"These Pushful Days": Time and Disability in the Age of Eugenics

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One of the central questions in the modern history of disability is why social attitudes toward disabled people became dramatically more negative around the turn of the twentieth century. In the United States, as in many other industrialized countries, tens of thousands of people with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities were segregated into institutions, involuntarily sterilized, or prohibited from marrying under state eugenics laws. Popular books, articles, and silent films advocated, and some physicians practiced, the euthanasia of disabled infants. A campaign to end the use of sign language among deaf people led to its prohibition in most classrooms in schools for the deaf. At the same time that widespread discrimination prevented many disabled people from earning a wage, many cities enacted "unsightly beggar" ordinances that prohibited the "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed" from begging. The United States, like other immigrant nations, passed a series of restrictive laws to prevent the entry of "undesirable defectives" into the country. In short, as Paul Longmore has observed, it was a period in which "prejudice and discrimination against disabled people seem to have been intensifying sharply."[1]

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[1] James W. Trent, Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp 141-4, 188-9. Reilly, Philip, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 94-110. Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language* (University of Chicago Press, 1996). Susan M. Schweik, *The*

Ideas about atypical bodies and minds clearly underwent dramatic changes in that era, but why? The reasons are varied and complex, but one crucial ingredient was a transformation in the meaning of time: the popularization of discoveries in geology and evolutionary biology radically altered concepts of historical time, while widespread industrialization accelerated already changing perceptions of everyday time. These changes brought into being new ideas about disability and a new vocabulary with which to talk about it. Such terms as "handicapped," "retarded," "abnormal," "degenerate," and "defective" came into common use, each explicitly or implicitly rooted in new ways of thinking about time.

The new understanding of disability necessitated a variety of new social policies, but immigration restriction was perhaps its most complete and unambiguous expression. Other measures primarily targeted specific types of disabilities. For example, institutionalization and sterilization were directed mainly at people with mental, moral, and intellectual "defects," and moreover grew from a mix of motives, such as a desire to shelter vulnerable individuals from a precarious existence, as well as to protect society from them. Educational policy similarly combined concern for the wellbeing of children, especially those with intellectual or sensory "defects," with fear of the effects they might have on the "normal" child or classroom. Restrictive immigration laws, on the other hand, eventually encompassed virtually all defects and were rarely defended as beneficial to the individuals affected. Most importantly, the systematic changes to immigration policies and inspection procedures over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries offer a relatively legible guide to the protean and amorphous cultural assumptions about disability at the time.

Handicap

Until the late nineteenth century, "infirmity" and "affliction" were the terms most widely used to refer to what we now call disability, though both had broader definitions. "Infirmity" denoted weakness, frailty, or debility from any cause; the "infirmities of age," "an infirmity of will," or "an infirmity of purpose" were commonly heard phrases. **"**Affliction" was applied to almost any difficult or

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Ugly Laws: Disability in Public (New York: New York University Press, 2009). Douglas C. Baynton, "Defectives in the Land: Disability and American Immigration Policy, 1882-1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Spring 2005, pp 31-44. Paul Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 36-7. See also: Paul Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds. *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York University Press, 2000). Catherine J. Kudlick, "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other'," *The American Historical Review* 108 (June 2003): 763-93.

unfortunate circumstance. Disabled people shared it with the poor and the sick, widows and widowers, parents whose children died young, and anyone who suffered nearly any unpleasantness from tragedy to inconvenience. Thomas Jefferson on various occasions wrote that he was "afflicted" with a headache, that the "affliction of the people for want of arms is great," that a tiresome colleague was "afflicted with the morbid rage of debate," and that the death of Benjamin Franklin was an "affliction" to those who knew him. Herman Melville wrote in *Moby Dick* of an aged whale "afflicted with the jaundice, or some other infirmity" and of marital troubles as "domestic afflictions."[2]

The experience of infirmity and affliction was common and universal. When a significant or long-lasting condition was referred to, both words (but especially "affliction") in American popular usage often carried the connotation of imposition by an omnipotent god, an aspect of a larger design, and a spiritual burden to be borne or lesson to be learned. A teacher at mid-century wondered "whether sin had brought into our world any heavier affliction" than deafness. Another advised a man to be reconciled "to the will of Providence which made him deaf." Whether seen as just deserts for sin or the design of an inscrutable will, disability was commonly said to be the "decree of Providence" and the "condition in which God has placed them"—at least "until the time arrives when human imperfections will be done away with."[3]

These concepts inhabited a larger belief system in which the world was a product of conscious design, essentially unchanging and infused with purpose. Prior to the ascendance of scientific naturalism in the late nineteenth century, most Americans still imagined a relatively short arc of history of only a few thousand years, from creation to imminent and preordained end. Natural phenomena were typically explained in terms of their intended purpose, from the perfection of birds' wings for particular kinds of flight, to the opposable thumbs of humans for holding tools and the tails of monkeys for swinging through trees.

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[2] *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904–05), vol. 1: 89, 450, vol. 6: 207; *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, vol. 1, edited by Henry Augustine Washington (Washington, H.W. Derby, 1859), 58, 303. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1851), 171, 391.

[3] J. A. Ayres, "An Inquiry Into the Extent to Which the Misfortune of Deafness May be Alleviated," *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 1 (April 1848): 221; Collins Stone, "On the Religious State and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb," *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* 1 (April 1848): 133; Thomas Gallaudet and Thomas Machinator, "Discussion," *Proceedings of the Ninth Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, 1878* (Columbus, Ohio, 1879), 131, 133.

