

Who is Unfit?: Centering Race and Disability in Histories of Eugenics

Natalie Lira, Ph.D.

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Pacific Colony: Confinement, Sterilization, and the Convergence of Race and Disability



Pacific Colony, ca 1939. Burton O. Burt, Works Progress Administration Collection, Los Angeles Public Library

Presentation Outline

- Disability and Eugenic Notions of the “Unfit”
- Pacific Colony Case Study
 - Feeble-mindedness/mental defect
 - Knowledge production
 - Gendered Application
 - Implementation
 - Resistance
- Eugenic Legacies

Critical Disability Studies: Disability as a Social Construct

- Power, historical context
- Justifies inequality
- “ideological lynchpin” in the (re)constitution of “social difference along the axes of race, gender, and sexuality.” (Erevelles, *Disability and Difference*, 6)

STATE CRITERIA FOR LEGAL EUGENICAL STERILIZATION

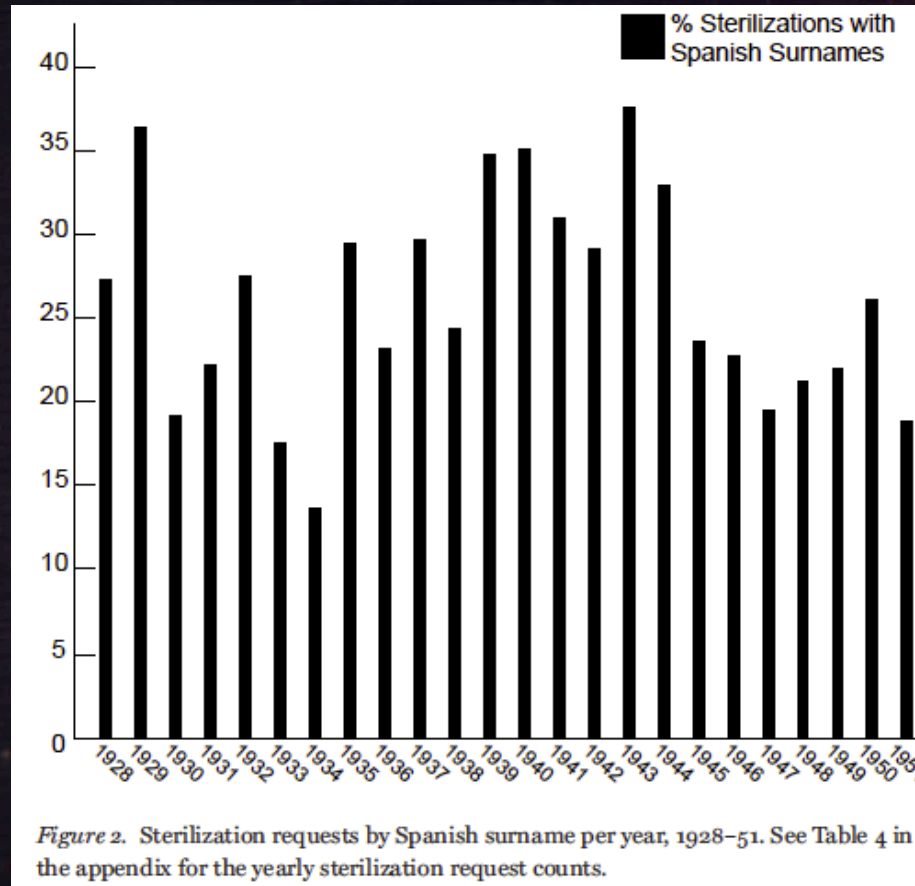
STATE	TYPE OF PATIENT
Alabama	"Feebleminded."
Arizona	"Inmates of Hospital for Insane."
California	"Feebleminded, habitual criminals, insane, idiots, mental defectives."
Connecticut	"Feebleminded, insane, idiots, imbeciles and those with inherited tendency to crime."
Delaware	"Mentally defectives, insane, feebleminded or epileptic persons."
Idaho	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptics, habitual criminals, morally degenerate persons."
Indiana	"Hereditary insane, feebleminded or epileptic."
Iowa	"Feebleminded, insane, syphilitic, habitual criminals, morally degenerate persons."
Kansas	"Feebleminded, insane, habitual criminals."
Maine	"Feebleminded."
Michigan	"Mentally defectives, insane."
Minnesota	"Feebleminded, insane."
Mississippi	"Persons with hereditary form of insanity, feeblemindedness, idiocy, epilepsy."
Montana	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptic."
Nebraska	"Insane and feebleminded."
New Hampshire	"Feeblemindedness or certain forms of other mental diseases."
North Carolina	"Mentally defective persons."
North Dakota	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts."
Oklahoma	"Habitual criminals, hereditary feebleminded, insane, idiots, imbeciles, epileptics."
Oregon	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts."
South Carolina	"Hereditary form of insanity, idiocy, imbecility, feeblemindedness or epilepsy."
South Dakota	"Feebleminded."
Utah	"Habitual criminals, insane, idiots, imbeciles, feebleminded, or epileptics."
Vermont	"Prevent procreation of idiots, imbeciles, feebleminded or insane persons."
Virginia	"Hereditary insanity, idiocy, imbecility, feeblemindedness or epilepsy."
Washington	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts."
West Virginia	"Insanity, imbecility, epilepsy, idiocy, feeblemindedness."
Wisconsin	"Insane, feebleminded, epileptic and criminal persons."

