



# Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

## JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism

Iasi, Romania

[www.csesm.org](http://www.csesm.org)

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# IMMIGRATION AND EUGENICS, PAST AND PRESENT

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## Abstract

The transnational eugenics movement that flourished during the early twentieth century is often thought to have ceased with knowledge of the Nazi reliance on and use of its underlying concepts to justify the extermination of various groups. Although scholarship has extensively explored the short- and long-term consequences of many eugenic strategies, including marriage restrictions, enhanced public health measures, and involuntary sterilization, little attention has been paid to the use of immigration measures as a eugenic strategy. This article addresses this gap, noting how the interplay of law, science, and politics supported the use of such measures. The article concludes with a discussion of the practical and ethical issues arising from continuing reliance on eugenic-inspired immigration provisions.

**Key words:** Disability, eugenics, immigration, national origin, race

## Introduction

Francis Galton, concerned with the higher rate of reproduction among degenerates—those who were labeled as such based on their social characteristics and mental abilities—compared to healthy persons, who restricted their rate of reproduction, suggested that the science of eugenics could correct this perceived imbalance (Galton, 1907, 1908). “Eugenics,” a word derived from the Greek roots for “good” and “origin,” came to signify the science of breeding a better race (Chung, 2002; De Courcy Ward, 1910; Weindling, 2021).

Eugenic theory posited that the course of human evolution was governed by genetic/biological determinism and, therefore, could be self-directed (Selden, 2005). Proponents of eugenic theory attributed not only the perceived deterioration in population quality to the differential birth rate among those deemed to be degenerate, but also argued that such groups were responsible for then-occurring social problems (Allen, 1997). Not surprisingly, biological metaphors were utilized to shape social policies, including those relating to immigration, segregation, and sterilization (see Ellis, 1912).

The transnational eugenics movement openly flourished during the period from 1900 to 1940. The International Commission of Eugenics, which was established in 1924, consisted of fifteen full commission members from Germany, Great Britain, the United States, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, and Argentina. An additional seven countries were eligible for cooperation: Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Australia, and New Zealand. As Nancy Ordover noted, “[e]ugenics ... played a pivotal role in nationalist and racist enterprises, as practice and as theoretical prism, an ideology in service of other ideologies” even as it was considered a science (Ordover, 2003, p. xv).

Eugenic approaches comprised both “negative” and “positive” practices. “Negative” practices, designed to discourage the growth of groups and reproduction among individuals deemed to be unfit or “feeble-minded,” often assumed the form of immigration restrictions, anti-miscegenation/segregation laws and the involuntary sterilization of the “feeble-minded,” who were most often poor, female, and a member of a minority or immigrant group—and in Nazi-controlled territories, the form of “euthanasia” and extermination of unwanted, “defective” groups (Bergin, 2016; David, Fleischhacker, & Höhn, 1988; Perlin, 2018;

Pernick, 2002; Selden, 2005). “Positive” measures included a focus on improving public health and sanitation and greater attention to the welfare of pregnant women, children, and the family (Fairchild, 2003; Leonard, 2003; Pernick, 1997). The eugenics movement was driven by a wide range of factors, which often varied depending upon the specific country—economic and social instability, increasing industrialization threatening employment and security, an increased faith in science and medical experts, a belief that rational scientific planning could enhance efficiency, and power struggles and rivalries between eugenicists and other health practitioners (Leonard, 2003; Pernick, 1997).

While the extant literature has examined in detail diverse nations’ reliance on control of reproduction, marriage, and death by execution as mechanisms of eugenics (See, e.g., Dikötter, 1998; Reilly, 2015; Selden, 2005), significantly less attention has been paid to the formulation and implementation of immigration policies as a eugenic strategy. Eugenic immigration measures were designed to exclude eugenically undesirable classes of persons, deport those considered dysgenic who were already present in the country, and encourage those with eugenically valued traits to enter. This manuscript addresses this gap by examining the connections between eugenic “science” and policy, immigration law, and immigration policy. Because it is beyond the scope of this manuscript to examine eugenic immigration measures in all countries in which they were instituted, this article focuses on the United States, France, Hungary, Romania, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, Argentina, and Brazil, with a very brief discussion of eugenics in Japan and China. Particular emphasis is placed on the restrictions developed by the United States, which was considered to be a forerunner in the development and implementation of eugenic immigration restrictions (Bucur, 2002; Marinescu, 1936; Miller, 2020). Because a number of immigration provisions that originated during the eugenics movement have been carried forward to the present day, the final discussion addresses the implications of continuing reliance on these provisions.

## **Immigration in the Context of Eugenics**

### *The United States*

From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States received approximately three-fifths of the world’s immigrants (Lee, 2019). During this same period of time, the country was also a “nation of xenophobia,” deporting more immigrants than any other nation—more than 55 million (Lee, 2019, p. 3). Indeed, the country was wary of almost every group of foreigners (Salins, 1997). Although xenophobia is often believed to be associated with economic, political, and social crises, with war and rapid demographic change, and is often thought to be an exception to the U.S. tradition of welcoming others, it has been asserted that xenophobia is an ideology that is a “constant and defining feature of American life” that perceives all foreigners as a threat to the nation (Lee, 2019, pp. 7-8). Race, once understood to encompass not only skin color but also geographical origin, religion, and class (Barkan, 1992), was perhaps the single most important factor that determined which groups would be targeted for discrimination generally and in the immigration context specifically.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, eugenicists took their cues from the language of animal breeding and relied on the concept of natural selection to justify the necessity of selecting human stock (Baynton, 2016). Eugenics was conceived of as a national project and eugenicists conceived of themselves as humanitarians who sought to alleviate the suffering of those who were less fortunate. Accordingly, immigration restrictions were seen as a potentially effective measure to improve the moral and physical well-being of Americans while simultaneously excluding those with any defect or disability. It was believed that individuals with defects were hereditarily predisposed to commit crime; the exclusion of those with defects would limit crime. Eugene Talbot, a Chicago surgeon and

professor of medicine, opined, “[C]rime is hereditary, a tendency which, in most cases, is associated with bodily defect, such as spinal deformities, stammering or other imperfect speech, club-foot, cleft-palate, hare-lip, deformed jaws and teeth, deaf-mutism, congenital blindness, paralysis, epilepsy, and scrofula” (Talbot, 1898). Selection would be utilized to screen out those with defects; restriction would reduce the level of immigration, especially that of specified groups. Both approaches were deemed necessary in order to prevent eugenically unfit persons from entering the United States (Benton-Cohen, 2018).

The first nation- and race-based law in the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act, was introduced in 1882 by western senators, who claimed that Chinese racial characteristics presented a threat to “Anglo-Saxon civilization” and, one senator claimed, Chinese persons were more like “beasts” than humans (Congressional Record, 1882). The extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was due to expire in 1892, prompted further discussion about Chinese persons’ characteristics, with Senator Felton of California claiming that they had no conscience and further remarking that “[W]e would not permit the purity and sweetness of our national waters to be contaminated or polluted by the mingling of its pure streams with the impure from any source whatsoever” (Gossett, 1997, p. 49). The proposed extension, known as the Geary Act, passed despite opposition from some members of Congress. Two decades later, then-president Calvin Coolidge would amplify these sentiments, claiming that “[Q]uality of mind and body suggests that observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law” (Coolidge, 1921, p. 13).

Concerns related to the quality of immigrants and its perceived decline led to the formation of the Immigration Restriction League in 1894. Co-founded by the climatologist Robert De Courcy Ward, the lawyer Charles Warren, and the lawyer Prescott Hall, the organization championed immigration restrictions as a means of ensuring a higher quality of immigrant, claiming that the newer immigrants were inferior to Anglo-Saxon stock and the older immigrants from northwestern European nations (Lee, 2019). Hall and the Immigration Restriction League promoted the implementation of a literacy test for all immigrants, claiming that illiteracy was linked to “other undesirable qualities” such as crime, and a literacy test was needed to separate desirable from undesirable persons (Lee, 2019, p. 127). Although Congress passed such a bill in 1897, it was vetoed by then-president Grover Cleveland. The bill later passed in 1917, over Woodrow Wilson’s veto (Benton-Cohen, 2019).

