

Original Article

**Eugenicists' Views on Democracy in Relation to
"the Feebleminded" in Pre-World
War II America**

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The present paper examines how "the feebleminded" to whom eugenicists were most hostile were regarded and what kind of image of democracy many eugenical scientists had in pre-World War II America. Eugenical scientists viewed the government as a system run by men of ability. "The feebleminded," therefore, were regarded as inferior people, and thought to be lacking in the citizenship necessary in order to contribute to society. Even after the 1930s, when eugenics discourse began to decline, mainline eugenical scientists did not accept the idea that "the feebleminded" were citizens of a democratic society, although some scientists ventured to defend the rights of "the feebleminded".

Key Words: eugenics, democracy, citizenship, pre-World War II America, "feebleminded"

Introduction

Contemporary Democracy and Social Participation of People with Disabilities

The participation of people who are socially disadvantaged as members of a democratic society, regardless of their disabilities, ethnicity, poverty, gender, location, and age, is an internationally accepted idea. This idea is inseparable from ideas about improving exclusive environments. However, any attempt at improving the environment through only medical or biological means is bound to fail. Therefore, any category or severity of disability should not be left out, according to contemporary ideas.

This idea originated in a reflection on the status of people with intellectual disabilities who were objects of sterilization, isolated from normal society by being segregated in institutions, or separated in special schools. People with intellectual disabilities were considered to be a threat to democratic society, and hence were segregated in institutions. In the American community of those days, they had been considered to lack citizenship because of their intellectual disabilities.

In the present paper, "citizenship" is used to express civic, political and social

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M. Nakamura & N. Oka

rights for a full member of the community, according to Marshall's definition (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). "Democracy" refers to government by the people, rule by the majority, free elections, and the absence of hereditary or arbitrary class distinctions or privileges.

Republican America has placed great importance on the requirements for democracy. Fundamental principles of citizenship became a new topic in the curriculum of urban public schools after the beginning of twentieth century America (Butler, 1909, p. 77). Such education was considered necessary for construction of a new democratic society in a new world.

The eugenics movement, which appeared at that time, proposed its own theory of democracy. The present paper examines what citizenship really was in the democratic society that was proposed by American eugenicists, and explains why intellectual disability was an obstacle to citizenship of democratic society, in the eugenicists' view. Some of the positions described in the present paper will be useful for realizing the full participation of people with intellectual disabilities in contemporary democratic society.

Sterilization of "the Feeble-minded" in Democracies and Especially in America

That "the feeble-minded" (a term used in the past to denote intellectual disability and used as a historical term in the present paper) were a socially negative constituent of existence was most obvious in pre-World War II America. At that time, the sterilization policy, based on eugenics, had gained international popularity. In the late 1930s, sterilization became "the most common eugenic measure in liberal democracies", including America (King, 1999, p. 57). By the 1930s, the countries that had legalized sterilization were all democratic ones, except for Germany, and a number of other democratic countries were also considering its introduction.

As "the feeble-minded" were the main object of the widely practiced sterilization, in the present paper, the social phenomenon of sterilization is considered in relation to democratic society, through an examination of the theories of democracy held by eugenical scientists. The present paper mainly focuses on America, because the enactment of sterilization laws and their prosecution in America provide a good example for other countries (Reilly, 1991, pp. 106-107).

Although almost all American studies of eugenics have pointed out that eugenics was hostile to feeble-mindedness, those authors failed to describe expressly eugenicists' hostility to feeble-mindedness from the perspective of democracy and citizenship. Exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities from democratic society seems to have its roots in hostility to feeble-mindedness. Therefore, why democratic societies felt hostility toward "the feeble-minded" is a most interesting question at a time when contemporary democratic society aims at an inclusive society.

In the present paper, "science" is being used to refer to each accumulated object of knowledge systematized according to some methodology. Therefore, scientists are those who are engaged in their occupations in a science community. Because the present paper will mainly examine the early twentieth-century period, many emerging

Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

sciences, 1) such as psychology, sociology, and psychiatry, as well as the scientists who worked in these specialties, will also be discussed. With the progress of science and specializing scientists in time, these developments will also be described and documented.

