"Immediate Preservation of the Public Peace, Health and Safety": Colorado's History of Eugenic Sterilization

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A honors thesis submitted from the Department of
History

University of Colorado Boulder
Defended April 6th, 2020

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At the turn of the twentieth century social scientists across the United States investigated heredity and the ramifications of human reproduction. These experiments started with simple analyses of family histories but transformed into a monumental social engineering project that physically mutilated the United States' most vulnerable: the mentally and physically disabled and the poor. The American Eugenics Movement resulted in tens of thousands of Americans losing their ability and individual freedom to decide whether to become parents.

Eugenics was a pseudoscientific movement that attempted to control the inheritance of human characteristics with the goal of perfecting racial and physical ideas imagined by elite white Americans. Eugenicists of the early twentieth century ascribed to a theory of race degeneracy, that first originated in the seventeenth century and, argued that populations of criminals and the poor weakened society with their inherent inferiority.[1] The application of such theory manifested in two major ways in American culture. First, through Progressive-era policies that encouraged marriage and reproduction between people with desirable traits. Second, through legislation that prevented the inheritance of undesirable traits through marriage restrictions, sexual segregation, and sterilization.

As the formal American Eugenics Movement of the early twentieth century took shape, it drew from racist, classist, and nativist impulses incubating within the broader culture. The eugenics movement privileged existing social hierarchies that benefited populations of native-born people who were also descendants of northern Europeans, wealthy, and Protestant. They considered mental and physical disabilities to be undesirable traits but also considered social issues such as drug addiction and poverty to be products of genetic destiny. In practice, the

[1] Paul Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck V. Bell* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 8.

classification of undesirable traits targeted the most marginalized people in society, those who wielded less social capability and, especially poor women. In the twentieth century, American eugenicists established a wide-reaching eugenics movement based on rudimentary genetic science and white supremacy that empowered state governments to isolate marginalized people into institutions and asylums and inflict compulsory sterilization upon them. The widespread application of eugenic principals required government cooperation and support from elite and intellectual communities.

Under the guidance of eugenic pseudoscience, the medical establishment implemented policies of compulsory sterilization against their patients. For women, surgeons performed salpingectomies, the full removal of their fallopian tubes or tubal ligations. For men, surgeons performed vasectomies, which prevented the release of sperm during ejaculation. Both procedures rendered their patients permanently sterile. Between 1909 and 1970, the United States sterilized 60,000 men and women in the name of eugenics.[2]

Eugenicists were active in all fifty states during the twentieth century. Pseudoscientific ideas about eugenics were ubiquitous in American culture. They infiltrated numerous aspects of life from major legislative decisions such as marriage restrictions and immigration reform to less conspicuous institutions such as social welfare programs, agricultural science, and marriage counseling. Most research focuses on big states such as California, North Carolina, and Virginia

[2] Most historians estimate between 60,000 and 62,000. Hansen and King and Dr. Reilly suggest 60,000, while Kluchin suggests 62,162. This estimate excludes illegal and coercive sterilizations and sterilizations performed by private practices. Historians differentiate between coerced and compulsory sterilizations because in many instances health workers pressured women to sign consent of sterilization forms during childbirth.
Randall Hansen and Desmond King, *Sterilized by the State; Eugenics, Race and the Population Scare in Twentieth-Century North America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.
Philip Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 94.
Rebecca M. Kluchin, *Fit to be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1950-1980* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 17.

where extensive medical infrastructures and legal successes redefined the movement and subjected tens of thousands of individuals to compulsory sterilization. California alone, for example, sterilized 20,000 patients between 1909 and 1964 within their enormous system of state institutions.[3] Eclipsed by such numbers, states that did not pass any sterilization legislation, such as Colorado, lack significant research and this knowledge gap reinforces the myth that these states did not practice eugenics.

Although Colorado never enacted a compulsory sterilization law, Colorado State Hospital authorized and performed eugenical sterilization in accordance with the nation-wide eugenic trend. My thesis investigates how Colorado eugenicists successfully and covertly orchestrated policies of compulsory sterilization within state institutions in the absence of formal legislative authority. This research is important because it sheds new light on the experiences of victims who suffered immense trauma under Colorado's unregulated eugenics regime. Due to the clandestine nature of Colorado's sterilization policy, the state neither punished the medical professionals and lawmakers who endorsed eugenic policies nor made reparations to the victims. Colorado's role in the national eugenics movement has remained largely understudied and, as such, has been largely forgotten.

My research, in contrast, reveals how Colorado State Hospital performed eugenic sterilizations on institutionalized patients under the direct supervision of superintendent Dr. Frank H. Zimmerman between 1928 to 1961. While most of these procedures went unchallenged, some of Zimmerman's patients fought back. In 1955, attorneys Norman Berman and Molly Edison charged a $250,000 assault and battery damage action in Pueblo District Court

[3] Alexandra M. Stern, "From Legislation to Lived Experience: Eugenic Sterilization in California and Indiana, 1907-79," in *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, ed. Paul Lombardo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 100.

against Dr. Zimmerman, Dr. J. L Rosenbloom, Dr. W. T. Wingett, and Dr. Irving Schatz for performing an illegal salpingectomy upon a woman named Lucille Schreiber, who was a minor at the time.[4] Schreiber's lawsuit included five additional plaintiffs named Mable Hoar, Alva Christian, Stella Flores, Nancy Danneberg, and Josephine Roy who accused the Colorado State Hospital of sterilization without consent.[5] The lawsuit demonstrated the lack of legal accountability hospital superintendents faced. Additionally, the lack of public outrage and conviction towards Schreiber's sterilization at the time showed the pervasiveness of eugenic doctrine within American culture.

Scarce official documentation suggests Colorado did not perform eugenic sterilizations, but the practice was much larger than historians have concluded. Schreiber's 1955 court case proves Colorado State Hospital under superintendent Zimmerman's leadership sterilized patients without legislative authority. Dr. Zimmerman successfully operated on his patients because Colorado's law enforcement, welfare system, and network of general physicians worked with the court system to institutionalized at risk populations, who then received limited legal representation or opportunities to object to their sentence. Once hospitalized and removed from society, physicians sterilized their mentally ill patients without fear of consequence. The absence of government regulation over state institutions fostered an already hierarchical mental healthcare system that when partnered with a cultural pervasion of eugenic ideals allowed for

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[4] Zeke Scher, "Typist Sues 4 Doctors For 'Illegal Sterilization'," *Denver Post,* December 29, 1955, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

[5] The full written transcript of *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* is missing but Colorado State Archives saved both Schreiber and Zimmerman's depositions, exhibits A through D, instruction numbers two through thirty one, and the sealed verdict. Lucille was the main plaintiff. The remaining documents from Schreiber's court case say nothing about these five women besides their names and accusations.
Lucille Schreiber v. F.H. Zimmerman, et al., (1955-1958), Case No. 38407, Pueblo District Court File, Colorado State Archives, Denver, CO.
Schreiber v. Zimmerman interrogatories, 8, 19, 21, 23 and 25.

rampant patient abuse in the form of compulsory sterilization that escalated during Dr. Zimmerman's tenure. When historians and state officials discount Colorado's history of compulsory sterilization, their omission insults the unknown number of victims and their memories.

The historiography of Colorado's eugenics practices is limited. What exists is often eclipsed by a larger, national story except for scholarship done by the following researchers: Mike Anton, Harry Bruinuis, Lutz Kaelber, and Friends of Pueblo. In 1999, a reporter named Mike Anton from the *Rocky Mountain News* published an article on Lucille Schreiber titled "Colorado's Dark Secret State Mental Hospital Sterilized Patients for More than 30 Years" that examined the role of hospital superintendents in performing illegal sterilizations on poor whites, Native Americans, and Hispanics.[6] Harry Bruinius' book, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* published in 2006 that included an entire chapter on personal interviews conducted with Schreiber.[7] Besides Bruinius, the most detailed description of eugenics in Colorado comes from two online sources. The first is by University of Vermont Professor Lutz Kaelber, whose honor program on Disability as Deviance in 2011 published a database cataloguing compulsory sterilization in all fifty states.[8] The second comes from the Friends of Pueblo County, a historical society from southern Colorado. They published a database in 2004 on Pueblo history that included information on

[6] Mike Anton, "Colorado's Dark Secret State Mental Hospital Sterilized Patients for More than 30 Years," *Rocky Mountain News,* Nov. 21, 1999, Gale.
[7] Harry Bruinius, *Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 322.
[8] Lutz Kaelber, "Colorado Eugenics," Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States, University of Vermont, last modified 2011, https://www.uvm.edu/~lkaelber/eugenics/CO/CO.html.

Colorado State Hospital.[9] In many ways, the paucity of research on Colorado's eugenics movement reflects the illicit nature of its compulsory sterilization program.

Select primary sources documented the public debate over whether Colorado should or should not have sterilized the mentally ill. The Denver Public Library's microfilm collections provided newspaper articles from the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post* that reported on the 1955 Schreiber lawsuit. The Charles and Minnie Love Collection housed at History Colorado provided insight into the legislative history of eugenics in Colorado. I found the remaining compulsory sterilization bills at Colorado State Archives along with the *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* court case. The shortage of substantiated research on Colorado's illegal sterilizations undermine the state's opportunity to recognize and pay reparations to potentially surviving victims and their families and provide knowledge to prevent future citizens from making similar mistakes.

My thesis begins by setting up the national timeline of the American Eugenics Movement. I define the terminology and tools invented by eugenicists to discriminate against their victims. Next, I illustrate how Colorado's unique history with tuberculosis treatment, immigrant labor for mining and coal extraction, and the politics of the Ku Klux Klan in the West created conditions that fueled eugenics policies. To accomplish this, I analyze three cases of sterilization in 1921, 1922, and 1937 that criminalized poverty in Denver. Finally, I examine the consequences of the 1955 *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* court case within the post-Second-World-War eugenics movement.

Most historians agree the eugenics movement collapsed after the Second World War because of associations with Nazi Germany's racial hygiene propaganda and sterilization courts.

[9] Karen Mitchell, "Scarred for Life," Pueblo County Index, Friends of Pueblo County, last modified April 5, 2004, http://www.kmitch.com/Pueblo/asylum2.html.

However, I argue that eugenics practices endured in Colorado through the 1950s and ultimately helped shape the welfare agenda of the 1960s and 1970s. While the late 1920s and 1930s appeared as the apex of popular eugenic culture, the ramifications of eugenic ideology on medicine and the long term application of state institutions' sterilization policies impacted victims for decades.