De Courcy Ward argued at least as early as 1904 that those coming from Southern and Eastern Europe could not be assimilated into the mainstream population and that “a mixture with the blood of the ‘new’ immigration ‘can have only a bad effect,’” (De Courcy Ward, 1904, p. 237, quoting Henry Gannett). According to De Courcy, the immigration question

is a race question, pure and simple. Many of our recent immigrants, not discouraged by the problem of maintaining high standards of living with their many children, are replacing native Americans (De Courcy Ward, 1904, p. 236).

He later queried rhetorically,

How far do our present immigration laws enable us to keep out those who are physically, mentally and morally undesirable for parenthood; whose coming here will tend to produce an inferior rather than a superior American race; who are eugenically unfit for race culture? ... It will not help to reduce the number of our native degenerates if we admit alien degenerates. National eugenics means the prevention of breeding the unfit native, no less than the prevention

of the admission, and of the breeding after admission, of the unfit alien (De Courcy Ward, 1910, p. 63).

Jews and Catholics were perceived as dangerous (Lee, 2019). Italians, racialized as primitive and prone to violence, were referred to as the “Chinese of Europe” (Lee, 2019, pp. 124-125).

Madison Grant opined similarly, asserting that race was an immutable biological reality that determined each individual’s disposition, behavior, and physical and intellectual abilities. Accordingly, he argued, humans could be categorized into groups by race and these groups ordered hierarchically based on their intellect, morality, and abilities; whites were presumed to be superior to others. Grant assumed that categories of immigrants that lacked moral and physical fitness, such as imbeciles, polygamists, and those harboring contagious diseases, were more likely to include individuals from inferior and unassimilable races who would likely drain the country’s economic strength and resources and, therefore, should be excluded (Lee, 2019). This was an era during which the boundaries of what constituted whiteness were particularly contested, nuanced, and shifting, depending upon the specific context, when the whiteness of Italians, Jews, and Armenians was subject to dispute (Jacobson, 1998).

It was not only eugenicists who feared Jewish and Catholic immigrants, but Protestant clergy as well. As early as 1885, the Congregationalist clergy and leader of the Social Gospel movement Josiah Strong had warned,

Immigration brings unquestioned benefits, but these do not concern our argument. It complicates almost every home missionary problem and furnishes the soil which feeds the life of several of the most noxious growths of our civilization. I have, therefore, dwelt at some length upon its future that we may the more accurately measure the dangers which threaten us (Strong, 1885, p. 40).

Despite the Social Gospel’s call for social justice, Strong argued that Anglo-Saxons constituted a superior race and that other races required civilizing. Years later, the Protestant minister Reverend Frederick Lynch labeled southern and eastern European immigrants as superstitious and childlike with respect to religion (Lynch, 1912).

The solution, De Courcy argued, could only be a thorough medical examination at the port of entry of each foreigner seeking admission to the country, the placement of limitations on the number of such individuals who could be examined on any given day, the imposition of fines on steamship companies that brought eugenically unfit individuals to the country, and to “see to it that our immigration laws are always enforced, and are amended along lines which shall give us the best stock which other countries can send us” (De Courcy Ward, 1910, p. 57).

The 1907 immigration law provided for the exclusion of persons who were deemed to be eugenically unfit mentally: idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, persons who were insane during the previous five years, persons who had ever had one or more attacks of insanity at any time, and persons who the examining surgeon certified as being mentally defective in such a way that their ability to earn a living would be affected. Based on a presumed connection between tuberculosis and dependency, the law also prohibited the admission of immigrants diagnosed with tuberculosis (Fairchild, 2003).

Additional immigration restrictions as a eugenic strategy received the support of at least some members of the medical profession. The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* quoted the author Henry James Forman approvingly:

The dual aim of eugenics is to check the reproduction of the unfit and to encourage the propagation of the fit .... There is ... one effective means to the

desired end in this country which lies at hand. It is the further restriction of immigration .... [T]he exclusion of the undervitalized and undermoralized aliens now crowding into this country would contribute powerfully to conserve the national vigor (Editor, 1912, p. 63).

Various medical organizations, including the American Medico-Psychological Association, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, the New York Psychiatric Society, the Committee of One Hundred on National Health, the New York State Hospital Commission, and the Immigration Committee of the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders' Association, endorsed on the basis of eugenics the expansion of the classes of excluded persons to include those with chronic alcoholism and those who were deemed to be morally or economically unfit (De Courcy Ward, 1916; Thielman, 1985).

Jeremiah Jenks, appointed by then-president Theodore Roosevelt to the Dillingham Immigration Commission in 1907, was a strong supporter of centralized federal power (Benton-Cohen, 2018). He was also a strong supporter of immigration restrictions, viewing the U.S. immigration policy as a strategy to project governmental power both internationally and domestically. He believed, as well, that African Americans, women, and many immigrants were not suited to democracy and required a period of tutelage. Additionally, he cautioned, immigrants should be barred from suffrage in areas where prejudice might demoralize U.S. citizens or provoke violence.

Concerns regarding the effects of immigration on the quality of the American populace increased with the advent of World War I. Eugenicists warned that countries would send their strongest and brightest into battle to face certain death or injury, leaving those with lesser physical, mental, and moral standards to emigrate to the U.S. (De Courcy, 1916; Schneider, 1990b) Only more restrictive immigration policies could save the nation:

A policy of national eugenics, for the United States as for every other nation, means the prevention of the breeding of the unfit native. But for us it means far more than that. For us it means, in addition, the prevention of the immigration of the unfit alien .... By selecting our immigrants, through proper legislation, we can pick out the best specimens of each race to be our own fellow-citizens and to be the parents of our future citizens (De Courcy, 1916, p. 270).

The lawyer and eugenicist Madison Grant launched particularly vitriolic charges against immigrants as he implored Congress to adopt even more restrictive immigration provisions. Speaking of the years following the Civil War, Grant opined:

The transportation lines advertised America as a land flowing with milk and honey, and the European governments took the opportunity to unload upon careless, wealthy, and hospitable America the sweeping of their jails and asylums. The result was that the new immigration, while it still included many strong elements from the north of Europe, contained a large and increasing number of the weak, the broken, and the mentally crippled of all races drawn from the lowest stratum of the Mediterranean basin and the Balkans, together with hordes of the wretched, submerged populations of the Polish Ghettos (Grant, 1916, pp. 79-80).

Grant's concerns and sentiments mirrored those of the physician Alfred Paul Karl Eduard Schultz, who had immigrated to the U.S. from Germany in about 1888 at the age of ten. Writing a decade earlier than Grant, referring to the 1903 immigration of individuals from Austro-Hungary, Russia, and Italy, Schultz claimed,

The influx of those races cannot be without consequences. The surgeons at the ports of immigration observe that the present immigrants have a much higher percent of loathsome diseases, and that, in general physique, it is very much inferior to the immigration of thirty years ago. The history of the races now coming proves beyond doubt their mental inferiority to the races that immigrated before the advent of Slavs and Latins. If immigration is still a blessing, then the sturdy Northern races are in every way preferable to the Southern and Southeastern débris of races that have been. The free admission of these latter prevents the coming of the former, for if content to compete with Slavs and Latins, the Northerners need not migrate as far as the United States. Much more important than the economic effects of immigration are the racial effects of immigration (Schultz, 1906, pp. 254-255).

He continued,

The hordes of Southern Europeans are driving the American toward the setting sun. Many settlers, in every way more desirable than the newcomers, are leaving the United States. Emigrants from the United States are settling Manitoba, Alberta, Assinibola, and Saskatchewan. It is a leak at the top. In New England the Anglo-Saxon is dying out. Many are leaving and many are deteriorating (Schultz, 1906, p. 276).

