

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. & Eugenics: A Means of Social Manipulation

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In its simplest terms, eugenics is the science of breeding better humans. When the English scientist, Sir Francis Galton, coined the term in 1883, he intended it to represent a science that improved human stock by giving more suitable races a better chance of prevailing over the less suitable.¹ Yet, by the turn of the twentieth century, eugenics had mutated into a pseudoscience that would cast a dark and lingering shadow upon American history. Perhaps Charles Davenport, who identified it as “the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding,” gives the best definition of the twentieth century version.² Despite eugenics’ negative connotation, its study holds the secret to discovering the place of heredity in American social thought. Furthermore, it becomes evident that rich philanthropists found their niche in the movement by providing the funds necessary for its functioning. Most notably, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. contributed his wealth and time to the eugenics movement not because of supremacist desires, but with the intent of reforming a society he viewed as decaying and chaotic.

Eugenics can best be understood as a by-product of the rapid and frenzied change brought about in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. The movement emerged from the romanticized notion of social perfectionism in which doctrines of social Darwinism orchestrated the American experience.³ Essentially, a slew of perceived social ills such as pauperism, alcoholism,

¹ Daniel Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985), ix.

² Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 3.

³ Author, Review of *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal*, by Kenneth Ludmerer, *Journal of American History* 61 (June 74): 225-26.

feble-mindedness, and increased immigration plagued the nation. Eugenacists manipulated the developing Americanism morale and pushed for the cleansing of society via such means as marriage and immigration restriction, education, and forced sterilization. Even President Theodore Roosevelt supported a secondary form known as positive eugenics that encouraged pure Americans to procreate and increase the stock of good American genes. Perhaps, forced sterilization, the most abhorred tactic of all, illustrates the intentions of eugenacists best. The approach would be implemented by preventing the lowest tenth of the population from reproducing so that theoretically, with their passing, the lowest tenth became extinct. At which point, a new lower tenth would emerge and be forcefully sterilized and again the lowest tenth of society would become extinct and a new lower tenth would transpire. The objective was to continue eliminating the lowest tenth of society via various forms of sterilization until only a master Nordic race survived.⁴

Leading eugenacists were greatly challenged when it came to funding because the U.S. Federal Government did not support basic science research studies until after the Second World War. Instead, state universities and philanthropists took the leading role in the movement's funding.⁵ Most notable were three well-known figures of the day, Mrs. E.H. Harriman, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller. Together, their institutions would fund nearly every aspect of the movement including the educational portion, which trained office and field workers and awarded scholarships so young people could spend their summers training and studying in human heredity and field research.⁶ It is clear that without the backing of rich elite in both

⁴ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls, Eight Windows, 2003), xv –xvi.

⁵ Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 208.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 55.

capital and in name, the eugenics movement would not have had the financial stability or the assurance of the public to exist as a large-scale entity.

It is evident that Charles Davenport⁷ used the names and capital of rich philanthropists to secure the funds so desperately needed. To insure that he acquired the financial backing necessary to support the eugenic cause, Charles Davenport often appealed to those closely associated with leading philanthropists. For example, he first petitioned Mary Harriman, the daughter of Mrs. E.H. Harriman,⁸ and convinced her that the operation was worthy of her mother's attention. Mrs. E.H. Harriman later financed the creation of the Eugenics Records Office and gave over half a million dollars to Davenport to conduct his studies.⁹ A similar tactic was applied when approaching the Rockefellers for financing. Davenport set his sights on the Rockefeller fortune after John D. Rockefeller, Sr. allotted over one hundred million dollars over a two year span for the creation of the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁰ John D. Rockefeller, Jr. would become the foundation's first president and hold the position from 1913 through 1917 when he then took over as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees until 1939.¹¹ There is an apparent paradox that arises when the correlation between eugenics and Rockefeller philanthropy are drawn. The situation is considerably ironic knowing that the industrious endeavors of Mr. John D. Rockefeller Sr. led to the oppression and misery of thousands of Americans and yet his own son supported a movement that pinned the socially unfortunate's miseries not on the ills of society, but rather on their own heredity and so-called degenerate genes.

⁷ Charles Davenport was the leading eugenicist in America and the founder of the Eugenics Records Office.

⁸ Mrs. E.H. Harriman acquired the fortune of her recently deceased husband, Mr. E.H. Harriman, the former railroad tycoon.

