‘It would be very much better if they never had children’: Eugenic Ideas and Policy-making in Edwardian Britain

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Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

'What I want to insist upon is, that a state of things in which not two out of five of the population below a certain standard of life are fit to bear arms is a national danger, which cannot be met by any mere schemes of enlistment, and that true patriotism requires that that danger should be recognised' (Miles, 1902: 81).[1] Thus warned General J F Maurice writing under an alias in 1902 and sounding the alarm that the surprisingly poor performance of the British military in the Second Boer War (1899-1902), and its rejection of a worrying number of volunteers as physically unfit, might signal the end of British hegemony. General Maurice's pronouncements launched a debate that would transform British politics in the twentieth century: the debate over physical deterioration and national efficiency.

His views were not entirely new. Investigators, philanthropists, doctors and others, had been warning for decades that the physical condition of the British people, and especially its poorer sections, was disconcerting. General Maurice's contribution was in explicitly linking these concerns to the burning issue of the day: the military setbacks of the Second Boer War and the realisation that Britain's predominance had become fragile (Gilbert, 1965). Amid this doubt over 'whether English ways of doing things were any longer invariably the best' (Ibid: 143), the Balfour government reluctantly initiated a series of thorough investigations on the various failings of British society and politics, among them the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1903-1904), the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded (1904-1908), and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1905-1909).

Amidst all this turmoil, a formerly tiny and disconnected collection of individuals managed to organise and carve its own niche in public discourse. Their views were eclectic and diverse, but they were united by the belief that the key to Britain's problems and to their solution lay primarily in the population's hereditary endowment, its genetic makeup. As Karl Pearson – professor of applied mathematics at UCL – theorised in the Huxley Lecture for 1903, 'there really does exist a lack of leaders of the highest intelligence, in

[1] Throughout the text, quotations of primary sources from the time period will be in *Calibri* font. Quotations of secondary sources will be in *Times New Roman*, like the rest of the text.

science, in the arts, in trade, even in politics … we have a paucity, just now, of the better intelligences to guide us, and of the moderate intelligences to be successfully guided. The only account we can give of this is that we are ceasing as a nation to breed intelligence as we did fifty to a hundred years ago. The mentally better stock in the nation is not reproducing itself at the same rate as it did of old; the less able, and the less energetic, are more fertile than the better stocks. The only remedy, if one be possible at all, is to alter the relative fertility of the good and the bad stocks in the community' (Cited in Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report, Vol.I*: pp.38-39, para.212) The group rallying around this view would go down in history as the *eugenics movement*, and their ideology, *eugenics*, would become a term which over the twentieth century would generate wild utopian hopes, dry bureaucratic analyses, heated scientific debate, and scathing moral condemnation.

Besides eugenic activity, what makes Britain in the Edwardian decade (1901-1910) so intriguing for the social scientist is the fact that the heated discussion around perceived imperial decline brought various ideas, old and new, to the forefront of public life. From social imperialism's 'national efficiency' to Fabian socialism, and from the new liberalism to eugenics, such ideas would underpin the major political and institutional innovations that would have a lasting impact on the British state. The period provides a rich and fertile soil for studying the importance of ideas, a question whose relevance is, of course, not confined to the Edwardians.

Ideas are everywhere when it comes to politics. They offer solutions to problems, motivate partisanship, and make politics more than just a popularity contest between individuals. Most political clashes involve a battle of ideas, and public policy, even if defended as purely 'practical', always reflects certain assumptions and goals, themselves defined by ideas. The influence of such ideas often goes unnoticed. As John Maynard Keynes famously wrote, '… the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.' (Keynes, 1957: 383).

Therefore, to understand politics and public policy, we have to answer a deceptively simple question: when are certain ideas adopted by policy-makers?

And what is the mechanism in play? The answers to these questions are far from obvious. Ideas may be everywhere, but this omnipresence can mean different things. The adoption of certain ideas in policy may indicate that policy-makers follow expert advice, yet it could equally reflect a purely instrumental use of ideas to achieve certain pre-existing goals, or indeed point to any number of alternative explanations. Uncovering exactly what is the causal mechanism in operation requires careful research, and should not be asserted hastily.

This project aims to answer the above questions by conducting a small-N (N=3) study of how eugenic ideas failed or succeeded in influencing British policy-makers in the Edwardian period. We classify our cases as positive or negative on the basis of whether their eventual report adopted eugenic ideas as to the causes and solutions of the main issue under consideration. Under this criterion, if a Commission heard a good deal of eugenic arguments but decided to reject them, then it would be a negative case of eugenic influence; similarly, if eugenic ideas were accepted only for a marginal component of the question but not for the main issue under consideration, the case would still be categorised as negative. A case is positive if the Report adopts eugenic views as to the causation of and solution to the main problem being examined. We will examine the following three cases where eugenic ideas interacted with policy-making: the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1903-1904), the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded (1904-1908), and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1905-1909). Of these, only the Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded accepted eugenic ideas; in the other two, policy-makers were unconvinced. Our task, our puzzle, so to speak, is to explain why eugenic ideas succeeded in the case of the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded but not the other two cases. We will provide a detailed description of our case selection strategy in the next chapter, but before that, let us clarify key terms such as ‘ideas’ and ‘eugenic ideas’.

The notion of an ‘idea’ is fairly intuitive and well-integrated in everyday discourse. But this familiarity can lead to imprecision, and we would do well to provide a definition which structures our thought and maintains consistency. Following James Walsh (2000), we use the term *idea* to refer to what Peter Hall defined as a *policy paradigm*, namely ‘a framework … that specified not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing’ (Hall, 1993: 279). They differ from the more abstract concept of *ideology*, for an *ideology* expresses certain goals but an *idea* defines a specific problem and

proposes an appropriate solution (Walsh, 2000: 485). Other definitions have been offered, but they are in fact very similar. Béland and Cox, for instance, define ideas as causal beliefs emerging from our interpretations of our surroundings and serving as guides for action (Béland & Cox, 2011: 3-4). It should be clear that, following Walsh and Hall, ideas of one form or another are virtually always present in politics and policy-making. Whether they exercise any independent impact of their own, and if so, how, remains an open question.

Having defined ideas, which of them can be considered *eugenic*? After all, eugenics was a broad church and, despite often having a conservative bias in Britain, it counted among its adherents people with such diverse views as the conservative Sir Ronald Fisher and the bolshevik H J Muller. Nevertheless, drawing on the work of David Barker, we can identify three core tenets that were common to virtually all British eugenic thought: (1) a wide range of social conditions – such as intelligence, alcoholism, and more – are seen as primarily genetic in origin, (2) a distinction is made between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' hereditary qualities, although the precise criteria varied among eugenists, and (3) it is argued that action must be taken to ensure the prevalence of 'desirable' qualities among the population and the restriction of the 'undesirable' ones (Barker, 1983: 197); the nature of such action ranged widely, from passing policy to reshaping morality or providing some other guidance to individuals.

At first sight, eugenics may seem a curious subject of study for the social scientist seeking to explain the influence of ideas on policy-makers, yet it is ideal for doing just that. Eugenic ideas are a clear case of policy-relevant ideas whose political fortunes varied widely across time, issues, and nations. Moreover, their advocates' claim to expertise touches on the question of the influence of experts on policy-makers, a burning issue in the era of Covid-19 and especially in the construction of a post-pandemic world. And yet, eugenics has been almost completely ignored by anglophone political scientists, with the exception of Michael Freeden, Randall Hansen, and Desmond King, even as it has been extensively studied by social historians and historians of science. This is partly because research on ideas and experts tends to focus on specific issue spaces, usually related to economic and environmental policy as well as international relations (Béland & Cox, 2011; Hall, 1993). This is especially true in the Epistemic Communities literature (Adler, 1992; Dunlop, 2009; King, 2005).[2] It might also be explained by the broader reluctance of social scientists

[2] The emphasis on the aforementioned fields is not surprising: as Yee (1996) explains, many scholars explain the causal effect of ideas by studying the influence of experts acting as their

who work on public policy to study illiberal social policies (Hansen & King, 2013: 6). Examining a field which is understudied in social science, such as eugenics, is more likely to yield novel and important contributions than yet another analysis of extensively surveyed fields such as economic policy-making. Last, but not least, recent advances in gene editing (Gallagher, 2019) have revived old debates, originally launched by eugenists, about what kind of hereditary endowment is 'desirable' or 'undesirable' and about how such judgments should affect social policy (Allen, 2001; Paul, 1995). A good grasp of the ways in which eugenists tried, with or without success, to promote their policies might enable us to be better understand and navigate these coming discussions.

How, then, do we account for why Edwardian eugenics succeeded on the issue of the feeble-minded but not in discussions on physical deterioration and the poor laws? Briefly put, we argue that a virtually infinite number of potential ideas on dealing with a problem exists, yet only a finite and sometimes small subset of these will actually reach policy-makers as a plausible alternative to be considered. We focus on two filters that many ideas in general, and Edwardian eugenics in particular, must pass through in the modern era to have any hopes of being adopted: first, we content that the creation of a network of experts supporting an idea is necessary– but by no means sufficient – for its adoption, as these experts provide not only legitimacy but also transform speculative and sometimes vague ideas into persuasively argued theories and concrete policy proposals. Second, we note that ideas which are contrary to the prevailing political culture may struggle to appeal to policy-makers even if they do have an expert network behind them, as they breach core values and norms, unless they can align themselves with exceptions to these norms and values more convincingly than competing ideas. Concerning our cases, eugenics failed in the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration because an expert network supporting it had not yet formed. This network would quickly come into being and affect both of our other two cases, but the variation between these two is to be attributed to political culture: eugenics was an illiberal social policy trying to succeed in a predominantly liberal political culture. Eugenists convincingly claimed that the question of mental deficiency and feeble-mindedness was exempt from liberal norms and values in ways that aligned with their hereditarianism, but were unable to do so with regards to unemployment and poverty relief.

carriers, and it is argued that these experts – and therefore the ideas they hold – have a stronger impact in highly technical fields, such as environmental policy or monetary policy.

The Thesis will proceed as follows. We begin by explaining the logic of our case selection strategy in the 'Case Selection' chapter, and give a description of the sources and methods we have used to answer our research puzzle in our 'Sources and Methods' chapter. We then provide an overview of existing theories which have been put forward to account for the success of eugenic ideas in the 'Literature Review', evaluate their strengths and inadequacies, and subject them to Process-Tracing tests. We will attempt to overcome the limitations of existing work in our 'Theoretical Framework' chapter, where we will expand on the theory presented above, drawing from the Epistemic Communities literature as well as from Desmond King's work on illiberal social policy. The next two chapters are our empirical chapters, where we apply and test our theory. The first, 'From Speculation to Action Plan', compares the negative case of Physical Deterioration with the positive case of the Feeble-Minded, and establishes the necessity of expert networks. We trace the formation of the British eugenics Epistemic Community, showing that its non-existence at the time of the Physical Deterioration debate condemned eugenics to failure, and we explore the crucial impact that its formation and activity would have on the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded. The second empirical chapter, 'Fetters of Liberty', stresses the importance of political culture by comparing the positive case of the Commission on the Feeble-Minded to the negative case of the Commission on the Poor Laws. The chapter explains why eugenics was antagonistic to core values of the predominant liberal political culture, and how this problem was overcome in the case of the Feeble-Minded but not in the case of the Poor Laws, due to the very nature of eugenic ideas and of the issues under consideration. Finally, the Epilogue restates the argument and underlines our contributions to social scientific knowledge, before going on to warn the reader that the study of the interactions of ideas, experts, and policy-makers might be more relevant than ever in the era of the post-Covid 'New Normal', and that eugenic ideas specifically might reappear in public discourse in this era of revolutionary advances in genetics.

Case Selection

This project deviates from previous comparative work on eugenics in that it aims to analyse variation across cases coming from the same country rather than cross-nationally. Restricting ourselves to a single nation within a short time-span presents two advantages. First, we can hold constant a number of potentially important confounding variables, such as institutional variance, nation-specific historical events, and socio-economic conditions. This is key, as even excellent cross-national comparisons cannot always adequately control for such factors and the resulting omitted variable bias can undermine their validity. For instance, the Hansen and King (2001) comparison of the adoption of eugenics in the United States and their rejection in Britain is insightful and perceptive, but cannot address potential confounders such as political culture or institutional variance. The United States adopted a series of illiberal social policies on the state or federal level which Britain did not, such as alcohol prohibition, marital and residential racial segregation, as well as eugenic sterilisation and immigration restriction, and this suggests that there might be something about the political culture or institutions of the United States more broadly, rather than eugenics specifically, that drove the adoption of this particular form of illiberal social policy. Second, we can explore variation across cases from the same nation, which cross-national comparisons by their design struggle to understand, as they tend to classify a certain nation as 'positive' or 'negative' on the whole. An example of this limitation is Porter's (1999) comparison of the adoption of eugenic sterilisation in Sweden and its rejection in Britain, which is explained by differences in the institutionalisation of racial or genetic science and the access of experts to policy-makers. While these factors are important, they cannot explain why Britain is not uniformly a negative case when it comes to eugenic influence on policy-making. Selecting only British cases is the key to solving this puzzle.

Even if we restrict our inquiry to cases drawn from Britain, the universe of cases is large, and spans much of the twentieth century, beginning roughly with the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1903-1904) and extending at least until the Committee on Human Artificial Insemination appointed in 1958, and possibly even beyond that. As mentioned above, we have limited ourselves to a short time period, for this is the only way to hold constant certain confounding variables related to socioeconomic conditions and exogenous shocks in the form of historical events. It is the contention of this

project that the most suitable period is the first decade of the twentieth century, the Edwardian decade.

The 1900s are ideal for studying the influence of eugenic ideas on policy-making. The underperformance of the British military in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) triggered a re-evaluation of existing institutions, policies, and values. This is not to say we adopt the controversial idea of this constituting a full-blown 'Edwardian crisis'; but heightened concerns did lead policy-makers to seek ideas, new or old, to help them resolve a series of issues. Consequently, this period saw the landmark New Liberal reforms and the dynamic presence of groups willing to push forward policy-relevant ideas, such as the Fabian Socialists, the New Liberals, and, of course, the eugenists. The Edwardian period has indeed been identified by multiple historians as the peak of eugenics' influence on British politics (Farrall, 1970; MacKenzie, 1976; Searle, 1973, 1979), which makes the negative cases even more intriguing. We can perhaps view the period as a 'critical juncture', a moment of flux when usual structural constraints are relaxed and contingency, actors, and their ideas become unusually important (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Finally, concentrating our cases in the period 1903-1909 allows us to rule out major external shocks, such as wars, as being the key cause of variation: all cases occur after the Second Boer War but before the First World War.

In addition to the aforementioned considerations, we followed Federico Varese (2011) in making the *Possibility Principle* a fundamental criterion of our case selection. In its original formulation, the Possibility Principle holds that the universe of negative cases should include only cases where the outcome of interest was really possible (Mahoney & Goertz, 2004: 653-654). For our purposes, this means showing that policy-makers were aware of eugenic ideas as a potential explanation of the issues being examined. We will do so in our empirical chapters, where we will explain what positions the eugenists held on the three cases we consider and how the Commissioners interacted with eugenics and other alternative explanations.

Finally, a note on the nature of Royal Commissions is needed, as they have fallen out of date in the United Kingdom since the 1980s and thus even a politically informed reader may be confused by the term. The House of Lords Library explains that 'A royal commission is a type of committee appointed for a specific investigatory or advisory purpose. The Queen appoints its members

on the Government's advice. Governments have often appointed royal commissions to address high-profile social concerns, issues that may be controversial, or matters of national importance. Royal commissions typically work by gathering evidence and producing a report. It is then up to the Government of the day to decide how to respond and whether to act on any of the recommendations' (Newson, 2020). In other words, Royal Commissions (as well as Departmental Committees) are set up by governments with specific terms of reference setting out their task, and are expected to consult expert opinion and produce an informed report, which advises – but does not compel – the government as to the proper course of action. Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees are thus similar in their composition, the non-binding, consultative nature of their eventual report, and their method of inquiry. The difference between the two is that Departmental Committees tend to have a lower profile and to deal with more restricted issues than Royal Commissions (Butler & Freeman, 1969). Nevertheless, our research design has unit homogeneity, as the terms of reference of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration were expanded in order to avoid a further Royal Commission on the issue, essentially turning it into a Royal Commission in all but name (Gilbert, 1965: 147). We should note that by selecting Royal Commissions as our units, we are examining a particular kind of exchange between idea-carrying experts and policy-makers, one that is similar to public inquiries and departmental committees on account of their being non-party investigative bodies appointed by the government to analyse a particular development and recommend certain solutions. Our findings need not apply to all forms of interaction between ideas and policy-makers, such as those that happen in parliamentary committees and debates or in the selection of ideas to be included in manifesto commitments, or other cases.

In this chapter, we will explain how we reached our judgment of classifying our cases as positive or negative; for more detailed analysis and historical context please refer to the empirical chapters. A brief summary of key facts about our cases can be found in Table 1 (see Appendix).

Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration

The discussions surrounding the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration helped launch eugenic concepts in Edwardian political discourse; nevertheless, the Committee's actual Report rejected eugenic explanations. Eugenists asserted that there was a progressive deterioration in national

physique due to the differential birth rate, that is, the combination of low fertility of the 'fittest' and high fertility of the 'unfit', which was hypothesised to lower the average standard of the population over time. In fact, as has been frequently noted by historians, the Committee even rejected the idea that there had been progressive deterioration in the last few decades, and claimed that what problems did exist were explained by environmental factors, such as nutrition, urbanisation, industrial conditions, ignorance, and poverty (Harris, 1994; Mazumdar, 1992). The Report stated that 'the impressions gathered from the great majority of the witnesses examined do not support the belief that there is any general progressive physical deterioration' (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report*, *Vol.I*: p.13, para.68), and proceeds to quote the testimony of the strongly anti-hereditarian Dr Eichholz at length, including this representative statement: 'While there are, unfortunately, very abundant signs of physical defect traceable to neglect, poverty, and ignorance, it is not possible to obtain any satisfactory or conclusive evidence of hereditary physical deterioration … Other than the well-known specifically hereditary diseases which *affect poor and well-to-do alike*, there appears to be very little real evidence on the pre-natal side to account for the widespread physical degeneracy among the poorer population' (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.14, para.69). Italics in the original text of the Report).

Later in the Report, several potential causes are examined individually, with heredity among them. Yet the eugenic views of Professor Karl Pearson, who emphasised differential fertility, are reported as having received mixed reaction among witnesses. The Report ultimately concludes that there are no figures available to establish even the presence of this alleged differential fertility, much less its effects, and that the further discussion of Professor Pearson's hereditarianism was pointless unless new data could prove his assertions (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report, Vol.I*: pp.38-39). As a result, heredity was overlooked whereas environmental factors were examined in detail. The Report devotes only two pages to the eugenic viewpoint, as opposed to fifteen for the effects of urbanisation alone; and of the over thirty pages detailing the conditions of children, only one is devoted to heredity, mostly rejecting the view that its effects are noticeable except in some transmissible effects of syphilis or alcoholism (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.46-47). In short, both the literature and the primary sources suggest that the Committee on Physical Deterioration did not ultimately embrace eugenic ideas.

Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded

The Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded is a positive case of eugenic influence, as its Report accepted eugenists' claims of a hereditary causation of feeble-mindedness and their proposal of transferring the feeble-minded to special institutions where they would be unable to reproduce. The Commissioners acknowledged that expert opinion on the cause of feeble-mindedness was split in two camps: (1) the hereditarians, and (2) the environmentalists. They make clear which side they think is dominant: 'The first of these doctrines is held, it should be said, by the large majority of witnesses' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Report, Vol.VIII*: p.181, para.545). They further explain that they have followed the hereditarian view: 'Among thirty-five witnesses (besides many others who have merely touched on the subject) who have expressed opinions on the part played by heredity in the production of mentally defective individuals, twenty-five attach supreme importance to the fact that in a very large proportion of cases of mental defect there is a history of mental defect in the parents or near ancestors' (Ibid, *Vol.VIII*: p.181, para.547).

