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OF EUGENICS

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The strong connection between eugenics and nationalism is now a clear interpretive strand in the historiography. From strident British “race patriotism,” to “blood and homeland” arguments in central and southeast Europe, from anti-colonial nationalism in Latin America to nationalist race hygiene in Spain, eugenics was a key component of modern discourse on race and nations. For all the local differences between these nationalist histories, the place of eugenics within them was remarkably similar. Eugenics was, in this sense, international. Proponents may have argued about Lamarckian and Mendelian theories, *puériculture* and hygiene-based approaches as opposed to interventionist sterilization, but the drive to shape national populations through an applied science of heredity was widely shared. Eugenic experts from across the globe understood each other, even if they disagreed. Indeed, eugenists spoke an international language, perhaps more effectively than other internationalists of the period spoke Esperanto.

Early historical studies of eugenics emphasized a comparative and therefore international dimension. These, and the generation of work that followed, show how and why eugenic ideas might have been similar between nations, but eugenic policies completely different. Other studies have traced circuits of exchange between influential scientific figures, linking a long-standing strand of analysis in the historiography of science with the more recent upsurge in transnational history. Important connections have been unearthed between eugenic scientists based in Germany and the United States, across the British Empire, and as Quine shows in this volume, between scientists based in southern Europe and their counterparts in Latin America.
The long-standing historiographical interest in this aspect of eugenics stemmed partly from the availability of the proceedings of early international conferences. Twentieth-century eugenic societies and associations inherited a rich nineteenth-century tradition of international science meetings. The organizers were assiduous about publishing their proceedings widely and quickly, providing detailed papers for scientific and social analysis at the time, and for subsequent historical scrutiny. For the participants at these meetings, “international” meant first, and most simply, the gathering of experts from several nations, though unsurprisingly, perhaps, the range of national representation was limited. Substantive issues of internationalism and eugenics were also occasionally addressed: standardization of data was one key agenda item in this respect; migration and its regulation was another. This period’s phenomenal uptake of migration law, and the eugenic clauses and powers therein, is arguably the most internationally consistent manifestation of eugenic ideas not just as policy, but also as practice. The various migration statutes themselves were remarkably similar across time and national contexts, in their fairly sudden appearance, in their drafting, and in their increasingly eugenic rationales.

If we know a good deal about the international eugenic congresses, we know far less about the place of eugenics in the two flagship international organizations of the twentieth century, the League of Nations (1919–1946) and its successor, the United Nations (1945–). Notwithstanding major efforts on the part of eugenic societies, it proved problematic for League of Nations’ personnel to divorce eugenics from nationalism, to see it as a viably international issue. By contrast, eugenics was explicitly championed and harnessed by key players in the early postwar years of the United Nations. The twentieth-century chronology of the links between eugenics and the formal international organizations is thus surprising, and in many ways counterintuitive: avoided by the League in the 1920s and 1930s, eugenics was taken up by sections of the UN after World War II. Given that many scholars argue that eugenics became publicly indefensible in the post–Holocaust period,4 this postwar uptake invites a reconsideration of the periodization of eugenics’ decline.

The League and the United Nations were intergovernmental organizations, bound in many ways by nationalist politics that, as we shall see, came to determine just which issues could be deemed “international” and which could not. But there was a further intellectual and political tradition of internationalism driving certain elements within and behind the League and later the UN, which sought to diminish national agendas and even nations themselves. Deriving from a tradition of universalism and pacifism, historians have become interested in the influence of cosmopolitanism, the idea of a universal human community, a “supra-national” or world citizenship.5 Especially the leftist “reform” eugenicists of the interwar and the post–World War II period should be interpreted partly within this tradition. Cosmopolitanism also shaped the links between eugenics and the problematization of world population growth, which intensified in the postwar decades, and which was one of the key trajectories of international eugenics over the twentieth century. As one population expert wrote to the long-standing Eugenics Society secretary C. P. Blacker (1895–1975) in 1954: “Narrow patriotism must go and one must become ‘planet conscious.’”6
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The first eugenic organizations were established in the very early twentieth century, initially in Germany. As its name suggests, the Internationale/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene was intended to be international from the start. A large International Eugenics Congress was held at the University of London in 1912, organized by the [British] Eugenics Education Society and presided over by Leonard Darwin (1850–1943), who argued explicitly for the national benefits of eugenics in a context of international competition. This Congress divided eugenics into biological research, sociological and historical research, and legal and social customs, and the practical application of eugenic principles. In his review in the journal Science, U.S. biologist Raymond Pearl noted the “respectability” of the attendees, over 800 of them, with as many visitors in daily attendance. The Congress established a Permanent International Eugenics Committee, which worked toward the second Congress. This Committee became, in 1925, the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations.