The best known version of this story was found in William Paley's immensely popular book, *Natural Theology*, published in 1802 and used in high school and college classrooms well past mid-century. Paley wrote that anyone who found a watch on the ground would immediately understand that it was "formed and put together for a purpose;" the obvious inference is "that the watch must have had a maker . . . who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use." If this were true of a mere watch, how much more true it must be of the intricate design of living things. Paley takes his readers on a walk through a world in which evidence of a maker are found everywhere, in the wings of birds, the humps of camels, the fangs of snakes, and the snouts of pigs. His assumption, shared by most people in the west, was that since God cannot be capricious, understanding the world meant asking what purpose God had in making it.[4]

Geography school books until late in the century explained the planet in just this fashion. Because the earth otherwise "could not be the abode of man," suggested one, "two indispensable agents are provided -- the sun and atmosphere." The landscape had been carefully planned and arranged: "As the torrid regions of the earth require the greatest amount of rain, there are the loftiest mountains, which act as huge condensers of the clouds." Furthermore, breezes from the mountaintop cooled inhabitants at its base; thus, mountains were located there "for the same reason that you put a piece of ice into a pitcher of water in summer, rather than in winter." Why did water, unlike other substances, expand when frozen? Because, if it contracted, "the freezing particles being heaviest, would sink to the bottom," resulting in bodies of water gradually freezing from the bottom up "which no summer's sun would have power to melt." This "remarkable exception to a law otherwise universal is, therefore, a means of preserving, in cold climates, the liquid form of this element." Finally, "As the earth is round, only half of it can be lighted at once. In order that both sides may be lighted, the Creator has caused the earth to rotate."[5]

The purpose of affliction was often more difficult to comprehend, but its place in a larger design was nonetheless assumed. In an address before the Connecticut

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[4] William Paley, *Natural Theology: or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* [1802] (London: W. Mason, Baldwin and Co., 1917), 6-7.

[5] James Monteith, *Physical and Intermediate Geography* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1866), 9, 15-17; Arnold Guyot, *Physical Geography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1873), 46; Arnold Guyot, *Intermediate Geography* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co. 1867) 9. For similar examples, see John Brocklesby, *Elements of Physical Geography* (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler & Co., 1875), preface, 30-31, 142.

legislature in 1818, Laurent Clerc, co-founder of the first school for the deaf in the United States, explained the existence of disability in this context. Having stated the commonplace belief that "every creature, every work of God is admirably well made," he acknowledged as well the plain fact that "everything is variable and inconstant," some of which perhaps "we do not find right." When we look around us, we see that "here the ground is flat; there it is hilly and mountainous; in other places, it is sandy; in others it is barren." There are "trees high or low, large or small, upright or crooked, fruitful or unfruitful." Likewise, the "intellectual faculties" and "corporeal organization" of humans are prone to a variety of imperfections, some of which might be ameliorated by education, "but nothing can correct the infirmities of the bodily organization, such as deafness, blindness, lameness, palsy, crookedness, ugliness." Yet in spite of this, he insisted, "everything is well made." He intended no contradiction, for the world with its bewildering multiplicity and apparent defects was made for purposes beyond the ken of humans. "Why then are we Deaf and Dumb?" Clerc asks. The purpose is unclear—"I do not know, as you do not know why there are infirmities in your bodies, nor why there are among the human kind, white, black, red and yellow men"—but because it is part of a larger design and the creator is not capricious, he concludes that the deaf "cannot but thank God for having made us Deaf and Dumb, hoping that in the future world, the reason of this may be explained to us all."[6]

By the 1890s, however, the concepts of affliction and infirmity, along with the world view that sustained them, began to give way to the idea of handicap. The word originated in a popular game of chance in seventeenth-century England known as "hand-in-cap" or "hand-i'-cap," which involved drawing money or slips of paper from a cap. The rules ensured that each time a player lost, their odds of winning the next time improved; over a succession of games, wins and losses would more or less even out. In the eighteenth century, the term migrated to horse racing; a "handicap race" was one in which weights were fastened to the faster horses to improve the chances of the slower. The "handicapper" was the official who decided how much weight was to be added.[7]

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the idea of handicap was generalized to other kinds of matches in which the superior competitor was purposely disadvantaged: foot races, yacht races, rowing, billiards, card games, badminton,

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[6] *An Address, Written by Mr. Clerc: And Read by His Request at a Public Examination of the Pupils in the Connecticut Asylum before the Governour and Both Houses of the Legislature, 28th May, 1818* (Hartford: Hudson, 1818).

[7] "Origin of the Handicap," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* 21 July 1877, 2. See also Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Douglas C. Baynton, "Handicap," *The Encyclopedia of American Disability History* (Facts on File, Inc., 2009).

croquet, even pigeon shooting. Eventually it drifted out of the sports orbit to nearly every competitive arena, as when a *New York Times* writer in 1874 ventured that Southern Republicans had "no desire to handicap the party with any extreme doctrines on civil rights," an 1897 newspaper advertisement warned, "Don't handicap your appearance by wearing a shabby looking out-of-date hat," and a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1908 wrote that poor "economic and social efficiency" might "constitute serious handicaps in the matrimonial race."[8]

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, as Americans increasingly found themselves drawn into a competitive industrial economy, at the same time that evolutionary concepts and metaphors from biology were being applied to social questions, modern life began to be described as a race (some years later as a "rat race.") People who by misfortune or failing were at a competitive disadvantage were said to be "handicapped in the race for life." In this context, "handicap" began to acquire a more specific meaning. Educators spoke of disabled people as "seriously handicapped in the race for life," or "by this defect handicapped in the struggle for existence," and needed help to "win the battle of life."[9] In 1890, when an obituary eulogized the subject's "life work done in spite of the handicap of physical infirmity," it was still necessary to specify that the handicap resulted from infirmity. By the early twentieth century, one needed only to say "the handicapped" to be understood as speaking of disabled people.[10]

There was not one but two races in which disability was a handicap: the economic race for life in which an individual might succeed or fail, and the evolutionary competition by which races and nations would rise or fall. While Darwin's theory of natural selection was not widely accepted in the United States until after the turn of the century, the basic tenets of evolutionary science quickly found widespread acceptance. Evolutionary concepts, analogies, and explanations

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[8] "Southern Republicans," *New York Times* (15 October 1874): 1. *Galveston Daily News,* March 27, 1897, 10. William Z. Ripley, "Races in the United States," *The Atlantic Monthly* 102, No. 6 (December 1908): 753.

