

“Why do we preserve these useless and harmful beings? The abnormal prevent the development of the normal. This fact must be squarely faced. Why should society not dispose of the criminal and insane in a more economical manner?” Dr. Alexis Carrel, 1912 Nobel Prize winner, Rockefeller University¹. Throughout its history, American society has been required to deal with the issue addressed by Dr. Carrel, the issue of the appropriate treatment for individuals, like the mentally ill, whose behavior falls outside of social norms. Stereotypes and stigmas, as well as larger social attitudes and beliefs, have influenced the types of treatment that the intellectually disabled received. On one hand, the treatment of ‘madness’ in America has held a mirror up to society, reflecting the constantly changing zeitgeist, while on the other hand, maintaining three consistent elements. The use of moral treatment for the mentally ill throughout mid 19th century embodied the charitable mindset of the antebellum era’s revivalism and reform movements. During the Progressive Era, the rise of eugenics reflected the industrialized thinking of the time, the growing faith in science, and the idea of societal perfectibility through natural selection. Yet despite these fundamental changes, three consistent themes ~~have~~ characterized American treatment of the mentally ill: isolation, lack of patient consent, and a public façade of humane and effective treatment.

Dating back to ancient times, the mentally ill have been considered outcasts of society, isolated and abused. Throughout history, their madness was commonly thought to be a result of God’s displeasure or anger. ~~Very e~~Early European thinkers laid a foundation ~~of for~~ more rational beliefs about mental illness and treatments. Between the 5th and 3rd centuries BCE, the Greek physician Hippocrates repudiated the long-held assumption that mental illness ~~stemmed~~ resulted from supernatural forces and instead determined that natural events in the human

¹ Lombardo, Paul A. *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011. Print: 172

body, particularly in the brain, caused mental illness². Although psychiatric illness is as old as the human condition, the specific practice of psychiatry did not exist, as no particular group of physicians devoted themselves to its treatment, until the advent of medical specialization in the late nineteenth century³. While there have been asylums since the Middle Ages, the emphasis had been primarily on custodial functions rather than therapeutic functions, ~~until the nineteenth century.~~ However, in the nineteenth century, when modern society began to recognize mental illness as a real disease⁴. In a world before psychiatry and its therapeutic intentions, the mentally ill were often savagely treated as animals, with little tolerance or support for those supposedly deviant in society.

Treatments for the mentally ill initially came to America from European influences, as colonists from Europe migrated to the new world, bringing European ideas with them. In New England, as the Puritans spread and settled, their perception of the mentally ill ~~was mostly devoid of~~ lacked rational or medical evidence, and instead tended toward religious interpretations such as possession by the devil or witchcraft. This Puritan ignorance about the true nature of mental disabilities eventually passed. However, the deep-rooted idea that the mentally ill were dangerous, inferior, or even a manifestation of evil remained widespread in the New World for centuries to come.⁵ The original idea of the conservative colonists ~~consisted of a belief that~~ predicated that “society needed to be protected from the insane”; a powerful and lasting attitude that continued to influence American thinking well after mental

² Foerschner, A. M. "The History of Mental Illness: From "Skull Drills" to "Happy Pills"" RSS. Student Pulse, 2010. Web. 01 Dec. 2014.

³ Shorter, Edward. "The Birth of Psychiatry." *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac*, page 1

⁴ Shorter, 4

⁵ Ibid, 4

illness ceased to be considered a form of demonic possession.⁶ American attitudes toward mental illness maintained various elements of several lingering mind-sets from these early influences: condescension portraying the mentally ill as worthless, benevolence viewing them as childlike and helpless, and fear that rendered them as dangerous and in need of segregation or incarceration.

The ideas and central beliefs about mental illness in America have changed, influenced strongly at first by Christianity, then by biology and Social Darwinism. Negative stigma of mental illness has lingered in American society from the colonial period; however, with the reform movements in the antebellum era, many significant changes were made, especially those inspired by different, more accepting Christian values.⁷ As a result, the treatment of the mentally ill became significantly more humane, and treatment was often provided in organized, well-funded asylums, where the staff implemented the ‘moral treatment’ that reformers advocated. During this period of reform, those with mental illness were put into large estates, which were often built with beautiful architecture and careful organization for each ward⁸. However, when these institutions became overcrowded and underfunded, asylums no longer could afford ‘moral treatment’ and ~~began to transform~~ transformed from ~~hospitals-humane treatment centers~~ to prison-like institutions. With the turn of the century, moral care became a relic of the past, and biological treatment arose from the Progressive Era’s scientific thinking and desire for social perfectibility ~~elements~~ of the Progressive Era.

