

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

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







#### **Presentation Outline**

- Disability and Eugenic Notions of the "Unfit"
- Pacific Colony Case Study
  - Feeblemindedness/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			
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	Fachlaminded income anilantics habitual criminals mently described		
Indiana	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptics, habitual criminals, morally degenerate persons."		
Iowa	Hereditary insane, feebleminded or epileptic."		
Kansas	Feebleminded, insane, syphilitic, habitual criminals, morally degenerate persons."		
Maine	Feebleminded, insane, habitual criminals."		
Michigan			
Minnesota	"Mentally defectives, insane."		
Iississippi	"Feebleminded insane."		
Iontana	Persons with hereditary form of insanity, feeblemindedness, idiocy, epilepsy.		
Vebraska	Feebleminded, insane, epileptic."		
	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.		
klahoma	Habituat Criminals, hereditary feebleminded insane idiots imbeciles epileptics		
regon	reedleminded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts		
outh Carolina	nercaitary form of insanity, idiocy, imbedility, feeblemindedness or enilancy		
outh Dakota	reebleminded.		
Itah	Habitual criminals, insane, idiots, imbeciles, feebleminded, or epileptics."		
ermont	Prevent procreation of idiots, imbeciles, feebleminded or insane persons		
irginia	Rereditary insanity idiocy imbecility feeblamindedness or enilance		
ashington	"Feebleminded, insane, epileptic, habitual criminals, moral degenerates and sexual perverts.		
est Virginia	insanty, impecinity, epitebsy idiocy feeblemindedness		
isconsin	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

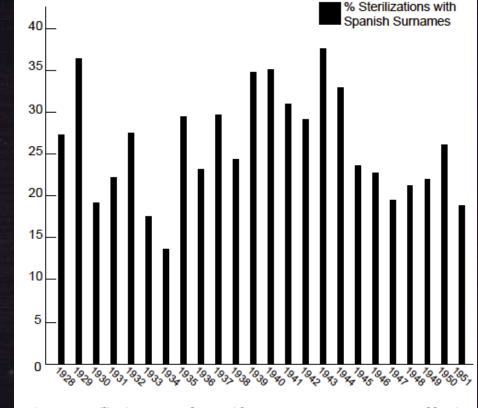
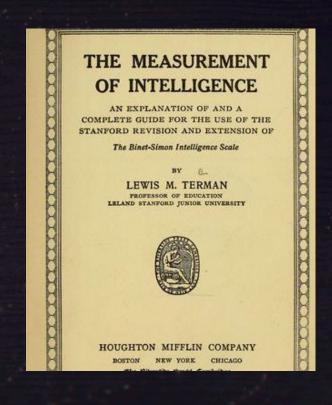


Figure 2. Sterilization requests by Spanish surname per year, 1928-51. See Table 4 in the appendix for the yearly sterilization request counts.



# Lewis M. Terman and Knowledge Production on Feeblemindedness





- 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

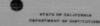
- 1/3-1/2 "delinquency in California can be prevented by segregation, in their early years, of feeble-minded children" J. Harold Williams in *Report of 1915 Legislature*
- "Negroes and Mexican-Indians show a greater tendency to delinquency than the whites.
   [...] This relationship is probably due to 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"

EARL E JENSEN



R. M. RITCHEY, M.D.

PACIFIC COLONY

Aug. 15, 1929.

Hon. Marl E. Jensen, Director, Department of Institutions, Sacramento, Calif.

INSTITUTION

Dear Sir:

sterilize our patient committed to Pacific Colony August 3rd, 1925, from ventura County.

Family history unknown, and she has no known relatives. She is a ward of the Juremile Court of Ventura County, and the petition for her commitment was signed by the Chief Probation Officer. She is a public charge, a moral problem, and feeble-minded. She is about sixteen years of age, with a mental age of six and an 1. 4. of 41. She has been committed to racific Colony to keep her from contacting men. She is also suffering with what appears to be a chronic osteomyelitis of the left leg, but is able to be up and about, most of the time.

It is the urgent request of the Probation office that she be sterilized immediately.

I believe that this patient is suffering from a mental disease which has been inherited and which might be transmitted to her descendants, and I recommend that the operation of sterilization be performed upon her. We hold the signed consent of the Chief Probation Officer.

RMR:RM

### 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
	Paris - Francis	vegetable garden. Went to get a drink and
Ages S		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	Parton	Rosario Valverde, #13552
10-10-10	Laron	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.
		COLUMN HOTE CHICAGII WINGOW BOLOGII.





#### 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