[9] Edward M. Gallaudet, "Our Profession," *American Annals of the Deaf* 37 (January, 1892): 7. Henry Smith Williams, "What Shall Be Done with Dependent Children," *North American Review* 164 (April 1897): 408. Grace C. Green, "The Importance of Physical Training for the Deaf," *Association Review* 9 (February-April 1907): 183.

[10] "The Late Edwin Cowles," *Yenowine's News* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), 16 March, 1890, 6. See, for example, Randolph Bourne, "The Handicapped – By One of Them," *The Atlantic* 108, (September, 1911): 320-29; Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, *Motion Study for the Handicapped* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1920).

soon became ubiquitous across practically every field of scholarship as well as in the broader popular culture.[11]

One of the many effects of evolutionary thought was that teleological explanations of causation, by which natural phenomena were explained in terms of intent and purpose, became less tenable, to be replaced by explanations based on prior cause. Another, in concert with earlier discoveries in geology, was to vastly expand the dimensions of the past. No longer an unfolding plan, history was characterized by contingency, and the future by an indeterminacy that was both exhilarating and terrifying. Nearly any future became thinkable, but the hope placed in progress had as its constant companion the fear of decline, and new branches of literature sprang up to explore myriad imagined futures, some bright and others despairing. With growing nationalism and international competition added to the calculation, stasis seemed no option, for to stand still was to fall behind.

Quotidian time was being similarly destabilized. That the pace of life was increasing rapidly was obvious not just in hindsight but to people at the time and was a common topic of conversation. William R. Greg wrote in 1875 that, "Beyond doubt, the most salient characteristic of life in this latter portion of the 19th century is its SPEED,—what we may call its hurry, the rate at which we move, the high-pressure at which we work." Greg was British but, as an editorial in the *New York Times* that same year noted, "Mr. Greg's remarks have even more point here than in his own country." Josiah Strong, in his popular 1891 book, *Our Country*, wrote that "It must not be forgotten that the pulse and the pace of the world have been marvelously quickened during the nineteenth century." Indeed, the American "finds life growing ever more intense and time more potent… There is a tremendous rush of events which is startling, even in the nineteenth century." Strong segued easily between the quickening pace of daily life and the gathering speed of progress, suggesting the close relationship between the two. That "rush of events" could refer to everyday experience, or to his observation that the "western world in its progress is gathering momentum like a falling body." In either case, "can anyone doubt that the result of this competition of races will be the survival of the fittest?"[12]

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[11] See Peter Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). John C. Greene, *Science, Ideology, and World View* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 52.

[12] William Rathbone Greg, "Life at High Pressure," *The Contemporary Review* 25 (March 1875): 623-24. *The New York Times*, "Life at High Pressure" (Editorial) March 14, 1875.

Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co. 1891), 16, 120, 223.

In his 1901 story, "The New Accelerator," H.G. Wells has a scientist concoct "an all-round nervous stimulant to bring languid people up to the stresses of these pushful days," something to confer "the power to think twice as fast, move twice as quickly, do twice as much work." It was an elixir to give a competitive edge in an accelerating world, that would make "you go two—or even three—to everybody else's one... That's the thing I'm after." The fantasy was a pleasant escape from the certain knowledge that no matter how fast any individual tried to go, they would always be just keeping up, as everyone else was accelerating just as quickly.[13]

The felt necessity to use time more efficiently became pervasive. Traditional standards for the pace of work were being quickly discarded as, in an intensely competitive free-market economy, the essential goal was to be faster than the next business or worker. The "gospel of efficiency" permeated nearly all aspects of life, from businesses to schools, hospitals to prisons. Frederick Winslow Taylor's 1911 treatise, *The Principles of Scientific Management,* urged that the same principles that applied to the efficient operation of the factory be "applied with equal force to all social activities: to the management of our homes . . . our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities." Popular magazines repeated Taylor's call. As the historian Samuel Haber wrote, "efficient and good came closer to meaning the same thing in these years than in any other period in American history."[14] A teacher of deaf students was asked, in 1907, what should replace the inefficient teaching methods of the past: "The answer may be given in a word," he answered – "the factory, the factory principle and system in everything." Another told his colleagues at a 1914 convention that, "In this modern day everybody and every movement is coming to be measured by and for efficiency."[15]

The cultural value placed on speed and efficiency, in tandem with a system of production increasingly based on wage labor outside of the home, inexorably drew people with disabilities along with everyone else into a competitive labor market (children and the elderly as well, until compulsory education, child labor laws, and social security insurance took them out of the market). Earlier in the century, with limited exchange and home-based production, the key to survival was that every

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[13] H.G. Wells, "The New Accelerator," *The Strand Magazine* (December 1901): 622-23.

[14] Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911; New York: Norton, 1967), 8. Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), ix; Cecilia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 75-96.

[15] Frank W. Booth, "Normal Training for Oral teachers of the Deaf," *Association Review* 9 (February-April 1907): 206; R. O. Johnson, "Discussion," *Proceedings of the Twentieth Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, 1914* (Washington, D.C., 1915), 186.

family member, including children, the elderly, and the disabled, contributed what they could at whatever pace they could manage. With the growing dominance of wage labor, many found themselves unable to compete successfully, whether because of functional impairments, discrimination, or some combination. Often they were described as "burdens" on the family, as well as on the community and the nation, all of which were engaged in various competitive spheres. To be "handicapped in the race" became a matter not only of individual but also familial and social concern.[16]

Retardation

"Idiot," "imbecile," and "feebleminded" were the commonly used terms for intellectual disability throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, which were understood as implying a qualitative difference in kind. By the end of the century, however, educators and other professionals began to adopt terminology related to time, progress, and competitiveness, such as "backward" and "atavistic." The term that became standard was "retarded."