⁹ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 46-47.

¹⁰ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 93.

¹¹ Raymond Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 317.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has been described as a man whose philanthropic acts had given both meaning and character to his life and was considered by many as “a blessing to mankind.”¹² Despite his charitable efforts, which amounted to over \$537 million, he was never well-known by the general public.¹³ Instead, he was perceived as a man who lived simply, sought no admiration, and was guided by old-fashioned virtues. In short, Junior was esteemed as one who asked nothing of the world but gave so much in return.¹⁴ Yet, this is the same man who felt the world was out of control in the early 1920s and wanted to sponsor scientific research to compile a thorough analysis of human behavior.¹⁵ Oddly, Rockefeller, Jr. was obsessed with cleansing the family name, which quite possibly may explain why he gave so generously to various organizations.¹⁶ The result has been a mixed perception of appreciative beneficiaries and of critical observers. No matter how one may interpret Junior’s life, it lends itself to a paradox in which he is praised for his philanthropic acts that simultaneously casts a lingering shadow upon the Rockefeller name he tried so vehemently to purify.

Both Rockefeller’s life and the concept of eugenics have been researched tirelessly. Numerous authors have composed works on the issue of eugenics and an accomplished few have provided a thorough analysis. Mark Haller’s *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, Kenneth Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal*, and Donald Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives*, are most noted for their broad scope and ability to capture the social and cultural implications of the eugenics movement and its political impact on American thought in the twentieth century.

¹² “John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at Age 85,” *New York Times* 20 June 1959.

¹³ John Ensor Harr, Peter J. Johnson, *The Rockefeller Century* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), 562-63.

¹⁴ “John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at Age 85,” *New York Times* 20 June 1959.

¹⁵ Kevles, *In The Name of Eugenics*, 208-209.

¹⁶ Harr, Johnson, *The Rockefeller Century*, 87.

However, there are distinct differences in the ramifications of the movement as told by each of the historians. Essentially, there are several series of studies that have formed from the analysis of the eugenics movement starting with Sir Francis Galton in the 19th Century. Mark Haller's major concern in writing *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* was to understand why substantial numbers of experts considered hereditary characteristics to be the cause of criminality, poverty, and the mentally disabled and ill.¹⁷ Likewise, Daniel Kelves in his book, *In the Name of Eugenics*, writes a social and intellectual history of human genetics that accredits human heredity as a potential mechanism for social change.¹⁸ In each composition, the authors suggest a degree of social manipulation through their emphasis on heredity and its implications for a new social order. More recently, Edwin Black, examined the social ramifications of the eugenics movement on a global scale and explores the connections between American eugenics and Nazi Germany. He also considers the source from which leading eugenicists get their funds and concludes that without the assistance of leading philanthropists, many eugenic organizations would not have succeeded in surviving into the 1930s and the scope of their influence would have been considerably smaller.¹⁹ Albeit each author recognizes the exploitation of social manipulation in the promotion of eugenics and acknowledges John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as a source of financial assistance, no major eugenics composition discusses the reason for Junior's support of the movement.

Similarly, no major work pertaining to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. writes of his interest in eugenics or describes his reasoning for supporting the institution. Although there are a number of secondary sources written on the Rockefellers, there are few books dedicated solely to the

¹⁷ Haller, *Eugenics*, 4.

¹⁸ Charles E. Rosenberg, Review of *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, by Daniel Kelves, *Journal of American History* 73 (June 1986): 232-34.

¹⁹ Black, *War Against the Weak*, xv –xvi.

study of Junior. One book composed by Joseph Ernst entitled "*Dear father"/"Dear Son," Correspondence of John D. Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*" is a collection of letters written between John D. Rockefeller and his son outlining the transfer of family wealth between generations. In his introduction, Ernst writes of five themes that are prominent throughout the letters. They include love between family members, a father's advice to his son, the son's willingness to accept his father's precepts, a son being conscious of the family wealth he will acquire, and an unwavering faith in god displayed by both men.²⁰ *The Rockefeller Century* coauthored by John Harr and Peter Johnson proved that rich men did not practice philanthropy because of an inherent guilt associated with being wealthy. Albeit the book looks to target three generations of Rockefellers, it focuses primarily on the career and person of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The text credits Junior with influencing his father to both institutionalize and rationalize Rockefeller philanthropy. The authors also portray his obsession with the public image of the family name and in doing so they indicate that he made it his life's ambition to allocate the family's wealth properly.²¹ Additionally, William Schneider chronicles the philanthropic activities of the Rockefeller Foundation around the world in his book *Rockefeller Philanthropy and Modern Biomedicine*.²²

The only full-scale biography to be written about John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was composed by Raymond Fosdick in 1956 when he published *John D. Rockefeller, Jr. A Portrait*. Fosdick was a companion of Rockefeller for upwards of forty-five years prior to authoring the biography in which he attempts to develop the first comprehensive survey written of Junior's life.