The Commissioners then link this argument for a hereditary causation to the view that the feeble-minded have above average fertility (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Report, Vol.VIII*: p.185, para.551), and come to the following pro-eugenic conclusions: '(1) That both on the grounds of fact and of theory there is the highest degree of probability that "feeble-mindedness" is usually spontaneous in origin—that is not due to influences acting on the parent—and tends strongly to be inherited. (2) That, especially in view of the evidence concerning fertility, the prevention of mentally defective persons from becoming parents would tend largely to diminish the number of such persons in population. (3) That the evidence for these conclusions strongly supports measures, which on other grounds are of pressing importance, for placing mentally defective persons, men and women, who are living at large and uncontrolled, in institutions where they will be employed and detained; and in this, and in other ways, kept under effectual supervision so long as may be necessary' (Ibid, *Vol.VIII*: p.185, para.553).

These statements were embraced by the Eugenics Education Society, and Montague Crackanthorpe, its President, touched on the Royal Commission on Feeble-Mindedness in his 5 May, 1910 Presidential Address. In particular, Crackanthorpe approved of the acceptance of heredity as the primary cause of

feeble-mindedness, and the suggestion to place the feeble-minded 'in appropriate institutions, homes, or colonies, where they may find occupation adapted to their slender powers' and where 'they must not be allowed to increase and multiply and so swell our national burden and impair our national efficiency' (Eugenics Education Society, 1910: p.9).

In conclusion, the Royal Commission on Feeble-Mindedness was clearly a positive case, as eugenic ideas were taken up by the Report, both to explain the cause of feeble-mindedness and as a guide for the proposed measures. This evaluation is not original or controversial, but the standard line in the literature (Barker, 1989; Mazumdar 1992; Searle, 1973).

Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress

The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress is slightly different from our other cases in that it produced two reports: the 'Majority Report', signed by 14 of the 18 Commissioners, and the 'Minority Report' signed by the remaining four. The former was heavily influenced by the views of the Charity Organisation Society: six of the signatories were members of the Society, including its Secretary, C S Loch. The latter was instead influenced by Fabian Socialism, as is obvious both in its content and in the composition of its signatories, led by Beatrice Webb, who along with her husband Sidney Webb was a central figure of the Fabian Society. However, neither report was shaped by eugenic ideas, and thus this Royal Commission is uniformly a negative case. They were indeed deemed unsatisfactory by Crackanthorpe in his aforementioned 1910 Presidential Address, where he discussed the Commission on the Poor Laws at length, arguing that both the Majority and the Minority Report ignored eugenic principles and pressing for an alternative solution which would be informed by eugenics (Eugenics Education Society, 1910: pp.9-16). Lest we think that Crackanthorpe was merely exaggerating, we should look into the Reports themselves.

That the Majority Report does not endorse eugenics becomes clear in Part IV of the Majority Report, particularly in Chapter 10, which deals with 'The Causes of Pauperism' (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: pp.219-232). Throughout the chapter, the focus is squarely on issues such as intemperance, low wages, poor

habits of spending and saving, and the discrimination against the elderly in the labour market. The Report quotes the following evidence submitted by Frederick Wright, a relieving officer at Leeds, as representative of the causes of pauperism in large towns: 'The most important causes of pauperism are: (a) Old age; (b) the early marriage of persons dependent upon casual labour. Large families are the rule. Owing to the low wages earned no provision can be made to meet such contingencies as non-employment, sickness, or of imprisonment for debt. The latter is a crying scandal, and I have had to relieve the families of hard-working respectable men who have been committed for long period on non-compliance of a county court judge's order for a few shillings. . . (c) Imprisonment for criminal offences is a large factor in pauperism; (d) venereal disease also contributes largely; much of the misery entailed by this disease would be obviated if it were made notifiable. Its ramifications are appalling, (e) Intemperance is another contribution, and in this I find females to be the worst offenders. Many men are perforce paupers by the intemperance of their wives… (f) Indiscriminate relief by private persons and religious bodies also contributes largely to pauperism, and cases have occurred where relief has been in the first instance given in this manner and the recipients eventually become confirmed paupers, (g) Cases are not wanting to show that pauperism is hereditary—two generations being quite common, and third generations occasionally occur.' (Ibid: 221).

Heredity is completely ignored in the rest of the Chapter apart from this very brief mention; by contrast, the Commissioners engage in extensive and detailed discussion of the other causes, such as intemperance and ill-health. What is more, it is not clear whether even this reference to 'heredity' refers to genetic defects, as eugenists would have it, or negative parental influence, or even inherited social position. It is therefore unsurprising that no eugenically-informed recommendations are made.

The Minority Report is hardly more sympathetic to eugenics, expressing very clearly a view that it is the prevailing socioeconomic system rather than the defects of paupers themselves which produced pauperism: 'If we were suddenly relieved of the whole of the present incubus, without any change in the conditions, we should, within ten or twelve years, have just as many Unemployable on our hands as ever' (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: p.1162).

This, of course, is hardly surprising given the Fabian socialist ideology of its authors. The only time when the Report interacts with eugenic ideas is when pointing out that among the many problems of the existing system of poor-relief is 'the continued procreation of the feeble-minded' (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: p.1220). This does not render the Report 'eugenic'. It was only one among very many arguments used against the existing system of poor relief, with the issue of heredity given no further consideration. Moreover, this already brief mention focuses solely on feeble-mindedness, the one issue where eugenic ideas had already been accepted and promoted by the Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded just a year before. Eugenics are not extended to pauperism, the topic which this Royal Commission investigates. We can thus safely conclude that neither Report was based on eugenic ideas.

Sources and Method

Both primary and secondary sources were used to answer our research question. This project has attempted to integrate two traditions in the literature: (1)a social science tradition on ideas, experts and policy, which provides the theoretical framework needed to explain relationships of cause and effect and allows us to situate this project in broader debates that extend well beyond Edwardian Britain, and (2)a historical, more descriptive tradition on Edwardian Britain and the history of science and eugenics in Britain, which provides a solid empirical basis on which to ground our theorising.

Primary sources were consulted extensively, for we believe that referring to them is absolutely necessary when analysing historical cases. Two key arguments support this claim: first, as Goldthorpe (1991) and Lustick (1996) remind us, social scientists should not uncritically draw from the secondary historical literature as if it merely furnished 'data points', 'facts' out of which social scientific theories can be woven; rather, they must approach historical work critically, as the imperfect survival of sources on one hand, and the theoretical and perhaps political predilections of the historians themselves on the other, mean that there will always be a layer of *interpretation* in historical work and, consequently, a competition between clashing interpretations. Studying the primary sources ourselves helps us make an informed choice between different interpretations and to use information provided by various scholars more critically, as we are more familiar with the data on which their claims are based. Second, historical knowledge is indispensable for testing various theories and especially causal mechanisms (Kreuzer, 2010). Suppose there is a strong correlation between a given explanatory variable X and an outcome variable Y. It is intuitively sound and the literature has posited a causal effect. But this relationship between X and Y might have many potential mechanisms, some of them mutually exclusive, with diverging observable implications. Primary sources are often indispensable for adjudicating between these mechanisms, for they contain the traces left by the mechanism in operation. Primary sources have a similar function in theory-testing. For instance, in all three of our cases, the Report adopts the views of the majority of witnesses. This is compatible with many different explanations: one could argue that this is a case of *social learning*, where witnesses and experts exercise considerable influence quite outside of power struggles; it could equally be that the witnesses were carefully selected by the Commissioners to reflect their a priori preferences. Deciding between the theories is virtually impossible without

examining the historical sources themselves. These sources, then, can be used in conjunction with the literature to conduct Process-Tracing tests which will determine the presence of the causal mechanism in action, in a way that sole reliance on secondary sources would not allow.

Specifically, the primary sources consulted here were:

- The Reports and Minutes of Evidence produced by the Committees and Commissions which form our three cases, which are available in digital form in the U.K. Parliamentary Papers and are accessible via the Bodleian Libraries.
- Certain Annual Reports of the Eugenics Society, which are available in digitised form through the Wellcome Library.
- Articles in the *Eugenics Review*, the journal of the Eugenics Society, whose volumes are available online thanks to the National Center for Biotechnology Information of the U.S. National Library of Medicine.

I should make clear that it was impossible to analyse the entirety of the Minutes of Evidence across all three cases, as that would include studying the testimony of over 1,616 witnesses, spanning over 60 volumes and thousands upon thousands of pages. I did glance over and read much of the testimony, but I decided to thoroughly study only 61 witnesses, listed in Table 2 (see Appendix). These were selected on the basis of two criteria: first and foremost, I chose witnesses that appeared in at least two of the cases. The reasons were theoretical, namely helping us discover whether the same individual witnesses actually changed their view regarding the importance of heredity across the three cases, which as we shall see enables us to test certain theories and mechanisms. Second, I also included a handful of witnesses who only appear in one case but fulfilled at least one of the following criteria: (a) they did not merely mention heredity in passing but their evidence was listed in the Report as being *about* the question of environmental versus hereditary influences; (b) they appear in a second or third case not as witnesses but as Committee Members or Commissioners; (c) they were mentioned by the report as being very important for the relevant claims made in said report (as was the case with Dr Tredgold, whose evidence was instrumental in convincing the Commission on the Feeble-Minded that feeble-mindedness has a hereditary cause). The resulting list of witnesses considered can be found in Table 2 (see Appendix). This selection strategy is not perfect, but any selection was bound to be

imperfect, and at least such transparency allows anyone to check my claims and contest this choice of sample.

Needless to say, not all witnesses called by a Commission had the same views, and even the same individuals did not always maintain identical opinions across their testimonies to different Commissions. The testimony of witnesses to each Committee or Commission may take one of the following seven values, based on their views as to the causes of the problems under consideration:

- *Hereditarian*: witness stresses heredity, and rejects, downplays or simply ignores environmental factors. Even if environmental influence is acknowledged, heredity is seen as accounting for a large majority of cases and problems.
- *Primarily hereditarian*: witness acknowledges importance of environmental causes, but emphasises heredity.
- *Both environment and heredity*: witness refers to both environmental and hereditary causes, but does not attempt to prioritise one over the other.
- *Primarily environmentalist*: witness recognises the relevance of heredity but emphasises environmental factors. Note that this may mean that the role of heredity is acknowledged for a specific, restricted facet of the issue under consideration (e.g. syphilis as a facet of physical deterioration) but will not be extended to other facets or the issue as a whole, with the result that environment is still the centre of attention.
- *Environmentalist*: witness stresses environmental factors, and rejects, downplays or simply ignores heredity. Even if hereditary influence is acknowledged, environmental factors are seen as accounting for a large majority of cases and problems.
- *Accidentalist*: the incidence of the phenomenon does not depend on either environmental or hereditary factors, and must be considered random.
- *Does not address causes*: witness does not address causation.

The reader will notice that two further Tables are included in the Appendix, which are subsets of our general sample in Table 2. Three further selection mechanisms were used to derive these subsets: (1)testimonies which were unclear or took the value ‘Does not address causes’ have been excluded from Tables 3 and 4, excluding testimonies where we would have to make overly subjective valuations; (2) testimonies with the value ‘Does not address causes’ have been included only if the specific witness addresses their views on causation in a different case, thus potentially signalling pertinent intellectual

shifts or awakenings; (3) Table 4 further restricts the sample to witnesses who express views on causation in at least two of our cases. The sample in Table 4 is therefore small but it enables us to test various hypotheses much more rigorously, for example on whether the same witnesses changed their minds over time due to the activities of an Epistemic Community, or on whether there are issue-space peculiarities which make witnesses behave differently across cases.

Literature Review

Most of the scholarship on eugenics is produced by historians of science and has a strong descriptive bent as well as making some theoretical contributions. It is typical in this tradition to point to macro-level trends and processes, such as industrialisation, urbanisation, fertility decline, the rise of the biological and social sciences, migration, and Darwinism and other forms of evolutionary thought, in order to account for the rise of eugenics. These are all true and incisive, yet they do not explain the adoption or rejection of eugenics in policy at any particular point. As we have already seen, even in the span of a single decade in just one country, where these macro-factors are very similar, we observe variation. The cross-national variation is even more pronounced. The important thing to remember is that these factors by no means led deterministically to the rise of eugenics. They are in effect *scope conditions*, delimiting the boundaries of the universe of *relevant* cases where eugenic ideas, could, potentially, exert an influence. Obviously, eugenics was more influential in Britain after the late Victorian period and the industrialisation, urbanisation, and fertility decline it brought, than it was in the Elizabethan period. But scope conditions only take us so far as stating that eugenics became relevant from the late 19th century onwards – explaining variation within that time period requires emphasis on more meso- and micro-level factors. It is precisely this shortcoming of the existing scholarship that we attempt to overcome with this project.

To be sure, certain historians and the few social scientists who study eugenics have noted precisely this issue and attempted to overcome the shortcomings of macro-level approaches. While they do not often consciously attempt a link with the social scientific literature on the impact of ideas on politics, they inadvertently follow the three main approaches in the ideational literature as identified by Walsh: (a)*Epiphenomenality*, (b)*Institutionalism*, and (c)*Social learning* (Walsh, 2000: 484). All of these approaches offer valuable insights and bring pertinent variables and processes to our attention. However, as we shall demonstrate, they do not by themselves provide a satisfactory account of the observed variation in the influence of eugenics on policy in Edwardian Britain.

Instrumentalism

'Instrumentalism' or 'epiphenomenality' in the ideational literature is the view that ideas are merely tools used instrumentally by actors to promote their interests. Ideas therefore do not have much independent impact; they are adopted or rejected based on whether they further actors' interests. Concerning eugenics, this line of thought is best expressed in Garland Allen's Marxist analysis of the early-twentieth century eugenics movement in the United States (Allen, 1975; 1987; 2001) which contends that it was 'at heart a social, political and economic phenomenon arising from the struggle between classes' (Allen, 1975: 39). Allen argues that science and technology throughout human history is controlled by the ruling elites; in the case of the American eugenics movement, these ruling elites were the economic elites, namely wealthy businessmen and investors, who funded eugenic research and joined as lay members. Their funding of eugenics was not random, but aimed to promote their interests, as eugenics promised to expand social control over the working class and establish a biological basis of inequality which would confront the increasing radicalism of the working class in the turn of the century United States. Of course, elites did not *create* eugenics; but they selected scientists with eugenic ideas and funded them generously (Ibid). There is no counterpart to Allen's clear, Marxist model on British eugenics. MacKenzie's influential work *Statistics in Britain* (MacKenzie, 1981) has been presented as a 'class model' of British eugenics by Weingart (1999a: 164), yet this is inaccurate, as MacKenzie does not seek to explain the influence of eugenics on policy and the sources of such influence, but rather how the social position and outlook of three *individual* scientists (Sir Francis Galton, Karl Pearson, and Sir Ronald A Fisher) led them to embrace eugenics, which in turn influenced the content of their scientific work on statistics (MacKenzie, 1981). Thus, we have to focus on Allen's model, and see how it applies to the Edwardian eugenics movement. Specifically, we can treat the following observable implications of Allen's theory as 'Hoop Tests', tests which a theory must pass to be valid, but which by themselves do not provide sufficient proof for the theory:

Test 1: economic elites (i.e. prominent businessmen, bankers, investors and landowners) can be easily found in the membership of the Eugenics Education Society, the lay wing of the eugenic movement.

Test 2: the 'Biometric School' – the intellectual wing of the eugenics movement – received a large part of its funding from these economic elites.

The available evidence suggests that none of the above are observed. Let us start with Test 1. Farrall's pioneering study of the English Eugenics movement shows that both the membership and the Council of the Eugenics Education Society were drawn almost exclusively from the professional middle class. The dominance of academics and medical men among members is crystal-clear, while businessmen are conspicuous by their absence – only one businessman could be identified –and this was further corroborated by random sampling where no businessman or banker was found (Farrall, 1970: 217-226). These findings received additional confirmation by MacKenzie, who further analysed the membership of the Society's Council for 1914, and concurred that 'the Society's activists were drawn almost exclusively from the professional middle class' (MacKenzie, 1981: p.21-23). This almost exclusive membership of the professional middle classes is widely accepted in the literature, and in fact the main disagreement on the membership of the British eugenics movement concerns whether it is meaningful to draw a distinction between various sectors within the professional middle classes (Bland & Hall, 2010; MacKenzie, 1981; Searle, 1981). With regards to Test 2, Farrall also provided an in-depth analysis of the sources of funding of the Biometric School, and shows that in the period 1903-1910, 97% of the funding of the Galton and Biometric Laboratories came from two sources: 1)Sir Francis Galton, the founder of the eugenics movement, and 2)The Worshipful Company of Drapers (Farrall, 1970: 126-138). Galton's support cannot be seen as sufficient proof of economic elites' support for eugenics, as he was a single individual and also the father of the eugenics movement; his support was thus probably the product of personal interest than class interests, and the absence of funding from any other wealthy Britons indicates that this was indeed so. And lest the Drapers' funding be considered 'business support for eugenics', it should be pointed out that it came through a grant to University College– one of the Company's many grants to educational institutions in London – which was not earmarked for eugenics but which University College awarded to Pearson's Department of Applied Mathematics due to Pearson's pioneering work in mathematical statistics, not eugenics (Ibid: 129-131). After the First World War, the government started funding the Galton and Biometric Laboratories, not due to interest in eugenics per se but because the war had greatly expanded the state's demand for statisticians and Pearson's Department of Applied Mathematics was at the time the only institute in Britain providing training in modern statistics (Farrall, 1970: 140-141; MacKenzie, 1981: 101-102). Given the above evidence, we can safely conclude that Allen's model, while intelligent and possibly valuable for the United States, fails to pass the hoop tests and thus is not applicable to the British eugenics movement.

There is another sharp argument which an instrumentalist could use to explain why the Reports of Commissions and Committees adopted eugenic ideas, even though it is not encountered in the literature: that rather than focusing on how interests affected the eugenists, we should focus on the political interests influencing the Commissioners and Committee members. More specifically, since the members of the Committees and Commissions were selected by the incumbent administration, they could have been predisposed to a position favouring that government, and they might have selected or judged witnesses accordingly. This argument can be tested using the following Hoop Test:

Test 3: in all cases, the Commissions and Committees produced reports that were in line with the views and desires of the governments which appointed them.

This theory fails the above Hoop Test. When the Unionist Balfour government appointed the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in September 1903, it purposively created a low-ranking committee made up of civil servants to appease critics while postponing any action. The Local Government Board and Home Office in fact wanted no investigation at all, and the terms of reference of the Committee were enlarged to avoid having to appoint a Royal Commission on the same issue. Instead of a docile document absolving the government of action and denying any need for action, the Physical Deterioration Report was a 'full, honest, and frightening report revealing physical weakness among the working class', most of which was within the government's power to address, thus directly challenging the Unionists' opposition to social reformism (Gilbert, 1965). In fact, all three cases we study were appointed by the Balfour government, and yet still exhibited variation.

Given the failure of instrumentalist approaches to this question, it is imperative to examine other approaches.