In 1866, when John Langdon Hayden Down identified the syndrome later given his name, he called it "mongolian imbecility," or "mongolism." The shape of the head, facial features, and intellect suggested to him a biological reversion by Caucasians to the Mongol racial type. Down's interpretation persisted for decades because it fit into a common narrative for understanding disability. The advancing but still inchoate understanding of evolutionary change led many experts to explain congenital disabilities as atavistic. In the 1920s, elaborating on Down's theory by incorporating Mendelian genetics, Frances Graham Crookshank suggested that mongolism was likely caused by a recessive "unit character" that persisted in western populations and occasionally resurfaced, "coarsely and brutally displayed and accentuated in certain idiots and imbeciles."[17]

Criminologists, most notably Cesare Lombroso, argued that criminality represented a reversion to an earlier stage of evolution, evident in a primitive sense of morality as well as ape-like physical characteristics such as a sloping forehead, facial asymmetry, long arms, and insensitivity to pain. American criminologists, following this line of reasoning, found that "atavistic tendencies are more necessarily pronounced in the offscourings of older social systems," as in immigrants from Asia and southern and eastern Europe. The idea found its way into popular culture; Jack London described a character in *The Sea-Wolf* as "a magnificent atavism, a man so

[16] Trent, *Inventing,* 60-95.

[17] Frances Graham Crookshank, *The Mongol in Our Midst: A Study of Man and His Three Faces* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1924), 4-7; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 160.

purely primitive that he was of the type that came into the world before the development of the moral nature. He was not immoral, but merely unmoral." The eugenicist Henry Goddard argued that criminality was not reversion *per se* but rather arrested development. The moral evolution of those he termed "moral imbeciles" or "morons" had failed to advance beyond a primitive stage of development. Such people were especially dangerous because they often passed as normal—the "public is entirely ignorant of this particular group," he warned, and the "public school systems are full of them." The schools vainly attempted "to make normal people of them," but inevitably their "primitive" instincts led them into crime. Whether caused by reversion or arrested development, crime and immorality were problems of lagging behind.[18]

The verb "to retard" dates at least to the fifteenth century in the sense of "to slow down or hinder" and was widely used in a variety of contexts in the nineteenth century, especially in the common phrase "retarding progress." In the proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feebleminded Persons, from its founding in 1876 until 1895, the term appears half a dozen times to describe various ways in which progress, physical growth, or other matters may be "retarded," but only once as "retarded mental development."[19] In the twentieth century, however, it followed the same path as "handicapped" from general multi-purpose adjective, to one applied frequently to disabled people in the sense of retarded development, to a stand-alone noun: "the mentally retarded." Like handicapped, its usage tracked the changing understanding of the significance of time, as the problem shifted from a mind that was "feeble" to one that could not compete.

Educators first began using "retarded," sometimes "grade-retarded," in the 1890s to describe children who did not advance with their age cohort, for reasons ranging from lack of discipline to malnutrition to mental defect.[20] The graded public school

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[18] G. Frank Lydstrom and E. S. Talbot, "Studies of Criminals," *Alienist and Neurologist* 12 (1891): 557; Unsigned, "The Study of the Criminal," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 125 (July-December 1891): 579; Steven A. Gelb, "'Not Simply Bad and Incorrigible': Science, Morality, and Intellectual Deficiency," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 359-379; Jack London, *The Sea-Wolf* [1904], 2nd ed. (New York, Bantam Classics, 1984) 78; Goddard quoted in Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 137-39.

[19] "Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feebleminded Persons" (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1876): 32.

[20] George W. Twitmyer, *The Psychological Clinic* 1, no. 4 (15 June 1907): 97-98, 102. See also J. David Smith and Gretchen Smallwood, "From Whence Came Mental Retardation? Asking Why While Saying Goodbye," *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 45, no. 2 (April 2007): 132–135.

that gradually replaced multi-age grouping or the "one-room schoolhouse" in the second half of the nineteenth century was structured as a competitive model in which children were compared to others of the same age and ranked within that group. The top students were honored, the majority won advancement to the next grade, and those at the rear of the pack were demoted or removed entirely from the regular classroom. As Penny Richards has noted, children with intellectual disabilities typically had been included in ungraded classrooms, "allowing some children to progress more slowly without drawing unwelcome attention (or requiring special accommodation)." With the advent of graded schools, however, children who did not keep up became a problem.[21]

Educators often tried to make clear the distinction between the merely retarded child and the defective. For example, in his 1895 book, *Mentally-Deficient Children*, George E. Shuttleworth emphasized the importance of differentiating children of "retarded mental development amounting to nothing more than backwardness" from "real defectiveness." He conceded the difficulty of determining "how far incapacity to benefit by the ordinary school curriculum is due to retarded development rather than to actual initial defect," but argued that it could be done reasonably well by intelligence testing. A child whose "mental age is not more than three years behind his actual age," Shuttleworth believed, "may be considered backward, but a greater difference shows mental defect." Thus, in practice, retardation and defectiveness were often determined by competitive tests that ranked students according to their ability to respond to questions quickly.[22] While educators continued for some time to describe grade retention as retardation, they increasingly also used it to describe a quality of the mind and a category of persons. In 1907, the superintendent of schools in Wilmington, Delaware, used "retardation" to refer to the "failure of many pupils to be promoted regularly from grade to grade" but went on to describe those "children who cannot keep pace" as "backward children, dullards or defectives," conflating categories that others such as Shuttleworth had

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[21] David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 33; Penny L. Richards, "'Beside Her Sat Her Idiot Child': Families and Developmental Disability in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader,* edited by Steven Noll and James W. Trent, Jr., (New York University Press, 2004), 67; Lightner Witmer, "The Study and Treatment of Retardation: A Field of Applied Psychology," *The Psychological Bulletin* 6, No. 4 (15 April 1900), 123; Julia Richman, "What Can be Done in a Graded School for the Backward Child," *Charities* 13 (5 November, 1904), 129-31.