Comment [EK1]: Need this or else the sentence contains a misplaced modifier

Comment [EK2]: This is too vague. Be specific

Throughout the 1850s, ~~the spirit of~~ reform and religious revivalism ~~went hand in hand~~ occurred concomitantly, sparking philanthropic ideals throughout America, along with

⁶ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 4

⁷ Kent, Deborah. *Snake Pits, Talking Cures & Magic Bullets: A History of Mental Illness*. Brookfield, CT

⁸ Rothman, David J. *The Discovery of the Asylum; Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971: 144

the rise of many social reform movements. Reform movements advocated the abolition of slavery, women's rights, temperance, public education, as well as prison and asylum improvement. The idea of a utopian society also inspired many different social experiments throughout America, challenging Americans to better themselves and their societies. During the antebellum period of the mid nineteenth century, the influence of the reform movement and the call for humanitarian care sparked a major change in the treatment of the mentally ill. As key reformers worked to recognize and change the previously inhumane management of the mentally ill, their work led to the development of 'moral treatment'.⁹ However, although the reformist attitude brought a more charitable approach, the isolation, lack of consent, and public façade of benevolence remained.

Derived from Quaker religious beliefs about the ability to cure through love and empathy, moral treatment was a social reform that relied on the munificence of the American people, requiring "...the aid of the benevolent"⁹; a sympathetic attitude toward the mentally ill and a public willingness to fund relatively expensive therapeutic care.¹⁰ Moral treatment was accompanied by enforced order and precision in the hope of counteracting the debilitating and disorienting influences of modern society. This treatment reflected the reformist mindset that the disadvantaged could be cured by regulating and bettering their living conditions¹¹.

For example, a New York doctor explained, "...the hours for rising, dressing, and washing should be regulated by the most perfect precision...and utmost neatness should be observed in

⁹ Kirkbride, Thomas S. "On the Construction, Organization, and General Arrangements of Hospitals for the Insane, with Some Remarks on Insanity and Its Treatment." *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 83.165 (1882): 1

¹⁰ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*: 32

¹¹ Rothman, David J. *The Discovery of the Asylum; Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971: 144

the dormitory.”¹² Moral treatment’s rigid and exact management can be seen as an imitation of the wave of utopian societies that spread throughout America during the antebellum period such as Brooke Farm and New Harmony, where similarly ordered regimens were enforced.¹³ Unlike these societies, moral treatment of the mentally ill did not involve new forms of politics or production, but it experimented with the advantages of a regular routine and well staffed, yet isolated living conditions. Additionally, alongside the religious revivalism, moral treatment was deeply rooted in the Christian beliefs of the Second Great Awakening that significantly differed from the Puritan’s Calvinist idea of predestination. For example, in the mid-1800s, Thomas Story Kirkbride, supervisor of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, would kindly encourage patients to acknowledge their behavior, and therefore develop a sense of guilt and social conscience¹⁴. Kirkbride also preached to them that by their own free will, they could choose to be sane, telling his patients that, “~~y~~ou have it almost entirely in your power to continue to enjoy these blessings.”¹⁵ These ideas of healing the mentally ill through “resist[ing] mad thoughts” and repenting for misbehavior paralleled the central Christian belief that salvation is determined by human’s free will to ask for forgiveness of sins.¹⁶ Moral treatment was a result of the reformist and revivalist movements of the antebellum era, as it was based on the benevolent attitude that spread throughout America in the mid 19th century.

Along with Thomas Story Kirkbride, another catalyst for the transformation from custodial to therapeutic care, such as moral treatment, in mental institutions was Dorothea Dix.

¹² Rothman, 144

¹³ Rothman, David J. *The Discovery of the Asylum; Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971: 132

¹⁴ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Pub, 2002. Print.