Part I: The Intellectual Background of the American Eugenics Movement

The American Eugenics Movement emerged during the twentieth century gaining major political traction through the 1920s and 1930s. However, much of the eugenic doctrine developed from the early studies of human heredity, evolutionary biology, and criminology. Famous scientists such as Jean Baptiste Lamarck, Gregor Mendel, and Charles Darwin inadvertently supported the establishment of eugenics while intellectuals such as Richard Dugdale, Cesar Lombroso, and Francis Galton played a more explicit role. Eugenicists of the twentieth century drew from a long history of ideas to shape their agenda.

One early influence was nineteenth-century Lamarckian ideas about inheritance. In 1801, French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck suggested life on Earth evolved, not the common idea that life existed identical to its original creation during biblical times. Lamarck argued since animals adapted to better suit their environment, their offspring in each sequential generation inherited each useful adaptation.[10] Even though Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection improved upon Lamarck's inheritance theory, a century later eugenicists revitalized Neo-

[10] Andrés Galera, "The Impact of Lamarck's Theory of Evolution Before Darwin's Theory," *Journal of the History of Biology* 50, no.1 (2017): 54-55, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s10739-015-9432-5.

Lamarckianism to prove humans actively acquired desirable or undesirable characteristics from their parents in a single generation.

In addition to Lamarck, eugenicists appropriated Gregor Mendel's laws of inheritance to verify eugenical fitness in affluent families. In 1866, Mendel published "Experiments of Plant Hybridization" that documented the existence of dominant and recessive traits called genes in pea plants.[11] Four decades later eugenicists established the theory of Mendelian inheritance based on his pea plants. Mendelian eugenics falsely argued that if genetic inheritance alone controlled human heredity not environmental factors, then monitored human breeding programs could eradicate physical and mental disabilities along with other undesirable traits.[12] Inspired by the Industrial Age's new faith in scientific progress, eugenics preached that human ingenuity could solve any problem.

The scientific theories of English naturalist Charles Darwin reinvigorated the eugenics movement and supported generations of discriminatory policies. In 1859, Darwin published *The Origin of Species* débuting his theory of natural selection: that if a trait helps an organism better survive and reproduce compared to the rest of their population, then that gene will become more frequent in future generations.[13] In the following decades, the application of natural selection to humans became known as "social Darwinism."[14] Similar to eugenicists, social Darwinists believed that problems within society stemmed from biological inheritance. While Darwin did

[11] Gregor Mendel, "Experiments in Plant Hybridization," ed. and trans. Roger B. Blumberg (Province, RH: Mendel Web Archive, 1999)1, http://www.mendelweb.org/Mendel.html.
[12] Hamish G. Spencer and Diane B. Paul, "The Failure of a Scientific Critique: David Heron, Karl Pearson and Mendelian Eugenics," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 31, no. 4 (1998): 442, https://doi-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/10.1017/S0007087498003392.
[13] Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species,* ed. First Avenue Classics (Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 2018),55.
[14] Bruinius, *Better for All the World,* 35-36.

not invent the eugenics movement, his scientific theories fostered a harsher world view centered around evolutionary biology.

Most famously, social Darwinists rallied against relief for the poor arguing humans – like animals – competed in a "survival of the fittest."[15] When churches or governments provided humanitarian aid to the poor, they argued, it kept the weakest members of society alive in direct opposition to natural law. In the dirty and crowded urban centers of the nineteenth century, British and American citizens saw the poor living in deplorable conditions which fueled antagonism against their existence. Social Darwinism echoed an the doctrine of Malthusianism, a theory created by eighteenth century British economist Thomas Malthus who predicted that human population would outpace food production leading to a global famine because charitable programs increased the birthrate of the poor.[16] Collectively, the eugenics movement, Malthusianism, and social Darwinism all agreed the poorest members of society behaved like a cancer and threatened the existence of the wealthy.

Eugenicists also assimilated the criminology research of other nineteenth century scientists such as Cesare Lombroso and Richard Dugdale to bolster their doctrine. During the 1870s, Italian physician and criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso redefined the study of criminology that encouraged eugenic doctrine. Lombroso believed criminals and epileptics evolved into a more primitive version of humans because he documented an unusual skull depression, common among rats, while performing an autopsy.[17] Lombroso's theory defended

[15] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 36.
[16] Peter M. Dunn, "Thomas Malthus (1766-1834): Population Growth and Birth Control," *Archives of Disease in Childhood: Fetal and Neonatal Edition* 78, no. 1 (1998): 1, https://doi.org/10.1136/fn.78.1.F76.
[17] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 8.

the eugenic belief the people inherited criminal tendencies and supported early theories of biological determinism, the belief that genetic makeup determined behavior.[18]

In 1877, American sociologist Richard Dugdale wrote the first semi-fictional genealogical study that eugenicists used to justify the family inheritance of undesirable traits. Dugdale himself never outright supported eugenics, instead arguing that environmental factors influenced the probability of poverty. However, Dugdale's *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Diseases, and Heredity* terrified readers with descriptions of forty two loosely related families living in upstate New York and each generations' encounter with illegitimacy, prostitution, crime, disease, and even animal cruelty.[19] *The Jukes* advertised for the emerging field of eugenics by proclaiming that if "typical habitual criminals who are contrivers of crime" cannot be cured individually then the state "must organize extinction of their race."[20] These studies argued good citizens bear an unfair financial and moral burden when the delinquent go unhindered in their perversion. Racial and social hierarchies deeply influenced scientific research leading to the crescendo of eugenic principles actualized by British Victorian scientist Sir Francis Galton.

Eccentric mathematician and younger cousin of Charles Darwin, Galton, began the eugenics movement after publishing his novel *Hereditary Genius* in 1883.[21] Inspired by his cousin's research, Galton dedicated the rest of his career to what he believed was the

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[18] Carson W. Byrd and Matthew W. Hughey, "Biological Determinism and Racial Essentialism: The Ideological Double Helix of Racial Inequality," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 661, no. 1 (2015): 8, http://doi.org/10.1177/0002716215591476.

[19] Nicole Hahn Rafter, *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies 1877-1919* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 35.

[20] Richard Louis Dugdale, *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Diseases, and Heredity*, 4th ed. (New York: G. P Putnam's Son, 1910), 132, HathiTrust Digital Library.

[21] Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (New York: Appleton, 1883), 1, HathiTrust Digital Library.

"improvement of humanity through selective breeding."[22] Using statistical analysis, Galton traced personality, intelligence, and physical ability through the pedigrees of prominent British families. Galton advocated for reproductive colonies for the fit and segregation for the unfit, best described in his erotic utopian novel *Kantsaywhere* written before his death in 1910.[23] Unlike twentieth century eugenics, Galton viewed eugenics more as a religious movement that prompted the propagation of elite families.

During his research, Galton popularized the notion that "nature not nurture" influenced an individual's capability for achievement.[24] Galton hypothesized hereditarianism, a pseudo-science used during the twentieth century to justify a plethora of racist policies. Like biological determinism, hereditarianism argued that heritance alone influenced human behavior, not environmental factors. Hereditarianism asserted that the white race dominated the hierarchical scale of intelligence because of their superior genetics.[25] The most commonly known association with hereditarianism are the craniometry studies from the early twentieth century that falsely correlated racial skull shape with intelligence.[26] Even though historians named Galton the father of eugenics, the movement took off after his death when eugenics left Great Britain for the United States.

One other crucial concept for early eugenicists was the idea of "feeblemindedness." The term "feeblemindedness" originally referred to any type of mental deficiency, but over time eugenicists developed a scale of feeblemindedness ranging from "high-grade moron" to middle-

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[22] Nicholas W. Gillham, "Sir Francis Galton and the Birth of Eugenics," *Annual Review of Genetics* 35, no.1 (2001):85, http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.genet.35.102401.090055.
[23] Bruinius, *Better for All the World,* 357.
[24] Nicholas W. Gillham, "Sir Francis Galton and the Birth of Eugenics," Annual Review of Genetics 35, no.1 (2001);87, http://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.genet.35.102401.090055.
[25] Charles C. Roseman, "Complexity, Genetic Causation, and Hereditarianism," *Human Biology* 90, no. 4 (2018):244, http://doi.org/10.13110/humanbiology.90.4.05.
[26]James Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815- 1920* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 2019), http://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226626895.001.0001.

range "imbecile" to low-level "idiot."[27] Eugenicists liberally used the word but over time added various interchangeable terminology such as "mental deficient" and "unfit."

The advent of the IQ test revolutionized how eugenicists perceived the connection between mental aptitude, moral behavior, and genetic inheritance. French scientists Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon developed the intelligence scale in 1908 to help teachers track their students' progress.[28] Soon thereafter American psychologist Lewis Terman transformed this test into a powerful eugenicist tool.[29] Subsequently, IQ tests allowed social workers to test and categorize people, including children, according to their mental competency. IQ tests gained major popularity across the United States, even the U.S. army adopted a version called Alpha and Beta tests to measure troop intelligence during the First World War.[30] In many ways, IQ tests reflected eugenicists' belief in the superiority of upper class whites. Although the tests discriminated against immigrants, eugenicists saw them as scientific confirmation of their beliefs. They categorized intelligence as a rigid inherited quality with no variation.

By the 1910s, feeblemindedness no longer just described disability but became an all-encompassing label for anti-social behavior. Eugenicists began to categorize individuals labeled as feebleminded into four categories: people with physical and mental disabilities, those who defied conventional sexual mores, indigent populations, and immigrants. Thus, this already broad label initially applied to people diagnosed with chromosomal diseases, schizophrenia, and epilepsy and later expanded to include unwed mothers, prostitutes, sex criminals, syphilitics,

[27] Robert A. Wilson, *The Eugenic Mind Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 43.
[28] James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feebleminded: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 157.
[29]Trent, *Inventing the Feebleminded,* 157.
[30] Trent, *Inventing the Feebleminded*, 170.

alcoholics, and the chronically impoverished.[31] Doctors of the early twentieth century assumed mental illness always accompanied poverty. Essentially, eugenicists labeled any population that threatened their vision for the United States as feebleminded.

Eugenicists created a special classification for feebleminded women called "high functioning morons," a label regularly applied to immigrant and impoverished women. These so-called "high functioning morons" could pass as normal adults but their sexual appetites and high fertility rate distinguished them from other women. Eugenicists raved about "the particular danger of the fecund, feebleminded female" who deceived innocent men into producing a multitude of feebleminded children.[32] Paranoia around feebleminded motherhood frequently manifested itself in the eugenic doctrine. Eugenicists argued that these feebleminded women "generated bad offspring" more often than men and attributed degenerate tendencies in families to a single promiscuous matriarch.[33]

Eugenicists believed their policies protected the white race from extinction by domestic and foreign-born feebleminded populations alike. The eugenics movement lacked scientific explanations to support many of their foundational principles resulting in the overuse of ambiguous language such as "stock" to describe genetics. People who considered themselves to be of "true American stock" felt threatened by immigrants and poor whites. Eugenicists– among many others – believed that the hierarchy that privileged wealthy whites would fall unless the United States' federal government acted.