[22] George Edward Shuttleworth, *Mentally Deficient Children: Their Treatment and Training* (London: H. K. Lewis and Co., 1922), 165.

tried to keep separate.[23] Gradually, the term "retarded" came to describe not merely an educational but an overall mental status.[24]

Normality

The use of the word "normal" to describe the person ostensibly without defect dates also from the second half of the nineteenth century. While not immediately apparent, in context it too was an evolutionary concept. Before the nineteenth century, it usually denoted the "normal" or "right" angle for the corner of a structure. Georges Canguilhem has described how medical doctors adopted it early in the nineteenth century, describing a healthy organ or organism as in its "normal state" when functioning properly and an "abnormal state" when not. (In a parody of medical discourse, Balzac wrote in *Eugenie Grandet* that Mademoiselle d'Aubrion had "a nose that was too long, thick at the end, sallow in its normal condition, but very red after a meal.") In the 1820s, Auguste Comte imported the term into sociology to describe the healthy state of a society. From there it migrated from one discourse to another.[25] Political economists in the 1850s, for example, defined the "normal nation" as economically mature and capable of self-government, at times likening it to the independent and self-sufficient "normal man." The abnormal nation, needing "protective, restrictive, or reformatory" supervision, was likened to "the child or the idiot, the spendthrift or the sot."[26] "Normal schools" (derived from the French *Ecole Normale*), established in the United States beginning in the 1830s, were so called because they set common standards and methods for public schools. By 1862, an *Atlantic Monthly* writer could play with the meanings of the word: "Your Normal schools wun't turn ye into Normals."[27]

By the end of the century, according to Ian Hacking, normality had "displaced the Enlightenment idea of human nature as a central organizing concept" in western

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[23] George W. Twitmyer, *The Psychological Clinic* 1, no. 4 (15 June 1907): 97-98, 102.

[24] R.H. Sylvester, "Clinical Psychology Adversely Criticized," *The Psychological Clinic* 7, No. 7 (15 December 1913): 182, 185, 188. C. S. Berry, "Intelligence Quotients of Mentally Retarded School Children," *School & Society* 17 (1923): 723 -729. Anna Johnson, "Retarded Sixth Grade Pupils," *The Psychological Clinic* 7, no. 6 (15 November 1913): 163.

[25] Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 39-64, 125; Honore de Balzac, *Eugenie Grandet* [1833] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188; Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 160-6.

[26] Unsigned, "Bowen's Political Economy" *The North American Review* 82, no. 171 (April 1856) 538-9.

[27] James Russell Lowell, writing under the pseudonym, Markiss O' Big Boosy, "Birdofredum Sawin, Esq., to Mr. Hosea Bigelow," *Atlantic Monthly* 9 (March 1862): 389.

societies; rather than inquire into human nature, the modern question was what was normal for people to do.[28] The complex etiology of the concept includes the rise of the social sciences, the science of statistics, and industrialization with its need for interchangeable parts and interchangeable workers. From the start, "normal" functioned simultaneously as both description and prescription. A normal angle for the builder was both a *type* of angle and *the desirable* angle; in all of its subsequent applications, from medicine and sociology to eugenics and education, the normal was also the desirable. Thus, the *New Orleans Delta* in 1856 could maintain that the people of the northern states "can never exist happily and normally" until they too adopt a system of labor based on slavery.[29] And Francis Galton in 1877 could use it as a neutral description of a distribution that "is perfectly normal in shape" but also to describe people who fell to one end of a distribution as "unfit" and on that basis advocate their sterilization.[30] While it denoted ostensibly merely the existing average, normality functioned as a standard that compelled conformity--"abnormal" typically signified an undesirable deviation. To ask, "Is the child normal?" was rarely to express concern about *above* average abilities.

Socially, it became a powerful concept with the growing acceptance of theories of evolution that, as George Cotkin wrote, "posited change, process, and struggle as essentials" while simultaneously equating evolution with progress.[31] In the context of an assumption that the normal tendency of the human race was to improve steadily, to advance ever further from its animal origins, normality was implicitly defined as progressive. Normality on the individual and social level contributed to forward motion. Abnormality was a retarding or atavistic force that could potentially slow down or even reverse progress. By the late nineteenth century, both non-white "lower" races and defective individuals were similarly described as evolutionary laggards or throwbacks. A popular 1873 geography textbook, under the heading "The White Race the Normal, or Typical, Race," compared the "harmony in all the proportions of the figure" of the white race with the degenerate races. African Americans, moreover, were said to flourish in their "normal condition" of slavery,

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[28] Hacking, 160-166. See also Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, chapters 5-6.

[29] "The Progress of Southern Opinion" *Provincial Freeman* [reprint] (25 November 1856), http://www.accessible.com (accessed 5 September 2011).

[30] Francis Galton, "Typical Laws of Heredity," *Proceedings of the Royal Institution*, Vol. 8, no. 66 (9 February 1877): 297.

[31] George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992): xii, 3, 20-4.

while the "'free' or abnormal negro" succumbed to illness, degeneration, and inevitable extinction.[32]

James W. Trent has argued that the 1904 World's Fair displays of "defectives" alongside displays of "primitives" evinced related schemes of classification. Defective individuals and defective races were both ranked on the basis of how "improvable" they were—capable of being educated on the one hand or civilized on the other—and both explained in terms of atavism or lack of evolutionary development.[33] Teachers of the deaf at the turn of the century spoke of making deaf children more like "normal" people and less like "savages" by forbidding them the use of sign language, which "resembles the languages of the North American Indian and the Hottentot of South Africa."[34] They argued that when "man emerged from savagery he discarded gestures for the expression of his ideas,"[35] and that ever since spoken language had been "the normal and universal method of communication," with the exception only of "tribes low in the scale of development."[36] To use sign language with deaf children would "push them back in the world's history to the infancy of our race."[37] Given that "speech is better for hearing people than barbaric signs, it is better for the deaf; being the fittest, it has survived."[38] One educator described a young girl who "had just broken out in speech" and experienced an "elevation in the scale of being."[39] Another argued that mute children could "gradually rise" if taught to speak, even if their development remained "retarded."[40]

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[32] Arnold Guyot, *Physical Geography* [1873] (New York: American Book Co., 1885), 114-18. John H. Van Evrie, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination, or Negroes a Subordinate Race* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, and Co., 1868), 199, chapter 15 *passim*.

[33] James W. Trent, Jr., "Defectives at the World's Fair: Constructing Disability in 1904," *Remedial and Special Education* 19 (July/August 1998): 201-11.

[34] Gardiner G. Hubbard, "Proceedings of the American [Social] Science Association," *National Deaf Mute Gazette* 2 (January 1868): 5.