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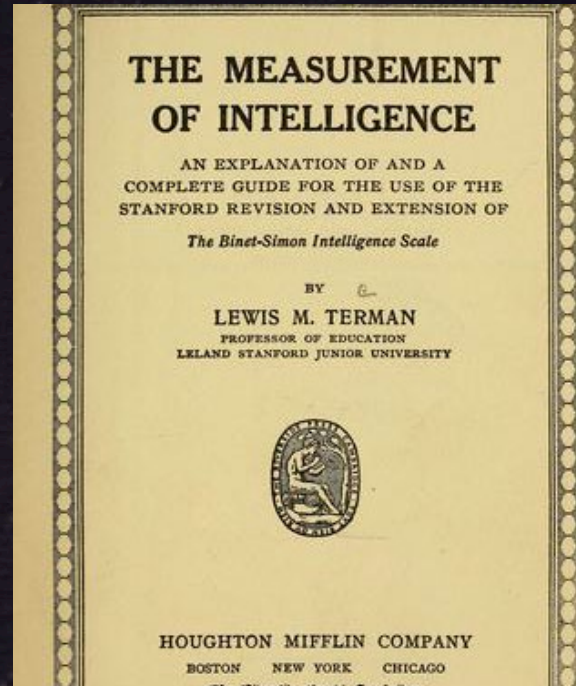
Pacific Colony: A Case Study

- Where eugenic theories of feeblemindedness were both developed and implemented
- Disability and race come together: Mexican-origin youth targeted for confinement and sterilization

- 1935 CBJR Study: “Mexican” represented 15.3% of population
- 1947 Psychology Dept. Study: “Mexicans” 21.2% of population
- Admission Legers 1927-1947: “M” 21% of admissions



