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## *Preface*

### *Eugenics and its Study*

Robert A. Wilson

As the current volume attests, contemporary academic and public interest in the history of eugenics and its contemporary significance continues to grow. The volume's focus on the role of psychiatry in the eugenics movement, both in Canada and internationally, and the relationship between eugenics and psychiatry more generally allows a multi-directional start to be made on raising and addressing difficult questions that have remained unasked. The "Living Archives on Eugenics in Western Canada" project is pleased to have been able to offer support for both the workshop at which many of the papers here were first presented, and the publication of the volume itself.

My brief prefatory comments are organized around three chief thematic tasks. First, I provide some idea of the trajectory of the scholarship on eugenics over the past thirty-five years that set the context for the contributions for the current volume. Second, I will articulate a view of the relationships between eugenics and disability, on the one hand, and eugenics past and eugenics present, on the other. This should make it clear that eugenics and eugenic thinking is of more than historical interest. And third, I will make some remarks more directly relevant to the specific focus of the volume, the connections between eugenics and psychiatry, connections that have been under-explored in the literature to date to which the essays in this collection make a significant contribution. The second of these themes is the focus of the admirable commentaries by Mark Workman in Chapter 11 and by Gregor Wolbring in Chapter, while both the editors' introductory chapter and their concluding Chapter 13 articulate a

detailed view on the third of these themes. My own general views of eugenics have been developed in a number of publications in the past few years.<sup>i</sup>

### *From Archives to Activism*

Between the appearance of the historian Daniel Kevles' *In the Name of Eugenics* (1985)<sup>ii</sup> with its focus on the relationship between biological science and eugenics, and the legal scholar Paul Lombardo's *Three Generations, No Imbeciles* (2008)<sup>iii</sup> on the famous "Buck vs. Bell" case, interest spread steadily amongst scholars in articulating the broader relevance of the history of eugenics for a cluster of contemporary issues. This cluster ranged from issues concerning reproductive autonomy to science and scientism, biological (particularly genetic) determinism, and disability and human variation. Since 2010, the contemporary resonances of eugenics have spiked, not only in concert with ongoing concerns about emerging biotechnologies (such as CRISPR), but also as there has been further reflection on broader social policies, such as forced child removal and immigration restriction, as means of achieving eugenic ends.

Accordingly, the ways in which eugenics has been taken up by university scholars has diversified during this time and the resulting scholarship has increasingly connected with issues of ongoing significance for people marginalized in our societies by eugenic ideas, practices, and policies. For example, in recent years in this vein we have seen the publication of a major handbook on the history of eugenics,<sup>iv</sup> several journals that have dedicated special issues to eugenics,<sup>v</sup> books exploring eugenics in North America in more detail,<sup>vi</sup> as well as those focused particularly on eugenics in Alberta,<sup>vii</sup> and the appearance of eugenic survivor testimony and memoirs.<sup>viii</sup> The present volume continues and extends this trend into the domain of psychiatry,

though the task of integrating this extension with emerging work within the Mad Pride movement headed by psychiatric survivors remains one for future scholarship.<sup>ix</sup>

The recognition of the need for public engagement around eugenics can be understood against two dissonant social contexts that are especially poignant in North America. First, in the early 2000s, there were official apologies from the governments of four of the thirty-one American States to have passed eugenic sterilization laws: Virginia, Oregon, and North Carolina in 2002, and California in 2003. These apologies themselves followed in the wake of over eight hundred settled legal actions in Alberta, Canada, brought by sterilization survivors against the government of Alberta for wrongful confinement and sterilization under the province's Sexual Sterilization Act (1928-1972), as well as revelations of the relative recency of eugenic sterilization in the Scandinavian countries.<sup>x</sup> Second, in the past five years it has been revealed that sexual sterilization continues to be practiced in several disparate circumstances: for example, on women and girls with intellectual disabilities in Australia,<sup>xi</sup> and on women in the California prison system.<sup>xii</sup> While the settlements and apologies aimed to make it clear that eugenics was a matter of a regrettable past, that view of eugenics is undermined by the ongoing sterilization of just the sorts of people who were the target of past eugenics policies and laws. The dissonance here, in turn, raises questions about the forms that eugenic policy takes beyond sterilization, and the manifestations of "newgenics" thought and practice that exist now, well beyond the explicit, self-conscious eugenic era of the past.

