

“AS IT IS WITH RACES AND CULTURES, SO IT IS WITH THE ART OF GOVERNMENT:”
THE INTERNATIONAL EUGENICS MOVEMENT AND HARRY H. LAUGHLIN’S WORLD
GOVERNMENT (1883-1939)

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by

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Introduction

Eugenics was coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, and it concerned both the study of hereditary qualities and the social institutions which could control them. Eugenicists sought to understand human genetics and the ways in which certain traits were passed down through generations in order to influence the spread of certain supposed hereditary potentialities. Infiltrating numerous scientific fields in the early twentieth century, eugenic ideals were prevalent in academia, amongst the public, and within the political sphere, leading to diverse eugenics legislation throughout the United States and across the Atlantic.

Historians have divided eugenic principles into two main categories within historical scholarship: positive and negative eugenics. Positive eugenics refers to the promotion of eugenically sound breeding. For example, positive eugenicists advocated for widespread and public eugenic education. Positive eugenicists assumed that if the public understood the importance of hereditary, individuals would choose to marry and thus reproduce along eugenic lines. Contrastingly, negative eugenics refers to the active prevention of reproduction amongst individuals carrying perceived negative hereditary qualities. Negative eugenics took a variety of forms, from marriage restrictions to birth control and sterilization. Additionally, negative eugenicists sought to curb the immigration of various people whom they deemed to be inferior. Within an American context, this included both Eastern and Southern European immigrants, leading to the Immigration Act of 1924, which set harsh quotas upon Eastern and Southern European immigration.¹ A large contributor to this act was eugenicist, Harry Laughlin through his involvement in the Congressional hearings of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, in which he advocated for immigration restriction due to his view that

¹ Erika Lee, "The "Inferior Races" of Europe," in *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019), 113-147.

immigration would “influence greatly the character, the natural abilities and weaknesses, of the Americans of the future.”²

Harry Laughlin was born on March 11, 1880, in Oskaloosa, Iowa, but spent the majority of his young life in Kirksville, Missouri. After graduating from Kirksville High School, he received a teaching certificate in history and began teaching high school history. Laughlin’s career in eugenics began out of sheer curiosity, as he studied Mendelian theory in relation to animal and plant breeding. He then applied his interests in agriculture to his professional life, acquiring a teaching position in agriculture at North Missouri State Teacher’s College (modern-day Truman State University). His interest in Mendelian theory only increased from here, leading him to attend the most significant conference of his career, the 1909 American Breeder’s Association in Columbia, Missouri. It was here that Laughlin met Charles B. Davenport, Director of the Eugenics Record Office, which was the primary American institution of eugenics.

Laughlin and Davenport discussed eugenic principles extensively at this conference. Their conversation presumably went very well, as one year later, Davenport would offer Laughlin the position of Superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York. Laughlin swiftly accepted, and both he and his wife Pansy moved to Long Island, New York. Upon accepting this position, Laughlin’s career in eugenics would flourish. He first completed his Doctorate of Science degree from Princeton in 1917, studying his longtime interest in plants with his thesis “The Duration of Several Mitotic Stages in the Dividing Root-Tip Cells of the Common Onion.” Laughlin then obtained his position as an immigration expert to the United States House Committee of Immigration and Naturalization in 1921. As both a

² Harry H. Laughlin, “Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives: Sixty-Seventh Congress, Third Session, November 21, 1922,” *Analysis of America’s Modern Melting Pot* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), 759.

scientifically trained and politically accepted eugenicist, Laughlin would become heavily involved in the international eugenics movement, attending the final two of three International Eugenics Congresses in 1921 and 1932. He would even put together public displays for the final two congresses at the American Museum of Natural History. Here, the US public would come face to face with eugenics as they walked the halls of his exhibit. Yet, Laughlin's most significant contribution to the field of eugenics would be his 1922 publication, *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States*, in which he outlined the already existing sterilization laws within the US and also crafted a model sterilization law which would later be implemented in other parts of the world, such as Germany, various Scandinavian countries, and multiple Canadian provinces.

The transmission of Laughlin's model sterilization law and the three International Eugenics Congresses demonstrate eugenicists' ability to collaborate internationally. Rather than merely limiting their efforts to their home countries, eugenicists on both sides of the Atlantic recognized that extending their reach past national boundaries was extremely beneficial to the movement. Through the sharing of both eugenic knowledge and legislation, international eugenicists amplified their influences on faraway locales. Because of this, this thesis characterizes the eugenics movement as a wholly international enterprise, by which eugenic practitioners from a multitude of nations communicated within one singular movement, regardless of national origin. However, eugenicists were not the only individuals interested in international cooperation during the early twentieth century.

While Laughlin and his eugenicist colleagues crafted the international eugenics movement, the first experiment in legislative international relations was undertaken with the creation of the League of Nations in 1920. The pre-existing internationalist movement culminated following the devastation of WWI, as its drafters hoped that the League would

prevent the war from reoccurring. According to internationalists, the League's emphasis on international cooperation, the promise of disarmament, and the creation of a world court system ensured that international disputes would no longer result in war. Although these ideals would prove futile, internationalism's promise to "make the world safe for democracy," and ensure global peace heavily influenced none other than eugenicist, Harry Laughlin.

By observing the League from afar and reflecting upon his own experiences with internationalism, Laughlin combined the principles of international eugenics to global governance in his world government proposal, titled "World Government: The Structure and Functioning of a Feasible Civil Government of the Earth." Although this manuscript would never be published, Laughlin's proposal was not merely an idealistic vision of his. Because of his involvement with international eugenics, Laughlin understood that his field could promote international collaboration, and he had watched as his model sterilization law was implemented in other parts of the world. Moreover, Laughlin (like other internationalists during this period) identified various flaws within the League, and he believed that his eugenic world government could mend the perceived errors.

While other scholars relegate Laughlin's internationalism as merely a tangential passion project (this will be discussed further in chapter one), an analysis of Laughlin's world governmental efforts alongside his eugenic goals demonstrates that this was not the case.³ Additionally, more historiographical research reveals that a multitude of histories of eugenics limited their focus to either one nation-state or followed a comparative model, focusing on the similarities between two nation's eugenical principles and policies; very few historical accounts

³ Jason McDonald, "Making the World Safe for Eugenics: The Eugenicist Harry H. Laughlin's Encounters with American Internationalism," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 12, no.2 (July 2013), 379-411; Randall D. Bird and Garland Allen, "The J.H.B. Archive Report: The Papers of Harry Hamilton Laughlin, Eugenicist," *Journal of the History of Biology* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1981), 339-353.

of eugenics emphasize the truly international nature of the eugenics movement. Because of this, I sought to implement a transnational framework to the history of eugenics, thus highlighting eugenics as a distinctly international endeavor, with Laughlin's World Government as a focal point.

The first historical account of the American eugenics movement *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, was published by Mark Haller in 1963. Haller's analysis begins with eugenics' inception in Europe, as he traces its beginnings to Francis Galton in 1883, and culminates with a discussion of how eugenic thinking continues to infiltrate 1960s scientific thinking. Through both a discussion of the scientific thinking and legislative actions associated with American eugenics, Haller provides a detailed examination of eugenics' impacts on American society. Most importantly, Haller ends his work as a warning to his readers, highlighting a resurgence in eugenic thinking. However, aside from his discussion of "European beginnings," Haller's work is tightly confined to the United States. Although he references a "world movement in the twentieth century," his analysis represents the quintessential national framework.⁴

In 1968, Donald K. Pickens published the next full-length narrative regarding eugenics, *Eugenics and the Progressives* which directly connected the American Progressive and eugenics movements. Rather than merely discussing eugenic ideals and policies, Pickens's analysis examines how the expansive Progressive impulse influenced eugenics and vice versa. Moreover, Pickens delves into wider the implications of eugenics, such as Margaret Sanger's birth control movement and its infiltration into the field of psychology. The most significant contribution of Pickens' work though, is how he demonstrated that eugenics was not entirely separate from

⁴ Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 177.

wider American society and Progressivism. However, like Haller's analysis, Pickens' examination is still limited to the American state.⁵

The most seminal historical account of eugenics is Daniel J. Kevles' *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, published in 1985. Even though Kevles' examination is nearly forty years old, it is still the most widely read and significant publication in the history of eugenics. His extensive examination also begins with Francis Galton as the "founder of the faith," but expands into the 1980s, as he analyses the eugenics roots of modern-day genetics. Kevles' work is revered due to his expansive archival research and detailed discussion of eugenic developments. More importantly, Kevles does not limit his study solely to the United States, but also examines eugenic developments in Great Britain. By analyzing both the US and Britain, Kevles demonstrates that eugenics was developed through an active conversation between researchers and propagandists between both nations. However, his analysis follows a comparative model, which largely neglects eugenic developments in other parts of the world such as Germany, Scandinavia, Canada, France, etc. Because Kevles' focus is limited to a comparison of the United States and Great Britain, it diminishes the sheer magnitude of the international eugenics movement.⁶

Because previous historiography is limited solely to either nationalistic or comparative paradigms, this thesis diverges from this position, arguing that eugenics was a wholly international movement in which eugenicists from around the world collaborated with one another and policies were shared internationally. Moreover, I argue that Harry Laughlin's world government was not an anomaly, as previous researchers have suggested. Instead, the

⁵ Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).

⁶ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

international eugenics movement of which he was apart embraced internationalism through the sharing of eugenic knowledge policy. Most importantly, I argue that Laughlin's world government was not only a physical manifestation of the international eugenics movement, but converged with the wider history of internationalism, as he believed his world government to be the remedy for the issues of the League of Nations.

The first chapter of this thesis, "Internationalizing Eugenics: Laughlin's World Government and Internationalism," discusses his world governmental proposal in relation to the international eugenics movement. In contrast to the first historian to extensively discuss Laughlin's world government, Jason McDonald, this chapter emphasizes that Laughlin was not an anomaly amongst his fellow eugenicists. While McDonald argues that Laughlin's internationalism was inconsistent with the views of other eugenicists, this chapter demonstrates that while he was the sole author of his proposal, his views converged with that of his eugenic colleagues. Through an examination of both the International Congresses and Conferences of Eugenics, this chapter makes clear that eugenics was not separated from internationalism. To the contrary, eugenicists greatly benefitted from collaborating with practitioners outside of their national boundaries. Thus, this chapter asserts that Laughlin's world government was not a superfluous passion project, but rather a logical extension of his eugenic goals.

Chapter two "The Communal Creed: International Eugenics and the Dissemination of Eugenic Thought," takes this view a step further. While various historians have acknowledged the international nature of eugenics through a simple comparative model, this chapter extends this interpretation to a truly transnational model, as this chapter demonstrates that eugenic knowledge was crafted and shared by various nations throughout the globe. Rather than one or two nations corresponding with one another, this chapter demonstrates that the eugenic creed

was crafted communally by various nations throughout the globe and shared widely. Moreover, this chapter utilizes Daniel Rodgers' transnational paradigm from his acclaimed *Atlantic Crossings* and applies this idea to the history of eugenics. Because eugenics sought to improve humanity, eugenicists saw no issue in transcending their ideas across national boundaries. Henceforth, this chapter analyses the international dissemination of eugenic thought through International Congresses and the creation of the international eugenic network. As eugenicists met face-to-face at International Congresses, connections were established and later fostered through letter writing, visitations, and the conferral of honorary degrees. Through discussions of both International Congresses and the establishment of the eugenic network, this chapter asserts the eugenic communal creed was crafted and shared throughout the international community.

The third and final chapter, "Fixing the League: International Eugenic Policy and Harry Laughlin's World Government" surrounds the international dissemination of eugenic policy and its relationship to Laughlin's world government. Because eugenics was both the study of human heredity and institutions of social control, legislative policy was inextricably linked to the eugenic ideal. Moreover, even though eugenic policies were limited to either the federal or state level, they could still be shared internationally. Both eugenicists and legislators around the world imitated policies from elsewhere and applied them to their home countries. To demonstrate this phenomenon, this chapter analyses the international dissemination of sterilization policy. Although States implemented various other eugenic policies such as immigration and marriage restrictions, I focus on sterilization because of its connection to Harry Laughlin, as is model sterilization law would be the template for sterilization policy throughout the world. Additionally, I focus on this policy specifically because it was the most controversial of eugenic policies. Therefore, the international diffusion of sterilization policy is the greatest indicator of

eugenics' ability to transcend national boundaries. Furthermore, after demonstrating the international dissemination of eugenic policy, this chapter argues that Laughlin's world government was his attempt to mend the issues he saw in the League of Nations. Specifically, while the world was experimenting with global governance, Laughlin's model sterilization law was proliferating throughout the globe. As he witnessed eugenics' ability to promote international collaboration, he was also observing the League and its perceived issues. Thus, Laughlin's world government proposal was not only his attempt to codify eugenic policy on an international scale, but it was also his attempt to craft a more efficient world government.

Consequently, eugenics was undoubtedly an international endeavor. While the historiographical record largely minimizes internationalism's impacts on eugenics, this thesis centers internationalism as an essential element of the eugenic ideal. Rather than discussing specific eugenic developments in one nation, or comparing eugenic thinking and policies between two countries, I highlight the importance of international thinking on eugenics. Although eugenicists were certainly concerned with the conditions in their home countries, they also sought to improve conditions throughout the globe. Eugenicists intended to enhance the hereditary qualities of the human race, which no national boundary could contain. Therefore, although national eugenic knowledge and policy were essential, eugenicists never confined themselves to national borders. Harry Laughlin's world government exemplified this ideal, but it was not the sole example of eugenics' connections to internationalism. By acknowledging internationalism's influences on eugenics, the story of eugenics emerges not merely as a stain upon national history, but as an international development. This recognition is not only important for the historiography of eugenics but is essential in order to combat the lasting impacts of eugenic thinking and policy. Because eugenics was not confined to national boundaries, anti-

eugenics must also function transnationally. An international anti-eugenics movement is currently underway, but to truly fight eugenics, we must acknowledge that its practitioners were not nationalists; they were international collaborators and social crusaders. If anti-eugenics is to take any advice from eugenics, it should be that.

Chapter 1: Internationalizing Eugenics: Harry Laughlin's World Government and Internationalism

When President Woodrow Wilson officially declared war on Germany in April of 1917, he asserted that the Great War would be “the war to end all wars” which would ultimately “make the world safe for democracy.” Based on Progressive ideals, Wilson believed that America’s involvement in WWI would not only ensure an Allied victory, but more importantly would lead to amicable peace negotiations, in which world peace and democracy would prevail. While his prediction of an Allied victory came true in 1918, he was far more concerned with the upcoming peace treaty. Through his Fourteen Points and draft for a global government known as the League of Nations, Wilson entered negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles with confidence that American Progressivism would ensure global democracy and peace; yet this would ultimately not be the case. As heavy sanctions were placed on Germany and much of his Fourteen Points were ignored, the Great War was not the war to end all wars but instead set the stage for the later catastrophe of WWII. Still, his plans for a world government prevailed with the creation of the League of Nations in 1920, although the United States failed to enter into the global political agreement that Wilson had crafted.

However, US rejection of the League of Nations did not lead to an age of complete isolationism. Three years after the formation of the League, American author and Pulitzer Prize winner, Edward W. Bok crafted the American Peace Award Contest, “which offered \$100,000 “to the author of the *best practicable plan by which the United States may cooperate with other nations to achieve and preserve the peace of the world*”.”⁷ Recognizing the importance of

⁷ Jason McDonald, “Making the World Safe for Eugenics: The Eugenicist Harry H. Laughlin’s Encounters with American Internationalism,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 12, no. 3 (July 2013): 380.

American intervention in world peace, Bok sought proposals from US politicians, statesmen, and even scientists in search of an improved plan of world governance. Among the received proposals came a submission from a seemingly improbable author: prominent American eugenicist Harry Hamilton Laughlin.

Laughlin's American Peace Award submission was not his first attempt at crafting a world government. In October of 1922 (one year prior to Bok's contest), Laughlin sent a letter to the editor of Foreign Affairs Dr. Archibald Kerry Coolidge which included "a draft of a "Constitution for the International Government." He continued to describe his interest in the matter, as he wrote: "Permit me to say that the preparation of this draft has been a passion with me; that I made the first outline twenty years ago, and that every year since, and sometimes several times a year, I have recast it in the light of further study of the problems in world government."⁸ According to this letter, Laughlin completed his first draft of a world government in 1902, eight years prior to becoming superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office.

Laughlin is most well-known for his role at the Cold Spring Harbor Eugenics Record Office (ERO), which was the primary institution of the American Eugenics Movement. Working alongside his colleague and ERO director Charles Davenport, Laughlin organized family pedigrees, authored various scientific publications, and worked to codify eugenic principles into American law through eugenic marriage laws, immigration restriction, and compulsory sterilization for the eugenically unfit. His work with the ERO and the American government made him one of the most powerful voices in American eugenics, leading to the enactment of various state laws which legalized forced sterilization and the federal immigration restrictions placed upon Eastern and Southern European peoples in the 1920s.

⁸ Harry H. Laughlin to Dr. Archibald Kerry Coolidge, Editor of Foreign Affairs, Oct. 17, 1922, Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Pickler Memorial Library, Truman State University, Kirksville, MO (hereafter "Laughlin Papers").

At the same time as he worked to ‘perfect the human race’ through eugenic legislation, he also retained an interest in international collaboration. Through his declaration to Dr. Coolidge, Laughlin demonstrates that his proposal was not a mere scheme to possibly win Bok’s prize but was reflective of his lifelong passion for internationalism.

While Laughlin’s work with the ERO and the American Eugenics Movement has been the topic of numerous studies, his efforts concerning world governance is nearly absent in the historiographical record, with very few historians mentioning it at all. The first historical account of Laughlin’s attempt at world government was published by Randall D. Bird and Garland Allen in 1981. After discovering the decaying “Laughlin Papers” in the basement of Truman State University, Bird and Allen dissected the large sum of material and summarized their findings in “The J. H. B. Archive Report: The Papers of Harry Hamilton Laughlin, Eugenacist.” They mention Laughlin’s draft for a world government as a transnational extension of his eugenic aims, as he incorporated eugenic ideals of improving the human stock into his global government proposal.⁹ Yet, their inclusion of Laughlin’s world government is a mere afterthought placed at the end of their discussion of his eugenic objectives. More importantly, they imply that Laughlin’s internationalist views were an anomaly amongst his eugenicist colleagues, as they neglected to connect his efforts to the American eugenics movement as a whole.