²⁰ Joseph W. Ernst, "*Dear Father"/"Dear Son" Correspondence of John D. Rockefeller and John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*" (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 224-29.

²¹ Edward N. Akin, Review of *Rockefeller Century*, by John Ensor Harr and Peter J. Johnson, *Journal American History* 76 (December 1989): 964.

²² Hans A. Baer, Review of *Rockefeller Philanthropy and Modern Biomedicine*, William Schneider, *Journal American History* 90 (March 2003), 1504-1505.

Although the book is rich with details only a friend could provide, it lacks analytical criticisms overlooked by an author who is not only a companion but who also participated in many of the events described.²³ In general, the literature covers personal, industrial, and philanthropic aspects of Junior's life, but neglects to mention his involvement with eugenics.

Through varying degrees of research, it becomes evident that despite Rockefeller, Sr.'s direct association with the causation of social ills such as pauperism, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. supplied financial assistance to the eugenics movement. In doing so, he partakes in a multifaceted paradox in which the movement he funds targets the very people whom his father oppressed to make millions. By supporting eugenics, Junior not only blemishes further the family name, but also contradicts his own stated views of human nature, industrial relations, and philosophy on philanthropy.

As early as 1912, eugenics had become the butt of jokes and for the most part as soon as it was made clear that eugenicists intended to sterilize millions of Americans and immigrants, people viewed the movement as a non-science and racist.²⁴ The Eugenics Records Office was just as perceptions assumed, for upon their founding they declared that 10% of the population were defectives and had an ultimate goal of sterilizing upwards of fifteen million people.²⁵ There was publicized abhorrence for the eugenics movement as is evident by the editorial printed in the *San Francisco Daily News*. One critic made known the contempt felt towards the rich for supporting a movement that preyed on the weak and poor of America. The author is obviously disgusted by the thought of forced sterilization and personally attacks Rockefeller, Jr. for his

²³ Raymond Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr., A Portrait* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956): iiv-iv.

²⁴ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 387.

²⁵ W.J. Hadden, C.H. Robinson, M.R. Melendy, *The Science of Eugenics and Sex-life, Love, Marriage, Maternity: the Regeneration of the Human Race* (New York: Eugenics Health Foundation, 1914), 95.

financial assistance. The informant continues to state that Junior is the true criminal and that the most effective, far-reaching, and genuine way of eugenics would be to sterilize Rockefeller, Jr.

A boy is born to millions. He either doesn't work, isn't useful, doesn't contribute to human happiness, is altogether a parasite, or else he works to add to his millions, with the brutal, insane greed for more and more that caused the accumulation of the inherited millions. Why isn't such the most dangerous "defective" of all? Why isn't the prevention of more such progeny the first duty of eugenics? Such "defectives" directly attack the rights, liberties, happiness, and lives of millions.²⁶

There is an obvious disdain for Junior's support of eugenics and the author points out a seemingly correct truth about the usefulness of rich inheritors. However, the editorial is also evidence that eugenics was not well received by the public, but rather was an invention of a concentrated group that was able to obtain funding through rich elite. The perspective also addresses Junior's paradoxical ideology that he could simultaneously support eugenics and purify the family name.

In 1912, at the conclusion of the Eugenics Records Office's first board of directors meeting, it was determined by vote to ask John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to support several initiatives. First, the board of directors asked for \$125 a month to analyze the causes of feeble-mindedness. A \$150 per month was requested for an examination into the heavy incidence of insanity in Worcester County, Massachusetts, \$2000 a year was being asked to fund an investigation into the better and poorer strain of immigrants, and finally the board of directors were requesting \$2000 a year to hire a statistician to work out results already collected and to help prepare the information for publication.²⁷ In 1913, an article published in the *New York Times* described the intent of the Eugenics Record Office as wanting to benefit humanity by conducting various degrees of research. In this same article, Rockefeller was cited as one of the office's leading

²⁶ "Where to Begin," *San Francisco Daily News* 14 October 1915.