If the first meeting bore the marks of eugenics’ British origins (notwithstanding the congress’s “international” claim), the second was a thoroughly North American affair, held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York in September 1921. It was organized by Henry Fairfield Osborn (1857–1935) of Columbia University; Madison Grant (1865–1937), chair of the Zoological Society; and Clarence Little (1888–1971), zoologist, neo-Malthusian, and at that point ending his assistant directorship in the Carnegie Institute’s Department of Genetics, under Charles Davenport (1866–1944). The organizing committee arranged eugenics conceptually into four sections: pure genetics in animals, plants, and human heredity; the regulation of reproduction of “the human family”; human racial differences; and eugenics in relation to the state, society, and education. Two large volumes resulted from this meeting: Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family (1923); and Eugenics in Race and State (1923).

A further international congress was held in New York in 1932, led this time by Charles Davenport, and distinctly reflecting his particular interest in race science. Speakers and papers were solicited and divided into: race differences and their measurement; “mate selection” and the birth rate; “the socially inadequate”; the physiology of reproduction; eugenics and society; and genetics. And in 1940 there was a fourth international congress of eugenics led by the German Racial Hygiene Society, which gathered Axis experts together in Vienna.

For population experts in Latin America, the pan-American political and geographic logic was more significant. Extending prior pan-American medical and sanitary conferences, there was a series of equivalent “eugenic and horticultrue” conferences, which linked with the Latin International Federation of Eugenics Societies, holding its first meeting in Mexico City, 1935. At this meeting and at the
Paris meeting of Latin Eugenics in 1937, "Latinity" was constructed as an "oppositional identity to 'Anglo-Saxonism,'" as Nancy Stepan notes, and this manifested as resistance to the interventionist reproductive eugenics especially associated with the United States.  

In the manner of any number of international scientific congresses common from the later nineteenth century, the eugenics meetings gathered experts from several countries: the London and New York meetings were dominated by U.S. and British contributors, with typically sizable French, Italian, Scandinavian, and German contingents as well. The proceedings of the 1912 meeting lists only one eastern European participant and one East Asian delegate from the University of Kyoto, while the 1921 New York meeting included papers from Indian Gopalji Ahluwalia, and the Cuban Dr. D. F. Ramos, key organizer of the Pan-American Eugenics Committee and an important figure in the League of Nations' consideration of eugenics. In general, the eugenics meetings were less diverse than other comparable meetings, such as the various international birth control and population congresses of the period, which included much larger numbers of East and South Asian participants.

Ironically, the actual reach of eugenics was far wider and broader than the participation in these so-called "international" congresses. If one is guided by the proceedings of these meetings, or even the list of the formal members of the International Federation, the impact of eugenics appears falsely diminished. The contributing nations to the International Federation in 1934, for example, included the well-known US, British, and European organizations, as well as groups from Argentina, the Dutch East Indies, Estonia, South Africa, Switzerland, and Ramos's Pan-American Office of Homiculture in Cuba. But this list offers no sense of the extensive eugenic activity elsewhere: in Australia, Hong Kong, India, China, Japan, or New Zealand. Eugenics was in fact far more globally widespread than participation in, and the records of, the so-called "international" congresses would suggest, as chapters in part II of this volume demonstrate.

Social and biological scientists interested in eugenics also exchanged ideas at other international meetings: the International Congresses of Medicine, International Neo-Malthusian Conferences, and the International Congresses of Genetics. For example, at the fifth meeting of the latter (Berlin in 1927), Ruggles Gates (1882–1962) spoke on interracial inheritance, and the editors of the British Eugenics Review congratulated themselves: "eugenic science and heredity in man found itself... no longer a halting camp-follower of the progressive army of genetic studies."  

Similarly, the 1931 International Congress for the Study of Population Problems held in Rome—with Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) as the honorary chair and demographer Corrado Gini (1884–1965) as the effective chair—had a section devoted to "Biology and Eugenics." Topics included "declining birth rate factors," and "effects of war on the rate, longevity, relation between intelligence and birth-rate." It should be noted that papers on "crossings in human races" were presented not to the eugenics section, but to the section titled "Anthropology and Geography."
From the earliest international congresses, comparative national studies appeared. But occasionally the substantive topic of internationalism was put forward. Its least ambitious form involved plans for standardization of data, for example “International Biological Registration: the Norwegian System for Identification and Protection of the Individual” and “Plan for Obtaining an International Technique in Physical Anthropology.”\(^9\) The most ambitious consideration of eugenics and internationalism, to be discussed below, involved consideration of apparently universal principles of evolution and inheritance for humanity as a whole. Somewhere in between lay close consideration of the role of eugenics in regulating and monitoring international human movement.