Institutionalism

Rather than class interests, many scholars emphasise the interaction between ideas and institutions, particularly how ideas perpetuate their influence by being

'encased' within institutions or how existing institutions can block or facilitate the adoption of certain new ideas. Porter's work on British eugenics falls in the latter camp. She argues that eugenics in Edwardian Britain failed to achieve much of a policy impact largely because of the strong institutional position of medical officers who were strongly attached to environmental measures and openly in conflict with eugenists; their position within the state apparatus gave them a direct and constant access to policy-makers that the eugenists lacked (Porter, 1991). In a comparison between the interwar eugenic pro-sterilisation campaigns in Sweden (which succeeded) and Britain (which failed), she explains the variation by, among other factors, the strong pre-WW1 institutionalisation of racial and genetic research in Sweden compared to its weakness in Britain, which again influenced the access that experts committed to hereditarian explanations had to policy-makers and broader public consciousness (Porter, 1999). Porter's argument is not so much wrong as unhelpful in explaining the variation we examine here. By treating Britain as a uniformly 'negative case' of eugenic influence, Porter usefully highlights some constants that held back such ideas but cannot sufficiently account for the variation we observe across cases in Edwardian Britain. In other words, this model can account for negative cases of eugenic influence on British policy; it can even account for why such influence was weaker in Britain than in other nations; but it does not help us understand variation in Britain itself.

Social learning

In his influential study of social policy in Britain and Sweden, Hugh Heclo introduced the concept of *social learning*. Heclo believed that policy-making is not just a struggle between competing groups, but 'a form of collective puzzlement on society's behalf' (Heclo, 1974: 305). While this original formulation stresses the importance of ideas, Peter Hall points out that the mechanism is unspecified and the state is depicted as virtually autonomous from societal context (Hall, 1993: p.276). King and Hansen note that, for all its ambiguity, social learning is characterised by three core attributes: (1)intellectual machinations in the policy-making process, (2)reaction to previous policy, (3)central place for 'the expert' (King & Hansen, 1999: 79). They use a social learning approach to explain the influence of British eugenics in policy-making by focusing on the Brock Committee (1932-1934), a committee appointed by the minister of health to evaluate the sterilisation of the 'feeble-minded' in England and Wales, and they argue that the possession of a radical social agenda is a prerequisite to learning: in the case of the Brock Committee, certain elements in the state sought to solve perceived past failures by importing ideas from the Eugenics Society (Ibid). Their study is insightful,

but it is focused on a single positive case, and as such they do not provide a broader theory of why specific ideas are adopted through social learning in some cases but not in others, or why a certain set of ideas A as opposed to a rival set of ideas B is selected when social learning occurs. If at this point readers do not completely understand what social learning would actually entail, they have stumbled on the problem of this approach: it is often too vague and unspecified, and while it can be used to explain the causal mechanism operating in positive cases, it does not have much to offer when it comes to explaining variation in outcome.

An issue-space effect?

There is, however, a fourth approach, which has remained rare and underdeveloped. For some historians of Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, such as Jose Harris, the key question on Edwardian eugenics' interaction with policy is why, while not influential on the whole, it succeeded in one particular issue space, namely mental deficiency and feeble-mindedness: 'Quite why the perception of feeble-mindedness differed so markedly from that of other early twentieth-century social problems merits closer investigation' (Harris, 1994: 245). Indeed, it seems particularly striking that almost all the political successes of British eugenics, both in the Edwardian period as well as in the interwar, were concentrated on that one social question. Could it be that there was something special about mental deficiency which made the reception of hereditarian ideas easier? The best way to establish this conclusively would be to observe the very same people who oppose or ignore hereditarian ideas in other questions embracing them in the case of mental deficiency. We can therefore design the following Smoking Gun Test, that is, a test that would provide sufficient evidence for this theory:

Test 4: *the same decision-makers and witnesses should reject or ignore hereditarianism in other cases but accept it for feeble-mindedness.*

To carry out this test we can use Table 4 (see Appendix), which contains all 16 witnesses who expressed an identifiable position on the causes of the phenomena under consideration in at least two of our cases, thus enabling comparison of their position across different issues. Recall that, according to our selection criteria for witnesses, *all* of the witnesses who testified in at least two cases were included in our general sample in Table 2. Table 4 is much more

restricted, excluding from the general sample all those who failed to express identifiable positions on causality in at least two of our cases, in order to avoid having to offer overly subjective interpretations: 16 witnesses expressed identifiable causal views in two or more of our cases, forming Table 4, and 11 of them testified to the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded, serving as our sample for this test. Of them, 9/11 adopted a more hereditarian position during the Commission on Feeble-Mindedness compared to their testimony in other cases. Of the remaining two, one – Dr Hutchison – shifts to an 'accidentalist' position on feeble-mindedness, which views its incidence as purely random, thus existing outside of the 'nature-nurture' debate (it should be said he is the only witness examined here who expressed this view, and was thus received with scepticism from the Commission). The other, Dr Eichholz, is in fact the only witness to remain equally environmentalist on feeble-mindedness as on other issues. In short, *nine of the 11 witnesses who expressed clearly identifiable causal views in testimony to the Commission on Feeble-Mindedness and at least one other case were more hereditarian on the issue of feeble-mindedness, and only one witness – Dr Eichholz – remained equally environmentalist on the issue. None shifted to a more environmentalist position on feeble-mindedness.*

The special nature of feeble-mindedness can also be seen in the testimony and Report of the Commission on the Poor Laws, where the same Commissioners and Witnesses who would opt for a strongly or softly environmental outlook would concede heredity specifically for the issue of feeble-mindedness, but not extend this recognition of heredity to any of the many other facets of pauperism. For instance, Maria Poole and John Milson Rhodes, classified as 'primarily environmentalist' in their Poor Law testimony, adopt an environmental explanation for pauperism except for a single facet of the issue, feeble-mindedness, where heredity is acknowledged (Com. on Poor Laws, *Vol.III*: p.410; *Vol.IV*: p.146). Similarly, both the Minority and the Majority Reports follow the hereditarianism and eugenic outlook of the Royal Commission on Feeble-Mindedness for their description of feeble-mindedness, even though they both reject the hereditarian argument for every other aspect of the issue of pauperism, as we have already explained in our case selection chapter. C S Loch, the only person to serve as a Commissioner in more than one of the Commissions examined here (he served on the Royal Commission on Feeble-Mindedness and signed the Majority Report of the Commission on the Poor Laws), illustrates the same pattern, whereby he accepted eugenic arguments for feeble-mindedness but basically ignored them for everything else. Indeed, in his article in the November 1910 special issue of the *Eugenics Review* dedicated to the Poor Laws, Loch defends the Majority Report, and argues that eugenics did

not feature in the Report because it was irrelevant – save for the issue of feeble-mindedness (Loch, 1910).

All this provides Smoking Gun evidence for Test 4, illustrating that we have sufficient grounds to regard mental deficiency and feeble-mindedness as an issue-space more receptive to eugenic ideas. This uniqueness of the issue of feeble-mindedness forms the basis of our theory, and has been the subject of a major contribution by Thomson (1998) which we will discuss more fully in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter delved into the merits and limitations of the three major existing approaches – instrumentalism, institutionalism, and social learning –to lead us to the conclusion that a new theory is needed to solve the research puzzle. Following the speculation of historians that there might be something about feeble-mindedness which made eugenics disproportionately successful in that field, we use witness testimony to prove fairly conclusively that, indeed, feeble-mindedness is special in serving as a fertile ground for eugenic ideas. We now have to follow this result, and explain why Edwardian eugenics failed to make a breakthrough in all cases save the Royal Commission on the Care and Control Feeble-Minded. To do so, we must go beyond the literature in two respects. First, we must understand how novel ideas are communicated to policy-makers. It is this piece's contention that importing social scientific theory, in particular from the Epistemic Communities literature, provides the most suitable framework to achieve this. Second, to explain why networks such as Epistemic Communities are not uniformly successful, we must correctly account for the issue-space peculiarity of feeble-mindedness. We shall draw on Desmond King's concept of 'illiberal social policy' (King, 1999) to understand why the very nature of eugenics restricted its applicability in liberal democracies to very specific policy fields.

Theoretical Framework

Overview

An infinite pool of potential ideas for dealing with a problem exists, but only a handful of these will be considered by policy-makers, due to the existence of two filters: first, scope conditions – mostly structural – which filter out relevant and imaginable ideas from the irrelevant and unimaginable ones, and second, expert agency which establishes certain ideas as a credible explanation and crafts policies which make these ideas workable and thus attractive to decision-makers. The presence of an Epistemic Community promoting a novel idea is necessary for its adoption by decision-makers; indeed, this adoption will not occur in its absence even if the decision-makers are open to that idea. However, an Epistemic Community by itself is not sufficient. In this chapter, we argue that the content of an idea promoted by an Epistemic Community is also critical to its success: if it clashes with the prevailing political culture, it must conform better than the alternatives to one of the accepted exceptions to the prevailing political culture.

Scope conditions, experts, and the pool of considered alternatives

During the Great Depression (1929-1930s), Germany seemed mired in a dreadful, vicious cycle of deflation, with signs of economic downturn evident already from 1928. The spiral would result in profound economic hardship and, eventually, the rise to power of the Nazi Party. It is therefore only natural to ask why German governments persisted with hurtful deflationary policies, only abandoning the gold standard when absolutely forced to in 1931 and not adopting expansionary economic policies until the summer of 1932. One may charge – as many did in post-war Germany – that Germany's political and economic leadership showed an inexcusable lack of imagination and intelligence. But as Knut Borchardt reminds us, it is too easy to pass judgment without knowing which options were actually seen as plausible given the state of knowledge at the time. Past experience from the late 19th century as well as the 1920-1921 and 1925-1926 crises showed that even economic downturns which seemed very troubling at first would eventually pass fairly quickly, without much state intervention. Even those who proposed inflationary policies

at the time produced plans that were unconvincing and too timid to have an effect – which is equally unsurprising if we remember that the memories of hyperinflation were still alive and that Germany's economic policy options were restricted due to the international complications of the war reparations issue, making large-scale spending seem dangerous and undesirable (Borchardt, 1991). Not to mention, of course, that the Keynesian theories which would justify and guide such spending in the post-war period were not yet in existence. It is only in hindsight that some paths of action seem obvious and desirable.

To a modern scholar who is familiar with the concepts of the counterfactual and of opportunity cost and who lives in a world of rapid, fast-paced change, it seems puzzling that key decision-makers do not always carry out a cost-benefit analysis of *all* options available to them. It would appear that they were irrational, or simply not imaginative enough. But in reality, only a very restricted number of potential courses of action is actually considered by decision-makers. Similarly, when we study ideas and policy-making, we should remember that while an infinite number of potential ideas exists with relevance to a particular question, only a finite subset of these ever reaches policy-makers.

Various structural and epistemic constraints may filter out ideas as irrelevant. As we have previously mentioned, Elizabethan England's levels of industrialisation, urbanisation, fertility, and its state of knowledge on biology and genetics, meant that eugenics was obviously not even vaguely entertained as a realistic policy option. It was simply not relevant to the problems of the time. But while such constraints may function as scope conditions, informing us of when an idea can be potentially considered, they do not overdetermine the eventual outcome. In our case, industrialisation, urbanisation and fertility decline experienced in the late 19th-early 20th centuries made eugenics relevant, and therefore possible, but they did not lead uniformly to its adoption. For instance, mental deficiency policy may have followed eugenic advice in the United Kingdom, but there was substantial cross-state variation in the United States, and in Canada's province of Ontario, eugenic mental deficiency policy was considered and recommended in the early 20th century but never adopted, despite clear similarities with Britain in terms of the events and discourse surrounding the formation of mental deficiency policy (Simmons, 1978: 387).

Once scope conditions are favourable, a crucial factor towards making policy-makers aware of an idea is human agency and, in the modern era, especially *expert* agency. Experts and their networks focusing on a specific idea can produce research which justifies that idea, disseminate findings among policy-makers, and translate the idea into concrete policy suggestions, allowing policy-makers to use the idea as a promising solution to the problems at hand. Why should we accord so important a role to the expert? Because the modern state

has expanded its activities over an ever-increasing number of policy fields, many of them highly technical; consequently, this engagement with complex and technical problems generates a demand for technical input that politicians by themselves are unable to satisfy. Hence, they turn to experts. It is important at this point to understand that experts do not just provide neutral technical input requested by politicians; rather, their suggestions are informed by the causal and normative beliefs and assumptions of the experts in question. Experts, therefore, do not just passively reply to questions already set by politicians; they might seek to influence politicians' perception of the problem through the articulation of their ideas (Weingart, 1999b). Subsequently, interactions between experts and policy-makers are not only an opportunistic use of experts' technical input by politicians who already have their own ideas and goals – though this can happen, of course – but are also an encounter of politicians with different and new ideas, brought to their attention by experts. The need to study these interactions where experts present policy-makers with ideas gave rise to the 'Epistemic Communities' framework.

Epistemic Communities

Emerging in the International Relations literature in the 1990s, the Epistemic Communities framework emphasises the impact that networks of like-minded experts with policy-relevant ideas can have on policy-makers. This impact is strongest under conditions of uncertainty (for instance due to a crisis or just due to the novel and technical nature of a particular policy field), which relax constraints and open up room for expert agency. In particular, an Epistemic Community is defined by the following four attributes: (1)a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, (2)shared causal beliefs, (3)shared notions of validity, and (4)a common policy enterprise (Haas, 1992: 3). Epistemic Communities therefore vary from other groups that seek to influence the policy-making process, such as interest groups or social movements, whose members may share principled beliefs but may hold varied notions of validity and causal beliefs. Epistemic Communities are also not synonymous with scientific disciplines, as they may draw from a variety of disciplines and as not all members of a particular discipline have common policy enterprises or normative commitments. An example of an Epistemic Community would be a network committed to promoting the establishment of national Health Technology Assessment agencies and drawing its members from experts in academia, health insurance funds, professional societies, pharmaceutical and medical devices industry, etc. (Löblová, 2018).

Edwardian eugenics conforms particularly well to the Epistemic Community model. The Second Boer War provided the impetus for a reconsideration of existing policies and, regardless of whether we see this as a full-blown crisis or not, it provided the background of uncertainty which the Epistemic Community framework sees as strengthening expert agency. Old and new ideas alike were consulted and re-examined, among them eugenics. Building on Farrall's work, we can identify two groups in particular as constituting the backbone of the Edwardian Epistemic Community: (1)the Eugenics Education Society, and (2)the Biometric School centering on Karl Pearson. We will sketch out these groups in more detail in a later chapter. These groups and their members satisfy all four of Haas's criteria: they believed that society should and could be improved through social engineering (shared normative and principled beliefs); they attributed a wide range of social conditions to hereditary endowment (shared causal beliefs); they had a common policy enterprise, namely to promote eugenically informed policies, even though they sometimes disagreed on the details (common policy enterprise); and finally, they were predominantly experts (shared notions of validity), with academics and doctors dominating the Edwardian Eugenics Education Society and the Biometric School consisting of highly trained statisticians resident in University College's Department of Applied Mathematics under Karl Pearson (Farrall, 1970; MacKenzie, 1981). Despite the obvious fit of Edwardian Eugenics with the Epistemic Community model, this framework has not yet been applied to the study of eugenics.

What does the Epistemic Community approach actually suggest? There are multiple ways that Epistemic Communities may exert an influence on policy, but the core mechanism is as follows: conditions of uncertainty increase the demand for expert input, setting the whole process in motion. Experts with similar beliefs form a network which possesses the attributes of an Epistemic Community, and seek to promote their ideas among decision-makers (the Epistemic Community may be formed in the context of increased demands for input generated by uncertainty, or it may pre-exist but now gain a voice due to the uncertain situation). More likely than not, the Epistemic Community will try to infiltrate bureaucracies in order to institutionalise its ideas, but regardless of whether they succeed, they will provide decision-makers with other learning opportunities informed by their ideas; there, they seek to influence policy 'either by directly identifying them for decision-makers or by illuminating the salient dimensions of an issue from which the decision-makers may then deduce their interests' (Haas, 1992: 4). This process may also be characterised by international diffusion, resulting in international policy convergence. Apart from international diffusion, the mechanism can be schematically depicted as follows:

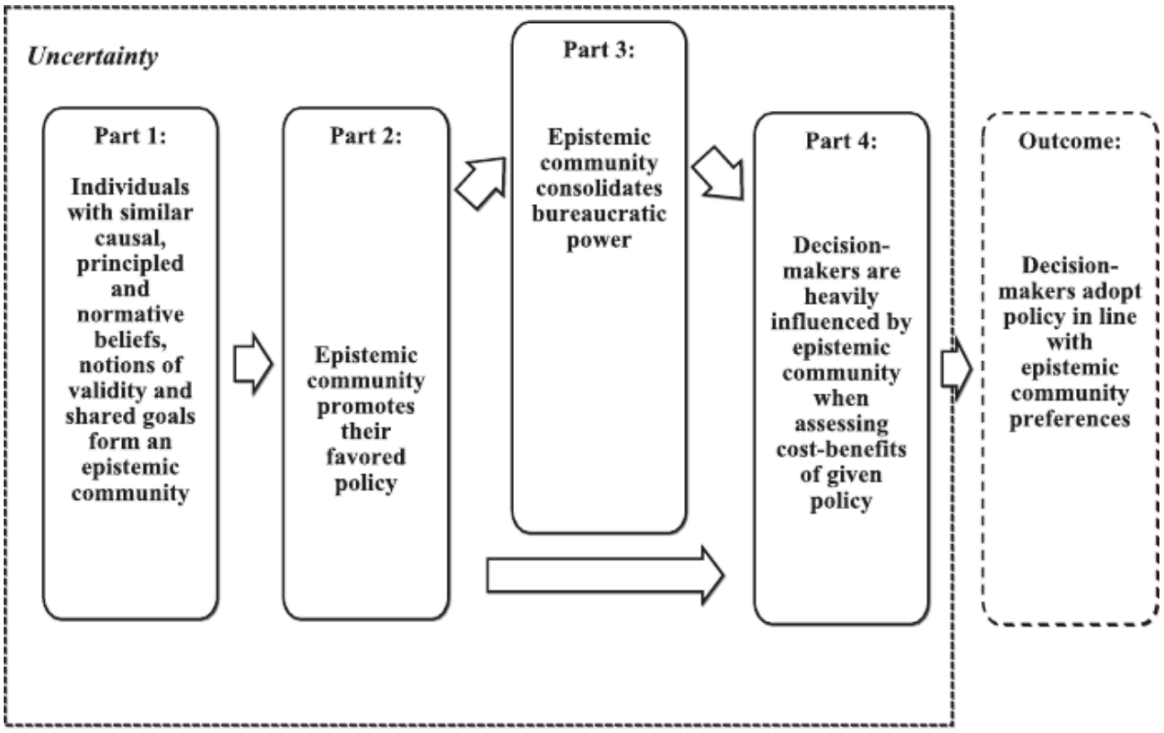

Figure 1: The Mechanism of Epistemic Community Influence. *Source: figure 1, in Löblová (2018: 165)*

As we will explain at length in the next chapter, the presence of an active Epistemic Community promoting eugenics was necessary for eugenics to be taken seriously as a practicable policy solution. Its absence in the debate surrounding Physical Deterioration meant that, while the Committee Members on Physical Deterioration were interested in hearing more about the eugenic point of view, they could not find well-argued presentations of the causal explanations and policy recommendations furthered by eugenists. By contrast, eugenists were active during the deliberations of both the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, yet we still observe variation between these two. How can we explain this?

Ideas are more than their carriers: political culture and the nature of ideas

While the above mechanism is essential for understanding how an idea can be brought to policy-makers' attention as a plausible and practicable alternative, there are some limits to the Epistemic Communities approach, mainly the overestimation of the influence of Epistemic Communities. It is often assumed that the formation of an Epistemic Community will lead to success; failure is

taken to be the product of such a community not forming or disintegrating, but there is little explanation of why failure can occur *despite* the presence of an active Epistemic Community. This oversight is mainly attributable to two reasons. The first is methodological, a tendency to focus on single-case research designs with a clearly positive outcome of Epistemic Community influence, noted by Löblová (2018). The second is ideological, in the sense that scholars often study Epistemic Communities whose ideas and commitments they share, and thus they tend to view them as providers of 'rational' and 'true' expertise, cutting through partisanship to apply proper scientific knowledge to politics. Our research design illustrates these shortcomings: we study three cases of which only one is positive, and the author is not committed to the ideas of the Epistemic Community in question, which were – and remain – controversial, to say the least. In seeking to overcome these issues, we will not only better explain our primary question, that is, when ideas influence policy-making, but also contribute to the Epistemic Communities literature by pointing out the forces constraining Epistemic Community influence.