²⁷ "Minutes of the Eugenics Records Office's First Board of Directors' Meeting." TD. 1912. Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

philanthropists, behind only Mrs. E.H. Harriman. The Eugenics Records Office, while receiving financial funding from Rockefeller, Jr., proposed to assist civilization in a variety of ways via a range of different studies. The ultimate goal for eugenicists was to breed better humans and they proposed doing this by analyzing the most successful American families in hopes of replicating their blood strains. However, the concept of breeding a better race did not end with the replication of good blood strains, but also included preventive procreation measures forced on the socially weak. The converse was applied to enact the measures, which proposed examining the apparent degenerate families in America with the intention of restricting their blood strains. To accomplish these tasks, the Eugenics Records Office would conduct studies pertaining to the method of inheritance in regard to certain traits and interfamily marriages and would also conduct full examinations into family histories of permanent immigrants. Junior's role as a leading financial contributor is undoubtedly an indication that by 1913 he had become a strong advocate for the eugenics movement.²⁸

The Rockefeller Foundation would begin funding the eugenics movement after initial contact was made between Charles B. Davenport and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Money was originally given in small allotments, totaling just under \$22,000 at first with increasing amounts following with the completion of projects.²⁹ As time progressed so did the funding from the Rockefeller Foundation as their philanthropies crossed the Atlantic and sponsored German research in eugenics at a rate of \$410,000 a year by 1926.³⁰ Just as important as the cash that Rockefeller, Jr. was supplying was the very name of the established family, which brought

²⁸ "Extends Work In Eugenics, Harriman Philanthropy to Have a Board of Scientific Directors," *The New York Times* 20 March 1913.

²⁹ Kelves, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 56.

³⁰ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 284.

authenticity to the movement's cause.³¹ By October 28, 1926, the Rockefeller name had become so synonymous within the field of eugenics that even small-scale organizations like the Advisory Committee of Eugenics in Vermont were making proposals for assistance with their research.³²

The Nam Family: A Study in Cacogenics, composed by both Charles Davenport and Arthur Estabrook, was one of the various studies that Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. supplied financial assistance to for the purpose of publication. The study examined the Nam's with the intent of proving that they were of degenerate stock. The analysis began by examining the branch of the family that settled in the mountains of western Massachusetts and continued by tracing the pedigree through numerous generations. The survey concluded by labeling the family as mostly ignorant, unintelligent, indolent, alcoholic, and unmotivated to improve their circumstances.³³ By granting the finances necessary to publish this study, Junior exhibits a distaste for the poor of society, which only adds to the notion of a paradox. Rockefeller, Jr. claims to give money for the improvement of humanity, but by funding the eugenics movement, he justifies the actions of leading eugenicists who wish to irradiate so-called degenerate stock.

The socially, intellectually, and financially weak men and women affected by the eugenics movement were the same people found working in the factories and mills owned by rich elite like Rockefeller, Jr. Therefore, an examination of Junior's treatment of employees will enable a better understanding of why he supported the movement that proposed to eliminate the majority of people who made up his workforce. Oddly, the conditions and beliefs that Junior put forth and displayed are not contingent with the beliefs stated by the eugenics movement.

However, they are an attempt by him to enact an institution of order in the field of industry.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

³² "Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Eugenics Survey." TD. 28 October 1926. Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History Collection, University of Vermont, Burlington.

³³ Arthur H. Estabrook, Charles B. Davenport, *The Nam Family: A Study in Cacogenics* (Lancaster, PA., The New Era Printing Company, 1912), 1-3.

Such beliefs are an indication that Rockefeller, Jr. sought above all else a degree of order within society and as a result he supported organizations within the eugenics movement that promised the greatest means of order, the control of human heredity.

