *Reform and Resistance*, 151-152.

⁹⁸ Gittens, *Poor Relations*, 175-176.

which often led to girls being labeled as feeble-minded, the go-to explanation for negative behavior. That diagnosis was sometimes supplemented by additional diagnoses of hysteria or other mental illnesses.⁹⁹ Proving feeble-mindedness appeared to be psychologists' primary objective, but in cases where girls either passed the tests or otherwise avoided being labeled as feeble-minded other terms began to be utilized to show they were subject to some form of heritable mental illness which explained their behavior. Observations from Geneva show how shallow the arguments made by eugenicists were in order to validate their view that heredity was responsible for behavioral issues.

Girls brought to Geneva were subject to a strange transitional time in American history. Concepts of deviancy and delinquency were understood as diseases and their treatment was carried out in hospital settings. Psychology, proposing itself as capable of explaining behavior, was expected to deliver results, and the psychologists at Geneva sought to diagnose girls for a broad range of behaviors using very limited methods for scientific measurement. Disproportionately the behaviors most likely to get a girl sent to Geneva involved some immorality, particularly sexual behaviors.¹⁰⁰ Immoral women and their perceived degenerative effects on society were cause for a great panic throughout the Progressive Era as new sexual norms concerned social conservatives. The desire to connect immorality with feeble-mindedness or some other mental ailment was therefore crucial to eugenicists at Geneva.

Girls residing within Geneva were subject to testing of various kinds to seek an explanation for their improper behavior. Feeble-mindedness, being a classification that could serve as an explanation for nearly any maladaptive behavior at that time was one of the first

⁹⁹ Anne Burnet, "A Study of Delinquent Girls," *Institution Quarterly* 3 (1912): 50-53.

¹⁰⁰ Rembis, "I Ain't been Reading while on Parole," 225-247.

things psychologists measured. Typically, this would take the form of an intelligence test, with other methods such as family histories or sensory tasks also being used. The percentage of feeble-mindedness within the population at Geneva varied among the different studies that were conducted there; however, it always was reported to affect a majority of the inmates.¹⁰¹ Cases where individuals were either borderline feeble-minded or normal constituted a perplexing issue for psychologists and eugenicists. In such cases they had to invent new diagnoses to explain behavior, arbitrarily using terms such as psychotic or hysterical as needed to support their explanations.¹⁰² Psychological examinations citing such ailments often gave little explanation besides descriptions of behavior and, if possible, some other medical diagnosis such as a sexually transmitted disease, which was thought to be associated with mental illness.¹⁰³

This arbitrariness was not lost on a good portion of the general public. Furthermore, a good deal of evidence began to contradict the conclusions coming from state institutions and the courts. Healy and his associates at the juvenile court, while seeking to find hereditary or environmental links to behavior, began to publish findings that disputed popular eugenic ideas, and his findings began to be findings noticed.¹⁰⁴ This affected the public's public perception of eugenics and reformers also began to take notice. Many who previously had been swayed by eugenic thinking now began to seek alternatives to the dreary conclusions offered by eugenicists that large segments of the population could not be rehabilitated and needed to be institutionalized.¹⁰⁵ There was never a consensus among the coalition that had created and lobbied for the 1915 Commitment Act, and whatever ties they once had were now beginning to

¹⁰¹ Louise E. Ordahl and George Ordahl, "A Study of Delinquent and Dependent Girls at Geneva," *Institution Quarterly* (September 30, 1918), 57-58.

¹⁰² "Delinquent Geneva Girls and Co-Operation," *Institution Quarterly* (1923), 141.

¹⁰³ Singer, H. Douglas. "Eugenics and Insanity." *Institution Quarterly* (1913), 12-17.

¹⁰⁴ Deutsh, *The Mentally Ill in America*, 320-330.

¹⁰⁵ Healy, *The Individual Delinquent*, 10-11.

fray. While there was no precise moment at which this occurred, it is likely that the groups that had made up the coalition were not as ideologically similar as they may have seemed, making it easier for groups that had once supported eugenic proposals to now disassociate themselves from the movement.¹⁰⁶

Eugenics and its assertions that behavior could be explained almost entirely by hereditary factors was the principle reason the movement gained such influence throughout early twentieth-century Illinois.¹⁰⁷ The problem of convincingly connecting the two that was encountered at the Geneva school is indicative of the issues eugenicists faced in making convincing arguments. The arbitrary diagnoses they used to explain behavior began to come under scrutiny. However, this did not stop calls by eugenicists for increasingly radical proposals. Calls for sterilization were shouted down instead of being met with silence by many of the same individuals who had previously supported institutionalization of the feeble-minded.¹⁰⁸ Eugenicists in other states routinely cited the high cost of long-term institutionalization as the primary reason for their support of sterilization.¹⁰⁹ Eugenic thinkers in Illinois, either not cognizant of financial constraints or optimistic about getting the state to pay for institutionalization, seem to have disregarded cost factors while debating approaches to limiting the reproduction of those they deemed unfit.