**Eugenics and Immigration Restriction: International Bio-regulation**

Historians of eugenics are typically concerned to assess the actual implementation of eugenic ideas, compared to their theoretical discussion. This is the common gap that Robert Nye notes between “the ambitions of the eugenicists and their real achievements in legal and institutional reform.”\(^{10}\) Indeed, eugenic movements were not infrequently unsuccessful by their own measures, failing dismally at the “application” end of applied science. In an under-recognized way, however, the remarkable proliferation of eugenic clauses in immigration laws across many nations in the first half of the twentieth century arguably constitute the single most internationally significant and consistent policy and legal application of eugenic ideas. U.S. historians in particular have shown the influence of eugenic arguments on the shape of the famous 1924 Immigration Act and more generally on linked histories of territorial governance, population management, and U.S. nationalism.\(^{21}\) Yet this history needs to be understood as constituting a global trend.\(^{22}\) Enacted and implemented as part of increasingly strident nationalisms in the interwar period, immigration law aimed to regulate intercontinental, interregional, and often interracial movement, which renders it an aspect of international eugenics of the first half of the twentieth century.

Beginning with Chinese exclusion acts in the 1850s, immigration restriction and regulation proliferated in a great number of countries in the 1920s and 1930s. These national statutes were a “new world” response to the massive global human movements of the nineteenth century, the Chinese and later Indian labor diasporas, and the economic migration of millions of Europeans to North and South America. National and colonial immigration laws were considered part of the management of the intergenerational biological character and health of domestic populations. Over time, the explicit nomination of race and nationality as grounds for exclusion (always problematic, especially within the British Empire and Commonwealth)
declined and was increasingly replaced by racially coded health and eugenic clauses. By the 1920s, almost every statute in the global phenomenon of immigration regulation had a power of exclusion, deportation, or restriction of entry based on a eugenic rationale. And later in the century, new states like Israel and Singapore inherited this linked eugenic and migration history, introducing medical screening in bids to secure national health.23

Historians of eugenics and historians of migration regulation have generally pointed to the role of eugenics and eugenicists in arguing for race or nationality-based restrictions enacted in many laws. This is historically clear, not least in the multiple Chinese exclusion acts across the world, and in the 1924 U.S. Act that established national quotas for immigrants from various nations and ethnicities.24 Indeed, from 1919 the leader of the U.S. Immigration Restriction League, Prescott F. Hall (1868–1921), called the proliferation of migration acts “world eugenics.” To his mind, racial segregation of nations was an appropriate and effective response to the “yellow peril” of the Chinese diaspora and Chinese population growth.25 But there needs to be an extension of our understanding of the eugenics of immigration restriction beyond a discourse of race difference. In the interwar period, many “new world” nations were hurriedly writing and rewriting the exclusion of the “unfit” from the old world into statutes, policy, and regulation. This was a means by which populations were to be improved, not necessarily on grounds of racial difference, but perhaps more commonly on grounds of the “unfitness” of individuals of the same “race.” Thus, even more strictly eugenic than the race- or nationality-based exclusions were those clauses of immigration acts which sought to screen out the genetically dangerous from the population who, racially or ethnically speaking, were permitted entry; “whites” who were feeble-minded, syphilitic, criminally inclined, or alcoholic. This is the less familiar legacy of eugenics on the international regulation of global movement. Indeed, occasionally commentators would explicitly distinguish eugenic from racial exclusion. Anthropologist and geographer Griffith Taylor, for example, thought the obsession with blanket race-based exclusions should sensibly be dropped in favor of health and fitness criteria of entrants as individuals. “Eugenics rather than nationality,” he wrote, “is the best criterion for those responsible for racial exclusion.”26

In the U.S. 1917 Immigration Act, section 3 prohibited “all idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons; persons who have had one or more attacks of insanity at any time previously; persons of constitutional psychopathic inferiority, persons with chronic alcoholism.”27 The process of health inspection on arrival by the U.S. Public Health Service (and in some circumstances at point of departure) was driven simultaneously by fiscal (the cost of welfare), health, and eugenic rationales, with the distinction between the latter increasingly imperceptible. The earlier Canadian laws were similar, the 1910 Act nominating in the “prohibited classes” “idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons.”28 Even earlier again, the 1901 Australian Immigration Restriction Act had effectively ceased Chinese, Indian, Japanese, or Pacific Islander entry. This meant that the immigration powers to refuse entry on fitness grounds were far more commonly
implemented against Britons, by design the most common migrants. In gaining a certificate of health to board a ship bound for Australia, would-be immigrants were questioned by representatives of the Australian government first on tuberculosis, second on whether they had ever been admitted to an insane asylum. As reported at the time, the most common grounds for rejection were “want of physical fitness, deficient height and weight, defective eyesight, deafness, mental deficiency, and tuberculosis.” In other contexts, immigration acts governed both race criteria and mental and physical health. The 1906 Newfoundland Act, for example, defined as undesirable any “Chinese who is...an idiot or insane.”