¹⁵ Whitaker, 23

¹⁶ Ibid, 39

Dorothea Dix appealed to the antebellum era's humanitarian impulse and embodied the nation's strong fervor for reform. Dix traveled throughout Northeastern states, gathering information on the inhumane and animalistic treatment that the mentally ill received. She observed that, "mentally ill persons, some violently insane, are herded indiscriminately with criminals, idiots, paupers... in cages"¹⁷, "chained, naked, beaten with rods, and lashed into obedience."¹⁸ After seeing such inhumane conditions first hand in a Massachusetts state asylum, Dix spent the next forty years of her life advocating for better treatment of the mentally ill. Dorothea Dix not only represented the reformist eagerness for change, but also embodied the rising female social influence that occurred during the reform period. For example, even though she was a woman, Dix was able to appeal to twenty different states to build mental hospitals by presenting state legislatures with her own reports, thereby helping to change government policy ~~even though she was a woman~~.

However, post reform movement, moral treatment faced threats from the lack of a scientific basis for its therapy, underfunding, and the financial requirements of the Civil War, which strained state and federal budgets. Meanwhile, the number seeking treatment grew much faster than the population (as shown in the graph on the last page). For example, Kirkbride's expensive design required a maximum of two hundred fifty patients per asylum. According to national census figures in 1841 2,500 people were living in mental institutions; a number of patients that could be treated in 10 of Kirkbride's ideally sized facilities. And by 1890, while the U.S. population had tripled, the number of patients living in asylums had increased nearly thirty times, from 2,500 residents; to 74,000, requiring 300 facilities (see

¹⁷ Wilson, Dorothy Clarke. *Stranger and Traveler: The Story of Dorothea Dix, American Reformer*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1975. Print, (104)

¹⁸ Wilson, 105

chart, appendix B).¹⁹ By 1874, state mental hospitals were crowded to “more than 500 patients, and a few had more than 1,000.”²⁰ As state asylums quickly became overpopulated, and financial demands grew from the Civil War, states cut costs by overfilling facilities, ultimately making moral treatment impossible. As one superintendent told Dix, “the tendency now is not to make hospitals as fit as possible, but as cheap as possible.”²¹ Therefore, patients were now kept in “hospitals,” without receiving the reformist vision of effective moral treatment, and the charitable and therapeutic measures and attitudes established during the antebellum period disintegrated.

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It can be argued that ~~Furthermore, moral~~ moral treatment was significantly shaped by European treatments rather than American zeitgeist of revivalism and reform. The notion of institutionalization as a method of segregation for the mentally ill began in Europe, particularly from the 17th century onwards.²² Similar to American treatment, from the 17th to the 19th century in Europe, the majority of treatment within institutions consisted of deplorable physical conditions and abuse, even within the notable historic asylums, such as Bedlam in London and La Bicêtre in Paris.²³ One of the earliest European reforms was in La Bicêtre in 1792, when Philippe Pinel ~~decided to test~~ tested if a patient’s condition could improve from care and consideration, rather than enchainment and abuse.²⁴ Although Pinel’s approach can be seen as the initial model of American moral treatment, the resemblance between the two reforms is superficial. Pinel’s motivation for asylum reform was driven by

¹⁹ Kent, 74

²⁰ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 35

²¹ Kent, Deborah. *Snake Pits, Talking Cures & Magic Bullets: A History of Mental Illness*. Brookfield, CT

²² Foerschner, A. M. "The History of Mental Illness: From "Skull Drills" to "Happy Pills"" *RSS*. Student Pulse, 2010. Web.

²³ Shorter, Edward. "The Birth of Psychiatry." *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997. Print. 35

²⁴ Foerschner, A. M.

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the rationality of the French Enlightenment as well as the French Revolution's aggressively secular ideas and like individual-libertyism. For example, Pinel, believed that the treatment for insanity was found in "differentiating the characteristics of the individual", rather than focusing on the patients surroundings.²⁵ In contrast, the American motivation for moral treatment was rooted not in European ideas, but in American social movements such as utopian communities, religious revivalism, which sparked Christian compassion through the generous support of benevolent patrons, and reformists, who advocated strict utopian-moral care and sympathetic benevolencecompassion.

