

History of Race and Eugenics (HRE)
Centre for Health, Medicine and Society, Oxford Brookes University
&
School of Modern Languages and Culture
University of Leeds

proudly invites you to the international workshop:

**Motherhood, Family, Reproduction: The Theory and Practice
of Eugenics**

Convenors: Marius Turda and Richard Cleminson

3-4 April 2014
Balliol College, Oxford

Programme

3 April 2014

14.30-15.00 Opening Remarks: Marius Turda (Oxford Brookes University)

15.00-18.30 Panel **1. The Theory and Practice of Eugenics** (Chair Paul Weindling, Oxford Brookes University)

David Redvaldsen (Independent Scholar): Francis Galton, Eugenics and the
Routinization of Charisma

Stephen Byrne (Oxford Brookes University): Eugenics on Trial in Britain, 1903-1908

Patrick Merricks (Oxford Brookes University): 'Problem Families' in Post-War Britain

Coffee break (16:30-17.00)

Richard Cleminson (University of Leeds): Between 'Latin' and Germanic Eugenics:
The Portuguese Eugenics Movement

Alexandra Barmpouti (Oxford Brookes University): The Institutionalisation of
Eugenics in Greece during the 1950s

4 April 2014

10.00-13.00 Panel **2. Motherhood, Family and Reproduction** (Chair Marius Turda, Oxford Brookes University)

Andrés H. Reggiani (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires): Motherhood, Women's Sports, and Eugenics in Argentina

Irena Rožman (University of Primorska, Slovenia): 'The Reproductive Health of our Mothers is a Guarantee for a Healthy Nation': Childbirth in the Interwar period and during the First Decade after Second World War

Coffee break (11.00-11.30)

Chiara Beccalossi (Oxford Brookes University): Sexuality and Reproduction in Latin Eugenics: Nicola Pende's Institute of Biotypology

Maria Sophia Quine (University of East Anglia): Futuristic Visions of Motherhood: 'The Woman Question' in Italy, 1860-1945

13.00-14.00 Lunch

14.00-14.30 Concluding Remarks: Paul Weindling (Oxford Brookes University)

14.30-15.00 Roundtable discussion and future research agenda: Chair Richard Cleminson (University of Leeds)

ABSTRACTS

David Redvaldsen (Independent Scholar)

Francis Galton, Eugenics and the Routinization of Charisma

In the social theory of Max Weber charisma is a world-changing force such as possessed by great prophets, statesmen or leaders. The paper begins by arguing that Francis Galton's life is a case in point. It will examine eugenics as it appears in *Hereditary Genius, Inquiries into human faculty and its development, Probability: the foundation of eugenics* and other writings. Next it will investigate the processes whereby eugenics as a doctrine was institutionalized in the Eugenics Record Office in London from 1904, leading to the foundation of the Galton Laboratory of National Eugenics at University College London in 1907. Additionally, independently of Galton, the Eugenics Education Society was founded in 1907. With these dual events the doctrine of eugenics had been bequeathed to posterity. The institutionalized doctrine focused on what Caleb Saleeby christened "negative eugenics" to a greater extent than did the founder. Galton was also a meritocrat who tabulated how ability shifted between classes in the community, although talent tended to run in families. The former was largely lost sight of in the first years of the eugenics movement. More generally, Weber's model postulates a loss to the doctrine through the routinization

of charisma. This paper will assess to what extent this was true for British eugenics until the year 1926.

Stephen Byrne (Oxford Brookes University)

Eugenics on Trial in Britain, 1903-1908

In December 1903, and then again in April 1905, Alfred Eichholz M.D. was called to give evidence before *ad hoc* government-appointed bodies that were deliberating on the health of the British nation. On both occasions, the evidence he put forward was substantively the same; that is, there was no evidence to support the contention that the British population was subject to progressive, hereditary deterioration. In the first instance, Eichholz's testimony was well-received and went on to form the basis for the committee's report and recommendations; in the second, it was treated to a minute, searching deconstruction and then dismissed. Through the medium of Eichholz's testimony, and its reception, this paper will examine two of the key fora in early twentieth century Britain where eugenic ideas and principles were placed on trial: the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, and the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded. It will explore the composition of these bodies and the conditions that led to their formation. It will argue that although both bodies mobilized an impressive array of 'expert' testimony – Eichholz included – the recommendations and conclusions which they arrived at were, to a great extent, determined long before the first testimony was received. And, it will affirm that, in the British context, the promulgation of 'eugenic policy' owed more to civil society than it did to the organs of the State.