More recent scholarship surrounding Laughlin’s internationalism takes this viewpoint a step further, viewing Laughlin’s internationalist endeavors as not only an irregularity, but entirely incompatible with his larger eugenics work. In Jason McDonald’s “Making the World Safe for Eugenics: The Eugenacist Harry H. Laughlin’s Encounters with American Internationalism,” he argues that Laughlin’s eugenicist colleagues wholly dissented from his international goals: “As

⁹ Randall D. Bird and Garland Allen, “The J.H.B. Archive Report: The Papers of Harry Hamilton Laughlin, Eugenacist,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 14, no. 2 (Autumn, 1981): 348-349.

far as his professional status was concerned, Laughlin probably always stood to lose more than he would gain from this association with internationalism because his fellow eugenicists were generally inclined to be either indifferent or vehemently opposed to the idea of a world government.”¹⁰ According to McDonald, the majority of American eugenicists preferred to limit their aspirations to the nation-state, as they sought to change domestic legislation regarding marriage laws, immigration, and sterilization. Moreover, he views Laughlin’s work with world government as wasted energy which would only hinder his professional reputation, rather than as an extension of his ultimate eugenic aspirations on an international scale.

If this view is accepted, Laughlin’s successes with American eugenics despite his apparent fascination with internationalism cannot be explained. If other eugenicists opposed his internationalist views, why would he then emerge as a leading voice in their movement?

McDonald concedes that Laughlin spanned the scientific and political worlds of eugenics and internationalism. Yet, he identifies Laughlin as the sole inhabitant of both fields, in which his eugenicist colleagues opposed his internationalism, and fellow internationalists shied away from eugenic ideals, which is not the case.

However, an analysis of the organizational nature of the eugenics movement demonstrates that this was not the case. The rift between the eugenics and internationalist movements was not as deep as McDonald’s analysis paints them to be. Laughlin built a successful career spanning this rift and effectively merged the two in his own proposals for world government. Although his submission did not win Bok’s first prize, Laughlin’s dedication to a combined understanding of eugenics and international collaboration is reflective not only of his own passions, but of the larger eugenics movement as a whole. Therefore, this chapter will argue

¹⁰ McDonald, “Making the World Safe for Eugenics,” 392.

that Laughlin was not an abnormality amongst his fellow eugenicists. Rather, Laughlin's eugenic world government was both a political and bureaucratic manifestation of the pre-existing transnational eugenics movement. Even though neither Laughlin's American nor international colleagues would craft their own versions of a potential eugenic world government, they each participated in a collaborative and organized transnational movement through international conferences and congresses. Laughlin's world government was simply the next step in codifying eugenic policy on an international scale. On the other hand, although internationalists such as Bok may not have actively participated in the eugenics movement, much of their Progressive principles closely mirror those of eugenicists, such as a focus on scientific expertise, organization, and most importantly the progress of humanity.

By recognizing Laughlin's world government as merely a codification of the pre-existing transnational eugenics movement, it becomes clear that the heinous negative eugenic policies implemented throughout the globe were not only designed in cooperation with one another but were a part of a larger, transnational movement that embraced biological determinism. To include his world governance within the historiography of international eugenics is to release this story from the analytic cage of the boundaries of the nation-state.¹¹ Laughlin's world government was of his own authorship, yet the ideals implanted within it were not only his. From American immigration policy and forced sterilization, to the sterilizations conducted in various Nordic countries, and the eventual mass extermination of Jewish peoples by the hands of Nazi Germany, each of these eugenic narratives were connected to and sanctioned by the highly systematized transnational movement. Still, in order to understand the ways in which eugenics and internationalism converged, an examination of what Laughlin proposed to the American Peace

¹¹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998): 2.

Award is necessary, as his world governmental draft was the most obvious example of this junction.

Laughlin's World Governmental Proposal

Laughlin's submission, titled "World Government: The Structure and Functioning of a Feasible Civil Government of the Earth," adhered to the international application of eugenic principles. He begins his draft with the section "Statement of the Problem" with a detailed explanation of his belief in eugenics as an effective means of international collaboration and its ability to ensure world peace, as he writes:

Superior hereditary endowment of the people is, in the last analysis, always the basis for a successful democracy... This, in turn, means from generation to generation the people of each country must improve upon their own hereditary equipment, and must educate their youth to the latter's full capacity of mind, body, and spirit.¹²

According to Laughlin, global democracy was contingent upon each nation's dedication to improving its own racial stocks. He suggests that in order for more informed democratic decisions to be made, the nations of the Earth must first focus on the content of their populations in relation to their supposed capacities for self-government. In short, his submission implies that by applying eugenic principles and thereby enhancing the intelligence of nations' citizenry, sound global government would be inevitable. Moreover, Laughlin identifies eugenic policies as a prerequisite for democracy.

Laughlin's belief in intelligence as a hereditary quality was widely shared, and the notion of manipulating intelligence for future progress is one with deep eugenic roots. For example, the son of Charles Darwin, Sir Leonard Darwin illustrated this concept in his 1928 introductory guide to eugenics. Darwin utilized the metaphor of an anchor and a cable, in which

¹² Harry H. Laughlin, *World Government: The Structure and Functioning of a Feasible Civil Government*, Laughlin Papers, 4-5.

one's hereditary qualities acted as an anchor to their progress. Yet, he turned to a more hopeful note in writing: "But the cable which ties us to this fixed point is elastic. By further efforts, or by being placed in better surroundings, our lot can always be improved somewhat. In all circumstances the cable tying us to our hereditary anchor can be stretched a bit by pulling harder."¹³ The stretching cable in Darwin's metaphor directly correlates to Laughlin's proposal in his reference to education. As Laughlin recommended, each nation must educate its youth to their fullest capacity, therefore stretching each individual's cable as far as their anchors will allow.

Still, both Laughlin and Darwin concede that environment and education can only stretch each person's cable so far; Hereditary anchors were ultimately viewed as the largest influence upon one's abilities. However, this was not a bleak fact for either of the scientists due to their view of the future. Specifically, Darwin furthers his metaphor in relation to future generations, writing:

If an improvement in the breed of the race comes to be made, this will be as if those who come after us will come to find their anchors of hereditary cast further in advance. Such an improvement in natural qualities would mean that our successors would have a better start in life. They would be able to do as well as we have done with less exertion. With efforts equal to those which we have made, their lives would be more profitable than ours. The cables attached to their fixed anchors would not drag them back to the same extent.¹⁴

Plainly, Darwin argues that if eugenic principles are followed, both the mental and physical capabilities of the human race would increase, inevitably leading to social progress.

¹³ Major Leonard Darwin, *What is Eugenics?*, (London: Watts and Company, 1928): 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20. By comparing the global citizenry to equipment, he reduces human beings to pieces of machinery of which their sole purpose is to participate in democratic relations. This reductionism was extremely common amongst eugenicists.

As Darwin professed, the science of eugenics was based on the belief in progress. Eugenic researchers assumed that the social application of their research would lead to the betterment of humanity. In the words of prominent eugenicist Lewellys F. Barker, “they [eugenicists] feel that through the scientific study of heredity and dissemination of knowledge among the people, ideals may be gradually fostered regarding parenthood, which will go far toward improving the inherent qualities of the human race.”¹⁵ Hence when Laughlin identifies eugenics as a precursor for an improved form of international government, he is echoing the movements’ belief in its ability to enact future change. For Laughlin, eugenics could advance far more than even individuals’ mental and physical qualities. He believed that a merger of eugenics and internationalism could lead humanity to stretch its cables toward collaboration and world peace.

Although this eugenic philosophy of progress was the centerpiece of Laughlin’s world government proposal, it was not the only eugenic principle included. After stating what he perceived to be the so-called problem with the League of Nations, he continued to describe in length the structure, functioning, and rights allocated to the citizens of his potential world government. Within this description, Laughlin detailed more specific examples of how eugenics would be included in his international government.

The first few examples of distinct eugenic policy embedded into Laughlin’s submission occurred in his prospective “Bill of Rights” for his world government. Modelling the American governmental model, Laughlin clearly defined the certain inalienable rights which he believed should be guaranteed to the citizens of the world. While many of the eleven amendments closely mirrored those of the US government, he also incorporated specific eugenic principles.

Explicitly, the eleventh amendment of Laughlin’s Bill of Rights read:

¹⁵ Lewellys F. Barker, “Foreword,” in *Eugenics: Twelve University Lectures* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1914), xi.

individual registration in reference to name, personal identification, blood and marital kinships, natural qualities, condition, history, citizenship and residence, provided that while the personal references of the individual's registry shall not be made public, statistically an analysis of the whole population registered in each political unit, regardless of location or degree, shall be maintained for the public good.¹⁶

Simply, this lengthy worded amendment was a legislative guarantee of the eugenic practice of quantifying and tracking family pedigrees.

Family pedigrees were detailed calculations of the supposedly heritable traits existing within a certain family and were one of Laughlin's main tasks while working with Davenport at the ERO. In Laughlin's first report of The Eugenics Record Office in 1913, he stated that "to build up an analytical index of the traits of American families" was one of the primary purposes of the ERO. Utilizing Davenport's "Trait Book", which quantified any mental and physical trait (ranging from IQ to one's capacity for criminality), the ERO could presumably track each heritable trait possessed in any familial lineage.¹⁷ Although appearing benign, these pedigrees were then utilized as critical scientific data for further eugenic studies and discrimination, such as the infamous publications surrounding the "feeble-minded" Juke, Nam, and Kallikak families, which were lengthy eugenic studies surrounding the supposed inheritance of feeble-mindedness, leading to the justification of sterilization policy (which will be discussed in chapter three).¹⁸ According to Laughlin's report, as long as "they [family pedigrees] are held in confidence so far as the general public is concerned—no names are published without the owners' permission—

¹⁶ Harry H. Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 13.

¹⁷ Harry H. Laughlin, *Eugenics Record Office: Report Number One* (Cold Spring Harbor: Long Island, NY, June, 1913): 8.

¹⁸ For more on feeble-mindedness, see: Paul Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008); John David Smith, *Minds Made Feeble: The Myth and Legacy of the Kallikaks*, (Rockville, Maryland: Aspen Systems Corp., 1985); Mark Haller, "Myth of the Menace of the Feeble-minded," in *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

and the curious are forbidden access to them” the ERO and respective researchers were free to utilize any family’s data for eugenic research.¹⁹

Thus, the inclusion of this legislative safeguard was Laughlin’s attempt to codify a commonplace eugenic tactic which he utilized in his domestic practice on a transnational scale. Like his work with the ERO, Laughlin envisioned vast family pedigree data available to international politicians, who could in turn utilize the statistics to quantify the world citizenry and improve upon the stocks of each nation. By appropriating the very language of his 1913 ERO report in his submission for the Peace Award, Laughlin attempted to bring American eugenics to an international audience.

A second eugenic concept which Laughlin embedded into his world government can be found in his section “The Allotment of Representatives in the World Parliament.” Although Laughlin states that his suggested structure was designed “in such a manner as to represent equitably all persons and territory of the entire World,” his methods prove that his allocation was based more on eugenic principles than equity. He proposed to divide the world’s representatives based on five attributes, writing that: “Total population shall count fifteen percent. Total literate population shall count thirty five percent. Total land area shall count five percent. Total wealth shall count ten percent. Total value of extra-continental exports and imports for the last previous decade shall count thirty five percent.” Literacy’s importance in relation to representation was not due to Laughlin’s passion for education. Quite the contrary, his emphasis on literacy was due to a longstanding eugenic practice of utilizing literacy rates as a precursor for American citizenship, leading to the exclusion of populations eugenically deemed inferior, such as Eastern

¹⁹ Laughlin, *Eugenics Record Office Report Number One*, 3.

and Southern Europeans. Because these immigrant populations oftentimes held lower literacy rates, literacy was utilized as tool of discrimination for eugenicists.

He continued in boasting of his plan for representation, stating that these factors measured whether each nation played either a large or small part in “modern civilization.” Moreover, he asserted that the factors were “quantitatively measurable” and were not based “upon race, caste, or religion.” While recognizing the importance of equity in representation and that race should not be a part of its allocation, he contradicts this philosophy when writing: “Nothing is more obvious than that a man in Central Africa today does not count as much, nor should he be credited with as much, Representative Rating in the World Parliament as, for example, a man in China or Sweden.”²⁰

Still, Laughlin does not view his low representational rating of Central Africa as a product of racism, but rather due to ‘equitable’ and quantifiable factors. His emphasis on quantification aligned with his background in scientific eugenics. For example, his work with family pedigrees was the science of quantifying heritable traits. Quantification was the cornerstone of both eugenics and other early twentieth century science. The ability to place a number upon a once qualitative topic opened the door for scientists such as Laughlin to whole new sets of data. In Laughlin’s words within the section titled “The Principles of Nation Rating:”

It is conceivable that anything which can be described qualitatively by adjectives can somehow be more accurately appraised or measured quantitatively. In order quantitatively to rate or measure the more complicated things—articles, actions, individual capacities, or nations, for a particular purpose—it is necessary first to devise an appropriate mathematical yardstick.²¹

²⁰ Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

The five quantifiable factors were Laughlin's mathematical yardstick which allowed him to rank nations, yet these factors were highly discriminatory and tied to longstanding eugenic traditions of exclusion.

Most importantly, Laughlin furthers his eugenic interests when he justifies the uses of quantification through an anecdote of its uses in psychology. He writes: "In parallel fields, perhaps the most outstanding work of this sort has been done in recent years by the psychologists in devising mental-test ratings—intelligence quotients—for individuals."²² He ties his work of quantifying world government representation to the previous development of IQ by psychologists. Both the field of psychology and IQ gained prominence during WWI after a group of psychologists, led by Robert Yerkes, were permitted to work with the US Army by administering IQ tests to each WWI recruit. These tests were then used to categorize each recruit by intelligence and thereby classify them into wartime jobs according to it. While this appears to be a benevolent partnership between the Army and psychology, the nature of the psychological field and IQ was far more ominous.

As president of the American Psychological Association, Robert Yerkes was renowned in his field of psychology. However, he was also a prominent member of another field: the field of eugenics. He is even mentioned in Laughlin's first ERA report as the chairman of its Committee on Inheritance of Mental Traits.²³ Thus, Yerkes conducted his work with the army under the auspices of the Eugenic Records Office, and his field would continue to collaborate with the field of eugenics in the years to come.²⁴ Hence, Laughlin's comparison between psychological IQ and

²² Ibid., 126.

²³ Laughlin, *Eugenics Record Office Report Number One*, 9.

²⁴ Daniel J. Kevles, "Testing the Army's Intelligence: Psychologists and the Military in World War I," *The Journal of American History* 55, no. 3 (Dec., 1968), 565-581; John Carson, "Army Alpha, Army Brass, and the Search for Army Intelligence," *Isis* 84, no. 2 (Jun., 1993), 278-309; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 76-84; Daniel J. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 70-74.

his national ranking was a discreet way of connecting his own efforts with quantification to its success with eugenics.

A final example of the inclusion of eugenic principles within Laughlin's world government is found in his section "The Biological Aspects of World Government." In this section, Laughlin highlights a foundational piece of the eugenic creed: the necessity of racial differentiation. Warning his readers, he writes:

Neither a continental nor a World Government could exist for a very long period if it undertook to conduct a racial melting-pot. The World will always need many highly specialized families and races, and many diverse types of cultures. Any World Government which seeks to forestall racial differentiation is not only doing mankind an irreparable injury, but it is also foredooming its own failure.²⁵

Explicitly, Laughlin believed that a successful world government was only possible if racial groups remained separated. The separation of the races was a very typical eugenic ideal, and Laughlin was no stranger to this. He strongly advocated for the abolition of miscegenation and spent a significant amount of time petitioning the US government for the restriction of immigration for Eastern and Southern Europeans. By referencing the melting-pot theory, Laughlin speaks directly about the American 'immigration problem' and sought to utilize world government in order to ensure the separation of racial groups throughout the globe.

Throughout Laughlin's submission to the American Peace Award, he unites the seemingly distant subjects of eugenics and internationalism. For Laughlin, there was no fissure between the subjects: "The desire for a sound and honest World Government by all mankind and earnest effort for biological race-betterment by each of the several nations are two movements which would interact powerfully to strength each other."²⁶ By applying eugenics to internationalism, his

²⁵ Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 168.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

world governmental draft physically exemplified his attempt to codify eugenic policy internationally.

Yet, this information is not entirely brand new. Laughlin's world government has been written into the historiography of eugenics by McDonald and others. However, McDonald's examination of the intersection between eugenics and internationalism ends with Laughlin, while this is only half of the story. Laughlin was not the only one to span the fields of eugenics and internationalism; He stood between this fissure alongside a multitude of other eugenicists, both from the United States and abroad. Through an analysis of the pre-existing transnationalism which existed within the eugenics movement, it becomes clear that Laughlin was not an anomaly among his colleagues. Instead, he was solely the first one to write these ideas to paper.

The Transnational Eugenics Movement

The history of eugenics has widely been told in domestic terms. Through examinations of specific eugenic policies enacted in various nations, historians have largely limited the history of eugenics to the nation-state. Specifically, historian Alan Dawley alleged that WWI created a disconnect between the once-connected movements of Progressivism and eugenics. Dawley argued that after WWI, devout Progressives such as Woodrow Wilson and Edward Bok would have looked overseas for international peace, while more conservative reformers would have diverged from this goal. He identified the eugenics movement as a part of this conservative impulse, which would stray away from internationalism and instead focus its efforts on conservative domestic policy.²⁷ While the existence of Laughlin's eugenic world government proves this to not be the case, it is essential to look outside of Laughlin's submission to understand the whole picture of transnational eugenics.

²⁷ Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 276.

It is undeniable that eugenic societies were primarily organized through domestic associations. For example, Laughlin and Davenport were predominantly associated with the organization of their home country, the ERO. Still, this was not the only society to which they belonged, as both Laughlin and Davenport would later become instrumental in the International Congresses and Commissions of Eugenics.