The events that would take place at his Colorado Fuel and Iron Company would send Rockefeller, Jr. down a humanistic path that would alter his perception of industry from predominantly production and profit to a view that also emphasized the well-being of his labor. On September 23, 1913, miners of approximately thirty companies from southern Colorado would go on strike under the organization of the United Mine Workers Union. Violent outbreaks between the miners and company owners would sporadically emerge over a span of several months. Colorado State Governor Elias Ammons called in the National Guard to assist in maintaining order, but his actions only worsened the situation. Strikers eventually realized the militia were only there to ensure that production continued while they made no progress. Tensions finally climaxed on April 20, 1914 when after a day-long battle between the National Guard and the strikers from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company ended with the burning of the employees' encampment. A number of men were killed on both sides, however the event that quickly became synonymous with the fiasco and that tarnished the Rockefeller image most involved two women and eleven children. During the day's confrontation, the group sought shelter in a cellar, but was suffocated when a tent was burned above the foundation. Undoubtedly, the event preceded open warfare, which would eventually require the action of President Wilson sending in six troops of U.S. Cavalry to restore order to the state.³⁴

After the strike in Colorado, Rockefeller, Jr. decided to cooperate with employees and felt that building a YMCA, church, or bandstand was a good investment because it increased

³⁴ Harr, Johnson, *Rockefeller Century*, 125-26.

personal relationships.³⁵ This marked the first time he mixed philanthropic activities with business affairs. Essentially, Rockefeller came to believe that the principal problem of modern civilization was the lack of cooperation between labor and capital.³⁶ He felt that most misunderstandings between men occurred because of a deficient knowledge of one another and championed the idea that when men were capable of talking out their differences, disputes vanished.³⁷ Basically, he assumed that if people understood the universal commonalities amongst each other, then bitterness would halt. The key to all success in corporations, Rockefeller, Jr. would come to claim, existed in the personal relationships between labor and capital.³⁸ Interestingly, the stances Junior develops pertaining to industry and the status of laborers are not reflective of the beliefs publicized by leading eugenicists. In fact, the ideas Rockefeller, Jr. exhibits appear frankly hypocritical when analyzed in lieu of his financial assistance for the eugenics movement. However, it is not the act of sterilization that Rockefeller was concerned with, but the notion of social order. To achieve order in his industries, Junior preached the importance of personal relationships.

The expansion of Rockefeller's beliefs on industry only further contradicts the financial assistance he gave to Charles Davenport and the eugenics movement. For example, Rockefeller, Jr. claimed that older and simpler industry were better than the current day corporations because owners worked in the same building as employees and often shared in some form of a personal relationship.³⁹ In response to the dilemma created by the modern day corporation, Junior proposed a solution that required laborers and capital holders to become partners and form a

³⁵ Ernst, "Dear Father/Dear Son," 70-71.

³⁶ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., *The Personal Relation in Industry* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923), 40-41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

personal relation in industry.⁴⁰ The lack of personal relationships in corporations created an environment where each group misinterpreted the other. For example, he stated that capital holders regarded laborers as a mere commodity to be bought and sold whereas the laborers viewed capitalists as soulless money. However, Rockefeller, Jr. held that men did not have sufficient knowledge of each other and so their interpretations were inherently skewed. He also contended that because both parties were men, the industrial problem was really a human problem and it was the very essence of human nature that made it nearly impossible to solve.⁴¹ Again, Junior's notion of a personal relationship in industry is overtly different from claims made by Charles Davenport and further illustrates his desire for social order as opposed to the creation of a superhuman race.

The master plan that Rockefeller, Jr. enacted to establish a series of personal relationships in corporations was the appointment of special officers. Their task was to bridge the lack of contact between owners and their employees. Junior was certain that his idea would work because when he first arrived at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, it was evident that people hated anyone with the name Rockefeller. However, after he took the time to talk personally with hundreds of employees, going to their homes, talking to their wives and children, visiting their schools, their places of amusements and bathhouses, he claimed to have effectively created a series of friendly relationships.⁴² So, before leaving Colorado, he put in place a plan of industrial representation that promoted close personal contact between duly elected representatives of laborers and officers of the company as voted by the employees.⁴³ The plan looked to reproduce the earlier contact between owner and employee found in the previous and simpler forms of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁴¹ Ibid., 71.

⁴² Ibid., 77.

⁴³ Ibid.

industry. This plan was received with such enthusiasm that the company began working to capacity and actually reopened several idle mines without making any special effort to attract labor. Furthermore, steel and ironworkers adopted the same plan that worked so well for the Colorado miners.⁴⁴ He called the initiative the Colorado Industrial Plan and claimed that its success was due to its ability to guard against arrogance and oppression by allowing employees various channels to vocalize their grievances.⁴⁵ Rockefeller summed his plan up with the Golden Rule believing that humans responded better to love and sympathy than they did to authority and distrust.⁴⁶ Junior's assessment of human nature and the liberties he granted to his employees are humanistic and add to the paradox that has come to describe his philanthropy.