Patrick Merricks (Oxford Brookes University)

Problem Families' in Post-War Britain

Since its introduction in 1943, the term "problem families" has been used to classify a relatively small sector of society assumed to cause problems disproportionate to its size. This paper examines a project conducted by the British Eugenics Society that attempted to address this very issue, culminating with the Problem Families Committee (1947-1952). A key aspect of this study involves exploring the interaction between eugenic ideology and the porous border that loosely segregated "nature" and "nurture" interpretations of human society. With this in mind, I examine: first, the rise of the term "mental deficiency" and its attempted use by eugenicists to explain the existence of the poor in the inter-war period; second, the emergence of "Problem Families" as a typological sub-section of society, in some respects considered hereditarily degenerative but, significantly, also a product of the inequalities of modern, urban society; and finally, I draw tentative conclusions on why the term "problem families" still resonates in popular and political discussion today. I operate here on the premise that the "problem families" discourse was characterised both by a ubiquitous struggle to define the "problem family" and a wider metaphysical struggle concerning the nature of heredity and what it means to be human.

Richard Cleminson (University of Leeds)

Between ‘Latin’ and Germanic Eugenics: The Portuguese Eugenics Movement

This paper traces the evolution of eugenics in Portugal with respect to two of its many currents: the more Germanophile tendency exemplified in figures such as Professor Eusébio Tamagnini at the University of Coimbra and a more publicly-orientated sanitation current focused on maternal care, puériculture and marriage guidance. The relevance of these debates for a broader, particularly European, historiography of eugenics is foregrounded and suggestions for further research on the Portuguese case are highlighted together with routes to comparative research across several national eugenics movements.

Alexandra Barmpouti (Oxford Brookes University)

The Institutionalisation of Eugenics in Greece during the 1950s

The most important step towards the study and dissemination of eugenics in Greece was the creation of the Hellenic Eugenics Society (H.E.S.). H.E.S. was founded in 1953 and remained active until early 1980s. Its numerous members were qualified and respected physicians, academics, scholars and scientists. Despite the fact that these people are still well-known, the Society itself is not very popular and its work neglected by modern historians.

Nikolaos Louros, eminent Greek obstetrician and gynaecologist, was the “heart” of the Society. He was president of H.E.S. for many years and dealt extensively with its activities. A recent exploration of Louros’ archive revealed that P. K. Whelpton visited Greece in December 1952 for the purpose of raising public awareness of eugenics and population problems. On 19th March 1953, a meeting was held at the premises of Medical Association of Athens regarding the “*creation of a union for eugenics*”. Three days after that, a report letter was sent back to Whelpton to show that his goals were met with the Greeks.

The statute of the Society, which was completed after an array of meetings, included Society’s aims. The study of eugenics problems of Greek population, in matters of quality and quantity, was set as priority. The ultimate target though was the co-operation with the state in implementing national policies with the purpose of solving those problems. An equally significant activity of the Society would be the education of the masses and the promotion of better living standards of the Greek family. Society’s work was assisted by both Greek and foreign institutions, like the National Union of Sanitary Education (Εθνικός Σύνδεσμος Υγιεινολογικής Διαπαιδαγώγησης) and International Planned Parenthood Federation.

Andrés H. Reggiani (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires)

Motherhood, Women’s Sports, and Eugenics in Argentina

In the early 1930s, as Argentina struggled to overcome the world depression, concerns about the slowdown of demographic growth became a recurrent theme in both expert and lay milieus. The closing of overseas immigration and the decline of the fertility among the population of European descent reawakened atavistic fears about a backward nation not yet tamed by civilization. This bleak picture was

compounded by the unease caused by the rapid erosion of traditional gender roles and family structures brought forth by economic and social modernization. Faced with these challenges, population experts adopted a two-pronged policy aimed at encouraging a higher birthrate and improving the psychophysical qualities of the population. The first translated in fighting infant mortality; the second, on ensuring that individuals would find their “right place” in society according to their inborn capabilities. The importance of demographic growth as a vital area of state-building, on the one hand, and the changing patterns of reproductive behavior, on the other, made women a priority target. This focus took many shapes. On the one hand, it led to the passing of mildly eugenic legislation to protect pregnant women and young mothers as well as their newborns. On the other, it stigmatized all behavior perceived as endangering women’s maternal duties as manly and unhealthy.

I propose to explore the way in which informed commentators, with special attention to biotypologists and sports physicians, responded to the growing participation of women in sports. Although most medical doctors were not opposed to women undertaking physical exercises they discouraged the practice of “violent” and “intense” sports—those which demanded high levels of training and sustained exercise of a particular group of muscles. By promoting the “fad for narrow hips” female athletes not only challenged conventional views of physical beauty but were also perceived as threatening the physiology of reproduction by over-exercising anatomical areas deemed as essentially masculine. In so far as competitive sports implied the idea of breaking records, of playing for winning and pushing oneself to the limits, women athletes subverted the chivalrous, muscular and Christian ideal of fair play embedded in male amateur sport. The responses of the medical profession also illustrate the anxieties fed by the deeper trends that were undermining the hierarchical and paternalistic structures of Argentine society.