There were three International Congresses of Eugenics in total. Occurring in 1912, 1921, and 1932, the international congresses were similar to large academic conferences in which eugenic information was shared, exhibits were put on display, and colleagues from around the globe could connect. As scientists shared their findings and discussed, they discovered their common interests in the science of eugenics, regardless of their national identities. While the sharing of eugenic information across national borders was extremely advantageous, international collaboration was the goal of the international congresses. During the welcome toast of the First International Congress of Eugenics held in London, Congress Chairman Sir Leonard Darwin asserted:

This is an International Congress; one which deals with the interests not of one civilized nation rather than another, but a Congress which deals with problems which every civilized nation, both in new countries and in old, has got to face, and which in its magnitude naturally and necessarily obliterates all minor differences....Science knows no division between nations, and we collected in this room may all feel that, from whatever country we be drawn, to whatever Government we owe allegiance, whatever be our hopes for the future or our traditions from the past, we are all alike interested in a common scientific task, one of the greatest that can be presented, that is being presented, to civilized mankind at the present moment.²⁸

Through the words of Leonard Darwin, each attendant's belief in eugenic science was able to break the barriers of national identity and unite scientists from around the globe. Although Laughlin was not present at the First International Congress of Eugenics, (Davenport was in

²⁸ *Problems in Eugenics: Report of the First International Eugenics Congress Held at The University of London, June 24th to 30th, 1912*, 2nd ed. (Kingsway House, Kingsway, W.C.: The Eugenics Education Society, 1913), 7.

attendance and presented a paper) British eugenicist Darwin's words emulated Laughlin's adherence to the intersection of eugenics and internationalism. Darwin viewed each participant of the First International Congress as a part of a singular goal and saw the Congress as an opportunity for global scientific collaboration.

The next and final two International Congresses of Eugenics were both held at the American Museum of Natural History. Along with this shift towards the United States, Laughlin was also far more involved in the final two international congresses. With Charles Davenport as chairman and Laughlin as secretary of the congress, the 1921 Congress centered on the tragedy of WWI and the extreme loss of life. In the address of welcome, American eugenicist Henry Fairfield Osborn stated: "I doubt if there has ever been a moment in the world's history when an international conference on race character and betterment has been more important than the present. Europe, in patriotic self-sacrifice on both sides of the World War, has lost much of the heritage of centuries of civilization which never can be regained."²⁹

In contrast to Dawley's assertion that WWI created a rift between internationalist Progressivism and the domestic eugenics movement, Fairfield Osborn's welcome speech shows that WWI furthered eugenics' internationalist aims rather than hindered it. The devastation of war sparked a sense of cooperation amongst eugenicists throughout the globe instead of leading them into a period of isolationism.

Moreover, the exhibits present at the second congress included representations of both the WWI Army IQ testing and diagrams regarding the supposedly deficient Juke and Nam

²⁹ Henry Fairfield Osborn, "Address of Welcome," in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family: Scientific Papers of The Second International Congress of Eugenics*, vol. I (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1923), 1.

families.³⁰ Whilst Laughlin served as secretary of the second congress, the exhibitions present wholly mirrored the eugenic concepts built into his eugenic world government. Thus, Laughlin's inclusion of these eugenic ideas was not the first instance in which they were displayed internationally.

The three International Congresses of Eugenics were not the only transnational conferences devoted to eugenic issues. In the late summer of 1927, the World Population Conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland. While the conference's name does not clearly signify its eugenic themes, the participants of this meeting were all eugenicists. The president of the conference, C.C. Little was a well-known eugenicist from Michigan State University. The two honorary secretaries consisted of C.V. Drysdale of England the prolific eugenicist and birth control advocate, Margaret Sanger. Various other notorious eugenicists were a part of the conference's advisory council such as the American H.P Fairchild, England's Havelock Ellis, France's Lucien March, and the future Nazi Party eugenicist, Dr. Eugene Fischer.³¹ Although Laughlin did not attend this conference due to schedule complications, the conference secretary Edyth How-Martin of Switzerland assured Laughlin that she would provide him with "copies of the proceedings" in an August 27th letter.³²

According to the preliminary announcement, the World Population Conference held very similar goals to those of the international congresses. The announcement stated that:

the chief purpose of the World Population Conference is to establish an international viewpoint from which the question may be studied...It is hoped that from this conference will come the establishment of a permanent international organization for population fact finding and the adoption of some common point of view which will tend toward a solution of the problem.

³⁰ "Plate 12: Measurement of Physical and Mental Traits," "Plate 13: Measurement of Mental Traits," Plate 19: The Jukes," and "Plate 20: The Nams," in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family: Scientific Papers of the Second International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1923).

³¹ *Preliminary Announcement of the World Population Conference*, Laughlin Papers.

³² Edyth How-Martin to Harry H. Laughlin, Aug., 27, 1927, Laughlin Papers.

The organizers of the World Population Conference sought to study the eugenic issue of overpopulation and specifically, an increasing population of the perceived ‘wrong’ kinds of people like the Jukes and Nams. The scientists viewed these issues not through a domestic lens, which could presumably be solved through simple immigration policy. Instead, they recognized “that the problem of one is the problem of all.”³³

Although it is unclear whether the conference ever achieved its goal of establishing a permanent international organization, Laughlin would work to do so through his world government. In his proposal, he states:

If, at any time in the future, World population should be found to crowd hard upon its food supply, it may then be necessary for each sovereign country to decide upon its own optimum national population, and to work for the maintenance of such numbers. Such a situation would call for a much more difficult coordination of give and take among nations than is now required in attempting national disarmament and the guarantee of security.³⁴

Laughlin recognized that global collaboration would be necessary in order to solve problems of overpopulation but concedes that this cooperation would prove difficult due to disagreements such as immigration restrictions. Yet, Laughlin was writing in 1924 (four years prior to the World Population Conference). It is probable that he would have written more confidently on this topic if he were writing after the conference, as he writes that political science should soon “have mastered the principles and practice of population-control in numbers and quality and should be ready with sound rules-social forces and laws—for the effective control of immigration, marriage and reproduction...”³⁵

Both the three International Congresses of Eugenics and the World Population Conference attested to scientists’ faith in international collaboration. Each of these congregations

³³ *Preliminary Announcement*, Laughlin Papers.

³⁴ Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 169.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

were devoted to the international transmission of eugenic knowledge and the collaboration amongst scientists throughout the globe. Yet, while academic conferences are an ideal opportunity for the intermingling of scientists and the sharing of knowledge, they do not necessarily signify that the participating nations must truly work together toward their common eugenic goal. Explicitly, once conferences finish after a few days, scientists are free to return home, thus hindering the progress of international collaboration. However, the International Congress of Eugenics recognized this issue during their first conference, leading the scientists to form the International Commission of Eugenics.

Mirroring the World Population Conferences' goal of establishing a permanent fact-finding organization, the International Commission of Eugenics would function as eugenics' permanent international meeting. Its first meeting occurred on August 4th, 1913, in Paris with scientists from the United States, Britain, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Norway.³⁶ The commission met at least once a year in various locations throughout the globe in order to "act on other international eugenical matters that require actions in the interval between Congresses."³⁷ The commission repaired the dilemma of large interludes between eugenic congresses. Moreover, the creation of the international commission provided a much more organized structure for the transnational eugenics movement.

Similar to a governmental constitution, the International Commission of Eugenics had a written set of rules which outlined the procedures and structure of the commission. According to the updated set of rules established at the 1923 commission in Lund, Sweden, the commission consisted of "a Chairman, several Vice-Chairman, and a Secretary-Treasurer, and not more than

³⁶ *History of the International Organization of Eugenics*, Laughlin Papers, 2.

³⁷ *Rules for the International Commission of Eugenics*, Adopted by the International Commission of Eugenics at Lund, Sweden, Sept., 3, 1923, Laughlin Papers, 1.

three members from each co-operating country.” The Chairman and the Secretary-Treasurer were elected at the larger International Congress of Eugenics, allowing more scientists to participate in the election. Several vice-chairmen were also elected, but by “the members of the Commission for each country.” These national commissions were permitted to act “on matters of national Eugenics, and in such consultative capacity may add, to their own membership; but in no case shall one country have more than three votes on the Commission.” This rule ensured that no single country could influence the proceedings of the commission, highlighting their commitment to international collaboration.³⁸

Democratic processes were the foundation of the international commission. The tenth rule underscores this, as it stated that votes would only be taken “by a show of hands only; and the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.” Moreover, voting was only permitted while the commission was in session unless organized measures were taken: “Provided that when the Commission is not in session no decision shall be taken in regard to the admission of a country as a co-operating country except with the written assent of three-fifths of the members of the Commission.”³⁹ The commission exemplified eugenic scientists’ adherence to representational democracy and collaborations amongst various nations throughout the globe.

The 1923 Sweden Commission was the first meeting in which both Davenport and Laughlin were in attendance. During this commission, Dr. Davenport was elected to participate in a joint European and American committee, solidifying his important position in the transnational movement. Laughlin was also offered a prestigious position within the committees as he was placed in a sub-committee tasked with “drawing up a list of members of the

³⁸ Ibid., 1.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

commission.”⁴⁰ While previous historiography asserts that Laughlin was the sole eugenicist interested in internationalism, the existence and organization of the movement makes clear that this is far from accurate. The transnational movement arose with the First International Congress of Eugenics in 1912 and the subsequent development of the permanent commission in 1913. Additionally, Laughlin was not even a part of this movement until his appearance at the international congress in 1921. Although Laughlin’s interest in internationalism traces back twenty years prior to his submission to the Peace Award in 1923, his participation in transnational eugenics undoubtedly impacted his submission. His belief in eugenics’ ability to promote international collaboration was not an invented dream of his. Instead, he called on his experiences in the transnational eugenics’ movement, and its commitment to democratic principles and cooperation.

The American Peace Award provided Laughlin with the perfect opportunity for him to demonstrate eugenics’ collaborative efforts to the world and codify the organization’s rules on a larger scale. Laughlin’s submission was not disconnected from his work in eugenics or merely the extension of his beliefs. Instead, it was an attempt to expand the transnational movement past the existing participant nations to encompass the entire globe.

Moreover, Laughlin’s internationalism was also characterized as dissonant from the views of more typical Progressive reformers, like Bok and Wilson. For example, historian Dawley identified the larger Progressive movement and eugenics as wholly separate reform efforts following WWI. However, just because Laughlin did not win the Peace Award, this does not mean that Progressive internationalists would regard his insights as fanatical. Instead, they would accept his views as credible insights. Through further investigation into the motives of

⁴⁰ *History of the International Organisation of Eugenics*, Laughlin Papers, 9-10.

Progressivism and Laughlin's own personal connections with progressive reformers, the two movements appear less dissimilar than once thought.

Progressivism, Internationalism, and Eugenics

Like the eugenics movement, the Progressive impulse which inspired Woodrow Wilson's war for democracy spanned nations.⁴¹ As global populations swelled and shifted from smaller rural communities to larger urban centers, the localized political orders of the 19th century could no longer function efficiently. Simply, urban problems required urban solutions through larger governments and sweeping regulations. Hence, localized government fell away to centralization and bureaucracy. In light of these rapid changes, Progressive reformers sought to remedy the ills of industrialized urban life through the search for progress and order.⁴² Typical Progressive reforms took shape through safer working conditions, the promise of regulating trusts, protecting public health from disease, and multiple other improvement efforts.

Yet, these reforms were not limited to simplistic American narratives of Theodore Roosevelt's attempt (or non-attempt) in trust-busting but rather were the product of transnational political efforts. Daniel Rodgers' seminal work *Atlantic Crossings* demonstrates that although most historiographical accounts of the Progressive movement have resorted to nationalistic interpretations which validate the 'exceptionalism' of each nation's Progressive efforts, the social politics of both the Progressive and New Deal eras were crafted through both international collaboration and competition. While Wilson's Progressive war for democracy and peace has often been depicted as his attempt to bring American Progressivism abroad, Rodgers' work proves that Progressivism had always been shared, as its ideas were transposed across the

⁴¹ Louis Filler, "Progress and Progressivism," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 20, no. 3 (April, 1961), 295.

⁴² Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 167.

Atlantic from both sides. Rodgers asserts that the Progressive impulse cannot be restricted to the bounds of the nation-state because the socio-political transformation of Progressivism was a transnational development in which various nations recognized that the globe held “a world mart of useful and intensely interesting experiments.”⁴³

Moreover, in order to effectively carry out the transmission of Progressive ideas, reformers throughout the globe focused on creating order by following the advice of newly created specialized scientific experts. The early twentieth century underwent an acute proliferation in the realm of science, in which newly specialized fields were developing and previous specializations were progressing. Scientific experts were believed to be the ideal remedy to the ailments of early twentieth century industrial society due to their ability to apply specialized knowledge to various social problems. According to Progressive reformers, through the centralization of political power and by following the advice of specialized scientific experts, social progress could be achieved.

Because of Progressivism’s belief in the ability of science to enact social change, the political and social culture of Progressivism was inextricably connected to the advancement of eugenics. Not only was Progressivism a prerequisite to eugenics, but the primary goals of both movements were remarkably similar.⁴⁴ Most importantly, both movements sought to improve society through science, whether that be the immediate nation-state or the wider globe. While eugenicists viewed the remedy for society’s ills solely in biological terms, both Progressives and eugenicists believed that by applying scientific expertise to social problems, progress was

⁴³ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 4.

⁴⁴ Thomas C. Leonard, ““More Merciful and Not Less Effective”: Eugenics and American Economics in the Progressive Era,” *History of Political Economy* 35, no. 4 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 687-688.

imminent. Moreover, early twentieth-century science would also wholly embody internationalist ideals, as scientists sought to disseminate their findings widely.

Likewise, many Progressive reformers gladly accepted the Social Darwinist methods of eugenics, applying them to topics even as distant from biology as economics. In Thomas Leonard's analysis of American economists' relationship to eugenics, he describes how racial groups were demonized by economists through eugenic epistemologies in order to justify their exclusion from certain wage labor.⁴⁵ Plainly, eugenics was an attractive methodology for Progressive reformers of all kinds, as they both utilized biopower for governmental control in the name of improving society.⁴⁶

Illustrated by Progressive economists' use of eugenics and the closely related goals of both movements, the eugenic ideal was not entirely separate from typical Progressivism. Hence, it should not be assumed that Laughlin's submission to the American Peace Award would have been unusual; rather, his submission was likely appreciated by Bok and his colleagues. In congruence, a 1926 letter from Esther Everett Lape, the member-in-charge of the American Foundation which maintained the American Peace Award, substantiates this. In her letter to Laughlin, Everett Lape personally requested Laughlin's opinions regarding the 'present situation' of US foreign relations "with reference to the World Court" She continues to ask for his permission to publicize his views "to the press in connection with a few others" but reassures him that they would appreciate his opinion regardless of his decision on publication.⁴⁷

Her letter which she ended with the affectionate closing of "sincerely yours," clearly exhibits that prominent Progressive internationalists valued Laughlin's viewpoints. Her desire to

⁴⁵ Ibid., 701.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 166-182.

⁴⁷ Esther Everett Lape to Harry H. Laughlin, Nov., 22, 1926, Laughlin Papers.

publish his opinions alongside those of other internationalists places Laughlin among the voices of well-respected Progressive reformers. Furthermore, as Laughlin quickly sanctioned the publication of his views to the press, his opinions surrounding American foreign policy could have presumably been read by any US citizen who sought guidance on foreign policy by Progressive experts.⁴⁸ As ordinary Americans would undoubtedly associate Laughlin's name mainly with eugenics and his position at the ERO, this publication placed eugenics and internationalism as comparable fields.

In his world government, Laughlin proposed that “it is impossible to analyze critically the nature and the possibilities of either World Government or race biology without considering the other. This relationship presents a situation not to be avoided, but face squarely.”⁴⁹ Everett Lape evidently agreed with this statement, as she included the voice of a prominent eugenicist and expert on sterilization in her press release regarding the World Court. The American Foundation accepted the viewpoints of Laughlin and thereby invited the eugenic creed to infiltrate their declarations of world peace. Whether or not Everett Lape and her colleagues adhered to the principles of the transnational eugenics movement, their inclusion of Laughlin equated a eugenicist with an expert on international relations.

Conclusion

The historical record has long divided the fields of eugenics and internationalism. In any discussion of Laughlin's world government, historians have characterized his efforts as inconsequential or a waste of time, rather than as an extension of the pre-existing transnational eugenics movement. Moreover, Laughlin's submission to the American Peace Award has been described as strange and disavowed due to his status as a prominent eugenicist. Yet, his

⁴⁸ Harry H. Laughlin to Esther Everett Lape, Dec., 15, 1926, Laughlin Papers.

⁴⁹ Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 168.

submission was not unusual; it was exemplary of the conversion between eugenics and internationalism. Through the International Congresses and Commissions of Eugenics, eugenicists throughout the globe accepted internationalism with open arms. Likewise, Progressive internationalists in Laughlin's home country acknowledged him as an expert on foreign policy. The supposed fissure between eugenics and internationalism was not wide as it has been portrayed. Laughlin's ability to span this fissure was not due to any extraordinary skill of his to divide his ambitions amongst two dissimilar subjects. On the contrary, he was only one of many who occupied both domains.

Both eugenicists and Progressive internationalists were well aware of their respective movements and subsequently chose to embrace one another rather than resist each other. In his submission, Laughlin declared: "The evolution of World law is on the way, and every advance in international relations is an experiment in World Government with its attendant hopes and risks."⁵⁰ Therefore, Laughlin considered the transnational eugenics movement as a potential trial run in global governance. He was not alone in this opinion. In Nowell Charles Smith and J.C. Maxwell Garnet's 1932 analysis of the League of Nations *The Dawn of World Order*, they provide a graph that measured the proliferation of international conferences and identified this increase as a notable example of "the interdependence of nations."⁵¹ Thus, each International Congress and Commission of Eugenics illustrated to Progressive internationalists that the world was shrinking and in need of organized government.

According to Laughlin, the organized government that the world needed was one built upon the principles of eugenics. He saw the collaborative effects of the eugenic ideal through his

⁵⁰ Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 16.

⁵¹ Nowell Charles Smith and J.C. Maxwell Garnett, *The Dawn of World-Order: An Introduction to the Study of the League of Nations*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 32-33.

international colleagues, and he believed in eugenics' ability to safeguard the human race. In Laughlin's eugenically inspired words: "A just and effective World Government will, within a generation, constitute the natural harvest of sound seed now germinating in good soil—provided these seedlings are nurtured by common sense and not trampled underfoot by mad men."⁵² According to Laughlin, in the same way that eugenic principles such as marriage restriction and sterilization could lead to the harvest of a sounder human race, eugenics could also foster international peace.

Laughlin's confidence in eugenics' power for international collaboration is reasonable, considering his experience with the transnational movement. Yet, to fully understand the international nature of eugenics, it is essential to turn to the reasons why eugenic international scientists found collaboration necessary. Through an analysis of the ways in which eugenic knowledge and legislation were transposed across national boundaries, the necessity of transnational organization becomes clear.