### *Understanding Disability and Newgenics*

Disability has never been far beneath the surface in the trading zone between eugenics past and newgenics present.<sup>xiii</sup> Perceived and ascribed disabilities of body and mind were one of the core sets of eugenics traits that provided the basis for institutionalized and sterilization

on eugenic grounds for the first seventy-five years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even if, as Douglas Wahlsten shows in Chapter 3, the basis for policies of segregation and sterilization reflected ignorance and confusion about the basics of genetics and the nature of inheritance of what elsewhere I call “eugenic traits”.<sup>xiv</sup> Since that time, the eugenic preoccupation with the character of future generations has seeped into what have become everyday practices in the realm of reproductive choice. As Marsha Saxton<sup>xv</sup> and Adrienne Asch<sup>xvi</sup> have forcefully argued, the use of prenatal screening technologies to facilitate the selective abortion of fetuses with features that signify disabling traits—the paradigm here being trisomy 21 in a fetus indicating Down Syndrome in the child—express a negative view of such disabilities sufficient to warrant terminating an otherwise wanted pregnancy.<sup>xvii</sup> The eliminative structure of what disability theorist Rosemary Garland Thompson<sup>xviii</sup> has called *eugenic logic* persists in contemporary practices governing reproductive choice, social inclusion, and democratic participation and their relationship to disability.

The assumption that it would be better if disability simply did not exist that underlies eugenic logic runs deep in contemporary social thought and practice, deep enough to pass as common sense. That those who would make the same assumption about dark-skinned people would be critiqued as harbouring racism serves as a marker of how distinctively disability is presently conceptualized as something negative: misfortunate, regrettable, limiting, disease-like, in need of elimination. This tie between eugenics and contemporary disability studies, however, also less depressingly suggests that eugenics and reflection on its history can also play a more positive role in disability politics. Survivor testimony of what it was like to be housed in the training schools for the feeble-minded and subjected to dehumanization beyond strictly eugenic policies constitutes a major source of knowledge about eugenics in Alberta. Revelations of the lackadaisical application of intelligence tests, of the use of those deemed to be “morons” to care for so-called “low-grade” children, and the effects of extensive

psychotropic experimental by the medical superintendent at the Provincial Training School, Dr. Leonard J. LeVann (1815-1987), are just three examples.<sup>xix</sup>

As we move to articulate a more complex and complete collective memory of the explicitly eugenic era, I suspect that such survivor knowledge will increasingly reinforce and support the view that the disability activism slogan “nothing about us without us”<sup>xx</sup> has epistemic as well as political resonance. Together with the standpoint of those surviving newgenics, this insider witnessing of eugenics opens up a role for oral history in reflecting on the question “what sorts of people should there be?” Like other neutral-sounding questions, surface appearances here mask the fact that this question sits very differently those on either side of eugenic logic.

### *Eugenics and Psychiatry*

The most prominent cluster of traits that featured as the basis for eugenic sterilization policies in North American and Europe were mental or psychological, falling themselves into two traditional kinds.<sup>xxi</sup> The first—including mental deficiency, mental defectiveness, feeble-mindedness, idiocy, and imbecility—concerned people with or deemed to have subnormal levels of intelligence, typically from birth and often ascribed from early in childhood.<sup>xxii</sup> The second kind of mental trait here was the paradigmatic concern of psychiatry and psychiatrists: insanity, lunacy, psychosis, madness. Even though the non-medical competitor to psychiatrists, psychologists, were in effect the gate-keepers to feeble-mindedness through their development and adoption of intelligence testing and their special connection to childhood and education,<sup>xxiii</sup> psychiatrists played an active role in the administration and enforcement of eugenic policies, especially in Europe, as documented in a number of the contributions to the current volume.

Psychologists used intelligence quotient (IQ) tests as their major diagnostic technological weapon in the eugenic “war against the weak”, and their role in the eugenic past has a long history of having been well-discussed by scholars.<sup>xxiv</sup> The contribution of psychiatrists, by contrast, is lesser known and is sometimes thought to be more contingently related to the profession of psychiatry, and more idiosyncratic. Again, the contributions to the present volume give reason to challenge this view and constitute the beginnings of a more systematic consideration of psychiatry, alongside psychology and genetics, as forming one of the many disciplinary branches in the eugenic tree. Together with neurologists, psychiatrists are clinicians of the brain and the presumed departures from its normal function that lead to failures in the nervous system and psychiatric symptoms.<sup>xxv</sup> German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin’s (1856-1926) views of nervous degeneration and the psychiatric genetics of Ernst Ruedin (1874-1952), both discussed in several of the contributions here, and more generally hereditarian views of psychiatric traits, represent major ways in which psychiatry influenced the trajectory of eugenics.<sup>xxvi</sup> The scientific authority that psychiatry inherited from its medical standing, however, gave the discipline a much broader role here in diagnosis, treatment, and recommendation than it would otherwise have had.