Rockefeller's perception of labor is interesting in that it promotes the social welfare of his employees, effectively putting them on a similar social level as the management of his corporations. He stated that if men could only begin to gain knowledge of each other, they would realize that they were both of flesh and blood.⁴⁷ Once again, the notion of a paradox arises both with Junior's statements equating the poor laborer to the wealthier capitalist and with his willingness to supply social welfare to his employees. In both instances, he directly opposed the objectives of eugenics. Furthermore, Rockefeller, Jr. supplied the employees of Colorado Fuel and Iron Company with a trade agreement that increased their pay, gave them an eight hour day, and provided various other benefits, such as the construction of new churches and YMCAs.⁴⁸

Undoubtedly, Junior's perceptions and actions pertaining to industry are not contingent with the aspirations of eugenicists. Yet, when the opinions pertaining to wages are compared, it

⁴⁴ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 38-39, 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

becomes evident that the two share some commonalities. While eugenicists believed heredity to be the cause of social ills, they still acknowledged the connection between the rate of wages and the appearance of social evil. In 1914, a group of eugenicists, W.J. Hadden, C.H. Robinson, and M.R. Melendy, coauthored *The Science of Eugenics and Sex-life, Love, Marriage, Maternity: The Regeneration of the Human Race* and contended that without sufficient funds, personal care was near impossible. Furthermore, they stated that if employees did not have proper food, housing conditions, and clothing, then they could not obtain a self-respect high enough to be successful. Eventually, Hadden, Robinson, and Melendy concluded that without enough leisure time composed of both exercise and relaxation, then people would give away to impulses that led to their own destruction and weakened the human race.⁴⁹ Junior, who addressed the majority of the deficiencies described above with his trade agreement, evidently shared such a perception. Yet, the major differences between eugenicists and Rockefeller, Jr. are illustrated via his industrial relations. While eugenicists promoted the eradication of lower classes, Rockefeller, Jr. provided a means of social welfare to aid in his employees' existence. As a result, an obvious contradiction emerges when comparing Junior's industrial affairs with his subsidy of eugenics. However, when his actions are analyzed as a desperate attempt for social order, they materialize as the primary reason for supporting the movement as the pseudoscience of eugenics preached the same sermon of social control.

Evidently, there was more to Rockefeller's intentions than a desire to create a master Nordic race such as Charles Davenport and other leading eugenicists hoped to establish. Rather, Rockefeller, Jr. invested his capital into eugenics because he feared that society was quickly turning out of control. Starting in 1897, while still attending college at Brown University,

⁴⁹ W.J. Hadden, C.H. Robinson, M.R. Melendy, *The Science of Eugenics and Sex-life, Love, Marriage, Maternity*, 106-107.

Rockefeller, Jr. became aware of the problems associated with population growth and its distribution. After his experience on the White Slave Grand Jury, he became increasingly concerned about the tribulations of human sexual behavior.⁵⁰ Soon, obsession took over Junior as he tried to find solutions to difficult social problems. Rockefeller, Jr. found an advantageous opportunity to influence societal behavior in 1911 when he would become the Chairman of the Bureau of Social Hygiene (BSH), which was created as a result of the White Slave Traffic Law.⁵¹ Even though Junior gave over five hundred million dollars to different charities and organizations, the BSH was the only philanthropy, which he was an active member of the board, demonstrating to a degree the true nature of his character and sensibilities.⁵² Furthermore, under the direction of Junior, the BSH allied itself with the Eugenics Records Office and together the institutions pooled resources to gather information. Detailed accounts pertaining to the lives of imbeciles, idiots, criminals, and outcasts were gathered via various investigations into the living conditions, employment options, and social evils of society. The motivation behind the research derived from the need to create a quantitative report outlining the cost to humanity for maintaining the lives of defectives.⁵³ By serving as a member of the BSH board and securing ties to the Eugenics Records Office, Junior had devised another means of support for eugenics with the intention of reforming society.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. personally issued several grants that funded small scale research until 1913, all of which investigated such vices as prostitution, penology, and narcotics control.⁵⁴

His funding for the BSH would continue for twenty-five years amounting to a massive five

⁵⁰ Harr, Johnson, *The Rockefeller Century*, 190-91.

