AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS FOR THE FEEBLE-MINDED, 1876-1916

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KATRINA NANCY JIRIK

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To my mom, Barbara Jirik, who helps me have a wonderful life.

Abstract

Between 1876 and 1916, American institutions for the feeble-minded became an established part of the landscape and reflected important educational, social, medical, and scientific shifts during that period. This dissertation traces attitudes toward those deemed feeble-minded and the institutions that housed them by investigating the voices of people, organizations, and state governments that have not been well explored previously and identifying the particular influences that shaped them.

The Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO) formed in 1876 as the professional organization for institution superintendents and expanded its membership over the years to encompass other professionals with an interest in feeble-mindedness. It strove to become the repository of all things related to feeble-mindedness with its members seen as the recognized experts in the field.

From small private establishments before the Civil War, these institutions expanded rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Not only did the number of institutions increase, but the number of residents in the institutions and thus the size of the institutions to house them also grew significantly. While the establishment of pre-Civil War institutions had relied on philanthropic efforts and the advocacy of superintendents, the post-Civil War institutions were usually state funded and relied on the advocacy and social capital of prominent societal leaders. Between 1890 and 1900, the well-established institutions consolidated both the authority of those providing care and the functions of the institutions; in the process they moved from small residential

schools to large, congregate, and increasingly, custodial institutions. The beginning of the twentieth century, from 1900 to 1916, brought new issues to the forefront. Compulsory school attendance laws, new understandings of heredity, and eugenics all pushed administrators and sponsors to reconsider the previous conceptions of care for the feeble-minded. Throughout these decades, superintendents, parents, educators, legislators and even members of the general public became engaged in the definition, growth, and influence of these institutions. It was not a static process; all these entities worked in concert with, and, sometimes, in opposition to, with each other.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

BL	Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley
CDNC	California Digital Newspaper Collection, https://cdnc.ucr.edu/
CPP	College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
CSA	California State Archive,
	[Identification of item], Department of Mental Hygiene - Sonoma State Hospital Records, [ID number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.
CSL	California State Library, Sacramento, California
JPA	Journal of Psycho-Asthenics, available through Hathi Trust
NJSA	New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, New Jersey
NJSL	New Jersey State Library, Trenton, New Jersey
Proceedings	Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons, available through Hathi Trust

Introduction

American institutions for the feeble-minded,[1] created throughout the United States in the last half of the nineteenth century, created a visible and often architecturally prominent site on the landscape and in the imagination of the larger public. This dissertation traces how attitudes toward those deemed feeble-minded and the institutions that housed them changed between 1876 and 1916, bringing in voices of people and organizations that have not been well explored previously. The challenges to existing social and economic structures in American society, massive immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, seemed to many middle-class and even working-class white citizens to raise concerns that the quintessential American way of life of a still largely rural nation was threatened. The emerging professionalization of physicians, social workers, psychologists, and teachers also represented a change in the social structures of the time. In what Robert Wiebe terms a "search for order,"[2] practical reformers began to establish institutions to manage various segments of the population that seemed either particularly or persistently needy or that seemed to pose a threat to the social order.

[1] Our modern day understanding of the word "feeble-minded" is to equate it to mental retardation or cognitive impairment. This was not, however, the definition of the term at the turn of the twentieth century. During this time period, it was synonymous with the concept of "socially inadequate." This concept was strongly based on middle-class mores. It was nebulous enough to have a wide-reaching application to populations who were often poor or were composed of immigrants. While it included people with cognitive impairments, it also included a wide variety of people who today would not be considered cognitively impaired. The term "feeble-minded," while considered offensive by today's standards, is used in the rest of this dissertation in order to capture the sense in which it was used in the late nineteenth century.

[2] Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

Industrialization and urbanization were intricately intertwined with changes to care for those labeled feeble-minded. Prior to the 1870s children and adults considered feeble-minded could often be integrated to a certain extent into the farm economies, as family members were available to offer supervision. However, the movement of people into the cities and twelve-hour work days meant that the constructive assistance available in a rural setting was not available for a feeble-minded person in an urban tenement.[3] As the vocational training done in institutions focused on skills appropriate for a rural household, urban families, often poor, had limited ability and few resources to tend their feeble-minded relatives.[4] This led to an increased need for custodial care as many of the feeble-minded residents of the institutions now had no home to which they could return as productive family members, even after some educational training. Immigration of non-Nordic people also raised concerns because they were considered as lower functioning races of people and, by their very numbers, threatened American values of hard work, Protestant piety, and white, Anglo-Saxon power structures. Many of the immigrants were perceived to carry the taint of feeble-mindedness which found expression in immigration restriction laws.[5]

Changes in the functions of institutions for the feeble-minded offered an example of how changes in the social structures impacted vulnerable populations. The institutions became an important career paths for the so-called helping professions as they worked to

[3] Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).
[4] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle,* 57.
[5] Douglas C. Baynton, *Defectives in the Land: Disability and Immigration in the Age of Eugenics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

establish their fields.[6] Women were becoming college educated and joining the work force. The institutions, in many cases, welcomed these women and provided avenues for them to attain positions with well-paying, respectable positions and even gain some authority.[7] Increasing governmental bureaucracy also played a part. As more institutions became state-funded, they became part of the governmental response to the issue of feeble-mindedness and thus part of the bureaucratic structure; this, in turn required institutional administrators to navigate within a power structure unrelated to the actual mission of the institution.

The changing conceptions of heredity, from neo-Lamarckism to Mendel's hard heredity, influenced not only the care of the feeble-minded but also impacted society's understanding and response toward feeble-mindedness. Neo-Lamarckism allowed for the possibility that positive change (acquired characteristics) could be passed on to a person's children. Thus, providing educational and vocational skill training could be justified as a means of improving the next generation. Mendel's hard heredity, whereby genetic traits were passed on without alteration, seemed to indicate that, no matter the amount of training, two feeble-minded parents would likely produce a feeble-minded child. Eugenics, coined by Francis Galton in 1883, added another filter as to how society viewed the feeble-minded. They were considered unfit and were polluting the gene pool, leading to increased crime, alcoholism, and prostitution. Institutions for the feeble-minded, as sites that provided care, were clearly a response to the perceived societal

[6] Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[7] G. R. Hunter, "Mary Dunlap, Cumberland County," *New Jersey Medicine* 87, no. 3 (1990): 207–8.

desire to "do something" about the feeble-minded during the time period from 1876 to 1916. What that something was, though, changed over time. All these factors influenced the institutions; at the same time, the institutions influenced the societal structures within which they operated, challenging stereotypes and reshaping programs to better suit those enrolled.

In the last third of the nineteenth century, not only were institutions for the feeble-minded expanding in states across the United States, but the size of the individual institutions was also growing rapidly. In 1878, the Minnesota institution for the feeble-minded opened with 15 residents.[8] By 1904, it had 888 residents and by 1910, it had 1194. The census of 1910 documented another 1271 feeble-minded people in almshouses in Minnesota. This trend continued. The California Home for Feeble-minded Children was established in 1884 with 2 children and by 1910 had 854 residents with an additional 455 feeble-minded people living in almshouses.[9] This rapid increase in both number of institutions and their size, as well as recognition that an increased number of people in prisons and almshouses were being labeled feeble-minded, indicated societal and governmental interest in providing for the feeble-minded as state legislatures were not likely to fund enterprises without the support of their constituents. In addition, it indicated parental interest in the services provided by the institutions. Admission was

[8] The term for the people who resided institutions for the feeble-minded varied. Initially, children were the only ones accepted into the institution. As the turn of the twentieth century approached and the custodial function increased, many of the children, now adults, remained in the institution. These people, for the most part, retained the label of children. Administrators also used the term "inmate," which often implies prison, but admission and discharge from feeble-minded institutions was voluntary during this time frame. This dissertation uses the term "resident" to describe the status of a person who lived at an institution and is inclusive of both children and adults.

[9] Joseph A. Hill and Lewis Meriam, *Insane and Feeble-Minded in Institutions 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914).

voluntary on the part of parents, and with limited community services available to educate or provide care in the community of a rapidly industrializing nation, institutions offered services that were not available elsewhere.[10]

Research on institutions for the feeble-minded has often focused on their initial establishment prior to the Civil War or with the de-institutionalization movement that had its origin in the 1950s and 1960s. There is also considerable research on the Progressive Era but most of it focuses on other institution building, particularly on mental institutions. This dissertation adds to the discussion of institution building with its focus on institutions for the feeble-minded, when they moved from small, often private, experimental schools to an established state-sponsored mechanism to provide care for those people considered feeble-minded. It expands attention to the interactions among institutional staff, the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO), governmental staff and policies, parents, and the local and regional public.

Historiography

The authors who have looked at institutions for the feeble-minded vary in their explanations of the phenomena. Three different perspectives appear within the older works in this field: the humanitarian approach represented by R. C. Scheerenberger, a physician, in *A History of Mental Retardation* (1983),[11] the consensus based new

[10] Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008).
[11] R. C. Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation* (Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1983).

humanitarianism of Peter Tyor and Leland Bell, historians, in *Caring for the Retarded in America* (1984),[12] and the social control perspective of James W. Trent, Jr., a sociologist, in *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (1994, 2017).[13] All of these books include information on institutions for the feeble-minded within their larger projects of a history of mental retardation. These approaches, humanitarianism, social control and consensus-based new humanitarianism, reflect trends in the social sciences, where the social control perspective was a reaction to the often less critical humanitarian view. Fields, such as education and sociology, began exploring a social control explanation of various social phenomena in the 1970s and that was also reflected in historical accounts. The interest in social control and Foucault, however, also met resistance. The consensus based new humanitarianism was often a reaction to the social control approach. As the field of cognitive impairment has had much less scholarship, the chronology is not as straightforward. Tyor and Bell's book, which was published in 1984, is a reaction to the social control theorists in related fields and emphasizes how economic conditions influenced the institutions. Trent's first edition, published in 1994, captures the social control perspective from an earlier time and applies it to the field of cognitive impairment. While his second edition (2017) updates some information, his social control perspective remains basically the same.

Scheerenberger's account of the time frame from 1876 to 1916 is embedded in a larger work on the history of mental retardation. It is representative of a humanitarian

[12] Peter L. Tyor and Leland V. Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America: A History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).
[13] James W Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

viewpoint in the historiography because he emphasized that institutional programs were initially educational, serving school-age children. The shift toward large multipurpose facilities that were often overcrowded and underfunded was linked to a lack of adequate resources in the community, rather than a focus on social control. He argued that one of the important social factors leading to an increase in custodial care was the fear that feeble-minded women, if discharged to the poorhouse, would reproduce feeble-minded children. A growing emphasis was placed on vocational training, which also served to meet the institution's operational needs. Scheerenberger made the point that

> the need for early and extended vocational experience was essential since, in reality, residents became responsible for many of the institution's basic operations. Residents worked long hours, performing a wide range of skilled and unskilled tasks…It should be remembered, however, that asking young people as well as adults to labor for long hours was consistent with the work ethic of the day.[14]

He added, "Most institutions….frequently were in conflict with other forms of institutions (such as prisons and insane asylums) also undergoing reform and expansion, and all were considered "charitable" at a time when charity was not popular. Legislators expected institutions to operate as economically as possible."[15] Local philanthropic institutions were struggling to meet larger demands for services.

Although expanded compulsory school attendance laws were being enforced in the early 1900s, Scheerenberger found no linear path from education in an institutional setting to special education in the public schools. While most institutions were accepting people with all grades of feeble-mindedness, the experts disagreed about the level of

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[14] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*, 125, 126.
[15] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*, 126.

feeble-mindedness that could be served in the public schools. Superintendents, educators and active reformers involved in both the institutions and the public schools took a variety of positions on the issue as they developed professional standards, dealt with differences in local conditions, and reflected distinct differences in educational philosophies. However, there was consensus among them that the public schools should be responsible for providing educational programs for those children with some aptitude for learning despite the lack of consensus on the criteria. Initially many special educators believed once students finished in the public schools they should be admitted to institutions for the feeble-minded because they would not be able to support themselves. That assumption was called into question by a 1915 study of 350 former special education students from the New York City public schools. It found that 54.8% were employed for wages, 8.8% were temporarily out of work and 24.6% were cared for at home and considered of economic value to their family. The rest were unknown.[16] Scheerenberger's point of view stressed the good intentions of the superintendents. Although the experts' views on the most appropriate means of caring for the feeble-minded changed with social views and as new scientific information became available, their focus remained on what they considered the best interest of the feeble-minded, given the information available to them[17].