America became the world leader in the eugenics movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, due to prime movers of eugenical science such as Charles Benedict Davenport (1866–1944), the publication of a monthly newsletter, “*Eugenical News*,”²⁾ and the research institute Eugenic Record Office, or ERO, which was established in 1910, amply funded by wealthy individuals and foundations.

Another fundamental reason for American leadership in the eugenics movement was that from the time of the founding of the country, the American republican system of government required more urgently than other countries' governments, people with higher intelligence. Further, in the absence of strict social customs regulating the life of an individual, such as ones based on caste or social class, a notion that the capacity to adapt as well as enjoy political liberty was indispensable came to be accepted in American society (Anonymous, 1913, p. 5), including the early establishment of a merit system that paid high regard to youthfulness and health.

The Pursuit of Democracy and the Position of “the Feebleminded” in the Sciences

Aristocratic Democracy by the Able (Goddard)

The above-mentioned requirement for an average American citizen came to be recognized as an important social factor for maintaining American democracy, because, in our opinion, the social conditions common to advanced nations had degenerated for various reasons, such as a population upsurge, international economic competitiveness, World War I, the growth of socialism, and biological and cultural degeneration theory. Moreover, we believe that the degeneration of social conditions increased further because of the influx of immigrants in and after the end of the nineteenth century. This social situation resulted in some scientists becoming concerned as to whether “the feebleminded” should be disqualified from being citizens in a democratic society.

In particular, the theory of democracy propounded by the internationally acclaimed psychologist Henry Herbert Goddard (1866–1957) of the Vineland Institution for the Feebleminded (also known as the Training School at Vineland, New Jersey) serves as a typical example of the pro-eugenical stance. Goddard's theory was based on his well-known investigation of the Kallikak family. In 1917, Goddard was recognized as “the most prominent American authority on the subject of feeble-mindedness — representative of the scientific school which is dominant today” (Somerville, 1917, p. 212). Goddard explained that he felt deeply anxious about the future American democracy, and that he sensed an impending crisis, because the number of people with average intelligence, as denoted by the distribution curve of intelligence, was very high (Goddard, 1919, pp. 236–238).

M. Nakamura & N. Oka

According to Goddard, those individuals with the highest intelligence and character and the right attitude toward those with mediocre or low intelligence should decide what was best for a particular group of people in their struggle for existence. Thus, he contended, to form a democratic society, people should select the wisest, most intelligent, and most humane individuals who would then “tell them what to do to be happy.” Such a democracy is “a method for arriving at a truly benevolent aristocracy,” he wrote (Goddard, 1919, p. 237). For him, “a perfect democracy is only to be realized when it is based upon an absolute knowledge of mental levels and the organization of the social body on that basis” (Goddard, 1922, pp. 126–27). Thus, institutions for “the feebleminded” are a kind of ideal, because they are characterized by government by the most benevolent and most intelligent who superintend and rule over “the feebleminded”, that is, individuals with lower intelligence (Goddard, 1922, p. 98; Smith, 1985, pp. 128–129).

The characteristics of a democracy, as advocated by Goddard, were the societal right of self-protection, the predominance of social interests over individual rights, the importance of social efficiency, a view of people with low level of intelligence as a menace, and a fear of socialism³⁾ (Goddard, 1922, pp. 120, 125, 127, 128).

The pioneer of eugenics, Francis Galton (1822–1911) said that “a democracy cannot endure unless it be composed of able citizens” (Anonymous, 1914, p. 422). Such a theory of government by the able was common among scientists who had a deep sympathy for eugenics. Stewart Paton (1865–1942), the president of the Eugenics Association, recognized this type of democracy as “a victory over autocracy” and as “democracy’s opportunity” (Paton, 1920, p. 254).