⁵² Laughlin, *World Government*, Laughlin Papers, 141.

Chapter 2: The Communal Creed: Eugenic Knowledge Production and the International Dissemination of Eugenics

On September twenty-fifth, 1914, the prominent American eugenicist Charles Davenport attended a luncheon in his honor. Dedicated to his work as the United States' leading eugenicist, this meeting signified Dr. Davenport's status as a highly respected contributor to the international field of eugenics, and not without merit. He opened the nation's leading eugenic institution, the Eugenics Record Office and held the position of director for the subsequent four years after its opening in 1910. Because of these achievements, Davenport is primarily associated with US eugenics. Yet this gathering was not hosted by his American colleagues, but rather by the Eugenics Education Society in New South Wales, and took place in Sydney, Australia, thousands of miles away from his home and ERO Office in Cold Spring Harbor, New York.⁵³



Figure 1: Charles Davenport with the New South Wales Eugenics Education Society.

⁵³ Eugenics Education Society of New South Wales luncheon in honor of C.B Davenport, (standing second from left), Sydney, Australia, Sept. 25, 1914.

Davenport's physical presence alone at the Sydney luncheon is noteworthy; however, the convention's significance is far greater than merely the miles which he travelled. Specifically, while Davenport sailed the thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean, his eugenic ideals had evidently already arrived on the Oceanic continent. By 1914, his eugenic work was important enough to the New South Wales Eugenics Education Society to justify a gathering in his honor. As his eugenic principles travelled far faster than his physical body, the spatial separation between him and the event's organizers became inconsequential. Moreover, his status as an American was not important to the Australian scientists, as his eugenic expertise superseded his national identity in their eyes. Regardless of their spatial and national disparities, this group of scientists found a communal identity with one another through the science of eugenics. Because his eugenic knowledge transcended oceans and national boundaries, Davenport was permitted to sit alongside a table of foreign scientists and collectively discuss their mutual eugenic interests.

Yet, Davenport's influence on the New South Wales Eugenics Education Society was not an anomaly. The transnational impact of his eugenic ideals was merely one example of this trend. Although some historians have argued that eugenics resulted in the "biologisation of national belonging," eugenic science was never confined to the nation as it was always meant to be shared and disseminated throughout the world.⁵⁴ As eugenicists viewed their work as the antidote to racial degradation and the solution towards the betterment of humanity, it was inherently international in scope. Through both positive and negative eugenic programs, eugenicists sought to improve the state of humanity, and their conceptions of humanity were not confined to nations. While eugenicists undoubtedly focused their research efforts on their home countries, their findings were not limited to the nation. Instead, eugenicists both actively transmitted their

⁵⁴ Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 6.

own conclusions and interacted with the work of their fellow eugenicists overseas. Therefore, this chapter will argue that eugenic science was communally crafted, as eugenic researchers collaborated with international colleagues through international conferences, interpersonal connections, and university affiliations. Because of this, I will refer to eugenic ideals as a “communal creed,” emphasizing the truly collaborative nature of eugenic thinking. The term communal creed represents the process of exchange between eugenicists. Through the sharing of eugenic information and the subsequent acceptance of eugenic ideals by various practitioners, the communal creed would be solidified.

Several historians have recognized the permeability of the nation-state in relation to the eugenic creed, highlighting the profound connections between various nations’ eugenic ideals. The most prolific example in the historiography of eugenic knowledge diffusion comes from the relationship between the United States and Germany. Explicitly, both James Q. Whitman and Stefan Kuhl have analyzed the ways in which American and Nazi eugenics converged and were crafted in collaboration with one another.

Historian James Whitman’s *Hitler’s American Model* provides a compelling narrative that demonstrates the connections between America’s restrictive immigration legislation and the later Nazi Nuremberg laws, which legalized antisemitism and the persecution of Jewish peoples. In his expansive legal history, Whitman argues that the Nazi regime looked to earlier American definitions of citizenship and immigration restriction as a ‘model’ whilst crafting their own racist legislation. He traces the roots of the Holocaust to early American traditions of immigrant exclusion and discriminatory naturalization laws, as he emphasizes that the history of racism in the United States was not limited to Jim Crow or the American South. Instead, his work

demonstrates that xenophobic and eugenically based citizenship legislation was central to the histories of both American and German racism.⁵⁵

Similarly, Stefan Kuhl's *The Nazi Connection* proves that American and Nazi German eugenic ideals were deeply intertwined during the period between 1920-1939. Kuhl argues that through parallel evaluations regarding the efficacy of coerced sterilization, the United States and Nazi Germany were nearly identical in their eugenic principles. His work demonstrates that until Nazi eugenic theory increasingly focused solely on antisemitism, American eugenicists fully supported and collaborated with their Nazi German counterparts. Rather than justifying American racism and eugenics by divorcing it from the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, both Kuhl and Whitman demonstrate that the two movements were very close to one another. Both authors highlight that neither US nor Nazi eugenics were crafted in isolation from one another but were comparable manifestations of the eugenic creed.⁵⁶

Still, comparative analyses of eugenics were not limited to studies of the United States and Nazi Germany; the comparative model of eugenics has also been utilized in order to demonstrate the vast connections between Germany and various Nordic countries. Historians Jon Royne Kyllingstad and Geoffrey G. Field have examined the ways in which anthropological definitions of a "Nordic master race" provided eugenicists from both regions with scientific justifications of the racial superiority of the Nordic and Germanic peoples. Both historians recognize that the term "Nordic" originated in the late nineteenth century but gained further traction in the early twentieth century in order to bolster eugenic conceptions of racial

⁵⁵ James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁵⁶ Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

superiority, especially for Nazi Germany, who would utilize the terms “Nordic” and “Aryan” interchangeably during the Holocaust.⁵⁷

Each of these comparative analyses have progressed the historiography of eugenics beyond the bounds of the nation-state. By recognizing the similarities in eugenic thought across national boundaries, each historian demonstrates that eugenic knowledge was not specific to the state but was shared across nations. However, the comparative model is still far too limiting. Despite the historiographical advances achieved by this approach, its focus solely on the comparison of two nations functions to blur the reality of eugenic knowledge production in the early twentieth century. Rather than promoting the restrictive comparative model, the next two chapters seek to broaden the transnational scope by adhering to the framework put forth in Daniel Rodgers’ *Atlantic Crossings*.

Rodgers’ groundbreaking work examined the construction of the Progressive political ideology through a truly transnational lens, as he demonstrated that Progressive social politics were not developed in a nationalistic vacuum but were actively constructed and shared throughout the globe. While various historians have relegated the history of Progressivism to discussions of solely the United States or Europe separately, Rodgers acknowledges that these histories must be understood in relation to one another. His analysis is built upon the recognition “that nations lie enmeshed in each others’ history”, and that “even the most isolated of nation-states is a semipermeable container, washed over by forces originating far beyond its shores. Even the most powerful act their part within systems beyond their full control.” Moreover, Rodgers argues that early twentieth century nation-states were especially ‘permeable containers’,

⁵⁷ Jon Royne Killingstad, “Norwegian Physical Anthropology and the Idea of a Nordic Master Race,” *Current Anthropology* 54, no. S5 (April 2012), S46-S56; Geoffrey F. Field, “Nordic Racism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38, no. 3 (July-Sept., 1977), 523-540.

as both European and American Progressive ideals were shaped “through a web of rivalry and exchange,” and “other nations’ social politics, in short, were news.” Concisely, *Atlantic Crossings* emphasizes the processes of exchange and rivalry which occurred across the Atlantic in the early twentieth century, demonstrating that Progressive ideals were constructed through an active conversation between nation-states.⁵⁸

Although Rodgers’ study is confined to the topic of Progressivism, the transnational framework which he employs is not restricted to this topic. Explicitly, by applying Rodgers’ transnational paradigm to the history of eugenics, the full picture of international eugenics can be seen. While comparative explanations of eugenics stressed the vast connections between diverse nations, they fail to demonstrate the ways by which eugenic thought transcended mere comparisons and was communally crafted throughout the globe. Even though Stefan Kuhl includes a chapter centered on the wider international eugenics movement, his analysis remains solely on comparing US and Nazi eugenics in relation to the international movement.⁵⁹ By contrast, the Rodgers transnational paradigm can take this position a step further by extending past sheer parallels between two nations and viewing the eugenic creed as an actively constructed collaboration throughout the Atlantic world and beyond.

This chapter and the third embrace Rodgers’ transnational paradigm and seek to connect the history of eugenics to the broader international movement by placing Harry Laughlin and his American colleagues such as Charles Davenport and various others in a dynamic dialogue with their international counterparts. Rather than merely comparing American eugenicists and their principles to their foreign colleagues, this chapter aims to show that, like Rodgers’ Progressive

⁵⁸ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 1, 5-6; See also James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵⁹ Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, 27-37.

social politics, eugenic knowledge was intentionally molded whereby both American and international scientists exchanged and debated various eugenic ideals in order to cement them into a communal creed to be shared throughout the world. Hence, this chapter is not about Davenport's connection to the New South Wales Eugenics Education Society, yet it is at the same time. The honorary luncheon was a consummate microcosm of the ways in which the communal creed functioned. The New South Wales Eugenics Education Society welcomed Dr. Davenport at their gathering not because his ideas influenced solely their eugenic perceptions, but because his contributions were a part of the larger eugenic communal creed.

Thus, in order to fully appreciate the ways by which international eugenicists constructed the communal creed, the various avenues they took to do so must be analyzed. While the transformation of eugenic ideas through the "web of rivalry and exchange" will be discussed, this chapter is not predominantly focused on following the evolution of eugenic principles. Instead, this chapter will demonstrate the multitude of ways in which this web manifested; it is focused on highlighting how eugenicists from around the globe interacted with one another, fostered international collaboration, and cultivated the communal creed. Thereby, the most salient place to begin this discussion is through an examination of the three International Congresses of Eugenics.

The International Congresses of Eugenics

The three International Congresses of Eugenics were primary conduits of eugenic knowledge dissemination. Held in London in 1912, and in New York City in both 1921 and 1932, each of these international conferences were dedicated to the propagation of eugenic ideals. In Leonard Darwin's words, during his speech delivered at the Second International Congress of Eugenics: "International congresses are organized no doubt mainly with the object

of enabling workers in the same field both to become personally acquainted with each other—a far reaching benefit—and to exchange information and ideas.”⁶⁰ Each congress allowed scientists from around the globe to personally meet and exchange various eugenic ideals and scientific findings.

Eugenicists presented their findings at the conferences by reading their papers to the audience, allowing the listeners to familiarize themselves and engage with scientific material conducted far from their home countries. For example, the presentations delivered at the Second International Congress included researchers from throughout the United States, England, France, and Norway, and even a lecture from Dr. Louis Legrand from the French colony of Tunis, Tunisia. Similarly, the topics discussed during these presentations varied as widely as the locations from where their presenters were from. The audience of eugenic scientists were presented with discussions ranging from Dr. Davenport’s “Aims and Methods of Eugenical Studies”, to Dr. R. Ruggles Gates of London’s presentation titled “A New Type of Variability Among Plants,” Dr. Leo Loeb’s “The Inheritance of Cancer in Mice,” and Norway’s Kristine Bonnevie’s paper “Main Results of a Statistical Investigation of “Finger Prints”, from 24,518 Individuals.” Moreover, the second congress even included two presentations delivered entirely in French, increasing the wide range of eugenic information presented.⁶¹

The extensive variety of information presented at each of the three International Congresses of Eugenics undoubtedly led to an exchange of eugenic ideals by which various scientists could accept the views presented to them, but also to the process of rivalry, to use Rodgers’ language. In other words, just because a lecture was given during an international

⁶⁰ Leonard Darwin, “The Aims and Methods of Eugenical Studies,” in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family: Scientific Papers of the Second International Congress of Eugenics* (Baltimore: Watkins and Watkins, 1923), 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, i-iv.

Congress does not mean that eugenic scientists in attendance accepted the view of the presenter. International congresses and the information presented during them underwent active processes of both exchange and rivalry. Both the exchange and rivalry processes occurred immediately after the researchers finished speaking, as the audience was free to comment, question, and interrogate the information they were presented with.

Specifically, the published *Report of Proceedings of the First International Eugenics Congress* included these discussions, allowing those who could not physically attend the conference to acquaint themselves not only with the various papers presented but also with the comments which succeeded them. These comments included absolute acceptance, harsh condemnations, or general uncertainty regarding the information presented. For example, following the American Dr. Raymond Pearl's reading of his paper "The Inheritance of Fecundity," which discussed the breeding abilities or egg production of different breeds of hens, Cambridge's Professor Reginald Punnett, most widely known for creating the Punnett Square, responded in full agreement to Pearl's work. He commended his work stating that "he [Pearl] had upset all the cherished ideas of the poultryman in regard to egg-production, and the selection of hens for breeding purposes; but he had given the explanation." He continued his praises by saying that "workers of eugenic problems were sometimes criticized for experimenting with apparently useless things, such as sweet peas; Dr. Pearl had shown that such work might produce useful results." Punnett's comments reflect the various condemnations of those outside of eugenics in relation to eugenic studies of seemingly unrelated topics like plants and animals, but his praise demonstrates that he (and ostensibly each of the other audience members since his was

the sole comment), accepted and applauded Pearl's eugenical studies of hens.⁶² He understood the relevance of Pearl's studies not only to the topic of egg production but also to human populations, as he declared: "It was from the human standpoint that fecundity was important", and "this quality was also likely to be inherited in humans."⁶³ The process of eugenic information exchange is directly reflected in Punnett's words and the lack of any negative comments succeeding them. Through Punnett's praise, it is evident that Dr. Pearl's research was accepted by the audience members as an influential contribution to the study.

Another example of exchange within the First International Congress of Eugenics occurred during the reading of Dr. Davenport's paper "Marriage Laws and Customs," which discussed the potential limiting of the right of marriage along eugenic lines, in which 'eugenical fitness' would be accessed prior to couples' big day. He also included substantial information regarding the practice of 'cousin marriage,' strongly advising against this practice due to the eugenical consequences of interbreeding. Following the reading of Davenport's paper, an American social worker Miss Garrett responded in agreement, stating that: "Teachers ought to be specially trained to impart such information. Dr. Davenport's conclusions with regard to the marriage of cousins, in particular, ought to be widely circulated."⁶⁴

She was not alone in her acceptance of Davenport's conclusions. Similarly, Dr. Jon Alfred Mjoen, one of Norway's most renowned eugenic scientists, expressed his approval of Davenport's work, remarking "that in the Scandinavian countries the question had been discussed whether it would be possible to arrange medical examination before marriage."⁶⁵ Dr.

⁶² For more on the intersection between eugenic science and the natural world, see Jonathon Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2009).

⁶³ Professor Punnett in *Problems in Eugenics: Report of the Proceedings of the First International Eugenics Congress* (Kingsway House, Kingsway W.C.: The Eugenics Education Society, 1913), 15.

⁶⁴ Miss Garrett in *Problem in Eugenics*, 28.

⁶⁵ Dr. Mjoen in *Problems in Eugenics*, 27.

Mjoen's comments reflect not only his acceptance of Davenport's conclusions but also the direct process of international eugenic information exchange. By referencing his own work in Norway and other Scandinavian countries, he explicitly connects the eugenic science of the United States and all of Scandinavia, demonstrating his belief that eugenic science could be effectively transposed across national boundaries. His words reveal the active process of exchange which occurred at international conferences, as scientists from distinct and disparate backgrounds conformed in their eugenic beliefs and offered their experiences from their home countries as potential guidance and contributions to the information presented.

However, not all presentations at the First International Congress of Eugenics received such high praise. The paper titled "Neo-Malthusianism and Race Hygiene," written by Munich's Dr. Alfred Ploetz (who was president of the International Society for Race Hygiene) is a primary example of a presentation that sparked intense debate. His work discussed what he considered to be the consequences of Neo-Malthusianism's usage and its impacts on race hygiene. In his paper, he defined Neo-Malthusianism as "the tendency to limit the birth-rate below the physiological capacity of the mother," and asserted that race hygiene treated "the sum of the most favorable conditions for the preservation and development of our race."⁶⁶ According to Ploetz, the two concepts worked against one another, as Neo-Malthusianism sought to limit the birth rate and thus negatively impacted racial hygiene through the decrease of supposed superior peoples and the propagation of so-called 'weaker races':

In the struggle of the three great races of mankind [white, black, and yellow] Malthusianism is playing a part and it gives no favorable outlook for the white race, in its great combat for lasting supremacy, but a great handicap, especially before the yellow race which in its ancestor worship possesses a strongly effective hindrance to the spread of Malthusianism practices.

⁶⁶Alfred Ploetz, "Neo-Malthusianism and Race Hygiene," in *Problems in Eugenics: Report of the Proceedings of the First International Eugenics Congress*, 183.

He continued in his condemnations of the practice, stating that “if we look on all its [Malthusianism’s] effects we must conclude that today the spreading unregulated and misdirected Malthusianism has a harmful effect from the standpoint of race hygiene. We should strive to abolish it, but its abolition would, I believe, be wholly impossible.” Ploetz advised his audience to disregard Neo-Malthusianism altogether and instead urged his listeners to “combat the propaganda of Neo-Malthusianism” by encouraging the families of their respective nations “to undertake the responsibilities of life, a higher patriotism, a sense of devotion to our race which must face the great combat of future, so that they gladly prepare for an expenditure of energy beyond their own immediate and personal interest.” Ploetz viewed Malthusianism and its emphasis on population control as a deterrent to the betterment of the white race, ending his presentation with this emphatic warning: “Only then, in the decision between self-centered individualism and service toward a new generation and new forces for their race, will they [future generations] decide in favor of life.”⁶⁷

However, not everyone in the audience agreed with Ploetz’s repudiation of Neo-Malthusianism. For example, present in Ploetz’s audience was the president of the Neo-Malthusian League, Britain’s Dr. Charles Drysdale. In defense of his organization, Drysdale asserted that:

the movement stood for race-hygienic principles. It had also laid much stress on qualitative improvement, as well as quantitative reduction in the birth rate, had urged the poor to restrict their families in accordance with their incomes, and advocated early marriage as a cure for many of the evils which circulate race-poisons.⁶⁸

According to Drysdale, Neo-Malthusian principles promoted race hygiene through the reduction of ‘unhygienic’ births, rather than the other way around.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁶⁸ Charles Drysdale in *Problems in Eugenics*, 25.