Specifically, we argue that an Epistemic Community, while necessary to make new ideas a serious contender in the minds of policy-makers, is very unlikely to be successful if the nature of its ideas (and in particular the policy proposals outlined) clashes with the prevailing political culture. If we observe such a clash, the Epistemic Community will only be successful in fields where it can credibly claim that the principles of the political culture which its proposals seem to challenge do not apply. To understand how Edwardian eugenics fits into this, we must familiarise ourselves with the concept of *Illiberal Social Policy* outlined by King's study on the United Kingdom and the United States (King, 1999).

King defines illiberal social policies as those policies in liberal democracies which tend to appeal across the political spectrum and are advanced on intellectual grounds while also violating one or both of the two core liberal principles: freedom of individual without harming others, and equality of treatment (King, 1999 23-24). Since liberalism is entrenched in the political culture and institutions of the United Kingdom, a violation of the above liberal principles demands exceptional justification, which can take three forms:

1. *Liberal unreason*: liberal politics are premised on the assumption of rational human action. Therefore, rights and responsibilities do not apply in the same way for individuals who are incapable of reasoning as they do for other members of society.

2. *Liberal amelioration and collectivism*: the state has a commitment to the welfare of the needy, and can act in collectivist ways that violate individual freedom and equal treatment in order to carry out this commitment.

3. *Liberal coercive contract*: rights beget obligations, and certain citizens who are seen as having flaunted obligations can be treated punitively.

Since eugenic policy proposals focusing on coercive control of the fertility of the 'unfit' were plainly illiberal social policies, violating both individual freedom and equality of treatment, we would only expect these policies and the theories behind them to receive a sympathetic hearing in issue-spaces where the above three types of illiberalism apply. Indeed, both the issue of mental deficiency as well as the question of poverty and unemployment can be related to the above types.

Mental deficiency perfectly fits the *Liberal unreason* type, which sees personal liberty as the preserve of reasoning citizens, and therefore views people seen as incapable of reasoning as members of society for whom different rules apply (King, 1999: 10-13). In fact, eugenic views on the mentally deficient are used by King as an example to illustrate this type of illiberalism: the mentally deficient (including the feeble-minded) were asserted by eugenists to be qualitatively different from normal, reasoning citizens, in that their inferior reasoning abilities indicated a pathology. The conclusion drawn was that they should be treated in a paternalistic way, to prevent harm to themselves and others. The treatment of paupers and the unemployed, on the other hand, can qualify as *Liberal amelioration and collectivism* when we encounter ideas such as work camps and labour colonies. Indeed, the Reports of the Royal Commissions on the Feeble-Minded as well as the Poor Laws advocated illiberal social policies: eugenically-guided detention and prevention of procreation regarding the feeble-minded (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Report, Vol.VIII*: p.185, para.553), and labour colonies for workhouse inmates (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: pp.662,1237).

This leaves us with one question: since eugenics entailed illiberal social policy, and since both the poor laws and mental deficiency were fields where illiberal social policy applied and was proposed, why was eugenics only adopted for mental deficiency but not for the poor laws? After all, the eugenics Epistemic Community was active in both cases. The answer lies in the nature of the exemption from liberalism under the different types of illiberal social policy. *Liberal amelioration and collectivism*, to which the poor laws belong, claim an exemption from liberalism to fulfil out an ostensibly *reparative* function: remoulding those who have been 'degraded' into honest members of society by uplifting their 'character' (Brown, 1968). There was no need to invoke eugenics for policies such as labour colonies; in fact, eugenics' emphasis on genetic determinism seemed to undermine the whole premise of a *reparative* intervention being possible. Besides, it had become obvious that business cycles directly affected unemployment, making hereditarian explanations unnecessary.

By contrast, *liberal unreason* claims exemption from liberalism in order to accord differential treatment to those who are seen as innately incapable of reason. A specific segment of the population is set apart as *immutably* different. It was precisely for that reason that a view such as eugenics which sees the mentally deficient as a *biologically* distinct subset of the population would be much more successful than an environmental explanation, which talked about non-biological environmental influences, and therefore made the claims of liberal unreason tenuous. Hence why, while both hereditarian and environmentalist witnesses advocated for indeterminate detention, it was hereditarianism that carried the day among the Commissioners, but also among witnesses who shied away from it in their testimony to our other cases. Briefly put, eugenics was more suited to the *Liberal Unreason* type than the environmentalists who were also proposing illiberal measures, and so it was naturally adopted; whereas contemporary understandings of poverty did not make it a very potent explanation, and in any case illiberal social policy could be promoted better by environmentalists appealing to the *Liberal amelioration and collectivism* type.

In short, we see that an idea's influence is not reducible to the power of its carriers. The content of the idea matters, and insofar as it challenges the prevailing political culture, it will not be adopted unless it can adequately justify this transgression. In our case, we note that Edwardian eugenic policy proposals were illiberal social policies at odds with the predominant liberal political culture of the United Kingdom. As such, eugenic ideas were only adopted when they were able to lay a better claim than environmentalism to one of the three logics which have historically allowed the adoption of illiberal social policies in the modern United Kingdom (King, 1999).

Alternative explanations of epistemic communities' limits

Our explanation goes beyond Epistemic Communities by looking at the content of the idea and its interaction with political culture. But we are not the first to examine what variables condition the influence of Epistemic Communities by including negative cases. Two attempts in particular are noteworthy, and we should explain why we have not simply resorted to them but instead created our own theory.

The first is by Dunlop (2009), who sees the expert-decision-maker exchange as a learning process and, building on the lifelong learning literature, focuses on two of aspects of this process: the control that decision-makers – the learners –

have over (a)the production of substantive knowledge, and (b)the objectives to which the learning is directed. This results in four types of learning.

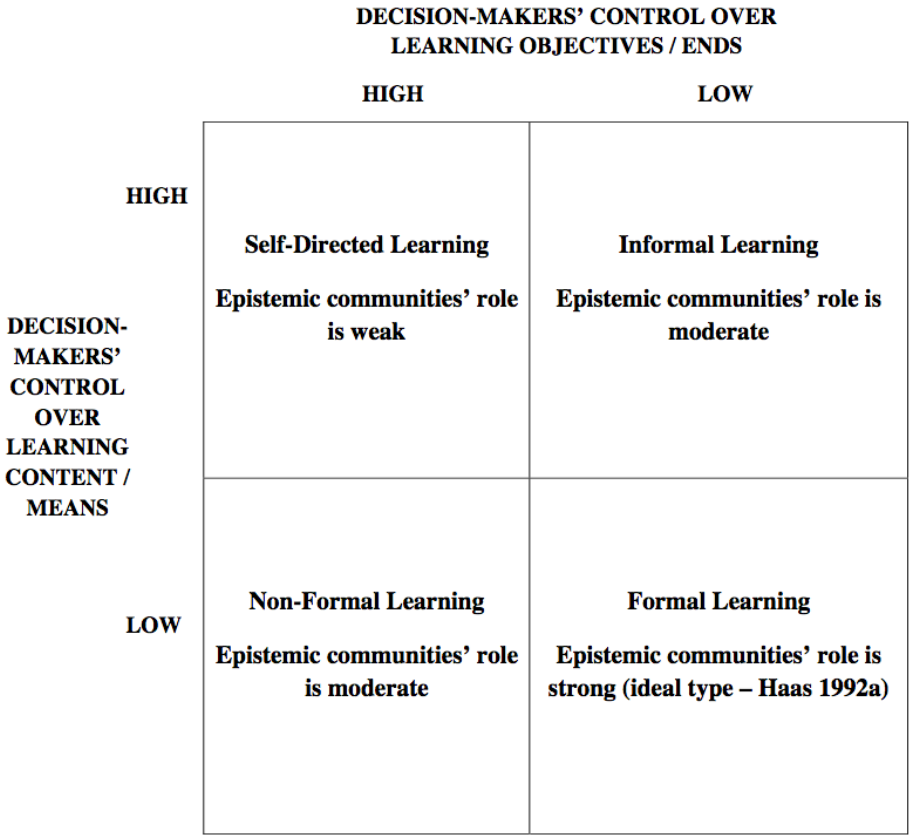

Figure 2: The four types of learning in the expert-decision-maker exchange. *Source: figure 2, in Dunlop (2009: 296)*

Dunlop (2009) predicts that clear Epistemic Community influence mostly emerges in a situation of 'Formal Learning', where the Epistemic Community - not decision-makers – control the content of expert input provided and the means to which it is directed. Otherwise, the impact is moderate at best. This theory is intelligent but not applicable to our cases. Royal Commissions and Departmental Committees all belong to the 'Informal Learning' type, where learners (in this case, Commissioners and Committee members) have been externally set a task but control the learning they engage in to carry out this task (Ibid: 297). In our cases, the terms of reference outlining the scope and purpose of the inquiry have been externally set by the government in all three cases, but the learners decide which witnesses to call. Eugenists were not in control of the learning process, and were only one of the groups called upon to provide their input.

A second, more recent view argues that learning and framing opportunities are important but insufficient without good, consistent access to decision-makers (Löblová, 2018). For instance, an Epistemic Community may convince

decision-makers of the merits of its approach, only to see that an external shock completely diverts the attention of decision-makers or even replaces the decision-makers (for example due to government changes), invalidating its efforts. Thus, bureaucratic capture is necessary to ensure that the Epistemic Community will continue to provide a steady stream of input, resistant to such external shocks. This theory is not so much wrong as simply not relevant to our cases, since the eugenics movement had not succeeded in infiltrating the bureaucracy by 1908, when our one positive case, the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, published its Report. Therefore, the variation we observe is not attributable to bureaucratic capture.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the ideas that decision-makers actually consider when dealing with a problem are only a small subset of the potential alternatives. Ideas that are irrelevant or even unknowable due to scope conditions are filtered out, and in the modern era those that remain need expert backing to acquire legitimacy and to be worked into practicable policy alternatives. Experts are of course not neutral, idle machines that wait until politicians demand technical input and then produce their advice; they themselves may hold certain normative beliefs and particular views on causal relations, and they will organise in Epistemic Communities to proactively promote their preferences. The backing of such an Epistemic Community is necessary for an idea to reach decision-makers as a plausible, realistic proposal. At the same time, the fate of ideas depends on more than just their carriers, as the predominant political culture influences an idea's chances of success. In our case, liberalism was a formidable barrier for the illiberal proposals of the eugenists, and it was only when they could claim an accepted exception to liberalism that they could succeed. The congruence of an Epistemic Community's ideas with the political culture, rather than bureaucratic position or the control it has over the process and goals of learning in the exchange with decision-makers, is what explains the variation in Epistemic Community success when it comes to Edwardian eugenics.

From Speculation to Action Plan: the Rise of the Eugenics Epistemic Community in Britain

Overview

This chapter argues that an Epistemic Community committed to an idea is necessary but not sufficient for the policy success of that idea. We will analyse the secondary literature as well as the Minutes of Evidence and Report of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1903-1904) to see what happens to an idea when an Epistemic Community supporting it is absent. Then, we will trace the rise of eugenics from an essentially personal project of Sir Francis Galton and his associate, Karl Pearson, into a more organised network of experts capable and willing to promote research and policy supporting their ideas. We will examine how this network carried the day among the witnesses of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded (1904-1908). Finally, we will end with a reminder of the dangers of looking solely at the presence of Epistemic Communities.

Fears of decline: the question of physical deterioration and the debut of British eugenics

Boers, eugenists, and environmentalists: the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration

Widespread disquiet marked late-nineteenth-century Britain. On the one hand, Britain was still the pre-eminent global power. On the other, certain trends, viewed as threats to British supremacy, were accelerating: the rapid economic development of Germany, Japan and the United States; anti-colonial resistance; the decline of the birthrate in the face of persistently high infant mortality; the disquieting findings of social surveys of the living conditions of the urban poor; and domestic unrest due to the suffrage movement and the revival of socialism and the labour movement. Whether this was a momentous ‘Edwardian crisis’, as it is sometimes called, is a contested point and one beyond this Thesis. Regardless of how dominant they were, the fears produced by these developments resulted in concerns among certain quarters about racial deterioration, cultural degeneration, and generally the decline of Britain,

presented in grand historical narratives as mirroring the collapse of past civilisations (Bland & Hall, 2010; Solloway, 1978). The South African War of 1899-1902 further animated these anxieties as the mighty British Empire struggled to subdue an enemy that was nowhere near as threatening as its major rivals such as Germany or Russia. The writings of Arnold White, Seebohm Rowntree and General Sir John Frederick Maurice linked the challenges of the Boer War to anxieties about racial deterioration and urban conditions, by pointing out that around 3/5 of the men who volunteered for the army had been rejected on the grounds of physical unfitness. Then, in spring 1903, the Inspector General of Recruiting presented a report on the manpower problem to Parliament, confirming fears about the fitness of recruits, and in July 1903, the formerly silent *British Medical Journal* stated that racial deterioration was a perfectly plausible outcome of the living conditions of children in England and Wales. Within the context of this alarmism, the Balfour government appointed on 3 September 1903 an Inter-departmental Committee to examine whether the population had indeed deteriorated physically, as suggested by the rejection of many Army recruits, and to identify the causes and cures of the population's poor physical condition (Gilbert, 1965).

The Committee worked efficiently, producing its Report on 29 July 1904. In it, the Committee argued that there was no available data to test whether the physique of the people had worsened compared to the past, and as such, claims of deterioration should not be taken at face value: 'the impressions gathered from the great majority of the witnesses examined do not support the belief that there is any general progressive physical deterioration… Testimony is almost unanimous as to the improving conditions under which the denizens of large towns are called upon to exist.' (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report*, *Vol.I*: pp.13-14, paras.68-70). At the same time, however, the Committee also stressed that the poorer strata did not share equally in these broad improvements (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.15, paras.73-77). Rather, they were afflicted by poor physical condition due to a number of causes, such as urbanisation and its concomitants (pollution, overcrowding, etc.), alcoholism, and poor diet. Special attention was paid to conditions adversely affecting the healthy development of children, particularly parental neglect (e.g. on issues of diet, breastfeeding or hygiene). To remedy this situation, the Committee recommended a series of policy interventions proposed by the environmentalist witnesses: from the more systematic collection of demographic and public health data, to stricter rules of urban planning, new sanitation measures, the education of girls on household management, medical inspection of children, physical exercises for school children, publicly-provided meals for poor schoolchildren, and more. These proposals were directly based on the recommendations offered by the almost 70 witnesses who testified to the Committee. These witnesses tended to be Medical Officers and medical professionals more generally, inspectors of schools and

factories, authors of social surveys, anthropologists, representatives of civil society, and more.

The question of physical deterioration brought to the fore several questions and dividing lines. For instance, there was a clash between on the one hand those who believed that the physical condition of Britons had indeed worsened in the previous decades, and on the other those who saw improvements; and there was a further important debate as to whether the causes of any decay which existed – whether diminishing or not – were related to conditions of the environment or matters of inheritance. The Committee itself acknowledged this latter difference among hereditarians and environmentalists in its Report, by noting the distinction drawn by Dr Eichholz – and accepted by many witnesses – between 'physical degeneracy on the one hand and inherited retrogressive deterioration on the other' (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report, Vol.I*: p.13, para.69). We have just seen in the last paragraph what the environmentalist positions on the causes and solutions to the problems were, which would eventually be adopted by the Committee. The eugenists, by contrast, naturally fell on the hereditarian side of this divide, with the eugenic position best explained by Karl Pearson in the excerpt from the 1903 Huxley Lecture that was mentioned in the introduction. As a reminder, Pearson's argument was that a gap had emerged in the fertility rates of different groups, with fertility decline among the most intelligent leading to a larger share of future generations being produced by the 'least fit'. Since major qualities – such as intelligence or physical strength – were seen by eugenists as greatly influenced by heredity, and since those with the least desirable qualities were thought to account for an ever-increasing share of the population, it was no surprise from this perspective why this would lead in a matter of a few decades to an evident deterioration of Britons' condition – physical as well as mental. In addition, the decline in mortality rates meant that those with 'weak' constitutions were now able to survive and pass on their traits to their descendants.

As we have established before, the Committee sided with the environmentalists and not the hereditarians, stating that 'the impressions gathered from the great majority of the witnesses examined do not support the belief that there is any general progressive physical deterioration' (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Report*, *Vol.I*: p.13, para.68) and that 'The Committee have not been able to obtain decided confirmation of [Pearson's] view.' (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.39, para.213). As we have explained more fully in the Case Selection chapter, the Committee's Report went on to question hereditarianism in its section on heredity and then to virtually ignore the question of heredity and focus instead on a series of environmental explanations and proposals. But why was that? The key is to be found in the Minutes of Evidence: the Committee rejected the eugenist viewpoint because of a lack of a serious body of experts supporting the

hereditarian viewpoint and proposing the eugenic policies that would naturally flow from it; but this absence was not the product of the Committee silencing eugenic views and deliberately selecting environmentalists because it had already made up its mind before the testimony for whatever reason (financial, ideological, or other). Rather, it was because at the time there was virtually no network of experts supporting such ideas, no significant research to back them or organisation pushing for such research. The few hereditarian ideas that were floated appeared in isolation from other witnesses or indeed from any research, and were often brief tangents to an environmentalist core testimony.

An open-minded committee: the Physical Deterioration Committee's handling of hereditarianism

The fact that few experts supporting a given idea are called by a Committee to testify as witnesses may reflect that an idea has not yet gained much credence among experts, but it may equally reflect a careful selection of witnesses by the Committee corresponding to its *a priori* views. This was not the case with the paucity of hereditarian views among the witnesses of the Committee on Physical Deterioration. First of all, the eight Committee members did not explicitly express a clear *a priori* commitment to one view over the other that biased their treatment of the evidence. The one exception was perhaps Dr Tatham, who expressed a slight preference for environmentalism when, during the examination of Sir William Taylor, the Director-General of the Army Medical Service, he agreed with the witness that alcoholic drinks and diet of low quality were particularly injurious, saying that 'I am glad to hear you say bad spirits and bad beer have an evil effect … If you could prevent our lower classes from taking bad food, and especially bad drinks, beer and spirits, I think you would do a great deal to stop this deterioration' (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II:* pp.3-4, para.58). He again expresses a preference for environmental explanations when he congratulates Dr Cunningham's criticism of Karl Pearson's hereditarianism: 'The very carefully reasoned and very complete character of the evidence you have given us covers the ground so thoroughly that really one has not many questions to ask you' (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.102, para.2273). Of course, even these references reveal a rather mild preference. Other than that, no clear comments were made by other Committee members.