Tyor and Bell presented a "consensus-based new humanitarianism" viewpoint, which kept the focus on the benevolent motivations of the superintendents but attended, as well, to the political, economic, and cultural events of the time. The authors discussed

[16] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*, 170.
[17] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*, 126,134-35.

the evolution of the institutions from schools to custodial asylums from 1875 to 1920 and explicitly challenged a social control analysis that emphasized the oppressive linkage of knowledge and power to override other motivations. Unlike Scheerenberger, who provided only minimal historical context, they focused on the political and social changes of the larger society that indirectly influenced the outlook and practices of the institutions for the feeble-minded. Like Scheerenberger, Tyor and Bell suggested that the increasing influence of hereditarian thought in the general society created a push for custodial facilities, especially for feeble-minded women as a means of limiting the number of feeble-minded offspring.

Prior to the 1880s, many institutions accepted only those children who were considered able to take advantage of the educational programs and could often be returned to their families or communities. However, after this, things began to change with a larger residual population remaining in the institution. Over half of those admitted had no family support because parents had died, did not want their children back, lacked the means to support the family member, or moved away. With no family to which to discharge a student, institutions had limited choices for managing these long-term residents. To deal with ever increasing numbers of people deemed in need of custodial care, legislators and institutional officials believed it was more cost-effective to enlarge the existing institutions rather than build new institutions specifically for custodial care. Reflecting trends in public education as well, by the mid-1880s, industrial and manual training became a larger component in education. Tyor and Bell's analysis emphasized multiple explanations for the growing reliance on vocational education including economic depressions, changes in society's understanding of heritability of traits, and

industrialization. According to Tyor and Bell, "The objective was to educate a growing percentage of (the feeble-minded) to self-sufficiency within an institutional setting."[18] Their work was expected to help offset the cost of their care. Tyor and Bell presented only minimal information on the ties between the institutions for the feeble-minded and the development of special education in the public schools. Nonetheless, this link is important in understanding the long standing practice of segregating children with special needs into separate, specialized public school classrooms.

Trent argued throughout his book, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, that "control and care merged as interrelated and interdependent factors in specialized services for retarded people….Although the message and meaning of care and control changed over time, care remained an important form of control."[19] Most of the book focuses on the evolution of custodial care. According to Trent, the medical model of classification based on etiology as the direct cause of feeble-mindedness replaced the educational model of classifying mental retardation after the Civil War. By 1900, the educational aspect of most institutions had been greatly diminished. Trent stated that schooling continued, but it was now modeled on vocational education. Whereas Scheerenberger and Tyor and Bell indicated that special education in the public schools was modeled after educational programs in institutions for the feeble-minded, Trent reversed the influence, by emphasizing the vocational aspect of the educational programming as a form of social control of the residents by the superintendents who used resident labor to control institutional costs.

[18] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 65.
[19] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 280.

Trent argued that the superintendents' public activities--presentations at professional conferences, state teachers' meetings, local civic clubs, and churches--had little to do with special education and everything to do with increasing control over a marginal population and expanding the superintendents' status.[20] According to Trent, the "superintendents were quick to manipulate the anxieties created by rapidly changing social and economic conditions in America,"[21] and were able to increase their power and prestige by moving into the public arena. The superintendents testified before elected officials and citizens' groups as well as presenting lectures on feeble-mindedness across the nation. "Presidents, governors, university professors, and philanthropists were seeking them out,"[22] and, according to Trent, social control and social reproduction of Protestant moral values were widespread phenomena from 1876 to 1916. These political and academic connections were an integral part of the social reform movement that was attempting to manage large scale societal change. Trent places the onus of social control of the feeble-minded squarely on the shoulders of the superintendents. The roles played by other actors, such as legislators, judges, philanthropists and social reformers, do not figure into Trent's account of the development of policies that fostered the social control of people with feeble-mindedness. Many of Trent's themes also appear in the work of Philip Ferguson, *Abandoned to Their Fate: Social Policy and Practice Toward Severely Retarded People in America, 1820-1920,*[23] a book published in the same year as Trent's first edition.

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[20] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 151
[21] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 141
[22] Trent, Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 182.
[23] Philip M. Ferguson, *Abandoned to Their Fate : Social Policy and Practice toward Severely Retarded People in America, 1820-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

A more recent book offers a quite different approach to these earlier authors. While Sarah Rose's book, *No Right to Be Idle,*[24] similarly encompasses a larger framework on work and disability, she provides a detailed analysis of resident labor within institutions for the feeble-minded.[25] Neither humanitarianism nor social control figure into her explanation of their work projects. Rather, she points out that societal structural changes and governmental policies around the turn of the twentieth century led to the exclusion of people with disabilities from economic citizenship. First, while a rural economy allowed families to make use of partially productive relatives, industrial capitalism and urban wage economy greatly reduced families' ability to do so. Second, mechanized factory labor mandated the need for interchangeable bodies, bodies that did not need accommodations due to disability. Third, public policies intent on ameliorating public dependency, such as moving people out of the poorhouse, often had unintended consequences creating in the mind of the public the concept that people with disabilities were unable to care for themselves or work productively.[26] People with diverse disabilities, from feeble-mindedness to blindness to amputations, struggled to find a place in the wage earning economy; but even if they found a place, they rarely made a competitive wage.[27] Institutions for the feeble-minded were settings where the residents engaged in productive work activities and yet were rarely considered productive workers; they also rarely received wages because of their classification as feeble-minded. There were some attempts by superintendents to parole residents to paid positions within the

[24] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.
[25] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle, 2*.
[26] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle,* 2-3.
[27] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle,* 4.

labor economy, but the need for unpaid work within the institution was a disincentive to full-fledged implementation.[28] Rose situates increased custodial care of feeble-minded persons, not as efforts for social control or humanitarian charity, but as a reaction to changing economic conditions and governmental responses.

Lawrence Goodheart's article, "Rethinking Mental Retardation,"[29] documents the changes in superintendents' outlooks by examining the differences between Henry M. Knight and his son, George H. Knight, both of whom were superintendents of the Connecticut School for Imbeciles.[30] H. M. Knight, who established the school in 1858, was motivated by religious benevolence and sought to inculcate middle-class, Protestant norms into the feeble-minded children in his care. In contrast, G. H. Knight, even though raised with his father's feeble-minded students, embraced social Darwinism, eugenics, segregation of the feeble-minded and sterilizations. George took over the superintendency upon his father's death in 1880. By that time, the increased size of the institution put him in the role of administrator rather than the innovator his father had been. He advocated the colony plan, whereby groups of feeble-minded persons were housed near work sites, often on farms. Goodheart argues that the

> *colony plan* was appropriate to an age of imperialism with, as the assumption went, a superior group ruling enclaves of inferior peoples, such as Filipinos and Puerto Ricans, who came under United States dominance with the Spanish-American War of 1898. The codification of Jim Crow, especially *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), complemented the apartheid of the mentally retarded.[31]

[28] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 10-11.
[29] Lawrence B. Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59, no. 1 (2004): 90–111.
[30] Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation," 90–111.
[31] Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation," 103. Italics in the original.

While Goodheart argues that social changes impacted care for the feeble-minded in Connecticut, his analysis neglects the interconnections with the public, social welfare reformers and, to a large extent, government officials, all of whom played important roles in the evolving care of the feeble-minded.

Information on parents' hopes for their institutionalized child is quite rare in the secondary literature and, indeed, in the archives. However, Brent Ruswick and Elliott W. Simon offer such information as gleaned from pre-admission records of the Pennsylvania Training School. Their analysis provides a comparison between the outlook of parents or guardians with the professional opinion of the superintendent and institutional staff. They conclude that the admission forms reveal that many parents desired educational improvement, something they believed was unattainable in the public schools. Their goal was that through training at the institution, their child would be able to be economically productive although not necessarily independent. While some parents expected their child to return to society after they completed training, others expected the security of ongoing custodial care. [32] Ruswick and Simon link the institutional move to increased custodial care to changing attitudes regarding economic independence and productivity in an increasingly industrialized nation. At the same time, the authors fault superintendents for a move toward a strictly medical model which denied much possibility for improvement and thus a failure to reintegrate adults into society. The superintendents' goal, in some ways reflective of parents' desires and in some ways the antithesis of them,

[32] Brent Ruswick and Elliott W. Simon, "Industry, Improvement, and Intellectual Disability: Finding the Hopes and Fears of Parents and Superintendents at the Pennsylvania Training School," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 (2018): 161.

was to deliver "practical training to residents, so that they might maintain the institution and provide custodial care to those less capable."[33] Ruswick and Simon offer insight into parental concerns prior to the admission of their children to an institution. This dissertation provides analysis of communication between institutional staff, government officials, and parents during the children's stay at the institution through letters, a satisfaction survey, and governmental correspondence, providing increased knowledge regarding parents' desires and concerns for their children over time.

Licia Carlson argues in her article, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies: Feminist Reflections on the History of Mental Retardation," that "the role of women in the history of mental retardation emerges as a complex and important one,"[34] and that a feminist analysis is needed because "multiple forms of oppression and power relations between groups of women emerge."[35] At the end of the nineteenth century, the category of "feeble-minded women"[36] became intertwined with moral degeneracy and linked to crime, poverty, prostitution and an increase in the number of illegitimate, feeble-minded children. At the time, experts looked at deviant behaviors by women, particularly sexual activity outside of marriage, and used them to categorize women as feeble-minded and thus argue for their institutionalization. Carlson makes the case that feeble-mindedness was considered a heritable condition, thus causing concern in the general population about the increase in feeble-minded children as a threat to middle-class, American values. Feeble-minded women often labored in the institution as care-givers for younger, feeble-

[33] Ruswick and Simon, "Industry, Improvement, and Intellectual Disability, 160.
[34] Licia Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies: Feminist Reflections on the History of Mental Retardation," *Hypatia* 16, no. 1 (2001): 124.
[35] Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies," 125.
[36] Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies," 126.

minded children, and this sustained their segregation from the larger society, although, ironically, suggesting that they could be adequate mothers. Thus, according to Carlson, these women were "exploited, marginalized, and powerless."[37] Female attendants and other female employees of the institution suffered under similar stereotypes, as their devalued labor was overseen and regulated by the male superintendents.

Carlson identifies another group of women, the reformists, whom, she claims, were important in perpetuating the category of feeble-mindedness. Typically educated and socially prominent, they did not operate under male supervision. In fact, she argues, they promoted negative images of feeble-minded women by creating two distinct groups of womanhood, the feeble-minded and the reformers.[38] One of these women was Josephine Lowell, who was instrumental in establishing the State Custodial Asylum for Feeble-minded Women at Newark, New Jersey, in 1878. Lowell's public rationale for advancing a custodial care institution was her belief that feeble-mindedness was "heritable, dangerous, and in desperate need of containment." According to Carlson, this echoed the dominant cultural view at the time and resulted in "'feeble-minded' women (suffering) cultural imperialism at the hands of both 'abled-bodied' men and women."[39] While Carlson's focus on women is important, her analysis does not identify institutions where there were female superintendents, matrons, physicians, and highly skilled teachers, many of who served in positions of independent responsibility and with a

[37] Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies," 130.
[38] Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies," 135-38.
[39] Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies," 136.

degree of empathy for their charges and even, in some cases, held positions of authority over men.

