"The brains of a nation": The eugenicist roots of Canada's mental health field and the building of a white non-disabled nation

Edward Hon-Sing Wong
School of Social Work, York University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Edward Hon-Sing Wong, The School of Social Work, S880 Ross Building, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, M3J 1P3A, Canada.

Contact: edwardhs.wong@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the literature published by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH), a precursor to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), from 1918-1921, and its connection to eugenicist social policies. Specifically, this study involves a critical discourse analysis of the Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene (CJMH) published by the CNCMH, which illustrates how the roots of Canada's mental health field are linked to a nation-building project deeply intertwined with eugenicist notions of race and disability. Foundation myths that reinforce the Canadian nation were also imbued in the literature, including: Canadian identity as linked to white non-disability, Canada as tabula rasa, and eugenicist fears of the 'over-population' of 'undesirables'. On the basis of these foundation myths, the CNCMH considered mental hygiene discourse and practice as a means to further Canada as a white nondisabled nation. The desire to further the Canadian nation in this manner led to the promotion of eugenicist social policies. Many of these policies - especially, immigration controls - were put into place by the Canadian government and remain to this day.

Keywords: mental hygiene; Canadian nationhood; racism; immigration; eugenics

" Les cerveaux d'une nation": Les racines eugéniques du domaine de la sante mentale et la construction d'une nation blanche et non-handicapée.

Résumé

Cet article examine des documents publiés entre 1918-1921 par le comité national d'hygiène mentale du Canada (CNHMC), organisation précurseur de l'association canadienne pour la santé mentale (ACSM). Il examine surtout sa connexion avec des politiques sociales eugéniques. L'article déploie une analyse critique du Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene (CJMH), publié par le CNHMC, qui démontre que les origines du domaine de la santé mentale au Canada est

liée au projet de nation canadienne, lui-même profondément entrelacées de notions eugéniques de race et de handicap. Des mythes fondateurs qui réifient la nation canadienne imprègnent également ces documents: l'identité canadienne définie comme blanche et non-handicapée, le Canada existant en tant que tabula rasa, et les craintes que la surpopulation des « indésirables » nous menace. Se reposant sur ces mythes, le CNHMC considérait que les discours et les pratiques sur l'hygiène mentale étaient des moyens de promouvoir une nation canadienne blanche et non-handicapée. Promouvoir une telle nation canadienne a mené a soutenir des politiques sociales eugéniques. Plusieurs de ces politiques- surtout sur l'immigration et le contrôle policier- ont été mise en place par le gouvernement canadien alors, et demeure en place aujourd'hui.

Mots clefs*: hygiène mentale; identité national canadienne; racisme; immigration; eugénisme*

Introduction

Eugenicist movements in the United States, and most infamously in Nazi Germany, have been understood to be important actors in the establishment of various social policies that are linked to nationalist goals of racial purity and the elimination of people with disabilities. Less publicized however, is the existence of similar eugenicist organizations in Canada. In this paper, I examine the eugenicist roots of the Canadian mental health field and how these roots are connected to a nationalist agenda. In particular, I analyze the literature produced by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH), the precursor to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Based on examination of this literature, I contend that the CNCMH's concerns extended far beyond service provision and that the CNCMH understood its role as a nation-building project rooted in reinforcing Canada as white and non-disabled. First, through a literature review, I elucidate some of the key concepts and their confluences used in my analysis, including: nationalism, eugenics, race, and mental pathology. Second, through a discourse analysis of CNCMH literature, specifically the Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene (CJMH) published by the CNCMH from 1918-1921, I reveal how discourses of Canadian nationalism contain foundation myths that reinforce the: Canadian identity as linked to white non-disability, Canada as tabula rasa, and eugenicist fears of the 'over-population' of 'undesirables'. Third, I explore how, on the basis of these foundation myths, the CNCMH considered mental hygiene discourse and practice as a means to further Canada as a white nondisabled nation. The desire for this furthering led to the advocacy of eugenicist social policy and the restriction of immigration.

Methodology

This qualitative case study borrows from Lee, Mishna and Brennenstuhl (2010), who view case studies as "an evidence-based, empirical approach that focuses on an intense investigation of a single system or a phenomenon in its real-life context" (p. 682). In this study, the system being examined is discourses of nationalism, race, and eugenics contained within the CJMH from 1918-1921. Lee, Mishna and Brennenstuhl (2010) further suggest that the purpose of the case study is to "generate or test a theory in its particular social, cultural, and historical context" (p. 682). In other words, the aim of the research would be to use the case to illustrate or contradict broader conceptualizations. Indeed, although the focus of the research is on the CJMH, the research findings may elucidate broader discourses within psychological or societal understandings.