Others in the audience evidently agreed with Drysdale's criticisms, as a Miss Rees declared that "the struggle for life among the upper classes could be lessened by limiting the supply of the lower classes," and that "the methods which had been used by the upper classes in limiting their families were obviously hygienic." She continued her comment with an ostensibly feminist critique, stating that "liberty was impossible for women if they were overburdened by the production of too many children."⁶⁹ While it is unlikely that other audience members agreed with Rees' feminism, both her and Drysdale's comments make clear that the work presented at the International Congresses of Eugenics were not blindly accepted by listeners but were subject to the process of rivalry. Paper presentations were often interrogated or subjects of debate, like that of Ploetz's.

Still, Ploetz's audience was not unanimously against his presentation. Immediately following Drysdale and Rees' criticisms, the infamous French eugenicist Dr. Lucien March refuted their claims, stating that:

the apologetic of neo-Malthusianism was based on the danger of a too rapid increase in population. Yet in all the countries where, in the 19th century, population had increased (England, Germany, the United States, etc.) wealth had increased yet more rapidly, whereas in such countries as Bohemia and Ireland a stationary or declining population had coincided with an increase of poverty.⁷⁰

March asserted that Drysdale and Rees' criticisms were unwarranted due to statistical inaccuracies observed throughout the globe. Although this was his sole comment, and he failed to enthusiastically support Ploetz's conclusions, his response appears to align with Ploetz's views.

The discussion of Ploetz's paper concluded with a retort of his own. Responding to both his critics and supporters, he asserted that "the case against Malthusianism was its tendency to

⁶⁹ Miss Rees in *Problems in Eugenics*, 25.

⁷⁰ Lucien March in *Problems in Eugenics*, 25.

diminish the better classes within a people, to reduce the numbers of those nations which represented the best races of mankind, and therefore to reduce their importance relatively to the rest of humanity.”⁷¹ Thus, it appears that Ploetz received the final word during his presentation, presumably silencing his opponents.

However, Ploetz’s ability to substantiate his claims is not nearly as significant as the fact that a discussion occurred at all. The conversation surrounding his paper exemplifies international scientific discourse in the field of eugenics, as eugenic researchers and advocates from around the globe participated in an active deliberation of Ploetz’s work. As Drysdale and Rees aggressively rivalled his claims, March interrogated the scientific validity of their criticisms. Each of these comments represent the active processes of both exchange and rivalry which occurred during each of the International Congresses of Eugenics. Regardless of the outcomes of these discussions, they demonstrate the ways in which the eugenic communal creed was formulated. Specifically, to say that the eugenic creed was communal is not to say that it was without disagreement. Rather, it is to say that eugenic ideals were actively constructed in a symbiotic relationship with researchers throughout the globe. While this relationship was undoubtedly not without discord and variance in opinions, eugenicists recognized that their discordant opinions were each actively contributing to the communal creed.

This view is most clearly displayed through Major Leonard Darwin’s (president of the First International Eugenics Congress) farewell address. Following the near week of conference proceedings, Darwin concluded the event with a speech in which he professed what he believed to be the conference’s achievements: “for of the results of international congresses, not the least important are those which spring from the opportunities thus afforded for free and personal

⁷¹ Alfred Ploetz in *Problems in Eugenics*, 25.

interchange of ideas between individuals coming from widely separated localities.”⁷² Darwin recognized that one of the main achievements of the eugenics congress was that of international information exchange, and his words emulate Rodgers’s language.

While Darwin does not directly utilize the terminology of rivalry, he does consider the rivalry process as another essential accomplishment of the congress. Explicitly, he states that:

possibly the result of the Congress will also be to clarify the views of us eugenicists ourselves; and I deliberately say to clarify rather than to unify, because I hope there will always exist differences of opinion amongst our leaders. For absolute identity of views only exists in a moribund movement.⁷³

Darwin viewed disparate opinions within the eugenics movement as a strength rather than a weakness, as he identified variability as an indication of the movement’s success. His words reflect the nature of how the communal creed was constructed, as eugenic ideals were actively accepted, refuted, and discarded during the active processes of exchange and rivalry. During each of the International Congresses of Eugenics, eugenic ideals were presented to wide international audiences through the form of paper presentations, and in turn, listeners responded in active processes of exchange and rivalry.

According to Darwin and various other prominent eugenicists, this was a great success. For example, leading American eugenicist Raymond Pearl published an article in the prestigious journal *Science* documenting the congresses’ success. He declared that “the congress [the First Congress] was a great success from every point of view... From an international point of view the congress gave the opportunity, for which the time was ripe, for a full discussion of eugenic problems as they appear in different civilizations and communities.” Moreover, Pearl documented the congresses’ high attendance rate, stating that “up to the day before the close of

⁷² Leonard Darwin, “President’s Farewell Address,” in *Problems in Eugenics*, 69.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 70.

the congress 836 persons had registered. Besides these there were many who attended as daily visitors.”⁷⁴ Hence, the international sharing of eugenic information at the First International Congress was seen as a triumph, in which paper presentations and subsequent discussions reached a wide international audience.

Yet, presenting papers was not the only way by which eugenic information was shared during international congresses; the second and third congresses included a separate section of the conference dedicated to exhibits. The 1921 Second International Congress of Eugenics held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City incorporated a Hall of Exhibits which displayed a variety of “plates,” which were visual components where visitors could gaze upon images and charts ranging from “the chromosomes of man,” to “the brains of criminals,” and the “heredity in epilepsy.”⁷⁵

Similarly, the Third International Congress of Eugenics expanded this concept with an enlarged exhibit curated entirely by Harry Laughlin. Laughlin’s exhibit extended the duration of the congress, lasting from August 21st to October 1st of 1932 and was not solely limited to the scientific participants. His extended display commenced with the scientific congress but continued into the fall as a public exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History. During this period, “more than fifteen thousand Americans passed through the halls of the American Museum of Natural History,” who viewed 267 presentations of “interactive displays and visual representations of eugenic values including photographs, models, casts, statues, measuring apparatuses, and additional statistical and pedigree charts.” The exhibit even incorporated busts

⁷⁴ Raymond Pearl, “The First International Eugenics Congress,” *Science* 36, no. 926 (Sep. 27, 1912), 395.

⁷⁵ *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family: Scientific Papers of the Second International Congress of Eugenics*, (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins Company, 1923), vii.

of prominent scientists and eugenicists, including Francis Galton, Charles Darwin, Charles Davenport, and Laughlin, himself.⁷⁶



Figure 2: Busts of Charles Darwin and Francis Galton.

Like Davenport's honorary luncheon in Sydney, the busts at the Third International Congress of Eugenics were intended to pay tribute to prominent scientists. While it is possible that Laughlin incorporated both his own and Davenport's busts partially to inflate their own egos, the busts are far more significant in that they represented the main contributors to eugenic science. The statues were a celebration of both past and present scientific and eugenic work from Darwin's theories of evolution to Davenport and Laughlin's current eugenic research. These busts were fitting, considering that the theme of the third congress was titled "A Century of

⁷⁶ Devon Stillwell, "Eugenics Visualized," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 86, no. 2 (Summer, 2012), 207.

Progress in Eugenics.” The final international congress honored the progress of eugenic research from its inception in 1883 with Francis Galton to the fields’ current practitioners.

Even though only the third congress featured ‘progress’ as its overall theme, each of the three congresses exemplified this idea. Primarily, the science of eugenics was inextricably linked to the ideal of racial and human progress. In Leonard Darwin’s words: “Progress on eugenic lines will make mankind become continually nobler, happier, and healthier.” Plainly, Darwin and his fellow eugenicists viewed eugenic science as aiding the advancement of humanity. Likewise, international congresses were based upon the dual progressive notions of collaboration and contribution; both the papers and exhibits of these conferences would not have been possible without collaboration between nations and the contributions of eugenic researchers throughout the globe. Eugenicists’ emphasis on contribution implied that their work should not be conducted out of self-interest, but rather in order to further the communal creed. Darwin exemplified this view in his speech to the Second International Congress of Eugenics, ending his lecture in stating:

In the past many nations of the first rank, when apparently advancing without check on the path of prosperity, have begun to decay from unseen causes, and have in time so fallen from their high estate as to cease to count as factors making for progress. A determination that such downfall shall not be the fate of his nation is a sentiment felt by every man who is animated by the eugenic ideal, an ideal to be followed like a flag in battle without the thought of personal gain.⁷⁷

Darwin’s words emulate the eugenicists’ view that their research and work was conducted not for oneself, but rather to further the progress of the field and in turn, the progress of humanity. Thus, both the statue busts at the third exhibit and Davenport’s honorary luncheon were celebratory gestures not because their fellow eugenicists sought to merely honor their personal research, but more so because of the ways in which they contributed to scientific and human progress.

⁷⁷ Leonard Darwin, “The Aim and Methods of Eugenic Studies,” in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family*, 19.

Laughlin also understood this concept. Although his inclusion of his own bust appears to be a manifestation of self-interest, a letter sent to Lucien March on March 29, 1926 demonstrates that he understood his eugenic research as apart of the larger movement. After Laughlin could not attend one of the yearly meetings for the International Commission of Eugenics, he apologetically wrote to March, declaring: “I trust that my work may be so adjusted that I shall be able to attend the meeting in 1927. Meanwhile I shall continue my studies on sterilization and immigration with the hope that I may have something to contribute later.”⁷⁸ Laughlin’s letter demonstrates that he viewed his work not solely for academic or professional recognition, but rather as a continuation in the progress of the eugenic communal creed.

The three International Congresses of Eugenics were primary examples of international eugenic information dissemination, and the conferences’ papers, subsequent discussions, and exhibits embodied the processes of information exchange and rivalry. International congresses were physical manifestations of the communal creed, as eugenic researchers from around the world unified in the name of eugenics. Although difference in opinion existed, these disparate voices were united under the creed. The active deliberations between fellow eugenicists at each conference were not indicative of a eugenic disconnect, but rather were manifestations of the ongoing process by which the communal creed was consummated. However, international congresses were not the sole path eugenicists took in order to circulate the creed.

The Eugenic Network: Interpersonal Relationships and University Connections

During Leonard Darwin’s farewell address at the First International Congress of Eugenics, he documented the various accomplishments which he believed the group of eugenicists had accomplished. Among these positive outcomes, he included a unique

⁷⁸ Harry Laughlin to Lucien March on 29, 1926, Laughlin Papers.

achievement, stating: “In the first place I am sure we shall all of us look back to this occasion as one at which many new and pleasant friendships were made. This is, in my opinion, not only a gratifying result in itself, but one of no small importance for our cause.”⁷⁹ Darwin evidently viewed the international congress not only as an opportunity for the exchange of eugenic research but also as a social occasion, where scientists from disparate locales could connect and establish friendships. Additionally, he asserted that these connections would benefit the eugenic cause. While Darwin does not explicitly state how friendship could impact the eugenics movement, his prediction rang true; Interpersonal connections remained another crucial manner by which eugenic information was shared and crafted throughout the globe.

Connections between eugenicists were not merely academic; genuine relationships were forged which transcended scholarly pursuits. Perhaps the greatest example of a sincere friendship amongst eugenicists was that of Harry Laughlin and Madison Grant. Madison Grant was a prominent American eugenicist and conservationist. He is known for both his interest in immigration restriction and the preservation of wildlife but is most remembered for his eugenic publication *The Passing of the Great White Race* in 1917.

While Laughlin and Grant’s relationship certainly stemmed from their similar eugenic interests in sterilization and immigration policy, their connection surpassed eugenic interests. In an April 1937 letter to Laughlin, Grant wrote: “many, many thanks for the beautiful flowers which I appreciate very much. I do want to see you, so come in any morning any time you like, or else come in the afternoon, and take a drive with me at two o’clock. In that case, telephone me well in advance.”⁸⁰ Grant’s letter demonstrates that he felt a real affinity for Laughlin, as Grant allowed Laughlin entrance to his home at any time he could permit. Equally, Laughlin’s gifting

⁷⁹ Darwin, “President’s Farewell Address,” 69.

⁸⁰ Madison Grant to Harry H. Laughlin, April 20, 1937, Laughlin Papers.

of flowers to the Grant home reveals that his connection to Grant was that of sincere companionship.

It is unclear whether Laughlin visited Grant after this April letter, since Grant passed away slightly over a month later, on May 30th, 1937. Yet, Laughlin remained loyal to his friend after his passing, and eulogized Grant's death at a meeting of the Eugenics Research Association. He publicly mourned Grant through a speech entitled "An Appreciation of Madison Grant, the Eugenicist." He lamented, "Grant, the patriot and biologist, looked upon the American people as a natural species. It was inevitable that Grant, the conservator of the finest species of trees and animals, should turn his interest and service to the conservation, the spread and the improvement of the pioneer stocks of man on the North American continent." Laughlin's speech was a commemoration of his friend, by which he celebrated Grant's scientific accomplishments in both environmental conservation and eugenics.⁸¹

Laughlin and Grant clearly had a genuine friendship outside of their parallel research interests, yet their separate relationship also functioned to further the pair's eugenic goals. While their relationship existed outside of eugenics, both Laughlin and Grant recognized that their joint efforts could advance the eugenic ideal by which they both ascribed to. For example, in a March 17th, 1937 letter to Grant discussing the state of forced sterilization in the United States, Laughlin stated: "We are making substantial headway in the Connecticut Survey. This is the first time a state has given its official sanction to a first-hand survey of the sources of the several types of inadequate in its population. Your friend Senator Walcott is chairman of the Commission and is tackling the job..."⁸² Hence, Laughlin understood his eugenic sterilization work not as solely his

⁸¹ Harry Laughlin, "An Appreciation of Madison Grant, the Eugenicist," Read before the Eugenics Research Association at its 25th Annual Meeting, June 5, 1937, Laughlin Papers.

⁸² Harry Laughlin to Madison Grant, March 17, 1937, Laughlin Papers.

own but as a collaborative endeavor with Grant. By working together, the pair would have increased their odds of success, as exemplified through Laughlin's letter. Moreover, Laughlin references another friendship, that of Grant and Senator Walcott. This additional friendship provided the two with a larger network of allies by which they could enhance their eugenic ideals.

The importance of interpersonal relationships to eugenic information dissemination resided in these connections and networks. By creating genuine friendships and utilizing these connections in order to promote eugenic ideals, the eugenic network of prominent scientists functioned to disseminate and advance the communal creed. Simply stated, while international congresses allowed for the exchange of information, the creation of longstanding connections between scientists throughout the globe enhanced these efforts. Like Laughlin and Grant's expressive friendship, connections between eugenicists and the larger eugenic social network would continue to foster international collaboration and information exchange long after congresses had ended.

While the network turn in both historical scholarship and the wider humanities is fairly new, scholars have recognized the importance of social networks to the production of scientific knowledge since the 1970s. For example, sociologist Diana Crane discussed this phenomenon in her 1972 work *Invisible Colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities*. Crane asserts that scientific communities should be understood as "social circles," in which interpersonal connections fostered the production of knowledge, equally as much as physical universities or scientific organizations. She labeled these connections and the knowledge which they produced as "invisible colleges," by which knowledge could be disseminated through these scientific social circles. Moreover, she contends that these relationships did not always have to

be as profound as Grant and Laughlin's. While more involved friendships undoubtedly would increase levels of communication and collaboration, Crane acknowledges that scientific social circles were complex networks in which "each member of a social circle is usually aware of some but not all other members," and "indirect interaction, interaction mediated through intervening parties, is an important aspect of the social circle."⁸³

More recent scholarship on network theory advances Crane's work. The network turn highlights the study of networks as a discursive method of analysis, defining the network as "an abstraction into a system of nodes and edges. Nodes are entities; edges are the relationships between them."⁸⁴ By applying both Crane's analysis of scientific social circles and network theory, friendships between eugenicists become exceedingly important to the story of eugenic knowledge diffusion. Specifically, the nodes of individual scientists and their connective edges amassed a large scientific network by which information was transferred. Through both direct communication (like Laughlin and Grant) and indirect interaction (such as Laughlin's connection to Senator Walcott), the eugenic network fostered a sense of unity amongst the scientists. Regardless of the genuine closeness felt between eugenicists, each of the scientists within the eugenic network were connected. To reference Darwin's speech during the Second International Eugenics Congress, each eugenicist carried the eugenic ideal "like a flag in battle."⁸⁵ To carry this flag was to actively participate in the eugenic network.

While Laughlin and Grant were both American eugenicists, the eugenic network was international in scope, as "invisible colleges" spanned oceans. Davenport's invitation to New

⁸³ Diana Crane, *Invisible Colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities*, (The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 17.

⁸⁴ Ruth Ahnert, Sebastian E. Ahnert, and Catherine Nicole Coleman, *The Network Turn: Changing Perspectives in the Humanities*, edited by Samantha Rayner and Leah Tether, (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 7.

⁸⁵ Leonard Darwin, "The Aim and Methods of Eugenical Studies," in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family*, 19.

South Wales was a manifestation of direct interaction through the eugenic network, as he mingled with eugenicists across the Pacific. Yet, this would not be Davenport's only international visitation outside of yearly International Commissions. In September 1922, Davenport departed across the Atlantic, heading to Europe for over a month. He would begin in "Brunn, Czechoslovakia, for the purpose of participating in the International Gregor Mendel Centenary on September 22, 1922." After attending this international meeting, he would continue to "Vienna to attend the meeting of the German Society of Geneticists, September 25-28." Following this second conference, he would head to "Upsala, where he will proceed to Norway for the purpose to Norway for the purpose of paying a visit to Dr. Jon Alfred Mjoen...thence to Holland to visit Dr. Joh. Von Der Speck." Davenport's next visit would be to the yearly International Commission of Eugenics in Belgium from October 9-14. Henceforth, Davenport would leave for "Paris in the interests of the Third International Congress of Eugenics." Finally, he would conclude his trip "in London, on October 24," where he would "lecture before the Eugenics Education Society."⁸⁶ Through this month-long European tour, Davenport advanced his eugenic connections and friendships and fostered international collaboration. Evidently, Davenport was deeply connected to eugenic practitioners throughout the continent, allowing him to disseminate his eugenic views throughout multiple nation-states. However, as Crane asserts, not all communication was physical due to spatial separation. Hence, the eugenic network was nurtured through the writing of letters.