During this same period of time, psychologists found themselves able to attain only relatively low academic status and were often critiqued by members of other professions (Tucker, 1994). The integration of psychology and eugenics provided a pathway forward, as psychologists developed mental tests for blacks and immigrants. The psychologist Henry H. Goddard visited Ellis Island in 1911, where he proceeded to display the use of the IQ test as a measure of intending immigrants' eugenic suitability. He concluded from his later demonstrations that more than three-quarters of each of four groups were "feeble-minded": Jews, Hungarians, Russians, and Italians. Ralph Pintner, a professor at Columbia University Teachers College, later reviewed these studies and concluded:

Mental ability is inherited. The population of the United States is largely recruited by immigration. The country cannot afford to admit year after year large numbers of mentally inferior people, who will continue to multiply and lower the level of intelligence of the whole nation. Our tests, although inconclusive, would seem to indicate that the level of certain racial groups coming to this country is below that of the nation at large. Increased vigilance is, therefore, required (Pintner, 1923, p. 361).

Robert M. Yerkes, the president of the American Psychological Association, concluded similarly from his later (poorly conducted) study of the intelligence levels of army recruits: finding that those who hailed from northern European countries were more intelligent than those who came from southern and eastern European countries, he called for enhanced immigration restrictions (Yerkes, 1923).

The 1917 immigration law reflected increased restrictions through the addition of constitutional psychopathic inferiority as a ground of exclusion. The eugenicist Harry Laughlin cajoled Congress to expand the restrictions even further, arguing that although imbeciles and idiots could be easily detected, morons were more difficult to identify (Laughlin, 1920). The exclusion of such "defectives" was seen as critical to the national survival and preservation of the American race (Baynton, 2016).

The success of the 1921 New York-based Second International Congress on Eugenics provided the impetus for the formation of the American Eugenics Society, which was spearheaded by the lawyer and eugenicist Madison Grant, the educator and eugenicist Harry Laughlin, the economist and statistician Irving Fisher, the eugenicist Charles Davenport, the evolutionary biologist Henry Crampton, and the paleontologist Henry Fairfield Osborn. Despite the objections of many eugenicists who initially feared that cooperation with the birth control movement would adversely affect their public relations, by 1928 the American Eugenics Society included birth control as well as immigration restrictions in their pamphlets promoting eugenic control of the population (Rosen, 2004).

### *European Nations*

The eugenics movement flourished in a number of European countries, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Most, if not all, of these countries ascribed to a belief in genetic determinism and that to allow those who were eugenically unfit to reproduce would be the height of folly (Hansen, 2005). Involuntary sterilization of the eugenically unfit was seen as the optimal solution to the perceived problem. Some countries, however, also focused their attention on incoming immigrants and the potential impact of these foreigners on the native population.

France. The eugenics movement in France has been characterized as a reactionary effort to reverse population decline and perceived population degeneration (Schneider, 1990b). France was concerned at the end of the nineteenth century about the economic growth of Britain, Germany, and the United States, fearing that it would continue to be economically surpassed by these rival nations. During this time, both the stature of the medical profession and the populace's concern with health increased. Physicians utilized new terms to describe the symptoms that they witnessed in their patients, leading to a sense that the population's quality was in decline. French writers, including Émile Zola, depicted the idea of population degeneration in their novels (Schneider, 1990b). The key to regeneration, it was thought, was eugenics. Initially, the three major groups supportive of eugenics—Malthusians, natalists, and eugenicists—focused their attention on control of reproduction, marriage, and disease, particularly alcoholism, tuberculosis, and sexually transmitted infections.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the notion of the “French race” arose from the fusion of conceptualizations of race and nationalism. In essence, individuals defined themselves in national terms, belonging to a specific ethnic group and to a distinct nation/nationality (Brubaker, 2004). According to the scholar Elisa Camiscioli, the origin of the “French race” coincided with the onset of mass immigration, preparations for revenge against Germany, and the expansion of France's colonial empire (Camiscioli, 2009). In the midst of this mass immigration, efforts were needed, it was thought, to distinguish white Europeans from colonial subjects, to uphold the purity of the white race, and to ensure the continuing homogeneity of the French body.

Pronatalists suggested that only foreigners with high birth rates should be selected for immigration to France, particularly the “buffer populations” of white Europeans, such as Spaniards, Italians, and Poles, who were thought to have high birth rates and traditional moral values. It was believed that Spaniards and Italians could be assimilated in France, despite their lesser evolution in comparison with the French. More “distant” whites, such as Slavs, eastern European Jews, non-Arabs from North America, and Levantines were deemed to be white, but with problematic physical, moral, and intellectual characteristics, and a reduced aptitude for productive labor that differed from other whites; as a result, assimilation would be possible only after multiple generations (Camiscioli, 2009). Additionally, marriage between French women and foreigners was seen as a necessary arrangement in order to

combat depopulation. As an increased focus came to be placed on the labor process, the emphasis shifted to encourage the immigration of foreigners deemed to be physically fit and disciplined. France's racial hierarchy was then superimposed on the labor process.

During the period from 1840 to 1914, France's liberal immigration policy was congruent with its economic policy of laissez-faire capitalism. Industries frequently recruited foreign workers and migration was generally unregulated, based on the assumption that both goods and workers should circulate freely and that unrestricted immigration would facilitate the provision of labor whenever and wherever it was needed. This seeming openness to immigration did not, however, extend to the Roma population. In 1912, France introduced a requirement that all migrants (*gens du voyage*) obtain and carry with them an identity card that included their photograph and fingerprint (*carte anthropométrique*), a requirement that reinforced the already-existing marginalization of Roma in French society (Hubert, 1999). Opponents of laissez-faire capitalism believed that a strict immigration policy was necessary to decrease competition for jobs within France's borders (Levasseur, 1926). Ostensibly, a shortage of labor in one nation would be offset by a surplus in others.

The years following World War I brought about both a change in perspective and mass migration to France; the 1920s has been referred to as "the most important watershed in immigration to France in the past 100 years" (Schneider, 1990b, p. 233). The mass migration was attributable to several factors, including the restrictive immigration quotas implemented by the United States, revolutions in Eastern Europe, a labor shortage in France, and concerns about the country's loss of lives during the war (Schneider, 1990a, b). The general secretary of the December 1922 meeting of the French Eugenics Society, Georges Schreiber, lamented, "[T]here are eugenically undesirable elements among those who flock daily toward us" (quoted in Schneider, 1990b, p. 214).

The creation of the Comité des enfants immigrés was announced during the May 1923 meeting of the eugenics society. This committee was charged with the responsibility of recruiting young persons from outside of France and placing them with farm families in order to address the inadequate number of agricultural workers that had resulted from the war. It was assumed initially that these individuals would easily assimilate into French culture because of their age. Several individuals at the meeting argued that individuals brought into the country through the program should be screened on an individual physical and moral basis, but also to ensure that they were of a eugenically appropriate race. At a later meeting of the French Eugenics Society, also in 1923, the pediatrician and co-founder of the Society Eugène Apert suggested that the program ban children of the "black or yellow races" (Schneider, 1990b, p. 215). He further remarked that even immigrants from some white races should be closely scrutinized because they represented a middle level between the banned black and Asian immigrants, who were lowest on the hierarchy of humans, and Belgian, Italian, and Spanish individuals, who were to be welcomed into France.

By the 1930s, French eugenicists had made immigration restrictions a priority in their agenda, a move that was, at least in part, a response to the loss of more than one million men during World War I, the postwar influx of workers and refugees to France, and the economic depression (Cross, 1983; Millet, 1938; Schneider, 1990a). By 1931, 11 percent of France's workforce consisted of foreigners and, in some industries, more than one-third of workers were foreigners (Cross, 1983; Millet, 1938). The country's economic decline in the early 1930s exacerbated fears of degeneration: lower class individuals were worse off biologically due to poverty and an increase in the number of poor as a result of immigration would lead to faster biological decline (Schneider, 1990b). Immigration could provide a temporary solution to France's problem of a declining birth rate. The work force became "racialized" and "scientific" theory was applied to various incoming groups. The geographer Georges Mauco argued that unskilled foreign labor was needed to perform jobs that the French refused to do

(Mauco, 1932). William Oualid, a former attaché of the Labor Ministry and director of the Foreign Labor Service agreed, noting that individuals have the right to migrate, but that French citizens must be protected from the unassimilable (Oualid, 1930). He rejected the exclusion of individuals on the basis of race, nationality, or religion, but indicated that receiving nations have the right to protect their physical integrity, economic equilibrium, and social standard.