This case study utilizes a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of archival sources. The CJMH was chosen as the archival source given its stated aim "to interest the general public as well as the medical profession" in the ideas of mental hygiene (Clarke, 2005, p. 67). The CJMH, published from 1919 - 1921, had three volumes made up of 11 issues. All 79 articles, and 21 news, abstracts, and book reviews sections contained within these issues were examined. I examined these articles through the coding of phrases related to race, foreignness, Canadian nationhood, eugenics, and immigration. While not every article contained discussions of these concepts, a significant number of articles tackled these ideas. Articles that considered these ideas served as a focal point of my research.

A critical discourse analysis "primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text [...] critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality"

(van Dijk, 2003, p. 352). This approach is consistent with my explicit anti-racist and anti-colonial position that recognizes colonialism and white supremacy as playing a major role in Canada's formation and continued development. CDA involves an analysis of three dimensions: discourse as a text, discourse as discursive practice, and discourse as social practice (Fairclough, 2003; Sheyholislami, 2001). For my analysis I draw on the third dimension that of analysis - social practices – that involves drawing on social and cultural theory (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002), and studying the socio-cultural context, including: "economic (i.e. economy of the media), political (i.e. power and ideology of the media), and cultural (i.e. issues of values)" (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 9). This final dimension will be explored through my examination of key concepts in the first section and the analysis throughout the article.

The Interlocking of Nationalism, Eugenics, Race, and Mental Pathology

For the purpose of examining discourses of nationalism, eugenics, race, and mental pathology, it is important that the definitions of these concepts and how they relate to one another are examined. First, nationalism and the nation-state are discursive regimes that should not be considered self-evident. The creation and maintenance of the nation-state and its borders are crucial to "material, existential, and ideological practices that organize the contemporary exercise of power" (Sharma, 2006, p. 1). The nation-state construct is often taken as a given. In truth, it has had a relatively short history. The Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, facilitated the development of the nation-state with the introduction of the concept of borders (Lynn, 1999). However, it was not until the 1800s, after the French Revolution, that the contemporary concept of the nation-state arguably emerged. Prior to this, the primary relationship of one's identity was to family, kin groups, or tribes, unlike today, where people identify with mappable boundaries and borders that are patrolled by soldiers (Grewal & Kaplan, 2002). The nation-state has hardly

been constant or static, with new ones emerging out of existing ones, and borders that constantly shift (Sharma, 2006).

One example of this shifting of borders is the emergence of Canadian nationalism in the time period (1919-1921) examined in this article. Indeed, the First World War and the time period following it has particular significance in respect to Canadian nationalism and the war was described by historian Tim Cook (2008) as Canada's "War of Independence" (p. 628). Scholars argue that this time period involved a shift away from the identification of Canada as a colony and towards identification of Canada as its own independent nation (Flanagan, 2014). This shift was thought to be attributable either to the war drawing British and French-Canadian communities closer through Canada's military accomplishments or to a distancing of Canada from Britain in response to the violence of the Western Front (Stacey, 1981). Other scholars like Champion (2010) and Igartua (2006) complicate the notion of this emergent Canadian nationalism as necessarily representing a break from its British roots, a significant critique given the tendency for the previous interpretation to frame "Canadians as a colonized people who emerged from colonial status to independence" (Champion, 2010, p. 34) and not as a colonizing force in their own right. Instead, Champion (2010) suggests, through an examination of various narratives written by participants of the First World War, that the war may have both cultivated separation - as Canadian soldiers identified cultural differences from being in close proximity to the British, and affinity - as other Canadians felt a closer connection with Britishness due to the camaraderie experienced (p. 116). Despite the contrary opinions, it can be gleaned from both perspectives that the First World War and its aftermath served as an important period in the shaping of a Canadian national identity.

This Canadian national identity, or indeed nationalism in general, is intertwined with ideas of race and disability. Thus, we must first examine what concepts of race and disability are before we can deconstruct the Canadian national identity. First, it should be understood that race is not a biological fact, contrary to the assumptions held within the literature analyzed in this paper. Castagna and Dei (2000) define the concept of race as "a social-relational category defined by socially selected real or imagined physical, as well as cultural, characteristics" (pp. 20-21). This definition not only challenges the idea of race as grounded in biological differences, it also recognizes racialization as a "historically-specific" process in which social relations become structured by categorization on the basis of supposed biological or cultural characteristics (Castagna & Dei, 2000, p. 21). This supposed biological difference was even applied to class differences, with Stoler (1995) arguing that racial conceptualizations were rooted in European class struggles. Thus, it is also important to note that today's understanding of who constitutes as racialized differs from understandings held during the time period examined.