Irena Rožman (Faculty of Humanities, University of Primorska, Slovenia)

“The Reproductive Health of our Mothers is a Guarantee for Healthy Nation”: Childbirth in the Interwar period and during the First Decade after Second World War

In this paper I place the concept of “medicalization of childbirth”, which can be called humanization of birth as well, in the socio-historical context of the interwar period and the first decade after the Second World War. We shall see that medicalization is a dynamical social process. It is typical for that the health policy makers in different historical periods from different reasons try to achieve the same objective, better reproductive health of women and better birth outcome. The lowering of maternal and infant mortality at childbirth due to absence of professional help is considered as the most important indicator of the effectiveness of health policy. It is therefore disputable to ascribe to medicalization of childbirth only a negative connotation, as do the modern time activists who nevertheless succeeded in lowering the number of unnecessary routine medical procedures during the birth. Those same activists nevertheless romanticize the childbirth culture of traditional rural societies as the human childbirth practice disregarding the fact that negative outcome of childbirth was much more frequent in those societies due to absence of professional medical help of midwives and doctors and access to medical technology and hospital facilities.

This so called natural state regarding human reproduction was present in South Eastern Europe even two decades after Second World War. I shall discuss how

and why population experts of various professions and political creeds were addressing the problem of maternal and infant mortality in the period of Eugenics. It was not only the health problem then but a demographical one too, the latter connected to the so called “white plaque”, which cause not only fertility decline, but also as they claimed led to extinction of nation. That is why the medicalization/humanisation of childbirth was regarded as urgent to prevent the unnecessary deaths of mothers and infants due to low social status and bad education of mothers and absence of organized health care for women and children. To achieve a better understanding of the concept of medicalization or humanization, I shall present the basic characteristics of health policy regarding the protection of mother and child after the Second World War as well. The state under auspices of WHO continued with activities to further the humanisation/medicalization of childbirth. As a consequence of this policy in the late 1950s half of the children were already born at hospitals, in the rural areas more professional midwives were active as at interwar period, obstetrics hospitals were established which all led to a lowering of maternal and child mortality due to childbirth.

Chiara Beccalossi (Oxford Brookes University)

Sexuality and Reproduction in Latin Eugenics: Nicola Pende’s Institute of Biotypology

Being unabashed advocates of what Dagmar Herzog has called modern ‘sexuality management’, eugenicists devised methods for the control of sexual behaviour and for channeling the sexual instinct towards reproduction. Taking Italian eugenics and Nicola Pende’s biotypology as its point of departure, this paper will show how Latin eugenicists put sexual behaviour and reproduction at the centre of their research. Thus, it will explore Pende’s theoretical and practical approaches to the study of sexuality. First, it will illustrate how Pende’s biotypology was intertwined with endocrinology and with Freudian and other psychological approaches to sexuality. Endocrinology in particular was at the centre of Pende’s work, for he believed that hormones held the key to understanding the relation between internal bodily functions and their outward manifestations. Secondly, this paper will show the extent to which one of the central aims of biotypology was to control the physical, psychological and sexual development of individuals so that ‘normality’ could be ensured and abnormalities prevented. Thus, focussing on the more practical activities of the Institute of Biotypology (Genoa), which was established by Pende in 1926, this paper will show how Pende’s theories of sexuality were put in practice. It will explore the ways in which the Institute of Biotypology was an example of ‘sexuality management’ by looking at its activities, such as the promotion of sexual education to subdue the sexual instinct; the identification of children who presented psychological anomalies; the treatment of ‘sexual deviancies’ such as homosexuality through endocrinological therapies; the treatment impotence; and finally, activities related to the evaluation of the racial unions that would produce ‘fit’ offspring in the long term.

Maria Sophia Quine (University of East Anglia)

Futuristic Visions of Motherhood: “The Woman Question” in Italy, 1860-1945

This contribution to the workshop and project will seek to re-conceptualize the 'Woman Question' in Italy in the light of new scholarship in the history of ideas, medicine, science and eugenics. Traditionally defined in relation to the status and position of women in society and economy, the 'Woman Question' amounted to much more than increasing pressures upon government from the emergent women's and labour movements for reform of legislation controlling the employment and education of women. This contribution, furthermore, will aim to uncover the centrality of the 'Woman Question' to Italian eugenics and to explore the critical importance of 'maternalist' nationalism to Italian politics, both during the liberal era and during the Fascist dictatorship. In this regard, a critique of the 'virilist' and 'masculinist' biases present in the works of Alberto Banti, which have come to dominate debates concerning the construction of 'the nation', will be an underlying theme. The paper and the article/chapter envisaged as its outcome will focus on key theorists, such as Mantegazza and Morselli, who 'invented' modern biopolitics and discourse about gender in liberal Italy and laid the foundation for eugenic thinking about the necessity for science and the state together to re-configure all the processes by which the mind and body of each future Italian might be 'sexed' according to exact biomedical specifications.