Considered collectively, as part of international eugenics, there is an arc to these legislative measures to manage global human movement through national statutes. The original twin legal rationales for exclusion and deportation—labor concerns on the one hand, quarantine and the management of acute epidemics on the other—increasingly merged and strengthened through a eugenic logic in the 1920s and 1930s in many receiving countries. Overall, the explicit nomination of race or nationality gave way to health and fitness (that is, eugenic) rationales for exclusion of individuals. Together, these were consistent and applied measures for the bioregulation of future populations.

**Eugenics and the League of Nations**

From its origins after World War I to its demise in 1946, the League of Nations considered many social, economic, and health issues raised by the member states of the Assembly and shaped them, via its various agencies and sections, into international issues: slavery, tariffs, the opium trade, infant welfare, labor conditions. If these did not naturally fit the League’s brief to maintain peace through international cooperation, they were discursively made to do so. Over the 1920s and 1930s many eugenic advocates approached the Secretariat of the League and its various agencies, seeking to place eugenics officially on the agenda and attempting to “internationalize” eugenics for the League’s consumption. Participants at the 1921 International Eugenics meeting in New York thought that a modest version of eugenics might have a “natural home” with the international health organization, for example, but this was not to be. Perhaps surprisingly, eugenics was never authorized by the League as “international.”

Notwithstanding this failure to formally internationalize eugenics, the various arguments put forward to the League illustrate the reach of eugenics, its links to any number of concerns in the period, and the flexibility it held, crossing social and biological issues. Charles Davenport argued his case first in terms of the global significance of human migration and its regulation:

In view of the fact that racial differences are now recognized as matters of the greatest possible concern in a world organization, in view of the fact that they
played so important a part in the Peace Conference and in the delimitation of countries, and in view of the fact that they form so important a consideration in matters of immigration, it is thought that the progress of the world would be advanced by having a definite sub-section of the Health Section.\textsuperscript{33}

Davenport received a firm decline. The honorary secretary of the International Eugenics Congress subsequently pressed Dame Rachel Crowdy (1884–1964), then secretary of the Social Questions and Opium Traffic Section of the League of Nations, on whether a Eugenics subsection had been considered. Progressive health policy, it was argued, demands that knowledge of human heredity, miscegenation, and vital statistics be disseminated rapidly and correctly to the health service of all countries. “The great Powers with their Colonial responsibilities cannot afford to neglect any opportunity of increasing the knowledge of such practical eugenic questions.”\textsuperscript{33} Although Crowdy’s response was interested, neither the Social Questions section nor the Health Organization was persuaded.

When Davenport tried Crowdy again, later in 1920, his rationale rested specifically on race difference and its significance in world affairs. In Davenport’s hands, eugenics was strategically rendered international by linking it to peace (resolving race tensions, as he saw it) through immigration regulation and through the constitution of nations. Eugenics promoted the “cause of the comity of nations and international good.” In this case, the bid to argue eugenics into the League through race was foiled by Japanese Inazo Nitobe, one of the original undersecretaries-general of the League and founding director of the League’s International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (which became UNESCO).

In view of the historical fact that races of all colors and grades have freely mingled all through the ages, I cannot share Dr Davenport’s view that the progress of the world would be advanced by accentuating race differences. German scientists under the lead of Gobineau...tried to find scientific basis to demonstrate the absolute superiority of the “Hun,” I hope America will not follow the German example—-I hail all scientific researches: but I am doubtful of their hasty application to social politics as was done by [the] “Politische-Anthropologische Revue” set.\textsuperscript{34}

C.B.S. Hodson, secretary of the British Eugenics Society, tried and failed again in 1924, identifying the Society’s aims as “the more practical side of the Heredity work” and later urging the League’s attendance at the 1927 World Population Conference, which Margaret Sanger and others organized in Geneva.\textsuperscript{35}

It was not under the logic of race and race-mixing, or immigration regulation, but of infant health and protection, that eugenics came closest to consideration as a field for information and action. As a result of a resolution put forward by the Cuban delegation to the League’s governing Assembly in 1926, the Health Organization was asked to what extent eugenics might shape its work on the protection of infants. The Secretariat’s file, originally titled 	extit{Protection l’enfant} was significantly struck through to become 	extit{l’Eugénisme: Questions générale}. Dr. D. F. Ramos, representing the Cuban Ministry of Health and Welfare, presented eugenics as “homiculture,” the French-influenced brand of hygiene and improvement.\textsuperscript{36} He was a student of Pinard who, as
Ramos put it “undoubtedly has the honour, shared with the wise Englishman Francis Galton, of having founded the science for the betterment of the human species.”