The concept of race is interlocked with the concept of disability, also a socially constructed phenomenon (Withers, 2012). This interlocking can be seen in the pathologization of the racialized Other, the marking of racialized peoples as 'disabled,' and the conceptualization of social conditions as medical conditions (Mama, 1995). An example of racialized pathologization can be found in Menzies' (2002) examination of how a group of 65 Chinese migrants in British Columbia were labelled mentally ill after displaying 'abnormal' behaviours, locked up in asylums, and deported out of the country in 1935. Ideas rooted in race further contributed to decisions to label these individuals as mentally ill, with the Chinese portrayed as inherently 'broken' because of race. This can be seen in medical notes, with the characterization of Cantonese-speakers as 'speaking in tongues' and as a symptom of "some unseen pathology"

(Menzies, 2002, p. 214). In essence, Chinese culture and by extension the Chinese racial construct itself was made into a mental disease. This pathologization of the Chinese justified social control - including segregation, detainment, and deportation. This is but one example, though there is a broad history of complicity by the fields of psychiatry and psychology in the pathologization of racialized people (Metzl, 2009; Richards, 2012; Winston, 2004).

Drawing the concepts of race and pathologization back towards nationalism, McCleery and Brabon (2007) in a critique of Benedict Anderson's suggestion that nationalism could be seen as separate from racism, posit that "racial categories are deeply imbricated with national ones in very many cases" (p. 14). McCleery and Brabon (2007) believe this to be especially visible in 19th century Europe. In the Canadian context, writers like Bannerji (2000) have shown how white supremacy has been a major foundational component of Canada's psychological and material landscape. Bannerji (2000) states,

> "Canada" then cannot be taken as a given. It is obviously a construction, a set of representations, embodying certain types of political and cultural communities and their operations. These communities were themselves constructed in agreement with certain ideas regarding skin color, history, language (English/French), and other cultural signifiers – all of which may be subsumed under the ideological category "white." A "Canada" constructed on this basis contains certain notions of nation, state formation and economy. Europeanness as "whiteness" thus translates into "Canada" and provides it with its "imagined community." (p. 64)

Canada is an 'imagined community', with whiteness as its foundation and the criteria by which belonging is determined. This notion can be seen throughout the CJMH, with articles both confirming this notion of Canada as a white nation, and examining whom has access to Canadian, and thus white, identity.

Eugenics as a discourse and a practice serves to bring the concepts of race, disability, and nationalism together. Withers (2012) argues that contemporary understandings of disability and pathology as they relate to racialized people are rooted in a eugenicist model, first theorized by

Sir Francis Galton in 1865. Inspired by evolutionary theory, eugenics brought about "the first cohesive ideas about a class of disabled people" (Withers, 2012, p. 13). Galton explained that eugenics was "'the science of improving inherited stock, not only by judicious mating, but by all the influences which give more suitable strains a better chance' and as a way 'to give the more suitable races a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable'" (cited in Withers, 2012, p. 13). In other words, eugenics was the science of improving the genetic quality of a population by preventing the procreation of certain people - those seen as disabled, a category understood as interlocked with racialized people - and by encouraging the procreation of white non-disabled people. Nancy Ordover's (2003) "examin[ation of] eugenics as it served, and was served by, nationalism" (p. 4) in the United States illustrates the intricate relationship eugenics has with nationalism. In particular, Ordover highlights United States immigration policy as serving nationalistic and eugenics aims. Ordover (2003) explains further, "For eugenicists, immigration was the peril from without. To truly "purify" the nation, racially and culturally, the perils from within also demanded attention" (p. 56). Practices and policies without and within were also evident in Canada, with both the existence of immigration restrictions and domestic eugenics policies such as sterilization. Thobani (2007) argues that these policies were both a product of and acted to reinforce Canada's foundation as white, through emphasizing the reproduction of those who were white and non-disabled (Thobani, 2007, p. 305). Thus, eugenics not only further proliferated the classification of people as disabled or unfit; it also linked this classification to a nationalist project. These connections have also been explored by a number of other authors. Dowbiggin (2003), Joseph (2012, 2015), MacLennan (1983), McLaren (1990), and Menzies (1998) are examples of scholars who have examined the connections between the

Canadian mental health system - including the CNCMH - and nationalist eugenics. I aim to build

on these seminal publications in this analysis of literature published by the CNCMH.