⁵¹ Abraham Flexner, *Prostitution in Europe* (Montclair, NJ., Patterson Smith, 1969), vii – ix.

⁵² Peter Collier, David Harowitz, *The Rockefellers, An American Dynasty*, (New York: Holt, Rinhart, and Winston, 1976), 105.

⁵³ W.J. Hadden, C.H. Robinson, M.R. Melendy, *The Science of Eugenics and Sex-life, Love, Marriage, Maternity*, 97.

⁵⁴ Harr, Johnson, *Rockefeller Century*, 185-86.

million dollars before the bureau closed in the 1930s.⁵⁵ The BSH would expand after WWI and continue to increase its study of population growth and sexual behavior. Eventually, Rockefeller, Jr. would become so entangled in the idea of sexual behavior and social restraint that he anonymously funded Margaret Sanger's Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau.⁵⁶ Junior's involvement with the BSH and his ties with Margaret Sanger are examples of his fervor for social order. The funding of these organizations are also an indication that his support for eugenics was deeper than the checks written for Charles Davenport, the Eugenics Records Office, and his later fixations with German science. Rather, they are evidence that through their funding, Rockefeller, Jr. was indirectly supporting the eugenic cause to enact a form of social regulation.

One specific study funded by the BSH was Dr. Abraham Flexner's *Prostitution in Europe*, which examined the nature of modern prostitution in Europe. The study was intended to take an earlier report conducted in New York a step further by discussing both methods of and regulations for prostitution.⁵⁷ Rockefeller hoped the results from Flexner's research in Europe could be applied in the United States. Flexner's conclusions are important for a number of reasons. First, he reported that prostitution was a modifiable phenomenon that if left unregulated would only increase. He also stated that the institution cannot be stamped out by what he referred to as "symptomatic treatments" in which action was performed after the offense had taken place.⁵⁸ Instead, he suggested that to eliminate prostitution, it has to be prevented from ever originating. This only deepened Rockefeller's conviction that without intervention, social order would dissipate. Additionally, Flexner claimed that prostitutes would not exist without a

⁵⁵ Fosdick, *John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*, 139.

⁵⁶ Harr, Johnson, *Rockefeller Century*, 191-92.

⁵⁷ Flexner, *Prostitution in Europe*, vii-ix.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 395-99.

demand and that even if police executed their jobs precisely, the tradition would still survive. Therefore, to cease prostitution, Flexner avowed society needed to be altered. He considered prostitution to be the product of natural impulses and ignorance of which only knowledge could prevail in its annihilation. This stance was elaborated through Flexner's suggestion that only a rationalized social life could forestall prostitution. Flexner also contributed the causation of the establishment as typically being from alcohol, illegitimacy, broken homes, low wages, and industrialization. The concluding solution put forth by Flexner was that it had to be dealt with as a part of the larger social problems of society and only a transformation via education, religion, science and sanitation would prevail in eradicating the problem of prostitution.⁵⁹ Flexner's conclusions are extremely important because of the relevance they have with eugenics. His description of the characteristics found to be the causes of prostitution are the very elements that eugenicists claim to have found among the feebleminded. Undoubtedly, Flexner's conclusions had a profound affect on Rockefeller, Jr. as he tried to grapple with an increasingly chaotic world.

The BSH also championed Miss Katherine Bement Davis, the superintendent of the State Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills, New York, as a permanent member of the board.⁶⁰ The laboratory at Davis' institute used defective cases from all of the hospitals and dispensaries in New York to conduct various studies. As expected, the information compiled from Davis' inquiries were the same kind of data that eugenicists were collecting. For instance, Davis investigated the physical, mental, and moral conditions of the poor for the purpose of creating effective reform.⁶¹ Likewise, the results from her laboratory proved to be influential in garnering

⁵⁹ Ibid., 395-402.

⁶⁰ W.J. Hadden, C.H. Robinson, M.R. Melendy, *The Science of Eugenics and Sex-life, Love, Marriage, Maternity*, 99.