Role of Universal Education in an Aristocratic Democracy and a Popular Democracy

Providing universal, equal public education had been one of the principles of American democracy since the founding of America. According to botanist James Howard Kempton (1891–?), who also advocated the idea of government by the able, the first efforts of modern democratic civilizations were directed toward “obtaining complete development and exercise of the abilities of the individual” and educating the masses as “the keystone of modern democratic states” (Kempton, 1925, pp. 3, 5)⁴⁾. Furthermore, according to Charles Abram Ellwood (1873–1946), professor of sociology at the University of Missouri, “the safeguarding of democracy in the United States evidently demands a higher development of social intelligence and character in the mass of individuals” (Ellwood, 1918, p. 514).

What motivated the spread of education? Edwin Grant Conklin (1863–1952), a prominent biologist who was a moderate eugenics adherent, recognized “the errors of extreme hereditarians” and their ignoring “the equally important process of development” (Cooke, 2002, p. 372). Conklin was of the opinion that universal public education was required for a democracy, which, he wrote, was the best government form, and which contrasted with the ignorant masses in dictatorial systems (Conklin, 1919b, pp. 162, 163). Goddard also considered education in a democracy as being

Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

important from the viewpoint of social control, as contrasted with the neglect of education in military aristocracies.

However, true or popular democracy is based on the principle that everyone plays an equal role in it. As the American historian Carl N. Degler said, "at bottom its [eugenics'] outlook was necessarily elitist," and that the eugenic movement sought "to bring them (masses) up to the standard exhibited by the few" (Degler, 1991, p. 42).

For Goddard, however, educational opportunities were unequal. He also thought that such opportunities were determined by the individual's level of intelligence, that the main factor determining performance in school was intelligence, and that educational standards were based on intelligence level (Goddard, 1922, pp. 122, 126). Moreover, he contended that the effects of education should depend upon people's innate intelligence (Goddard, 1919, p. 238). In other words, eugenical democratic education should be modified according to children's innate needs, which are biologically predetermined. Accordingly, "the feebleminded" should be taught the most immature basics, such as skills needed for manual labor, whereas people who have the potential to become mathematical geniuses or a statesmen should receive education appropriate for those goals (Anonymous, 1920, p. 28). Goddard's point of view is similar to Conklin's, who also emphasized a conversion into true democracy from aristocracy, plutocracy, and class discrimination. According to Conklin, "democratic equality does not mean equality of heredity, environment, education, possessions, nor even of opportunity"; rather, it "depends upon the ability to utilize opportunity" (Conklin, 1919a, p. 412).

Not all pro-eugenics scientists, however, have always supported such views on democracy and education. Most eugenicists denied that all people were equal, held the poor responsible for the origin of poverty, and sought to avoid social responsibility for poverty.

A few eugenicists took another position. Rev. John Lewis Gillin (1871-1958), professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin, and a leading criminologist and penologist, understood that, from the perspective of the settlement movement, democracy was not sustainable by political equality alone. He emphasized cultural heritage and the importance of opportunity. Gillin strongly supported the settlement movement of Jane Adams (1860-1935) and others, and regarded offering a wide range of educational opportunities to poor immigrant children and adults as an expression of the ideals of democracy in education.

Gillin recognized the limits of equal opportunity in universal public formal education. He expressed concern about the ideal of the settlement movement, which consisted of mutually sharing special social endowments, points of view, and opinions about culture, regardless of economic status, social class, and birthplace. His other concerns related to cleaning up urban politics and establishing democratic city governments (Gillin, 1921, pp. 522-525).

However, in the mainstream eugenics movement, aristocratic democracy that emphasized innate intelligence became the mainstream, because the view that

M. Nakamura & N. Oka

attached more importance to innate capability than to the influence of the environment was based on norms of intellect, behavior, and culture. The control function of the masses and the social leader theory in public education that Goddard advocated were influenced by contemporary scientific advances, such as those in psychology and psychiatry. Supported by the tenets of these developing sciences, before and after World War I, with tense international situations in the background, psychological tests such as those testing intelligence corresponded to contemporary social demands for a way to evaluate the national intelligence and to detect mediocre people and alien elements. This, then, provided a scientific base for this young science.