Comment [EK3]: How is this a secular idea? Secular means non-religious

Even during the era of moral treatment, the traditional themes of segregation, lack of consent, and the deception of munificence remained prevalent in American management of the 'insane'. With moral treatment, the mentally ill were still isolated from society; in the belief that their incarceration in a specifically designed setting would restore health. In reports to the public, the proponents of moral treatment claimed to "discharge as cured" up to 80% of all admitted patients.²⁶ However, according to the former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Professor Steven Hyman, M.D., the results were often "cherry picked...as the majority of published reports were only on successes and ignored the failures."²⁷ Also, patients were often committed involuntarily, frequently against their will by their families.²⁸ ~~And e~~Even as funding for institutions decreased, returning the 'custodial' rather than 'therapeutic' treatment, the public image of humane treatment remained. Pictured to the public with beautiful architecture. The beautiful architecture of asylums created an illusion of benevolent management to the public eye. Exterior images of hospitals were used

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²⁵ Shorter, 39.

²⁶ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 36

²⁷ Hyman, Steven, MD. "Interview with Professor Steven Hyman, M.D." Telephone interview. 7 Feb. 2015.

²⁸ Whitaker, 32

on postcards to show the asylum's architecture, organized design and beautiful grounds (see appendix A)²⁹. However, hidden from the public, inside the institutions moral treatment was fading, and treatment was returning from therapeutic attempts to callous methods of pacification.³⁰ The reality of moral treatment at its best corresponded with the building's positive external image but when the treatment's benevolence drastically declined, the public misconception continued. The institution's staff devolved to "criminals and vagrants,"³¹ who maintained order by returning to the old ways of "coercion, brute force, and the liberal use of restraints."³² For example, Nellie Bly, a reporter in the late 1880s who pretended to be insane, experienced first hand how the treatment in the post-reform movement declined. In her report, *Ten Days in a Mad House*, Nellie Bly ~~illustrated~~ showed the harsh ~~mailee~~ conditions and imprisoning isolation in asylums that antebellum reformers had ~~railed~~ rallied so strongly against. Nellie claimed that:

The nurses told us that because the asylum was a public institution, we could not expect kindness... we were given cold baths, deprived of sufficient clothing and fed with horrible food.³³

Additionally, Bly described how the disabled, who were "eager ... for a breath of air... for a release from their prison"³⁴; were treated like criminals rather than patients.³⁴ Nellie Bly's brutal and detailed descriptions ~~spurred~~ incited the emerging field of psychology to come up with radical new treatments.

²⁹ Payne, Christopher, and Oliver W. Sacks. *Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2009: 17

³⁰ Payne, Christopher, and Oliver W. Sacks. *Asylum: Inside the Closed World of State Mental Hospitals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2009.

³¹ Grob, Gerald N. *The Mad among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill*. New York: Free, 1994: 64

³² Whitaker, 35

³³ Bly, Nellie. *Ten Days in a Mad-House*. New York City: Ian L. Munro, 1887 : 64

³⁴ Bly, 64

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In addition to the overcrowding and underfunding of state mental institutions which occurred after the reform moment, the Progressive Era brought new harsh elements to the treatment of the mentally ill that were primarily focused not on therapy, but on limiting the ability to procreate. With the beginning of the Progressive Era, both America's attitude and treatment of the mentally ill changed to reflect the social beliefs and values of the late 19th century and early 20th century. The societal shift from America's strong Christian beliefs to scientific reasoning displaced the charitable perspective with biological imperatives. Beginning in the late 1800s, philanthropists who had previously viewed the less fortunate as worthy objects of assistance came to see them as poor, diseased, physically infirm, defective, and undeserving.³⁵ The most salient feature of the Progressive Era's new objective in treatment was ~~forced compulsory~~ sterilization of the disabled, a doctrine of the eugenics movement. ~~Sterilization is a surgical procedure which prevents procreation, a procedure used during the Progressive Era to prevent births of the 'unfit'.~~ Far from being an anomaly, sterilization was widespread and specifically authorized by most states as well as the U.S. Supreme Court in *Buck vs. Bell* and supported by the values and beliefs of the Progressive Era.³⁶ ~~By the late 1920s, a~~ Approximately 60,000 of the mentally ill were sterilized.³⁷ In addition, the mentally ill ~~were~~ classified as 'degenerates' and prohibited from marrying in many states³⁸. Lastly, 'detention camps' ~~were used to confine~~ ~~confined~~ the so-called 'unfit'

Comment [EK4]: I think you can assume that your reader knows what sterilization means

Comment [EK5]: During what time period? Give some context

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³⁵ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 49

³⁶ Lombardo, Paul A. *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011. Print: 43

³⁷ Kaelber, Lutz. "Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States." *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States*. University of Vermont, 2012. Web