Given the nature of record keeping between 1876 and 1916, much of the historiography relating to feeble-mindedness and institutions has focused on the superintendents. Some of the earliest accounts provide little historical context and skim lightly over the rapidly changing social environment. These records are important. For example, other than Sloan and Stevens, whose rather standard institutional book, *A Century of Concern: A History of American Association on Mental Deficiency 1876-1976,*[40] commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO), the organization is rarely mentioned in the secondary sources. The AMO shaped the professionalization of the field of caring for the feeble-minded, served as a nexus of support for superintendents and others as they navigated changing societal and political pressures, was a place for sharing information and working for consistency in practices, and worked to educate the public on feeble-mindedness. Its members reflected major transformations in the understanding of the science of heredity. While eugenics is discussed in the secondary literature related to feeble-mindedness, its changing scientific underpinnings are not. The secondary literature also rarely examines the state policies and funding patterns that were fundamental in creating and maintaining these institutions. Until quite recently, the voices of parents, social workers, women engaged in the care work, a variety of other professionals, oversight agencies, and the general public have been quite limited in the

[40] William Sloan and Harvey A. Stevens, *A Century of Concern: A History of American Association On Mental Deficiency 1876-1976* (Washington D.C.: American Association on Mental Deficiency, Inc., 1976).

secondary literature. This dissertation attempts to create additional space for those voices to be heard.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter deals with the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO) and, later, in 1906, renamed the American Association for the Study of the Feeble-minded (AASF). This organization served as a central point for discussion of those transitions that occurred in care for the feeble-minded from 1876 to 1916. It was established in 1876 as a professional organization for those providing care for people deemed feeble-minded. This chapter describes not only the organization's ongoing work of professionalization but also the response to and shaping of the public's perception of feeble-mindedness as reflected in its annual conferences and publications. The AMO sought to become the expert repository of all things related to feeble-mindedness, and, although initially having only superintendents as members, it expanded to include social workers, psychologists, university professors, and others. It moved from trying to convince state legislatures to fund institutions for the feeble-minded to its members helping legislatures to write laws and acting as expert witnesses regarding feeble-mindedness. While individual states wrote policies for the sponsored institutions, the AMO strove to bring about standardized procedures that were common across state lines. From its beginning, women were an integral part of the AMO. They were invested as full members, spoke at annual meetings, held offices, and even served as Presidents of the organization. Its journal, the *Proceeding of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and*

Feeble-Minded Persons, and, later, the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics,* contains valuable information regarding the AMO's public presentation of information about feeble-mindedness and the changes that occur over time. However, although important, the AMO reflects only some of the actors involved in caring for the feeble-minded. The subsequent chapters integrate the voices of other participants with the AMO in order to craft a more inclusive understanding of institutions for the feeble-minded between 1876 and 1916.

Chapter 2 focuses on the years 1876 to 1890. Paralleling the expansion of the nation, institutions for the feeble-minded spread across the Midwest and West Coast. Initially created as private enterprises, the first institution began in 1848 in Massachusetts. The model spread in the Northeast, usually under the aegis of a few prominent individuals, and was shaped in part by the promotion of superintendents and evidence of the improvement of feeble-minded students receiving specialized care in institutions. The Civil War and the reconstruction period that followed curtailed expansion until the early 1870s. By then, the nation had changed, with industrialization, urbanization, and massive immigration. The framework shifted from smaller, privately sponsored establishments to larger ones that necessarily relied more on state legislatures and prominent societal figures with social and financial capital to establish them. Prior to the Civil War, the institutions were primarily intended to maintain children through their school years and then return them to their families. However, even in this time frame, there was a custodial function.

In the post-war period, custodial care was closely linked to vocational education that emphasized skills useful to the maintenance of the institutions. Emphasis on causation of feeble-mindedness permeated the discussion of the superintendents as they sought ways to understand the etiology and thus intervene and prevent the problem of feeble-mindedness. Eugenics, a word coined 1883, provided a rationale for viewing feeble-mindedness as hereditary. Preventing the spread of feeble-mindedness, often associated with criminality, poverty, and promiscuity became a focus of not only the superintendents, but also the general public. Thus, winning public support for the institutions, as they became publicly funded and competed with other state funded mandates, was important. It was accomplished through publications, government lobbying, and events held at the institution to which the public was invited.[41] The institutions also paid heed to the desires and fears of parents. For example, the Illinois institution sent out parent satisfaction surveys,[42] while the rules for attendants at the California Home were meant to reassure parents that their child would be treated kindly.[43] In addition, for women, especially educated women, who had difficulty finding appropriate employment, institutions offered not only employment but also a site that could use their intellectual and organizational skills and often increasing levels of

[41] These outreach activities are recorded in multiple reports found in the annual journal publication between the years cited. "Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons," (1877-1890) .
[42] "Eighth Annual Report of the Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Children," (Jacksonville, Illinois: Institution for the Education of Feeble-minded Children, 1872), Uy8 19848.0.10, Library Company of Philadelphia, 33-45.
[43] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children" (Sacramento: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Children, 1887), 0200710204914, California State Library, 19-20.

authority. Their contributions to the care of the feeble-minded adds important context to the establishment and modes of operation of the institutions.

While Chapter 2 focuses on the establishment of the institutions, Chapter 3 demonstrates that the last decade of the century became a period of consolidation of institutional status and authority. The census of 1890 reported a significant increase in the numbers of feeble-minded people, raising concern in state legislatures and with the general public.[44] According to the census, only about five percent of the feeble-minded population resided in institutions. As feeble-mindedness had become broadly associated with criminality, prostitution, and poverty, the perceived fecundity of the feeble-minded raised alarm bells about the impact the cost of providing care to these increasing numbers would have on state budgets.[45] Institutions for the feeble-minded moved quickly from semi-private and experimental enterprises to becoming part of governmental agencies. As part of a state enterprise, many states passed laws regarding admission to and length of stay permitted in the institutions. Institutions moved from small endeavors to large congregate facilities housing upward to a thousand residents, with waiting lists of several hundred children. The arguments for funding also changed from requesting money to establish an institution to requesting money for expanding and maintaining already existing services and facilities. This growth created an increased need for trained staff, with many institutions organizing in-house training programs. Other professionals saw the institutions as an experimental site for conducting research related to health and

[44] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 88.
[45] Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present*, ed. Margaret C. Jacob, Spencer Weart, and Hal Cooke, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1998).

heredity, given the numbers of residents. As institutions were incorporated into the governmental bureaucracy, they were increasingly dependent on state funding, and subjected to the state patronage system, which some administrators thought interfered with effective management of the institution. This consolidation phase provided extended opportunities to expand professionalization and establish the members of the AMO as the experts on feeble-mindedness. They reached out to other organizations working with the feeble-minded population, such as Charities and Corrections, and simultaneously opened their membership to include others interested in but not directly involved with the institutions.

Educationally, this period saw the beginnings of a change that would be more fully manifested after 1900. Special education classes were slowly introduced into the public schools and extensive discussions began on the appropriate place for feeble-minded children. These discussions centered around what was most effective: residence in an institution, special education classes or integration into regular classrooms. With no clear agreement on what constituted 'most effective,' there was little consensus. Adding to the complexity were confounding factors like the child's age and the level of disability, especially in an era when there were few effective and generally agreed upon methods of testing. These discussions took place not only among superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded and public school personnel, but also in general public settings. Eugenics played a part in these discussions and had a growing influence on the institutions as the public and state legislatures grappled with constraining the growth of the feeble-minded population. Some states revised their admission and retention laws in

order to maintain feeble-minded women in institutions until they were past child-bearing age.[46] This too, increased the institutions' custodial function.

This period of consolidation was a time when issues of professionalization, expertise, the place of the institution in the governmental bureaucracy, and the rise of women into positions of authority beyond the internal workings of the institution were negotiated with the wider society. There were, however, issues beginning to arise that would call for reconsideration of many of these subjects in the early 1900s.

Chapter 4 moves into the new century, examining the period after 1900 and up to the entry of the United States into World War I in 1916, when a new era of testing and dramatically changing social attitudes became visible. Often associated with a "progressive era," social policies promoted an efficient and bureaucratic state guided by experts.[47] For institutions for the feeble-minded, the new century was a period of reconsiderations as they coped with scientific, educational, and societal changes. A major scientific change occurred in 1900 with the rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity. His work seemed to indicate that distinct parental genetic factors, not the acquired characters of neo-Lamarckism, were the determinants of heredity. This rediscovery had profound implications for institutions. Feeble-mindedness was now viewed as something that could not be ameliorated; it became a biological, heritable trait that would be passed on to offspring. Limiting or even eliminating procreation of those

[46] "Reports from the States," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* VI, no. 3–4 (June 1902): 93–98.
[47] Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

with such traits became an important focus of not only institutional staff, but also the general public.

While compulsory school attendance laws had been enacted beginning in Massachusetts in 1852, most of these laws there and elsewhere were not effectively enforced until the turn of the twentieth century. The enactment of new attendance laws and the enforcement of those already on the books were to a large extent focused on immigrant children, with the intention to ensure that they were instilled with American values. However, these laws brought large numbers of children, other than immigrants, under the purview of the public schools, including children in poverty and those with feeble-mindedness or some sort of disability. How to provide training to teachers given the task of providing educational instruction to feeble-minded students was an important issue. Institutional staff, recognized as the experts in teaching feeble-minded students, became the educators of special education teachers, forming important connections between institutions and public schools. Institutional staff and the public school staff grappled with basic question of the goal of educating feeble-minded children and what impact that answer would have on the long-term role of both special education and the institutions

By the early twentieth century, the institutions had gained a status and visibility that enabled them to reach out to other organizations, governmental agencies and the general public. They now had established credentials that allowed them to be viewed as experts on feeble-mindedness. They continued to welcome visitors to the institution, using those events as a mechanism for educating an interested public on the work being

done and the unmet needs, usually financial. Administrators and staff attended events like the St. Louis World's Fair, handing out circulars of information on feeble-mindedness and the institutions they managed. They generated newsletters, newspaper and magazine articles touting the work of the institutions.[48]

The period from 1900 to 1916 was a period of change for institutions for the feeble-minded as they reacted and interacted with ongoing societal change. Compulsory school attendance laws, the awareness of Mendel's work on heredity, and changing social structures led to reconsiderations of their place and function. Eugenics became a significant rationale for framing policies around feeble-mindedness and raised concerns about the management of a population considered a danger to society. Superintendents and staff had acquired the credentials to be considered experts and were now called on to assist government agencies in enacting laws and regulations. The issues under reconsideration were complicated and not readily resolved.

The forty years covered in this dissertation saw the establishment and rapid expansion of institutions for the feeble-minded. Superintendents, parents, educators, legislators and even members of the general public became engaged in their definition, growth, and influence, even as the children and adults involved as residents experienced education and training that had not been possible before. It was not a static process, and the philosophy of care, the financing of programs, and the training of experts were all a part of the process that put dramatic architectural institutions on the landscape and

[48] The Illinois institution published *The Asylum Index and Review* which had 800 subscribers by 1882 and later published *The Charitable Observer*. Vineland published *The Training Bulletin* and the Pennsylvania institution distributed 5,000 copies of a *Circular of Information* in 1879.

framed ideas about disability and difference. This dissertation works to take these factors and several influential constituents of the process into account for a clear look at the role of parents, educators, psychologists and the general public. Together they formulated a program of care for the feeble-minded.

Chapter 1 Formalizing Expertise at Institutions for the Feeble-minded

In 1876, the management of the Pennsylvania Training School invited superintendents of other institutions for the feeble-minded to an organizational meeting at Media. Dr. C. T. Wilbur, superintendent at the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-minded Children, stated the purpose of the meeting: "In view of the importance of the union to effect any good purpose, it seems necessary that the superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded should organize to forward their special work."[1] The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO). Given their long-standing responsibility relating to admissions and programming, they understood that they individually and collectively would benefit from the professional model. This organization quickly became an overarching umbrella for discussions about the specifics of care for the feeble-minded.[2]

The publications of the AMO, started with the *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons*, (*Proceedings*) initiated at the organizational meeting in 1876. Later the group produced the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*, (*JPA*), which began publication in 1896. Together they form the most easily accessible source material and the official public voice of the organization.[3] A. C. Rogers, superintendent of the Minnesota institution, who started the

[1] "Meeting for Organization 1876," *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons*, (1877): 3–6.
[2] Today the organization is called the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The organization underwent numerous changes in the years between its origin in 1876 and 1916, even changing its name in 1906 to American Association for the Study of the Feebleminded. It has served as a significant player in the development of American institutions for the feeble-minded.
[3] Digital copies of these publications are available through Hathi Trust

JPA in 1896, served as its editor, and became the guiding force behind the AMO from 1891 until his death in 1917. The *JPA* was published by the print shop at the Minnesota institution. His editorials commented on current practices and activities and the value or lack thereof. The purpose of the journal was to "be the repository of the *latest and best* of its kind.[4]" Under his leadership, the *JPA* became the primary scientific document dealing with feeble-mindedness. The publications detailed the changing focus of the organization as it navigated not only the internal changes as the institutions for the feeble-minded moved from small residential schools to large congregate facilities, but also how the institutions reflected large social attitudes and the political policies that shaped them. As with any official publications, these documents expressed only the official views of the organization. Other source material in archives and other publications at times confirmed the official viewpoints and at times contradicted or presented a more nuanced understanding of those views.