Position of “the Feeble-minded” in a Democracy, According to Eugenic Scientists

F. I. Drake (1864–1930), a physician working at the Wisconsin Hospital for the Insane, envisioned “a new order of nobility, a new aristocracy” as an ideal, and insisted that “the feeble-minded” were nothing more than a dead weight upon humanity. Wisconsin attempted to legalize sterilization in order to prevent the propagation of “the feeble-minded,” because Drake felt that caring for them might “consume the time, the energy and resources of the progressive element in population” (Drake, 1914, p. 295). By 1915, the feeble-mindedness threat theory was established in America as a justification for a policy of institutionalized segregation. As a result, “the feeble-minded” were not included as citizens in democratic society. However, a comparison of the presumed size of the population of “the feeble-minded” with the actual number of persons admitted to institutions reveals that many “feeble-minded people” could not be admitted to institutions (or they were loath to be sent to an institution), and, rather, lived in communities of their own. Moreover, children of these “renegade feeble-minded” actually attended regular classes or special classes at public schools.

In the latter half of the 1910s, follow-up surveys of discharged “feeble-minded” and of those who had left special classes in public schools revealed that social adaptation was possible for some, and consequently, the feeble-mindedness threat theory began to die out.

This change from total institutionalization to partial community life marks a watershed in the history of the struggle for the rights of “the feeble-minded”. However, unlike other persons with disabilities, their existence in the actual world and their possible recognition by and adaptation to ordinary society did not develop as a result of their contention that they should be included as citizens in democratic society. For example, the botanist Kempton expected an intellectual governance of aristocracy by “a system of weighted ballots”, according to differences in intelligence. In other words, Kempton preferred a government by the able (Kempton, 1925, p. 8). Naturally, he did not expect “the feeble-minded” to vote.

Moreover, as mentioned above although Gillin had accepted the provision of education and the idea of undertaking environmental improvements for people who were disadvantaged, he, too, did not seem to reject the theory of feeble-mindedness as a social menace. A criminologist by profession, he was apprehensive that the

Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

propagation of feeble-mindedness might threaten the ideals of democracy, based as the theory was on the newest knowledge in psychology, various fields of criminology, psychiatry, and other sciences (Gillin, 1918, pp. 3-6).

In other words, the fact and possibility of the social adaptation of "the feeble-minded" were restricted within the empirical knowledge of persons concerned about individual examples of adaptable feeble-minded persons, and not developed into a view of their deserving citizenship in a democratic society. Furthermore, almost no scientists, including psychologists, developed scientific proof regarding the adaptability of "the feeble-minded", nor did research on the attribution analysis of the adaptability of "the feeble-minded" consider the contrasting case of the feeble-mindedness threat theory.

Decline of the Eugenics Movement and Improvement in the Social Position of "the Feeble-minded"

Changes in Genetics Theories and Views of Capacity, and an Environmental View

In the mid-1930s, accepted views of disability, capacity, and environmental influence also underwent a change due to the loss of a scientific basis about heredity, which had been the foundation of eugenics doctrine. According to Hermann J. Muller (1890-1967)⁵⁾, professor of zoology at the University of Texas and winner of the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine in 1946, it became widely believed in the first half of the 1930s that higher intelligence quotients resulted from a congenial environment, and that it was in order to justify their own personal economic and social status that the adherents of the doctrine of eugenics held that economically higher classes and races are hereditarily superior (Muller, 1933, p. 46).

However, such changes in opinions in the scientific world did not necessarily bring about a corresponding change in the capability or social position of able people. In a paper presented at the 19th annual meeting of the Eugenics Research Association in 1931, Harrison Randall Hunt (1889-?), a research biologist from Michigan, proclaimed that "democracy is the ideal governmental practice of our time". Hunt believed that "a democratic government can be greatly improved if the right to vote and to hold office is limited to those persons of good mental capacity, public spirit, humanitarian enthusiasm and interest in governmental affairs," and he was "skeptical [about] too great an extension of the principles of self-government." He denied, however, "the limitation of the franchise," that is, "to return to the worn-out formulate of European aristocratic government." He also proposed a new blueprint of aristocracy, an aristocracy that would be administrated by "some families of ability" who were devoid of mental defects and criminal motives. The proposal also included "an eighth grade education, ownership of capital accumulated by one's own efforts-capacity to pass mental and temperamental tests devised by psychologists by this purpose" (Hunt, 1931, pp. 98, 99).