⁶¹ Ibid., 100.

support from men like Rockefeller, Jr. For example, findings published by the reformatory concluded that of the 647 inmates at Bedford Hills, 130 had a known degenerate stain and about 90% of the women had some form of a venereal disease. Davis also claimed that the typical brothel in New York City entertained over 264 customers a day with an average of sixteen per woman.⁶² The conclusions drawn by Miss Davis and the Bedford Hills laboratory undoubtedly had a profound affect on Junior as they indicated a similar message of social decay advocated by both Flexner and Davenport.

Albeit interested in Davis' results, Junior was more anxious about another one of her endeavors. In a correspondence to Charles Davenport, he exhibits an eagerness to support her plans to create a "Criminalistic Institute."⁶³ Essentially, Davis aspired to create an establishment for the incarceration of convicted women prior to their sentencing. The institute would keep them for a period of one to three months while a panel of experts would study the women's social and educational backgrounds, their industrial efficiency, and their physical and mental conditions. A diagnosis would be made and when the women were returned to the court, the judge would be handed a report of the institution's findings and given a recommendation for the proper placement of each woman.⁶⁴ Rockefeller, Jr. expressed his support for the idea to Davenport by commenting that "it would be possible to send the women to the place best adapted to her needs and where she would be kept from perpetuating her kind if she were mentally deficient and incapable of reform."⁶⁵ Junior's notion of saving society from chaos was so strong that even after admitting that the initial cost would be extraordinarily high, he asked Davenport if he thought it would be worth funding privately. Ultimately, Rockefeller, Jr.

⁶² Ibid., 101

⁶³ John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Charles B. Davenport, LS, 27 January 1912, Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

believed that the plan was hopeful because it presented a scientific means of escaping the evils that the courts could not correct.⁶⁶ Even though the price was high, Junior was willing to supply the finances necessary because the potential the project afforded. He believed a large number of felons would be lifted out of the criminal class through reform and for the defectives and hardened convicts for whom reform would not work, their return to society would be prevented until the period of childbearing had passed.⁶⁷ Rockefeller, Jr.'s interest in Davis is an indication of his willingness to support science as a means of social control.

Junior's involvement in the study of criminal women and particularly prostitution is important to the discussion of eugenics because in the early twentieth century, westerners viewed it as a trade of the feebleminded.⁶⁸ Leading eugenicists stated in an address to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections that of three hundred prostitutes, fifty-one percent were considered feebleminded and all doubtful cases were recorded as normal. In addition, they also claimed that no more than six women of the entire three-hundred had really good minds.⁶⁹ His support of both the BSH and Miss Davis' "Criminalistic Institute" are evidence that he shared similar views as they were in direct accordance with eugenic objectives. Clearly, Rockefeller, Jr. was so obsessed with maintaining a social order that he delved into the field of eugenics. Albeit he may not have had the desire to construct a superhuman race as is evident through his generous treatment of industrial workers, his obsession with maintaining a social order baited him into supporting eugenics with the hope of preventing a state of public mayhem.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ A.B. Droogleever Fortuyn, "Eugenical Remarks on China," *Eugenical News* 15, no. 6 (June 1930: 77-79).

⁶⁹ E.R. Johnstone, "Stimulating Public Interest in the Feeble-Minded" (address to the National Conference of Charities and Correction, 15 May 1916), Estabrook Paper, SUNY, University of Albany, Albany.

In the midst of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, Rockefeller, Jr. found himself observing a rapidly changing society that was feverishly out of control. The loss of dominion and a dependence upon old-fashioned virtues led Junior to explore the dark avenues of eugenics. The sense of security and its means of social order that he discovered among the shadows lured him into funding the psuedeuoscience. Rockefeller, Jr. never intended to create a master race as is evident via his views of human nature and industrial ideologies that were rooted in general welfare and personal relationships. However, his development of the BSH, its alignment with the Eugenics Records Office, and their studies of social problems illustrate Junior's grave concern that materialized into an obsessive compulsion to restore order by eradicating prostitution and other vices through such means as forced sterilization. It is apparent that Rockefeller, Jr. never intended to create a superhuman race aimed at perfection. Instead, he was merely reacting to a changing world that attempted to alter the moral perspective of humankind. Ironically, Junior's responses play a pivotal role in the development of a multifaceted paradox, which contradicts his own stated views of human nature and industrial relations. Furthermore, Rockefeller, Jr.'s sponsorship of eugenics stained the family name he tried so relentlessly to exemplify.

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