Accordingly, France encouraged the immigration of young strong males to invigorate the country's population, which had been debilitated by war. The young men, who were analogized to a blood transfusion for the nation, most frequently worked in heavy industry, including mining, handling, and transport industries, work that had been rejected by most French persons (Camiscioli, 2009). However, because younger men might be more prone to alcohol use and more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases, they often received shortly after their arrival in the country various messages stressing the importance of marriage. It was said that immigration of quality had been replaced by immigration of quantity.

Physicians and anthropologists believed that *métissage*—race mixing—between whites was the only permissible mixing because it was genetically sound. Foreigners were to be transformed into French persons through immersion in the French language and community. French females could transmit French culture to their offspring. Belief in the Lamarckian theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics between generations helped to dispel some anxieties regarding the potential for foreigners' adaptability.

Not all foreigners, though, were seen as equally desirable for the nation's regeneration. Rather, they were to be carefully selected in accordance with eugenic principles, meaning attention to possible defects in mental, physical, and moral traits; inclusion of such defective persons would ultimately lead, it was believed, to racial degeneration. The maintenance of whiteness was critical (Camiscioli, 2009). *Métissage* between whites and either Africans or Asians was not and could not be permitted because it would lead to race degeneration. Accordingly, the immigration of Africans and Asians to France was to be allowed only if no other groups that could meet the country's economic and military needs could be enticed to immigrate. *Métissage* with Belgians, Spaniards, and Italians was permitted because such individuals were believed to have the ability to assimilate quickly. The foreigner's capacity to assimilate—the concept of *immigration sanitaire*—soon came to be seen as a medical problem, akin to animal cross breeding.

A debate soon emerged as to the nature of any *métissage*: whether there are superior and inferior races such that all mixing must be prohibited or whether all races were equal and the French race resulted from the mixture of French blood with the blood of Latins, Celts, and Ligurians over centuries. Ultimately, the latter position prevailed and the French Academy of Medicine concluded that only foreigners deemed to be ancestrally close to the French, i.e., Belgians, Canadians, and Italians, should be permitted to immigrate (Camiscioli, 2009).

Immigration was a prominent issue at the later First Congress of Latin Eugenics (1er Congrès Latin d'Eugénique), held at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris in August 1937, under the patronage of the French Ministry of Public Health. The first cluster of issues to be addressed fell under the heading of Miscegenation and Immigration (*Métissage et immigration*). René Martial, a French physician and anthropologist, opposed racial mixing and uncontrolled immigration, arguing that such policies would weaken the racial vitality of the French nation (Martial, 1937, pp. 16-35). Martial was particularly concerned with the effects of racial mixing between blacks and whites and with the migration into France of whites from other nations, such as Poland and Russia. Martial argued that although uncontrolled immigration would undermine France's racial biological strength and jeopardize the nation's future, some forms of racial crossings (*le bon métissage*) could be beneficial (Martial, 1934).

Martial further claimed that a scientific basis—blood groups—underlay his ideas relating to both racial mixing and immigration and proposed that individuals with blood type B be barred from entering France (Schneider, 1990b). Although earlier research had indicated that the blood group distribution among Jews of a specific country was similar to the natives of that country, e.g., the blood group distribution of Berlin Jews was similar to the distribution among Germans in Germany, Martial insisted that intending Jewish immigrants to France were to be especially scrutinized because their psychology influenced their biology (Schneider, 1990b). According to Martial, individuals with blood groups A or O were to face fewer immigration restrictions, but the immigration of those with blood group B—primarily Jews and individuals from Eastern Europe—should be restricted (Schneider, 1990a). In 1942, he argued further that massive *métissage* would lead to severe consequences such that there would exist only a bastard race (*race bâtarde*), rather than French race (*race française*) (Martial, 1942, p. 46). His views regarding blood type and racial mixing met with fierce criticism and opposition, but nevertheless gained popular currency both in France and elsewhere. A 1938 work by Jean-Marie Baron entitled *La grande découverte: Les juifs et le sang B* (*The great discovery: Jews and B blood*) relied extensively on Martial's writings and claimed that social ills were attributable to type B blood (Baron, 1938).

André Langeron, a military officer, was similarly opposed to immigration into France, claiming that racially foreign elements had already contaminated the country as a result of the Third Republic's encouragement of "coloured labourers" and colonial soldiers to settle in France after World War I (Turda and Gillette, 2014, p. 221). Langeron claimed that the mental aptitude of members of these groups was inferior to that of the European race.

Despite the vigorous demands by eugenicists for the imposition of eugenic measures, including not only immigration restrictions but also provisions related to premarital examinations and the implementation of venereal disease laws, they were not implemented until after 1940, during the Nazi occupation of France.

Hungary. It has been suggested that Hungary experienced two waves of eugenic thought (Szamosi, 2021). The first wave, which reached its hiatus during the 1910s, reflected concerns with the degeneration of the country's population and the Hungarian race. The second wave, which stretched from the interwar period through the 1940s, reflected a "racist eugenic discourse" directed predominantly towards the Jews (Szamosi, 2021).

Concerns regarding the degeneration of the Hungarian population were voiced as early as December 1900, when the physician Mór Kende proclaimed at the meeting of the National Association of Public Health (Országos Közegészségügyi Egyesület) that the human race was beset with widespread degeneration (Turda, 2014). As in other countries, eugenics was seen as a mechanism by which social conditions could be improved through the protection of favored racial qualities and the deterrence or exclusion of individuals and groups that were perceived to be dysgenic or inferior and therefore a threat to the nation. As such, Hungarian eugenics displayed a nationalist character.

The Eugenic Committee of Hungarian Societies (Egyesületközi Fajegészségügye Bizottság) was established in 1914 to popularize eugenics among the general population and to coordinate interactions between eugenicists and the government (Turda, 2014). Prior to the First World War, eugenics focused on medical and social concerns, but following the war, there was an increased emphasis on the protection of the race and the survival of the nation.

The immense mobilization of men during the First World War led to a shortage of labor and a decline in agriculture and industry (Turda, 2009). Eugenicists, such as the neurologist Mihály Lenhossék, the biologist István Apáthy, and the eugenicist Géza von Hoffmann, argued that the war had been dysgenic, that the first individuals called to serve had been the bravest and essentially the best and were, consequently, that portion of the population that had been the first to be decimated, leaving Hungary's "racial vitality"

weakened (Turda, 2014, p. 214). Unlike many eugenicists, Lenhossék decried the hierarchical ranking of races and dissociated eugenics from racial hierarchies. The eugenicist Lajos Méhely argued that war presented an opportunity to foster spiritual and physical renewal, while simultaneously eliminating those who were weak, pale, and nervous, a characterization which was generally understood to refer to Jews (Turda, 2009).

The political elite viewed eugenics as a potential remedy by which to revive Hungary's social and biological situation that resulted from the war (Turda, 2009). Accordingly, the Hungarian Society for Racial Hygiene and Population Policy and the National Welfare Office for Disabled servicemen were established in 1917 in order to facilitate the collaboration of eugenicists, population policy experts, and public health professionals in their efforts to devise race protection and hygienic measures (Turda, 2009, 2015). Hoffman, who became the vice president of the Hungarian Society for Racial Hygiene and Population Policy, championed the implementation of practical measures designed to address endorsed policies, including those related to immigration, emigration, and resettlement (Turda, 2009).