Lewis M. Terman and Knowledge Production on Feeble-mindedness



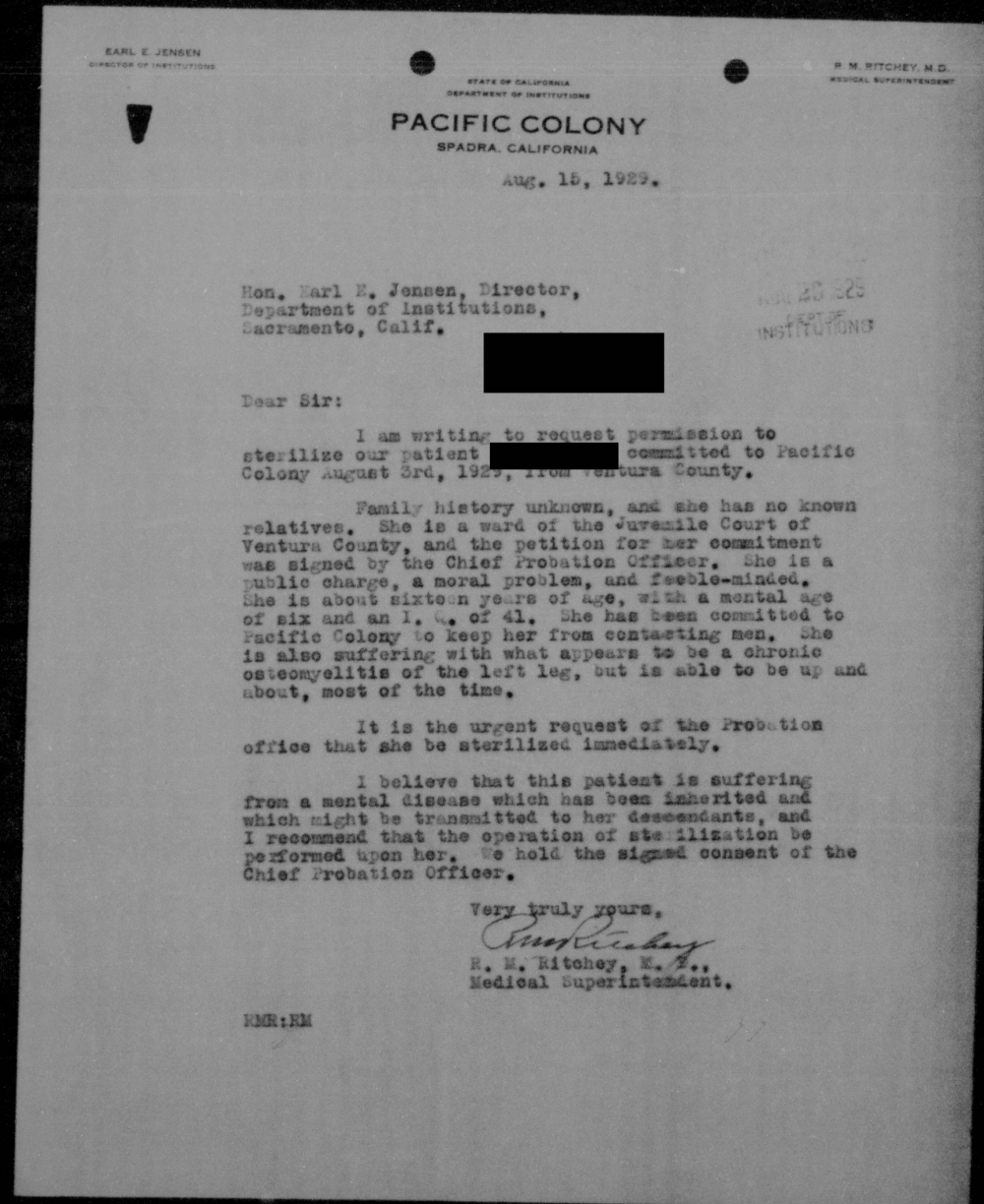
- Intelligence = Social Rank and Value
 - IQ Scores
 - Social Data
 - Family Histories
- Education, Labor, Civics, reproduction
- Broad Social Implications
 - Poverty
 - Crime
 - Morality

The Convergence of Race and Disability

- $\frac{1}{3}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ “delinquency in California can be prevented by segregation, in their early years, of feeble-minded children” J. Harold Williams in *Report of 1915 Legislature*
- “Negroes and Mexican-Indians show a greater tendency to delinquency than the whites. [...] This relationship is probably due to the higher intelligence of the whites. The average IQ’s for the delinquents of the three races were, white, .82; Mexican-Indian, .69; Colored, .77.” J. Harold Williams in *Journal of Delinquency*. 1920
- “Intellectually the Mexican Children are consistently inferior to American children. [...] This is not due, evidently, to the language factor, but appears to be real native inferiority.” Mary Bees Henry in *Journal of Delinquency* ,1920

Gendered Application

- Gendered symptomology
 - Young men
 - Petty crimes & status crimes
 - Young women
 - “sexual delinquency”



Theory Meets Practice

- (Prophylactic) Institutionalization, (Nicole Rafter *The First Eugenics Campaign*, 1992)
- Eugenic Sterilization
- “Vocational Training” and “Industrial Parole”



(Re)Interpreting Pathologized Behaviors, Refusals, and Escapes

- Defiance and disobedience
- Refusal to consent

10-5-48	Goddard	John Martinez, #14422	Patient was working on gang detail in vegetable garden. Went to get a drink and didn't return.
10-5-48	Goddard	Gilbert Macias, #14353	Patient was working on gang detail in vegetable garden. Went to get a drink and didn't return.
10-10-48	Paxton	Rosario Valverde, #13552 7058	While patients were in yard, attendant let Valverde in sewing room at 8 PM to sweep floors. Hillman returned to sewing room at 8:20 to let him out. Patient had escaped by cutting hole through window screen.

Legacies: Continued Sites of Reproductive Injustice

- 2000s: Sterilization at California Women's Prisons
- 2018: Kenosha Wisconsin sheriff: men accused of shoplifting should be “warehoused” for life, to “stope them, ...at least some of these males, going out and getting ten other women pregnant”
- 2020: ICE Detention hysterectomies