Discourses of Nationalism, Colonialism, and Canadian Identity within the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene Literature

The mental hygiene movement, of which the CNCMH was a major component, was a

significant building block in the history of psychiatry and psychology in North America, serving

to entrench these fields into every facet of daily life. William Sweetzer first coined the term

mental hygiene in 1843, defining mental hygiene as the maintenance of the health of the mind,

given how a failure to do so could contribute to physical illness (Mandell, 2012). Isaac Ray, one

of the founders of the American Psychiatric Association, adapted the term in 1863, placing less

of an emphasis on the connections between mental health and corporal health. Instead, he

defined mental hygiene as:

> the art of preserving the mind against all incidents and influences calculated to deteriorate its qualities, impair its energies, or derange its movements. The management of the bodily powers in regard to exercise, rest, food, clothing and climate, the laws of breeding, the government of the passions, the sympathy with current emotions and opinions, the discipline of the intellect—all these come within the province of mental hygiene. (Ray, 1863, p. 15)

Mental hygiene took on the meaning of preserving mental health through one's lifestyle and

behaviour. The eugenics component of mental hygiene is also evident considering the mention of

"the laws of breeding". "The laws of breeding" and other aspects were understood by mental

hygienists as tied to the perfection of "both the body and mind of man as well as his society"

(Richardson, 1989, p. 9). To summarize, while mental hygiene has been defined in different

ways by different people, it broadly refers to mental health, as defined by societal norms, and its

social context.

With the goal of promoting these principles, the mental hygiene movement formally

began in the United States in 1909, and expanded to Canada in 1918, as an extension of the

twentieth-century public health movement. The expansion to Canada in this postwar period

could also be linked to the growing awareness of mental health concerns with the return of

soldiers afflicted with shell shock, as the CNCMH outlined the provision of care to soldiers as a

goal (Richardson, 1989). Another goal was to promote its ideas through the CJMH. Indeed, in

the CJMH article *Immigration and the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene*, Page[1]

(1919) stated,

> the research work and the publicity given to its results by the Committee for Mental
> Hygiene, has done more to stir up public opinion during the last few months than all the
> protests and resolutions passed by the above agencies for many years, especially as
> regards the menace of the mentally abnormal. (p. 58)

The foreword (1919) to the first ever issue of the CJMH explained,

> The CJMH hopes to interest the general public, as well as the medical professional, in all
> the mental problems confronting the community, in their bearing upon the welfare of the
> individual and of society, and in the work which is being done towards their clearer
> definition and more adequate solution. (p. 3)

In other words, the CJMH was a tool to promote ideas of mental hygiene held by the CNCMH to

the general public and medical specialists.

> In The Scope and Aims of the Mental Hygiene Movement, Hincks[2] (1919) stated,

> the brains of a nation constitute its most important asset. No country can be truly great,
> and remain so, with a population possessed of mediocre mentality. Natural resources may
> be necessary for the success of a country, but alone they are not sufficient, and perforce
> must take second place to human resources. (p. 20)

Indeed, a nationalist desire for Canada to be 'truly great' was a major component of CNCMH's

raison d'être, with a particular focus on improving mental aspects of the Canadian people. Again,

Hincks (1919) lamented that "In the past, governments have, in the main given preference to

railroads, canals, and public works, and have largely neglected the human beings for whom they

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[1] Page (1919) was the Chief Medical Officer for the Port of Quebec in 1919.
[2] Hincks was the cofounder of the CNCMH in 1918. He also cofounded the first Canadian outpatient psychiatric clinic in 1917 (Richardson, 1989).

were constructed" (p. 20). Thus, in order for Canada to progress as a nation, there must be a shift of emphasis from purely material considerations to the social policies promoted by the CNCMH. Hincks (1919) explained that the CNCMH aimed to "assist the nation in conserving and developing a most precious asset" (p. 22) - the 'precious asset' being the mental capacities of Canadians. Similarly, Desloges[3] (1919) urged the public to "help build a nation" (p. 116) by refusing to "speculate on human degeneration" through inaction or unsound social policy. It was even suggested by Desloges (1919) that Canada as a democratic nation could not function if the policies advocated for by the CNCMH were not institutionalized. Along those lines, Rogers (1920) explained that while "An autocratic ruler may govern without science, a bureaucracy may dispense with science, but no democracy can survive unless its education is sound" (p. 72). Tait[4] (1921a) believed not only in the need for psychiatric sciences to be infused in public policy - such as through stringent psychiatric screenings for immigrants, but believed in the need for all citizens to be informed participants in the application of psychiatric understandings. Evidence of how closely related mental health promotion was to eugenics policies in purpose, Tait (1921a) also argued that scientific measures against the propagation of people with 'mental defects' need to be put in place to ensure that the leaders available in a democratic country are of a high calibre.