[35] J. D. Kirkhuff, "Superiority of the Oral Method," *Silent Educator* 3 (January 1892): 139.

[36] J.C. Gordon, "Dr. Gordon's Report," *Association Review* 1 (December, 1899), 206.

[37] Susanna E. Hull, "Do Persons Born Deaf Differ Mentally from Others Who Have the Power of Hearing?" *American Annals of the Deaf* 22 (October 1877): 236.

[38] Emma Garrett, "A Plea that the Deaf 'Mutes' of America May be Taught to Use Their Voices," *American Annals of the Deaf* 28 (January 1883): 18.

[39] Lewis Dudley, "Address of Mr. Dudley in 1880," *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Clarke Institution for Deaf Mutes* (Northampton, 1882), 7.

[40] Mary McCowen, "How Best to Secure Intelligent Speech for Deaf Children," *Association Review* 9 (February–April 1907): 258–9.

Edward Seguin, the leading expert on "feeblemindedness" in the nineteenth century, used "normal" frequently in his writings on the education of the feebleminded in the 1850s and 1860s, but nearly always to describe physical attributes, as in: "Sometimes the brain of idiots presents no deviation in form, color, and density from the normal standard; it is, in fact, perfectly normal."[41] By the 1880s, however, his colleagues were using it to describe the totality of a person, as when Isaac Kerlin, superintendent of the Pennsylvania Institution for Feebleminded Children, wrote that education of the feebleminded should effect "conformity to the habits and actions of normal people,"[42] At the same time, educators began to speak of "the normal child" as the type that could function successfully in the regular school system. Teachers of deaf students discussed how their work differed from "ordinary work with the normal child," how they could shape "the deaf child into as nearly a normal individual as possible," and how their students could learn to speak in "the manner in which the normal child acquires speech."[43]

Defect and Degeneracy

"Defect" and "degeneracy" were closely related terms that also came into common use at this time and, like "handicapped," "retarded," and "abnormal," had long been applied in other contexts before acquiring meanings specific to disability. The more general term of the two, "defect" had long been used to refer to any kind of imperfection or lack. Shakespeare, for example, covered most of the possible defects to which humans are susceptible in *Venus and Adonis*:

> Were I hard-favour'd, foul, or wrinkled-old,
> Ill-nurtur'd, crooked, churlish, harsh in voice,
> O'erworn, despised, rheumatic, and cold,
> Thick-sighted, barren, lean, and lacking juice,
> Then mightst thou pause, for then I were not for thee;
> But having no defects, why dost abhor me?[44]

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[41] Edward Seguin, "Origin of Method of Treatment and Training of Idiots," *American Journal of Education* 2 (1856): 147.

[42] Quoted in Trent, *Inventing,* 83.

[43] J.D. Kirkhuff, "The Natural Method," American Annals of the Deaf 36 (April 1891): 120, 124-5. See also Jennie L. Cobb, "Schoolroom Efficiency," *American Annals of the Deaf* 58 (May 1913): 208; Anon., *Scientific American* 96 (8 June 1907): 474; A. L. E. Crouter, "The Possibilities of Oral Methods in the Instruction of the Deaf," *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, 1911* (Washington, D.C., 1912), 139-41.

[44] William Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis (Stratford-upon-Avon: Richard Field, 1595).

Mark Twain in an apparently original coinage that never caught on wrote of a man who was "endowed with an extraordinary intellect and an absolutely defectless memory."[45]

By 1899, however, when a *Popular Science Monthly* writer argued that "laws preventing the marriage of defectives and of their immediate descendants would go far to stem the tide of harmful heredity," readers knew that these "defectives" were not merely those who might be forgetful or "lacking juice."[46] Rather they were understood to pose serious social and eugenic threats. Defects of the body, intellect, and moral sense were thought to be interconnected, an assumption expressed in an 1892 article in *The North American Review* that referred to "paupers, criminals, or other defectives."[47] A professor of medicine and criminal anthropology maintained in 1904 that "defective physique… has not received the attention it deserves in the causation of crime. The old adage, *mens sana in corpore sano* is too often forgotten." In 1905, Francis Galton, who coined the term "eugenics," advocated issuing certificates of fitness to people with "goodness of constitution, of physique, and of mental capacity," taking care to point out that these are not "independent variables."[48]

"Degeneracy" encompassed the concept of defect but emphasized general hereditary decline. Defects not only had the potential to persist over generations but, worse yet, were mutable. A *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* editorial confidently asserted that "physical degeneracy is now known to go hand-in-hand with mental and moral degeneracy."[49] An 1896 study reported that not only was "feeblemindedness" heritable, but that "abnormalities, such as blindness, deaf-mutism, etc., were found to be several times as frequent" in families in which feeblemindedness was prevalent. The authors warned that "by permitting the feeble-minded to reproduce, we are not only increasing their number, but we are also increasing the number of abnormals."[50] The leading eugenics theorist, Charles B.

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[45] *Life on the Mississippi* (1883; New York: Bantam Dell, 2007**),** 288.

[46] M. W. Barr, "Mental Defectives and the Social Welfare," *Popular Science Monthly* 54 (April 1899): 747.

[47] J.B. Weber, *The North American Review* (April 1892): 425.

[48] George Lydston, *The Diseases of Society and Degeneracy* [1904] (Philadelphia: JB Lippincott Co, 1908); Francis Galton, "Studies in Eugenics," *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. 1 (July 1905): 9.

[49] On the significance of degeneracy in the social policy of the era, see Nicole Rafter, "The Criminalization of Mental Retardation," in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2004): 232-57; Unsigned, "The Study of the Criminal," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 125 (July-December 1891): 579.

[50] Ernest Bicknell, "Notes and Abstracts: Feeblemindedness as an Inheritance," *The American Journal of Sociology* 2, No. 4 (January 1897): 627.