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[31] In certain cases, sex criminal referred to a gay man, a typical view on homosexuality prior to the 1960s. Additionally, the term prostitution could apply to any women having sexual relations outside of a traditional marriage or found pregnant outside of marriage.
Wilson, *Eugenic Mind Project,* 59 and 226.
[32] Bruinius, *Better for All the World,* 257.
[33] Hahn Rafter, *White Trash*, 66.

Part II: The Eugenics Movement Enters Politics

It was such thinking that propelled the eugenics movement into state and nation politics. In response to the flood of political corruption following the period of rapid industrialization, American reformers pushed an agenda of social and political reforms that lasted until the 1920s called the Progressive Era. Many historians oversimplify the connection between the Progressive Era and the eugenics movement claiming Progressive ideals led to compulsory sterilization. I argue that eugenic ideology grew alongside Progressive reform measures. Certain Progressive efforts to improve public health, disband child labor, and prohibit alcohol paralleled the eugenics mindset that government intervention paired with modernization could advance society. Progressive reformer and twenty-eighth president Woodrow Wilson, supported eugenics and in 1911 as governor of New Jersey, Wilson authorized sterilization for feebleminded adults in coordination with Henry H. Goddard from the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys.[34] Both Progressives and eugenicists envisioned a utopian society free from poverty and corruption evident in turn of the century life but, eugenicists focused on regulating human reproduction while Progressives attempted more economic measures.

The first point of entry for eugenics policy-making was in agriculture. As a mostly agrarian society, Americans understood how to breed livestock and increase crop yields. Connections between eugenics and agriculture served as a major catalyst for the movement because eugenicists argued selective breeding could produce genetically superior humans as it did for livestock. Better breeding initiatives functioned as a core eugenic principle resulting in childrearing competitions and, ultimately, prohibitory marriage laws.

[34] Trent, *Inventing the Feebleminded*, 173.

The excitement from agricultural scientific advancements transferred from the realm of crops to humans. In 1903, the American Breeders Association (ABA) became the United States' first professional organization to support eugenics research. In 1914, the ABA's monthly periodical published an article from scientist Alexander Graham Bell who argued "the laws of heredity which apply to animals also apply to man."[35] This strain of logic assumed if farmers can breed better livestock, why can't the human families breed better children? Eugenicists presented an oversimplified connection between the advancement of livestock and the advancement of the humankind.

Eugenicists continued to court the rural community through better baby contests of the 1910s and fitter family contests of the 1920s. During state fairs, eugenic organizations hosted competitions to rank the healthiest child while disseminating public health information on maternal care and infant mortality prevention. The competitions perpetuated myths of white supremacy by excluding non-white, non-Protestant, and poor families and distributed inaccurate information on childhood development. Early eugenic organizations developed an arsenal of propaganda techniques aimed at teaching Americans how to marry and reproduce within eugenical standards.

Eugenics policy makers soon progressed from state fair baby contests to the passage of prohibitory marriage laws. Beginning in the 1910s, state legislators encouraged laws restricting marriage between individuals with mental and physical disabilities, communicable diseases, and venereal infections. Lack of knowledge about the spread of disease and fear towards deadly infections such as syphilis and tuberculosis in part prompted these laws. However, marriage

[35] Alexander Graham Bell, "How to Improve the Race," *Journal of Heredity* 5, no. 1 (1914): 2, https://books.google.com/books?id=m78UAAAAYAAJ&dq=Journal%20of%20Heredity%201914&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false.

restrictions including anti-miscegenation laws, contributed to eugenic attempts to control American marriages and enforce sexual norms.[36]

The criminalization of interracial marriages, called anti-miscegenation, existed well before the eugenics movement. Marriage laws dating from the colonial era prevented relationships between white settlers and enslaved African peoples but as the United States' concept of race evolved alongside the institution of slavery states expanded marriage prohibitions to include indentured servants, Native Americans, Catholics and Asian-Americans for the next three centuries.[37] While the eugenics movement reinforced existing taboos on interracial marriage, it also established laws restricting the marriage between individuals with mental and physical disabilities and chronic diseases. The fears behind marriage restrictions corresponded to fears about the changing roles of female sexuality during the early twentieth century.

The coalition for gender equality collaborated with the eugenics movement to address the cultural significance of women as mothers and caretakers. Societal fears persisted about the declining birthrate of white American women and the hyperfertility of immigrants and the poor. Eugenicists encouraged white, wealthy, and educated women to protect the race by raising large families, while they attacked impoverished and non-white women for having any children at all. First wave feminists such as birth control advocate Margaret Sanger, suffragist Victoria Woodhull, and author Charlotte Perkins Gilman all openly supported the eugenics movement.[38] Non-surprisingly, Sanger, Woodhull, and Perkins Gilman were all elite white women and their involvement demonstrated the intersection between gender and class within the movement.

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[36] Rebecca Davis, *More Perfect Unions: The American Search for Martial Bliss* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 26.
[37] Werner Sollors, *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5-6.
[38] Mary Ziegler, "Eugenics Feminism: Mental Hygiene, the Women's Movement, and the Campaign for Eugenic Legal Reform, 1900-1935," *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 31, no. 211 (2008): 4, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1646393.

Early feminist movements adopted eugenic principles to argue gender equality would improve the white race because it empowered women to raise healthier children. Male eugenicists debated whether women could participate in the movement, agreeing with their role as ideal mothers but worried whether the social reformers would damage the cause. Eugenicist Caleb Saleeby's 1911 *Woman and Womanhood: A Search for Principles* declared "hosts of women of the highest type" perform "the silent work of the world…the creation of life" but "the spectacle of palpably aberrant and unfeminine women" distract other women from their true nature.[39] In contrast, elite white women responded to eugenic message that romanticized motherhood.

Female eugenicists argued access to birth control worked as the best resource in preventing the inheritance of mental and physical disabilities and birth of impoverished children. Beginning in 1914, the founder of the birth control movement, Margaret Sanger, argued birth control was "the highest form of eugenics" because it prevented the spread of poverty through population control.[40] However, the male dominated eugenic movement avoided association with the birth control movement because of Sanger's radical reputation and apprehension that birth control allowed white women to avoid their childbearing responsibilities. Even though the two strains of eugenics never reconciled, female supporters crusaded for the eugenics invalidating poor women's right to motherhood.

With widespread support among white, elite men and women with political capital and connections, the eugenics movement became organized. During the 1910s and 1920s eugenicists coalesced over white supremacy and sponsored a vast scientific research arm to support their

[39] Caleb Williams Saleeby, *Woman and Womanhood: A Search for Principles* (New York: J.J Little & Ives Co, 1911), 59, HathiTrust Digital Library.
[40] Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 129.

policy initiatives. The establishment of eugenic professional organizations such as the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) founded in 1910, Race Betterment Foundation in 1911, the Galton Society of America in 1918, and the American Eugenics Society in 1922 all shared a common trajectory and theme. These organizations fundraised, published literature, lobbied for eugenic coursework in primary schools and higher education, influenced lawmakers, and sponsored scientific research. Eugenic organizations successfully raised support from the United States' wealthiest families, philanthropic organizations, premier universities, and scientific laboratories alike. The eugenics movement spoke to the well-educated and upper class Americans, who excelled during the Gilded Age's notorious inequality and feared the countries' perceived deterioration by feeblemindedness, poverty, and immigration.

The ERO, the Race Betterment Society, and the American Eugenics Society all worked to promote white racial supremacy. Harvard biologist Charles Davenport and Princeton cellular biologist Harry Laughlin founded the ERO at New York's Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory with funds from the Harriman railroad dynasty, the Rockefellers, and the Carnegies.[41] The Eugenics Record Office compiled studies of family pedigrees "to quietly register the genetic backgrounds of all Americans" to separate "defective strains" from the desirable.[42] Eugenicists lived in constant paranoia of racial degeneracy and used the illusion of science to rally support for government regulation of marriage and sex.

These organizations utilized falsified statistical analysis of the United States population to predict the nation's apocalyptic demise. These revelations corresponded with an influx of immigrants from eastern and southern European and Asia that changed urban demographics. John J. Kellogg of Kellogg cereal founded the Race Betterment Foundation in Michigan, along

[41] Black, *War Against the Weak*, 45.
[42] Black, *War Against the Weak*, 45.

with Yale economist Irving Fisher and again Charles Davenport, as an continuation of Kellogg's public health campaigns.[43] Eugenicists reconstructed immigration into a public health issue. Kellogg urgently claimed "the whole race would become insane, idiotic or imbecilic within less than three centuries" unless eugenicists intervened and saved "the mental soundness of the race."[44] Of course the assumed race referred to people like the Kellogg family, elite whites.

Eugenic organizations began to merge anti-immigration measures with their agenda to eradicate feeblemindedness. Yale lawyer Madison Grant and co-founder of the American Eugenics Society published *The Passing of the Great Race: or the Racial Basis of European History.*[45] Grant invoked a racially anthropological explanation behind the supremacy of the Nordic culture to argue the United States should bar immigration from anywhere besides north-western Europe to preserve human civilization. In the 1918 edition, Grant asserted the United States should develop a "rigid system of selection" to first eliminate the "weak or unfit" who fill the "jails, hospitals and insane asylums" then move on to eliminating other "worthless race types."[46] Eugenicists made an easy transition from eradicating mental and physical disability to expelling non-Anglo Saxon and Nordic races in the 1920s.

After the First World War the United States experienced a rise in nativism, exemplified by the writings of Madison Grant, that encouraged anti-immigration legislation and a second wave for the Ku Klux Klan. Large scale urbanization created wealthier and more diverse city centers that produced opportunities for women and minorities while also attracting immigrants. As young adults returned from the First World War and women entered the workforce in larger

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[43] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 85.
[44] J.H Kellogg, "Relation of Public Health to Race Degeneracy," *American Journal of Public Health* 4, no.8 (1914): 656, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.4.8.649.
[45] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 264.
[46] Madison Grant, *Passing of the Great: or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: C. Scribner's Son, 1916),80-81, HathiTrust Digital Library.

numbers, traditional gender roles and sexual morels loosened. Klan membership multiplied across the nation, as white native born Protestant men joined together in a violent populist movement that attacked African Americans, Jewish populations, and Catholics to uphold white supremacy and "conservative family values."[47] The Ku Klux Klan and the eugenics movement were separate but their goals and membership overlapped for each other's mutual benefit.