But the Health Organization of the League remained reluctant: “Avoiding all questions of a purely national character [the Health Organization would consider] only those problems which deserve international consideration.”

Part of the Secretariat’s responsibility was carefully to adjudicate which issues were truly international and which might controversially breach national prerogatives. Even Ramos’ *puériculture* version of eugenics touched too closely a range of sensitive population policies, and implicitly the ambition and competition of nations, effectively putting eugenics outside “internationalism” and inside “nationalism,” as far as the League was concerned. Further, the close alignment of eugenics to birth control—in particular through common advocacy of sterilization—found no favor at all with Catholic nations, which constituted a significant lobby group in League politics.

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**Eugenics and UNESCO**

While the League of Nations had very little to do with eugenics, one of the key postwar United Nations agencies was described by its director-general as having eugenics at its core. Famously, Julian Huxley (1887–1975), grandson of Charles Darwin’s supporter T. H. Huxley and first director-general of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, placed eugenics front and center in his 1947 manifesto, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Philosophy*. In his new international role, Huxley rendered globally urgent those projects which might improve “the average quality of human beings...accomplished by applying the findings of truly scientific eugenics.”

Huxley was not in the least unaware of the race and even class implications of a science that had problematically assumed superiority and inferiority of certain groups, advocating what scholars subsequently called a “reform eugenics,” which rejected racism. He had delivered this message popularly in *We Europeans* in 1935, with anthropologist Alfred Cort Haddon (1855–1940) and social scientist (and eugenicist) Alexander Carr-Saunders (1886–1966). For Huxley, projects that delineated racial difference and that suggested action on the basis of hierarchized difference were unscientific, politically undesirable, and unconscionable. As a good evolutionary biologist, Huxley saw the significance of variation:  

> It is therefore of the greatest importance to preserve human variety; all attempts at reducing it, whether by attempting to obtain greater “purity” and therefore uniformity within a so-called race or a national group, or by attempting to exterminate any of the broad racial groups...are scientifically incorrect and opposed to long-run human progress.”

But Huxley’s opposition to what had been a significant strand of eugenics did not make him an opponent of eugenics per se. Other kinds of human difference did.
invite and require action, he thought: “There remains the second type of inequality. This has quite other implications; for, whereas variety is in itself desirable, the existence of weaklings, fools, and moral defectives cannot but be bad.” This was, indeed, no longer a national issue, but a global one, “a major task for the world.” 42 In other words, Huxley retained, fundamentally, an eugenic view not just of the possibility of, but imperative for, the valuation of human difference.

It is instructive to note that at the time, Huxley’s manifesto statements on birth control and world population were more controversial than his statements on eugenics. This was not because his milieu advocated or secretly harbored predilections for a eugenic race science. It is because Huxley and many of his contemporaries saw no necessary relation between eugenics and projects of racial purity with which eugenics later became so closely associated: indeed they were quite open advocates of eugenics’ continuance and its social and scientific value.

It is similarly telling that eugenics was quite discussable in various quarters of the new United Nations. For example, Alva Myrdal (1902–1986), head of UNESCO’s Social Science Division and later Nobel Prize winner, led a project in the early 1950s on the relationship between fertility and intelligence: “Differential fertility and its effects on the intelligence of the population stock” was to be UNESCO’s main contribution to the 1954 UN-backed World Population Conference in Rome. The experts she invited to work through the issue were key representatives of postwar eugenics and genetics, and, importantly, remarkably so. Dr C. O. Carter (1917–1984), secretary of the Eugenics Society (London) was nominated by the World Federation for Mental Health to participate in Myrdal’s committee. Fraser Roberts (1900–1987) also advised the committee, a medical geneticist then deeply involved in establishing early genetic counseling. Frederick Osborn (1889–1981), who was about to launch the new journal Eugenics Quarterly was also invited, but could not attend.43 The Committee returned to (or really represented a continuous link with) what was arguably the original eugenic project: class-based studies on differential fertility and intelligence.

Some of the experts present at this UNESCO meeting on fertility and intelligence were certainly more concerned than others about the term as well as the project of eugenics. Jan Böök (1915–1995) of the Swedish State Institute for Human Genetics and Race, said to his colleagues: “At our present state of knowledge I take a very sceptical attitude to any kind of recommendations of general eugenic measures.” And Danish human geneticist Tage Kemp (1896–1964) thought that people receiving the report would be anxious to know what position the group had with respect to eugenics: “the most important task is to encourage and assist studies of medical and especially human genetics.” A report should outline principles of voluntariness, he thought, the implementation of which he called a “negative eugenics programme” since a “positive” program would be “too controversial.” It is unclear here whether Kemp was reversing the standard construction of negative and positive eugenics. It is possible that he was signaling that the key controversy of eugenics at that point concerned programs which favored the eugenically “fit,” not those directed at the “unfit,” as we might expect. The key to any acceptable eugenics, the
Committee agreed, was the voluntary principle, consistent with (indeed, actively continuing) much interwar discussion on legitimate and illegitimate state powers.