These nationalist goals were tied to an idea of the Canadian nation as white, with the CJMH revealing the racial delineations that governed access to Canadian identity. Halpenny[5] (1919) classified Canadians with other ethnic groups including the "English, French, Irish, Scotch, Icelandic and American" (p. 225), explaining that these groups "spring[] largely from

[3] Desloges (1919) was the General Medical Superintendent of Insane Asylums of the Province of Quebec in 1919.
[4] Tait (1921a) was a Professor of Psychology at McGill University.
[5] Halpenny was a Professor of Surgery and Clinical Surgery at the University of Manitoba, and also served as the president of the Manitoba Medical Association (Canadian Publicity Company, 1925).

common stock" (p. 225). Halpenny (1919) added, "Icelanders are also included with Canadians because we find them more quickly Canadianized than any European group, except those who are British born" (p. 225). Smith[6] (1920) following Halpenny's (1919) lead similarly "group[ed] the Canadian, British and American (because of "Springing from Common Stock") [together and] add[ed] the Scandinavian and French (who are "quickly Canadianized")" (p. 76) in his discussion of immigration statistics. It can be seen that people of Western European descent are considered to possess a shared identity, as differentiated from inherently 'foreign' people belonging to the rest of the world. Sakamoto (2003) defines foreignness as an idea imposed on a person or group, marking them "as too dissimilar to become part of the dominant culture" (p. 169). This imposed idea of unlikeness is evident with the concept of biological differences rooted in eugenics: the idea of "Common Stock", and the idea of cultural flexibility for specific ethnic groups seen as having the capacity to change: the idea that some can be "quickly Canadianized". By constructing the category of Canadian belonging - which includes, the 'Canadian', British, and American, and to a certain extent, Scandinavian and French - they are also constructing the 'Other', with implications that those within this category cannot be considered or made 'Canadian'. The Other is seen as inherently inassimilable or undeserving of assimilation (Smith, 1919b, 1919c). It is also important to note that this definition of white, in terms of whom it encompasses, was more specific and limited when compared to contemporary understandings that might include Eastern Europeans and other groups.

The base requirement to access Canadian identity is recognition that the ethnic group is assimilable into Anglo-Canadian norms. Nevertheless, the idea purported of the incontrovertible lines between assimilable and inassimilable is actually contradicted by articles within the CJMH

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[6] Smith (1919a) was a Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto.

itself. For example, Fauman[7] (1920), while reemphasizing "complete and rapid Canadianization

[...] [i]n return for the privileges of citizenship granted the immigrant" (p. 323), attempted to

argue for the possibility of bringing Jewish people into the 'Canadian racial fold'. Although

Smith (1920) had argued that the category of people able to experience "complete and rapid

Canadianization" is only limited to Scandinavian and French people, Fauman (1920) contended

that some less assimilable groups, such as Jewish people, deserve to be "helped to the right path"

(Fauman, 1920, p. 323) and are able to bring "a certain definite contribution to the sum total of

the country's civilization" (Fauman, 1920, p. 328). Despite assumptions around the imperative to

adopt Anglo-Canadian norms remaining consistent, with arguments for mental hygiene workers

to understand the Jewish people in order to further the process of Canadianization (p. 328),

Fauman's (1920) writings suggest the fluidity of race or at least, Canadian identity, given its

existence as a social construct. Regardless, the majority of the articles within the CJMH

promoted the more stringent delineations described by Halpenny (Dauphinee, 1921; Smith,

1919c; Tait, 1921b).

Another dimension of nationalist discourses that appears in the text is the articulation of a

number of foundation myths that form an integral part of Canadian identity. A major myth that

has justified the formation of the country and colonialism is the representation of Canada as

barren, a tabula rasa (McKenzie, 2001). Page (1919) cited Sir James Barr: "You have, here, a

virgin soil and you should see that is peopled with a vigorous and an intellectual race. You

should shut out all degenerate foreigners as you would exclude a mad dog" (p. 59). Canada's soil

is considered untouched and the white race, vigorous and intellectual, is considered its rightful

inheritors. While Barr's use of the term "degenerate foreigners" appears to be in reference to "the

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[7] Fauman (1920, 1923) was a doctor and author of articles on mental and physical hygiene.

insane population[s]" (Page, 1919, p. 59), the idea of the "insane population[s]" was deeply intertwined with processes of racialization (Wong, 2012).