In Canada, perhaps as elsewhere, what could pass for scientific authority here was sometimes surprising. Dr. John MacEachran (1877-1971), chair of the Alberta Eugenics Board for most of its forty-three-year history, and the subject of Chapter 2 by Hank Stam and Ashley Barlow, occupied that role not only in virtue of his position as the long-standing Provost of the University of Alberta (1911-1945), but also as the founding chair of what was to become the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education. MacEachran’s scientific authority rested at least in part in his being perceived as a psychologist, despite the fact that his two doctoral dissertations were both squarely in the discipline of philosophy. Moreover, MacEachran never, so far as I can determine, published a single paper in psychology in his

long career and life. Likewise, the medical superintendent of the Provincial Training School for Mental Defectives from 1949 until 1974, Dr. Leonard J. LeVann, passed himself off as a psychiatrist when he in fact had no such accreditation in Canada, as was revealed in the lawsuit that eugenics survivor Leilani Muir brought against the province of Alberta for wrongful confinement and sterilization.<sup>xxvii</sup> Le Vann's authority as a putative psychiatrist likely made it easier for him to engage in psychotropic drug experimentation on children at the Provincial Training School, and may even have been partially responsible for his initial appointment as the medical superintendent there.

What this says about the strength of eugenic ideology, about the seriousness of confining and sterilizing those deemed "feeble-minded," and about the tangled relationships between eugenics, institutionalization, and clinical sciences, including psychiatry, will be informed by the kind of work that the present volume undertakes, as well as that in the field of philosophical psychiatry.<sup>xxviii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Robert A. Wilson, *The Eugenic Mind Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018); Robert A. Wilson, “Eugenic Thinking,” *Philosophy, Theory, and Practice in Biology* 10:12 (2018), 1-8. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ptpbio.16039257.0010.012>; Robert A. Wilson, “Eugenics Never Went Away,” *Aeon Magazine*, <https://aeon.co/essays/eugenics-today-where-eugenic-sterilisation-continues-now>, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2018; Robert A. Wilson, “Contemporary Forms of Eugenics,” eLS Wiley 2018. DOI: [10.1002/9780470015902.a0027075](https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470015902.a0027075); Robert A. Wilson, “The Role of Oral History in Surviving a Eugenic Past”. In *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, edited by Steven High, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015), 119-138; Robert A. Wilson and Joshua St. Pierre, “Eugenics and Disability”. In *Rethinking Disability: World Perspectives in Culture and Society*, edited by Patrick Devlieger, Beatriz Miranda-Galarza, Steven E. Brown and Megan Strickfaden, (Antwerp: Garant Publishing, 2016), 93-112; and Matthew J. Barker and Robert A. Wilson, “Well-Being, Disability, and Choosing Children,” *Mind* in press.

<sup>ii</sup> Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>iii</sup> Paul Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck vs Bell* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).



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<sup>iv</sup> Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>v</sup> Gregor Wolbring, “What Sorts of People Should There Be?,” special issue of *International Journal of Disability, Community, and Rehabilitation* 12 (2013); Erika Dyck, “The History of Eugenics Revisited,” special issue of *Canadian Bulletin for Medical History* 31 (2013), 7–211.

<sup>vi</sup> Paul Lombardo, ed., *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); Randell Hansen and Desmond King, eds., *Sterilized by the State: Eugenics, Race, and the Population Scare in Twentieth-Century North America* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>vii</sup> Jane Harris-Zsovan, *Eugenics and the Firewall: Canada’s Nasty Little Secret* (Winnipeg, MB: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing, 2010); Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

<sup>viii</sup> Kevin Begos, Danielle Deaver, John Railey, and Scott Sexton, *Against Their Will: North Carolina’s Sterilization Program and the Campaign for Reparations* (Florida: Gray Oak Books, 2012); Leilani Muir, *A Whisper Past: Childless after Eugenic Sterilization in Alberta* (Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2014); Robert A. Wilson, “The Role of Oral History in Surviving a Eugenic Past”, and the [EugenicsArchives.ca](http://EugenicsArchives.ca) website.

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<sup>ix</sup> Mohammed Abouelleil Rashed, “In Defense of Madness: The Problem of Disability,” *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy: A Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine*, in press, DOI: jhy016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jhy016>

<sup>x</sup> Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, eds., *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 2006).