It is important to note that discussion of eugenics within this UN agency was relatively unproblematic, and, in stark contrast to the League of Nations experience, was uncontroversially "international." In large part, this was because of the new discourse of economic development, closely linked to fertility studies. It was through the dominant notion of "development" that this classic eugenic topic became internationalized. And it was less the genetic counseling trajectory than demographic work on fertility rates and the measures to control and space births—all under demographic transition theories and development discourse—that most extended the momentum of eugenics as an international issue after 1945.

**Eugenics and World Population Control**

Many historians and other commentators argue that after 1945, eugenics changed its name and to some extent its clothes, to become "global population control," that this was a period in which eugenics operated "under new labels." The creation of, and action around, the world population problem is often described as eugenics on a global scale, where the problematic population shifted from domestic "undesirables"—"the enemy within"—to the growing populations of South Asia, East Asia, and to some extent, Latin America. The quantitative global overpopulation problem was certainly used as a rationale for "qualitative" local population policies and eugenic practices of reproductive regulation. The technique of sterilization of both men and women was not the only method by which this was to be achieved, but was clearly inherited from interwar eugenics and came into favor with various international population-control organizations, as well as national campaigns, infamously in the so-called Indian Emergency of the mid-1970s. Historian Ian Dowbiggin's work reveals the connections between eugenic and sterilization organizations of the 1930s and the population control campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s, usefully nominating a twentieth-century-long "sterilization movement." And Matthew Connelly has carefully detailed the marked continuity between anxious literature about overcrowded Asia from several twentieth-century generations, its links with post–World War II development theory, U.S. popular writing on world overpopulation, and the implementation of population control policies. These scholars join long-standing critics of population control, writing from Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial traditions.

Yet both historians and sensationalist critics of "population control" deploy the link with eugenics as a kind of exposé of a movement that went underground after World War II. This is not to deny the case for criticism. But this exposé is slightly disingenuous: it overcomplicates at one level, and overlooks at another, several aspects of the history of eugenics. The connection should be unsurprising: this was

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From the extract, it seems that the text discusses the intersection of eugenics and world population control post-1945, highlighting the internationalization of eugenic discourse and its adoption into the realm of postwar economic development. The text points out the role of sterilization as a method of population control, linking historical eugenic practices with contemporary population policies. It also references the work of historians and critics who have explored the connections between eugenics and population control, noting both the historical and ongoing debates surrounding the topic.
one manifestation of standard prior links between eugenics and birth control. That is, many, even most interwar eugenic organizations intensified already existing family planning, birth control, or population control dimensions after the war. Further, as we have seen, many eugenicists on the international stage saw eugenics as neither controversial nor problematic, even if they understood the Nazi version of it to be so. They were not infrequently entirely open about their projects and interventions. And finally, eugenic and neo-Malthusian arguments about overpopulation (including global overpopulation) were not new, but had been entwined since the beginning of the twentieth century. What Pauline Mazumdar says of the British organization is widely applicable: “It is clear that population studies took their origin in and were developed through the eugenics movement.” 48 There was not so much a shape-shifting of eugenics into a new global “population control movement” in the 1960s, as an intensification of overpopulation arguments long held by experts active also in eugenics research. 49

To take one example, when anti-colonial nationalist demographer Sripari Chandrasekhar (1918–2001) prepared his Population and Planned Parenthood in India (1955), he was fully and openly engaged with eugenics. A key player in international and Indian sterilization programs, Chandrasekhar had thought through population questions in terms of eugenics for his entire professional life. Chandrasekhar undertook his doctoral training in neo-Malthusian economics and sociology under sometime American Eugenics Society, Planned Parenthood, and Population Association president Henry Pratt Fairchild (1880–1956). He published in the Eugenics Review in the late 1940s; he lectured to, and was elected Honorary Fellow by, the Eugenics Society in 1954; as late as 1965 he was writing to the Japanese embassy in Washington, seeking the best English translation of the 1948 Japanese Eugenics Law, for reference in his own work. 50 All this sat comfortably alongside his nationalism, especially given the Indian National Congress’s own interest in population management, and indeed eugenics. Jawaharlal Nehru contributed the forward to Sripari Chandrasekhar’s 1955 book, while Julian Huxley wrote the introduction. And for decades Chandrasekhar sought C. P. Blacker’s editorial and substantive advice, both in the latter’s Eugenic Society role and his International Planned Parenthood role. These postwar actors, and even the field of international population control as a whole, were entirely connected to earlier eugenics. Far from disavowing eugenics after the war, they often pursued it enthusiastically on a new global stage.