The first meeting of the AMO was held in June 1876 at the Pennsylvania Training School and timed to take advantage of potential members' interest in attending the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.[5] The organizers clearly wanted a forum to discuss common interests but they also pointed to their interest in a professional organization to push for, "the development of institutions in the West, where everything was ripe for the best results,"[6] referring to what is today considered the Midwest. The constitution of the AMO presented three major objectives, first, to pursue all questions relating to the

[4] Arthur C. Rogers, "Announcement," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 35–36. Italics in original.
[5] The superintendents attending were Dr. Edouard Seguin of New York, Dr. Hervey Wilbur of Syracuse, New York, Dr. George Doren of Columbus, Ohio, Dr. C. T. Wilbur of Jacksonville, Illinois, Dr. Henry M. Knight of Lakeville, Connecticut, Dr. George Brown of Barre, Massachusetts, and Dr. Isaac Kerlin of Media, Pennsylvania.
[6] "Meeting for Organization 1876," *Proceedings* (1877): 3.

causes, conditions, and statistics of idiocy, second, to discuss the management, training, and education of idiots and feeble-minded persons, and third, to act as an active lobby group to encourage the establishment of new institutions for this purpose.[7] While initially most of the new institutions for the feeble-minded were established by legislatures as experimental schools, the AMO leaders believed legislatures should now skip the experimental label and move directly to the establishment of fully functional institutions, since, after almost thirty years of these institutions serving people considered feeble-minded, their value had been established and was no longer in question.

Membership in the AMO initially required a unanimous vote by the existing members. The founding members came from both public and private institutions for the feeble-minded. Membership was explicitly extended to women at this organizational meeting. While the first women elected were the wives of superintendents, not all wives were elected. Those elected had already established reputations as active contributors to the work of the training schools. Their participation was evident, for example, when, at the second annual meeting of the Association, when Mrs. C. W. Brown of Barre, Massachusetts, presented a paper entitled, "Prevention of Mental Disease."[8]

Annual meetings were held at one of the institutions. During the first decade of the AMO, according to William Sloan and Harvey Stevens, the focus was on the development and organization of institutions, the causes of idiocy and methods for its

[7] "Meeting for Organization 1876," *Proceedings* (1877): 3–6. This mission statement is remarkably similar to the mission, goals, and principles of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the current iteration of the AMO.
[8] Catherine W. Brown, "Prevention of Mental Disease," *Proceedings* (1877): 25–28. Catherine Brown was the matron at the Elm Hill institution in Barre, Massachusetts where her husband, Dr. George Brown, was superintendent.

prevention, and the appropriate methods for educating the residents.[9] In 1876, when the AMO began, seven states had institutions for the feeble-minded. By 1885, 20 of the 38 states had at least one, either public or private. In some states, like Connecticut, the legislature appointed a board of commissioners to investigate the need for an institution for the feeble-minded in the state. Part of their task was to visit institutions in adjoining states to ascertain the facts and report back to the legislature.[10] The AMO, as the primary organization concerned with all aspects of feeble-mindedness, was influential in this growth. Superintendents developed working relationships with each other, often visiting and working together to solve problems. People hoping to establish new institutions often contacted staff at existing institutions for guidance. The superintendents dealt with on-going issues of "gaining public acceptance, of coping with political interference, and of obtaining adequate financial support from state legislatures."[11] They also shared their efforts to gather useful data on the causes of feeble-mindedness, typically focused on extended family histories gathered from parental surveys done during the admission process and studies of the residents and, later, on reports from pathologists after a resident's death.

While the name of the AMO implied a strictly American focus, by its second year it had incorporated international connections. In 1877, Dr. Edouard Seguin, originally from France, was appointed the AMO's delegate to the International Medical Congress at Geneva and its representative before the British Medical Association and the French

[9] William Sloan and Harvey A. Stevens, *A Century of Concern: A History of American Association On Mental Deficiency 1876-1976* (Washington D.C.: American Association on Mental Deficiency, Inc., 1976).
[10] Isaac N. Kerlin, "Provisions for Idiots," *Reports and Discussion on Provision for and Training of Feeble-Minded Children* (Washington, DC: Conference of Charities and Corrections, June 1885), 7, http://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/27533/309%20p-11.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[11] Sloan and Stevens, *A Century of Concern*, 3.

Association for the Advancement of Science.[12] By the third year, membership was extended to several officers of institutions in France. Superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded in Canada and England participated in the annual meeting of 1879 by correspondence and were later elected members. International exchange of ideas was evident in 1882, when Catherine Brown presented a paper about her visit the previous year to four English institutions for the feeble-minded. Her report documented numerous differences between American and English institutions, especially in regards to funding. English institutions relied on charity while American ones were moving toward state funding.[13] In addition, correspondence was exchanged among members of the AMO and Drs. Fletcher Beach and George E. Shuttleworth, superintendents of institutions in England.[14] In 1884, John Müller, of the Pennsylvania institution, presented information on his visits to institutions for the feeble-minded in Scotland and Denmark, finding the Scottish institutions well behind the ones in the United States and the Danish one far ahead in the area of vocational training.[15] At the 1892 annual meeting, Dr. Alexander Prytz, of Copenhagen, Denmark, thanked the AMO for electing him to honorary membership.[16] In addition, the AMO established a long standing connection with the Thorshaug Institute in Christiania, Norway, reflected in an exchange of letters, honorary membership of some staff in the AMO, and an opportunity for teachers from the Institute to come to the United States to work in American institutions for a period of time.[17] The

[12] "Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting 1877," *Proceedings* (1877): 10.
[13] Catherine W. Brown, "A Visit to Four English Institutions," *Proceedings* (1882): 226-235.
[14] "Minutes, Sixteenth Annual Session," *Proceedings* (June 14, 1892): 257.
[15] John Müller, "Some Observations of the Scotch and Danish Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," *Proceedings* (1884): 305-310.
[16] "Minutes, Sixteenth Annual Session," 258.
[17] "Minutes, Sixteenth Annual Session," 257; George Brown, Catherine W. Brown, and George A. Brown, "Twenty-First Biennial Report, Private Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Youth" (Barre, Massachusetts: Elm Hill, 1892), MSS 6.0013-01, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 7.

AMO had a connection with the institution for the feeble-minded in Orillia, Canada, almost from the organization's inception.

In 1892, a number of foreign physicians, who were superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded, made plans to attend the World's Congress at the 1892 Columbian Exposition. The AMO planned a meeting between these physicians and the superintendents of American institutions to demonstrate their shared professional goals.[18] American superintendents were thus aware of services for feeble-minded children in European countries, through attendance at meetings, articles by foreign superintendents, and tours of the European institutions. Articles written by European superintendents, such as Shuttleworth, appeared in the *JPA* and offered comparisons among American and European methods of providing care for the feeble-minded. For instance, compulsory school attendance laws for defective and epileptic children were being enforced in England for children between the ages seven and sixteen,[19] something that was just beginning in the United States. American superintendent Dr. Walter Fernald presented, in great detail in the *JPA*, his findings on the services provided for feeble-minded children in the British public schools.[20] This information was, thus, available to the readership of the *JPA*, both professional and lay affiliates because it was mailed to subscribers across the country.[21] By the turn of the twentieth century, providing institutional care for the feeble-minded had become an international movement, adapted

[18] "Minutes, Sixteenth Annual Session," 260-261.
[19] G. E. Shuttleworth, "The Elementary Education of Defective Children by 'Special Classes' in London," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 58–64.
[20] Walter E. Fernald, "Mentally Defective Children in the Public School," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 25–34.
[21] "Treasurer's Report, 1903-1904," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 99.

to the societal concerns and strictures of the individual country, but with a great deal of sharing among the various superintendents.

The membership of the AMO was also expanding beyond the medical profession. Women, few of whom had medical degrees in the early years, had been part of the membership since its inception. At the turn of the twentieth century, female expertise was still often marginalized. Although employment opportunities for educated women expanded during that time, many were in low-paying, low-status jobs. Employment in institutions provided women with opportunities for positions of prestige and authority. As these women assumed positions of power and influence, they served as models of possibility for other women. Women continued to hold important roles within the AMO, serving as committee members and officers along with their male colleagues,[22] and presenting papers, especially papers related to educational practices, at the annual meetings.[23] Women's membership, as well as men's, was contingent on their contributions to the work of caring for the feeble-minded. Women associated with the institutions were not the only ones welcomed into the organization. By 1885, the AMO extended membership to other people who supported the work, including religious leaders, legislators, and state officials, in an effort to situate the AMO as the primary organization regarding feeble-mindedness and as a vehicle to influence others committed to its agenda.

[22] "Minutes of the Twenty-third Annual Meeting 1899," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (1899): 225.
[23] E. R. Johnstone, "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (June 1904): 95-96.

Numerous concerns confronted the members of the AMO as they worked to establish not only their own institutions but also to strengthen their new organization by building public support for their agenda of supporting the feeble-minded. The annual meetings offered a time for collaboration and for sharing of information on techniques, procedures and problems. At each venue, the host institution invited members of the local community, civic and religious leaders, educators, and legislators, including the governor. The institutional setting provided an opportunity to showcase the work being done to members of the public not familiar with the work, through classroom visits and performances done by the children. Each meeting featured a "Report from the States," which detailed the progress of the various states in providing for the care of the feeble-minded. Some reports described the educational programs, some described the building projects, and almost all had at least some comment on funding issues related to legislative appropriations or lack thereof. The newer institutions were overwhelmingly public institutions and relied on governmental funding to cover most of their costs. Increased enrollments and increasing waiting lists were ongoing issues for the institutions, with superintendents reporting 400 to 800 children on a waiting list.[24] The move toward public institutions reflected the growing bureaucratic function of state government. Progressivism touted the administrative state, whereby the collective good could be rendered by experts.[25] Institutions for the feeble-minded were seen as the site where the state's duty to the feeble-minded population could occur. However, the state had numerous financial responsibilities, so while the state recognized the need for an

[24] E. R. Johnstone, "Discipline," *JPA* VII, no. 2–3 (1903): 38–42.
[25] Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

institution, most did not prioritize or could not find resources to fund services for the entire population of feeble-minded citizens.

Together the institutions for the feeble-minded and the AMO faced many changes between 1890 and the end of the century. Numerous new institutions for the feeble-minded had been established and were becoming part of the state's bureaucracy for caring for dependent populations. By 1890, most of the original members of the AMO had passed away. The loss of this generation of original leadership and the expansion of institutions for the feeble-minded across the country raised a number of issues. One of the major problems was attendance at the annual meetings. Dr. A. E. Osborne, President of the AMO in 1894 and superintendent of the California institution, believed that the AMO had become too big for institutional meetings and, in addition, caused too much extra work for the hosting institution. He also wished to expand the membership beyond just the people engaged in the work at the institutions. Citing the expanding societal interest in caring for the feeble-minded, he proposed opening the membership to:

> some superintendents of public and private institutions; to some assistant superintendents; to some trustees, teachers and prominent educators; to some eminent authorities in medicine, law and medical-jurisprudence; to some workers in charity organizations and to some benevolent and philanthropic people of both sexes, who, though belonging to no organization, are humble workers in the cause individually and to whom our papers and discussions would be very interesting as an additional incentive to action.[26]

This call to widen the membership rolls reflected both the expanding societal interest in the care of the feeble-minded and the effort by the AMO to maintain its role as the recognized expert forum on feeble-mindedness.

[26] A. E. Osborne, "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings* (1894): 389.

The newer members, although considered experts in feeble-mindedness by their peers, began striving for increased recognition from those not directly involved with institutions for the feeble-minded. As other groups engaged in the process of professionalization through specific training and engagement in specific types of work, the members of the AMO also began the process. In 1896, AMO President, Dr. Samuel Fort, said, "I ask you to pause and consider where and how we can attain our proper position in the ranks of progress, and secure the influence rightfully our own."[27] He lamented that the AMO was not even recognized by the scientific world, was not influencing legislation concerning feeble-mindedness and was not keeping pace with psychologists and sociologists. The AMO was also not contributing any of their research knowledge to other professionals such as biologists, histologists and pathologists. In addition, friction among the members, such as physicians in practice, who could not or did not care to attend regularly when they had other professional obligations, had led to a lack of interest in the organization.[28] To address these problems, Fort proposed significant changes to the AMO beginning with a change in the name of the organization. The AMO referred to medical officers although even at its inception it had members who were not physicians. With the growth of the organization, members who were not physicians increased in number. A name change would not only recognize the diversity of the current membership but also encourage wider membership in the organization, thus increasing its influence,[29] something Osborne had initially proposed two years earlier, in 1894. Arriving at a consensus to change the name to the American Association for the

[27] Samuel J. Fort, "President's Address 1896," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 30.
[28] Osborne, "President's Annual Address," 385–99.
[29] Fort, "President's Address 1896," 29, 30, 33.