While anti-immigration ideology existed before the eugenic movement, eugenicists capitalized on xenophobic fears to pass federal legislation. In 1922, the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization appointed Harry Laughlin from the ERO as the "expert eugenics agent" to help pass the Johnson-Reed Immigration Restriction Act of 1924.[48] The Johnson-Reed Act set stringent quotas on immigration reducing the influx from eastern and southern Europeans and almost entirely ending immigration from East Asia. In 1926, Laughlin argued the United States first needed to "exclude certain types and classes of antisocial, and otherwise undesirable persons, from admission" then use deportation as "the last line of defense against contamination of American family stocks by alien hereditary degeneracy."[49] Not only did eugenicists believe race degeneracy stemmed from domestic problems but foreign born populations also threatened to corrupt the United States.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of eugenics as federal policy came from the Supreme Court. After the 1920s, eugenicists shifted away from better breeding initiatives, sexual segregation, and marriage restrictions to the more authoritarian measure of compulsory sterilization. In 1907 the state of Indiana passed the first compulsory sterilization law aimed at institutionalized

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[47] Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), xii.
[48] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 36.
[49] Harry Laughlin, "The Eugenical Aspects of Deportation: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Seventieth Congress, First Session, February 21, 1928, Including Testimony Taken April 28, 1926," United States Congress, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Washington, D.C, (1928) 7.

"criminals, idiots, imbeciles, and rapists" but the law floundered undergoing multiple revisions and Indiana's sterilization program did not succeed until after 1927, this was true in most states with an early sterilization law.[50] The 1927 Supreme Court case of *Buck v. Bell* ushered in constitutional approval for future sterilization legislation.[51] *Buck v. Bell* forever changed the eugenics movement and brought on the most active nationwide period of sterilization during the 1930s.[52] After 1927, the proportion of female sterilization victims quickly outpaced their male counterparts and by 1934 surgeons performed sixty percent of all operations on institutionalized women.[53]

Superintendent of the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded, Dr. Albert Priddy, and state lawmaker, Aubrey Strode, decided to use Carrie Buck's impending sterilization as a test case to legalize the practice nationwide. Three years prior in 1924, the Virginian Commission of Feeblemindedness condemned seventeen-year-old Buck to the state colony at request of her foster parents, after she delivered her illegitimate baby, Vivian.[54] While Virginia among other states sterilized patients previous to Buck, their families regularly sued the surgeons for violating the U.S Constitution.[55] Virginian eugenicists desired a failproof argument for sterilization that other states could copy and they found that in Buck.

Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. granted the eugenicists their wish. First the court decided surgical sterilization failed to qualify as cruel or unusual punishment because compulsory vaccination laws set a legal precedent for personal sacrifices that maintained public health. Second, the court decided Dr. Priddy's law upheld the Fourteenth Amendment because

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[50] Alexander M. Stern, "We Cannot Make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow's Ear: Eugenics in the Hoosier Heartland," *Indiana Magazine of History* 103, no.1 (2007): 9, www.jstor.org/stable/27792776.
[51] *Buck v. Bell_274 U.S 200*, 5 (1927), Nexis Uni.
[52] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 94.
[53] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 98.
[54] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 102,
[55] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 104-105.

sterilization only applied to institutionalized patients possessing "hereditary traits of the diagnosed condition" such as hereditary imbecility. [56] Justice Holmes' argument that "three generations of imbeciles are enough" left a profound legacy on how states approached future compulsory sterilization laws.[57] Virginia proved the danger of hereditary feeblemindedness because the state colony already institutionalized Carrie's mother, Emma Buck while social workers immediately diagnosed Carrie's infant daughter as feebleminded.

The mindset behind Carrie Buck's sterilization explained why state governments levitated towards compulsory sterilization measures. While eugenicists argued to state legislatures their measures enacted social progress, a simpler reason motivated the onset of compulsory sterilizations. By the 1930s, lawmakers realized compulsory sterilization saved their governments money. During the Great Depression states wanted to prevent the birth of children to individuals they believed "unable to care for children."[58] This realization contributed to the overwhelming victimization of impoverished women and men in the name of eugenics. It opened the floodgates for states like Colorado to forge ahead with eugenics policies and institutionalize their own state-wide programs of forced sterilization.

Part III: Eugenics Practice and Policy in Colorado

Colorado's eugenic movement followed the national trend but issues specific to the western state distinguished the ways in which policy unfolded. During the Progressive Era, eugenicists in Colorado shaped their agenda alongside particular western histories of immigration, public

[56] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 110.
[57] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 7.
[58] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 94.

health, nativism, and white supremacy. Significant to Colorado was the relationship between western eugenicists and the ascendant racist, nationalist politics of the Ku Klux Klan, which gained traction throughout the state during the 1920s. Tensions from immigration and fears over the spread of disease fostered eugenically minded health reforms in Colorado. The most influential members of Colorado society from state lawmakers and the medical establishment attempted to enact eugenic health reforms. The careers of three prominent Colorado doctors: Dr. Hubert Work, founder of the Colorado State Insane Asylum, Dr. Charles Denison and Dr. Minnie C.T Love both members of the Colorado Medical Society normalized eugenics.

The foundations of Colorado's eugenics infrastructure lay in their early history of institutionalized care. In 1879, Dr. Hubert Work established the Colorado State Insane Asylum, northeast of the City of Pueblo, as a self-contained city designed to incarcerate the state's disabled, chronically ill, and criminally insane, renamed Colorado State Hospital in 1917.[59] Politician Dr. Work desired to cure Colorado's population of "mental weakness" with his modern asylum.[60] The founding of Colorado State Insane Asylum symbolized the beginning of Colorado's eugenics movement, as doctors segregated vulnerable populations and then blamed them for a plethora of social ills. But by the turn of the century, even Work had misgivings about protecting such vulnerable populations. In the 1912 edition of *American Journal of Insanity*, Dr. Work rejected institutionalized care by claiming "animals maintain the strength of species by mastery over their weaklings" but when the nation protects "physical weakness" it causes a

[59] "Brief History of the Colorado Mental Health Institute," Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo Museum, last modified 2014, http://www.cmhipmuseum.org/history.html.
[60] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 326.

"higher proportion of degeneracy."[61] Such a shift illustrated the ways eugenics thinking had influenced Colorado's medical leaders by the early twentieth century.

The shift would soon transform state policy. The Colorado Medical Society, established in 1871, played with eugenics as a strategy to prevent the spread of disease. Professor of Chest Diseases and Climatology at the University of Denver, Dr. Charles Denison suggested state sponsored euthanasia for the disabled and marriage restrictions as measures to prevent disease. The long lasting societal consequences of tuberculosis (TB), commonly called consumption, radicalized medical professionals towards eugenics. Dr. Denison favored eugenics as a cure for TB and pushed the state towards enacting eugenical policies.

Eugenicists believed since "defective genes" accelerated the spread of TB, marriages between feebleminded individuals and different races encouraged illness because their offspring lacked genetic resistance.[62] Dr. Denison wrote the 1901 bill outlawing the marriage of individuals infected with TB.[63] The bill declared engaged couples must admit if their family members "died of consumption" proving the "defective biology in that family strain" to prevent the birth of "consumptive off springs."[64] Dr. Denison's bill acted as a precursor to the eugenic marriage laws proposed in the next two decades. Although eugenicists suggested more sadistic options than marriage restrictions.

In 1900, Dr. Denison petitioned the Colorado State Medical Society to start euthanizing disabled children per request of their families. The example petition written by Dr. Denison,

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[61] Hubert Work, "The Sociologic Aspect of Insanity and Allied Defects," *American Journal of Insanity* 69, no. 1 (1912): 6, Nineteenth Century Collections Online.
[62] Black, *War Against the Weak*, 255.
[63] Pat Nelson, "Detailed History of the University of Colorado Medical Library Collection: 1912-2007," University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, last modified October 22, 2007, https://library.cuanschutz.edu/about/library-history.
[64] "Daring Suggestions to Prevent Disease: State Medical Society will Consider a Proposition to Exterminate Imbecile Children—To Stamp Out Consumption," 1901, Charles and Minnie Love Collection, 1887-1934, File Folders 179-185, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.

displayed in an newspaper article titled "Daring Suggestions to Prevent Disease: State Medical Society will Consider a Proposition to Exterminate Imbecile Children—to Stamp Out Consumption," left a fill in the blank section for the family's genealogical information and the parent's reason why their child should be exterminated. The petition described the fictional child as "a hopeless imbecile, a groveling idiot" whose life served as a "blight upon an otherwise happy home" and suggested the child's "worse than useless existence may be brought to an end (even by such painless, and by her undetected, means as gradual suffocation by carbonic acid gas)."[65] Dr. Denison's proposal to murder disabled children exemplified how eugenicists combined medical bureaucracy, ambitions of genetic purification, and cruelty to achieve their goals. Throughout the 1920s, Dr. Love would prove a tireless force in Colorado's legislative history of eugenics.

The prolific career of prominent civic leader and physician, Minnie C.T Love, marched Colorado towards eugenics. Born in 1855, Minniehaha "Minnie" Cecelia Francisca Love, née Tucker grew up in an eminent abolitionist family of Washington, DC and in 1887 Love graduated with her medical license from Howard University then dedicated her career to serving the poor.[66] In 1892, Dr. Love and her husband, Charles Guerley Love, moved to Colorado, where her efforts to improve the health of impoverished women within Denver's medical, charity, and correctional institutions shaped her growing belief in eugenics. During Dr. Love's influential career she served as head doctor for the Florence Crittenton Home for unwed mothers, founded the Babies Summer Hospital (Children's Hospital of Denver) in 1897, organized the care for juvenile delinquents at the State Home and Industrial School for Girls, was elected to the

[65] "Daring Suggestions to Prevent Disease: State Medical Society will Consider a Proposition to Exterminate Imbecile Children—To Stamp Out Consumption," Charles and Minnie Love Collection.
[66] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 333-334.

Colorado House of Representatives in 1921 and 1924, and served as a member on the State Board of Charities, the State Board of Health, and the Denver School Board.[67] Upon her death in 1942, *The Denver Post* reported Love as a humanitarian leader and scientist who "advanced Denver along the lines of progress and humanity" without failing "to recognize the value of being completely feminine."[68]

Dr. Love's career exemplified the direction of Colorado's eugenics movement. In the beginning eugenicists promised to clean society of disease and poverty connecting to the Progressive Era belief that "the mission of women in politics is to purify, reform, and cleanse."[69] Dr. Love's reform measures first centered around her medical specialization in obstetrics and gynecology but gradually devolved into nationalistic and white supremacist efforts to suppress reproductive rights. In 1924, Dr. Love held the office of excellent commander within the Women of the Ku Klux Klan and rallied behind an anti-immigration, anti-Catholic, and pro-sterilization agenda.[70] By the 1920s, the eugenics movement took on a nativist agenda supporting racist cultural attitudes in response to the last half century's influx of immigration. The trajectory of Dr. Love's medical and political career reflected three major transformations in Colorado history. The first was the growth of particular industries in Colorado that attracted large immigrant populations.