Eugenics, Cosmopolitanism, and Environmentalism

From the earliest part of the twentieth century, the idea of world overpopulation lent both to a race-based competitive model of the future (the “yellow peril” tradition on which Connelly focuses) but also to conceptions of humanity as a whole,
emerging from cosmopolitan political traditions. As Huxley put it, arguing for evolutionary progress as a touchstone for the new world order, "A central conflict of our times is that between nationalism and internationalism, between the concept of many national sovereignties and one world sovereignty." The "cosmopolitan" tradition of population expertise was certainly not free of racialized discourse on human difference and capacity, and colonial discourse on the right of certain populations to dominate and govern. Nonetheless, part of the interwar "retreat of scientific racism" which Elazar Barkan has traced, and even the anti-nationalism and anti-colonialism of certain population scientists, lay in this cosmopolitan desire to think about humans as a whole, rather than as racially or nationally divided populations in the first instance. From the beginning of the twentieth century, some eugenicists partook in the politico-scientific project of "species" rather than "race," of world citizens rather than patriots.

While modern political cosmopolitanism is often traced to Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795), for scientists, there was also a certain universalism in the claims of natural history. At the 1912 international eugenics conference in London, Leonard Darwin framed eugenics as his generation's work which extended "the practically universal acceptance of the principle of evolution in all fields of knowledge in the nineteenth century." This was, for him, the "great international achievement" of the Victorian period. Once eugenics was accepted as part of a larger evolutionary principle, it would and should be understood to govern humans universally. In hands other than a strident patriot such as Leonard Darwin, this line of inquiry was sometimes used as scientific ground on which eugenics would become not just an international, but a cosmopolitan science, applicable to all humans. Legal writer C. E. A. Bedwell (1878–1950) pursued this aspect of science and the new world order when he presented "Eugenics in International Affairs" at the 1921 New York meeting. Scientists know, he argued, that national boundaries do not limit researches, that there is an "international character of knowledge" which needs to be incorporated. Bedwell approvingly quoted jurist Sir John Macdonell's (1846–1921) 1916 essay in the *Eugenics Review*, which raised the possibility that a dispassionate eugenic science might show that "unions between certain races" are possible, even "desirable and propitious." It might find that "certain stocks would be enriched and strengthened," and humans might thus, in his opinion, become "citizens of a better world." For Macdonell, writing in the middle of World War I, and for Bedwell, writing in its aftermath, "eugenics in international affairs" could potentially lead the way by showing the "unity of humanity" a "rational jus communis as yet undreamed of."

Such statements were certainly not mainstream eugenics. Indeed, Bedwell's audience in New York was made up of the architects of the 1924 Immigration Act, whose eyebrows and ire would have been raised by his arguments. Yet these ideas did align with the cosmopolitanism of the adjacent and often interconnected neo-Malthusians, the tradition in which economist J. M. Keynes (1883–1946) was at that point thinking and writing. No stranger to the rapidly rising popularity of Galton and Pearson's eugenics, Keynes wrote on the supra-national significance of "population" in 1912:
Racial and military feeling now runs high, and every patriot urges his country forward on a course of action in the widest sense anti-social… The problem therefore, is made much worse and far harder of solution by having become, since Malthus’s time, cosmopolitan. It is no longer possible to have a national policy for the population question.\(^\text{56}\)

The idea of a connected humanity, a “rational jus connubii,” was a legal rendition of ideas that later experts rendered scientific—both anthropological and genetic—in the UNESCO statements on race.\(^\text{57}\)

Huxley wanted the scientists under his employ at UNESCO to think about the planet as an ecological whole. “The spread of man must take second place to the conservation of other species,” he wrote.\(^\text{58}\) These concerns signal a further dimension to the link between eugenics and internationalism. While historians have detailed the long twentieth-century trajectory of eugenics into reproductive population control on the one hand, and to a lesser extent individual genetic counseling on the other, the links with conservationist and environmentalist politics and sciences at a global level are more surprising, and only beginning to be studied.\(^\text{59}\) Yet, for many eugenicists, the connection between population quality and quantity, between differential fertility rates and overall population growth rates, found clear expression as critique of resource depletion and destruction. Leading U.S. conservationist William Vogt (1902–1968), for example, linked population and resource questions in the influential *Road to Survival* (1948), eliding his work as president of the Family Planning Association, participation in the Human Betterment Association’s scientific work, as well as that of the Association for Voluntary Sterilization.\(^\text{60}\) The formidable Osborn cousins—Fairfield the conservationist and Frederick the eugenicist—together represented the way in which the population growth issue drew in both “quantity” and “quality” arguments, connecting politics and sciences of reproduction, with politics and sciences of environmentalism. As Frederick Osborn, founding member and later re-organizer of the American Eugenics Society, commented: “I found that the quantitative aspect of the population could not really be separated from the qualitative aspects.”\(^\text{61}\) And Fairfield raised the stakes in *Our Plundered Planet*, in a classic ecological statement: “Each part is dependent on another, all are related to the movement of the whole. Forests, grasslands, water, animal life—without one of these the earth will die—will become dead as the moon.”\(^\text{62}\)