Not surprisingly, the meeting of the Society for Racial Hygiene and Population Policy on April 29, 1918 focused on issues related to immigration, emigration, and repatriation. The conference considered two approaches. The first resembled the American approach, which provided for eugenic inspections based on putative racial classifications. The second strategy more closely mirrored Germany's approach, which provided for the non-admission of individuals of specified races, as well as criminals and those who were considered to be politically dangerous. Hungary considered that individuals suffering from a mental or physical disability, who had a criminal record, or who were poor were to be deemed "not wanted." However, those who were thought to be intelligent and healthy, who had an "impeccable character," and who were hard-working and financially well-endowed were to be welcomed (Turda, 2014, p. 213). Individuals who requested Hungarian citizenship were also assessed according to racial and eugenic criteria.

Hungary's eugenic immigration policy was mirrored by a eugenic rural resettlement policy that was formulated to resettle into rural areas individuals and families that were physically, spiritually and linguistically of the Hungarian race; lacked a criminal record; were of racially good health; and had a predetermined number of children (Turda, 2009, 2014). This resettlement was intended to "recolonize" the country with racially healthy persons and families (Turda, 2009).

Hungary's eugenic strategies continued well into the 1940s, with an emphasis on negative eugenic approaches, such as sterilization, segregation and marriage selection, as well as a ban on marriage between Jews and non-Jews and other anti-Jewish measures (Turda, 2013). Many of these eugenic measures were reflected in the final version of Act XV of 1941. As Turda notes, eugenics, biologized nationalism, and antisemitism, combined to define "certain ethnic, social, and gender groups as 'inferior' and ultimately dangerous to the body of the nation" (Turda, 2013, p. 16).

Romania. It has been suggested that the eugenics movement in Romania served two primary purposes: as a vehicle for middle-class ethnic Romanians to assert increased power over the lower socioeconomic classes, as well as those who were not ethnically Romanian and to build a new model for a healthy Romanian (Bucur, 2002). In contrast to the increasing industrialization that seemed to amplify calls for increased immigration restrictions within the United States and many of the Western European countries, Romania's population was largely agricultural and of low literacy. Additionally, unlike many of the more industrialized countries, the clergy in Romania had served as the custodian of morality; Romania's eugenicists envisioned a movement away from the church to a more secular understanding of right and wrong.

Like the eugenicists of western industrialized nations, many of the Romanian eugenicists sought to discourage interethnic and interracial marriages. The eugenicist Guido Landra claimed that Romania had two racial enemies, the Jews and the Roma, and urged that a solution be found to what he considered to be a crisis (Turda & Gillette, 2014, p. 228). The exclusion of those considered to be dysgenic—Roma, Jews, criminals—was thought to be critical to the development of Romania as a healthy nation.

Enhanced immigration restrictions were presented as one potential solution. The physician Ioan Manliu advocated for the integration of eugenic principles in all areas of public life and lauded the United States for its foresight in implementing restrictive immigration laws (Bucur, 2002). In 1936, the clinician-scientist Gheorghe Marinescu argued that immigration in the context of eugenics required special attention (Marinescu, 1936). Traian Herseni, a sociologist, suggested that the segregation and deportation of these groups would lead to the nation's regeneration and racial purification (Herseni, 1940, 1941). In 1941, Mihai Antonescu, the deputy prime minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, proclaimed the Jews to be an alien race and launched a policy of "ethnic purification" that required their isolation or elimination (Turda & Gillette, 2014, pp. 230-231).

Although deportation of individuals and groups is not often discussed in relation to immigration and eugenics, deportation is very much one facet of an immigration policy. Antisemitism increased in Romania following World War I when, under the Treaty of Versailles, Bessarabia was returned to Romania from Russia and the regions of Bukovina and Transylvania were returned from Austro-Hungary—together with their Jews (Ioanid, 2022). The 1930 census indicated that of the population in each of these regions, Jews constituted 7.2 percent, 10.8 percent, and 10.0 percent, respectively (Ioanid, 2022, p. 4) and only 4.0 percent of the country's total population (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019). However, during 1940, Romania was forced to relinquish Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, southern Dobruja to Bulgaria and, following German and Italian arbitration, to cede northern Transylvania to Hungary, losses that constituted approximately thirty percent of Romania's territory.

Romania formally joined the Axis alliance in November 1940, following the abdication of King Carol II and the assumption of power by General Ion Antonescu and the fascist Iron Guard (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019). After Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, a campaign in which Romania participated, Romania re-annexed Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019).

During the period from 1940 through 1944, the majority of Romania's Jews who were not killed in pogroms were involuntarily "resettled," that is, deported, to transit or arrest camps (Ioanid, 2022). It is important to note that, despite Romania's alliance with Germany, the deportations were carried out on Romania's own initiative, not in response to any orders from Hitler (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, 2004). The deportations occurred in two phases. The first, during the summer and early autumn of 1941, involved the deportation of Jews from rural areas to transit camps and the segregation of urban Jews in ghettos. The second phase occurred during the period from September to November 1941 and involved the deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria.

The number of Jews deported remains unclear. Some of the Jews were deported from villages where they had lived for hundreds of years and their property confiscated (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, 2004). Many of the deported Jews died from typhus, malnutrition, or exposure to cold; others ate human waste and corpses in an effort to survive. Romania's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mihai Antonescu, explained in 1941 that the deportation of Jews and Roma from the regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina were intended to lead to "ethnic freedom" through the "ethnic and

political purification” of the regions (Turda, 2011, p. 347). Additionally, the deportation of Romania’s Jews was effectuated in an effort to effectuate a “national rejuvenation” (International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, 2004, p. 10). The general secretariat of the Council of Ministers in a memorandum dated January 24, 1944 justified the deportations as necessary “to satisfy the honor of the Romanian people” (Ioanid, 2022, p. 236).

### *The British Empire*

Britain. Like the U.S. eugenicists, British eugenicists claimed that a scientific solution could resolve England’s social problems, i.e., the eradication of poverty, crime, and disease (Farrall, 1985). Farrall (1985) has suggested that eugenics ideology was familiar to not only scientists, but also to English periodical readers as early as 1890. The increasing concerns and attention related to “race adulteration” coincided with the growing numbers of immigrants from Eastern Europe, many of whom were Jews, that occurred between 1880 and 1914 (Soloway, 1995, p. 60). However, the approach varied across writers. Some ascribed to Lamarckian theory, holding that characteristics acquired during one’s lifetime could be passed on to subsequent generations. Others adopted germ-theory, which suggested that innate characteristics, but not acquired characteristics, could be inherited. Yet others supported a biometric approach, which referred to the statistical analysis of characteristics on a population basis.

The eugenicist and author Samuel Alexander Kenny Strahan delineated five “laws” of heredity. “Direct heredity” referred to instances in which parental characteristics were reproduced in their offspring (Strahan, 1892). When the production of a characteristic skipped a generation, it was referred to as “reversional hereditary or atavism.” “Indirect or collateral heredity” occurred when offspring displayed characteristics of a relative who was not a direct ancestor. A parent’s mood or fortune at the time of the child’s birth constituted “initial heredity.” Finally, “heredity of influence” encompassed those situations in which a child displayed characteristics of a parent’s previous spouse.

Two organizations focused on eugenics were established during the first decade of the twentieth century: the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, originally named the Eugenics Record Office and located within the University College London, and the Eugenics Education Society. The university promoted the biometric approach to eugenics and it was through the university that the journal *Biometrika* was established. Karl Pearson, a statistician with the university, also established the journal the *Annals of Eugenics* in 1925. Pearson, who argued that the white Aryan race was superior to the black races of Africa, championed the creation of a homogenous white race. All of Galton Eugenics Laboratory’s eugenic research between the years 1905 to 1925 relied on statistical analysis (Farrall, 1985).

