

Reading

Dorothy Roberts. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*.

Class Business

Reproductive technology—bio-politics, defined by Michel Foucault, how technologies, scientific techniques are used as a threat. Foucault argued that looking at particular populations are really creating those categories, relates to security/government and economic productivity. NOT a positive view of eugenics. How it is that forms of science arose aligned with a particular identity of the nation and also with anxieties about the threat of “undesirable populations”? We’ll watch Skin Deep on Thursday. This movie looks at eugenic sterilization in America. Race was always about ideas of contraception, breeding—how black bodies have become sites of state intervention, in slavery, for both female and male. Keep in mind issues of different meanings, expectations attached to male or female bodies. This highlights the creation of the body relates to state security.

Reflection paper due on Wednesday. New reflection paper model—choose your own topic from the readings of that day. Be prepared to discuss what you wrote. Also prepare questions for the readings. Increase participation!

Second draft of first paper due on April 6.

Final paper: could be on Terri Schiavo case—end of life issues, consent, etc. Could be on stem cell debates with a selection of articles using course readings. Could be a comparison through case studies.

Student Presentation

“Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty”

Background: professor at Northwestern U, graduated from Yale, Harvard JD. Lectures on race, gender, and relates to class, reproduction, motherhood for black women. *Shattered Bonds*.

Chapter 2: The Dark Side of Birth Control

Margaret Sanger and the birth control movement

- emancipation for civil rights; birth control could free the woman “No one can call herself free if... she does not consciously choose whether or not she will be a mother.”

- Sexual freedom for women was taboo—the movement was about being a good mother, being chaste; civil liberties rather than reproductive liberties
- Shifts to a eugenic argument: to control lower classes afflicted with social ills, to help society.

The Eugenics Movement

- Sir Francis Galton popularized, programmed the philosophy of eugenics.
- Jewish sterilization; other examples in Europe
- That biology can be linked to stratification of human beings “to better society”
- There are certain undesirable traits... Where do we draw the line between what to keep or eliminate.
 - Amniocentesis—could select for Down syndrome. [Who decides what is a superior or inferior trait?]
- Eugenics Claim: Within the human races—there are subspecies -- that we need to recognize those differences. Programs to stop degeneration of race.

Implementing Eugenics

- The breeding of superior citizens
- Positive eugenics: Removal of funds to underserved, the inferior races; giving them minimal wages; reduce their ability to procreate.
 - Some thought that the process would take too long.
- Negative eugenics: race genocide
 - Abstract qualifications (feeble-mindedness, insanity) applied to women, and promiscuous traits
 - Couldn't really test for those traits on an absolute scale and ended up abusing that scale
- *This chapter is reflecting perceived social ills attributed to biology—question of nature, not nurture. Pseudoscientific practices are about rectifying social problems with bodily interventions.*
- The Depression: economic stress on the body; public support for underserved was eliminated first. Negative eugenics really took fuel.
- Do you think that the Eugenics would have progressed despite the depression? Was it an opportunity to let racism surface or was it necessary?
 - *Targeting of Jewish scientists in Nazi Germany during the German depression.*
- Medical commons abstracted from *the Commons*, very popular in the 70s, population control, the pasture. Depression is very real extreme limited resources.
- Student: depression seemed like a catalyst
- Student: when depression hit, people still want to stay on top—blame groups of people.
- In terms of managing the country's fund...
 - China: one-child policy; to control population and consumption of resources
 - The problem arises when it is done not equally, but only specific groups.
 - *East Africa: high population rates; does that mean you should tell them that you can't have a child. Development discourse: contraception—large*

Haitian families because of infant mortality rates; children are loved, however, not only as physical labor but in and of themselves. Women who have had many children may want to control their birth; it's historical and cultural. Should we be saying that the population/growth rate is too high? OR should we look at the question of global inequities and distributions. We'll look at India and China. This chapter is looking at how desirability for reproductive control depends on perspective—different historical meaning for the white privileged woman or the black woman. How are they located in particular social locations, what is the meaning of their reproductive capacity, and how is that rooted in social history and economics? Belgian Congo: increase female fertility among black workers. Higher end of economic spectrum.