Study of the Feeble-minded did not occur until 1906, partly due to disagreement on what the new name should be.

In 1896, the AMO had 57 official members, 13 of whom were women.[30] Fort was appalled that from 57 members, only a total of four papers were being presented at the annual meeting, especially given the wealth of knowledge available within the membership. To increase the research focus of the AMO, he suggested establishing sections within the central organization. Each section would be responsible for a program of research papers to be presented at the annual meetings. In addition, as the organization grew, the sections would foster personal connections among the specialized members, many of whom were also members of other organizations. Fort again proposed, as Osborne had done earlier, that annual meetings of the AMO move out of the institutions and into centrally located, major cities, and be advertised to other organizations with an interest in feeble-mindedness. Nonetheless, the lack of participation continued to be a problem. According to the membership roster printed in the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*, only 11 members showed up for the 1901 annual meeting held in Baltimore. In 1902, only 15 members were present at the annual meeting.

The *Proceedings* of the AMO's annual meetings had been published since 1876. In 1896, it launched its professional journal, the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* (*JPA*), to enhance the prestige of the membership and draw attention to the field. The *JPA* was the only English language journal in general circulation devoted to the care of the feeble-

[30] "Membership," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 39.

minded, and epileptic and it extended beyond the coverage of annual meetings. It included original articles by members and other experts, reprints of articles from other sources, book reviews, article abstracts, and information from the various institutions. For instance, an article by G. E. Johnson, Fellow in Pedagogy at Clark University, entitled "Contribution to the Psychology and Pedagogy of Feeble-minded Children" appeared in the first volume of the *JPA*.[31] Dr. A. W. Wilmarth, superintendent of the Wisconsin institution for the feeble-minded and a pathologist, contributed the article, "Physical Anomalies of the Feeble-minded" to the September 1900 volume of the *JPA*. Articles by medical experts, such as Dr. Gaylord P. Clark, professor of physiology at Syracuse University, on the function of the thyroid gland appeared in the *JPA*, as well as articles translated from other languages such as the Danish article, "A Few Cases of Ruminants," by A. Früs, chief physician at a Danish institution. Articles provided descriptions of foreign institutions for the feeble-minded, such as one on an institution in Denmark.[32] The *JPA* was a way to circulate the knowledge not only to institutional staff, but also to other physicians and the interested public, as it was widely distributed.[33] While still containing articles on institutional programming, there was a gradual shift toward detailing scientific information and bureaucratic management issues.

The *JPA* was an important method of outreach by the AMO. The stated purpose of the *JPA* was two-fold. First, it was to serve as a forum on various aspects of feeble-mindedness and, thus, stimulate an exchange of ideas among those in the field, including

[31] A. W. Johnson, "Contribution to the Psychology and Pedagogy of Feeble-Minded Children," *JPA* I (March 1897): 90–107. Reprinted from *Pedagogical Seminary*, III, no. 2, (1894): 246-90.
[32] Clara Sarauw and Camilla Teisen, "Sketch of Professor Johan Keller's Life and the Work of His Institution," *Proceedings* (1891): 163–72.
[33] "Treasurer's Report, 1903-1904," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 99

physicians, teachers, political economists, pathologists, psychologists, and sociologists. The second purpose was to provide direction to those already in the field, offering information on subjects of interest, such as educational protocols, categorization, and medical and pathological findings.[34] It also served the professional function of strengthening the role of the AMO as the arbiter of all things concerning feeble-mindedness. In that effort, the AMO distributed copies of the *JPA* and, prior to the establishment of the journal, the *Proceedings*, to state and public libraries on a regular basis.[35] Copies of the special Memorial Volume of the *Proceedings*, celebrating the ten year anniversary of the organization, were sent to the Brooklyn Library, the State Library in Raleigh, North Carolina, the State Library in Albany, New York, the Medical Library in Chicago, Illinois, the Kansas City Academy of Medicine, and the Bureau of Education at the Department of the Interior in Washington DC.[36] Membership dues were used for dispersing these publications as a way of meeting the AMO's mission of community education on the issues related to feeble-mindedness.

The AMO, as the leader of the movement to provide care for the feeble-minded, began incorporating the expertise of other professional and educational groups under their purview. They expanded their public activities by portraying the institutions as vital contributors to both the local and statewide community. By the turn of the twentieth century both institutions for the feeble-minded and the AMO had become fixtures within the United States as the repository for information related to feeble-mindedness, a growing concern. With its authority established, the AMO began a concerted effort for

[34] "Announcement," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 34.
[35] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891," *Proceedings* (1891): 155, 157.
[36] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891", 157.

standardization in all aspects of institutional care, including terms used among the various institutions. The names of the institutions varied, with some using the word asylum, others using home or school, and others using institution. The terms describing the residents also varied, some using feeble-minded, others using idiot, imbecile or inmate. There was also disagreement on whether the term 'children' should be used, as there was an increasing push toward lifetime commitment. The variability of terms created concern about public confusion over what, exactly, the vocabulary reflected about the people and practices involved. Many legislators and members of the public believed that the residents of the institution were unable to learn and, thus, the institution should not have funding beyond that of an almshouse. In some states, feeble-minded people were legally considered insane, adding to the confusion. Members of the AMO believed that following visits to an institution for the feeble-minded, most people changed their minds about the residents, realizing they were not insane and were capable of learning, and supported funding. The term, "feeble-minded," was generally agreed upon by the membership as it covered all degrees of mental impairment, from idiot to imbecile.[37] While the institutions were originally educational enterprises that only accepted children, the increasing emphasis on custodial care meant institutions now housed adults, raising questions about whether the terms "school" and "children" were still appropriate, and adequately reflected their changing nature. Most of the membership, after a discussion, agreed on retaining the word, 'children,' if it appeared in the institution's name because, legally, a feeble-minded person was considered a child and thus the term also reinforced the need for supervision and ongoing care for people who were chronologically adults but

[37] The terms 'idiot' and 'imbecile' were "scientific" classifications of ability at this time, although the definition of the terms varied somewhat.

functionally still children.[38] As most institutions continued to have educational programming, many of the institutions retained the word, 'school,' in their title. Other terms, such as colony and home, were incorporated into some institutions' names, which reflected the increased emphasis on lifetime care.

In 1898, AMO members discussed advocating for standard procedures used by the states to admit people to a state institution. For example, in Massachusetts, children were admitted by nomination by the governor but adults were committed by the court as insane, not feeble-minded. In Minnesota, the requirement was that two physicians certified that the person was insane.[39] At Vineland, in New Jersey, parents unable to pay the fee needed to petition the governor for a warrant, whereby the state would subsidize the costs.[40] In California, the state had originally covered all costs associated with the California Home. However, in 1897, due to increasing admissions, the state law was changed, requiring each county to contribute $10 per month for every resident committed by that county to support its dependents.[41] In other states, agreements were between parents and the superintendent.[42] In most states, parents or friends of a resident could remove the person from the institution at any time, even where there had been commitment proceedings.

While most of the member of the AMO supported removal if they perceived the resident would have adequate supervision, in many cases, they believed that would not

[38] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891," 189.
[39] Sloan and Stevens, *A Century of Concern, 42.*
[40] "Documents of the One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the State of New Jersey, Vol. I. Documents 1 to 4 Inclusive" (State Gazette Publishing Co., 1912).
[41] Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 127.
[42] S. Olin Garrison, "Minutes of the Meeting," *JPA* III, no. 1 (1898): 36–41.

occur and the former resident would be exploited or take up immoral habits. The goal was to allow professional staff to determine if proper protection for the individual would be provided instead of relying on the promise of the family member seeking the release. This range of practices led the AMO to support standardized state commitment statutes that gave each institution's superintendent the power to retain or release a resident.[43]

Standardization of forms and procedures became a prominent interest of the AMO's active members by the turn of the twentieth century. While classification of admittees had been a concern of the AMO from its inception, initially the objective was to enable information transfer about successful teaching techniques for specific groups of children. By the turn of the twentieth century, the function of classification had changed from improving programs to individual assessment. Classification was now used as a justification for custodial care. A standardized psychological assessment form, developed by the AMO's Committee on Psychological Research, was presented and distributed to the membership at the 1901 annual meeting of the AMO.[44] It was one of many attempts at standardizing classification. The advent of the Binet test, translated from French by Henry Goddard, a psychologist at Vineland, introduced what he identified as a scientific determination of feeble-mindedness and its different degrees of deficiency and eventually became the standardized assessment.[45]

The annual meetings of the AMO were a forum for discussions on standardization related to the management concerns that arose in a large residential facility. Discussions

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[43] Garrison, "Minutes of the Meeting," 36–41.
[44] Committee on Psychological Research, "Report of Committee on Psychological Research," *JPA* VI, no. 1 (September 1901): 21–26.
[45] Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds: Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 98-104.

were wide-ranging, from building and technical requirements, like electricity, water, and farm production issues, to personnel management including training for staff, accident prevention, corporal punishment, and abuse of residents by employees. While the organization took no formal steps to prescribe standards, the similarity in their annual reports and other materials suggest that peer exchanges established a number of similarities on policies and practices.[46]

By 1904, following changes advocated by previous presidents, such as annual meetings being held at city hotels instead of at the institutions, and opening up the membership,[47] the AMO anticipated it was on its way to becoming firmly established.[48] President Johnstone told the 1904 audience that the AMO was quickly becoming the world recognized, central organization dealing with the care of the feeble-minded and that professional members of other medical, educational and social welfare organizations were beginning to join the AMO in larger numbers.[49] As the organization and the institutional base grew, the relationship between the states and the institutional staff also evolved, from dealing primarily with funding, to institutional staff offering expertise to legislators on crafting legislation and policy regarding the feeble-minded.[50]

The AMO had, from its beginnings, kept a close watch on governmental attitudes and actions toward the feeble-minded and the institutions for their care. The new century saw increased public awareness of issues related to feeble-mindedness. Scientific

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[46] Sloan and Stevens, *A Century of Concern*, 69.
[47] "Minutes of the Twenty-third Annual Meeting 1899," 218.
[48] Peter L. Tyor and Leland V. Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America: A History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 89-90.
[49] The increase in membership was more than optimistic hype by Johnstone. The listing of members attending the annual meetings continued to grow, starting in 1904.
[50] E. R. Johnstone, "President's Address," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (1904): 63-68.

management and the improvement of society by social intervention marked the Progressive Era and the care of the feeble-minded was re-evaluated under these rubrics. The popularization of eugenics with its "scientific" basis for an understanding of heredity impacted societal ideas regarding feeble-mindedness.[51] In addition, beginning in 1896, public schools began offering special classes, which brought the issue of feeble-mindedness before a large segment of the population.[52] Legislation was passed in states like Delaware, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, and Utah to provide funding for new institutions, or in some cases, expanding schools for the blind or deaf to include feeble-minded children.[53] By 1904, there were 27 state institutions and 32 private ones, with more being developed.[54] While initially many state laws regarding institutional populations mandated release of the residents at a certain age, by the turn of the twentieth century, legislatures were amending the laws to allow for lifetime commitment. In the case of women, policies encouraged retaining them until they were past childbearing age, in order to prevent procreation. In an era when eugenics was gaining attention of policy makers, social attitudes shifted toward a more negative view of feeble-minded persons, associating them with crime and immoral behavior.[55] The new policies viewed segregation as a means of protecting society and looked to the established institutions as sites to manage the policies.

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[51] Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995); Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*.; Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993).
[52] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 90.
[53] J. C. Carson, "Feeble-Minded and Epileptic," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (June 1904): 78–83.
[54] Arthur C. Rogers, "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (June 1904): 87.
[55] J. M. Murdoch, "President's Address," *JPA* VII, no. 4 (1903): 67–72.