The Eugenics Education Society, founded in London in 1907 through the efforts of Sybil Gotto, was renamed the Eugenics Society in 1926. The Society was particularly interested in curing social ills, such as poverty, and in preventing the “feeble-minded” from reproducing. Together with the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, the Society published the journal *The Eugenics Review*. Unlike the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, whose membership was generally limited to scientists, the Society membership included politicians, scientists, educational professionals, and figures from the Church of England, almost all of whom were members of the middle class. The Society hosted the First International Eugenics Congress at the University of London in 1912.

The first 12 volumes of *The Eugenics Review* contained 33 articles that addressed factors affecting the composition of the British population; five of these concerned emigration and/or immigration (Farrall, 1985). Two of these five articles focused on the effects of immigration and emigration on the sex ratio and birth rate of the population. Two

others were concerned with the purity of race; one of these was entitled, “The Menace to the English Race and to Its Traditions of Present-Day Immigration and Emigration.”

The Mental Deficiency Bill of 1912, which allowed persons deemed to be feeble-minded to be segregated in asylums, was implemented in 1914 (Farrall, 1985). The later adoption by the Nazis of eugenic strategies prompted British eugenicists to distinguish between eugenics and “race hygiene,” with the Society framing race hygiene as a “perversion” of eugenics. During the 1950s, the Society promoted the adoption of immigration restrictions and published *Broadsheet on West Indian Immigration* by Colin Bertram in 1958. This publication suggested that a numerical quota be imposed to restrict the number of West Indians who could enter into the country and that immigration law provide for the testing and assessment of each individual for each prospective entry.

New Zealand and Australia. As Diane Paul and colleagues have noted, “[A]lthough eugenics was a transnational movement, it’s success and impact in specific national and State contexts was shaped by local factors of class, race, religion, social structure and political and judicial institutions” (Paul, Stenhouse, and Spencer, 2018, p. 3). In New Zealand and in Australia, racial purity was to be assured through immigration restrictions. Australia was founded on a “White Australia” policy, which prohibited the entry of Asians and “inferior” whites; immigration restrictions were imposed in order to prevent the nation’s degeneration. A similar policy was pioneered by William Pember Reeves in New Zealand, a policy that was maintained through the early twentieth century.

Reeves, the Fabian socialist minister in the New Zealand liberal government of the 1890s, introduced the eugenically-inspired Undesirable Immigrants Exclusion Bill in 1894 (Stenhouse, 2018). His proposal echoed the views of Duncan MacGregor, the Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of Otago, who had argued during the late 1870s that heredity is destiny. He encouraged the State to restrict immigration as a strategy to ameliorate the long economic depression that had begun during the mid-1870s and worsened during the 1880s. Reeves’ bill sought to impose a financial penalty on any ship owner or master if they failed to identify persons prohibited from entering into New Zealand or falsely classified them as tourists. According to the Imbecile Passengers Act of 1892, a ship owner or master was required to post a bond for any individual who was a “lunatic, idiot, deaf, dumb, blind or infirm” or any person who might become a public charge. The owner would be liable if any legal immigrant became a public charge within twelve months of arrival. Additionally, owners were fined £100 for every “Asiatic” passenger over the 1 per 100 tons limit and £200 for failing to provide a list of all Chinese or Asiatic passengers. The previous £10 poll tax imposed by the Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 on any incoming Chinese person was raised to £50 and the provision expanded to encompass all Asiatic passengers, in addition to Chinese passengers.

The parliamentary immigration debates that occurred during the period from 1895 to 1896 were particularly vitriolic. New Zealand nationalists demanded the exclusion of Negroes and Kaffirs, other African blacks, Assyrian hawkers, Austrian gundiggers, Chinese and Japanese persons, “low-class” Jews from Eastern Europe and persons who were diseased, lunatics, or unable to look after themselves. Much of what Reeves had proposed in his bill was included in the enacted Immigration Restriction Act of 1899, which restricted Asian immigration and excluded persons deemed to be idiots, insane, or having a contagious disease (Stenhouse, 2018). The freethinker and staunch eugenicist Sir Robert Stout concurred with these provisions, claiming that racial uniformity was a requisite for political stability and solidarity and would lead to fewer societal tensions and a lesser financial burden on the state (Gathey, 2018). The Chinese, he opined, presented the greatest threat to unity and would lower civilization. Like many nationalists, he sought immigration legislation that would bar the admission of Negroes and Kaffirs, in addition to Chinese persons.

*Latin American Nations*

Argentina, Cuba, and Brazil believed that the nation's populace could be whitened by mixing indigenous and mestizo peoples. Brazil and Argentina, in particular, encouraged the immigration of European workers in order to whiten the nation (Camisciolo, 2009).

Argentina. During the late 1800s, Argentina's government established a policy of attracting new citizens, preferably those from northern Europe, based on the belief that populating facilitates governance (Rodriguez, 2006). Accordingly, Argentina placed few limitations on immigration to its territory until the late 1880s, when urban areas became inundated with a wave of immigrants. Between the years 1871 and 1914, almost six million immigrants arrived in the country, with almost half remaining permanently.

Immigration and the societal hierarchy were premised on the idea of *pureza de sangre*—purity of blood, literally—the idea that race was equivalent to skin color. Whites were assumed to be superior and southern European cultures were seen as intellectually and culturally inferior. The government had hoped that newly arriving immigrants would resemble the country's first settlers—Germans, Swedish, Dutch, French, English, and Swedish—but instead found that many of the newer immigrants were fleeing poverty in their home countries (Rodriguez, 2006).

The General Department of Immigration was created in 1856. In 1869, by decree of then-president Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, the Central Commission of Immigration was created. At that time, immigrants were considered to be indispensable for building the nation's infrastructure.

The 1876 immigration law excluded several classes of persons deemed to possess eugenically undesirable traits: those with a contagious disease or organic defect that would prevent them from working and those who were demented, beggars, convicts, or criminals. These selection criteria were applied to immigrants arriving at ports, but not to those seeking entry over land. The Argentine general inspector of immigration indicated that first class passengers were not to be considered immigrants, but those who traveled in second and third classes of passage were to be inspected and classified. Agricultural workers, businessmen, and engineers were prioritized for admission into the country. Those found to have chronic diseases and an inability to work were expelled and returned to their port of departure in an effort to avoid the degeneration of race within Argentina.

Various stereotypes of immigrants prevailed during the early twentieth century. Immigrants were believed to commit more crime compared to native-born Argentinians. Psychiatrists and criminologists depicted Jews as a distinct race, vulnerable to mental diseases such as neurasthenia, hysteria, neurosis, and psychosis (Rodriguez, 2006). Italians, in particular, were viewed as an inferior race (Turda & Gillette, 2014). The concept of contagion was linked to racial inferiority; only racial engineering, it was thought, could rid Argentina of the "barbarism" that threatened future humanity. This was to be accomplished through cleansing, selecting, and purging (Rodriguez, 2006). Public health physicians, psychiatrists, and criminologists were to serve as gatekeepers, to identify those who harbored undesirable traits and to filter out those with symptoms of barbarism.

In 1902, the legislator Miguel Cané argued for further restrictions against immigrants "thrown from Europe who expulses them like a poison threatening its organism" (Rodriguez, 2006, p. 187). Immigrants were identified as a source of contagion; although immigration was to be encouraged, it was to be selective in order to minimize the "degenerative" effects of immigration. The immigrant population was to be transformed on the basis of scientific criteria. Lucas Ayarragaray proposed in his 1912 book entitled *Socialismo argentino* that the use of scientific criteria as the basis for selective immigration would provide a remedy to both social and labor problems.

The Registro Dactiloscópico del Inmigrado, established by the national immigration service in 1912, was charged with the responsibility of maintaining immigrants' fingerprint records. Each immigrant was to be issued by officers of the Office of Work and Dispatch a book that contained his or her photograph and fingerprint, as well as information about their rights and responsibilities, currency, education, banks, and the location of steamship companies.

Assimilation was seen as a social and biological process that would transform immigrants into civilized citizens. However, some individuals were excluded from citizenship based on the scientific theory that members of some groups were not rational and, as a consequence, could not be loyal to the state. The children of immigrants were seen as being especially malleable and, as such, were likely to be assimilated.