Furthermore, the Committee was far from uninterested in hereditarianism as a potential explanation of deterioration. Committee members would repeatedly ask a variety of witnesses to comment on the thesis that the population was deteriorating due to the increasing hereditary impact of the 'worst types', most often specifically asking witnesses about their views on Pearson's statements, or

occasionally asking them more broadly to assess how well hereditarian explanations fared against environmentalist ones. We can in fact find at least five witnesses who had not otherwise commented on the hereditarian viewpoint but were asked by the Committee to clarify their views towards hereditarianism: Dr D J Cunningham, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh and Chairman of the Anthropometric Committee of the British Association (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II*: pp.101-102, paras.2265-2271); Mr James Niven, Medical Officer for 18 years, first in Manchester and then in Oldham (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.251, paras.6276-6277); Dr W Leslie Mackenzie, Medical Inspector to the Local Government Board for Scotland (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.266, paras.6742-6750); Mr C S Loch, Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.371, para.10140); and Dr Arthur Shadwell, a medical man who had studied issues of 'national vitality', particularly 'vigour and reproduction' (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.451, par.12270). Of course, other witnesses discussed such ideas unprompted, as did Sir Victor Horsley regarding venereal disease (Ibid, *Vol.II*: pp.384-385, paras.10532-10576), and Dr Alfred Eichholz who made sure to distinguish between hereditary and environmental causes of physical conditions, and viciously attacked the idea that hereditary factors were important (Ibid, *Vol.II*: pp.19-37). All this should be sufficient evidence that the Committee not only did not silence the eugenic hereditarian position, but was interested in hearing expert opinion on it.

Most of these witnesses who commented on heredity were critical or at best agnostic regarding hereditarianism. Virtually all cited the lack of data or research to support the hereditarian thesis, especially the claim that the decline of the birth rate had actually proceeded at varied paces among different groups of the population, a crucial assertion underpinning the entire eugenic argument. Some went further, with Dr Arthur Shadwell arguing that better socio-economic position was not a good proxy for higher 'worth', as was implied by the eugenists, and as such differential fertility among socio-economic classes need not pose a genetic problem; after all, he would ask, is reproduction itself not a clear sign of vigour (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II*: p.450, paras.12227-12232)?

But equally important for demonstrating the underdeveloped, incoherent, and disorganised nature of eugenics at the time was the fact that witnesses who did acknowledge some role for hereditary factors, however minor (and who are thus coded in our tables as 'Both heredity and environment' or 'Primarily environmentalist'), did not really emphasise heredity, did not provide an explanation on exactly how the effect operated, and did not formulate concrete policy recommendations. References to heredity were for the most part related to two phenomena: (1)migration, and (2)diseases and dispositions such as syphilis and alcoholism. On migration, a number of witnesses pointed to the

migration of the 'strongest types' from the countryside to the towns as a factor driving deterioration in the rural areas, and especially to emigration to the United States (primarily from Ireland) leading to the loss of the 'best blood', as the United States imposed strict medical tests of immigrants' fitness and sent back those who were deemed unsatisfactory (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II*: p.413, par.11273). Witnesses talking about migration, however, would not go on to offer relevant policy recommendations, and importantly, they only pointed to migration as one among many causes of concern. The Lord Bishop of Ross worried equally about Irish emigration to the United States and the effects of poor diet (Ibid, *Vol.II*: pp.411-413, paras.1224-1276). G H Fosbroke would flag the danger of migration to urban centres (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.260, paras.6541-6551) but his recommendations centered on the teaching of hygiene and household management in schools (Ibid: p.261, paras.6596-6597). Sir Lambert H Ormsby would mention the downsides of Irish migration in Ireland to cities and to the United States but would prioritise environmental conditions (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.462 par.12564), and especially housing (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.467, par.12704). And Dr Arthur Shadwell says that, ultimately, there was a lack of necessary data to make ambitious claims about migration's effects (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.450, paras.12240-12242). When it came to afflictions such as syphilis and alcoholism, the witnesses made equally brief references to heredity which were not really central to their testimony. Dr James Kerr explained that, for a hereditary taint such as syphilis, a few cases of bad heredity will turn out unhealthy regardless of environment, but generally, good diet and healthy surroundings would help in most cases (Ibid, *Vol.II*: pp.42-43, paras.832-836). Dr D J Cunningham pointed to the hereditary effects in the case of syphilis and alcoholism, but said that the evidence was not conclusive and that he could not tell whether this was on the increase and thus whether it actually posed a danger (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.97, par.2211-2218); in any case, most of his testimony regarded the environment, especially the effects of urbanisation. Dr Edward Malins, the President of the Obstetrical Society of London, would make a passing reference towards the end of his testimony that there were some hereditary effects of alcoholism (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.140, paras.3240-3241), but would mostly stress environmental factors and would agree with Eichholz that the vast majority of children are born physically healthy (Ibid, *Vol.II*: p.136, paras.3124-3125).

The above testimonies clearly show that hereditarian ideas were intellectually underdeveloped: they did not have the necessary data to back them up; clear policy recommendations were not yet in broad circulation among experts; and even when hereditary factors were acknowledged, they were mostly presented as secondary at best. This state of affairs was directly caused by the lack of a eugenist network, which resulted in a paucity of research and theoretical refinement, a vagueness and disconnect among those who advanced hereditarian ideas as to their exact theories and proposed solutions, and a lack of focus on

hereditary factors as a priority over other factors. Given these limitations, the Committee's open-minded attitude did not lead to the adoption of eugenics, as the latter had not emerged as a plausible and practical policy alternative. Environmentalist ideas, on the other hand, were advanced by multiple and eminent witnesses, who used established theories and detailed, plentiful data, and who proposed specific policy interventions, most of which were easy to grasp as well as implement (though some were less feasible). It is no wonder, then, that the Committee reasoned the way it did, in favour of environmentalism.

From utopian idea to concrete policy proposal: British eugenics 1883-1911

Ideas about controlling human reproduction to optimise the population's traits have been occasionally expressed since ancient times, most famously in the utopian works of Plato in the 4th century B.C. and of Tommaso Campanella in the 17th century A.D. But it was the work of Sir Francis Galton that laid the ground for the modern eugenics movement, and he is therefore typically seen as the father of eugenics, having advocated for consciously planning reproduction in 1865 and having invented the term 'eugenics' in 1883 (Paul, 1995). Yet while concerns about fertility and national health were widespread in the late nineteenth century and provided fertile ground for eugenics, it would take some time before eugenics as a concept would become widely known. Barker explains that when Galton sought to discuss eugenics at a 1901 academic gathering, shortly after he wrote in *Nature* to promote a recent presentation to the Royal Society on the inheritance of intelligence by Karl Pearson, he was disappointed by the response and by the fact that few were aware of his ideas. Indeed, eugenics did not appear in the indices of medical and scientific journals or in reviews before 1905, illustrating its lack of recognition. By 1910, however, the situation had changed, and the concept as well as the word itself would appear in most discussions of the 'social problem' in political, religious, scientific, artistic, or journalistic media (Barker, 1983: 197).

During the work of the Committee on Physical Deterioration, no society, organisation, or academic and scientific institution existed which carried out avowedly eugenic research or promoted eugenic ideas. As we saw, this also resulted in the absence of basic data which was necessary for eugenic claims to appear respectable in the debate on physical deterioration, namely evidence of differential fertility decline across groups. In other words, there was basically no such thing as an Epistemic Community promoting eugenics at the time.

Thus, the causal chain of Epistemic Community influence depicted in Figure 1 from the last chapter broke down already in Part 1. The result was that the hereditarian position had not received focused expert attention, and so it did not have a community of experts committed to it, it did not have studies to back it up – or at least whatever evidence existed had not been brought together by experts to be presented in front of the Committee – and it did not have concrete policy proposals.

However, the situation began to change in 1904, with four main developments: first, the publication of the Report on Physical Deterioration in July 1904 and the broader debate during the workings of the Committee, which gave more publicity to all views associated with the debate, both environmentalist and hereditarian; second, the presentation on eugenics given by Galton and the lively discussion that ensued in a meeting of the newly-founded Sociological Society, also in 1904, in the backdrop of discussions about national deterioration, which is seen as the first large-scale public discussion on eugenics (Bland & Hall, 2010; Freeden, 1979: 645-646); third, the establishment of the Eugenics Record Office at UCL with funding from Galton, which would carry out academic research to buttress eugenics; and fourth, the formation of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, an issue which had driven some to adopt hereditarianism.

The importance of these developments would quickly become evident, as they would lead to the emergence of the eugenics Epistemic Community in Britain. In January 1905, Edgar Schuster was chosen as the first Fellow in National Eugenics to head the Eugenics Record Office at UCL, to be succeeded in late 1906 by Karl Pearson, who would rename the Office into 'The Francis Galton Laboratory for the Study of National Eugenics' and remain its Director until 1933. Upon Galton's death in 1911, a professorship of eugenics was established and offered to Pearson with funding from Galton's will, and the two laboratories headed at the time by Pearson (the Biometric Laboratory and the Galton Laboratory) were integrated into a newly-created 'Department of Applied Statistics and Eugenics' (Farrall, 1970: 110-113; MacKenzie, 1981: 103-105). These developments led not only to the eventual formation of an academic network studying eugenics, but also quickly furnished much-needed data and research. Particularly important was David Heron's 1906 study 'On the Relation of Fertility in Man to Social Status, and on the changes in this relation that have taken place during the last fifty years' (Heron, 1906), which set out to establish whether fertility decline was differential according to social status, exactly the point raised by Pearson in 1903 but rejected by critics on account of the lack of data to substantiate it. Through an ingenious use of available sources and modern statistical techniques, Heron was able to demonstrate a series of points that fit perfectly with Pearson's arguments: that the London birthrate was

clearly related to socio-economic status, with lower socio-economic status associated with higher birth-rates and higher socio-economic status associated with lower birth-rates, which meant that 'Where the mothers and fathers have the maximum of undesirability there is produced a maximum of children' (Ibid: 13); and that while this inverse relation between socio-economic status and fertility held true in both 1851 and 1901, the intensity of this effect had almost doubled in the course of these fifty years. Heron argued that, since the inheritance of both physical and mental characteristics was undisputed (with only the intensity being debatable), and given the fact that previous research had shown that 25% of the married population produce 50% of the next generation, his findings indicated 'distinct sources of national deterioration which the statesman and social reformer must be prepared to consider, and consider quickly' (Ibid: 22). Far from remaining an obscure statistical paper, Heron's study sold out (Mazumdar, 1992: 43) and formed the first in a series of publications by the Biometric Laboratory, the *Studies in National Deterioration*.

Eugenic ideas increasingly gained traction outside of Pearson's statistical circles, too. Eugenics was discussed again in meetings of the Sociological Society in 1905 and 1906 (Farrall, 1970: 206), and in November 1907 the Eugenics Education Society was formed. Now, the Society itself was formed too late to have any direct impact of its own on the Commission on the Feeble-Minded: the Society's first General Meeting was held on 14 February 1908 (Schenk & Parkes, 1968: 143) and the Commission's Report appeared on 10 July 1908. But it was the end result and thus is indicative of the rapid spread of eugenic ideas in preceding years, and in particular of the increasing organisation and interconnectedness of their carriers. The Society brought together individuals such as Edgar Schuster (UCL's first Fellow in National Eugenics) and David Heron (Pearson's associate at the laboratories and author of the landmark 1906 paper) with many involved in the question of mental deficiency, who believed that mental deficiency was heritable and incurable. Among them was Mary Dendy, who believed that the cause of feeble-mindedness was 'undoubtedly heredity' (Jakson, 1996: 169), and who had formed the National Association for the Care and Protection of the Feeble-Minded in 1896 along with Hume Pinsent (who also joined the Eugenics Education Society) with the goal of segregating the feeble-minded from the rest of society (Mazumdar, 1980: 208). Both Mary Dendy and Hume Pinsent testified to the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded. Also involved with the Eugenics Education Society were medical men who testified before the Royal Commission as experts on mental deficiency, in particular Sir James Crichton-Browne, who also served as the Eugenic Education Society's first President in 1908-1909 (Schenk & Parkes, 1968: 159), Dr A F Tredgold, who was a chief medical investigator and witness for the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded (Simmons, 1978: 392), and Sir Frederick Walker Mott (Farrall,

1970: 222, footnote 40). Again, the Eugenics Education Society did not itself cause eugenics to be adopted; but it clearly demonstrates how, after 1904, the proponents of eugenic ideas became more interconnected. The establishment of this network was a catalyst, enabling the emergence of a focused research agenda, the faster spread and refinement of hereditarian ideas, and the careful transformation of assumptions and theories into coherent, straightforward policy proposals. As a result, eugenists would henceforth be more consistent in their proposals, better able to popularise their views, and much better prepared to furnish data and research to support their stance.

Thus, what Farrall sees as the two wings of the early British eugenics movement – the 'academic' wing at UCL and the 'lay' wing in the Eugenics Education Society – became fully formed in the period 1904-1911. Starting from the almost complete lack of interest and familiarity encountered by Galton in 1901, eugenics eventually created its own academic niche and a Society dedicated to its promotion. Part 1 of the causal chain of Epistemic Community influence, the formation of an Epistemic Community under scope conditions of uncertainty, has therefore been sufficiently demonstrated. We will now further explore the question of mental deficiency and the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded to demonstrate how the rest of the causal chain's steps played out.

Treating the mind, healing the race: mental deficiency, feeble-mindedness, and eugenics

The problem of mental deficiency in fin de siècle Britain

We should start by explaining terms such as 'Mental Deficiency' and 'Feeble-Mindedness', which sound foreign to a modern audience. 'Mental deficiency' served as an umbrella term, and today would be applied to a range of mental disabilities, such as intellectual disability or dyslexia. The term entered medical usage in Britain in the late 19th century to describe a series of conditions of more or less permanent mental damage or incapacity, usually from birth, distinct from 'lunacy', which referred to acquired mental illness that was often temporary and curable (Thomson, 1998: 7). The term 'feeble-mindedness' emerged in relation to 'mental deficiency', being first used in 1876 by Sir Charles Trevelyan, a member of the Council of the Charity Organisation Society, to refer to people who were mental defectives – and thus below the norm – but who responded to care and treatment to the point of taking care of their basic needs (Simmons, 1978: 388). The most comprehensive presentation

of the terms in front of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, and the one that was essentially accepted by the Commissioners, was that of the mental deficiency expert Dr A F Tredgold: 'mental deficiency' (or 'amentia') was an umbrella term encompassing three classes: (1)'idiots', meaning 'the absolutely unimprovable cases capable of doing nothing for their support'; (2)'imbeciles', capable of doing only some work for their support; and (3)'feeble-minded', who after proper training could basically support themselves (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: p.399). We should at this stage clarify that the use of the above terms was different in the United States at the time and consequently in the literature on mental disability and eugenics which builds on the United States. The American usage of the term 'feeble-mindedness' corresponded to the British 'mental deficiency'/'amentia', essentially being the umbrella concept made up of various grades. Both the witnesses and the Commissioners were aware of this distinction already from the first days of examining witnesses (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.39, q.801).

This refinement of terms referring to mental disability and the related expansion in research that came about in the late 19th century is a broad phenomenon and covering it fully would be difficult to do here. Nevertheless, we should mention that one of the key – if not the primary – drivers of this phenomenon was the emergence of mass education. The establishment of a national elementary school system with the Education Act of 1870 made the state aware of a stratum of children who, while not exhibiting the physical stigmata associated at the time with 'idiots' and 'imbeciles', were still unable to cope mentally with the schools' demands. Thus, groups with developmental disabilities of any kind became problematised, as these disabilities impinged on the state's ability to educate them, and thus raised questions as to whether the state's investment in their education would produce the desired results (Simmons, 1978: 388). This spurred a research agenda and discussions among policy-makers who sought to understand and tackle developmental disabilities, including the Royal Commission on the Blind, the Deaf and Dumb and Afflicted Classes reporting in 1889, the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children reporting in 1898, and, finally, the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, reporting in 1908. The role that eugenists would play in this discussion, both in Britain and across the world, would be central. Indeed, in many countries, it was the issue of developmental disability that would animate the most ambitious and invasive eugenic policies. Such has also been the conclusion of Randall Hansen and Desmond King who, in their study of eugenic sterilisation policies in Canada and the United States, make clear that the main targets were the feeble-minded ('feeble-minded' in the American sense – meaning the 'mentally deficient' in British terms) (Hansen & King, 2013: 58).

However, it is crucial to point out that the issue of mental deficiency was not dominated by eugenic views from the beginning. The 1898 Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children in fact took the exact opposite position, arguing that children displayed differences only of degree, not of kind, when it came to mental ability. The more deficient children were seen as improvable, provided that they were instructed in a special manner (Jakson, 1996: 164).[3]

The rise to prominence of the eugenic viewpoint would take time, fanned by the rise of the eugenics Epistemic Community. Of course, there were already from 1898 some hereditarians who dissented from the Report of the Departmental Committee on Defective and Epileptic Children. Some of these, such as Mary Dendy and Hume Pinsent, would appear as witnesses to the Royal Commission, and would join the Eugenics Education Society almost immediately after its founding. Certain medical men who came to be seen as experts on mental deficiency would also eventually embrace the hereditarian viewpoint. These included most notably Dr A F Tredgold and Sir Frederick Walker Mott, both of whom, as we have seen, would also quickly joined the Eugenics Education Society. Again, it is not so much that the Eugenics Education Society itself was the major force behind the Royal Commission's adoption of eugenic ideas – rather, the formation of the Society itself and ultimately the consistent content of the hereditarian witnesses' testimony illustrate that a eugenic Epistemic Community was formed in the Edwardian decade, particularly after 1904. In many ways, the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded was the testing ground that would cement the network's ties.

The Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded

It was only to be expected that this increasing interest in mental deficiency would eventually lead to the appointment of a Royal Commission on feeble-mindedness, the most recently observed type of mental deficiency. The Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded was created by the Balfour administration on 9 September 1904, and would report in 10 July 1908. Its mission was 'to consider the existing methods of dealing with idiots and epileptics, and with imbecile, feeble-minded, or defective persons not certified

[3] This Committee used the term 'defective' to refer to children who 'whether by reason of mental or physical defect, cannot properly be taught in ordinary elementary schools by ordinary methods'. The term was seen as virtually synonymous to 'feeble-minded', but still distinct from 'imbecile' and 'idiot'; the result is that the Committee ends up talking about essentially the same population – the 'feeble-minded' – as the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded (Com. on Defective and Epileptic Children, *Report*: p.3).

under the Lunacy Laws; and in view of the hardship or danger resulting to such persons and the community from insufficient provision for their care, training, and control, to report as to the amendments in the law or other measures which should be adopted in the matter, due regard being had to the expense involved in any such proposals and to the best means of securing economy therein' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Report, Vol.VIII*: p.xvi). Over its almost four years of operation, the Royal Commission would collect evidence from 237 witnesses of various backgrounds, most of them medical men (particularly those dealing with issues of mental health), administrators and employees of institutions for individuals with special needs, civil society actors involved in the provision of care for afflicted individuals, local government officials, as well as occasional witnesses from law enforcement (courts, prisons, police).

As the Minutes of Evidence show and the Commissioners themselves acknowledged in their Report, the experts were divided into two main groups: those who thought that feeble-mindedness was primarily caused by heredity, and those who believed it was mostly due to environmental factors. Other important dividing lines emerged, for example whether cases were improvable, whether the feeble-minded should be institutionalised, and if so, whether the parents' consent should be obtained, whether detention would be indefinite or have a specified time limit, etc.

The key views of British eugenists regarding mental deficiency would be, first, the hereditary causation of most cases of mental deficiency; second, the permanent, incurable nature of such cases; third, the idea that the feeble-minded were the most dangerous among the mentally deficient as they were thought to be especially prolific, because on the one hand they were seen as lacking the moral restraints of those who were of 'sound mind', and on the other they were in a better state than the idiots and imbeciles to take care of their basic needs and thus often avoided detection. Combining these views, the British eugenists would argue for the indefinite detention of the feeble-minded in special institutions, where special education would be provided which recognised that they would never reach the standard of average children and, crucially, where they would be prevented from reproducing. This mixture of views would be the mode among the hereditarian witnesses, being supported by – among others – Mary Dendy (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: pp.39-64), Sir James Crichton-Browne (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.327-349; *Vol.IV*, pp.161-175), Dr A F Tredgold (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.395-410), Sir Frederick W Mott (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.452-464), and Charles H Fox (Ibid, *Vol.II*, pp.30-35). Some witnesses specified when detention should be considered by the authorities, with Sir Frederick W Mott for instance proposing that it should be an option only after the person reaches 16 years of age (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.461, q.8033). A couple of hereditarians, such as Dr James Kerr (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.433-452) and Dr Henry Ashby (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.579-586),

further called for the sterilisation of some feeble-minded if they were not detained – but this view was clearly in the minority at the time, both among the witnesses to the Commission and in the British eugenics movement as a whole during the Edwardian period, although it would drift towards more pro-sterilisation positions in the interwar years (Barker, 1983).