The shift in orientation came gradually but was wide spread after the turn of the century. Institutions originally began as residential schools and, as such, admitted only those considered amenable to the treatment provided, leaving those not considered appropriate for admission to the care of their families. As the original belief that the children would gain enough skills and intellect to return to society as functional adults faded, it was gradually replaced with an increased focus on lifetime custodial care. One of the influences for this change came from a growing public demand, that, as institutions were state-funded entities, they needed to accept all classes of feeble-minded children, not just those deemed teachable.[56] Another influence was the increasing public concern that feeble-mindedness was a prominent reason for criminality, drunkenness, prostitution, and other immoral activities, and thus, those with the condition should be segregated to protect society. Members of the AMO began discussing how training and lifelong care could ameliorate these community problems, and through segregation of the sexes decrease the number of feeble-minded people. Providing lifelong care, however, raised financial concerns for institutions. Additional buildings were required. One way to lessen the financial burden was to have the adult residents engage in labor to benefit the institution.

F. M. Powell, in his 1886 presidential address, stated, "It is not enough that the State provide temporarily for this division of unfortunates: it must be a life-school for its inmates, thereby preventing the transmission of infirmities to a still more degraded progeny."[57] He was particularly concerned with unguarded idiotic females, especially

[56] James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89.
[57] F. M. Powell, "President's Address," *Proceedings 1886*, (1887): 388.

those residing in almshouses. The AMO also voiced a perspective on foreign immigration as it related to the documented increase in feeble-mindedness in the 1890 census. According to Dr. Isaac Kerlin, MD, of the Pennsylvania institution, Pennsylvania saw a 228 percent increase in feeble-mindedness among new immigrants. As a prominent public spokesman on feeble-mindedness, his concerns influenced American policy on immigration in the following decades.[58] Administrators, spurred by both financial needs and by the ideas they held in common with the larger society presented their institutions as a solution to various social concerns and problems.

During the early years of the AMO superintendents spent time and effort trying to have states fund institutions. By 1894, most were state funded and had become part of the state's political apparatus. A complication of this status was that the institutional staffing was now subjected to political interference and patronage. People, with no knowledge of feeble-mindedness, were appointed to boards of trustees as a political plum, as the position held prestige as well as financial remuneration. In some cases, political leaders even replaced superintendents. This political interference seriously compromised the well-established practices of the institutions, and President Osborne called on the AMO to denounce the practice of political patronage.[59]

Members of the AMO had been aware of the tension between Christian charity and hereditary science from the beginning of the organization.[60] As the original leaders died, the new cohort of superintendents increasingly favored management decisions

[58] Isaac N. Kerlin, "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings* (1892): 282–84.
[59] Osborne, "President's Annual Address," 385–99. In 1901, Osborne was a victim of this politicalization when he was dismissed by the Governor and replaced by a political appointee, Dr. William Lawlor, who had no experience with the feeble-minded.
[60] Brown, "Prevention of Mental Disease," *Proceedings 1877*, (1877): 25-28.

based on the current scientific understanding of heredity. While segregation of the feeble-minded from society, in order to prevent the hereditary transmission of the feeble-mindedness, was the most prominent viewpoint among the superintendents, by 1897, other viewpoints were being expressed. The hereditary nature of feeble-mindedness was accepted by both the scientific community and state legislatures. By 1914, thirty states had marriage restriction laws that prohibited feeble-minded persons from marrying.[61]

Some administrators went even further. AMO President Martin Barr believed these laws were basically ineffective in eliminating procreation of the feeble-minded. Far more effective in preventing procreation would be what was being called asexualization (sterilization). Barr pointed to the "moral courage" of Dr. Hoyt Pilcher of the Kansas State Home for the Feeble-minded who had operated to castrate eleven boys. These operations began in 1894, although the Kansas sterilization statute was not passed until 1913. Pilcher was condemned by the newspapers but not by the medical journals, which found his actions medically appropriate.[62] This wide divide between medical and public opinion regarding sterilizations continued for several decades. The AMO, while mentioning sterilizations in their publications, stressed segregation and lifetime care, as these ideas enjoyed much wider public support. For example, the 1905 sterilization bill passed by the Pennsylvania legislature was vetoed by the governor who cited lack of scientific evidence for such a drastic action to be taken without the consent of the person or their guardians, echoing public sentiment.[63] The National Conference on Charities and Corrections published a majority report arguing for segregation and against sterilization

[61] Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 99.
[62] Martin W. Barr, "President's Address," *JPA* II, no. 2 (1897): 1–13.
[63] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 103.

in 1903.[64] The Catholic Church condemned sterilization as state interference with religious beliefs.[65] Observers noted that segregation was also not an optimal solution as the institutions housed only about five percent of the total feeble-minded population. Admission waiting lists were huge; 400 for the institution at Elwyn, Pennsylvania and 1,200 for the Illinois State Institution. Legislatures simply could not provide the funding to accommodate the need and thus the largest number of feeble-minded persons were no under the strict supervision of an institution.[66]

The eugenics movement postulated that heredity was fundamentally implicated in the transmission of traits from parents to children. People with good heredity were encouraged to have more children while people considered to have poor heredity, like the feeble-minded, were encouraged to have none. The mechanism for inheriting characteristics was unknown until the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's work in 1900. The development, at the Eugenics Record Office (ERO), of pedigree charts of feeble-minded people, which soon gathered data to try to prove the underlying theory of Mendel's work, seemed to show how inheritance of feeble-mindedness occurred. These charts emphasized the pernicious nature of the perceived unchecked fecundity of the feeble-minded. Legislatures and societal leaders became increasingly concerned about the perceived rapid increase of feeble-minded persons and the social problems they created. Laws to control the feeble-minded population were discussed. Among the alternatives was segregation, which entailed creating larger facilities and, in turn, large state expenditures. Another was active euthanasia of feeble-minded people, but this

[64] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 103.
[65] Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 83.
[66] "Minutes of the Twenty-first Annual Meeting 1897," *JPA* II, no. 1 (1897): 33–47.

strategy faced public resistance as murder. A third was sterilization, which could allow a feeble-minded person to remain outside an institution while not contributing to an increase in the feeble-minded population. Each of these positions had advocates, but also faced opposition from some members of the public, including the Catholic Church. All were put into practice in varying degrees. By 1915, eight states had sterilization statutes but most were using them very selectively.[67] The common feature of these laws was they allowed superintendents of institutions to recommend sterilization of residents and outlined the appropriate procedures that would need to be followed.

All of these alternatives were discussed by members of the AMO. While sterilization laws were passed by some states starting in 1907, very few sterilizations resulted from these laws. In some states they were found unconstitutional; the United States Supreme Court decision *Buck v Bell*, in 1927, changed this dynamic. While most superintendents favored segregation, many faced a conundrum. On the one hand, the argument was that the number of feeble-minded people was increasing because of the fecundity of the feeble-minded; but on the other hand, feeble-minded children often came from normal families. In fact, Dr. George Mogridge from the Iowa institution, stated that if all the feeble-minded persons currently in American institutions were eliminated, within a few years their numbers would be replaced, given the invisible, recessive nature of the feeble-mindedness trait.[68] For feeble-mindedness to be present in a child, both parents had to have at least one genetic character for feeble-mindedness. Therefore, if both parents were feeble-minded, their children would be feeble-minded, as there was no

[67] Haller, *Eugenics*, 136.
[68] George Mogridge, "Discussion of 'The Psychic Treatment of Mental Defectives,' by J. M. Murdoch," *JPA* X, no. 4 (1906): 224–29. Feeble-mindedness was thought to be recessive, based on Mendel's work, in that normal parents could have a feeble-minded child.

dominant characteristic for normal intelligence. However, since the trait was recessive, the trait could be passed down through generations, being manifested sporadically only when the recessive characters from both parents combined.[69]

Members of the AMO were cognizant that many of the proposed solutions to the problem of the fecundity of the feeble-minded had serious drawbacks, even as they supported them. Marriage restriction laws required medical certification but the methodology was often haphazard and depended on the individuals wanting to marry giving truthful information. Denial of the marriage certificate would also not preclude feeble-minded people from procreating. Sterilization of residents in institutions was, in some ways, redundant. Residents were segregated by sex so the opportunity for sexual contact was extremely limited. Sterilization to prevent procreation only made sense for residents being released back to the community and these numbers were quite small. Following *Buck v Bell*, the idea that sterilization would allow more residents to be released gained traction, and indeed Carrie Buck was released and married but, of course, had no children.[70] In addition, many feeble-minded men and women, especially those most likely to procreate, were not residents of institutions for the feeble-minded and there was little way to identify them or force them to undergo sterilization. Admission to an institution was still mostly voluntary on the part of parents, social workers, and concerned others. High-grade feeble-minded people, those most likely to procreate, were often viewed as a help to families and thus their admission to institutions for the feeble-

[69] Charles Davenport, "Application of Mendel's Law to Human Heredity," *JPA* XV, no. 3, 4 (June 1911): 93–95.
[70] Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*; Paul A. Lombardo, *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court and Buck v. Bell*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). Stephen J. Gould, "Carrie Buck's Daughter," *Natural History* 93 (July 1984): 14–19. Research suggests that she was not aware of what had occurred and always hoped to have more children.

minded was relatively low, less than an estimated two percent of those with high-grade feeble-mindedness.[71] One of the proposed solutions was to build custodial institutions for the high-grade, feeble-minded people. These would serve children who were in special classes when they finished their schooling, and remove the feeble-minded in penal institutions, reformatories, and almshouses to a dedicated institution for the feeble-minded.[72]

By the turn of the twentieth century, compulsory attendance laws for public schools began to be enacted and enforced. Combating sweatshop labor by children was increasingly tied to the need for compulsory school attendance laws.[73] With increasing numbers, curriculum was differentiated and children began to be tracked according to their perceived post-school employment. This increase in tracking students reflected the educational philosophy for the public schools in the beginning decades of the twentieth century, the scientific management of future workers. "Efficiency, economy, and scientific management became educational watch-words of the greatest importance to…school officials during the late 1800s and early 1900s."[74] Feeble-minded children did not fit well in this new paradigm of public education. The argument was made that segregation of children with feeble-mindedness served two main purposes: it increased the efficiency of the regular classroom by removing students who took up too much of

[71] Frederick Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XXI, no. 1, 2 (1916): 3–24;
[72] Walter E. Fernald, "The Burden of Feeble-Mindedness," *JPA* XVII, no. 3 (March 1912): 87–111.
[73] David John Hogan, *Class and Reform: School and Society in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 53.
[74] Robert L. Osgood, *For "Children Who Vary from the Normal Type": Special Education in Boston, 1838-1930* (Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 61.

the teacher's time to the detriment of the other students and it provided individualized attention to students with disabilities by gearing work to the disabled child's level.[75]

At the same time, it seemed, perhaps, less expensive to have school systems establish special classes for feeble-minded children, as building institutions to house all persons considered feeble-minded was cost prohibitive for the state. This resulted in ongoing discussions within the AMO regarding appropriate placement of students considered feeble-minded. The members believed the child deemed feeble-minded by school officials should be examined by a physician experienced in diagnosing feeble-mindedness, often times a physician from an institution, in order to rule out temporary causes like malnutrition. This practice increased the perceived authority and expertise of the superintendents and associated staff.[76] Discussion on the appropriate placement for feeble-minded children continued for years as public school programs continued to expand. No definite consensus was reached as to whether young children were better served in institutions or public schools as the individual child's functional level needed to be considered.[77] There was a more unanimous belief that once public school was finished, the appropriate placement was in an institution.