Institutionalization, for its part, was theoretically the best approach for the eugenicists, as it removed both the physical threat from the individuals and the risk of their reproduction. Increasingly, however, it began to accomplish neither aim, as institutions were unable to handle

¹⁰⁶Rembis, *Eugenic Commitment in Illinois*, 241.

¹⁰⁷ Knufer, "To Become Good Self-Supporting Women", 420-423.

¹⁰⁸ Pintner, *Intelligence Testing*, 398.

¹⁰⁹ Kline, "Building a Better Race," 51-52

the large number of individuals already under their care and came under pressure to release or parole more and more of their populations in order to alleviate overcrowding and make room for those perceived to be the most severely afflicted. Likewise, the court system became more hesitant about sending individuals to institutions as they became aware of the severe overcrowding there, reserving commitment to only the most severe cases.¹¹⁰ The comprehensive institutionalization that eugenicists originally sought would necessitate an extensive expansion of existing institutions. Those who had allied with them began to tune out eugenic rhetoric and were less likely to support calls for the building of new institutions as it became clearer that the sheer number of institutions that would be needed made the policy unrealistic.

Events surrounding the mobilization for World War One worsened chances for eugenic institutionalization. Intelligence tests were widely employed by the military, which used recruits as a large test pool for gathering data on intelligence throughout the nation. The results troubled eugenicists, however, as a large percentage of the military tested low, with many falling within the feeble-minded range.¹¹¹ Among the 1.7 million men who were tested the mean mental age for white recruits was 13.1 years old.¹¹² Although some eugenicists suggested that as much as seventy percent of population was feeble-minded this was an untenable proposition, as there was no feasible way to hold such a large population within institutions. Nor would such a proposal receive public support, as it was becoming evident that society was tired of hearing about problems that eugenicists could not prove existed, nor could they offer any realistic remedies for solving.¹¹³

¹¹⁰“*Annual Report of the Municipal Court*,” 17.

¹¹¹ Pinter, “*Intelligence Testing*,” 218-229.

¹¹² Pinter, “*Intelligence Testing*,” 220.

Sterilization, which was somewhat more feasible than mass institutionalization, was an unpopular proposition in Illinois and eugenicists were never able to draw support for it. As permanently segregating populations was proving to be neither realistic nor desirable, progressive reformers began to concern themselves with rehabilitation policies. Eugenics persisted to a degree by the continuing commitment of individuals in order to limit their reproduction and the threat they were perceived to pose to society, just as before. But institutionalization never approached the scale that eugenicists thought was necessary in order to accomplish their goal of eliminating hereditary problems entirely. The 1915 commitment law represented the apex of eugenicists' support in Illinois. Prominent eugenicists such as Chief Justice Olson, once renowned for his national influence, began to become ignored, his cries for further eugenic measures met by an apathetic public. Over time Olson became embroiled in various controversies, lost the support of his own court, and resigned.¹¹⁴ Psychologists who had worked to substantiate eugenic thought were themselves being discredited. Their methodologies were scrutinized by experts like Healy who revealed their flaws and challenged their status as experts.¹¹⁵ Dr. Town, for her part, continued to support eugenic actions, writing and speaking on the subject well after the age of progressive eugenics had passed. Psychologists, while they had been widely influential during their small window of opportunity, began to be perceived as failures by the rest of the eugenics movement because they had been unable to conjure up scientific rationales for extensive eugenic policies when society had asked for them. In Illinois, and throughout the rest of the country, eugenics moved away from its progressive reform roots and became a movement based on different ideals and methods.¹¹⁶ Sterilization would be more

¹¹⁴ Hiram T. Gillbert, *The Municipal Court of Chicago* (Chicago, 1928), 103, 109.

¹¹⁵ Healy, *The Individual Delinquent*, 783-785.

¹¹⁶ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 52-54, 100-103.

conducive to post-World War Two eugenic thinking, but that wasn't a transition Illinois would make.¹¹⁷

There was no dramatic moment signaling the end of the eugenic craze in Illinois. Instead, it simply fell out of favor over time, increasingly meeting with quiet indifference and occasionally ridicule. The eugenic notion that large portions of society deserved permanent isolation became increasingly disconnected from public opinion, which began to prefer a rehabilitative approach. Eugenicists remained somewhat visible in Illinois, but they never managed to regain their previous influence in the state. The window for pushing eugenic legislation, short as it was, had closed for good. The progressive-era coalition of reformers, experts, and legal professionals that had worked together toward the passage of the 1915 commitment law failed to cooperate on further policies.

¹¹⁷ Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 52-54.