Letter writing allowed eugenicists to foster their international connections when travel was not possible. These letters were not only indicative of cross-cultural relationships but were often avenues by which eugenic information could be spread overseas. A November 11, 1922,

⁸⁶ "Personal Notes," *Eugenical News* VII, no. 10, (Oct. 1922).

letter from Charles Davenport to Leonard Darwin demonstrated this, writing: “Thank you for your kind letter of November first. I am arranging to have two copies of the sterilization book sent to you.” The book Darwin references is Harry Laughlin’s 1922 *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States*, which will be discussed further in chapter three. After ensuring Darwin that two copies of the book would be sent to him, Davenport continued, writing:

I gathered from contact with geneticists and eugenicists in Austria and Germany that so far from eugenics not being recognized by scientific societies that the German Government is about the only one that has asked and secured the cooperation of leading scientific men (certainly members of leading scientific societies) to cooperate with the Government by constituting a committee to which should be referred all legislation of eugenical import. Apart from the international society of Dr. Alfred Ploetz in Munich, the liveliest society dealing with eugenical matters is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Vererbungswissenschaft of which Dr. H. Hachtsheim, Landwitsch, Hochschule zu Berlin, Invalidenstrasse 42, Berlin, H.4, is secretary.

He concluded his letter with the intimate closing of “with kind regards to Mrs. Darwin, as well as yourself, sincerely yours.”⁸⁷

Darwin’s words exemplify the impact of letters in both establishing and fostering the international eugenic network, and the process by which eugenic information exchange accompanied it. As the leading eugenicists in their home countries of America and Britain, the connection between Davenport and Darwin is expected. Yet, the affectionate nature of Davenport’s closing demonstrates that their relationship was deeper than solely eugenics, indicating eugenics’ ability to promote both collaboration and peaceful, friendly relations. His concern for Darwin’s wife insinuates a closeness between the pair that transcended into each man’s private life. This close-knit relationship was not only beneficial to them as people, but also allowed the two eugenicists to rely on one another for eugenic information, and bridge gaps within the eugenic network. As Davenport promised to send Darwin copies of Laughlin’s newest book, the connection between the pair extended to include Laughlin and his sterilization

⁸⁷ Charles Davenport to Leonard Darwin, November 11, 1922, Laughlin Papers.

research. Similarly, Davenport assists Darwin by relaying information regarding the state of Austrian and German eugenics. Davenport even provides Darwin with the name, organizational affiliation, and contact address of a German eugenicist who Darwin was presumably not aware of. This eugenic information exchange supplied Darwin with a new international contact, thus expanding the connective edges within the eugenic network. Because of Davenport and Darwin's close relationship, Darwin was invited to join in Davenport's separate connections, simultaneously tying Darwin to both Laughlin and Davenport's German contacts. Additionally, Davenport's combined discussion of eugenicists in Germany and Austria indicates that the two nations were also intimately involved with one another.

A second example of letter writing's importance comes from a May 26, 1914, letter from Geza von Hoffman to Harry Laughlin. Hoffman was a prominent Austrian eugenicist, who also worked in both Berlin and the United States. During his time in the United States, Hoffman would publish a study of California's sterilization policy. Likewise, Hoffman's letter to Laughlin referenced this, writing: "I thank you sincerely for the transmission of your exhaustive and interesting report. The far reaching proposal of sterilizing one tenth of the population impressed me very much. I wrote a report No. II in the Archiv fuer Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie and I shall take pleasure in sending you a copy as soon as it appear." Hoffman's words demonstrate that not only did Laughlin provide him with a copy of his work, but that Hoffman would further its dissemination through his German review. Because of Laughlin's connection to Hoffman, Laughlin's studies would be distributed throughout Germany and Austria.

Hoffman continued his letter, informing Laughlin of eugenic progress in other countries. He wrote:

I shall be pleased to inform you from time to time as to the progress of eugenics on the continent as far as I know about it. I do not remember whether I mentioned to you the

“Aerztliche Gesellschaft fuer Sexualwissenschaft und Engenik”, Berlin, organized on Febr. 21st, 1913...Another society was organized this year in Berlin...It organizes an international congress in Berlin, Oct.31-Nov.2,1914...

After discussing German institutions Hoffman continued to discuss another international development: “Splendid work is done by the “Eugenic Committees of Hungarian Societies” in Budapest, founded on January 25th, when I had the privilege to hold the opening lecture...The question of organization was solved by organizing committees for eugenics in a number of existing societies, the central committee being held in the Hungarian Society.” Finally, Hoffman concluded his letter with a request, writing “in case there are any new eugenic laws enacted in the United States during the year, I would be grateful for a short information. With best regards, I am very truly yours.”⁸⁸ This extensive letter provided Laughlin with a multitude of new connections both in Germany and Hungary and transferred his own work throughout Germany. Because Hoffman held German and Hungarian connections, these were transferred to Laughlin because of their closeness. Likewise, Hoffman expected that Laughlin would return this favor, anticipating that Laughlin would update him in the future regarding American developments. The direct and intimate connection between the two prominent eugenicists ensured that each man was permitted entry into the others’ eugenic social circle, enlarging the eugenic network and thus benefitting the “invisible college” of eugenics.

However, not all connections within the eugenic network fell under the category of “invisible colleges.” Another form of establishing connective edges within the network was the process of awarding honorary degrees. Universities throughout the world offered honorary degrees to both domestic and international recipients. One recipient of an international honorary degree was Harry Laughlin. Laughlin was awarded an honorary Doctor of Medicine degree from the German University of Heidelberg in June of 1936, during the university’s 550th jubilee year.

⁸⁸ G. von Hoffman to Harry Laughlin, May 26, 1914, Laughlin Papers.

He was also invited to attend the celebration and receive his degree in person, although schedule conflicts prohibited Laughlin from attending. Despite his inability to physically take part in the university's proceedings, Laughlin made sure to express his gratitude for the degree and thus nurture the connection between him and the university faculty. In a letter to Dr. Carl Schneider, Heidelberg's Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Laughlin thanked the dean, writing: "My dear Dr. Schneider...I stand ready to accept this very high honor. Its bestowal will give me particular gratification, coming as it will from a university deep rooted in the life history of the German people." He continued in his praises, stating that "to me this honor will be doubly valued because it will come from a nation which for many centuries nurtured the human seed-stock which later founded my own country and thus gave basic character to our present lives and institutions."⁸⁹ Laughlin understood his honorary medical degree not only as an academic commemoration of his lifelong eugenic work in sterilization and immigration but as a personal connection between him and the entire nation of Germany. He viewed the histories of the United States and Germany as intertwined through racial lines and the German race as the inception of US institutions. Likewise, Heidelberg's faculty evidently regarded Laughlin's work as consistent with their values as to warrant an honorary degree.

Honorary degrees physically connected recipients to universities by which they previously had no affiliation. By tying recipients to a particular institution, these degrees established relationships between distant scholars. Through his honorary degree at Heidelberg, Laughlin was explicitly associated not only with Dr. Schneider, but also with the university as a whole, as his name would forever be included in Heidelberg's alumni. Receiving honorary degrees was far more significant than the diploma itself; they were physical representations of

⁸⁹ Harry H. Laughlin to Dr. Carl Schneider, March 28, 1936, Laughlin Papers.

new connective edges within the eugenic network. As Laughlin received his degree, he obtained far more than his newfound status of a medical Ph.D. He established indirect relationships with all of Heidelberg's faculty and included the University of Heidelberg within the eugenic network, as it was now inextricably linked to his eugenic work.

Laughlin recognized the importance of honorary degrees not only for himself, but also for his friends. To return to the friendship of Harry Laughlin and Madison Grant, Laughlin worked tirelessly in his attempt to confer an honorary degree from Yale to his lifelong friend. Although Grant obtained his undergraduate degree from Yale and later a law degree from Columbia, he was never granted his Ph.D. This was particularly important since Grant's academic credentials did not align with his scientific work. Despite working within the law profession for a few years after his graduation, Grant spent most of his career concerned with conservation and most importantly, scientific eugenics. Because of this, both Grant and Laughlin recognized that receiving a scientific doctorate degree would greatly benefit his professional reputation. From December 1936 to March 1937, Laughlin and Grant exchanged a multitude of letters regarding the possibility of Grant receiving a Yale Ph.D. In one of these letters, Laughlin lamented that:

the real reason why Yale should grant you [Grant] an honorary degree is, of course, because it would constitute a fitting recognition of your scholarly research on American pioneer racial stocks and their descendants, and because these researches have added distinction to the scholarship and national service of Yale alumni.⁹⁰

Laughlin's words demonstrate that he believed Grant deserved an honorary degree not only to commemorate Grant's extensive eugenic research but also because it would increase Yale's status.

Moreover, while it could be argued that Laughlin only wrote so strongly in support of Grant receiving an honorary degree out of encouragement to his friend, Laughlin extended his

⁹⁰ Harry H. Laughlin to Madison Grant, Dec. 22, 1936, Laughlin Papers.

support by writing to various members of the Yale Academic Department. During the same period in which Laughlin and Grant personally corresponded regarding Grant's potential degree, Laughlin sent a total of six letters to various members of Yale's faculty on Grant's behalf. Through two letters to Yale University's President Dr. James Rowland Angell, one to the Dean of Yale's Law School Charles E. Clark, and various others, Laughlin pleaded with university faculty in order to confer his friend an honorary degree.⁹¹

Although Grant never received Yale's honors, Laughlin's attempts reveal the immense weight honorary degrees held. As physical embodiments and celebrations of scientific work, honorary degrees held the power to bolster academic prestige and directly connect scientists to prominent universities. Both Laughlin and Grant recognized that an honorary degree from Yale was a discernible opportunity to both celebrate Grant's eugenic research and craft a new connective edge within the eugenic network. Even though their efforts proved unsuccessful, Laughlin's attempt to confer Grant with an honorary degree was emblematic not only of their intimate friendship and the ways in which it could benefit their dual eugenic goals, but also the immense importance of honorary degrees and their ability to disseminate the eugenic communal creed.

Conclusion

Most of the historical scholarship surrounding the eugenic creed privileges the nation-state, as historians have emphasized the ways in which eugenic thought differed throughout the globe. Moreover, any attempts to mend this historiographical fissure have appeared solely

⁹¹ Harry H. Laughlin to Dr. James Rowland Angell, President of Yale University, Dec. 17, 1936; Harry H. Laughlin to Dr. James Rowland Angell, President of Yale University, Jan. 5, 1937; Harry H. Laughlin to Professor Nettleton, March 16, 1937; Harry H. Laughlin to Dr. Furness, March 16, 1937; Harry. H. Laughlin to Mr. Greene, Member of Yale's Committee on Honorary Degrees, March 16, 1937; Harry H. Laughlin to Charles E. Clark, Dean of Yale Law School, March 16, 1937, all Laughlin Papers.

through comparative analyses. While the comparative model has proved highly useful in straying from nationalistic narratives, mere comparisons obscure the reality of eugenic knowledge production, as eugenic ideals were crafted communally.

Beginning in England with Francis Galton and extending throughout mainland Europe, North and South America, and various African colonies such as Tunisia, and Australia, the eugenic communal creed was widely disseminated and shared by its practitioners. Through International Eugenic Congresses, the conversations sparked within them, interpersonal relationships, and university affiliations, the communal creed spanned the Western world. Although eugenic scientists conducted their research with their home countries as their priority, they never confined their ideas to the nation-state; Eugenicists sought to better *humanity*, which was never defined in solely nationalistic terms. Rather, eugenicists recognized that international collaboration and information exchange would benefit their journey toward progress. More importantly, the communal creed demonstrated eugenics' ability to promote collaboration between diverse peoples, which will be discussed further in chapter three. Despite the turbulence of WWI, international eugenicists remained loyal to the creed and continued to foster their singular movement and close friendships.

However, information exchange was not the sole avenue by which eugenicists sought international collaboration. While the communal creed proved increasingly beneficial to their goals, eugenics was defined as an applied science. Specifically, just as academic eugenic research was not limited to the nation-state, it was not confined to laboratories or conference discussions. Instead, eugenicists sought to apply their scientific findings to wider society through eugenic legislation. Although these laws would be conducted at the level of state or national regulations, they too, would be subject to international exchange.

Chapter 3: Fixing the League: International Eugenic Policy and Harry Laughlin's World Government

The First International Eugenics Congress in London culminated with the President's Farewell Address in which President Leonard Darwin spoke directly to all in attendance. Following six days of conference proceedings in late July 1912, Darwin both reflected on the meeting's various accomplishments and directed his listeners to think of the future of their movement. During his speech, Darwin reminded his audience of the movement's organizer and its founding principles, stating: "We all know Galton's famous definition that eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally. This definition I hope we adhere to..." After paying homage to Francis Galton's widely recognized definition, Darwin continued to emphasize social control, declaring that he hoped the conference would:

have some immediate practical consequences in the way of hastening legislation such as that is now being discussed in our Parliament. It would not be fair on this occasion to discuss controversial matters; but, if I have judged the tone of this meeting aright, all would place legislation tending to stamp out feeble-mindedness from future generations in a leading place in their programme.⁹²

Rather than speaking merely on matters of British legislation, Darwin directly connected potential Parliamentary actions regarding feeble-mindedness to all of those in his audience. He asserted that regardless of nationality, each audience member held a significant interest in preventing the supposed spread of feeble-mindedness.

Although much of the congress consisted of paper presentations and the sharing of eugenic knowledge, Darwin's concluding speech alludes to a very different aspect of the

⁹² "President's Farewell Address," *Problems in Eugenics: Report of Proceedings of the First International Eugenics Congress*, 1913, 70.

eugenics movement: the importance of social control through state intervention. Specifically, Darwin's words reflect the nature of eugenics as an applied science, or a scientific field which seeks to apply its findings to practical or societal problems. Eugenics wholly embodied this sentiment through its convergence of science and policy into one singular movement and can be most clearly seen through the infamous "Eugenics Tree" image.

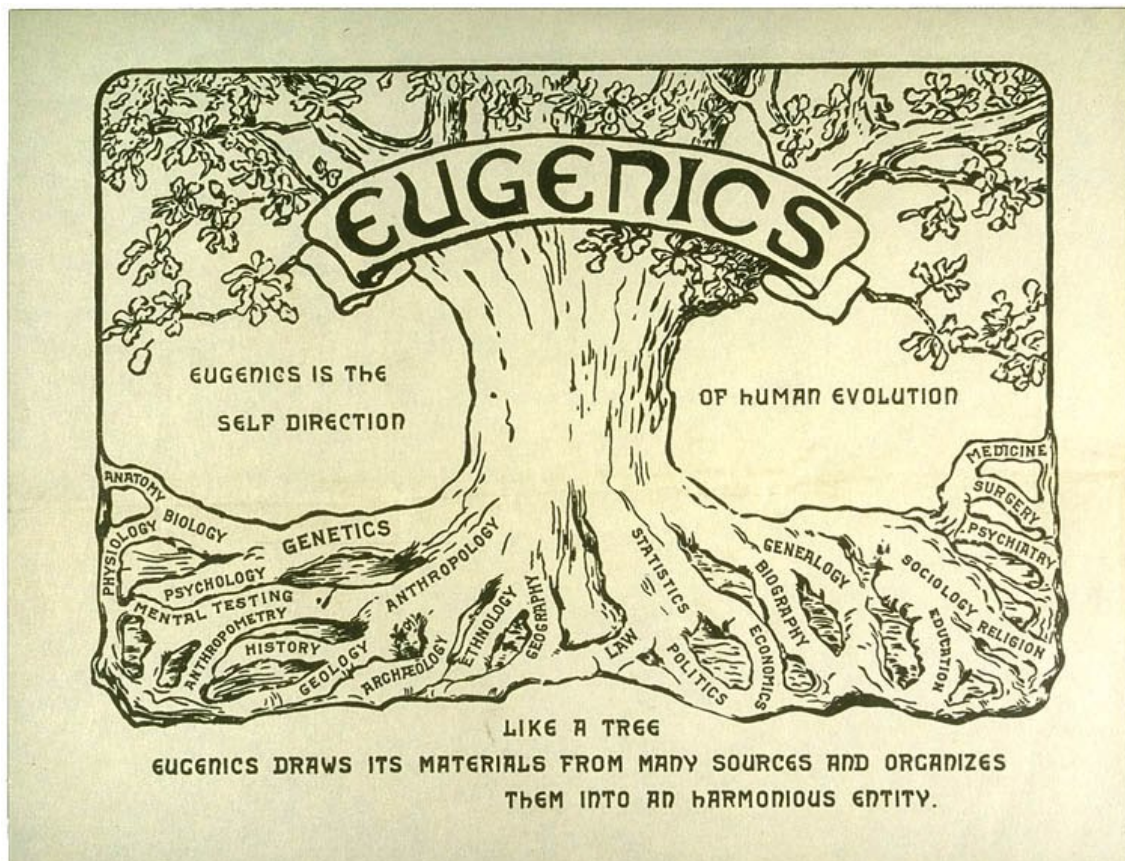


Figure 3: The "Eugenics Tree."

Originally displayed at the Second International Congress of Eugenics in 1921, the "Eugenics Tree" illustrates how eugenics synthesized scientific findings from various fields and organized "them into an harmonious entity." In the image, the large trunk of eugenics is supplied by various roots representing fields as distinct as geology, anatomy, and history, forming one singular entity. Moreover, both politics and law are included alongside a multitude of scientific

fields within the roots of the tree, demonstrating how science, law, and politics were equal contributors to the eugenic endeavor.

Thus, Darwin did not include Francis Galton's original definition of eugenics merely to reminisce upon eugenics' founder. More importantly, Darwin sought to remind his listeners of their movement's principal objective. Rather than merely collecting scientific information, eugenicists had to utilize their findings in order to enact social change. Without this crucial step, the branches of the eugenic tree could not sprout. Likewise, Darwin saw no issue in assuming that the various attendees would have agreed with his remarks surrounding feeble-mindedness. Although he strayed from more seemingly "controversial" topics (such as sterilization which will be discussed later), he believed in eugenic policy's ability to transcend national boundaries.

While the previous chapter highlighted how eugenic ideals were shared throughout the globe, this chapter follows Darwin's view, as it argues that eugenic policies were exchanged internationally in exactly the same ways. Furthermore, at the same time as various nations began to enact legislation such as marriage and immigration restrictions, the exclusion of so-called "feeble-minded" individuals, and sterilization policies, the largest experiment in global governance began with the League of Nations in 1920. Although the League would be relatively short-lived and would stray from its original goals, its emergence proved something that eugenicists were already all too familiar with: that international collaboration could be achieved. Therefore, this chapter also argues that the League of Nations' ineffectiveness led eugenicist Harry Laughlin to attempt to enact social change through his own world government proposal. Because the international eugenics movement had already experimented with international collaboration through three congresses, and had successfully exchanged both eugenic ideals and policies, Laughlin believed that his world government could achieve what the League could not.