Victor Delfino, the editor of the Argentinian medical journal *La Semana Médica*, established the Comité Eugenésico (Argentinian Eugenics Committee) in 1914 and the Sociedad Eugénica Argentina (Argentinian Eugenics Society) in 1918 (Turda & Gillette, 2014). The eugenicist Arturo R. Rossi implored Argentina to “[defend] white civilization” against the “profound polymorphism of our people” (Rodríguez, 2006, p. 246). At the First Italian Congress of Social Eugenics, held in Milan in 1924, Delfino advised that Argentina's eugenics program was to examine the causes of human degeneration and advocated the application of eugenic principles to “pauperism, social diseases, morbidity and infant mortality, population growth and immigration” (Turda & Gillette, 2014, p. 130).

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, a time of economic and social challenges, elite Argentinians perceived the failure of many immigrants to adopt Argentinian nationality and to marry outside of their own communities symptoms of “foreign ‘cysts’” in their midst (Stepan, 1991, p. 140). The middle class was similarly concerned that Argentina's Latin identity was becoming contaminated by foreign elements.

Argentina noted its efforts to reinforce Latin heritage in the face of increasing population heterogeneity due to the immigration of non-Latins into the country. The American eugenicist Charles Davenport proclaimed the benefits of U.S. immigration law at the First Panamerican Conference on Eugenics and Homiculture (Primera Conferencia Panamericana de Eugenesia y Homicultura), held in December 1927, noting that the various measures had been designed to halt the “flood” of “new and unassimilable elements” and to “exclude carriers of [undesirable] physical, mental and moral qualities” (Turda & Gillette, 2014, pp. 154-155). Together with Domingo F. Ramos, a Cuban eugenicist, Davenport penned the *Código Panamericana de Eugenesia y Homicultura*, that provided that eugenically fit individuals could immigrate anywhere in the western hemisphere and that each nation was to prohibit the entry of individuals with “bad germinal conditions” (Turda & Gillette, 2014, pp. 154-155).

Immigration was one of the most contentious issues at the Brazilian Congress of Eugenics (Primeiro Congresso Brasileiro de Eugenia) held at the National Academy of Medicine in Rio de Janeiro from June 30 to July 7, 1929. Some of the participants proposed the implementation of immigration restrictions along eugenic and racial lines, while others argued that racial integration was eugenic (Turda & Gillette, 2014). A few years later, the Argentine jurist Carlos Bernardo de Quirós proposed that Jews and Poles be excluded from the country because of their cultural incompatibility and that mulattos and zambos—persons with a mixture of Indian and black “races”—be excluded on the basis of race (Stepan, 1991).

Numerous transnational conferences and congresses focusing on eugenic theory and application followed. The second Panamerican conference (Segunda Conferencia Panamericana de Eugenesia y Homicultura de las Republicas Americanas), held in Buenos Aires in November 1934, included representatives from 20 Latin American countries and the

United States. Topics included Latin American eugenics and immigration (Turda & Gillette, 2014).

Successive governments sought to purge from the country those individuals who were considered unfit, including degenerates, the physically weak, and those considered dangerous. Pathology was thought to reside in the physical traits of a person. The president of the Association of Biotypology, Eugenics, and Social Medicine, Arturo R. Rossi, opined in 1941 that the organization's focus was directed towards the defense and preservation of white civilization (Stepan, 1991). He further declared that Argentina's problem was its lack of a specific nationality due to the amalgam of various racial and ethnic elements.

Brazil. Reference to eugenics (*eugénia*) in Brazil predates World War I (Stepan, 1990). Four factors in particular gave rise to Brazil's eugenic movement: its entry into World War I and calls for the country's regeneration; concerns relating to the population's poor health, increased immigration and unemployment; rising enthusiasm for science and a view of medical providers as experts; and concerns that Brazil was experiencing decline as a result of its racially mixed population (Stepan, 1990).

The Sociedade Eugênica de São Paulo (Eugenic Society of São Paulo) was formed in 1918 through the efforts of Renato Ferraz Kehl, who remained the society's secretary. The society's membership included primarily physicians, but extended beyond São Paulo to include scientists from other cities in the country.

Proponents of eugenics were divided with respect to both science and ideology. The Mendelian eugenicists ascribed to the primacy of genetics, arguing that environment had little effect on the inheritance of characteristics. The neo-Lamarckians espoused a racialist, negative form of eugenics based on the assumption that characteristics acquired during one's life time were inheritable by subsequent generations (Stepan, 1990). The neo-Lamarckians and an emphasis on negative eugenics gained increased currency by the 1930s due to more familiarity in Brazil with German and American eugenic approaches, as compared with those of other countries; the rise of integrationist ideologies, the state's role in structuring social relations, and assumptions relating to a natural hierarchy; and decreased white immigration to the country, prompting concerns about the country's racial future.

Several Mendelians vociferously countered Kehl's pro-neo-Lamarckian, racialist views. Domingues argued that, over time, the ongoing mixing of Brazil's races would lead to a whitening of the population because whites dominated over blacks. Edgard Roquette-Pinto asserted that racial mixing between whites and blacks was healthy and that, because mulattoes already contained "whiteness," they consequently could produce white offspring over time. Still others called for immigration restrictions against Asians on the basis of eugenics. Calls for immigration restrictions increased during the 1930s due to the decline of white European immigration during the 1920s, the increase in Japanese immigration, and growing public support for the proposition of racial fusion and consequent whitening. Eugenicists claimed that the country needed to be protected from outside forces that could disturb the homogenization process (Stepan, 1990).

The 1934 Brazilian legislature—the Constituent Assembly—shared eugenicists' concerns regarding immigrants' cultural or racial fitness. Antonio Pacheco y Silva asserted that immigration restrictions would protect both the public health and serve as a eugenic measure by preventing the entry into the country of immigrants who would bring new diseases with them. Others argued that eugenic restrictions were necessary due to the high unemployment rate. Ultimately, the Assembly approved a eugenic immigration law that established racial quotas and tests of fitness; these clauses were later integrated into the Brazilian constitution.

Blacks and mulattoes were especially marginalized in Brazilian society. The sociologist Gilbert Freyre argued that rather than being eugenically unfit, Africans were

eugenically superior and had merged with Portuguese persons and Indians, leading to the production of people who were both racially mixed and eugenically sound.

By the 1930s, some Brazilian eugenicists, including Kehl, urged the adoption of Nazi eugenics. Others moved from the paradigm of biological racism to sociological racism that encompassed eugenics (Levine, 1973-1974).

### *Asian Nations*

Both China and Japan were concerned with eugenics as early as 1894, during the first Sino-Japanese War. Concerns grew during the second Sino-Japanese War, spanning the years 1937 to 1945, which were seen by eugenicists as a “war of population” (Chung, 2002). The Chinese scholar Liang Yinhe believed that eugenic strategies would serve as a bulwark against Western imperialism through the production of better offspring.

Japanese eugenicists distinguished between eugenics and racial hygiene. Eugenics was to pursue a genealogical and biometric investigation, whereas racial hygiene was to focus additionally on social policy and the social sciences (Chung, 2002). Although both China and Japan were concerned with the need to regulate marriage and reproduction in order to improve the social environment and shape individuals with desirable qualities, China, in particular, was concerned with the consequences of immigration.

The second Sino-Japanese War was seen by many Chinese as a test of national stamina, and by Japan as bringing about population growth. The Chinese sociologist Pan Guangdan (also known as Quentin Pan) considered immigrants to be superior to the native population that had become accustomed to stability and accepted what was given. He suggested that successful immigrants possessed a personal drive, a “persevering and risk-taking physique,” and “intelligent competence,” believing further that the anti-Japanese war would lead to large-scale migration, ultimately leading to a rejuvenation of racial vitality (Chung, 2002, p. 161).