Conclusion

Prior historical studies have largely failed to incorporate Illinois into the wider narrative of American eugenics. This omission is likely due to the difficulty of associating events that occurred in Illinois with more popular topics in the study of eugenics, particularly the dramatic history surrounding sterilization. This thesis has argued that eugenics was much larger than sterilization laws, encompassing a wide range of social, political and scientific matters. The lack of a sterilization law in Illinois does not indicate a lack of eugenic involvement in that state, as Illinois enacted numerous policies that were concurrent with eugenic desires. This thesis has further argued that Illinois deserves more attention from historians regarding its influence in the history of eugenics because both Illinois, and particularly Chicago, were major influences on national policies during the early twentieth century. Because it was one of the most progressive states in the country, Illinois led the way in enacting numerous reforms that ultimately had major effects, on eugenics and on the creation of many institutions and mindsets that define the modern system of governance in the United States. The progressive era is somewhat synonymous with eugenics, as compulsory vaccination, sterilization, and institutionalization all illustrated a willingness to infringe upon individual rights, a willingness that characterized reformers and eugenicists alike. But to construe progressive reformers and eugenicists as identical misinterprets the nature of their similarities. Although there was often overlap between the two groups, they were not synonymous. Eugenicists were proportionately small compared to other influential groups of the early twentieth century. To achieve their goals they had to cooperate with larger groups on commonly shared aspirations, such as the need for a centralized municipal court in Chicago. For their part, progressive reformers built a governmental system that was better able to intrude into the lives of its citizens, yet they did so primarily for philanthropic purposes. They

sought help from legal and medical experts as well as others to run such systems. This opening allowing many eugenicists to find a place within progressive inventions, and they then used their new authority to steer reform discourses toward eugenic actions. Institutions such as the Chicago Municipal Court, while not inherently meant for eugenic purposes, was easily transitioned to the eugenicists' uses. For a short time the courts' Psychopathic Laboratories and their vast capacity to create substantiating data convinced many reformers of the need for eugenic action. Similarly, state care institutions employed psychologists who were deemed to be experts on the care of defective individuals. Many then went on to use their credibility to publish papers describing an urgent need for further eugenic action.

Eugenic rhetoric picked up traction within public discourses surrounding such issues as dependency and deviancy. Eventually these developments led to the first commitment act for feeble-minded individuals in 1915, which gave the courts the power to involve themselves directly in the application of eugenic policy. Soon, however, the limitations of eugenic institutionalization policy became apparent because there were not enough institutions to properly house even a small percentage of the people eugenicists claimed to be feeble-minded. Furthermore, the psychologists who had been brought into institutions to care for dependent populations were unable to isolate what caused certain behaviors. This was clearly shown at the institution in Geneva, where arbitrary labels were applied as poor explanations for unassociated behaviors and symptoms. Eugenicists offered little in the way of answers for behaviors and deficiencies, only calling for ever-higher numbers of people to be institutionalized. Their drastic rhetoric and outlandish statements eventually led to their methods falling out of favor and by the 1920s they had lost a great deal of their influence in Illinois.

Lastly, this thesis has sought to give an insight into the various groups that, through their interactions, constituted the eugenic movement in early twentieth-century Illinois. Although they may not have been as evil as, or synonymous with, Nazism in Germany their actions were based on faulty logic and reasoning, backed by even worse research, leading to misguided conclusions that harmed a great many people. Those who worked with eugenicists, particularly progressive reformers, did not always buy into eugenic rhetoric but at times worked in tandem with them and frequently adhered to their principles, particularly their reliance on data, however faulty, and the appeal to scientific credibility. Psychologists were unready for the burden that eugenicists placed upon them because very little was known about either human genetics or the human brain. The rush to apply medically significant judgments, which would also carry legal weight, was impossible given the limitations of their field of study.

Understanding eugenics in Illinois within the context and time at which it existed allows insight into a variety of key historical moments. It shows how the progressives and scientific experts rushed to apply what they perceived as a modern, scientific and direct hands-on approach to the numerous societal ills they perceived to be a great threat. This was often done with good intentions, yet the history of eugenics in Illinois shows the dangers of overt interference with the liberties of individuals. It also shows the dangers of applying poorly understood scientific concepts as determinations on a societal level, which can have a significant impact on the way individuals are perceived and treated. If carried out improperly and without clear understanding, good intentions can lead to dire consequences for the exact people one wishes to assist. Future historical studies will have much to build on from this thesis as it has shown the wide scope of eugenic influence as it crept into various facets of society. Further studies could highlight different ways in which eugenics permeated society, examining different time periods or

different groups or individuals than those focused on here, or potentially another state that has gone unnoticed by historians. Oversimplification of historical narratives has led to the role of Illinois as a prominent player in American eugenics being largely neglected. This thesis has shown that there is much to gain by examining the history of Illinois, and historians would be remiss not to recognize that state for the significant role it played in the eugenics movement.

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