The environmentalist camp was smaller, and the major difference from the hereditarians was only as to the causes of mental deficiency. Environmentalists tended to argue that the large majority of cases were caused by environmental factors such as pthisis, poor living conditions etc., and that the evidence for heredity was weak, as those afflicted by mental deficiency did not necessarily come from similarly afflicted parents and for the most part did not give birth to similarly afflicted children. At the same time, environmentalists – or indeed those arguing for a mix of environmental and hereditary causation – did not significantly differ from the hereditarians in their policy recommendations. Most agreed with indefinite detention in special institutions: Dr Alfred Eichholz voiced strong support for institutionalisation carried out alongside other reforms (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: pp.205-210); John Milson Rhodes declared he was in favour of indefinite detention of the feeble-minded in a colony (Ibid, *Vol.I*: pp.556-557); Philip Bagenal also recommended indefinite detention of the feeble-minded, although only after they left school at sixteen, where they would first receive special training (Ibid, *Vol. I*: p.136, q.2452-2455); Dr Leslie F Mackenzie approved of indefinite detention too, although with several caveats, implying that such measures may be too drastic for many cases, especially given that – according to him – the defect was not clearly heritable in the majority of cases (Ibid, *Vol. III*: pp.158-160, q.23290-23359).

We can now step back to describe how the empirical evidence reviewed in this chapter can be used for Process-Tracing the causal chain of Epistemic Community influence depicted in Figure 1. We showed that Step 1, the formation of the Epistemic Community, did not materialise in the case of the Physical Deterioration Committee, for there was no connected network of experts subscribing to eugenics at the time, and this would show in the testimony of witnesses to the Committee where committed hereditarians, clear recommendations or even basic research to back hereditarianism were lacking. The chain broke already from the first step in that case. But things were different in the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded. There, the Causal Process Observations we provided regarding the rise of a eugenic Epistemic Community in the 1900s is sufficient proof for Step 1. The hereditarian witnesses' testimony, with its consistency, focus and interconnectedness, is Smoking-Gun (i.e. sufficient) evidence for the occurrence of Step 2 in the causal chain of Epistemic Community influence: the Epistemic Community's promotion of its favourite policy. Indeed, we see a network of

experts who put heredity at the core of their accounts, who all furthered basically the same policy recommendations, who were familiar with each other's research and even associated with each other in eugenic circles. We also see evidence of Step 4 as well as the outcome, namely the heavy influence of the Epistemic Community on decision-makers and the eventual adoption of its ideas. The Royal Commission's Report claimed that 'Among thirty-five witnesses (besides many others who have merely touched on the subject) who have expressed opinions on the part played by heredity in the production of mentally defective individuals, twenty-five attach supreme importance to the fact that in a very large proportion of cases of mental defect there is a history of mental defect in the parents or near ancestors' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.VIII*: p.181, par.547). As we have explained in the Case Selection chapter, the Commission goes on to adopt the core causal beliefs, claims, and policy proposals of the eugenists. Among these, the Commission accepted that mental defect had a primarily hereditary causation, that the fertility of the feeble-minded was a danger to the population's future health (especially given their perceived fecundity), and that the feeble-minded should be indefinitely detained in special institutions (Ibid, *Vol.VIII*: p.185, paras.551-553). Interestingly, we do not observe Step 3 (consolidation of bureaucratic power by Epistemic Community) occurring between Steps 2 and 4; this is inconsistent with Löblová (2018), who sees bureaucratic capture as necessary for the Epistemic Community to reach Step 4 and exert significant influence on decision-makers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined how the absence of an Epistemic Community made eugenics a non-option even when decision-makers were open to the idea – as in the case of the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration. We then traced the rise and transformation of eugenics from an idea without followers to an increasingly organised network of experts who produced research and concrete policy recommendations oriented around eugenics. Finally, we illustrated how the rise of this network affected the work of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, presenting a strong front of experts who succeeded in impressing eugenic views upon the Commissioners. Nonetheless, while we have demonstrated that an Epistemic Community dedicated to an idea is apparently necessary for this idea to become a realistic option considered by decision-makers, we do not claim it to be sufficient. It is important to note that an Epistemic Community does not always dominate a discussion, and so by itself it cannot always achieve its preferred outcome. In the next chapter, we will examine why there can still be variation in

outcome even if an Epistemic Community is present, by comparing the success of eugenists in the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded to their complete failure to influence the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. An idea must find capable carriers; but ultimately, it is much more than its carriers.

Fetters of Liberty: Political Culture and the Limits of Eugenics

Overview

In this chapter, we seek to uncover the factors that influenced the success of the Edwardian eugenics Epistemic Community beyond its mere existence and activity. We start by testing the Thomson thesis on why mental deficiency was the only issue-space where Edwardian eugenics could point to concrete successes, and we illustrate that while the thesis has much to commend it, the question remains unanswered. We aim to overcome the shortcomings of the Thomson thesis by importing King's (1999) theory of illiberal social policy: since Edwardian political culture was liberal but eugenics was illiberal – something evident to both proponents and opponents – it could only achieve success by laying claim to one of the accepted exceptions to liberalism enumerated by King. Eugenics was able to do precisely that in the case of mental deficiency as it was compatible with the type of illiberalism most relevant to that issue space, but not in the case of poverty, where ideas prevalent at the time opened the door to a different type of illiberalism which was incompatible with eugenics.

The special nature of mental deficiency: the Thomson thesis

The contrast presented in the previous chapter between the rejection of eugenics in the Physical Deterioration Report and their adoption by the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded may at first appear as being explained solely by chronology. In the first case, the Epistemic Community had not yet formed, and thus the idea failed; in the second case, the Epistemic Community was present, and able to impart its views upon the Commissioners. It would appear that an Epistemic Community can simply persuade experts to join it and decision-makers to heed its advice, given enough time. But the failure of the eugenists to influence the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1905-1909), operating at basically the same time as the success story of the Commission on the Feeble-Minded, casts doubts upon this view. The eugenics Epistemic Community did not easily convert

people to its views, with the exception of a very specific issue: mental deficiency. Recall how Test 4 in the Literature Review chapter revealed that mental deficiency was uniquely open to eugenic ideas, by showing that the very same people who rejected eugenic ideas in our other cases (either in the Physical Deterioration case predating the rise of the eugenics Epistemic Community or in the Poor Laws case which came after it) would accept them in the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded. But how do we account for this?

There exists one major attempt to explain this issue-space peculiarity, which goes in the right direction, although without completely solving the issue. Mathew Thomson's account of the politics of mental deficiency in Britain covers the entire period of 1870-1959 and is fairly complex, but regarding the Edwardian decade, he points out that mental defect became a major concern due to its being an issue where varied anxieties about moral, demographic, and racial decline intersected. As such, there was an intense desire to control the feeble-minded. This heightened urgency meant that the Commissioners on Feeble-Mindedness had already decided they wanted to implement stricter control and institutionalisation of the feeble-minded by the time the Commission was created; they simply gathered the evidence needed to justify this *a priori* position. For Thomson, eugenic ideas had little independent impact, but were accepted for tactical reasons, namely because they seemed to provide a good basis for justifying policies of institutionalisation which the Commissioners already subscribed to before hearing eugenic testimony (Thomson, 1998). To test Thomson's theory, we can design a series of hoop tests. If feeble-mindedness as an issue space was different from physical deterioration and unemployment and poor relief, and if hereditarian ideas were only employed tactically, we should observe the following:

Test 5: *commissioners on the Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded should have a prior commitment to the institutionalisation of the feeble-minded.*

Test 6: *hereditarian witnesses testifying before the 1908 Royal Commission should present a more forceful case and stronger measures for the control of the feeble-minded than environmental witnesses did.*

Test 7: *feeble-mindedness and mental deficiency should be seen as connected to broad concerns about moral, demographic, and racial decline, whereas the issues of physical deterioration on the one hand and poor relief and unemployment on the other should not be perceived as similarly intersectional.*

Thomson's theory survives Test 5, as there are Commissioners with clear prior commitments to perpetuating the institutionalisation of the feeble-minded.[4] For instance, Reverend H N Burden owned a number of homes for the feeble-minded and inebriates. Moreover, many Commissioners were involved with the National Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded, which operated refuge homes for feeble-minded women but whose visits and efforts to find employment for the feeble-minded failed to meet expectations and morphed into calls for the institutionalisation of the adult feeble-minded. W H Dickinson was the Chairman of the Association, Ellen Pinsent was an active and vocal member, and Charles Loch was Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society which had set up the National Association in the first place (Thomson, 1998: 14-16). Indeed, during the hearing of testimony, the pro-institutionalisation bias of the Commissioners involved with the National Association for the Care of the Feeble-Minded was clear. In the following characteristic statement – a reminder that the Minutes are far from a dry source – Dickinson urges one of his witnesses to make explicit his suggestions for institutionalisation of *all* feeble-minded, not just those on poor relief: 'If you are right, as I am inclined to think you are, that this power should be extended outside the operation of the poor law, then you cannot say that you would only apply it to the cases who come first of all under the Poor Law' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: p.119, q.2134).

While Test 5 lends some credence to Thomson's theory, Test 6 questions it. Test 6 is particularly important, because a Commission stacked in favour of institutionalising the feeble-minded need not opt for hereditarianism if environmentalists also propose institutionalisation. Indeed, witnesses who were not hereditarian were also almost universally in favour of institutionalisation and provided their own justifications for it. Dr Alfred Eichholz, a vocal critic of the hereditarian view and the key influence behind the Physical Deterioration Report's adoption of environmentalism, restated his environmentalism to the Commission on the Feeble-Minded, arguing that heredity could only account for 'a minority of cases'. Far from opposing institutionalisation, he went on to propose 'Powers of detention permanent and temporary over the morally, and

[4] For a complete list of members of the committees and commissions examined in this Thesis, see Table 5 in the Appendix.

the helpless and neglected, feeble-minded' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: p.210), on the grounds that 'the physical, social, and industrial incompetence of the feeble-minded … makes them a danger to themselves and to their surroundings' (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.205). Dr W Leslie Mackenzie, who emphasised environmental causes while not denying heredity, expressed some reservations and caveats about institutionalisation but admitted that, on the whole, permanent detention was 'a reasonable and fair thing to do' (Ibid, *Vol.III*: p.158, q.23290). John Milson Rhodes, who did not prioritise either environmental or hereditary causes, said about permanent detention in special institutions after school that 'it is a very sad thing to say, but that is the only thing you can do with some of them' (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.557, q.9562-9566). Even the hereditarian Dr Ashby dissociated institutionalisation from heredity, saying the primary consideration for whether a feeble-minded person should be detained is whether they can support themselves, not heredity (Ibid, *Vol.I*: p.585, q.10143-10148). In short, non-hereditarian witnesses and arguments also tended to support and justify institutionalisation, which means that a Commission with a pro-institutionalisation bias could have opted for either an environmental or a hereditarian position based on that bias.

Test 7 casts additional doubts on Thomson's account, as feeble-mindedness was not unique in standing at the intersection of serious questions. There is indeed ample evidence to suggest that feeble-mindedness was seen not as a strictly medical issue but as standing at the intersection of a wide range of concerns, and Thomson is far from alone in suggesting this. Barker points out that discourse during the Edwardian decade linked feeble-mindedness to criminality, unemployment, poor relief, alcoholism, prostitution, venereal disease, and sexual licentiousness (Barker, 1983: 205-206). Diverse witnesses regularly draw connections between feeble-mindedness on the one hand, and conditions such as unemployment, criminality, vulnerability to sexual abuse, disease, insanity, pauperism, alcoholism, suicide, vagrancy and illegitimacy on the other.[5] Given the broader anxieties of the era about the falling birth rate and differential fertility, it is especially important to note that feeble-minded women were typically seen as having a higher than average fertility due to their lack of social inhibition, thus endangering the future of the race by increasing the proportion of the population exposed to the above conditions and simultaneously threatening moral values, as well as posing a burden to public finances due to their being disproportionately found in institutions such as prisons and workhouses (Simmons, 1978: 393-394). Nonetheless, while Thomson is right that the issue of feeble-mindedness tapped into a multiplicity Edwardian anxieties, it was not unique in this. We witness the same in our other cases.

[5] Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: pp.40, 116, 132, 342, 398; *Vol.II*: pp.164, 168, 209, 301, p.483.

Consider the question of the physical condition of army recruits, which preoccupied the Committee on Physical Deterioration. Historians point out that this debate was not confined to the issue of national military preparedness, but was influenced by and in turn itself affected broader fears of degeneration of the British society and race and apprehensions over the decline of the birth-rate (Harris, 1994: 241; Soloway, 1978: 267-268). The Minutes of Evidence clearly illustrate that the Committee broadened the discussion to address questions of poverty, urbanisation, immigration and even shifts in gender roles and parenthood.[6] And yet, hereditarian ideas were not adopted.

Reviewing the evidence for Thomson's thesis, we see that his contribution is important, but not bulletproof. He correctly points out that the Commissioners had *a priori* commitments, and that the issue of feeble-mindedness was not isolated but linked to a range of social questions. Where he incorrect is in asserting that only hereditarians' proposals could satisfy the Commissioners' commitments, and in failing to see that feeble-mindedness was far from alone in serving as a focal point of multiple anxieties. Despite these limitations, Thomson deserves credit for pointing out that there is something special about eugenics and mental deficiency that made the connection between the two powerful. Indeed, the theory presented in this Thesis emerged out of the following question that arises upon reviewing the Thomson thesis: if feeble-mindedness was almost uniquely fertile to eugenics, if Royal Commissioners were *a priori* committed to the institutionalisation of the feeble-minded, and if both hereditarians and environmentalists were willing to support this policy, then might there be something about the *content* of hereditarian ideas that made them (1)a more attractive justification of institutionalisation than environmentalism, and (2)only attractive in the case of feeble-mindedness?

Political culture and the content of eugenics

Breaching liberalism: eugenics and 'liberal unreason'

As outlined in the theory, an idea will be judged not only according to its validity, but also according to how it interacts with the prevailing political culture. By political culture we mean, following Lucian Pye, 'the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern

[6] For a list that is far from exhaustive, see Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II*: paras. 293-294, 487-490, 2185, 2199, 2554-2560, 2605, 3252-3266, 4226-4229, 4971, 6549-6551, 11270, 12698.

behavior in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity' (Pye, 1968: 218). One could argue that there may be more than one political cultures or sub-cultures, but by 'prevailing' political culture we refer to the political culture whose norms and values are encased in a nation's political institutions.

It is not particularly original to suggest that the prevailing political culture of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century United Kingdom was a *liberal* political culture, one guided by liberal principles of individual autonomy, individual responsibility, and parliamentarism. And while the Edwardian decade saw major political innovations which introduced certain collectivist elements under the guise of the 'New Liberalism', students of the period explain that contemporary fears that Britain was slipping from liberalism to collectivism were exaggerated (Harris, 1994: 11-13), and that New Liberalism's innovations were a modification, not a repudiation, of traditional British liberalism (Freeden, 1986). A good explication of what liberalism meant – at least in the United Kingdom and United States – comes from King, who points to two core principles: (1)freedom of choice so long as others are not harmed, and (2)equality of treatment (King, 1999: 7). How are we to conceive of the relationship between eugenics and the prevailing Edwardian political culture, namely liberalism?

As we explained more fully in the Theoretical Framework chapter, King has formulated the concept of 'illiberal social policy' to refer to policies that violate one or both of the core principles of liberalism by claiming to be based on scientific authority and by appealing across the political spectrum (King, 1999: 23-24). Illiberal social policy in the United Kingdom and the United States has historically been advanced under the three different justifications for exemption from liberalism that we have described at length in the Theoretical Framework chapter: (1)*liberal unreason*, (2)*liberal amelioration and collectivism*, and (3)*liberal coercive contract*.

Hardly anyone would disagree that, according to the above definition, eugenics qualifies as an illiberal social policy, violating both freedom of choice and equal treatment. King himself refers to eugenics as a clear example of illiberal social policy. Michael Freeden has long noted that, contrary to conventional thinking, there were areas of overlap between eugenics on the one hand and socialism and liberalism on the other, but still clarifies that the relationship was for the most part antagonistic (Freeden, 1979; 1983; 1986). Indeed, eugenics the world over would infringe upon freedom of choice by restricting reproduction and migration or in the Nazi case even denying certain individuals' right to live; it would also violate equality of treatment by targeting individuals on the basis of

their mere belonging to specific subgroups even if their actions were perfectly lawful.

The proposal of indefinite detention of the feeble-minded, whether advanced on eugenic grounds or not, constituted illiberal social policy, restricting people within the confines of an institution by virtue not of their actions but of their belonging to a group. While there were surprisingly few criticisms of such proposals, the ones that were publicly aired challenged precisely their illiberal dimension. During the parliamentary debates on the Mental Deficiency Bill, which led to the passage of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, MP Josiah Wedgwood charged that this would result in institutions 'where there are bolts and bars, where people are locked up at night, where people may not go in to visit their friends, where they will be hunted like runaway slaves if they escape and brought back by any constable or servant of the asylum … If you put on bolts and bars, you will not only arouse suspicion, but you will get far more brusque treatment, possibly brutal treatment of the inmates' (HC Deb 28 May 1913, vol.53, col.246). Similarly, we can see that reservations among the witnesses to the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded as to indefinite detention were often not as to its efficacy but as to its compatibility with liberal values and liberal public opinion. This was clear, for instance, in the testimony of Dr Arthur Downes, who agreed that parents of feeble-minded children may not always do what is best for the child, but that it was not advisable to compel the removal of the child over the objections of the parents, saying that 'in the state of public feeling you must have some regard to [parental rights]' (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: p.101, q.1857-1859). Consequently, justifying such a policy would be hard, and would have to follow one of the three main paths noted by King (1999).

In particular, illiberal measures towards the feeble-minded clearly fall under the *Liberal unreason* type, for it is this type which justifies differential treatment of individuals seen as being deficient in their capacity for reasoning. And this is important, because the reason that hereditarian rather than environmentalist arguments for indefinite detention were more widespread and were eventually accepted was that the former seemed to fit perfectly with the assumptions of *Liberal unreason*, whereas environmentalism laid an inferior claim. For *Liberal unreason* to apply to a group, that group must be shown to be different. In the environmentalist viewpoint, the difference in mental ability was quantitative, one of degree (Jakson, 1996), whereas for the hereditarians it was a qualitative difference, one of kind, for they saw feeble-mindedness as mostly concentrated in specific families and present in their genes. Hard-and-fast distinctions were evidently much more easily drawn if one followed the latter approach, which saw the feeble-minded (and the mentally deficient more broadly) as a biologically different subset of the population whose members can be identified

and membership to which is rarely due to environmental causes. For the environmentalists, the situation was far more unclear, with Dr Alfred Eichholz declaring that environmental conditions produced feeble-mindedness anew in each generation, and so even if you stopped all feeble-minded from procreating, you would only prevent a minority of cases (Com. on Feeble-Minded, *Vol.I*: p.214, q.3683). This resulted in a much more diffuse distribution of mental deficiency, which made it harder (though not impossible) to pinpoint this different group.