With the advent of special classes in the public schools, institutional staff became the recognized experts in providing specialized instruction. This expertise was manifested in different ways. Some institutions collaborated with school districts to provide instruction in teaching methods either directly by having public school teachers

[75] Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008); Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 463.
[76] "Minutes of the Twenty-third Annual Meeting 1899," 223.
[77] Murdoch, "President's Address," 68-71.

spend time at an institution, working with institutional staff, or indirectly, by institutional staff consulting in the public schools. In 1904, Vineland was the first institution to offer a summer training program for public school special education teachers. This program became world renowned, accepting teachers from several foreign countries. These activities were covered in the *JPA*, informing not only the AMO membership, but also the general public who subscribed to it or accessed it through libraries or other means. R. C. Scheerenberger points out that it was not a linear path from education in an institutional setting to special education in the public schools. There were disagreements about the level of feeble-mindedness that was appropriate for the public schools, with superintendents in both the institutions and the public schools taking a variety of positions on the issue. Psychologists, both those working in institutions and those in public schools, also differed on appropriate placement.[78] However, there was consensus that the public schools should be responsible for providing educational programs for some children with feeble-mindedness.[79]

In 1907, a year after the establishment of the Department of Psychological Research, an experimental psychology laboratory at Vineland, two papers appearing in the *JPA* that marked the beginning of an experimental psychology approach to treating people considered feeble-minded. Naomi Nosworthy, a professor at Columbia University, argued that psychological intervention should supplant the physiological method; she argued that feeble-minded children learned in a similar manner as normal

[78] Institutional administrators tried to incorporate other professionals, such as psychologists, under their umbrella of expertise. Many of the psychologists in the institutions worked on testing and classification. Their importance increased with the increased use of the Binet test of intelligence as a means of defining feeble-mindedness.
[79] R. C. Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation* (Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1983).

children but at a slower rate. Henry Goddard also argued that feeble-minded children could learn more than was expected of them, but it took them longer. Goddard also pointed out the possibility that some conditions that appeared to be feeble-mindedness could actually be the effects of environmental conditions. While Vineland's Psychological Department remained the most well-known, other institutions for the feeble-minded followed suit, establishing their own psychology departments. Standards and methods in the social sciences were still unsettled. According to Helene Silverberg and Dorothy Ross, in the late 1800s, the social sciences in the United States were newly created professional disciplines. Academic and reform social science were, for a variety of reasons, experiencing an ever-widening gap.[80]

There were significant disagreements among psychologists working at different institutions. The papers published in the AMO's journal, the *JPA*, highlighted some of these differences, including a disagreement between Henry Goddard of Vineland and Frederick Kuhlmann of Minnesota on the functionality of the Binet scale in predicting outcomes. Goddard's argument that training beyond a child's mental age was useless resonated with the membership much more than Kuhlmann's argument that since the rate of development was different in children than adults, a strict mental age was an arbitrary scale for children. Goddard's paper received much more interest from the AMO membership than did Kuhlmann's; spirited discussion followed Goddard's presentation, while only Goddard made a comment on Kuhlmann's presentation.[81] Sloan and Stevens

[80] Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Helene Silverberg, "Introduction: Toward a Gendered Social Science History," in *Gender and American Social Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 334.
[81] Henry Herbert Goddard, "The Improvability of Feeble-Minded Children," *JPA* XVII, no. 4 (June 1913): 121–31; Frederick Kuhlmann, "Degree of Mental Deficiency in Children as Expressed by the Relation of Age to Mental Age," *JPA* XVII, no. 4 (June 1913.): 132–44.

suggest that one of the outcomes of Goddard winning this debate was a reduction of spending on personnel for training the feeble-minded and a greater emphasis on segregation.[82]

Many of the articles in the *JPA* from the early 1910s focused on the Stanford-Binet test, including several by Louis Terman, a noted psychologist at Stanford University who worked on educational psychology. An emerging issue was the difference in the meaning between intelligence and educability, or as A. C. Rogers put it, "there (should) not be any confusion between improvement of intelligence and improvement in the sense of having learned things."[83] This led to numerous discussions on the best methods and content for training feeble-minded children. While some argued that none of the children should be taught significant academic (reading, writing, and math) content because the education gained seemed to lead to disciplinary problems, others argued the exact opposite, namely, that the lack of academic knowledge led to disciplinary issues.[84]

By 1916, the AMO was growing rapidly. The membership began discussing ways to incorporate other professions interested in feeble-mindedness into the AMO. One of the ways involved holding annual meetings in conjunction with other organizations as to pique the interest of those not formally members of the AMO.[85] The AMO sought to advance its authority as an organization that held important expertise in the management of feeble-mindedness by initiating calls for collaboration with other

[82] Sloan and Stevens, *A Century of Concern,* 78-80.
[83] Arthur C. Rogers, "Discussion of Teachability of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XVIII, no. 1 (1913): 55–56.
[84] Rogers, "Discussion of Teachability of the Feeble-Minded," 55–60.
[85] Minutes of the Fortieth Annual Meeting 1916, *JPA* XXI, no. 3 (1917): 107.

professional organizations, such as the American Bar Association and the Conference of Charities and Corrections, to jointly investigate issues of mutual concern, like marriage restriction laws.[86] E. R. Johnstone, superintendent at Vineland, advocated for the AMO to become the clearinghouse for information on feeble-mindedness, providing articles to magazines and newspapers, and advocating for wider distribution of the *JPA*.[87]

Sloan and Stevens made the following point on the importance of the AMO.

> It must be remembered that the men and women who attended these meetings (of the AMO) were considered to be the leaders in the scientific community and the most knowledgable (sic) about feeble-mindedness…The topics discussed and the opinions expressed were received by people outside the field and outside the Association, and many were translated into social and legislative action….they set the scientific basis for much of what ensued.[88]

While the AMO members had an overarching influence over policies for caring for the feeble-minded from 1876 to 1916, it was not alone. Government officials, religious leaders, social welfare officials, educators, parents and/or relatives of feeble-minded people, local business owners, and regular citizens all influenced the care provided to people who were feeble-minded. In addition, events such as economic downturns, immigration, industrialization, urbanization, compulsory education laws, and others influenced care provision and shaped policies regarding the feeble-minded. The AMO incorporated these influences in various ways and its publications and activities offer an important window on the care of feeble-minded persons over its first forty years.

[86] A. C. Rogers, "Minutes of the Association, Second Session, Discussion," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 239.
[87] E. R. Johnstone, "President's Address," 63–68.
[88] Sloan and Stevens, *A Century of Concern,* 60.

Chapter 2 Framing and Expanding Institutions across the Nation, 1876-1890

As the young United States framed its democratic goals and sought to demonstrate both its capacity for control and for generosity, attention turned to marginalized populations. Shaped by the efforts to manage people with needs and the dictates of Christian charity, various reformers sought to ameliorate the needs of such groups as the poor, widows and orphans, the insane, the blind, and the deaf. There was sympathy but also an intention to make them, wherever possible, functional members of American society. This was usually defined as being able to meet their social role obligations and were based on middle class morés. Providing care and training to those considered feeble-minded came later than some of the other initiatives, but was intimately connected to them by similar aspirations.

Prior to the Civil War

Institutions for the feeble-minded that were established prior to the Civil War were generally advocated for by specific individuals, often individuals with professional stature within the state. While there were some small, private establishments for caring for feeble-minded people, the impetus for providing state funded care for the feeble-minded began in the 1840s through the efforts of Amariah Brigham, the Superintendent of the New York Lunatic Asylum at Utica, one of the founders of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, and founded the

American Journal of Insanity,[1] and Judge Horatio Boyington of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, who closely followed the work of Samuel Gridley Howe, a well-respected expert on feeble-mindedness. Brigham, reacting to the New York census of 1845, which identified 1600 people as feeble-minded,[2] advocated that the state undertake providing care for the feeble-minded. This care, he argued, would not only improve the lot of the feeble-minded but would also financially benefit the state, as care-givers would be able to be gainfully employed instead of providing care. This argument was repeatedly used by others when seeking to establish institutions for the feeble-minded. Even with the influence of reform zeal at mid-century, often located in the ideals of Christian charity, in the case of the feeble-minded, the argument for care was strongly linked to the state's economic interest regarding dependent populations while also attending to concerns about resources and taxation. In 1846, a bill to establish an institution for the feeble-minded in New York State failed due to budgetary constraints; this situation of failed legislation was often repeated as other states grappled with the financial implications of establishing institutions for the feeble-minded.[3] States were already funding insane asylums, prisons, and schools for the blind and the deaf. Institutions for the feeble-minded added another large expense for the physical structures, staff costs and the everyday costs of running a large facility. A major impediment to state funding was the belief that, as Frederick F Backus, a member of the New York Senate, stated in 1846, "any efforts for their improvement were of a perfectly hopeless

[1] The Association became the American Psychiatry Association and the journal became the American Journal of Psychiatry. While many feeble-minded people were legally considered insane, the AMO worked diligently to differentiate between feeble-mindedness and insanity.
[2] Albert Deutsch, *The Mentally Ill in America-A History of Their Care and Treatment from Colonial Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 341.
[3] Peter L. Tyor and Leland V. Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America: A History*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 11-12.

character—an opinion so prevalent that even benevolent men, in search of objects of commiseration and charity, had passed them by…..as incapable of instruction as the brutes that perish."[4] The popular opinion was that, as the feeble-minded were incapable of learning, such a large expenditure was unnecessary, an idea advocates had to try to overcome.

About the same time, in Massachusetts, Boyington began a two-year process which included establishing a commission to investigate the number and condition of state citizens who were feeble-minded. The preliminary report included a letter from George S. Sumner, who had traveled to Europe with Horace Mann to observe the training of feeble-minded students. He not only described the results obtained by Edouard Seguin, a French pioneer in the training of feeble-minded children, but also contended that, in a republic, everyone had the right to full development of their faculties. In 1848, Dr. Samuel G. Howe,[5] as part of the work of the commission, examined 574 individuals thought to be feeble-minded, whom he defined as being incapable of self-guidance and who did not have the appropriate knowledge generally associated with chronological age. He found people he examined (those labeled feeble-minded) in almshouses and in private homes had invariably poor care. His report enumerated a number of benefits to the state of providing educational facilities for the feeble-minded. There would be financial savings to the state as some of the feeble-minded would become self-sufficient and the

[4] Frederick F. Backus, as quoted in "Account of the Ceremonies at the Laying of the Corner-Stone of the New York Asylum for Idiots" (Syracuse: New York Asylum for Idiots, September 8, 1854), Cage, pamphlet 1643, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 15-16.

[5] Howe is often called the most significant person in the history of American special education for his work with blind, deaf and feeble-minded children. He was aided in some of this work by his friend, the leading educational reformer of the period, Horace Mann. For a detailed account see James W. Trent, Jr., *The Manliest Man* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012).

people who currently provided care on an unpaid basis could then become gainfully employed. Secondly, the people of the state would have the satisfaction of fulfilling their Christian duty to raise up the afflicted. Moreover, the state was already providing state assistance to the insane, the blind, and the deaf and, he argued, had an obligation to help the feeble-minded in a similar manner, an often used argument for the need to provide care for the feeble-minded. Finally, if Massachusetts acted first, the state would have the prestige of becoming the model for other states to follow, something Massachusetts took very seriously.[6]

Massachusetts, in 1848, followed through on the commission's recommendations and became the first state providing organized care for those deemed feeble-minded. The legislature approved $2,500 annually for a three year experimental school for ten "idiot children" at the privately run and well-respected Perkins Institute for Blind Students. The Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth developed from this modest beginning. Thus began a partnership between state government and private institutions for the feeble-minded that would be widely replicated. About the same time, Dr. Hervey Wilbur began a small, private institution at Barre, Massachusetts, to provide for the care and education of children, "who by reason of mental infirmity are not fit subjects for ordinary school instruction."[7] Wilbur explored several different methods of training in the early years.[8]

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[6] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 12-15.
[7] *Circular of the Institution for the Education of Idiots, Imbeciles, and Children of Retarded Development of Mind,* Barre, Massachusetts, January 1, 1851 (Worchester, 1851), 18.
[8] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 16; James W. Trent, Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 14-15.