Toward the end of the 1930s, even the eugenicists began to admit the influence

M. Nakamura & N. Oka

and effect of the environment on the level of intelligence, and moreover, they did not emphasize a pedigree and inheritance so simply as the past. Frederick Osborn (1889–1981), then secretary (later, president) of the American Eugenics Society, supported the freedom of parents to decide on the number of children they wished to have. In addition, he was in favor of providing government aid for the upbringing of children, and thought that such an eugenic program was in accord with democratic ideals. Thus, he encouraged increasing the birth rate among more competent parents and parents with socially valuable qualities, whereas he discouraged child bearing among people with hereditary defects (Osborn, 1939, p. 110). In other words, in the final analysis, Osborn's stand was very similar to Hunt's.

Advocacy of the Rights of Children with Disabilities and Exclusion of "the Feeble-minded" from Democratic Society

The decline in the acceptance of eugenics theory did not have a positive influence all types of disabilities equally. However, in America, appropriate measures to protect the social rights of children with disabilities were taken at this time. For example, in July 1929, President Herbert Hoover appointed a White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, asking them to study the status of children's health and well-being. The Conference advocated the rights of children with physical and mental disabilities and also those who were "socially handicapped by dependency and neglect" (Johnstone, 1931, pp. 339–340). Actually, in some states, compulsory attendance laws were authorized that covered children who were deaf or blind. However, leading psychologists who occupied central positions at diagnostic clinics and conducted field work on education and welfare programs for adults and children with disabilities balked at the idea of an environmental influence on intelligence. They were unwilling to concede any rights to "the feeble-minded" or to grant them citizenship.

At the time of World War I, in order to safeguard American democracy from totalitarianism, Lewis Madison Terman (1877–1956) developed the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, which was later used as the standard for American intelligence tests. "Everyone, whatever his ability may be, should have the opportunity to develop it to the fullest limit," announced Terman, on the assumption that inborn differences in mental and physical abilities existed (Terman, 1943, pp. 5–6). His eugenic model of democracy is "biologically rooted [in the] democratic model of meritocracy," and not in the "socio-historical model of democratic egalitarianism" that had been proposed by John Dewey (1859–1952) and others (Minton, 1986, p. 105).

Changes in mainstream eugenical theory and the subsequent decline of the eugenics movement had little effect on the predicament of "the feeble-minded". Clairette P. Armstrong was a clinical psychologist, a prominent figure in the study of correctional facilities and family problems in New York, and a trustee of the American Eugenics Society. Armstrong "did not ignore or belittle the social, the economic, and the environmental factors" and recognized the inhumanness of "an atmosphere of indifference, of fear, intolerance, or hatred". Nevertheless, she advocat-

Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

ed “democratic eugenics” for “the development of a citizenry, healthy in body, mind and spirit ” (Armstrong, 1939, p. 20). Naturally, she considered the issue with the presupposition that “civil liberties and mental inferiority are incompatible” (Armstrong, 1940, p. 64). Therefore, according to Armstrong, “the feebleminded” did not have citizenship.

Just as Armstrong proposed birth control measures that included sterilization of “the feebleminded” for the maintenance of democracy (Armstrong, 1938, pp. 52–53), some scientists and other professionals did not change their eugenical stance. Lydia Allen DeVilbiss, a Miami obstetrician, invoked the same rationale as had been used for introducing eugenical sterilization: “sterilization of deficient and defectives, by helping to raise the general intelligence level, is a valuable contribution to the preservation to maintenance of a free Democracy” (DeVilbiss, 1940, p. 88).