Davenport, warned in 1909 that "the presence of these degenerates" was a growing problem (evidenced by the increase of both political anarchism and laziness): "these defective conditions are inevitably transmitted in the germ plasm and are apparently being reproduced faster than the more normal characteristics." Dr. G. A. Doren, superintendent of the Ohio Institution for Feeble-Minded Youth, likewise worried that "unless preventive measures against the continuously progressive increase of the defective classes are adopted, such a calamity as the gradual eclipse, slow decay and final disintegration of our present form of society and government is not only possible, but probable."[51]

What was termed "moral imbecility," an "absence of the moral sense often as complete as is the absence of sight in the blind," was especially associated with this danger: "its influence in heredity is far-reaching, liable to reappear in its own or in another form of defect." It had a "permeating, penetrating, disintegrating power," and was "at once the most insidious and the most aggressive of degenerative forces; attacking alike the physical, mental and moral nature, enfeebling the judgment and will, while exaggerating the sexual impulses."[52] The particularly frightening aspect of degeneracy was this capacity for defects to mutate, spread and worsen, so that a mild defect might within a few generations become a thorough-going "constitutional psychopathic inferiority."[53] Crime, pauperism, sexual immorality, violence, and most of the social problems of the day were its rapidly growing consequences.

Immigration Restriction

Two years after he spoke confidently of progress and "survival of the fittest" in *Our Country*, Josiah Strong worried in *The New Era* about the "deterioration of the Anglo-Saxon stock in the United States by immigration". His newfound concern that "there is now being injected into the veins of the nation a large amount of inferior blood every day of every year," was shared by many.[54] All the major immigrant nations began to restrict immigration in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries to exclude people with physical, moral, and mental defects, based in part on fears that economic efficiency and evolutionary progress were threatened by

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[51] Charles B. Davenport, "Influence of Heredity on Human Society," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34 (1909): 17-18; G. A. Doren, *Our Defective Classes. How to Care for Them and Prevent Their Increase* (1899; Columbus, Ohio: Westbote Co. 1902), 4.

[52] Martin Barr, *Mental Defectives: Their History, Treatment, and Training* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston's, 1904), 100-101.

[53] William House, "Constitutional Psychopathic Inferiority," *California State Journal of Medicine* 21 (January 1923): 26–9; Dr. Alfred C. Reed, "Immigration and the Public Health," *The Popular Science Monthly* 83 (Oct 1913), 313–38.

[54] Josiah Strong, *The New Era: Or, The Coming Kingdom* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co. 1893), 80.

defective immigrants. In the United States, legislation in 1882 ended a century of open immigration by forbidding the entry of any "lunatic, idiot, or any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge." "Lunatics" and "idiots" were automatically excluded, as were, in 1903, "epileptics" and "persons who have been insane within five years previous," "imbeciles" and "feeble-minded persons" in 1907, and immigrants of "constitutional psychopathic inferiority," in 1917.[55]

Inspectors at first had some latitude in deciding whether a physically disabled immigrant came under the "public charge" provision. However, the law was amended in 1891 to replace "*unable* to take care of himself or herself," with "*likely* to become a public charge," and in 1907 to exclude anyone with a "mental or physical defect being of a nature which *may affect* the ability of such alien to earn a living." (Nondisabled immigrants continued to be admitted under the less rigorous standard of "likely to become a public charge.")[56] Inspectors were taught to watch for "irregularities in movement" and "abnormalities of any description," and directed to exclude persons with "any mental abnormality whatever … which justifies the statement that the alien is mentally defective." Their charge as inspectors, one later wrote, was "to detect poorly built, defective or broken down human beings."[57] As the commissioner at Ellis Island declared in 1913, immigration officials had "no more important work to perform" than excluding defectives, for they were "not only likely to join the criminal classes and become public charges," but also "start vicious strains which lead to misery and loss in future generations."[58]

The "poor physiques" of many immigrants excited fears about economic competitiveness and eugenic progress. The immigrant of poor physique, the commissioner general of immigration explained in 1905, had "a body but illy adapted . . . to the work necessary to earn his bread." He was furthermore "physically degenerate, and as such … very likely to transmit his undesirable qualities to his offspring, should he unfortunately for the country in which he is domiciled, have

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[55] *United States Statutes at Large*, vol. 32 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), 1213; *United States Statutes*, Vol. 34 (1907), 898.

[56] Emphases added. *United States Statutes at Large,* Vol. 22 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 214; *United States Statutes*, Vol. 26 (1891), 1084*; United States Statutes*, Vol. 34 (1907), 899.

[57] United States Public Health Service, "Regulations Governing the Medical Inspection of Aliens" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917), 25-6, 28-9, 30-1; Victor Safford, *Immigration Problems: Personal Experiences of An Official* (NY: Dodd, Mead, 1925), 244-6.

[58] Letter dated 31 March 1913, National Archives, Record Group 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Entry 9, File No. 51490/19.

any."[59] A medical officer in the Immigration Bureau warned in 1906 that "there is to be expected in the case of poor physique, as an accompaniment of signs of physical degeneracy, some abnormality in the individuals mental and moral make-up."[60] In 1907, the commissioner general declared that the exclusion of the "morally, mentally, and physically deficient" was "the principal object to be accomplished by the immigration laws."[61] And in 1913, the commissioner at Ellis Island wrote that he had "no more important work to perform than that of picking out all mentally defective immigrants, for these are not only likely to join the criminal classes and become public charges, but by leaving feebleminded descendants they start vicious strains which lead to misery and loss in future generations."[62]

Advocates of restriction were equally explicit about the dangers. The New York surgeon and medical researcher, Arthur L. Fisk, wrote in 1911 that "an ever increasing horde of degenerates from all nations is entering our fair land, who are debasing the physical, mental and moral being of the nation."[63] The prominent biologist Edward M. East bluntly stated the essential equation for restrictionists: "if in the future the proportion of people of Grades A and B increases, the nation will prosper; while if the proportion of people of Grades D and E increases, the nation will decay." He concluded that "eugenic ideals...are the sole and final means of keeping a nation from deterioration and decay," which he explained required regulation of both immigration and reproduction.[64] Robert DeCourcy Ward, one of the founders of the Immigration Restriction League in Boston, simply called the admission of defective immigrants "a crime against the future."[65]

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[59] Letter from F. P. Sargent, Commissioner-General of the Bureau of Immigration, to the Commissioner of Immigration on Ellis Island, April 17, 1905, National Archives, Record Group 90, Records of the Public Health Service, Entry 10, File No. 219.