<sup>xi</sup> Women with Disabilities Australia, *Dehumanised: The Forced Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia—WWDA Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Involuntary or Coerced Sterilisation of People with Disabilities in Australia* (March 2013), accessed on February 25, 2018; <<http://wwda.org.au/papers/subs/subs2011/>>; The Senate, *Involuntary or Coerced Sterilisation of People with Disabilities in Australia* (July 2013), accessed on February 25, 2018; <[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Involuntary\\_Sterilisation/First\\_Report](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Involuntary_Sterilisation/First_Report)>.

<sup>xii</sup> Corey Johnson, *Female Inmates Sterilized in California Prisons without Approval*, Center for Investigative Reporting (July 2013), accessed on March 25, 2017; <<http://cironline.org/reports/female-inmates-sterilized-california-prisons-without-approval-4917>>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Henry H. Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness* (London: Macmillan, 1912); Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995).

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<sup>xiv</sup> Wilson, Robert A., “Eugenic Traits.” In *Connections*, edited by Eugenics Archives (Edmonton, AB: Living Archives on Eugenics, 2014), accessed on February 25, 2018; <http://eugen-icsarchive.ca/database/documents/535eeb757095aa0000000221>; see also *The Eugenic Mind Project*, ch.3, for more developed discussion.

<sup>xv</sup> Marsha Saxton, “Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnoses and Selective Abortion.” In *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, edited by Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch (Georgetown, D.C.: University of Washington Press, 2000), 147–164.

<sup>xvi</sup> Adrienne Asch, “Why I Haven’t Changed My Mind About Prenatal Diagnosis: Reflections and Reminders.” In *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, edited by Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch (Georgetown, D.C.: University of Washington Press, 2000), 234–258; Adrienne Asch, “Disability Equality and Prenatal Testing: Contradictory or Compatible?,” *Florida State University Law Review* 30 (2003), 315–342.

<sup>xvii</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880–1980* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1997).

<sup>xviii</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, “The Case for Conserving Disability,” *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 9 (2012), 339–355.

<sup>xix</sup> Eugenics Archives, ed., *Our Stories* (Edmonton, AB: Living Archives on Eugenics, 2014), accessed on February 25, 2018; <<http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/our-stories>>

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[~ website]; Jordan Miller, Nicola Fairbrother and Rob Wilson, *Surviving Eugenics* (Moving Images Distribution, 2015) [~film], available for free online at [eugenicsarchive.ca/film](http://eugenicsarchive.ca/film) .

<sup>xx</sup> James I. Charlton, *Nothing about Us without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>xxi</sup> Wilson, “Eugenic Traits” and *The Eugenic Mind Project*, ch.3.

<sup>xxii</sup> Theresa R. Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Robert A. Wilson, “Psychology.” In *Connections*, edited by Eugenics Archives (Edmonton, AB: Living Archives on Eugenics, 2014b), accessed on February 25, 2018; <<http://eugenics-archive.ca/database/documents/547ce966d7dacd0147000002>>; Aida Roige, “Intelligence and IQ testing.” In *Connections*, edited by Eugenics Archives (Edmonton, AB: Living Archives on Eugenics, 2015), accessed on February 25, 2018; <<http://eugenics-archive.ca/database/documents/535eeeb77095aa000000023a>>.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Lionel Penrose, *The Biology of Mental Defect* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1949). Nikolas S. Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England, 1869–1939* (London: Routledge, 1985); Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*.

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<sup>xxv</sup> Cf. Michael Hagner, *Homo Cerebralis. Der Wandel vom Seelenorgan zum Gehirn* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2000).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Emil Kraepelin, “Psychiatric Observations on Contemporary Issues” (1919), translated by Eric J. Engstrom, *History of Psychiatry* 3 (1992), 256–269.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Natalie Ball, “Leonard J. Le Vann.” In *Connections*, edited by Eugenics Archives (Edmonton, AB: Living Archives on Eugenics, 2014), accessed on February 25, 2018; <http://eugenics-archive.ca/database/documents/512fa4b134c5399e2c00000d>; Leilani Muir, *A Whisper Past: Childless after Eugenic Sterilization in Alberta*.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Serife Tekin and Robyn Bluhm, eds., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Philosophy of Psychiatry* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019); Natalia Washington, “Contextualism as a Solution to Paternalism in Psychiatric Practice,” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 25(4)(2018), 235-243; “Culturally Unbound: Cross-Cultural Cognitive Diversity and the Science of Psychopathology,” *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 23(2)(2016), 165-179.