The mid-nineteenth century development of railroads and the discovery of natural resources expanded Colorado's economy and attracted significant immigration from China as well as southern and eastern Europe. In the 1860s, labor needed to create the First Transcontinental

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[67] "Biography: Brief Overview of Minnie C.T Love's Life and Accomplishments," Charles and Minnie Love Collection, 1887-1934, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.
[68] "Dr. Minnie Love Dies Following 10 Day Illness," May 13, 1942, Charles and Minnie Love Collection 1887-1934, File Folders 179-185, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.
[69] "A Rousing Rally," October, 28 1906, Charles and Minnie Love Collection 1887-1934, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.
[70] Gail Marjorie Beaton, *Colorado Women: A History* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 164.

Railroad brought Chinese immigrants to the West Coast but eventually the immigrants migrated to the United States' interior and found work in Colorado's gold and silver mines.[71] By the 1890s, the prosperous Southern Colorado Coal Fields between Huerfano and Las Animas counties attracted immigrants from Italy, Germany, and Russia but Italian coal miners flourished the most and established strong Catholic communities.[72] These demographic shifts threatened native born Anglo-Saxon Protestants who felt a "sense of urgency" to prevent the rapidly declining "American racial stock".[73] Eugenic doctrine embraced "American nationalism" and reconstructed a quasi-fictional ancestral line from Anglo-Saxon England that fetishized the United States' race as superior.[74]

The second transformation was the emergence of a virulent anti-Catholicism. As limitations on eugenic science grew, Protestant eugenicists focused on perpetuating racial and social hierarchies that alienated and demonized Catholics. During the 1920s and 1930s eugenicists abhorred Catholic interventions into state politics, degrading their religiously themed arguments with racism against southern European immigrants. While not all Protestants supported eugenic sterilization, the movement was distinctly split along the Protestant-Catholic divide further fueling Catholic fears of government intervention into religious freedom. Protestant-led immigration quotas threatened Catholics as religious minorities and eugenics policy makers advocated for sterilization to limit Catholic family size radicalized Catholic organizations against the eugenic movement.[75]

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[71] Liping Zhu, *The Road to Chinese Exclusion: the Denver Riot, 1880 Election, and Rise of the West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013),12-13.
[72] Annaliese M. Bonacquista, "Community, Conflict, and Legacy in Southern Colorado: 1890-1920," (master's thesis, University of Northern Colorado, 2008), 22-25, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
[73] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 24,
[74] Francois Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 127-129.
[75] Philip R. Reilly, "Involuntary Sterilization in the United States: A Surgical Solution," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 62, no. 2 (1987): 164, https://www-jstor-org.colorado.idm.oclc.org/stable/2829217

Finally, Dr. Love's career was shaped by the rise of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which overtook Colorado's political machinery during the 1920s, emboldening anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant agendas that benefited the eugenics cause. By 1920, Colorado claimed 35,000 men and 11,000 women - as registered members of the Klan.[76] Women, like Dr. Love joined the female chapter of the Klan and embraced eugenics ideas. Klan women, preached nativist messages disguised as American patriotism and directed towards Protestant women "seeking to uphold Christian principles and virtues of true womanhood."[77] Their rhetoric replicated the eugenics movement's message for women. Colorado Klan members and eugenicists agreed immigration restrictions would protect against Catholic attempts to install the Pope as king and stop southern European immigrants from tainting American bloodlines.[78] It was in this context that Dr. Love introduced multiple bills to the Colorado state legislature in an attempt to legalize compulsory sterilization.

While serving as a state representative in 1921 and 1925, Dr. Minnie C.T Love drafted the first of two compulsory sterilization bills she would introduce in her legislative career. The first, a 1921 sterilization bill titled, *"An Act to Prevent Procreation of Confirmed Criminals, Idiots, Imbeciles and Rapists"* dictated that two skilled surgeons along with the chief physician must "examine the mental, moral and physical condition" of the inmate proposed for sterilization.[79] Dr. Love grouped together mental, moral, and physical as one fluid category because eugenicists viewed feeblemindedness as a "core, underlying heritable defect" that included physical,

[76] Betty Jo Brenner, "The Colorado Women of the Ku Klux Klan," in *Denver Inside and Out*, ed. Colorado Historical Society (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 65.
[77] Brenner, "The Colorado Women of the Ku Klux Klan," in Colorado Historical Society, 66.
[78] Marouf Arif Hasian Jr, *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 93-94.
[79] "An Act to Prevent the Procreation of Criminals, Idiots, Imbeciles and Rapists: Authorizing the Procedure Therefor and Payment of the Expense Thereof," 1921, Charles and Minnie Love Collection 1887-1934, File Folders 167-174, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.

physiological, mental, personality, and social traits.[80] Under the terms of the proposed laws, patients would have received a sterilization sentence based on uncontrollable circumstances such as class and education status but also how virtuous they appeared.

By arguing for the comprehensive quality of feeblemindedness, eugenicists contradicted their former support for state institutions as therapeutic establishments. Dr. Love's 1921 bill advised sterilization after the inmate "has been found to be non-improvable after one year residence in an institution." This represented a complete reversal of earlier nineteenth-century visions of the insane asylum, restorative and benevolent houses of correction. Pressured by the reality of failed institutions, eugenicists, such as Dr. Love advocated for sterilization as a medical remedy over rehabilitation.

After the first bill failed, Dr. Love introduced a second, revised law in 1925. This time Love added an economic argument for sterilization. State sponsored sterilization, Love argued, would have saved Colorado money through the increased productivity of former patients. The 1925 House Bill No. 60 emphasized training of patients for menial labor after release. Section one dictated hospitals could release patients after proper "training" so that the individual could lead "a life of industry" and "save the taxpayers the burden of their keep."[81] Eugenicists commonly argued for the economic benefit of sterilization, claiming future feebleminded offspring drained state funds through dependency, crime, and addiction. Introducing training programs provided another incentive for the perceived benefits of sterilization. This bill also failed to make it through the legislature.

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[80] Wilson, *Eugenic Mind Project,* 45 and 58.
[81] "An Act to Prevent the Procreation of Idiots, Epileptics, Imbeciles and Insane Persons, and Providing Penalties for the Violation Thereof," 1925, Charles and Minnie Love Collection 1887-1934, File Folders 167-174, History Colorado Archives, Denver, CO.

After the defeat of Dr. Love's two bills, Colorado eugenicists introduced a more subtle and bureaucratic version of compulsory sterilization to the state legislature. In 1927, Representatives John L. Tegarden of Jefferson County, E.W Newland of La Plata County, and Charles Works of Denver County and Senator Henry Wolcott Toll of Denver County drafted a sterilization bill titled, "*A Bill for An Act Authorizing the Sterilization of Certain Persons, and Providing for Investigations, Procedures and Other Matters in Connection Therewith*."[82] This bill was passed by both legislative houses, most likely because it coincided with the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Buck v. Bell.*

The sponsors of the 1927 bill transitioned away from Dr. Love's complex arguments and narrowed their objective to only sterilizing "insane, feebleminded or epileptic inmates" under the dominion of the Colorado Psychopathic Hospital. It excluded broad categories of "criminals, idiots, and rapists" residing in Colorado institutions and penitentiaries. The decision of *Buck v. Bell* reaffirmed Virginia's model sterilization law and gave legislators the legal reassurance to authorize the operations. Furthermore Tegarden, Newland, Works and Toll simplified their language exchanging Dr. Love's terms "defective" and "high-grade Moron" for "certain persons" symbolizing how eugenicists normalized discrimination through language.[83] Although the year of 1927 stood out as a turning point for national acceptance towards compulsory sterilization, Colorado ultimately failed to pass their law.

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[82] "A Bill for An Act Authorizing the Sterilization of Certain Persons, and Providing for Investigations, Procedure and Other Matters in Connection Therewith," H. B. No. 509 (1927), Colorado State Archives, Denver, CO.
I found the full names of all the House Representative and Senators from scanned Abstract of Votes Cast pamphlets on Colorado Secretary of State's website.
Colorado Secretary of State, Abstract of Votes Cast for Primary Election and General Election, September 14, 1926 (Denver, CO), https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Results/.../1926AbstractBook.pdf.

[83] House Bill No. 509, Colorado State Archives.

In April 1927, Colorado Governor William Herbert Adams vetoed House Bill No. 509 because he believed compulsory sterilization was undesirable.[84] Adams argued that because Colorado maintained "facilities for segregation" and exercised "careful supervision of the inmates" sterilization would not be necessary to prevent the birth of feebleminded offspring.[85] Certain eugenicists defended the sexual segregation of women because state institutions protected "feebleminded women from social ills" and inversely protected "society from their tainted progeny."[86] Colorado focused on removing prostitutes, unwed mothers, and impoverished women from society to impede the birth of feebleminded children. While Adams did not outright condemn sterilization, he referred to the House Bill No. 509's provisions as "perhaps unconstitutional" preferring to maintain the status quo.[87]

Much of the public opposition to the law came from Colorado's Catholic communities. *The Denver Catholic Register* reported that in response to House Bill No. 509, the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus along with the Holy Name Diocesan Union, Denver Catholic Charities, and the Archbishop of Denver protested against compulsory sterilization of "mental defectives" and epileptics because God granted procreation as a natural right. Mental illness, they argued, was understood to be partially correctable unlike sterilization. Further, they continued, without fear of pregnancy sexually transmitted diseases would spread more aggressively.[88] Catholics

[84] House Bill No. 509, Colorado State Archives.
[85] House Bill No. 509, Colorado State Archives.
[86] Philip R. Reilly, "The Surgical Solution: The Writings of Activist Physicians in the Early Days of Eugenical Sterilization," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 26, no. 4 (1983): 645, https://doi.org/10.1353/pbm.1983.0012.
[87] House Bill No. 509, Colorado State Archives.
[88] W. H. Kaffer and William May, "Fourth Degree Knights and Holy Name Diocesan Union on Record Against Measure; House Acts Under Delusion that State will Benefit," *Denver Catholic Register,* March 24, 1927, Denver Catholic Register Online Archives.

argued that the eugenics movement utilized government overreach to interfere with humankind's right to procreate, hinder individual liberties, and encourage modern decadency.[89]

Further, secular opposition alike questioned the autocratic science behind eugenics. The *Rocky Mountain News* ran an editorial by assistant director of the Colorado Psychopathic Hospital, Dr. Charles Rymer, that challenged the assumptions of hereditary feeblemindedness. Dr. Rymer cautioned against state sponsored sterilization because "science is still ignorant" about the "transmission of mental diseases and physical deformities."[90] Dr. Rymer believed in voluntary sterilization for known "defective germ plasm" but reflected that it was impossible to "prove to the satisfaction of any court that defective mental characteristics…can be inherited."[91] The *Denver Catholic Register* similarly agreed that a person afflicted with mental illness could recover after sterilization resulting in an "intolerable hardship…inflicted by the state."[92] Both newspapers demonstrated anxiety about the finality of sterilization amongst dubious evidence.