- Sterilization as a form of family planning, requires foresight and thought and did not think that inferior races could plan as they were reputedly driven by physical lust for procreation. This argument for birth control would lead to sterilization of superior race.
- Since we are in a democracy, everyone is allowed to vote; democracy will lose to those who procreate more.
- *The question of stereotyping. How is it that perception of the other can be elaborated through a pseudo-science in order to justify the social hierarchy as it is?*
- How much money the government and private/public institutions are funding this type of research into the stratification of the human race.
- Birth control, sterilization, abortion are not new concepts. Eugenics literature—black people were suspicious of white people. Run by black workers, but really run by white racists
- Was Margaret Sanger a racist? Why did she support it?
 - Roberts tries to defend her as a feminist. Although Sanger sided with Eugenics, she didn't think it was biological, but the social deficits, the lack of reproductive freedom.
- Race as opposed to sex—Roberts says that birth control could be in terms of race. What about today? Planning parenthood—as form of racial oppression on a group of people? Roberts is adamant that it is viewed in terms of race, not sex. *You can't separate debates of contraception with race and gender and social positions. You have the power, money, autonomy to make those kinds of decisions. But people I know in Haiti must rely on the husband or father of the child to survive, for survival, getting by each day*
- Socioeconomic factors—race—gender issue.
- Birth control focused on women. Major hormonal modifications.
- Form of oppression on society; racial genocide—wanted to eliminate blacks and other minorities. The social ills were still there—poor were reproducing, feeding poverty. Many doctors started to abuse their power. Underserved communities also threw in a sterilization process as well for women who were impoverished and had multiple children with a mathematical equation. People of high class who want sterilization—much more careful. Differential treatment from doctors to people of different classes.

- *Is it race or is it economics?*
- *Genetic screening: provided to whites or blacks. These tests to detect birth defects are not provided as equally across races and classes. We need to keep that in mind. The broader context of how reproduction, women's body, becomes target of government programs—ideas of nation, what kind of family are we trying to promote, how individual practices have larger national meaning (the idea of man-woman as a marriage), trying to forestall a perceived threat.*

Movie: The Lynchburg Story: Eugenic Sterilization in America. 1994, Stephen Trombley director.

1905-1972—sexual sterilization of children and teenagers at Lynchburg colony (1910), many from Blue Ridge Mountains, even entire families. Poor and considered a burden to the state. 17000 inmates, retarded and severely disabled, mostly “feeble-mindedness”—a dumping ground. Total came about 8,300 were sterilized.

A woman stayed in hospital for two weeks at age 11, was not given choice. When she was 16 she learned what it was about.

ACLU prepared to sue state of Virginia on behalf of victims. The state was embarrassed.

Model Sterilization Law, Laughlin biologist, compulsory sterilization of anyone with disease, paupers, homeless

Keep white race as pure as possible—stopped short of killing them—prevented them from having kids. Supposed to focus on hereditary mental retardation, but in fact it was poor young teenagers from broken homes, had children out of wedlock. Rounded up by welfare workers, put in the institution, solely for the purpose of being sterilized.

1934 sterilization law—theory of eugenics—understood as a “science of good heredity,” to promote good, healthy, productive people. Term coined by Galton, cousin of Darwin, to encourage survival of the fittest. Seen as the state's responsibility. Social reformers were seduced, on both left and right. HG Wells, Bernard Shaw, Winston Churchill would improve vigor of nation, reduce prison/welfare/hospital costs. Ideas were rejected by parliament.

“Some people are born to be a burden on the rest.”

Eugenics—became a household term. Hollywood talked about it as well.

It was radical, but in 1917, Buck v Bell, landmark case, the states became comfortable with wholesale sterilization. It ruled that under constitution it was acceptable to sterilize people. Buck—raped, committed to Lynchburg colony.

“Feeble-mindedness was inherited”—multiple generations locked away, Dr. Pretty masterminded Supreme Court appeal that eugenics sterilization law was constitutional. Audrey Strode—attorney who represented the Virginia colony, a lobbyist. Irving Whitehead, representing Buck, but had a conflict of interest.

Dr Laughlin never met Buck; part of Eugenics Office in New York, supported compulsory sterilization, gathered info. Acted as a professional witness in eugenic court cases.

“Buck family: these people belong to shiftless, ignorant white class.” A socially inadequate person, a social delinquent and that her family was the source of that,

“Something peculiar about the child.” Therefore, three generations labeled as imbecilic. Virginia constitutional law was ruled legal and could be applied others like the Bucks.

What about cases of poverty who were able to get out and other examples that did not follow the eugenics model?