Apparent in these quotations is the erasure of the indigenous peoples of this land and their long history of civilization and development. Canada as a nation exists on the idea that Indigenous peoples do not and should not exist - made evident by the plethora of policies designed to rid Canada of Indigenous peoples. This idea serves as an example of what Brown (2014) termed settler accumulation, the process of naturalizing settler polity and denying or obstructing indigenous resistance to it. Even in articles where demands for the outright exclusion of 'foreign' immigration were tempered, the erasure of Indigenous peoples continued. Smith (1920) stated, "Prohibit the entrance of the foreigner and thousands of acres of the virgin soil remain untouched, railways must remain as they are, if indeed they do not deteriorate, and the wealth of many mines abides in the earth" (p. 78).

"Virgin soil," mentioned in two different quotations above, alludes to the idea of manifest destiny and the frontier discourse of civilized white men conquering uninhabited lands (Smith, 1996, p. 73). The authors of the journal discussed colonialism uncritically, rendering its violence invisible. Smith (1919a) stated, for example,

> From the day when to the astonishment of the red men the pale faces began to arrive from the East and press their way forward toward the West, to the present day, when the results of the labour and endurance of the hardy pioneer are manifested in "the star of Empire," there has been the ceaseless movement of the immigration tide from the shores of Europe to those of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes and the illimitable lands of the west. (p. 47)

Not only is the violence of colonialism not mentioned, colonizers are celebrated for their "labour and endurance". Dauphinee[8] (1921) likewise characterized Canadian students as "alive to the world's unrest, thankful for a peaceful land" (p. 117). Once again, the violence that characterized

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[8] Dauphinee was a British Colombian schoolteacher and Vancouver's Supervisor of Subnormal Classes (Thomson, 2006).

the formation of Canada and continued to be a part of the colonizing process was erased, juxtapositioned with the apparent disorder in the rest of the world.

The final discourse linked to nationalism identified is the eugenicist fear of the growth of the 'mentally ill' population. As previously stated, the CNCMH considered "the brains of a nation . . . its most important asset" and demanded policies "to insure the nation, that Canadians will be well born, and well nurtured" (Hincks, 1919, p. 20). This demand was rooted in the concern "that feeblemindedness is highly hereditary" (Fernald, 1919, p. 104), resulting in Canadians being 'poorly' born and 'poorly' transitioned to adulthood. In a review of the American "Manual of the Mental Examination of Aliens" published in the CJMH, it is claimed that "In the case of the insane or mentally defective there is imposed a burden which tends to perpetuate itself. Each mental defective may become the progenitor of a line of paupers, vagrants, criminals or insane persons" (Notes and News, 1919, p. 285). Baragar[9] (1921) also stated, "Faulty or tainted heredity has been variously regarded as bearing an important causal relationship to mental disease" (p. 194). Meyer[10] (1919) expressed concern about "letting them out-marry the marriageable and out-multiply the fit" (p. 152). The concern is that 'mental defects' pass on from one generation to another and thus, pauperism and criminality is also being passed on. In addition, there was a great fear that the 'mentally deficient' would quickly outnumber 'normal' citizens. This emphasis on the hereditary nature of 'mental deficiency' unsurprising led to a focus on eugenicist policies aimed at preventing reproduction.

Eugenicist Social Policies and Immigration Restrictions

Eugenicist Social Policies – Sterilization, Segregation, and Family Planning

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[9] Baragar (1921) was the superintendent of the Brandon Hospital for Mental Diseases in Manitoba.
[10] Meyer (1919) was the director of the Henry Phipps Psychiatric Clinic.

Out of this concern for the undesirable groups outnumbering white non-disabled people came two approaches, 'positive eugenics' for 'normals' and 'supernormals', and 'negative eugenics' for 'abnormals' (Withers, 2012). Positive eugenics refers to policies that encourage reproduction while, negative eugenics refers to policies to discourage progeny. Negative eugenics is overtly expressed in an endorsement of the American "Manual of the Mental Examination of Aliens",

> Health officers will do well to ponder the following paragraph taken from this manual . . . ". . . Physical disability may give rise to dependency, but with the death of the individual the nation is relieved of the burden. In the case of the insane or mentally defective there is imposed a burden which tends to perpetuate itself. Each mental defective may become the progenitor of a line of paupers, vagrants, criminals or insane persons which will terminate only with the extinction of the race." (Notes and News, 1919, p. 285)