In 1929, two years later after the upset by Governor Adams, Representatives Edward King, Annah Pettee, S. Arthur Henry, and William Kavanagh from Denver County and La Plata Representative Helen Noland introduced, "*A Bill for An Act Authorizing the Sterilization of Certain Persons, And Providing for Investigations, Procedures and Other Matters in Connection Therewith"* to the Colorado General Assembly.[93] Absolutely identical to the 1927 version, both

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[89] Brian K. Pennington and Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 151.
[90] Charles Rymer, "Denver Psychiatrist Advocates Caution in Sterilization Cases," *Rocky Mountain News,* April 3, 1927, *Rocky Mountain News* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[91] Charles Rymer, "Denver Psychiatrist Advocates Caution in Sterilization Cases," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 3, 1927, *Rocky Mountain News* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[92] W.H Kaffer and William May, "Fourth Degree Knights and Holy Name Diocesan Union on Record Against Measure," *Denver Catholic Register,* March 24, 1927, Denver Catholic Register Online Archives.
[93] "A Bill for An Act Authorizing the Sterilization of Certain Persons, and Providing for Investigations, Procedure and Other Matters in Connection Therewith," House Bill No. 136 (1929), Colorado State Archives, Denver, CO. Colorado Secretary of State, "Abstract of Votes Cast for Primary Election and General Election," November 6, 1928, (Denver, CO), https://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/elections/Results/.../1928AbstractBook.pdf.

House Bill No. 509 and House Bill No. 136 symbolized the growing ingenuity and panic of Colorado eugenicists to legalize compulsory sterilization. Both bills argued hospitals needed to trace the inmate's "family history" to discover their "mental and physical condition" and imagining the quality of child an inmate could produce if released.[94] Unlike Dr. Love's previous bills, the 1927 and 1929 versions indicated a new legal savviness to orchestrate compulsory sterilization through government channels.

House Bill No. 136 arranged a complex network of state officials to locate, investigate, and sentence candidates for sterilization, while shielding state agents from facing legal ramification. The bill designated "the Chief Medical Officer, Secretary of the State Board of Health, and the Chief of Staff of the State Psychopathic Hospital" to form a "Board of Examiners" that functioned as a legal body to unanimously decide whether a sterilization operation would be lawful and in the best interests of the state of Colorado.[95] Compared to the 1925 bill that lacked consent requirements, in the newer versions lawmakers determined the board must receive written consent from either the patient's husband, wife, parent or guardian within thirty days before an operation.[96] Sensing the legally shaky foundations of receiving legitimate consent for sterilization, lawmakers sought to insulate themselves from legal consequences as they allowed medical practitioners to take advantage of populations with little social capital.

By the end of the decade, Colorado had failed in all their attempts to legalized compulsory sterilization. Their efforts, however, illustrate their deepening faith in the legitimacy and urgency of their cause. In both House Bill No. 509 and House Bill No. 136, lawmakers included an emergency clause authorizing the immediate enforcement of compulsory sterilization. Across the

[94] House Bill No. 136, Colorado State Archives.
[95] House Bill No.136, Colorado State Archives.
[96] 1925 bill, Charles and Minnie Love Collection

nation, legal battles impeded the passage of sterilization bills. The Colorado House of Representatives on both occasions took action to protect the state's sterilization bills with an emergency clause but twice the Senate denied their request. The lawmakers incited panic by claiming sterilization was needed for the "immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety."[97] It was this sense of urgency and necessity that allowed for the forced sterilization of vulnerable patients in Colorado to persist in the absence of legislative authority.

Part IV: Forced Sterilization Cases in Colorado

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, the eugenics movement in Colorado changed dramatically. Despite their failure to secure a sterilization law, advocates of eugenics policy continued to push their agenda forward, even as they faced mounting public critiques. Changing historical circumstances created new opportunities and new roadblocks to the eugenics movement. During the years of the Great Depression, eugenicists seized on the opportunity connect poverty to criminality as a way to advance practices of forced sterilization through local courts. So long as Colorado lacked a compulsory sterilization law, the court system could and did use utilize sterilization as a legal punishment throughout the 1920s and 1930s. After World War II, however, the revelations about the full extent of eugenics policies in Nazi Germany forced advocates of sterilization to shift their rhetoric and their priorities. Much of their work was forced behind closed doors. Under such circumstances, the eugenicist doctors and surgeons employed by state hospitals and mental institutions wielded enormous power over women's bodies quietly and discretely. The consequences of their actions rarely saw the light of day, but

[97] House Bill No.136, Colorado State Archives.

in some notable cases, victims of Colorado's eugenics practitioners sought remedies in court for violations enacted against them.

Despite their legislative defeats during the 1920s, Colorado's eugenics movement continued to aggressively utilize local courts to advance their sterilization agenda. Their main objective in local courts was a broad agenda to criminalize female poverty. Several cases involving poor and indigent women provide evidence of such plans. In one case, Denverite Mrs. Clyde Cassidente faced sterilization for suspected child neglect. According to reports from *The Herald Democrat*, Mrs. Cassidente's doctor, Ray Sunderland, recommended sterilization for the mother of five after a social worker reported the Cassidente home as filthy and their children as "neglected and undernourished." [98] Whether the Cassidente family lived in squalor or if the social worker sensationalized the episode is unclear. However, eugenicists blamed women for their family's poverty. Eugenicists depicted impoverished women as a "menace to society" ignoring inadequate social conditions.[99]

At the same time, Cassidente's case also revealed the growing public opposition to the eugenics agenda. An editorial from *The Salida Mail* vehemently opposed Mrs. Cassidente's sterilization citing suspicion of the scientific community for supplanting Christianity. The newspaper's editor referred to eugenicists as "monkey flirting doctors who revere Darwin" and accused them of mutilating women into "sexless useless creatures."[100] The editor's objection of the state's intervention into marriage and natural procreation exemplified the value of women in society. Mainstream culture in the early twentieth century viewed women as responsible for

[98] Associated Press, "Tells Mother She Mustn't Have Any More Children," *Herald Democrat,* November 27, 1921, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.
[99] Wilson, *Eugenic Mind Project*, 45.
[100] John M. O'Connell, "Monkey Business," *Salida Mail,* November 20, 1921, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.

bearing children within marriage but the advent of birth control methods changed the purpose of sex. Traditional ideals of family life and the biblical commandment to "increase and multiply" hindered public support for the eugenics movement.[101]

The editorial also criticized eugenic social workers who investigated poor families. A social worker reported Mrs. Cassidente to the authorities as an unfit mother. The editorial ridiculed female social workers as "short-haired old maids" and "short-haired, motherless types" who intruded into homes where they morally did not belong.[102] The editor's criticism towards social workers aligned with the belief that femininity came from marriage and children. Critics despised eugenics because their policies corrupted female sexuality by either preventing motherhood or encouraging spinsterhood.

In other examples, some eugenicist judges in Colorado faced national criticism when they compelled sterilization. In January 1922, the Ohio State University's *Law Notes* critiqued the decision of a judge who ruled on the case of an unnamed Denver woman who faced sterilization due to her poverty. *Law Notes* deemed sterilization as an unfair punishment because the mother's poverty resulted from "marriage to a man unable to support her" not "idleness or incapacity."[103] Their critique made clear that the wife was being punished for the incompetency of the husband. They went on to question the veracity of consent. In the case of the Denver family, the judge used the authority of the court to remove the existing children as leverage to compel consent. Even if the woman consented to sterilization, "what compulsion on a mother could be greater than the threat to take her children from her?" Voluntary sterilization was not voluntary, the

[101] John M. O'Connell, "Monkey Business," *Salida Mail*, November 20, 1921, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection.
[102] John M. O'Connell, "Monkey Business," *Salida Mail,* November 20, 1921, Colorado Historical Newspaper Collection.
[103] Editor, "Judicial Birth Control," *Law Notes* 25, no. 1 (1922): 184, Google Books.

journal explained, if the court coerced permission through intimidation. The few documented cases of sterilization in Colorado received permission from the patient but always under significant outside pressure. The question of consent became a lightning rod within the public debate over eugenics. The case of Thelma Baxter illustrates this tension.

In 1922, Baxter was sentenced to sterilization by a Denver judge after the Colorado Psychopathic Hospital diagnosed her as a "mental defective."[104] According to reports of the story that appeared in *The New York City Tribune*, Baxter's story illustrated how the state punished poor women. The *Tribune* reported that "Mrs. Thelma Baxter, thirty-two years old, mother of eight children" was "again pregnant," deploying commentary that played into the eugenicist belief that unfit women produced children faster than fit women. Eugenicists argued excessive childbearing resulted in "physically weakened, mentally dejected and spiritually hopeless" parents whose children either ended up dead, as child laborers, or as prostitutes.[105]

At issue in the Baxter case, however, was the ambiguity of her consent to sterilization. Similar to the 1921 Cassidente case, the operation depended on Baxter providing consent. Since Colorado lacked a compulsory sterilization law, however, the judge required "the consent of the woman and her husband."[106] Many U.S sterilization policies required informed consent but institutions forced the procedure as pre-condition for release and or used a surrogate family member to sign.[107] As cases such as that of Cassidentes and Baxter make clear, Colorado courts and doctors regularly pressured women into sterilization.

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[104] "Mother Who Scalded Boy May Face Sterilization," *New York City Tribune* (New York, NY) May 1, 1937, EBSCO Newspaper Source Plus.
Penelope Huse, Sterilization Abstracts, May 11, 1937, MS Planned Parenthood Federation of American Records 1918-1974, Women's Studies Archive at Smith College Library, http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CLwbh8.
[105] Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race* (New York: Brentano, 1920), 60-61.
[106] Penelope Huse, Sterilization Abstracts, May 11, 1937, MS Planned Parenthood Federation of American Records 1918-1974, Women's Studies Archive at Smith College Library, http://tinyurl.gale.com/tinyurl/CLwbh8.
[107] Alexandra M. Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 130.

The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 exacerbated hardships on Denver families and provided fuel for Colorado eugenicists to continue their inhumane efforts to criminalize the poor. Increasingly, throughout the 1930s, eugenicists began to equate poverty and crime in their advocacy for compulsory sterilization. By the 1930s, eugenicists widen their scope of interest to include poverty, immigration, and criminality instead of just mental and physical disability that dominated the earlier years. Although the Depression depleted funding for eugenic organizations, Colorado's institutions still maintained a eugenic philosophy in their treatment of crime and poverty.