[60] Letter from Victor Safford to the Commissioner dated May 16, 1906, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Immigration Restriction League Records, US 10583.9.8 – US 10587.43, box 4: "II. Record Books. III. Scrapbook. IV Compositions," folder: "Safford, M. Victor – Definitions of Various Medical Terms Used in Medical Certificates, 1906."

[61] U.S. Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Immigration* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), 62.

[62] Letter dated March 31, 1913, National Archives, Record Group 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Entry 9, File No. 51490/19.

[63] Letter dated June 10, 1911, letterhead: Dr. Arthur L. Fisk, NYC, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Immigration Restriction League Records, US10583.9.8 – US10587.43, Box 2: Correspondence: Fe – Q; folder: "Fisk, Arthur L."

[64] Edward M. East, "Population Pressure and Immigration," in Madison Grant and Charles Steward Davison, eds., *The Alien in Our Midst, or Selling our Birthright for a Mess of Industrial Pottage* (New York: Galton Publishing Co., 1930), 93, 97.

[65] Robert DeCourcy Ward, "Our Immigration Laws from the Viewpoint of National Eugenics," N*ational Geographic Magazine* 23 (1912): 40.

The public consensus supporting the exclusion of disabled people became the basis for arguments that European immigration ought to be restricted based on national origin. No such laws had been enacted for the four decades since the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882. By 1896, Francis Walker was writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* that the wisdom of "straining out" immigrants who were "deaf, dumb, blind, idiotic, insane, pauper, or criminal" was "now conceded by men of all shades of opinion," and that now was the time to go further.[66] Advocates of laws based on national origin used that premise to construct arguments, founded on a rhetoric of defect, that the "undesirable" ethnic groups were especially prone to be mentally and physically degenerate. Up to half of the immigrants from the south and east of Europe, according to some expert opinion, were feebleminded.[67] Rhetoric about "the slow-witted Slav," the "neurotic condition of our Jewish immigrants," and the "degenerate and psychopathic types, which are so conspicuous and numerous among the immigrants," pervaded the debate.[68] American criminologists claimed confidently that they showed "atavistic tendencies," and thus the "more pronounced criminal types as seen in this country are among the imported criminals."[69] In 1921, a temporary immigration act (revised and made permanent in 1924) established a quota system to severely limit immigration from Asia and eastern and southern Europe.[70] The act was seen as complementary to existing law—forbidding entry to defectives disproportionately affected immigrants from inferior nations, while strict quotas on immigration from those nations would likewise reduce the number of defective immigrants.[71]

Conceptualizing life as a race, and seeing evolutionary change as an unending struggle for existence, came to dominate how past, present, and future were

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[66] Francis A. Walker, "Restriction of Immigration," *Atlantic Monthly* 77 (June 1896): 822; see also Ellsworth Eliot, Jr., MD., "Immigration," in Madison Grant and Charles Steward Davison, eds. *The Alien in Our Midst, or Selling our Birthright for a Mess of Industrial Pottage* (New York: Galton Publishing Co., 1930), 101.

[67] Trent, *Inventing,* 166-9.

[68] Thomas Wray Grayson, "The Effect of the Modern Immigrant on our Industrial Centers," in *Medical Problems of Immigration* (Easton, Penn.: American Academy of Medicine, 1913), 103, 107-09. See also, Reed, "Immigration and the Public Health", 325; Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World and the New: The Significance of Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), 285–90.

[69] Unsigned, "The Study of the Criminal," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 125 (July-December 1891): 579.

[70] *United States Statutes*, vol. 42 (1923), 5.

[71] Harry Laughlin, "Eugenical Sterilization in the United States," *Social Hygiene* 6, no. 4 (October 1920): 530–1.

understood at the turn of the twentieth century. Analogies of competition became ubiquitous across practically every aspect of culture. The intense fear of human defects that characterized the immigration restriction movement grew, in good part, from this new and unsettling vision of time. While the shift in time consciousness was underway and intensifying, the changes it produced were obvious to those experiencing them and excited much comment. As those changes crested, however, and ceased to be experienced as novelties, the new time consciousness became the norm. The deep span of history and the speed of modern life alike faded into the background of thought. That the pace of life in the twentieth century was faster than ever before was still evident and remarked upon, but routine, and the evolutionary past settled into orthodoxy. As they lost their novelty, they lost too their power as social metaphors and intensity as topics for current commentary.

Toward the end of the twentieth century, however, the meaning of time again began to enter a period of rapid change. Belief in the inherent value of speed and efficiency came under challenge, and the extraordinary dominance of clock time in the modern world again moved to the forefront of consciousness. The conflation of evolutionary change with progress, the division of humanity into lower and higher races, and the belief that western civilization was the victor in an evolutionary struggle for existence, no longer seemed to make sense. A new literature on the social construction of time appeared in the humanities and social sciences, while popular titles such as *The Time Wars* and *In Praise of Slowness* proliferated.[72]

As the culture of time changed once again, so too did the cultural understanding of disability. Words such as "retarded," "handicapped," "degenerate" and "abnormal" no longer seemed intuitively fitting. Indeed, they began to seem like offensive relics from an unenlightened age. The modern disability rights movement came into being, along with a wave of disability rights and accessibility laws around the world, all of which put a greater valuation on human rights than they did upon the virtues and demands of "these pushful days."

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[72] Jeremy Rifkin, *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1987); Carl Honoré, *In Praise of Slowness: How a Worldwide Movement is Challenging the Cult of Speed* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004). See for example: E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (December 1967): 56-97; Stephen Kern The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983); Michael O'Malley, *Keeping Watch: A History of American Time* (New York: Viking, 1990); Stefan Klein, *The Secret Pulse of Time: Making Sense of Life's Scarcest Commodity* (Cambridge, MA: Marlowe & Co., 2007); Thomas M. Allen, *A Republic in Time: Temporality and Social Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007).