³⁸ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 56

during the mental patient's reproductive years, and [patients](#) were released when those years were over.³⁹

As brutal and inhumane as these treatments seem today, they were justified by the beliefs and values of the time, particularly Social Darwinism, which supported the belief that society could be improved through the use of certain scientific principles. Social Darwinism is the application of Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution through the "survival of the fittest" to the struggle for success within human society.⁴⁰ In 1869, Sir Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, published in *Hereditary Genius*; the idea that nature and inherited traits, rather than nurture and environment, separated the superior races and superior individuals from the weak and unfit. He later; coined the term "eugenics"; which included sterilization of the unfit, a new treatment of the mentally ill that mirrored the Progressive belief that society could be improved ~~by~~ selective procreation.⁴¹ Charles B. Davenport, a major advocate, furthered Galton's definition, saying that eugenics was "the science of the improvement of the human race by better breeding."⁴² Mainstream thinking throughout America began to embrace the broader belief that society could improve itself through enlightened collective and scientific action designed by the capable and the successful.⁴³

[Eugenic ideas](#)Support for [eugenics](#) gained momentum because eugenics proposed the idea that regulation of the reproduction of "unfit" Americans could efficiently improve society.

Throughout the early twentieth century, the public frequently equated the insane with "viruses," "social wastage," and "melancholy waste products"; seeing them as a "plague on

³⁹ Whitaker, 57

⁴⁰ Bannister, Robert C., Ph.D. "Social Darwinism." *Social Darwinism*. Encarta® Online Encyclopedia, 22 Nov. 2000. Web. 23 Jan. 2015.

⁴¹ Whitaker, 42

⁴² Lombardo, Paul A. *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011.

⁴³ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 59

civilization.”⁴⁴ On the spectrum of the “unfit” the insane were considered ~~to be~~ the worst.⁴⁵

Therefore, the mentally ill⁷ were first segregated from society in state institutions that “served as warehouses”⁷; until they were forcibly sterilized or aged beyond the ability to reproduce.⁴⁶

Society saw this sterilization as progress by ultimately eliminating the ‘degenerates.’⁷ Efforts

to do so went beyond sterilization and also included laws banning the mentally ill from

marriage. For example, *The New York Times* on July 29th, 1923 wrote:

Mental deficiency is the root of criminality... The weeding out of defective stocks is part of the eugenics program... Everybody knows that many feeble-minded parents breed feeble-minded children... It is certain that the marriage of two mental defectives ought to be prohibited...⁴⁷

In 1896, ‘mental defectives’ legally began to lose the right to marry when Connecticut became to first state to ratify such a prohibition. By 1933, all states in America had prohibited

marriage for the insane.⁴⁸ This treatment of the mentally ill was no longer aimed towards

bettering the condition of the individual patient. A new treatment was now justified. For

example, urologist William Robinson claimed, “~~s~~Such individuals have no rights. They have

no right in the first instance to be born...”⁴⁹ thus, treatment ~~was~~ aimed towards eliminating

the ‘defectives’ from American society rather than curing them. In the Progressive Era,

preventing “the spread and multiplication of worthless members of society” was seen as a

crucial way to improve the nation as a whole.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Whitaker, 56

⁴⁵ Ibid, 51

⁴⁶ Hyman, Steven, MD. "Interview with Professor Steven Hyman, M.D." Telephone interview. 7 Feb. 2015.

⁴⁷ Olson, Henry, and Max G. Schlappé, Dr. "Scientists See Eugenics Aid in Doing Away with Crime"; All Criminals Are Not Defectives, but Uncontrolled Mental and Emotional Impulses Cause Most Offenses -- What Science, Has Learned About Bad Boy." *Scientists See Eugenics Aid in Doing Away with Crime*. New York Times, 29 July 1923.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 56

⁴⁹ Ibid, 58

⁵⁰ Popenoe, Paul, and Roswell Hill. Johnson. *Applied Eugenics*. New York: Macmillan, 1923.