Seeing new opportunities to advance legislation, eugenicists began to advocate for the sterilization of the poor as a remedy to crime. In January 1937, the *Ignacio Chieftain* reported House Representative Dr. T. E Childress of La Plata County was "working on a bill for the sterilization of criminals." Dr. Childress argued since criminals possessed distinct genetic inclination towards delinquency, sterilization prevented future generations of crime. Canyon City's prison warden, Roy Best, supported Childress because both men "advocated such a plan for many years."[108] Implementing sterilization within the prison system appeared easier due to the insulated nature of the penal system. Later in January, *The Steamboat Pilot* ran an editorial in support of Childress' proposed bill. The editorial argued that lawmakers would place "all reasonable safeguards and protect sane individuals without inherent diseases" from forced sterilization.[109] The article also stressed the inherent difference between the criminal and non-criminal populations, further perpetuating the eugenic myth that criminals possessed inferior genetics.

[108] "Legislature Headlines," *Ignacio Chieftain* January 15, 1937, Colorado Historical Newspapers Collection.
[109] G.W.S, "The Commentator," *Steamboat Pilot,* Jan. 21, 1937, Colorado Historical Newspapers Collection.

The law never got off the ground, largely because revelations emerging from the Second World War laid bare the full horror of eugenics policies taking shape in Nazi Germany. The Second World War permanently altered Colorado's approach to eugenics. Although the connection between Nazi racial hygiene and compulsory sterilization policies appalled many Coloradans, state institutions did not entirely abandon their eugenics programs. Rather, members of the medical establishment used the new revelations to reinforced prewar policies and adjusted their scientific foundation for the new era.

During the postwar years, Colorado eugenicists vested new levels of power and authority into the role of the superintendent within state institutions. The vast autonomy of such a position allowed for the perpetuation of compulsory sterilization even after public opposition. The long tradition of state institutions being isolated from society, hierarchical, and working on a "system of reward and punishments" that enabled sterilization to continue long after the end of the Second World War.[110] Former Colorado House of Representative and superintendent of the Home for Mental Defectives at Grand Junction, Dr. Benjamin Lafayette Jefferson argued for compulsory sterilization in 1949. Opposition to the measure was fierce. *Rocky Mountain News* columnist Lee Casey and University of Denver sociology Professor Eugene P. Link opposed the sterilization revival by drawing explicit connections to Nazi sterilization tribunals.

Professor Link's column compared the discrimination of sterilization policies against women to prejudices against African American and Jewish populations. Link illustrated how the United States' sterilization laws unfairly targeted African American populations measuring the treatment of "the Jew in Germany" to "the Negro in America."[111] After establishing the connection, Link

[110] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 222.
[111] Eugene P. Link, "What About Sterilization Laws?" *Denver Post*, December 17, 1948, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

continued to argue that women also faced discrimination through sterilization laws because "we [United States] speak of their place, their temperament, their intelligence as fixed" and inferior.[112] The horrors of the Second World War, he argued, progressed society towards a more rights based culture.

In a similar critique, *Rocky Mountain News* columnist Lee Casey wrote an editorial denouncing Dr. Jefferson's proposals regarding the sterilization of the mentally infirm as an injustice to God's will. Casey asserted "sterilization is an outrage against human dignity" because no human should alter God's plan "in the name of science or economics."[113] For decades religious opposition to eugenics argued for the intrinsic worth of human life attempting to curtail blind scientific hubris. Echoing Link's critique, Casey's evoking of Hitler represented a new tool for resistance against eugenics thinking. As a persuasion technique, Casey reminded his audience that "Hitler…snuffed out the lives of those he considered mentally unfit" a painful fact obvious to Coloradans just years after the end of the war .[114]

Despite such public condemnation, state hospital superintendents like Dr. Jefferson continued to perpetuate patient abuse when they advocated for sterilization in their roles as law enforcers and surgeons. In Grand Junction, Dr. Jefferson supported sterilizing institutionalized patients because once paroled "women mental defectives" produced "children of low mentality" who end up institutionalized in the same hospital.[115] Even though, eugenicists argued for the benefits of sterilization, the procedure existed "as a punishment rather than a cure" for unwanted

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[112] Eugene P. Link, "What About Sterilization Laws?" *Denver Post*, December 17, 1948, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[113] Lee Casey, "Sterilization-Answer No," *Rocky Mountain News,* June 19, 1948, *Rocky Mountain News* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[114] Lee Casey, "Sterilization-Answer No," *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO) June 19, 1948, *Rocky Mountain News* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[115] Bert Hanna, "Sterilization, Not Mercy Death, Urged for Mental Defectives," *Denver Post*, October 10, 1949, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

populations who suffered under the hospital's "rigid hierarchies of power."[116] In an unofficial report of the Home for Mental Defectives at Grand Junction by the Colorado Planning Commission, a spokesperson named Milt Andrus referred to the disabled patients as "hideous spectacles of human wreckage" and recommend "controlled euthanasia" to prevent their grief and burden onto society.[117] Underfunded institutions with poorly trained staff contributed to the dehumanization of disabled patients in an environment already sympathetic to eugenic discrimination.

Perhaps the most famous example of institutional abuse and forced sterilization in Colorado was the case of Lucille Schreiber. Born in 1924 to a large working class family, Lucille was a nervous child who loved to run but by her tenth birthday the Children's Aid Society in Denver suggested to her frustrated mother Annabelle Schreiber, after numerous incidents of truancy and shoplifting, a medical evaluation for her daughter by the Colorado Psychopathic Hospital.[118] In 1934, after the hospital declared Lucille's IQ to be a feebleminded eighty nine, Annabelle relinquished her daughter to the Home of the Good Shepherd beginning Lucille's long history of institutionalization. The courts first sentenced Lucille to live at the Good Shepherd, then the Denver Juvenile Detention Home, then the State Home and Industrial School for Girls and finally after being declared insane by Denver's Lunacy Commission in 1940 transferred her to Colorado State Hospital.[119] As treatment for her nervous energy and alternating fits of depression and rage, in May 1941 Colorado State Hospital performed a salpingectomy on Lucille Schreiber at age seventeen without her consent.

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[116] Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 234.
[117] Bert Hanna, "Sterilization, Not Mercy Death, Urged for Mental Defectives," *Denver Post*, October 10, 1949, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[118] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 331.
[119] Bruinius, *Better for All the World*, 336-338.

Schreiber represented the perfect candidate for sterilization because her disadvantaged childhood, history with juvenile delinquency, and gender left her vulnerable to eugenic fearmongering. For young women such as Schreiber, Colorado eugenicists proselytized sterilization as a form of protection, for herself and the state, not as punishment for being underprivileged. Dr. Zimmerman utilized the pervasive "three generations argument" from the decision in *Buck v. Bell* to prove the operation would stop hereditary feeblemindedness. State officials believed Schreiber would conceive illegitimate children after release and her offspring would deplete the state's financial resources and contaminate the nation's genetic purity. In Dr. Zimmerman's deposition, the plaintiff's attorney, Norman Berman questioned Dr. Zimmerman if "mental deficients will always produce mental deficients" and the doctor responded, "Not necessarily, but we have three or four generations out at the State Hospital." [120]

Attorney Berman addressed the blurred motivations behind Schreiber's operation and questioned Dr. Zimmerman's response that sterilization was necessary in cases with "mental deficiency or we feel that the patient is going to be involved in giving birth to illegitimate children."[121] As a eugenicist, Dr. Zimmerman concluded the circumstances of mental deficiency and illegitimacy always accompanied each other. Although the Colorado Psychopathic Hospital diagnosed Schreiber with a feebleminded IQ score in 1934, the main evidence for her diagnosis came from her childhood behavioral problems. Schreiber's disobedience stemmed from a chaotic upbringing during the Great Depression and early admission into juvenile detention, not from a genetic disorder. Dr. Zimmerman assumed since Schreiber came from a disadvantage background she would conceive children outside of wedlock and be an inadequate parent. The

[120] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 25.
[121] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 21.

motivations behind eugenic sterilization reinforced harmful gender and class biases that targeted impoverished women as inherently inferior.

For decades eugenicists claimed sterilization worked as a therapeutic procedure: for women cutting the fallopian tubes calmed nervous personalities, diminished sexual promiscuousness, and stopped masturbation.[122] Schreiber's hospital records demonstrated such assumptions between feeblemindedness and sexual immorality. The Colorado Psychopathic Hospital diagnosed her with "mental deficiency—moron" for her "problems of masturbation, truancy and discipline" arguing sterilization would "safeguard her from illegitimate pregnancies."[123] However the salpingectomy operation only served to worsened Schreiber's depression. She recommitted herself in January 1942 and again in May 1945 and remained institutionalized until 1954.[124]

Attorneys Norman and Edison argued that Dr. Rosenbloom, Dr. Wingett, and Dr. Schatz acting under the supervision of Dr. Zimmerman "failed and neglected to properly safeguard the plaintiff from any harm" instead acting in a "willful and wanton disregard of the plaintiff's rights" removed her ability to have children.[125] They argued that because Colorado never passed a compulsory sterilization law, patient were made vulnerable to medical malpractice and surgeons made subject to punitive measures. Schreiber's lawsuit exemplified the maelstrom of Colorado State Hospital's policy of compulsory sterilizations. Unlike other states, Colorado did not provide patients a pre-operation hearing to legally object or have a certified system for obtaining written consent. Regardless of any potential protections, Dr. Zimmerman disobeyed

[122] 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), 84.
[123] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 30 and 35-36.
[124] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 12-13.
[125] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* sealed verdict, 4.

Colorado's Attorney General and pursued a policy of sterilization without addressing the legal rights of his patients.

Schreiber's lawsuit brought all the legal ambiguities over coercive sterilizations in Colorado into high relief. Because Colorado never passed a sterilization law, eugenics practices in the state flew largely under the radar. Unlike other states, where sterilization laws mandated a trial beforehand, Colorado failed to give patients any opportunity to object to their procedure. The decision in her case determined that "a surgical operation known as a salpingectomy was performed upon the plaintiff [Lucille Schreiber], without any legal or lawful consent or authorization being obtained…or from any person lawfully appointed to represent her by an duly authorized Court."[126] Under Dr. Zimmerman's orders, the hospital forbid Schreiber an opportunity to object, violating Section VI, Article II of the Colorado Constitution because the plaintiff never received a "lawful hearing on the necessity for said operation" nor given an "opportunity to protest said operation" with an appointed representative.[127] Dr. Zimmerman defied the state constitution when he sterilized Schreiber without consent or representation.