### **Discussion**

“No eugenic advocates propagated the ideas thinking they were evil and pseudoscientific and would do harm” (Chung, 2002, p. 169). Many eugenical scientists were likely motivated by “sciencism”—a belief that the findings of science should be used to define social goals and values—rather than racism (Tucker, 1994, pp. 96-97). However, as Marius Turda and Bolaji Balogun have noted, eugenics was and is about power and control over one part of a population by another part, effectively delineating who is “us” and who is “them” (Turda & Balogun, 2023). Nations’ retreat from their visible eugenic agendas was brought about only with increasing knowledge and horror of Nazi war crimes (Brookwood, 2021).

Despite countries’ apparent abandonment of eugenics as a basis for their immigration policies, immigration restrictions that were developed in reliance on eugenics continue to be relied upon today, in both law and policy. The current situations in the United States and in France are presented as examples.

In the United States, the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act, was intended to remedy immigration restrictions premised on eugenics that were imposed during the early twentieth century. In lieu of the immigration system embedded in the National Origins Act of 1924 that established quotas on the basis of national origin (Perlman, 2018), the 1965 Act preferenced intending immigrants on the basis of their relationships to U.S. citizens and permanent residents and on the basis of their skills through the establishment of seven categories. Additionally, it removed the unequal national quotas that had favored individuals from Northern and Western Europe and replaced these quotas with a minimum allowance of 20,000 visas per country, up to a maximum annual

allotment of 170,000 visas for immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere. However, whereas U.S. immigration law had not previously placed limitations on the numbers of immigrants from Western Hemisphere countries, the 1965 Act imposed an annual limit of 120,000 visas per year, leading directly to years'-long waits for visas by intending Mexican immigrants to the U.S. As an example, the current Visa Bulletin issued by the U.S. Department of State notes that as of January 2025, visas for the unmarried sons and daughters of United States citizens who are citizens of a European country are available to those who filed their applications by November 22, 2015. In contrast, visas for Mexican citizens in the same preference category are available only to those who filed their applications prior to November 22, 2004, a difference of eleven years (United States Department of State, 2024b). Additionally, the "illegality" of Mexican seasonal workers' entries into the United States resulted from a change in law, rather than a change in labor demands or worker behavior (Lauret, 2016)..

The 1965 Act also retained various categories of exclusion/inadmissibility that were formulated in response to eugenic concerns. Homosexuals continued to be excluded as "psychopathic" individuals until the passage of the Immigration Act of 1990 eliminated the provision. Although homosexuals may now obtain visas to immigrate to the United States, other categories of persons deemed to be dysgenic during the years of the eugenic movement, such as individuals with a mental illness or developmental disability, continue to be potentially excluded/inadmissible as individuals "likely to become a public charge" absent evidence of adequate financial resources for their support (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024; Immigration and Nationality Act, 2024; United States Department of State, 2024a).

U.S. political rhetoric about immigrants is eerily reminiscent of that which prevailed during the years of the eugenic movement. Donald Trump falsely claimed during his 2015 presidential campaign, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they're rapists, and some, I assume, are good people" (Sankin, 2024). His running mate, JD Vance, expressed his concern that "We don't have enough families and children to continue as a nation," while also blaming immigrants for increased crime (Licon, 2024).

In 2013, then- Interior Minister [Manuel Valls](#) of France publicly claimed that Roma were unassimilable into French culture and should be forced to leave the country (Bamat, 2013). A 2015 report by Nils Muižnieks, the Council of Europe Commissioner of Human Rights, noted that politicians in France have used stigmatizing language in referring to migrant Roma (Muižnieks, 2015). Additionally, although Romanian and Bulgarian Roma had been citizens of the European Union since January 1, 2007 and therefore have the right of free movement, in July 2010 President Sarkozy announced a new policy of evicting Roma from their camps, followed by their deportation. This action against Roma was justified on the basis of their threat to the "republican order" and as part of a crackdown against gangsters and traffickers (Parker & López Catalán, 2014, p. 384).

In response to a complaint against France, the European Committee of Social Rights found that such actions violated the right of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance. Although France later revised its laws pertaining to the residence of aliens and asylum, removing language directed at Roma and replacing it with a requirement for individual evaluations to determine the right to remain, collective evictions continued to occur (Muižnieks, 2015). A 2024 position paper issued by the International Refugee Assistance Project notes that France has failed to reduce existing barriers to the lawful immigration of disabled persons seeking reunification with their families (the International Refugee Assistance Project, 2024).

These examples highlight the continuing reliance on immigration provisions that were promulgated decades and, in some cases, a century ago, despite massive global changes wrought by climate change, increased globalization, civil wars, government overthrows, human trafficking, and political oppression and repression (Alffram et al., 2023; Barnett & Nam, 2024; Bellizzi et al., 2023; Boerman et al., 2023; Hanson & Baltabayeva, 2024; Rikani et al., 2023). Although many countries, including the U.S. and France, claim to prioritize family reunification within their immigration systems, current practice suggests that this declaration is in some cases more fictive than real (see, e.g., International Refugee Assistance Project, 2024).

The present practice of excluding and deporting members of specific groups—some of the same groups targeted during the heydays of the eugenics movement—is often justified on the basis of a heightened economic burden or an increase in crime. However, neither claim is evidence-based. U.S. president-elect Donald Trump has announced that his administration will effectuate the largest mass deportation in U.S. history, regardless of the cost. Estimates suggest that the approximately 11 million undocumented persons in the U.S. constitute five percent of the country's workforce and possibly an even greater proportion of workers in agriculture, construction, and leisure and hospitality services. Economists suggest that the economic cost to the U.S. will be substantially greater than merely the actual cost associated with individuals' removal and will ultimately lead to a slowdown of the country's economic growth and a huge increase in inflation (Lu, 2024). The deportation of 8.3 million undocumented individuals is estimated to lead to a 7.4 percent reduction in the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) and a 7 percent reduction in employment, leading to zero economic growth (Bernal, 2024).

A 2014 study of the impact of immigration on the French labor market found that immigration positively impacts the wages and employment of the native born in France (Ortega & Verdugo, 2014). Greater immigration was found to be related to a reallocation of native-born French persons to better paid employment.

Research relating to the United States has consistently demonstrated that undocumented immigrants commit criminal offenses at a lower rate than U.S.-born citizens. Results from a National Institute of Justice-funded study that examined the rates of violent, property, traffic, and drug crimes in Texas between the years 2012 and 2018 indicate that undocumented persons were arrested at half the rate of U.S. citizens for drug and violent crime and one-quarter of the rate for property crimes (National Institute of Justice, 2024). A recent study by the Stanford economist Ran Abramitzky and colleagues found that first-generation immigrants are no more likely to be incarcerated than U.S.-born citizens since 1880 (Abramitzky et al., 2024). They also found that since 1960, immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than U.S.-born citizens.

Similar results have been found in France, contrary to the political rhetoric attributing the majority of crime to immigrants. A recent study by the government Centre d'Etudes Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales (Center for International Prospective Research and Data) failed to find a correlation between immigration and criminality and concluded, additionally, that the statistical overrepresentation of immigrants was the result of biases that permeated the legal system (Pascual, 2023).

Continued reliance on eugenic-driven immigration laws, policies, and practices also raises potential ethical issues. Application of the concept of distributive justice requires an analysis of the distribution of benefits and burdens: what is to be distributed; the basis for distribution, e.g., equality, priority; who or what constitutes the site of justice, e.g., institution or person; the scope; and the basis for claims of justice, such as moral worth or social cooperation (Sager, 2012). It is beyond the scope of this paper to set forth an in-depth analysis of the application of distributive justice to migration. However, application of this

principle suggests that, at a minimum, individuals be viewed as having equal moral standing and be afforded equal moral consideration. Reliance on eugenic-inspired immigration provisions fails to view individuals as possessing equal moral worth; a failure to provide equal moral consideration, if not equal moral treatment, flows all too easily and seamlessly from the attribution of unequal moral worth. We can do better.

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