Yet, before connections between the League of Nations and Harry Laughlin can be explored, both the process by which law and science converged, and the dissemination of eugenic policies must first be examined.

Converging Law with Science and the Dissemination of Eugenic Policy

As the “Eugenics Tree” and Darwin’s speech illustrate, the eugenics movement sought to build on both law and politics. However, this does not mean that state officials would have automatically accepted eugenicists into the political sphere; eugenic scientists would have to prove themselves as viable experts in order to truly influence national politics in their respective home countries. Yet, eugenicists were widely accepted into the political sphere throughout the globe, as they were not the only individuals who valued the intersection between science and policy.

Like eugenics, the wider Progressive impulse on both sides of the Atlantic stressed the importance of science to cure social ills through newly created scientific fields and experts. With the creation of various new fields of scientific expertise and Progressivism’s emphasis on societal progress, Progressive experts were welcomed with open arms as indispensable resources in enacting social change. This intersection emulates what Foucault referred to as a “politics of health,” in which disease is considered “a political and economic problem for social collectives which they must seek to resolve as a matter of overall policy.”⁹³ Simply stated, both literal and social disease were viewed as political and economic challenges for Progressives. In turn, Progressive experts were the perfect remedy for these diseases, as their specialized knowledges were followed as cures and legitimated through the political process.

⁹³ Michel Foucault, “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (Pantheon Books, New York, 1980), 166.

Eugenic scientists were wholly embraced within this cohort of Progressive experts, allowing them to implement a variety of policies internationally. As the tree of eugenics was comprised of a variety of scientific field roots, eugenic science provided legislators with a multitude of supposed knowledge to work with. Likewise, eugenicists were more than willing to broadcast their research more widely into the political sphere, creating significant partnerships between scientists and policymakers.

One of the most noteworthy of these partnerships was that between Harry Laughlin and Chief Justice Harry Olson of the Chicago Municipal Court. Olson, a Chicago native and the first Chief Justice of the Municipal Court of Chicago, seems an unusual acquaintance for the New York-based scientist. Yet, the pair would remain deeply involved due to Olson's Progressive reforms of the Chicago Court.

Following his appointment to Chief Justice in 1906, the first National Conference on Criminal Law and Criminology took place in Olson's home city in 1909. This conference would pave the way for eugenicists' infiltration into American law, with the establishment of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology. The institute would begin its Progressive aims with the creation of five research committees regarding various issues within criminology and would be filled with both lawmakers and judges, as well as psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and economists.⁹⁴

Although appearing trivial, these committees were the first explicit example of the intersection between American law and science. Specifically, the first committee devoted to recording data on criminals described its objectives as an: "investigation of an effective system for recording the physical and moral status and the hereditary and environmental conditions of

⁹⁴ John H. Wigmore, "Chief Justice Harry Olson," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (1931-1951)* 26, no. 3, (Sept. 1935).

delinquents, and in particular of the persistent offender; the same to contemplate, in complex urban conditions, the use of consulting experts in the contributory sciences.” This Progressive committee recognized the importance of following expert advice in the legal system, and this stride would continue to be recognized following Olson’s death.

In a 1935 editorial in the *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* lamenting Olson’s recent passing, prominent American lawyer and Dean of Northwestern Law School, John H. Wigmore wrote that the committees marked “a new epoch in administration of criminal justice,” and that “at that time the idea of uniting law and psychiatry in criminal court was unheard of, here or elsewhere.” Moreover, Wigmore attributed this advancement solely to Olson, writing: “The pioneer courage and intelligence insight, needed to establish that first example, was that of Chief Justice Harry Olson. The science of Criminology everywhere owes homage to his memory.”⁹⁵ While Wigmore’s assertion that criminology was indebted to Olson’s efforts may be correct, the consequences of these committees were far less admirable than his editorial paints. Particularly, the first committee of the American Institute of Law and Criminology, of which Olson was chairman, included a multitude of prominent eugenicists, including sociologist Edward Ross and psychologist and Yale President James Angell. Most notorious amongst the members of the commission was the infamous psychologist Henry H. Goddard, who would later be remembered for conducting mental testing at the Vineland Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls, as well as publishing the *Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, which would be utilized as a scientific justification for forced sterilization.

Still, this would not be Olson’s only connection to eugenics, as he would later name Harry Laughlin as the “Eugenics Associate of the Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal

⁹⁵ Ibid., 328-329.

Court of Chicago.” With this lengthy title, Laughlin was officially welcomed as an associate of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology. Additionally, this title was not merely another addition to Laughlin’s resume. Rather, the Chicago Municipal Court would actively participate in the dissemination of Laughlin’s work by publishing his *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States*. Not only was this highly popular work published by the Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court, but Olson himself supplied both his own introduction to Laughlin’s piece and a whole chapter in which he analyzed the legality of sterilization laws. In his introduction, Olson wrote that the court was privileged to publish Laughlin’s research and that Laughlin “rendered the nation a signal service in the preparation of his work.”⁹⁶

While Laughlin’s book did not begin the sterilization movement in the United States, it certainly made it more popular. Prior to this publication, eighteen US states had already passed sterilization laws, with the first being Indiana in 1907.⁹⁷ However, the constitutionality of these bills were being actively contested, making Laughlin’s book and model sterilization law highly valuable. Within the lengthy publication, he began with a detailed history of each state which had previously passed sterilization laws, then discussed of the various legal proceedings surrounding the legislation. After his lengthy legal historical accounts, Laughlin included what was arguably the most important segment of his piece: his model sterilization law. He defined the law as “an act to prevent the procreation of persons socially inadequate from defective inheritance, by authorizing and providing for the eugenical sterilization of certain potential parents carrying degenerate hereditary qualities.”⁹⁸ By both defining the exact terms and

⁹⁶ Harry Olson, “Introduction,” in Harry Laughlin, *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States* (Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago, Dec. 1922), v an vi.

⁹⁷ Paul Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 294.

⁹⁸ Laughlin, *Eugenical Sterilization*, 446.

procedures which would lead to a potential sterilization procedure and justifying sterilization's constitutionality, Laughlin's book prompted substantial dialogue surrounding the legality of sterilization. Yet, the discourse was not the only consequence of Laughlin's publication. Instead, his work led to the codification of sterilization law and thus the victimization of Carrie Buck.

Buck, a seventeen-year-old Virginia native, was forcefully sterilized after the birth of her only child due to her classification as "feeble-minded." While both Buck and her family would appeal to the Virginia Court system, it would be to no avail. After utilizing Laughlin's model sterilization law to craft his legislation in Virginia, lawyer and politician Aubrey Strode would mercilessly battle the Buck family in court. Moreover, Strode directly appealed to Laughlin by letter to ask for his assistance with the case. In a 1924 letter, Strode wrote:

Both in the preparation of the statute and in preparation for the trial of this case we have found your book on "Eugenic Sterilization in the United States"... very helpful and it has occurred to us that perhaps because of your interest in the subject you might be willing to assist us in making up a proper record for the test case.⁹⁹

This correspondence ultimately worked in Strode's favor, as Laughlin would be an expert witness in the case, testifying on behalf of Buck's feeble-mindedness. Although her case was brought to the Supreme Court, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes ruled that "three generations of imbeciles was enough" in 1927 *Buck v. Bell* case, upholding the Virginia law. Hence, not only was Virginia's sterilization law sustained but each of the American states which had previously enacted sterilization laws were legitimated. However, the United States was not the only nation influenced by Laughlin's book and the model sterilization law.

Laughlin's work and the decision of *Buck v. Bell* rang loudly further north, as the two Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia subsequently enacted their own sterilization

⁹⁹ A. Strode to Harry H. Laughlin, Sept. 30, 1924, Laughlin Papers.

laws in 1928 and 1933, respectively.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the timing of Canada's experimentation with sterilization was not mere coincidence; the impacts of *Buck v. Bell* and Laughlin's model law were felt internationally. Even outside of Alberta and British Columbia, Dr. Herbert A. Bruce, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, cited American law in 1938 over a radio broadcast as evidence of the legality of sterilization, in hopes of extending legislation to his province.¹⁰¹ Even though sterilization laws would never extend to Ontario, these two Canadian provinces resulted in the sterilization of over two thousand documented persons. Moreover, Bruce's radio broadcast makes clear that Canadian eugenicists viewed their policy decisions as congruent with that of the United States. Regardless of differing national identities, Canadian eugenicists utilized American legal precedent in hopes to mirror the actions of their southern neighbor.

While Canada did not nationally legalize sterilization, a multitude of northern countries across the Atlantic did, as various Nordic countries wholly embraced forced sterilization in their federal legislatures. Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark each enacted compulsory sterilization laws for the feeble-minded following Laughlin's publication, with Denmark being the first in 1929. Denmark's connection to the eugenics movement was not new, as the country's leading eugenicists, Soren Hansen had attended the First International Eugenics Congress and was the representative eugenicist of Denmark in the International Commission of Eugenics.¹⁰² It was his eugenic research and lobbying that led to the 1929 act and the subsequent sterilizations of over eleven thousand individuals, mainly women.

¹⁰⁰ Randall Hansen and Desmond King, *Sterilized by the State: Eugenics, Race, and the Population Scare in Twentieth-Century North America* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 95 and 115.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰² Bent Sigurd Hansen, "Something Rotten in the State of Denmark: Eugenics and the Ascent of the Welfare State," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland*, ed. by Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996), 10-12.

Norway was the next Scandinavian country to enact involuntary sterilization, with its law passing in 1934. Norway had a long history of eugenic activity, as Alfred Mjoen was a longtime participant in the international eugenic movement through both International Congresses and Commissions. Moreover, the passage of its sterilization law was very much so an active response to American law and Laughlin's work. The sterilization debate in Norway intensified following news of California's procedures post WWI and the first governmental commission devoted to sterilization law, created by the Ministry of Justice in 1927, included an entire report of Laughlin's book in its appendix. After this commission, Mjoen worked tirelessly to legalize forced sterilization in congruence with his international eugenic colleagues. By 1976, almost one hundred thousand procedures were done in the country of Norway, again with the majority of victims being women.¹⁰³

One year following the passage of Norway's sterilization law, Finland legalized compulsory sterilization in 1935. The case of Finland was slightly different due to both its relatively weak ties to the international eugenics movement and the fact that the majority of eugenic advocates in Finland were Swedish speakers, leading to discrimination against Finnish speakers. Finish eugenics was heavily tied to Sweden (which will be discussed next), as eugenic dialogue proliferated after the development of the Swedish Institute of Racial Biology in 1921. However, Finland's sterilization law was not ratified solely due to Sweden. The first Finish governmental commission regarding sterilization in 1926 surveyed a variety of countries and their legislation, including the United States, other Nordic countries, and central Europe

¹⁰³ Nils Roll-Hansen, "Norwegian Eugenics: Sterilization as Social Reform," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State*, 169-170, 178.

(Switzerland). The results of the commission were favorable to eugenic sterilization, resulting in its legality during the same year as Sweden.¹⁰⁴

Although Sweden was one of the last Scandinavian countries to legalize sterilization, eugenics was just as successful here as in other Scandinavian countries. Swedish medical practitioners had performed forced sterilizations as early as 1906, despite its illegality. Like other Nordic countries, the debate regarding sterilization escalated in the 1920s, with its first governmental commission published by the Society for Racial Hygiene in 1922. The Society for Racial Hygiene (a direct arm of the Swedish state) had opened the same year, under the leadership of infamous Swedish eugenicist Herman Bernhard Lundborg. This commission led to the official ratification of Sweden's sterilization law in 1926 and to the strengthening of the country's connections to the international eugenics movement. Specifically, Swedish racial ideology proliferated with the 1926 publication of *The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation* in English, Swedish, and German. Lundborg would also continue his eugenic work internationally by collaborating with Charles Davenport and the ERO in an attempt to establish eugenic research institutes in Central America and Africa, as well as prompting German connections through public lectures by future Nazi biologist Hans F. Gunther and prominent eugenicist Eugen Fischer. Finally, Sweden facilitated significant collaboration between eugenicists throughout Scandinavia in the form of the 1925 Nordic Conference on Race Biology and Anthropology.¹⁰⁵

Hence, Scandinavia undoubtedly succeeded in implementing eugenic policy through sterilization; yet, the most successful and detrimental eugenic policy existed in Germany, as sterilization would ultimately lead to the euthanasia of millions of individuals, mainly Jewish

¹⁰⁴ Marjatta Hietala, "From Race Hygiene to Sterilization: The Eugenics Movement in Finland," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State*, 215, 218.

¹⁰⁵ Gunnar Broberg and Mattias Tyden, "Eugenics in Sweden: Efficient Care," in *Eugenics and the Welfare State*, 77, 89.

peoples throughout Europe by the Nazis. However, the United States actually inspired Germany's sterilization policy, as German eugenicists praised American eugenicists' publication such as Henry Goddard's study of the Kallikak family in 1912 and Harry Laughlin's *Sterilization in the United States*.¹⁰⁶ By appealing to American law and publicizing the successes of various US states in sterilization, Germany enacted their own sterilization law in 1934.

Likewise, American eugenicists equally supported Germany's sterilization efforts. In a 1934 edition of the *Journal of Heredity*, California eugenicist, sterilization advocate, and founder of the Human Betterment Foundation, Paul Popenoe published his thoughts in his article aptly titled "The German Sterilization Law." Popenoe praises the Nazi law and Hitler's implementations, yet asserts that: "Germany's eugenic sterilization law, which went into effect on January 1, 1934, is no hasty improvisation of the Nazi regime. It has been taking shape gradually during many years, in the discussion of eugenicists." He continues to disconnect the law from Hitler himself, writing: "From one point of view, it is merely an accident that it happened to be the Hitler administration which was ready to put into effect the recommendations of specialists."¹⁰⁷ Popenoe's words demonstrate that although the Nazi regime would later turn to much more heinous eugenic methods far outside of the international movement's recommendations, sterilization in Germany was fully supported by early German and international eugenicists.

While the United States, Canada, Scandinavia, and Germany certainly do not represent the whole of the international eugenics movement, their shared sterilization policies demonstrate that eugenic policy could easily be shared between countries. Moreover, just because sterilization was not legalized in a particular country, does not inherently mean that the nation's eugenicists

¹⁰⁶ Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, 41-45.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Popenoe, "The German Sterilization Law," *Journal of Heredity* 25, no. 7 (July 1934), 257.

did not support sterilization measures. For example, Britain's Leonard Darwin, although never an active proponent of eugenic sterilization, provided a review of Laughlin's work in his "Sterilization in America," published in Britain's most prominent eugenics periodical, *The Eugenics Review*.

In his review, Darwin highlighted Laughlin's sterilization book as "the most important work on sterilization which has yet appeared." He continues by asserting that Laughlin's work indicates many benefits of sterilization, in which Darwin states that "by the sterilization of defectives a contaminated tributary to the great stream of life may be dammed at its source." While Darwin's opinion of sterilization and its application to England is relatively unclear, he finishes his piece by stating:

And if the question whether sterilization should be authorized in this country, either as a voluntary or compulsory measure, should ever be decided in the affirmative, then the whole of this work will come to be of the greatest value. In any case the students of sterilization, whatever may be their views, will have to turn to Dr. Laughlin's great work for many a year to come.¹⁰⁸

Regardless of Darwin's personal opinions on sterilization, he concedes that Laughlin's *Sterilization in the United States* was the most influential work on the topic and that if Britain would choose to legalize sterilization, they should follow in Laughlin's footsteps, as many other nations did. His review reflects the character of his speech delivered at the First International Eugenics Congress, in which he remarked on the importance of shared eugenic legislation. No matter his conclusions regarding sterilization, Darwin was confident that Laughlin's model law implemented in the United States could be mirrored elsewhere. Yet, Darwin was not the only individual in Britain who held opinions regarding sterilization.

¹⁰⁸ Major Leonard Darwin, "Sterilization in America," *Eugenics Review*, (1923), 344.

British interest in sterilization policy began with eugenicists and subsequently passed down to the minds of the public, leading to political demonstrations. In fact, a British petition was sent to Neville Chamberlain in 1929, who was the Minister of Health at that time, appealing to him to enact sterilization policy. The petition was sponsored by the Grand Council of the National Citizens' Union, and the petitioners were quite a diverse group, including "many distinguished soldiers, peers, doctors, three Bishops, and prominent social welfare workers." The group specifically sought "a special inquiry into the possibility and advisability of legalizing sterilization under proper safeguards," and justified the need for inquiry because "many of the soundest English families are, for economic reasons, restricting the birth rate, while the country is spending tens of millions of dollars rearing children who will be a burden to the State." Moreover, they asserted that Britain's current legislation was not working and was in need of change: "Segregation, as a remedy, is failing... principally owing to the increasing numbers of mental deficient and the enormous cost."¹⁰⁹ According to the petitioners, sterilization seemed to be the proper remedy to Britain's problems.

Most importantly, however, is that the group came to this conclusion by looking at the legislation of other countries. A major justification of British sterilization within the petition mentioned "that legislation authorizing sterilization in certain circumstances had been passed by twenty-three states in the United States, and Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Alberta, Canada, and New Zealand."¹¹⁰ Rather than solely referencing British conditions, the petitioners appealed to legislation outside of their borders in order to bolster their argument. The existence of sterilization laws throughout the globe was indicative of its applicability to their

¹⁰⁹ "Move to Curb the Unfit," *The New York Times*, Feb. 21, 1929.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

own nation, according to the petitioners. They saw no difficulty in echoing the policies of other nations but instead viewed sterilization more favorably due to its presence elsewhere.

Evident through both the appeal of British petitioners and the active transcendence of sterilization policy throughout the globe, eugenic policy, like eugenic information was shared. In the words of Daniel Rodgers, eugenic policies enacted throughout the world were “news” to international legislators, eugenicists, and others.¹¹¹ Thus, international eugenic exchange was not limited to the sharing of eugenic knowledge and information; social policy, too, transcended national boundaries. As Darwin’s concluding speech emulates, eugenic thinking was inextricably linked to social control through policy, making the international dissemination of eugenic policy a necessary component of the international eugenics movement. Through International Congresses and transnational connections, eugenicists successfully facilitated international information exchange; yet, they also effectively connected themselves to their subsequent federal and local governments, ensuring the subsequent exchange of eugenic policy.