It appears that the CNCMH supported the idea of addressing the 'problem of insanity, criminality, and pauperism' through "extinction of the race" - or in other words, the elimination of all whom fit within these categories. While race is used here to describe a broader range of people that might not be considered racialized in today's context, including potentially white paupers and vagrants, these ideas would give rise to policies that targeted a more specific group of people: namely, Indigenous peoples. In the decades following the publication of these journals, policies of forced sterilization in Alberta and British Columbia and gender-segregated institutionalization practically everywhere else emerged. Considering the interlocking nature of processes of racialization and pathologization, it is unsurprising that these policies disproportionately targeted racialized people. In Alberta, a quarter of all sterilizations were conducted on First Nations and Metis people, despite this group making up less than three per cent of the entire population (Withers, 2012). And of course, there was the case of eugenicist policies in Nazi Germany, policies most often associated with the idea of the "termination of race." Nazi eugenicist policies infamously resulted in the mass murder of Jewish people, but also

targeted Romani people, queer people, people with mental and physical disabilities, and others. These policies enacted by the Nazis were heavily influenced by the North American eugenicist movement (Withers, 2012).

Consistent with eugenicist policies implemented by Canadian governments and the Nazi regime, the CNCMH advocated for sterilization, 'family planning', and segregation. As Fernald (1919) suggested, "Most important of all, so far as possible the hereditary class of defectives must not be allowed to perpetuate their decadent stock" (p. 110). Thus, even when there was not a public call for the mass murder of people with disabilities, there was a desire to limit reproduction. There were a number of calls for sterilization in the text. Taft (1919) suggested, "Sterilization of the feebleminded is logically the solution for the problem of prevention of propagation of the mentally unfit where feeblemindedness is due to heredity" (p. 166). Barager (1921) also suggested that sterilization should be applied to the "feebleminded", including: "imbeciles", "morons with antisocial or marked sexual tendencies", and "psychopathic individuals [...] with hypersexual tendencies" (p. 194).

Segregation was posed as an alternative to sterilization. Taft (1919) stated, "Segregation much more than sterilization offers a practical solution to part of our problem at least and may eventually be the final, most practical solution" (p. 166). Nonetheless, they felt that potential opposition to such practices by the general public, and especially family members, hindered the legislation of such policies. There was also a strong concern about the economic impact of such policies, including, the cost of constructing institutions for segregation and exclusion of 'mentally defective' individuals from the work force (Taft, 1919). The *Survey of the Province of Manitoba* (1919) went further in arguing for the institutionalization of the 'mentally unfit', with a demand for additional segregation by gender and by the specific mental health diagnosis. The

gender segregation also addressed concerns held by Meyer (1919) that general segregation would mean propagation, as the "defective and dangerous . . . are apt to reproduce their kind" (Meyer, 1919, p. 151).

Family planning was another eugenicist policy advocated in the CJMH. Meyer (1919) stated, "Love is very justly nature's and mankind's ablest matrimonial agent. Love plays many pranks and is said to be blind; but love, like any other capacity, can be made to grow better or worse" (p. 153). For 'love' to grow better, Desloges (1919) argued, "candidates for marriage will have to show their sanitary testimonials in order to be allowed to legally do so" (p. 116). It was suggested that medical experts should assess individuals before allowing them to join in marriage, and thus, reproduce.

These proposals for eugenicist policies also covered questions of race and the desire to maintain Canada as a 'white nation'. With regards to people of Asian descent, Smith (1919c) stated, "And if assimilation is so backward what indication is there that amalgamation, or blending of races, is practicable or even advisable?" (p. 219). Smith (1919c) expressed concern about interracial relationships on the basis that people of Asian descent are understood as fundamentally alien to the dominant Anglo-Canadian population. And considering another one of Smith's (1919a) statements, "a polyglot population intensifies on every side the task of assimilation and makes the hope for one uniform and national language recede into the distant future" (p. 56), it appears that Smith, and other members of the CNCMH, desired the maintenance of Anglo-Canadian norms in the country. Clarke (1921) also implied that a psychiatric patient's selecting of "foreigners, such as Greeks, Chinese, etc. as her companions" was immoral (p. 13). While a direct explanation of the reasons behind discouraging racial mixing

seldom occurs in the text, we can speculate on the reasons from more general discussions on eugenics in the CJMH – i.e. that racial mixing weakens the genetic makeup of the white race.