Different ideas may be more or less capable of justifying the exemption from liberalism that its illiberal proposals claim. By positing a biologically distinct and identifiable 'problem group', eugenists were strongly positioned to claim 'liberal unreason' as a justification for their preferred policies. But the emphasis on the biological, permanent nature of difference made it much less capable of adequately claiming that eugenics could be advanced under other types of illiberalism. And when 'liberal unreason' seemed inapplicable, as in the case of pauperism, eugenics could not hope to breach liberalism, and fail to serve as a major influence.

Alternative roads to illiberalism: 'liberal amelioration and collectivism' and the Poor Laws

Our third case, the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, was appointed by the same (now outgoing) Conservative-Unionist administration on 4 December 1905 and would report on 4 February 1909. Its task was 'to inquire (1)Into the working of the laws relating to the relief of poor persons in the United Kingdom; (2)Into the various means which have been adopted outside of the Poor Laws for meeting distress arising from want of employment, particularly during periods of severe industrial depression; and to consider and report whether any, and if so, what, modification of the Poor Laws or changes in their administration or fresh legislation for dealing with distress are advisable' (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: p.1). The Commission on the Poor Laws is seen by some as a monumental affair, a 'unique episode' in the history of state-society relations in Britain (Harris, 1994: 206). It was definitely an ambitious project with a complex and important object of study.

The issue of how to relieve poverty and provide for the least fortunate is one of the central questions facing every organised society. In England as elsewhere, such arrangements have a very long history. For some social and economic historians, a convenient starting point for the history of the English state's involvement with poverty relief is the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Law, the 'Old Poor Law' (Brundage, 2002; Lees, 1998), which became a nationwide system

by the end of the 17th century and which charged parishes with locally organising the provision of relief and financing it out of local property taxation (Solar, 1995). The Old Poor Law went through multiple incremental reforms, and much has been written about its administration and significance, but the system examined by the Poor Law Commissioners of 1905-1909 was the one that had been put in place in 1834, the 'New Poor Law', instituted on the recommendations of a contemporary Royal Commission. That Commission sought to overcome what were perceived to be the flaws of the Old Poor Law and the 'Speenhamland System' which was its latest incarnation (operating roughly in 1795-1834); in particular, critics charged that the Old Poor Law demoralised the poor through ill-targeted and overly generous largesse and retarded the creation of a national labour market by restricting labour mobility. The New Poor Law of 1834 abolished outdoor payments to able-bodied applicants and made the workhouse the standard locus of relief. Importantly, conditions in the workhouse were to be rough by design, to prevent people from seeking relief unless they were in dire need; the assumption in the 19th century which underpinned the New Poor Law was that there was a difference between *poverty* – a product of complex forces beyond someone's control – and *pauperism*, which was the result of a lack of character that would only be incentivised if access to relief was easy and convenient (Rose, 1986: 10-11). Of course, despite certain underlying core principles, the implementation of both the Old and the New Poor Law varied widely by locality. Moreover, the late 19th century had seen an expansion of public goods provision, for example the creation of a national school system or the mostly city-based policies of 'gas and water socialism'. To put it mildly, the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws had an exceedingly complex task, touching on issues of localised versus centralised provision, and universalism versus deterrence via means-testing.

It was only to be expected that questions so broad and so vital would attract involvement from a wide array of groups, as Mazumdar (1980) explains. The Charity Organisation Society with its emphasis on proper poverty relief (which had as a key goal the long-term moral uplifting of the relieved) was heavily involved and indeed well-represented among the Commissioners, with 6/18 Commissioners being members. The Fabian Society, pushing towards a reformist, statist socialism, was another key participant, with the four Commissioners belonging to it eventually producing a dissenting report. Aside from these two main groups, many more would be involved in the debates on the Poor Laws out of a special interest in aspects of poor relief. Among them was the Society of Medical Officers of Health, who were broadly allied to the Fabian positions, specifically on the merger of various distinct institutions of health provision into a single, centralised health service (Porter, 1991: 172).

The eugenists would bring their own views to the discussion, for they were far from indifferent to pauperism. In fact, as Mazumdar (1980; 1992) has pointed out, pauperism and the issue of the 'residuum' was at the core of British eugenics. We should not be surprised at all that eugenists were interested in pauperism, which at first seems a very different question to illness or disability. Indeed it is, but the perception of pauperism at the time was such that it appeared in many ways similar to a pathology. The economic hardship of the 1880s was followed by rapid improvements for the majority of the working class but by increased distress for a sizeable minority of it; the result was that pauperism was now seen as a social problem concentrated on a very specific group, the 'residuum' (Harris, 1994: 239). In fact, the views of British eugenists on how to treat paupers mirrored their proposals toward the feeble-minded: since pauperism was seen by them as a pathology largely caused by biological, heritable defect, paupers should be placed under the control of the state, and detained so as not to reproduce and spread their defect; and if that was not feasible, then they should not be allowed to marry (Farrall, 1970: 238-239; Mazumdar, 1980: 211).

Yet while eugenists did have their own point of view, it is impossible to neatly divide – even as an approximation – the positions in two camps, an 'environmentalist' and a 'hereditarian' camp, as we did in our previous cases. The discussion was so broad that there was a bewildering number of topics about which to disagree; the question of heredity was only one of them and a very peripheral one at that, with the major conflicts occurring between the ranks of 'environmentalists' of very different stripes. Indeed, so deep was the division that the eighteen Commissioners did not manage to produce a single report of their findings but ended up splitting into two groups: the larger group made up of 14/18 of the Commissioners signed the 'Majority Report' (with six of them belonging to the Charity Organisation Society), and the remaining four Commissioners who were Fabians signed a dissenting 'Minority Report' led by Beatrice Webb. Both groups fell within the environmentalist camp, for they did not accept a biological basis of destitution, as scholars have pointed out (Mazumdar, 1992: 22) and as we have demonstrated in our Case Selection chapter. And for all their differences, both of their reports criticised existing methods of relief for being too decentralised, too amateurish, too overworked, lacking in specialised provision, and called for more uniform practices and standards and, among other things, new ways of tackling unemployment and compiling data on it, including labour colonies. Interestingly, the only time they brought up eugenics and heredity more broadly was on feeble-mindedness, basically echoing the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded and stressing that this meant shifting provision for the feeble-minded away from the General Mixed Workhouse. Similarly, essentially all witnesses to the Commission adopted environmentalist views, almost completely

sidelining the question of heredity, save for passing references to feeble-mindedness – and this holds true even for witnesses who were hereditarians during their testimony to the Royal Commission on Feeble-Mindedness, such as Flora C. Joseph (Com. on Poor Laws, *Vol.II*: pp.68-75), Maria Poole (Ibid, *Vol.III*: 408-417), and Nathan Raw (Ibid, *Vol.IV*: 98-112).

Returning to Process-Tracing the causal chain of Epistemic Community influence in the case of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, we established Step 1 in the previous chapter, and we have also now pointed to Step 2, namely how eugenists were present and opinionated on the issue of pauperism; and yet, we have just shown that this did not lead to Step 4, the influencing of decision-making by the Epistemic Community's ideas and eventually their adoption, as the Commissioners (and even witnesses) did not pay much attention to hereditarianism. This is unlike our other case – the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration – where the causal chain broke down already in Step 1. By contrast, in the case of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, the chain breaks in the link between Steps 2 and 4. To put it simply, an Epistemic Community existed, had views on the topic, tried to influence the debate, but ultimately failed. Why? In short, eugenics' illiberalism made it difficult to participate strongly in such a discussion, unless the issue could be shown to fall under one of the exceptions justifying illiberalism; but while indeed the issue of poverty invited illiberalism, the nature of this illiberalism was much more easily claimed by environmentalism than by eugenics.

Poverty and unemployment were and still are well-known issues, although each age brings its own distinctive views on them. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, there was a sense that the portion of the urban working class which did not seem to follow broad trends of overall improvements in the economy and health – the 'residuum' – were in a way a 'race apart', a group with distinct moral and even physical characteristics (Simmons, 1978: 390; Porter, 1991: 159). This could make heredity and eugenics potentially applicable to discussions about poverty. However, at the same time, the work of social reformers and researchers such as Charles Booth or Seebohm Rowntree had convincingly demonstrated how these moral and physical conditions – which they deplored– arose primarily from irregular employment and insufficient wages that characterised the prospects of a sizeable minority of the working class (Brown, 1968: 351-353). Booth believed that the degraded residuum was dragging the rest of the working class down to its level, and proposed that it be segregated in special labour colonies where inmates would be treated well, trained, and provided with employment, and thus they would be transformed from burdens to society into productive members (Ibid). Ultimately, the influence of these reformers' views on the question of poverty

was reflected in a number of outcomes: in that both Reports– for all their differences – wanted public policy to serve not just as a deterrence or a last-resort relief of poverty, but to also be 'preventive, curative, and restorative' (Harris, 1994: 240); in that both Reports specifically and enthusiastically approved of labour colonies (Com. on Poor Laws, *Report*: pp.662, 1237); in that labour colonies were actually established by a series of groups, even before the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws voiced its approval (Brown, 1968: 357); and of course in that Seebohm Rowntree and Charles Booth were called to testify as experts to a number of Edwardian inquiries, including the Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (Com. on Physical Deterioration, *Vol.II*: pp.47-55, 200-212) and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (Com. on Poor Laws, *Vol.VIII*, p.506; *Vol.XI*: pp.12-13).

The aforementioned views of Booth and Rowntree, and the labour colonies that flowed (in part) from them, clearly connect to one of the types of illiberalism: *liberal amelioration and collectivism*. Recall that, in this type, illiberalism is justified as necessary for the government to fulfill its commitment to the welfare of those in need. Implicit in this type of illiberalism is the belief that the target group of illiberalism is improvable, if only certain drastic collectivist measures are taken. *Liberal unreason*, the type of illiberalism eugenics is so well-suited to, did not apply to poverty as understood through the lens of prevalent theories of the time, those of Booth and Rowntree, where the emphasis was put on conditions of employment and life, for *liberal unreason* emphasises a permanent, innate difference, based on reasoning ability. The problem for Edwardian eugenics was its incompatibility with *liberal amelioration and collectivism*, which dominated discussions about poverty at the time. The biological and genetic determinism of British eugenists meant that the 'unfit' were not seen as improvable. The targets of eugenic policies – which in the Edwardian period were predominantly negative eugenic policies (Barker, 1983)[7] – were not to be improved, but to be isolated and restricted for the protection and improvement of the rest of society. A comparison between proposals for the institutionalisation of the feeble-minded and for the establishment of labour colonies for the residuum can illustrate this point: in the first instance, the target of the policy is seen as unimprovable and dangerous, and the measure is justified on the basis of that person being dangerous to society as well as innately incapable of reasoning and thus incapable of citizenship; in the case of labour colonies, the rationale behind the illiberalism is

[7] Conventionally, 'negative eugenics' is a term used to denote policies aimed at restricting the fertility of the 'unfit', in juxtaposition to 'positive eugenics' meant to increase the fertility of the 'fit'.

that imposing certain illiberal measures on the target group will help them recover and eventually rejoin society.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to show that the success of an idea depends on more than its carriers, and in particular to explain which factors conditioned the success of the Edwardian eugenics Epistemic Community once it was formed. After explaining the limitations of existing approaches, we argued that we should pay attention to the interaction between the content of the idea and the prevailing political culture, and illustrated that this is how we can explain the different levels of success enjoyed by eugenists in the issues of mental deficiency and poor relief. Specifically, faced with an illiberal political culture, eugenics had to align itself convincingly with the accepted exceptions to liberalism. This was possible in the case of mental deficiency, as the content of eugenics was compatible with the *liberal unreason* type of illiberalism applicable to the issue; it was not possible in the case of poverty relief, where prevailing conceptions of poverty pointed to the *liberal amelioration and collectivism* type whose logic was antithetical to eugenics.

Epilogue

Contribution

In conclusion, we have argued that Edwardian eugenics could not succeed until the establishment of a eugenics Epistemic Community, and even after that had come to pass, the predominantly liberal political culture of Britain at the time meant that an illiberal policy proposal such as eugenics could only succeed on issues where it could convincingly claim that an exception to liberalism applied which was compatible with eugenics. But how original is this, really? What have we learned from this foray into the world of Edwardian eugenics that we did not already know? The contribution has been twofold. First, we have augmented empirical knowledge, by making eugenics a subject of social science research, and by using hitherto fine-grained data hitherto untapped by social scientists to test certain propositions and trace processes. Second, I have used these new cases and data to advance theoretical discussion in the social sciences about the role of ideas and experts in policy-making.

In respect to the empirical contribution, we have illustrated how social science research can be enriched by paying attention to eugenics, which so far has mostly been the remit of historians, especially historians of medicine and science. Eugenics is a promising field in which to explore questions of science, ideas, expertise, and interests in policy-making. With regard to patterns emerging from the data investigated (the Reports and Minutes of Evidence of official Committees and Royal Commissions), I have demonstrated in a thorough manner that, consistent with the arguments of Jose Harris and Mathew Thomson, feeble-mindedness, and more broadly mental deficiency, were indeed uniquely receptive to eugenic ideas. Thus, my Test 4 results clearly show that the same people who ignored or rejected eugenics elsewhere would embrace it in the case of feeble-mindedness.

Concerning social science theory on ideas, science, and experts in policy-making, this study is of course a case study in Epistemic Community influence, but it is more than just that. In contrast to most of the literature on Epistemic Communities, we included negative cases, and this variation in the dependent variable allowed us to show that the Epistemic Community may play an important role but is in itself insufficient. Probably the central lesson emerging from this work is that an idea is more than its carriers, more than the networks and interests involved, and that the content of the idea matters. The observation

that the very nature of an idea matters is easy to understand intuitively but fiendishly difficult to demonstrate rigorously; hopefully, a rigorous enough case was made here for the importance of this apparently straightforward idea that often appeals more to laymen than scholars, and that the latter ignore at their own peril. In this case, content matters insofar as political culture can act as a filter limiting the number of ideas to be seriously considered, and thus an idea's content may make it more or less commendable based on its compatibility with the dominant political culture. Naturally, this view further invites us to construct rational choice models differently: while not denying rational choice, it underlines the crucial caveat that we should carefully identify which ideas actually considered among the vast, almost infinite set of potential choices.

It is in the above ways that we seek to assist the study of the influence that ideas, science and experts have on policy-making. And while the ideational literature and the 'technocracy debate' are by no means new in social science, their relevance and even centrality in recent events have become only too apparent in the midst of the global pandemic.

The New Normal: ideas and technocracy after Covid-19

On 9 January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released a statement warning about a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China, which the local authorities believed had been caused by a new coronavirus, but said the situation did not require any restrictive measures.[8] Mild worry turned into alarm as Chinese scientists confirmed human-to-human transmission of this novel coronavirus on 19 January.[9] Then, on the 23rd, faced with a worsening situation, the Chinese government opted for a bold, drastic idea on how to manage the impending crisis; an idea that would come to define the year 2020 and the entire Covid-19 pandemic: *lockdown*. Entire cities across Hubei province, where the virus originated, were placed under quarantine. Public transport ceased, movement in and out of these cities was banned, and citizens' mobility was severely curtailed in a horizontal manner, irrespective of whether they were carriers. The international community initially reacted with apprehension and skepticism, but Italy quickly followed suit with a national lockdown on 9 March, and by April almost half of the world's population would be under some

[8] https://www.who.int/china/news/detail/09-01-2020-who-statement-regarding-cluster-of-pneumonia-cases-in-wuhan-china
NOTE: Preview will not open certain hyperlinks; Acrobat Reader will.
[9] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/20/coronavirus-spreads-to-beijing-as-china-confirms-new-cases

form of stay-at-home order or curfew, with over 90 countries and territories opting for such heavy-handed approaches.[10] In many countries, lockdowns became a recurrent phenomenon, deployed by governments as the ultimate weapon to face the new waves of the pandemic. The UK, for instance, announced its first national lockdown on 23 March, to be followed by a second one on November 5th and then a third on 6 January 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic, along with the recent Great Recession, have brought ideas – be they herd immunity strategies or austerity plans – and the Epistemic Communities behind them – be they pro- or anti-austerity social scientists, and public health scientists backing lockdowns or opposing them – back to the centre of public discourse. Gone are the post-Cold War predictions of liberal convergence and of the end of significant ideological conflict; gone also are hopes (and fears) that experts and planning had become outdated in a post-communist world and that consumers, producers and citizens would reign supreme in all cases. The role of experts and their ideas in steering political action during complex crises and especially on technical issues has become plain for all to see. Ideas and experts remain central to modern politics, whether used instrumentally by politicians to legitimise preferred policies and solidify power or used as guides by decision-makers grasping for guidance to confront a messy and confusing situation that they do not control or even understand. And in a world made increasingly complex and interconnected by globalisation and scientific advances, this centrality will only solidify. Naturally, we can only assume that this only further fuels the increasing public disaffection with distant 'elites' in advanced democracies (often described as a rise of 'populism'), resulting in a new political cleavage, that between the 'politics of responsibility' and the 'politics of responsiveness'.

But even if 'populists' and the 'establishment' are fighting over the use and legitimacy of ideas and experts on debates about the economy, epidemiology and social policy, surely eugenics itself is not going to be on the agenda anytime soon?

Memories from the future: the prospects of eugenics in the twenty-first century

[10] https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/02/coronavirus-in-europe-spain-s-death-toll-hits-10-000-after-record-950-new-deaths-in-24-hou

In February 2020, No.10 Downing Street was criticised for refusing to comment on past remarks made by Andrew Sabisky, adviser to the Prime Minister, on women's sport, on racial differences in IQ, and on the prevention of the creation of a 'permanent underclass' through compulsory contraception. Accused of being a racist and a eugenist, Sabisky resigned.[11] The fact that this tense affair was resolved quickly and with virtually no aftermath seemed to underscore how this 'morally and scientifically vacuous ideology' seemed to be 'behind us by now'.[12]

Indeed, eugenics in the post-war period entered a phase of gradual decline. The 1970s in particular saw the repeal of eugenic sterilisation policies, notably in Scandinavia, with Denmark repealing its eugenic sterilisation law in 1973, Sweden in 1975, and Norway in 1977; and in the late 1990s, increasing awareness of the history of these policies in Scandinavia and especially in Sweden would leave its mark on international opinion and trigger much condemnation and soul-searching (Tydén, 2010). In the United Kingdom, the Eugenics Society would also feel the pressure and take a series of steps to stem the tide of decline by turning away from tenets of eugenics or by concealing them. The organ of the Eugenics Education Society, the *Eugenics Review*, would be renamed into the *Journal of Biosocial Science* in 1969, and the Society itself would become the Galton Institute in 1989. The hostile reaction to Sir Keith Joseph's statements about the dangers of the fecundity of the 'least fitted mothers' in a 1974 speech to Birmingham Conservatives confirmed that eugenics had become politically problematic and ended his prospects to be Conservative Party leader (Bland & Hall, 2010).

And yet, there is no lack of voices asserting with varying degrees of confidence that eugenics has now returned – if it ever really went away (Allen, 2001; Paul, 1995). Certain changes in culture, policy and science have made the return of eugenics a plausible – though not certain – scenario.

First, shifts in reproductive technology and policy mean that the manipulation of heredity has once again become important as well as increasingly precise and feasible, albeit on an individual level. Prenatal testing in combination with the liberalisation of abortion is of particular importance, for it allows parents to gain knowledge of genetic conditions of the foetus and make decisions informed by this knowledge. It might be said that, since the decision is up to the parents and not subject to compulsion by the state, this does not really amount to eugenics.