Still, eugenicists were not the only individuals interested in international collaboration and policy during the early twentieth century. The topic of international relations was increasingly gaining popularity at the turn of the century and culminated with the creation of the League of Nations following the First World War. The League would become the world’s first large-scale experiment with world government, although the outcomes would not live up to the ideals upon which it was founded. With the United States’ decision not to join the League and the later disillusionment amongst many of the league’s former proponents, an international organization that had already proved its ability for international collaboration would attempt to salvage the original goals of the League of Nations through its own form of world government.

¹¹¹ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 4.

The Formation of the League and Wilsonian Policy

The League was officially established with “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” in January 1920. It maintained the permanence of the League and signified both the principles and legislative guidelines by which each participating nation must adhere to. Beginning with its objectives, the Covenant stated that the League of Nations was essential “in order to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security.” Although a highly ambitious and somewhat ambiguous opening statement, the League asserted that international peace was possible:

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just, and honorable relations between nations, by the firm establishment of the understandings in international law as the actual rule of conduct among Government, and by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another.¹¹²

This lengthy statement of the League’s methods towards peace was then broken down into twenty-six specific articles, covering topics as varied as the regulations for membership and withdrawal to the procedures for the passing of amendments.

President Woodrow Wilson’s extensive participation in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and his subsequent appeals for international collaboration made the League of Nations a centerpiece of Wilsonian foreign policy, though the US never ratified the treaty. Despite his efforts, the US Senate would still vote against American participation in the League. Yet, US resistance did not entirely strip Wilsonian foreign policy ideals from the League, as his adherence to self-determination would remain within the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Wilsonian self-determination is “commonly understood in terms of national self-determination, or the self-determination of nations, and while this is not exactly what Wilson had

¹¹² “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” *World Peace Foundation* vol. 3, July 1920, i.

in mind at the outset, it remains his lasting legacy to world politics, both during his lifetime and thereafter.”¹¹³ Specifically, Wilson believed that international peace was inherently dependent upon the right of people to govern themselves. During the age of imperialism, this view was not widely held, (and although Wilson’s own conflicting opinions may be put into question), his devotion to self-determination heavily influenced the Covenant.¹¹⁴

Article twenty-two of the Covenant, titled “Control of Colonies and Territories” was the direct product of Wilsonian self-determination. This provision created the mandates system, which allowed the League to access the status of certain colonial holdings and determine whether they were fit for self-determination. For example, the Covenant recognized that “certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized.” If a certain colony was determined not fit for self-governance, the article states that “those colonies...which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world...should be trusted to advanced nations.” The Covenant specifically identified “those of Central Africa... and territories, such as Southwest Africa and certain of the South Pacific islands,” as ineligible for self-governance, and therefore would be mandated by so-called stronger nations. Still, the Covenant asserted that unlike with the imperial system, “the Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to

¹¹³ Allen Lynch, “Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of ‘National Self-Determination’: A Reconsideration,” *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 2 (Apr., 2002), 421.

¹¹⁴ For more on Wilson and the League of Nations, see Leroy G. Dorsey, “Woodrow Wilson’s Fight for the League of Nations: A Reexamination,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 107-135; Susan Pedersen, “Back to the League of Nations,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no.1 (Oct., 2007), pp.1091-1117; David Mervin, “Henry Cabot Lodge and the League of Nations,” *Journal of American Studies* 4, no. 2 (Feb., 1971), pp. 201-214.

its charge.” According to the League, the mandates system would ensure “the well-being and development of such peoples” and would “form a sacred trust of civilization.”¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, the mandates system was clearly not a just and equitable arrangement of self-determination; yet, this was by design. Director of the Mandates System, Swiss professor William Rappard, defined the system as “at best a compromise between partisans of imperial annexation and those who wanted all colonies placed under international control,”¹¹⁶ Moreover, historian Susan Pederson argues that the mandate system actually led to more oppressive governmental control and the abandonment of territories seeking self-governance.

However, her analysis also demonstrated that the mandate system opened the door for oppressed peoples under colonization to be heard. Because imperial officials were forced to annually submit reports and were authorized to respond to comments during League meetings in Geneva, they were oftentimes met with increasing dissatisfaction by journalists and nationalist leaders who sought their independence and just treatment under the mandate system. She describes this as a process of internationalization, “by which certain political issues and functions are displaced from the national or imperial, and into the international, realm.”¹¹⁷ Yet, public uproar was evidently not enough to curb imperial power, as conditions were hardly improved. Therefore, even though the mandate system allowed for a wider, international dialogue of self-governance and fair treatment, the League of Nations did little to ensure that the “sacred trust of civilization” was maintained.

Still, colonial subjects were not the only individuals unhappy with the outcomes of the League. Not only did the United States Congress refuse to enter into the League, but (as

¹¹⁵ “The Covenant of the League of Nations,” ix.

¹¹⁶ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

mentioned in chapter one), American internationalist Edward Bok created his American Peace Award in 1923, only three years after the signing of the Covenant. Evidently, Bok and his colleagues were skeptical of the League's ability to promote international collaboration and peace. Moreover, Harry Laughlin was also not convinced; yet, unlike Bok who looked to the submissions of others, Laughlin felt that he could repair the League of Nations.

Laughlin's World Government and the League

Accustomed to his role as both a social policy maker and eugenic expert, Laughlin confidently entered the world governmental debate with his proposal. Likewise, he was not shy in sharing what he believed to be wrong with the League of Nations. He bluntly wrote: "The principle defectives of the League were that it lacked equitable representation for all countries of the World, and that it failed to provide real justice and protection for that nation which was willing to resort to law instead of arms."¹¹⁸ He continued to criticize the League, by claiming that the organization presented "favoritism for individual continents and nations," and that it could "ultimately become the Continental Government of Europe," due to its inequity.¹¹⁹ Because of the inefficiency of the League, Laughlin then inquisitively asked his reader: "If the League of Nations be unsatisfactory, why not design a better World Government," and concluded his thoughts, stating that: "The failure of the League of Nations as a successful World Government of definite function and authority, in turn calls for another independent attempt to advance the just political organization of all nations."¹²⁰

His proposal represented that independent attempt. Laughlin believed that he had remedied the League's supposed ineffective representation through his proposed "Allotment of

¹¹⁸ Laughlin, "World Government," Laughlin, Papers, 18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 150-151.

Representatives.” Yet, as mentioned in chapter one, his allocation was highly biased, with the majority of representatives allocated to Western nations. However, Laughlin’s understanding of equitable representation was not based on equality. Laughlin justified his representative distribution not only due to his eugenic principles of racial difference, but also under the assumption that his system of world governance mended the errors within the League in relation to the so-called civilizing mission.

Specifically, while the League’s mandate system promised to uplift and develop mandated territories, the mandates were often worse off than before the signing of the Covenant. Section three of Laughlin’s proposed governmental structure claimed to remedy this issue through the separation of the entire globe into continental units and the creation of three governmental statuses within those units: States, Continental Provinces, and World Territories. He defined a State as “an organic political unit which possesses the highest degree of political autonomy enjoyed by the Primary Political Sub-divisions of the particular Continent,” while a Continental Province was “a potential State whose government is administered by the government of the Continent in which it lies.” Finally, Laughlin defined a World Territory as “a potential State whose government is administered by the World Government.”¹²¹ While later revisions within Continental governments could admit either Continental Provinces or World Territories as States, Laughlin had already mapped out which locations were to be qualified as States, Continental Provinces, and World Territories in his governmental proposal.

Although these classifications seem to be merely a reconfiguration of the mandates system, Laughlin asserted that his system would truly uplift civilization. Nonetheless, he was not entirely opposed to the imperial order which the mandates system upheld. Laughlin felt that

¹²¹ Ibid., 26.

imperial systems were an effective model for world government, writing: “Although the motives and methods of the contemplated future World Government and those of the ancient and present empires are very far apart still, all things considered, their governmental tasks are of comparable order.”¹²² Instead, his gripe with both ancient and modern empires were their negligence of the civilizing mission. Specifically, Laughlin stated that:

although there is a close resemblance in certain administrative tasks between the past empires and the future World Government, still there is this fundamental difference in motive: Exploitation by the central conquering state has always played the major role in imperial policy, whereas, in the future World Government, exploitation must be made to give way to mutual benefit for all constituent elements.¹²³

Laughlin’s phrasing of mutual benefit speaks directly to the civilizing mission or the mandate system’s “sacred trust of civilization.” He believed that the organization of his World Government would abandon exploitation in favor of the betterment of the world.

To illustrate how he believed this process could occur, it is first necessary to map out his representational distribution system. Laughlin’s World Governmental legislative branch (see below), which he projected could be put into effect in 1930, would consist of 514 World Senators. The continental distribution was as follows: Europe 233 senators, Asia 105, North America 104, Africa 16, Australasia 14, South America 42. The number of senators given to each continent was based upon how many sovereign nations were recognized in each. For example, while Laughlin characterized Europe as having thirty-eight sovereign nations, Africa was only given three. Moreover, (as discussed in chapter one) certain countries were given more senators based on how significant he found them to be in the world. Specifically, fifty senators were given to China and thirty-four to Japan, meaning that eighty-four out of Asia’s 105 senators belonged to only two countries. Likewise, the three nations of Germany, Great Britain, and France were

¹²² Ibid., 6-7.

¹²³ Ibid., 8.

given 110 senators to themselves. Finally, the United States was given ninety out of North America's 104 senators.

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SUMMARY BY CONTINENTS	POTENTIAL REPRESENTATIVE RATING	ADJUSTED FOR SOV- EREIGN STATUS	ALLOTMENT OF WORLD SENATORS 1930
1. Europe.....	.389692	.387921	233
50 Countries			
38 Sovereign Nations: Full Rating			
8 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
4 Mandates: Quarter Rating			
2. Asia.....	.228243	.175090	105
15 Countries			
7 Sovereign Nations: Full Rating			
8 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
3. North America.....	.184775	.173356	104
31 Countries			
11 Sovereign Nations: Full Rating			
3 Dominions: Half Rating			
3 Organized Territories: Half Rating			
14 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
4. Africa.....	.062015	.026197	16
54 Countries			
3 Sovereign Nations: Full Rating			
2 Part of Sovereign Nation: Full Rating			
2 Dominions: Half Rating			
41 Mandates: Quarter Rating			
6 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
5. Australasia.....	.063803	.023156	14
25 Countries			
1 Sovereign Nation: Full Rating			
2 Dominions: Half Rating			
4 Mandates: Quarter Rating			
18 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
6. South America.....	.071500	.070083	42
18 Countries			
11 Sovereign Nations: Full Rating			
7 Colonies: Quarter Rating			
Total for the 193 Countries and Dependencies of the World.....	1.000028	.855803	514
Notes: (1) When all countries become fully self-governing the number 514, representing the total present actual allotment of World Senators, automatically becomes 600. Article VIII, Section 1, Provision 2.			
(2) Complete tables at end of this book give the detailed data and computations upon which these summary tables are based.			
(3) For the more detailed data and computations for the above table see "Table 7, Summary:World" at end of book.			

Figure 4: Harry Laughlin's "Summary of Continents."

Subsequently, Laughlin's distribution system was far from equal, despite his criticism of the League of Nations for its inequity. However, his justifications for his system demonstrate

how he believed his system was different. First and foremost, Laughlin intended for the number of world senators to increase over time, writing: “These relative votes would change with the decades in company with changes in the elements of political importance. With future development in World civilization the distribution of voice by continents, under the proposed schedule, would, beyond doubt, tend toward greater equality than now exists.”¹²⁴ As seen in his “Summary of Continents,” he stated that “when all countries become fully self-governing the number 514...automatically becomes 600.”¹²⁵ Henceforth, Laughlin believed that over time, each Continental Province and World Territory would eventually become a self-sustaining State, with a larger amount of representation.

Still, this begs the question of why Laughlin was so confident in his government’s ability to complete the civilizing mission. The answer lies in a significant difference between Laughlin’s World Government and the League of Nations’ mandate system: the classification of World Territories. Because World Territories would be governed by the World Government itself, rather than by an individual State, Laughlin assumed that this would eliminate the exploitation associated with the imperial order. Through World Governmental supervision and guidance, he believed that supposed less advanced nations could become civilized, without the threat of exploitation. For example, he was extremely optimistic of Africa’s future under his World Government, writing:

The Union of South Africa is, by far, the most promising country for growth into the Continental Government of Africa. This Union represents the Africa of the future. In this Continent a modern civilization is growing northward from the Cape and the rich contributions of ancient culture are moving southward from Egypt and North Africa. No one doubts the commonality of the continental interests which have often expressed themselves in the ambitions of the French for a Trans-Saharan Railway and by the English in their Cape-to-Cairo project. But for a long time the main part of Central

¹²⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 106.

Africa, under their proposed Instrument would undoubtedly be made up of World Territories.¹²⁶

According to Laughlin, colonial Africa showed promise for its continent, and he applauded imperial France and England's efforts. Like with Britain's intrusion into southern Africa, Laughlin was confident that Central Africa could emulate its northern and southern neighbors under World Governmental supervision, but in due time.

Similarly, Laughlin's world government operated off the notion of what he called "Continental Interests." In addition to nation-states and international government, Laughlin believed that each continent should also have federal governmental institutions. It would be these institutions that governed the second-class Continental Provinces. Moreover, his continental interests were based on the ethos of separation. Specifically, Laughlin wrote that "the world is an immense group of diverse nations, races, and cultures, so that for most countries it is a long step from the individual nation to the World as a political unit."¹²⁷ Accordingly, continental governments would be intermediaries between nation-states and the higher World Government, but more importantly, continental governments would keep diverse nations, races, and cultures as separate entities.

Therefore, with World Governmental supervision over territories, as well as more localized control associated with Continental Governments and their Provinces, Laughlin's government wholly embodied the civilizing mission. While it was essential to keep diverse groups separate from one another, both the World and Continental Governments would act as effective supervisors of the uncivilized, according to Laughlin. However, there was one final, but

¹²⁶ Ibid., 89.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 86.

crucial, element of his governmental proposal which would ensure that not only would nations become civilized, but also, the quality of their citizenry would improve.

The decisive factor in Laughlin's proposal was one that the League of Nations discredited altogether: eugenic policy. As discussed in chapter one, Laughlin's governmental proposal was rampant with eugenic principles. Still, the eugenic policy embedded within his proposal was not only his attempt to codify international eugenics, but it was also his foolproof method of correcting the mistakes made by the League.

The most important eugenic policy included within Laughlin's proposal refers to the earlier discussion of sterilization and curtailing the spread of the feeble-minded. In his section, "The Biological Aspects of World Government," Laughlin warns his readers, writing: "Races and nations will continue to come into existence, to specialize, to rise, to culminate, to decay and to die, but human welfare demands that these essential biological processes be guided by fair competition under law and not left to chance, anarchy, nor to military conquest."¹²⁸ His warning speaks to the League's inability to promote eugenic advancement within nations, leaving them open to danger and potential warfare. He thereby directly connects this to the civilizing mission:

Civilization must always treasure above all else the biological values—that is the hereditary endowments—of its human stocks. In the future one of the principle constructive functions of World opinion will be to nurture the several races of mankind, and to secure to all peoples, under fair competition, an equal opportunity for equitable expression and vigorous racial development.¹²⁹

Again, Laughlin implicitly references the inequity of the League and its negligence of racial advancement. Mirroring the language of his own "Eugenics Tree," Laughlin asserts that his World Government would lead to the advancement of all peoples.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 168.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 172.

Moreover, he specifically states the eugenic policies which would lead to this advancement. He states that:

If human civilization is to advance mankind must make wise mate-selections among and must breed abundantly from the best of its family-stocks—the strongest physically, the wisest mentally, the most talented and the most courageous and honest—and it must forbid reproduction by the inferior, the dullest and the weakest stocks of every nation and race.¹³⁰

Although Laughlin does not utilize the exact language of sterilization, he asserts that inferior stocks should be forbidden from breeding. Likewise, Laughlin is writing during 1923, prior to the Buck v. Bell case and the proliferation of sterilization policy internationally. It is likely that if he were writing at a later date, he would have explicitly included the language of sterilization.

At the time of writing, Laughlin had recently published his infamous *Sterilization in the United States* with the help of Chief Justice Olson, and he would soon reap the benefits of its dissemination. He had also already experienced first-hand the internationalizing power of eugenics through International Congresses and Commissions. He had witnessed the exchange of information during Congresses and the international collaboration during Commissions and would shortly view the ability of sterilization policy to transcend national boundaries. Both Laughlin and all his fellow proponents of the communal creed of eugenics understood that their movement was wide-reaching and functioned to advance the human race, regardless of national boundaries.

At the same time, Laughlin had observed from afar the world's first experiment in international government with the League of Nations. He had watched as the United States chose to abstain from joining the League and took note of its inefficiencies. In response, Laughlin felt

¹³⁰ Ibid., 172.

confident that his experiences with international eugenics equipped him with the tools to advance the League. Despite all of his critiques, Laughlin recognized its importance, stating that:

The general plan or form of the League of Nations was inspired largely by Woodrow Wilson who had great faith in federal democracy. Although the specific formula failed in its immediate purpose, Wilson's work will constitute a brilliant and credible chapter when the history of the political organization of the World is written.¹³¹

Nonetheless, Laughlin viewed the application of eugenic principles as the next chapter in the international government's history. In Laughlin's words, "Good work done by the older races and cultures is not lost; it is picked up by younger and more vigorous units where the older and more decrepit human stocks left off. As it is with races and cultures, so it is with the art of government."¹³² According to Laughlin, the League of Nations was a good start, but it was now his turn to pick up where it had left off, therefore advancing both world government and humanity.

However, Laughlin's aspirations for a eugenic world government would be discarded, and his work in eugenics would soon come to a close. As the Second World War began, the Eugenics Record Office would close its doors, leaving Laughlin without a job. The same year, Laughlin suffered a series of seizures due to none other than hereditary epilepsy, a condition that Laughlin classified as a criterion for forced sterilization. This epileptic episode would force him to return to a quaint life in his small town of Kirksville, Missouri.

Harry Hamilton Laughlin would die before the war's end, in January 1943 at age sixty-two. He left behind only his wife Pansy, since the couple never had children, despite his declaration of its importance. Moreover, his devotion to the international eugenics movement and its ability to enact global social change would also prove fruitless, as eugenics would become heavily associated with the horrors of the Holocaust, leading to its eventual demise. His

¹³¹ Ibid., 149-150.

¹³² Ibid., 172.

years of work dedicated to a eugenic world government would go largely unnoticed by both those of the past and present, and his chapter in international government would ultimately go unwritten.

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