The treatment of the mentally ill during the Progressive Era also reflected the increasing industrialization of the United States and the accompanying rise in modern capitalism. Unable to fully participate in the ~~industrialisation~~ industrialization of the Gilded Age in America, the mentally ill became viewed as inefficient and a waste of resources. Harvard-educated biologist, Charles B. Davenport, claimed, “supporting the insane costs taxpayers more than \$100 million dollars a year, money that was wasted because these social problems have little hope for doing any good.”⁵¹ Abandoning the possibility of curing the mentally ill allowed sterilization to be proposed as an effective and economically sound way to deal with and even eliminate the mentally ill, a way that paralleled the industrial mentality of profit over people. Throughout the Progressive Era, industry began to reshape society, developing significant wealth gaps that would separate the successful few from the majority of the lower class. The eugenics movement was funded and supported by owners of powerful ~~industrialists~~ corporations such as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie, who promoted the movement in America, as ‘degenerates’ or the mentally ill lacked the efficiency demanded in the industrial workplace.⁵² For instance, Rockefeller contributed \$10,000 to the American Eugenics Society, an organization focused primarily on advertising eugenics to the American public, as well as supporting campaigns to build support for sterilization laws. One communication tool designed by the American Eugenics Society was a billboard with a light flashing every 15 seconds warning viewers that American taxpayers had just spent another \$100 dollars on dealing with ‘defectives’, and another flashing light to indicate when another ‘defective’ had been born. This billboard was titled “Some People are Born to be a Burden on

⁵¹ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 48

⁵² Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 54

the Rest.”⁵³ Seen through the eyes of the Progressive Era, the mentally ill in the late 19th century were considered “degenerates” that would prove to be useless in the rising industrial society. The ascendance of major corporations, the principles of Social Darwinism and popularization of biological and economic evaluations of ‘social worth’ all contributed to the widespread sterilization of the mentally ill⁵⁴.

Comment [EK7]: Not sure you talked about this

An alternative viewpoint might see the forced sterilization of the mentally as a reflection of the work of a small number of active individuals rather than the reflection of the wider Progressive beliefs and values of American society. This perspective would contend that eugenics originated from a single thinker, Sir Francis Galton, and was pushed into action in America by a handful of individual activists, such as Oscar McCulloch, a Christian minister, David Starr Jordan, an educator and leading eugenicist, and Harry Clay Sharp, a prison physician and surgeon⁵⁵. McCulloch played a significant role in popularizing the shift from “an enabling charity to reproductive isolation of those considered unfit”, while Jordan provided scientific authenticity for isolation of the “unfit”.⁵⁶ Additionally, Harry Clay Sharp, one of America’s first nationwide successful advocates, merged medical techniques with eugenics and began compulsory sterilization of the mentally ill under therapeutic claims.⁵⁷ These three individuals are credited with creating the use of sterilization to prevent the mentally ill from procreating.⁵⁸ McCulloch, Jordan and Sharp, planted the seeds for American eugenics, however, these seeds could have only grown in the fertile soil of American Progressive society. Indeed these three individual advocates have been

⁵³ Whitaker, 47

⁵⁴ Ibid, 53

⁵⁵ Lombardo, Paul A. *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011: 14

⁵⁶ Lombardo, 14

⁵⁷ Ibid, 14

⁵⁸ Ibid, 14

characterized as, “merely men of their times”.⁵⁹ In 1937, 30 years after Sharp was ordered to cease his practice of sterilization, he commented “We did not know enough about science then”, thus showing the ongoing change in social thought.⁶⁰

The reflection of society’s constantly changing values in the treatment of the mentally ill is seen in the shift from the charitable intentions of the reform movement to the harsh conditions of industrialization. Although the times of the reform movement and the Progressive Era significantly differed, the three consistent attitudes towards the mentally ill persisted. The mentally ill continued to be isolated during the Progressive Era, as prominent eugenicists, such as Wisconsin professor, Leon Cole, argued “permanent segregation, at least during the period of reproductive capacity, is going to prove most effective of restrictive measures”⁶¹. Therapeutic treatment through isolation for the mentally ill was de-emphasized in the favor of the eugenicist’s vision of “detention camps” run on minimal budgets, to detain any ‘mental defectives’ until they had passed reproductive age or had been sterilized.⁶² In 1923, the *Journal of Heredity* concluded that the “segregation of the insane is fairly complete”⁶³ as American mental institutions expanded from holding 0.06% of the nations population in 1880, to holding 0.23% in 1923, a fourfold increase in less than fifty years (see last page for graph)⁶⁴. Also, the lack of consent from the patient was a prevalent theme in sterilization. For example, sterilized patients at the Vinita Asylum in Oklahoma claimed they would rather die than be sterilized, “If they do that to me they might as well kill me” while others sought reprisal.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 23

⁶⁰ Ibid, 21

⁶¹ Cole, Leon, and Paul Popenoe. *Journal of Heredity*. Vol. VIII. Washington D.C.: American Genetics Association, 1917.