Colorado State Hospital upheld an unofficial policy of obtaining written consent from a family member before sterilization. In response to the lawsuit, Dr. Zimmerman and Dr. Rosenbloom argued their hospital "received written permission on April 30, 1941" from Mr. and Mrs. Annabelle and Louis Schreiber consenting to their daughter's operation.[128] However, the jury had to decide whether written consent given by the plaintiff's parents "freely.. and after a full disclosure…regarding the consequences of such operation" was adequate or invalid because as "a ward of the state" Schreiber's parents "would not afford any protection to those performing

[126] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* sealed verdict, 2.
[127] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* sealed verdict, 4.
[128] Zeke Scher, "Typist Sues 4 Doctors for 'Illegal Sterilization'," *Denver Post,* December 29, 1955, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

the operation."[129] Since Mr. and Mrs. Schreiber forfeited their parental rights when she was ten and then the Lunacy Commission declared her insane at age sixteen, Lucille existed in a legal purgatory where neither herself nor her family could sign consent on any treatment. Colorado's dubious practice of sterilization left patients at the will of their doctors with few legal measures of protection.

In addition, Dr. Zimmerman directly violated orders from Colorado's Attorney General William L. Boatright. In August 1928, shortly after the Colorado legislature rejected the 1927 sterilization bill, Dr. Zimmerman wrote to the Attorney General asking his responsibility as hospital superintendent on "the question of sterilization of mental patients" with and without a written request.[130] Attorney General Boatright quickly responded saying since no law exists "there is no authority at the present time for performing such operations."[131] Dr. Zimmerman lacked the legal authority to sterilize patients but continued Colorado State Hospital's tradition of sterilizing the mentally ill after becoming superintendent in 1928 because he believed it fell under his duties of providing treatment.[132] Colorado State Hospital physicians maintained the status quo fostering an environment ripe for patient abuse.

Despite the vast amount of evidence wrongs against Schreiber and violations by Zimmerman, the case failed on a technicality. In 1958, Honorable Judge S. Philip Cabibi threw out the civil suit claiming Schreiber was too mentally competent to be considered insane, which was the basis

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[129] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* Instruction No. 24.
Zeke Scher, "State Hospital Official Admits Sterilization," *Denver Post*, December 29, 1955, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[130] Dr. Zimmerman to Attorney General Boatright, August 27, 1928, *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* evidence, Colorado State Archives.
[131] Attorney General Boatright to Dr. Zimmerman, August 30, 1928, *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* evidence, Colorado State Archives.
[132] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 96.

for the original violation against her.[133] The jury considered her too sane to be compensated for damages performed by the Colorado State Hospital for mentally deficiency. In the end, the decision was a further violation of Schreiber's rights. Like thousands of sterilization victims before her, Schreiber was neither insane nor mentally deficient just a disadvantaged and depressed teenager victimized by the government's misguided eugenics crusade.

When Judge Cabibi threw out Schreiber's lawsuit against Dr. Zimmerman, he ended the most formidable opposition to Colorado's eugenic movement and precluded the possibility of justice for the unknown number of sterilization victims. During Schreiber's court case, Berman interrogated Dr. Zimmerman on whether Colorado State Hospital sterilized five additional plaintiffs named Mable Hoar, Alva Christian, Stella Flores, Nancy Danneberg, and Josephine Roy.[134] Dr. Zimmerman did not answer for the fate of the five women but asserted "something should be done" about how feebleminded "child after child after child" come to Colorado State Hospital.[135] Later an anonymous staff member divulged to the *Denver Post* that the hospital sterilized three or four patients per year.[136] The Colorado State Hospital sterilized mentally ill patients before and during Dr. Zimmerman's tenure as superintendent from 1928 to 1961 with little fear of legal repercussion or moral consequence. After the news frenzy surrounding the case abated, the knowledge of Colorado State Hospital's illegal sterilization policy lapsed from public memory.

The indicted physicians continued on with their lives uninterrupted and as Dr. Zimmerman approached his retirement Colorado celebrated his career as superintendent. During the court

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[133] Mike Anton, "Colorado's Dark Secret State Mental Hospital Sterilized Patients for More Than 30 Years," *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO) November 21, 1999, Gale.
[134] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* interrogatories, 8, 19, 21, 23 and 25.
[135] *Schreiber v. Zimmerman* deposition, 77.
[136] Zeke Scher, "State Hospital Official Admits Sterilization," *Denver Post*, December 29, 1955, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

case in 1956, state officials awarded Dr. Zimmerman for his distinction as one of "America's leading psychiatrists and mental hospital administrators."[137] Additionally, University of Colorado president, Dr. Ward Darley "paid tribute to Zimmerman's achievement" of administrating "Colorado's largest state business" at a dinner held in Zimmerman's honor.[138] Schreiber's lawsuit exemplified Colorado's perplexing relationship with the eugenic movement and the state's denial of class and gender discrimination within their healthcare system. However, beginning in the 1950s and following a nationwide trend, Colorado began to reform its mental health care system.

State officials slowly updated Colorado's archaic lunacy laws and by the 1960s moved to deinstitutionalized Colorado's mental health care system. As an influential member of the Colorado legislature, Representative Jane Woodhouse led the movement to "remove the stigma associated with mental illness" arguing Colorado needed to staff professional health units, help parole patients back into society, and update laws alongside medical advancements.[139] Another eminent civil servant, Dr. Florence R. Sabin championed Colorado's public health reform, at request of Governor John Vivian, by changing demeaning legal terminology asserting "a mentally ill person should not be referred to as a lunatic…nor treated by implication as a criminal."[140] Woodhouse and Sabin shared similarities with Dr. Minnie C.T Love because all three were highly educated women who succeeded in their careers despite the misogynistic culture, except Woodhouse and Sabin utilized their authority to help Colorado's most vulnerable.

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[137] Ralph C. Taylor, "State Salutes Dr. Zimmerman For Outstanding Work," *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain,* December 9, 1956, Dr. Zimmerman Clipping File at Denver Public Library.
[138] "State Hospital Director Feted for Achievement," *Denver Post*, December 15, 1956, Dr. Zimmerman Clipping File at Denver Public Library.
[139] Bill Text CO House Memorial 1005, 65th General Assembly, Denver CO, April 21, 2005.
"Mental Health Laws Called Old-Fashioned," *Denver Post,* December 8, 1950, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.
[140] "Dr. Sabin Scores Colorado Lunacy Laws as Medieval," *Denver Post,* January 8, 1951, *Denver Post* Microfilm collection at Denver Public Library.

The differences between Woodhouse, Sabin, and Love represented how far cultural attitudes towards mental health progressed from the turn of the century to the 1960s.

Colorado officially deinstitutionalized its mental healthcare system in 1962. The most expansive state facility, Colorado State Hospital housed 6,100 patients and occupied 300 acres of land at its peak in 1962.[141] After Dr. Zimmerman's retirement, the hospital decentralized into "twelve semi-autonomous divisions" separated by age and diagnosis and then they hired specialized "nurses, psychologists, and social workers" for each division and incorporated community-based treatment programs to reintegrate patients back into society.[142] For decades Colorado State Hospital suffered from overcrowded conditions, underfunding, and lack of trained personnel that resulted in patient abuse. The 1951 annual report by Dr. Zimmerman described how the patient population outpaced the "rated bed capacity of the hospital" and unless the institution could secure "competent and qualified" staff it would lose its hospital status.[143] When Colorado stopped removing its mentally ill to poorly maintained asylums, eugenic sterilizations in state institutions ended but unfortunately the number of victims remains unknown.

Conclusion

Colorado's six known sterilization victims confirmed the presence of eugenics in the state's medical establishment and institutions during the twentieth century. Colorado State

[141] "Brief History of the Colorado Mental Health Institute," Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo Museum, last modified 2014, http://www.cmhipmuseum.org/history.html.
[142] "Introduction to the Colorado State Hospital," October 13, 1970, Colorado State Asylum collection at Pueblo City-County Library, 4-5.
[143] "Colorado State Hospital Pueblo Annual Report," July 1, 1951- June 30, 1952, Colorado State Hospital collection at Denver Public Library, 8-9.

Hospital chose to illegally sterilize Lucille Schreiber, Mable Hoar, Alva Christian, Stella Flores, Nancy Danneberg, and Josephine Roy because the perceived threat of their socioeconomic status and gender. The absence of government regulation over Colorado State Hospital fostered an already loosely regulated healthcare system under Dr. Zimmerman's authority that when partnered with societal apathy towards the inhumanity of eugenics allowed for rampant patient abuse in the form of compulsory sterilization at a scale far larger than the limited documentation suggests. Schreiber's failed lawsuit against Dr. Zimmerman contradicted the mythology that Catholic activists from the Holy Name Diocesan Union and the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus paralyzed Colorado's eugenic movement. Rather, the absence of government oversight over hospital superintendents and a lack of an official sterilization law, made the practice easier for Colorado doctors to execute.

While strong evidence demonstrated the autocratic system of compulsory sterilization, the deficiency of verified research on victims and public opinion towards the practice hindered my thesis overall. Evidence that Dr. Zimmerman received praise and not punishment for his career confirmed the inviolable authority of superintendents over their patients. The few sources from private citizens such as University of Denver Professor Eugene Link and *Rocky Mountain News* reporter Lee Casey, who argued for the improved care of institutionalized patients instead of sterilization discredited the idea of complete societal apathy towards mental health care. The narrow scope of Schreiber's lawsuit against Colorado State Hospital failed to prove if other Colorado institutions practiced compulsory sterilization as well. Despite the lack of proof, superintendent Dr. Jefferson's testimony about the benefits of sterilization at the Home for Mental Defectives at Grand Junction is condemning and warrants a historical reevaluation of the

scale of Colorado's institutional eugenic sterilization. Besides the official evidence in Schreiber's lawsuit, no data or written evidence of the number of sterilization victims exists.

The scarcity of research prevents the state of Colorado from formally apologizing and paying reparations to sterilization victims and their families. In 1976, the *Denver Post* asked officials from the Colorado Department of Institutions, the Colorado Department of Corrections, University Hospital, and Denver Health and Hospitals whether their institutions once upheld a policy of compulsory sterilization and each responded with a resounding "no."[144] People associate eugenic sterilization with the horrors of Nazi Germany, not the dusty foothills of southern Colorado or even in states like California where compulsory eugenic sterilization was officially institutionalized and occurred on a much larger scale. However, the significance of Colorado's compulsory sterilization policy showed the inevitability of systematic discrimination and government corruption when society refused to safeguard the most vulnerable. The eugenics movement revealed that people are capable of denying others their fundamental human right to parenthood in the misguided pursuit for perfection.

[144] Fred Gillies, "Officials: No Colo Sterilizations," *Denver Post*, March 28, 1976, Sterilization Clipping File at Denver Public Library.

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