Immigration and 'Reverse Eugenics'

In a review of Prescott F. Hall's *Immigration Restriction and World Eugenics*, it was expressed that,

> Immigration tends to sterilize the people on the higher social and economic levels who are already in the country. The population of the United States would have been larger to-day if there had been no immigration since 1820. The low-class immigrants have not only diminished the numbers of the natives, but have also dissipated the energies of the latter by introducing elements of conflict into the nation, and thus, prevented the development of many of those kinds of ability which are most worth cultivation. (Abstracts, 1919, p. 245)

In the article, low birth-rates amongst native - which in this context, means white upper-class people were seen as the result of non-white working-class immigrants bringing chaos to the nation through criminality, mental defect, and so on. Similarly, Tait (1921b) argued, "There is one answer and that is that we are losing a considerable amount of our native born people (the better type on the whole) and filling the country with inferior types and then expect to have a great country" (p. 273). Again, this speaks to a discourse of the 'unfit' out multiplying the 'fit', or as Tait (1921b) expressed in more overtly racial terms, a commitment of "race suicide" (p. 271) and a "detract[ion] from our racial integrity" (Tait, 1921a, p. 169).

Eugenicist ideas were closely connected to ideas of immigration restriction. Through the use of some of the discourses highlighted above, the CNCMH advocated for immigration controls. Indeed, Withers (2012) concludes, "Eugenicists were determined to use any tool they could to reduce the population of those they considered unfit. They had a number of successes in influencing governmental policies in Canada and the United States, particularly in keeping people they considered undesirable out of the country" (p. 19). Smith (1920) stated,

> The policy of absolute exclusion would no doubt be effective if it could be carried out, but a number of other things would also be eliminated along the lines of industry and production. Prohibit the entrance of the foreigner and thousands of acres of the virgin soil remain untouched, railways must remain as they are, if indeed they do not deteriorate, and the wealth of many mines abides in the earth. (p. 78)

Even though this passage appears to support the idea of immigration, an underlying discourse is that the sole purpose of allowing immigrants into the country is to support the economic interests of white 'Canadians'. This discourse was prevalent in Canada. For example, Ward, a merchant, testified to the 1885 Canadian Commission on Chinese Immigration, expressing that "it would be difficult to say what proportion (if any) Chinese immigration should bear to the immigration of white people, in order to . . . provide comfort of the [white people] now here . . . depends upon the amount of white labour procurable" (Chapleau & Gray, 1885, p. 85). When the comfort of white Canadians is detrimentally affected, the immigration of racialized peoples is no longer considered sound policy.

Of course, much of the literature published by the CNCMH focused specifically on immigration controls in relation to individuals understood as having mental health concerns - though the literature also tends to understand immigrants and racialized peoples as particularly prone to mental issues (Barager, 1921; Mundie, 1919; Page, 1919). Baragar (1921) explained, "From a national and social standpoint the prevention of mental disease involves the exclusion of immigrants whose capacity for mental adjustment is low. […] The conclusions are obvious. Stringent regulations are required to prevent those physically and mentally unfit from entering or becoming citizens of Canada" (p. 196). There was a general consensus amongst authors of the CJMH that immigration controls were necessary. During the time period, immigration controls regarding people labelled as 'mentally defective' had already existed (Wong, 2012). Nevertheless, the narrative within the CJMH is that the regulation had to be made more stringent, with greater resources and training provided to immigration inspectors. Page (1919) explained,

"with the chronic weakness of our system of inspection . . . a demand has already been created for a more rigid inspection of arriving aliens to determine their exact mental and physical status" (p. 59 - 60).

Conclusion

As can be understood through this critical analysis of CNCMH literature, the Canadian mental health field has historical roots in a nation-building project that revolved around ideas of Canadian nationhood that erase histories of colonial violence, reinforce race-based hierarchies, and connect to eugenicist fears of 'feebleminded' hereditary. These discourses were intricately linked to the promotion of eugenicist social policies and immigration controls. Alarmingly, many of these policies - such as immigration controls like the excessive demand clause (Wong, 2012) - were put into place by the Canadian government and remain to this day. Considering the continued relevancy of the discourses explored in this study, I will conclude by suggesting that an assessment of the historical record for the mental hygiene movement may not only reveal insights about these forms of eugenicist advocacy. Instead, this analysis of CNCMH literature opens up further questions about the very fabric of Canadian nationhood, especially as it relates to constructions of race, disability, and so forth. These further questions will help us challenge the notion of these eugenicist movements as marginal and instead, encourage us to examine how the discourses promoted by these organizations may have permeated beyond its confines.

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