⁶² Whitaker, 57

⁶³ Cole, Leon

⁶⁴ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 57

“I’ll kill the man who orders it done if it takes the rest of my life.”⁶⁵ Additionally, eight years after being sterilized, a twenty-nine-year-old man described how, against his will, his life had been permanently changed:

I was operated on when I was 21... It was all a mistake... I would rather not be sterilized... and I shall ever bemoan the fact that I shall never be able to have a son to bear my name, to take my place, and to be a prop in my old age.⁶⁶

Proponents of sterilization of the mentally ill sought to use science to justify the practice to the public, a mirage that hid the harsh truth behind falsified information on eugenics. The scientific validation for the obligatory sterilization of the mentally ill relied the principle that insanity was an inherited disorder. Aaron Rosanoff, a doctor at Kings Park State Hospital in New York, tried in 1911, to prove that insanity was an inherited disease. However, his initial results failed to do so. Among the 1,097 relatives of the 72 patients, only 43 were medically declared to have a type of mental illness⁶⁷. Instead of stating what he had found, he claimed that he “had defined mental illness too narrowly.”⁶⁸ He then drastically expanded his definition of the mentally ill to “match to the number he needed to support his hypothesis.”⁶⁹ This falsified conclusion became the “scientific” standard ~~wisdom~~ that was presented to the public. Also, when John Grimes, a medical doctor, was hired by the American Medical Association to inspect the nation’s mental hospitals, the association refused to accept his conclusion. He noted that the external grounds seemed to be in good shape, similar to “that of city parks, with shade grass, flowers, [and] streams...”⁷⁰ Yet, the inside differed significantly from the façade that was ~~being~~ presented to the public. Grimes witnessed patients sleeping in

⁶⁵ Nourse, Victoria F. *In Reckless Hands: Skinner v. Oklahoma and the near Triumph of American Eugenics*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.: 18

⁶⁶ Whitaker, 62

⁶⁷ Ibid 50

⁶⁸ Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Cambridge, MA: 50

⁶⁹ Whitaker, 50

⁷⁰ Grimes, John Maurice. *Institutional Care of Mental Patients in the United States*. Chicago: Author, 1934

hallways, dining rooms, and living rooms, anywhere that would fit a cot.⁷¹ He said that attendants worked as prison guards, serving to incarcerate those unwanted by society.⁷² The American Medical Association chose to hide this information, firing Grimes for his refusal to change his report.⁷³ The three consistent attitudes towards the mentally ill in American society of segregation, a lack of patient's permission, and the public fallacy of humane conduct, continued not only during the era of moral treatment, but also during the Progressive Era.

The ultimate cure of mental illness has been and remains to be a mystery. Because there has never been a clearly effective cure for mental illness, its treatment has been something of a blank canvas onto which societies have projected their own values and beliefs. In the absence of a single effective treatment, it is not surprising that the mentally ill, who are inherently different from the rest of society, have been consistently isolated and involuntarily subjected to 'treatments' that society believed to be humane and effective. Studying and analyzing the changes in the treatment of the mentally ill and the causes of those changes, shows that in the tapestry of history, every thread is connected to every other thread. Charles Darwin's research on finches in the Galapagos profoundly influenced restrictions on the ~~procreation~~procreation of Americans considered to be 'feeble-minded' or 'unfit'. The religious revival of Christian feeling in the mid 19th century led to changes in the architecture of asylums. The belief that mental illness was an inherited disease impacted American immigration policies in the 1920's.⁷⁴ Like the interwoven tapestry of history, the ultimate comprehension and treatment of mental illness will require understanding the complex

⁷¹ Grimes

⁷² Grimes

⁷³ Whitaker, 67

⁷⁴ Lombardo, Paul A. *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011. Print.

connections among genetics, the environment, the brain and the mind. And when mental illness is finally diagnosed and cured, there will not be real progress unless treatment is not determined, as in the past, by the social beliefs and values of the times, but instead by the medical needs of the patient and the therapeutic requirements for an effective cure.

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