Some psychiatrists continued to maintain firmly that “the feebleminded” did not have citizenship in a democratic society and that they should actually be seen as obstructions to democracy. In 1933, E. Arthur Whitney, superintendent of the Elwyn Training School in Pennsylvania, asserted the necessity of promoting a system of selective sterilization. Whitney associated democracy with the nature of the individual. Since the target of sterilization included not only “the feebleminded”, but also the numerous people with hereditary, physical, mental, and social disadvantages, Whitney’s proposed theory of “selective sterilization” was actually eugenical sterilization.

The original selective sterilization theory was a social treatment theory of the institutionalized feebleminded with social adaptability. This theory was advocated in 1930 by Harvey Middleton Watkins (1894–1942), a psychiatrist and superintendent of the Polk State School in western Pennsylvania. The aim of his theory was to select “the feebleminded” residing in an institution, sterilize them, and then release them so that they could lead a normal life in the community and even get married. The main purposes of his position were to enable “the feebleminded” to experience an ordinary individual and social life, except for pregnancy, childbirth, and child rearing; to protect their rights in general; and specifically to validate their educational rights and growth by improving their environment.

How, then, do these two superintendents differ in their views? While Watkins acquiesced in the idea of letting “the feebleminded” lead an ordinary life in society, although with restrictions, Whitney feared that unrestricted liberty on the part of “the feebleminded” would damage society. Watkins tried to respect the rights of “the feebleminded” within certain limits, and to treat them as partial citizens, in a sense.

Whitney accepted the idea of environmental improvement, and wanted democracy to succeed accordingly. However, he also thought that because of this environmental improvement and the participation of “the feebleminded”, democracy would be at risk. As if to support Watkins’ opinion, an abundant demand for the cheap work of “the feebleminded” created an indispensable socioeconomic condition. However, these two superintendents of institution for “the feebleminded” differed in their view of the abilities of “the feebleminded”. Watkins considered that “the mildly

M. Nakamura & N. Oka

feeble-minded” could have social adaptability, whereas Whitney believed that they were apt to relapse into “their former feeble-minded state”, even after starting to live in ordinary society.

The results of scientific research that affirmed the ability of “the feeble-minded” to adapt were not circulated promptly, and old school opinions like those of Whitney continued to circulate and exist in the minds of people for a long time. Among people with all types of disabilities, this unique social attitude is observed only with regard to people with intellectual disabilities.

People who had no direct contact with “the feeble-minded” tended to adopt opinions that were supported by contemporary scientific knowledge about “feeble-mindedness”. The feminist Martha Carey Thomas (1857–1935), who served as the president of Bryn Mawr College and personally advocated the necessity for higher education for women, also insisted that because “democracy depends for its existence on intelligent voters, the ever-increasing production of morons must be scientifically checked and insane and weak-minded people must be prevented from having children” (Thomas, 1933, p. 3).

Conclusions

The adherents of eugenics emphasized the importance of democracy, but gave priority to the presumed social benefits of sterilization and other eugenical activities, ignoring the rights of the people who did not receive such social benefits. This eugenical stance can be traced back to Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), the eugenics pioneer, who had an important influence on American sociology (Carlson, 2001, p. 121).

What was the purpose of an aristocratic democracy in which “the feeble-minded” were refused any social involvement? It was not until the beginning of 1920 that the proposal of a eugenical democracy brought about a seemingly positive change in the social value of “the feeble-minded”. “Biological determinism and a hereditarian explanation of human differences were very compatible with the vertical division of labor necessary for an industrialized society” (Minton, 1986, p. 106).

Nevertheless, were “the feeble-minded” really included as legitimate citizens of such a democratic society? There were both direct and indirect reasons for the philosophy of excluding “the feeble-minded” from ordinary democratic society. One direct reason was that “the feeble-minded” were regarded as the opposite of an ideal citizen, because the formulation of the “feeble-mindedness threat theory” and the growth of imperialism precisely overlapped. That is, “the feeble-minded” were regarded as lacking in the basic qualifications necessary for one to be a citizen.

In the beginning of twentieth century, urban public schools recognized the need to develop citizenship courses for immigrant students as a vital educational policy. Courses were offered to immigrants, with the goal being for them to pass the citizenship test. In case of “the feeble-minded”, their potential to be citizens never even occurred to either those in charge at the institutions or public schools officials.

Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

However, issues concerning “the feeble-minded” became fairly complicated after the fall of imperialism, as appropriate theories for “the feeble-minded” began to appear (for instance, Watkins’ theory). Watkins continued to have supporters holding this view amidst growing discontent and discomfort about the status of “the feeble-minded”. In other words, most of the eugenical scientists denied “the feeble-minded” all rights of citizenship, as mentioned by Marshall, whereas Watkins denied only a part of their social rights.

Although a resolution to these contradictory positions concerning “the feeble-minded” had to be solved in the future, some of the key ideas in the present paper can be summarized at this point. Antipathy to and discomfort about “the feeble-minded” were not universal; rather, these feelings were unique to a specific historical time in the West in and after the end of the nineteenth century, along with a rapid increase in poverty and crime. In this social situation, as a correctional method, it became compulsory to attend public school. However, society rejected “the feeble-minded” on the basis of their low intelligence, inability to use language, and deviant behavior. Such a rejection was considered to be scientifically based on modern Western European standards. The deficiencies of “the feeble-minded” could not, however, be cured by the education in the schools of those days.

Although social rejection, similar to the rejection of “the feeble-minded”, was also observed with respect to people who were mentally ill and had epilepsy, it is difficult for us to mention any other categories than these disabilities. Further, the social acceptance of people with other disabilities was not as unpredictable as was the social exclusion of those with mental disabilities.

This can be seen in the coercion exerted for deaf people to use the oral method and in the exclusion of the use of signing, with an approximation of a “normalcy theory” of deaf people in the background. However, the target of special education for children with disabilities (not including those children considered to be “feeble-minded”) is to raise those children as citizens of a democratic society, as children with disabilities other than “the feeble-minded” were supposed to be able to develop communication and to have intelligence, and were not rejected socially.

Given that the social evaluation of “feeble-mindedness” might result in conflict, and that that viewpoint changes over time, the resultant changes will affect our intellect and body which constitute human beings, as well as modern principles such as democracy, tolerance, rights, and justice. When contemporary Western culture attaches a superlative value to physical fitness and cognitive function (Marks, 1999, p. 37), it becomes our responsibility to make a positive examination of the composition, changes, and rationale for the abovementioned modern elements and principles, in addition to explicating the role that psychology played with regard to “feeble-mindedness” and other disabilities such as blindness and deafness.

Endnotes

- 1) These emerging scientists had especially made very efficient use of sterilization for

M. Nakamura & N. Oka

males, because it is simple and easy to do. This convenient surgery gave support to eugenical sterilization, despite the decline of the eugenical movement in America.

- 2) *Eugenical News* was founded in 1920; it ceased publication in 1938. Harry Hamilton Laughlin (1880–1943), the director of the Eugenic Record Office, wrote many papers. An anonymous paper (1920) might have been written by Laughlin. He was a typical narrow-minded and extremist racist and eugenicist.
- 3) It came to be widely recognized that American democracy was facing a crisis because the Army Test revealed that the average mental age of the whites drafted into the army was 13 years old (Gould, 1996, pp. 316–317). Moreover, the popular fear and dislike of socialism and communism was one basis for the concept of government by the competent. For example, the communist regime in Russia, the increasing power obtained by the proletariat there, and the ardent admiration of socialism and communism by the intelligentsia, in America was pointed out by Kempton (Kempton, 1925, pp. 4, 5; cf. Hunt, 1931, p. 99). On the other hand, it was also perceived that the leftist parties were concerned about and sympathetic to eugenics (Anonymous, 1937, p. 296; Paul, 1984).
- 4) However, Kempton did not adopt a family tree of “the able” because he attached importance to education, which he considered was for raising the able. Rather, he insisted that the reproduction rate of the mentally inferior be controlled (Kempton, 1925, p. 8).
- 5) In fact, Muller supported affirmative eugenics, that is, an emphasis on the population of people with valuable genes multiplying (Carlson, 2001, p. 348).

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Eugenicists' Views on Democracy

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