[11] https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-51538493

[12] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/19/eugenics-andrew-sabisky-right-ideas-human-breeding?CMP=fb_gu&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR1aGNZFcetkZFOxp6wBDwE3Gxnr7hliNHt4jHkJzjz3qdYPoGfr2MuHubo#Echobox=1582110913

Absent state coercion, we may want to refrain from characterising the aggregation of individual parental preferences as constituting eugenics, which after all was a movement with goals applying to society as a whole. That is a very valid point. Yet we should not ignore two aspects of the practice of prenatal testing and abortion: first, the state is very much interested in achieving certain outcomes – by gently nudging rather than through coercion – through the promotion of these procedures. Tydén (2010) notes that Denmark and Sweden introduced prenatal diagnoses after a conscious cost-benefit analysis of this testing compared to the long-term care of disabled children; the assumption was that abortion would be a popular option when the test revealed disabilities. This brings us to the second point: although the decisions are personal and not coerced, they follow very clear trends of which the eugenists would approve. In Denmark, prenatal screening for Down syndrome is offered to every pregnant woman since 2004, with virtually all women taking the test, and 95% of those that receive a Down Syndrome diagnosis opt for an abortion.[13] In this we see a curious inversion: while eugenics used to be a small group of vocal and politically influential reformers strongly opposed by large parts of public opinion, it has now been routed from the political scene but infiltrated public consciousness. It is an interesting phenomenon that, with regards to eugenics, individuals do not preach what they in fact practice. Lastly, quite apart from prenatal diagnosis and abortion, we would also do well to observe how assisted reproductive technology, such as in vitro fertilisation, potentially opens up another space for eugenics. In such settings, preimplantation genetic diagnosis serves much the same function as a prenatal testing, that of detecting and filtering out 'undesirable' traits. Indeed, British eugenists had studied the issue of artificial insemination already in the 1950s and concluded that the ability to select donors on the basis of mental and physical qualities made artificial insemination eugenically commendable and in fact eugenically superior to conventional reproduction, a view they communicated to the Departmental Committee on Human Artificial Insemination active in 1958-1960 (Schenk & Parkes, 1968: 152-153).

The second breakthrough which opens the field to twenty-first-century eugenics is gene editing. Gene editing allows us to change an organism's DNA, and can be used to cure a specific patient of certain genetic diseases (*somatic cell gene therapy*) or to prospectively change a child's genes (*germline gene therapy*). Germline gene therapy is currently seen as highly unethical and taboo, and for now both governments and the scientific community are unwilling to proceed in this direction. When Chinese scientist He Jiankui claimed in November 2018 to

[13] https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/the-last-children-of-down-syndrome/616928/?utm_content=146785486&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&hss_channel=fbp-212009668822281&fbclid=IwAR3Wyg3M70CSI9fBtyM-PeC0hE0EOYVjwVVEi2aYrCaSGJhcF3xkbc375Ks

have created the first babies genetically edited so as to not get HIV, he was immediately isolated by the scientific community, placed under house arrest, and sentenced in December 2019 to three years in prison by a Chinese court.[14] Time will tell whether the opinion of scientists, publics and governments on this issue will shift. In the meantime, however, gene editing operations to cure diseases in specific patients (rather than design them before their birth) have already been successfully carried out in the United Kingdom in the previous decade,[15] and recent advances promise to revolutionise the potential of such operations.[16] We still have a long way to go in terms of research to discover the actual efficacy of gene therapy, but it is evident that our ever-increasing capacity to edit our genes can result in an increasing incentive for politicians to reconsider whether designer babies should remain a taboo. At the same time, it will also raise further questions about what is 'desirable', 'normal', and ultimately what is 'acceptable'; and while most people would not really hesitate to answer with regards to genetic diseases like certain forms of cancer, the question becomes much trickier in the context of disability. Most people would probably agree with gene therapy when the question is cancer; but maybe not in the case of Down Syndrome.

Of course, old topics that concerned twentieth-century eugenists, such as intelligence, disability, mental illness or race, are still relevant and mired in controversy. But the emphasis here was placed on changes in policy and scientific advancements rather than on these topics, in order to illustrate that the incentives facing scientists and decision-makers are moving towards a direction of enabling rather than disabling the consideration of eugenic policies. To put it in the terms of this research project, we can say almost for a fact that decision-makers will be called to legislate on areas where eugenic ideas will be relevant and that Epistemic Communities promoting such ideas will form. Whether these experts will publicly call themselves 'eugenists' or whether they will be conscious of the eugenic nature of their ideas is a different question. The result will largely rest, therefore, on political culture.

As for the liberalism of the early twentieth century, which constrained eugenics, few can deny that it has declined over the past hundred years, regardless of whether one approves of this trend. If anything, the recent lockdowns reminded us that, in the modern era, public health can legitimately trump liberalism in the eyes of experts, elites, and often majorities of the public alike. If we agree with

[14] https://edition.cnn.com/2019/12/30/china/gene-scientist-china-intl-hnk/index.html
[15] https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/gene-therapy-success/
[16] https://www.bbc.com/news/health-50125843?ocid=socialflow_facebook&ns_campaign=bbcnews&ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR13GkkZEwNqvbeZYVJE7Lj8o51WEQdDHxqcWGH2oAROXdtC-asM6vMH13s

Karl Mannheim (1952) that for a ‘generation’ to form there must be a ‘common destiny’ (namely, a commonly experienced event or series of events defining individuals’ lives) uniting the experiences of its members, and if we see the Covid-19 pandemic as being precisely such a formative experience in the political socialisation of today’s teenagers and young adults, then we may well expect that this generation’s political values will come to be defined by the dominant narrative that emerges regarding the pandemic. It may be then that we can no longer see liberalism as reliably stopping illiberal proposals when these are framed in terms of the promotion and protection of public health. If this analysis is correct, and liberalism no longer provides a reliable guarantee against eugenics, will other trends and ideologies fill this void? Will the ‘Rights Revolution’ of the postwar years persist, enabling people with disabilities to assert their right to life, opportunity, and respect? Will organised religion successfully assert itself as the ultimate authority on issues of sexuality and reproduction? Will committed anti-hereditarians convincingly demonstrate that a series of disparities and conditions are caused overwhelmingly by social, political and economic arrangements, rather than by genes?

The verdict is still out on whether eugenics will remain a political taboo. But as to whether issues of reproduction and genetics will become increasingly important in public and scientific debate, the answer is clearly affirmative. What the twenty-first-century reader must remember is that obscure, old and seemingly irrelevant ideas can easily make a comeback when they convincingly present themselves as expert guidance on navigating complex new issues, providing both overall direction and recommendations on how to achieve one’s goals. And it is this writer’s contention that the continuing inattention of social science to the past, present, and future of eugenics may well result in us being presented with a *fait accompli* which will find us politically and morally unprepared.

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*NOTE: Preview will not open certain hyperlinks; Acrobat Reader will.

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Appendix

Table 1: Key facts about our cases

Case	*Creation*	*Publication of Report*	*Main Issue Under Consideration*	*Main Findings*	*Outcome*
Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration	2 Sep. 1903.	20 July 1904.	Examine whether the population had indeed deteriorated physically, as suggested by rejection of many Army recruits, and identify causes and cures of poor physical condition.	No progressive deterioration among the population in recent decades; physique of poor – particularly in cities – is concerning, has environmental causes (diet, overcrowding, pollution etc) and therefore environmental interventions are needed.	Rejection of eugenic ideas.
Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded	9 Sep. 1904.	10 July 1908.	Consider existing methods of dealing with idiots, imbecile and feeble-minded, or other defective persons, and propose economic improvements to better protect these people and the broader community.	Feeble-mindedness is more prevalent than commonly thought, strongly heritable, contributes to multiple social problems, and its carriers have above average fertility. The solution is to place them indefinitely in special institutions where they will be employed and detained, and where they will	Acceptance of eugenic ideas.

				be unable to reproduce.	
Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress	4 Dec. 1905.	4 Feb. 1909.	Review existing provisions for relieving poverty and unemployment, both those that are part of the Poor Laws and those that exist outside them, and suggest improvements if necessary.	Diverse findings. Majority Report saw poverty as caused by bad character and habits, disease and ineffective welfare, Minority Report focused on socio-economic system, both ignored hereditarian arguments ignored. Both reports proposed that relief should be transferred from local government to a centralised body. Minority Report called for ambitious reforms to introduce state services aiming at prevention, not just relief, of poverty, including abolition of workhouse and creation of a public health service. Majority Report thought charitable bodies rather than state should remain primary providers of poverty relief.	Rejection of eugenic ideas.

Table 2: Witness testimony across cases

No.	*Names*	*Physical Deterioration*	*Feeble-Mindedness*	*Poor Law*
1	**Adrian, Alfred Douglas**	-	+	+
2	**Ashby, Henry**	+	+	-
3	**Bagenal, Philip Henry**	-	+	+
4	**Barclay, R.B.**	-	+	+
5	**Booth, Rt. Hon. Charles**	+	-	+
6	**Borrett, Major-General H.C.**	+	-	-
7	**Bourke, Edmund**	-	+	+
8	**Buist, R.C.**	-	+	+
9	**Chalmers, Archibald Kerr**	+	-	+
10	**Chance, Sir William, Bart.**	-	+	+
11	**Clifford, Mary**	-	+	+
12	**Close, Ellinor C.L.**	+	-	+
13	**Crichton-Browne, Sir James**	-	+	-
14	**Cunningham, D.J.**	+	-	-
15	**Curtis, Richard James**	-	+	+
16	**Davy, James Stewart**	-	+	+
17	**Dendy, Mary**	-	+	-
18	**Dorington, The Right Hon. Sir John**	-	+	+
19	**Downes, Arthur Henry**	-	+	+ (also Commissioner)
20	**Eichholz, Alfred**	+	+	-
21	**Fleming, Baldwyn**	-	+	+
22	**Fosbroke, G.H.**	+	-	-
23	**Fox, Charles H.**	-	+	+
24	**Gray, J.**	+	-	-

25	**Grisewood, William**	-	+	+
26	**Helby, James Thomas**	-	+	+
27	**Henderson, Alexander**	-	+	+
28	**Horsley, Sir Victor**	+	-	-
29	**Hutchison, Robert**	+	+	-
30	**Jefferies, Marguerite**	-	+	+
31	**Joseph, Flora C.**	-	+	+
32	**Kelly, Denis, Bishop of Ross**	+	-	+ (also Commissioner)
33	**Kerr, James**	+	+	-
34	**Lamb, David Crichton**	+	+	-
35	**Legge, James Granville**	Committee Member	+	-
36	**Loch, C.S.**	+	Commissioner	Commissioner
37	**Mackenzie, W. Leslie**	+	+	+
38	**Malins, Edward**	+	-	-
39	**Mann, T. Duncombe**	-	+	+
40	**Mason, Marian Harriet**	-	+	+
41	**Maurice, General Sir Frederick**	+	-	-
42	**Motion, James Russell**	-	+	+
43	**Mott, Frederick Walker**	+	+	-
44	**Murphy, Shirley Forster**	+	-	+
45	**Niven, James**	+	-	+
46	**Ormsby, Sir Lambert H.**	+	-	-
47	**Poole, Maria**	-	+	+
48	**Raw, Nathan**	-	+	+
49	**Rees, The Rev. W.E. Edwards**	+	-	-
50	**Rhodes, John Milson**	-	+	+

51	**Rowntree, B. Seebohm**	+	-	+
52	**Shadwell, Arthur**	+	-	-
53	**Spence, T. W. L.**	-	+	+
54	**Stanley, The Hon. Maude**	+	+	-
55	**Tatham, John**	Committee Member	+	-
56	**Taylor, Sir William**	+	-	-
57	**Tredgold, A.F.**	-	+	-
58	**Vallance, William**	-	+	+
59	**Whitaker, James Smith**	-	+	+
60	**Wiglesworth, Joseph**	+	-	-
61	**Willis-Bund, John William**	-	+	+

Legend:

‘+’: witness testified to the case in question.

‘-’: witness did not testify to the case in question.

Table 3: Testimony of witnesses who addressed causes in at least one case

No.	*Names*	*Physical Deterioration*	*Feeble-Mindedness*	*Poor Law*
1	**Ashby, Henry**	Primarily environmentalist	Hereditarian.	-
2	**Bagenal, Philip Henry**	-	Both environment and heredity	Does not address causes
3	**Barclay, R.B.**	-	Does not address causes	Environmentalist
4	**Booth, Rt. Hon. Charles**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
5	**Chalmers, Archibald Kerr**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
6	**Chance, Sir William, Bart.**	-	Both environment and heredity	Does not address causes
7	**Close, Ellinor C.L.**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
8	**Crichton-Browne, Sir James**	-	Hereditarian	-
9	**Cunningham, D.J.**	Primarily environmentalist	-	-
10	**Curtis, Richard James**	-	No mention of causes	Primarily environmentalist
11	**Dendy, Mary**	-	Hereditarian	-
12	**Eichholz, Alfred**	Environmentalist	Environmentalist	-
13	**Fosbroke, G.H.**	Both environment and heredity	-	-
14	**Fox, Charles H.**	-	Hereditarian	Does not address causes
15	**Grisewood, William**	-	Does not address causes	Environmentalist
16	**Henderson, Alexander**	-	Does not address causes	Environmentalist
17	**Hutchison, Robert**	Environmentalist	Accidentalist	-
18	**Joseph, Flora C.**	-	Primarily hereditarian	Environmentalist
19	**Kelly, Denis, Bishop of Ross**	Primarily environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
20	**Kerr, James**	Both environment and heredity	Hereditarian	-
21	**Lamb, David Crichton**	Environmentalist	Both environment and heredity	-

22	**Loch, C.S.**	Environmentalist	-	-
23	**Mackenzie, W. Leslie**	Environmentalist	Primarily environmentalist	Environmentalist
24	**Malins, Edward**	Primarily environmentalist	-	-
25	**Maurice, General Sir Frederick**	Primarily environmentalist	-	-
26	**Motion, James Russell**	-	Does not address causes	Environmentalist
27	**Mott, Frederick Walker**	Environmentalist	Hereditarian	-
28	**Murphy, Shirley Forster**	Environmentalist	-	Does not address causes
29	**Niven, James**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
30	**Ormsby, Sir Lambert H.**	Primarily environmentalist	-	-
31	**Poole, Maria**	-	Hereditarian	Primarily environmentalist
32	**Raw, Nathan**	-	Hereditarian	Environmentalist
33	**Rees, The Rev. W.E. Edwards**	Environmentalist	-	-
34	**Rhodes, John Milson**	-	Both environment and heredity	Primarily environmentalist
35	**Rowntree, B. Seebohm**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
36	**Shadwell, Arthur**	Both environment and heredity	-	-
37	**Stanley, The Hon. Maude**	Environmentalist	Does not address causes	-
38	**Taylor, Sir William**	Primarily environmentalist	-	-
39	**Tredgold, A.F.**	-	Hereditarian	-
40	**Vallance, William**	-	Hereditarian	Does not address causes

Table 4: Testimony of witnesses who addressed causes in at least two cases

No.	*Names*	*Physical Deterioration*	*Feeble-Mindedness*	*Poor Law*
1	**Ashby, Henry**	Primarily environmentalist	Hereditarian.	-
2	**Booth, Rt. Hon. Charles**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
3	**Chalmers, Archibald Kerr**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
4	**Eichholz, Alfred**	Environmentalist	Environmentalist	-
5	**Hutchison, Robert**	Environmentalist	Accidentalist	-
6	**Joseph, Flora C.**	-	Primarily hereditarian	Environmentalist
7	**Kelly, Denis, Bishop of Ross**	Primarily environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
8	**Kerr, James**	Both environment and heredity	Hereditarian	-
9	**Lamb, David Crichton**	Environmentalist	Both environment and heredity	-
10	**Mackenzie, W. Leslie**	Environmentalist	Primarily environmentalist	Environmentalist
11	**Mott, Frederick Walker**	Environmentalist	Hereditarian	-
12	**Niven, James**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist
13	**Poole, Maria**	-	Hereditarian	Primarily environmentalist
14	**Raw, Nathan**	-	Hereditarian	Environmentalist
15	**Rhodes, John Milson**	-	Both environment and heredity	Primarily environmentalist
16	**Rowntree, B. Seebohm**	Environmentalist	-	Environmentalist

Table 5: List of committee members and commissioners

Name	*Background as stated in the report*
Inter-departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration	
Mr Almeric W. Fitzroy, C.V.O.	Clerk of the Council (Chairman)
Colonel G.M. Fox	Inspector of Physical Training under the Board of Education
Mr J.G. Legge	H.M. Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools
Mr H.M. Lindsell, C.B.	Principal Assistant Secretary to the Board of Education
Colonel G.T. Onslow, C.B., R.M.L.I.	Inspector of Marine Recruiting
Mr John Struthers, C.B.	Assistant Secretary to the Scotch Education Department
Dr J.F.W. Tatham, M.D., F.R.C.P.	of the General Register Office
Mr Ernest H. Pooley	Barrister-at-law
Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded	
Thomas Henry	Marquess of Bath, Chairman (resigned)
Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie	Earl of Radnor, Chairman (replaced Henry)
William Patrick Byrne, Esquire	Companion of Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Principal Clerk in the Office of Our Secretary of State for the Home Department
Charles Edward Henry Hobhouse, Esquire	-
Frederick Needham, Esquire	Doctor of Medicine, one of the Commissioners in Lunacy
Henry David Greene, Esquire,	One of our Counsel learned in the Law
Charles Edward Heley Chadwyck-Healey, Esquire	One of our Counsel learned in the Law
Harold Nelson Burden	Clerk, Manager of Brentry and other Certified Inebriate Reformatories
Willoughby Hyett Dickinson, Esquire	Chairman of the National Association for promoting the welfare of the Feeble-Minded
Charles Stewart Loch, Esquire	Secretary to the Council of the London Charity Organization Society
Ellen Frances Pinsent	-
Horatio Bryan Donkin, Esquire, M.D. F.R.C.P.	One of the Commissioners under the provisions of the Prison Act, 1877
James Craufurd Dunlop, Esq., M.D., F.R.C.P. (Edin.)	Superintendent of Statistics in the Office of the Registrar-General for Scotland, Inspector under the Inebriates Acts,

	Assistant to the Medical Adviser to the Prison Commissioners for Scotland

Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress	
The Right Hon. Lord George Hamilton, G.C.S.I.	Chairman
The Most Rev. Denis Kelly, D.D.	Lord Bishop of Ross, Ireland
The Right Hon. Sir Henry Robinson, K.C.B.	Vice-President of the Local Government Board for Ireland
Sir Samuel B. Provis, K.C.B.	Permanent Secretary to the Local Government Board for England
Frank Holdsworth Bentham, Esq., J.P.	Ex-Chairman of the Bradford Board of Guardians
A.H. Downes, Esq., M.D.	Senior Medical Inspector for Poor Law purposes to the Local Government for England
The Rev. Thory Gage Gardiner, M.A.	Clerk in Orders
George Lansbury, Esq.	Member of the Borough Council and Board of Guardians for Poplar and of the Central Unemployed Body for London
C. Stewart Loch, Esq., B.A., LL.D., D.C.L.	Secretary of the London Charity Organisation Society
J. Patten Macdougall, Esq., C.B.	Vice-President of the Local Government Board for Scotland
T. Hancock Nunn, Esq.	Member of Hampstead Board of Guardians; and sometime Chairman of Hampstead Distress Committee, and of the Classification and Employment Exchanges Committees of the Central Unemployed Body for London
The Rev. L.R. Phelps, M.A.	Fellow of Oriel College Oxford, and Vice-Chairman of Oxford Board of Guardians
William Smart, Esq., M.A., D.Phil., LL.D., Adam Smith Professor of Political Economy, University of Glasgow	-
The Rev. Prebendary H. Russell Wakefield, M.A.	Alderman and Ex-Mayor of the Borough of St. Marylebone, and Chairman of the Central Unemployed Body for London
Mrs. Bosanquet	-
Mrs. Sidney Webb	-

Miss Octavia Hill	-
Francis Chandler, Esq.	Secretary to the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, and ex-Chairman of Chortlon Board of Guardians