In her examination of the underresearched conservationist-eugenicist alliance, Alexandra Minna Stern understands Fairfield Osborn and his ilk to have repackaged conservation “in terms of overpopulation and its frightening consequences.”\(^\text{63}\) But at another level, the Osborns and Vogt, so vocal in the post–World War II period, so influential on the subsequent generation of environmentalists, had inherited a planet-level problematization of population and resources presented at the very least by the World War I generation of population experts. As early as 1917, for example, one statistician linked eugenics with an early ecological conception of the planet and the human race. He listed the critical planetary problems deriving from population growth, including “The multiplying power of the human race; The
organic constitution of Nature and the means at human disposal for avoiding the incidence of its unfavorable aspects; i.e. eugenics in its wider sense... Internationalism and the solidarity of humanity.\(^{64}\) Thus, when Huxley declared, as director-general of UNESCO, that "population is really a world problem, involving potentialities of good or evil for the whole human species,"\(^{65}\) he was developing links between eugenics, population studies, and internationalism that were already several generations old.

It was the pacifism authorizing this version of internationalism and providing such a powerful moral claim, which postwar eugenicists like Blacker, Huxley, and Fairfield Osborn seized upon, and which did a good deal of work to rescue eugenics from its connections with illiberal authority. As historian of Spanish eugenics, Richard Cleminson notes, the lineage connecting controlled reproduction, the perfection of humanity, and utopian thought, is long.\(^{66}\) "World, Globe, Orb, Whole, One," Blacker wrote floridly in the late 1940s about "the planetary problem." "U.N.O. Is it not the perfect word? The last of the three letters denotes our spherical planet; the first two sound the call to unite."\(^{67}\) Such purple language may indicate how far from science eugenics had strayed. And the call to unite, indeed the entire field of what I am calling here cosmopolitan eugenics, need only be scratched lightly to reveal underlying divisions and inequities (the more familiar history). But understanding this particular strand of internationalism and cosmopolitanism is necessary to analyze eugenicists’ own comprehension of their project, especially but not only in the postwar period. In other words, it is necessary to understand internationalism at various points in the modern period, to properly comprehend the historical development of eugenics. Strangely, then, given that the history of eugenics is fundamentally about the devastating implications of a science of human differentiation, it is also part of, and needs to be understood through, the modern history of universalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism.

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**NOTES**


15. Ibid., 185.

16. Ibid., 190.


Technique in Physical Anthropology,” in A Decade of Progress in Eugenics: Scientific Papers of the Third International Congress of Eugenics (Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins, 1934), 47.


27. Immigration Act (1917), United States of America, Section 3.

28. Immigration Act (1910), Canada, Section 3(a).


30. Chinese Immigration Act (1906), Newfoundland, Section 4 and section 5(b).


32. Davenport to Crowdy, 23 November 1920, Box R642, International Eugenics, Social Section, LNAS.

33. Rolfe to Crowdy, 28 September 1920, Section 12 7260/7260, LNAS.

34. Handwritten Note by Inazo Nitobe, 24 December 1920, Box R642, International Eugenics, Social Section, LNAS.

35. C. B. S. Hodson to Dr. Norman White, 29 February 1927, Box 1602, Dossier Concerning World Population Conference 1927, LNAS.


37. D. F. Ramos to director of the Department of Hygiene of the Office of the League of Nations, 21 September 1926, Box R975, Infant Welfare Enquiry Dossier respecting Cuba, LNAS.

38. Report on the Work of the Health Committee, 8th Session October 1926, Box R912, Health Section, LNAS.


40. Ibid., 37.


53. UNESCO Archives, Paris.
44. UNESCO/SS/POP/M/Conf.1/1/S.R.1, UNESCO Archives.
50. S. Chandrasekhar to Ambassador, Japanese Embassy (Washington, DC) 12 October 1965, Box 14, Chandrasekhar Papers, Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, University of Toledo Library.
58. Huxley, UNESCO, 45.
61. Frederick Osborn, National Academy of Sciences, Conference on Population Problems, June 20, 1952, Rockefeller Archive Center, Rockefeller Family Papers, Record Group 5, Series 1, Sub-Series 5, Box 85, Folder 720, 15.
63. Stern, Eugenic Nation, 126.
FURTHER READING