In 1851, Howe was invited to bring some of his students from the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth to appear before the New York legislature. He brought students who had just been admitted and others who had been at the institution for a period of time to demonstrate the improvement possible with special training. The improvement displayed by the students who had received care over new incoming students prompted passage of a bill appropriating $6,000 annually for two years for an experimental school. Wilbur became the first superintendent of this new facility, leaving his Barre institution to his assistant, Dr. George Brown and his wife, Catherine. The success of these experimental schools in Massachusetts and New York led the legislature to appropriate funds to establish a permanent facility in Syracuse, New York in 1854.[9]

These initiatives inspired other prominent citizens who sought to help feeble-minded people within their communities. In Pennsylvania, in 1853, James B. Richards, along with Bishop Alonzo, Franklin Taylor, Dr. Alfred Elwyn and others, formed a private corporation to establish a private school for feeble-minded children. Richards, who had worked under Howe in the institution in New York, became the superintendent. He arranged for a demonstration of his students before the Pennsylvania legislature in 1854. The success of the demonstration resulted in the legislature agreeing to the "Pennsylvania Training School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Children" remaining as a private institution, but one that would receive a state appropriation for a fixed number of state-sponsored pupils alongside privately paying pupils.[10] Massachusetts had used a

[9] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind,* 14-15.
[10] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 17.

similar mixture of private enterprise and state support in the establishment of the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth. A permanent site for the Pennsylvania institution was opened in Media, later renamed Elwyn, in 1859, in honor of a founder. States without institutions for the feeble-minded began sending pupils to the Pennsylvania Training School in 1860, paying the same rate as the state of Pennsylvania. As part of the agreement with the state of Pennsylvania, the per diem rate for out of state students was paid to the state government and generated income for the state. This became standard practice as institutions for the feeble-minded spread across the United States.[11]

Three other institutions for the feeble-minded opened prior to the Civil War, Ohio in 1857, Connecticut in 1858, and Kentucky in 1860. Their establishment followed a similar path. To secure state funding, each had to overcome public indifference and, sometimes, outright hostility toward providing care for the feeble-minded, who were generally viewed with "pity, scorn, and contempt…contained on the periphery of society…an underclass of forgotten people."[12] They were linked with the mentally ill and regarded as "society's most unwanted citizens."[13] Charity officials tended to not serve those deemed feeble-minded as they were considered incurable, unable to care for themselves or work.[14] Superintendents argued before the legislatures that the institutions were to operate strictly as residential, educational facilities, developing students' dormant faculties and returning them to their families at the end of what would be typical school

[11] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 17-18.
[12] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, ix.
[13] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, ix.
[14] Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 17.

attendance for normal children, usually at age 16.[15] Demonstrations by students and teachers from existing schools along with statistics on the number and condition of state residents considered feeble-minded usually led to funding for an experimental school for a specified time period. These early institutions "were intended to perform a variety of educational functions for individuals, parents, and society."[16] Most of the superintendents associated with these first institutions subscribed to the belief that providing treatment to the feeble-minded was a progressive step for society as a whole and a reflection of Christian charity as the staff developed their mission statements, policies, and methods.[17]

Certain procedures became normative. Admission to one of these early institutions for the feeble-minded was by an application initiated by a parent or concerned other person and required support from a medical doctor. Institutional staff carefully regulated admissions in order to maintain the educational character of these institutions. The staff had the power of selecting among the applicants, but they could not command entrance nor deny withdrawal. Only children who could benefit from instruction were admitted to these early institutions, and most declined to admit children who were epileptics, had hydrocephalus, or were extremely low functioning. An upper age limit, usually sixteen, was established for discharge from the institution. Parents were able to discharge their child at any time. To discourage the development of permanent custodial

[15] For children who had families to return to, many became engaged in some form of agricultural or housework. Those who had no families often ended up in jail or the almshouse.
[16] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 18.
[17] Lawrence B. Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59, no. 1 (2004): 90–111; R. C. Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*, (Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1983); Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*.

care, students were required to return home for up to two months in the summer. This was seen as a way of maintaining family and community ties and was in keeping with the superintendents' belief that the institution served as a "boarding school for idiots." For children unable to go home for vacation for a variety of reasons, including parents not being able to afford the transportation costs, summer school classes often met in pavilions in the woods where the children engaged in a variety of outdoor activities.[18] In addition, the institutions often had liberal visitation policies for legislators, parents and the general public, another way of maintaining community connections.[19]

Educationally, the early superintendents adopted the work of Seguin, in *Traitement moral hygiene, et education des Idiots* (1846) and later, available in English, *Idiocy and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (1866), which presented a treatment plan for improving the function of feeble-minded children. According to Tyor and Bell, his system was used in virtually every institution for the feeble-minded in the United States and Europe. His treatment methods were so successful that he was recognized as both an innovator and an established authority on educating feeble-minded children.[20] His method strove to meld a scientific understanding of the functions of the brain with specially designed educational techniques to improved functioning. One of his tenets was that improved motor functioning helped improve cognitive function, so each child was to have an individually designed exercise program that needed to be carried out daily. He also stressed using the child's interests as the foundation of an individualized educational program. He wrote, "We must not begin their day's work like a duty, but

[18] Susanne Lied, "Report of the Principal Teacher 1903-1904," in *Fifty-Second Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children* (Elwyn: Elwyn Boys, Printers, 1904), 29.
[19] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 23-25.
[20] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 23-25.

like a pleasure, with walks, sports, music, and end it in the same manner; so that if we have not made them perfectly happy though our daily routine, we can send them to bed cheerful."[21] Following the morning pleasure, teaching began. It was the teacher's responsibility to closely monitor the child for signs of what Seguin called "mental depression," such as knitted brows, blank looks and dejected posture. If these signs appeared, Seguin said, "let us hasten to take him off gaily to some pleasant exercises or music, remembering that we were at fault."[22] In order to aid learning, a myriad of materials must be used, such as, "objects, pictures, photographs, cards, patterns, figures, wax, clay, scissors, compasses, glasses, pencils, colors, even books."[23] Teaching should occur outdoors whenever possible. In addition, "We must not forget to create gaiety and mirth several times a day: happiness is our object as much, nay more than progress."[24] Teaching a child to obey and become self-reliant was based on kindness that encouraged the child to cooperate. Seguin expounded on the power and necessity of love, saying, "All of them may be taught to love by being loved…To make the child feel that he is loved, and to make him eager to love in his turn, is the end of our teaching as it has been its beginning. ….love alone can truly socialize them; those alone who love them are their true rescuers."[25] Seguin's methodology emphasized individualized instruction that spanned the children's day, from the time they got up until they went to bed. His methodology was labor intensive and somewhat idealistic as each child must be diagnosed, treated and reassessed on a regular basis and every waking moment was to be

[21] Edward Seguin, *Idiocy and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method*, Reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1971).
[22] Seguin, *Idiocy and Its Treatment*, 94.
[23] Seguin, *Idiocy and Its Treatment*, 96.
[24] Seguin, *Idiocy and Its Treatment*, 97.
[25] Seguin, *Idiocy and Its Treatment*, 244-245. These techniques and attitudes were studied by Maria Montessori and used as the basis for her teaching methods.

filled with instruction. Students were to be motivated to learn by appealing to their interests. There was no corporal punishment, rather, the children were to be governed by kindness.[26] These techniques required a high student to staff ratio and were workable when the number of students was small. However, as the number of residents increased, maintaining these educational services necessitated increased state funding, something not easy to obtain, or adapting the techniques to require less staff.

Superintendents and governing boards realized that one of the obstacles to the survival of these early institutions was negative public opinion. The general public often held the view that feeble-minded children had no minds and, therefore, could not learn; thus, public funding educational endeavors was seen as a waste of money.[27] To overcome this sentiment, the publication of annual reports, and public exhibitions of the students' accomplishments demonstrated that, while feeble-mindedness could not be cured, many students could be taught to be self-sufficient and useful members of society. This was especially true in many agrarian communities prior to the Civil War when many jobs required manual, but not intellectual skills. In addition to educational and vocational skills, appropriate behavior of the students was seen as an important requisite when measuring students' progress. As students were to be returned to the community after their schooling, the ability to function with the members of that community was critical. Thus, the emphasis was on social skills, as well as skill training, throughout the child's waking hours.[28]

[26] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 24-25.
[27] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 18.
[28] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 28.

According to Tyor and Bell, the Civil War had minimal impact on the operation of the existing institutions for the feeble-minded. Children continued to be admitted and staff continued to be employed. However, most institutions suffered financial setbacks due to rising prices associated with a wartime economy, lack of adequate funding from the states to keep up with inflation, and decreased ability of parents to contribute to the child's maintenance due to the hardships imposed by the war. The Experimental School for Idiots and Feeble-Minded Children in Jackson, Illinois, was opened in 1865, the only new institution to open during the war years. An eleven-year hiatus followed that opening as the states focused on recovering from the aftermath of the Civil War.

Post-Civil War Institutional Expansion

Beginning in 1876 until roughly 1890, the number of institutions for the feeble-minded expanded across the Midwest and the West Coast. Northeastern states which had previously paid tuition to existing institutions for the feeble-minded in neighboring states established their own institutions. In addition, states expanded the size of existing institutions and some states, like New York, built additional institutions in other geographic locations in the state. Some patterns prevailed in the establishment of these new institutions, such as the need to convince both legislators and the general public of the efficacy of institutions for the feeble-minded. Contemporary newspapers affirmed public stereotypes, namely that the primary cause of hereditary weakness was that of the sins of the parents being visited upon their children, even though how that transmission occurred was not yet understood.[29] In many cases, the public/private mix of funding

[29] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 34-35.

continued. Reliance on legislative funding had its drawbacks. As the funding for institutions for the feeble-minded became intimately connected with the political process in each state, they vied for resources with requests regarding roads, public education, public safety and other governmental concerns. Nearly all of the superintendents spoke of long waiting lists for admission to their institutions because they did not have enough room to accommodate more residents and used this as an argument for additional support for space and other expenses. Requests might not result in quick action. In New York, H. B. Wilbur pointed out that heavy taxation and increasing the number of asylums for the insane delayed funding of a new custodial institution for the feeble-minded for several years.[30]

While the older institutions had relied on personal testimonials from well-known superintendents and demonstrations by the students to convince legislators to establish them, the newer facilities began using different strategies, often relying on the social and political capital of prominent citizens. The establishment of the new institutions no longer were simply about providing care for the feeble-minded; they represented a myriad of other concerns of communities and state government. For example, communities often vied to have the institution located near them as they were perceived as having a positive economic impact due to the hiring of local people and as a consumers of goods, which benefited local merchants.

[30] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* (1879): 98.

An example of this is the process that took place in California which relied on the social capital of well-respected citizens, especially women. The process in California also reflected a change in public interest, from neglect to organized management of the feeble-minded. In California, the superintendent actually played a more minimal role; it was upper-class women with a great deal of social capital who spearheaded and shepherded the institution from conception to its permanent home in Sonoma County. One of these women, Katherine Lathrop, served as the president of the Board of Trustees and other women served as Board members.

Articles advocating care for feeble-minded children in California began appearing in local newspapers in the late 1860s.[31] Initial government action did not occur until 1881 when Mr. Rowell, a state senator, proposed a bill in the California Senate to establish an institution for feeble-minded children.[32] Senate Bill 213 proposed $50,000 for buildings, $20,000 for maintenance, and expenses for staff and the Board of Trustees.[33] The proposal was not met with universal acclaim. The editor of the *Daily Alta California* challenged the costs associated with the project as unnecessary state expense.[34] This bill did not pass. By 1883, public concern was mounting that insane asylums were reaching capacity because they were full of feeble-minded people, but no bill was proposed.[35] In the meantime, in 1882, Katherine Lathrop and Julia Judah traveled to Syracuse, New York, to observe the institution there; at that time it was considered a premier example of institutional care for feeble-minded children. Their

[31] "Marriage of Blood Relations," *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 6, 1867; "Letter from Kentucky," *Sacramento Daily Union*, November 23, 1870, California Digital Newspaper Collection.
[32] "California Legislature Senate," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 22, 1881, CDNC.
[33] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 29, 1881, CDNC.
[34] "Editorial Notes," *Daily Alta California*, January 23, 1881, CDNC.
[35] "Letters from Sacramento," *Morning Press*, February 17, 1883, CDNC.

intent was to establish a similar institution in California. Lathrop was the wife of Ariel Lathrop, Leland Stanford's brother-in-law and business manager. Judah was the wife of Henry Judah, a prominent railroad tycoon. She was also the mother of a child with disabilities.[36] On July 19, 1883, circulars were sent to the press, clergy, physicians, and important citizens in San Francisco that, on July 24, a meeting would be held in San Francisco. The intention was to organize a number of men and women who might support an institution, "for the care and training of feeble-minded children, to be similar in all respects to the institutions successfully engaged in this work in the Eastern States."[37] Governor-elect Washington Bartlett was to preside. Between 150 and 200 people attended the meeting. By August 2nd, a board of directors was selected: Katherine Lathrop, Julia Judah, Mrs. Lathrop's brother-in-law, railroad tycoon, Leland Stanford, Governor-elect Bartlett, and seven others well-known members of society. This private organization, the California Association for the Care and Training of Feeble Minded Children, was applauded by the *Los Angeles Herald* stating "This new Society is heaven-born and beneficent, and supplies a link in the education of the human race for happiness and usefulness. All honor to the excellent persons who have taken this matter in charge."[38] Newspapers throughout the state echoed similar thoughts about the new enterprise.[39] By early September 1883, 13 women had raised over $4000, and 42 subscription collectors were working to raise $25,000 toward building the institution. The city of San Jose promised to contribute $2000 and other cities were expected to

[36] Glen Ellen Historical Society, "Sonoma Developmental Center," accessed July 27, 2016, http://www.sonoma.edu/users/w/warmotha/psychclasses/423f00/historical.html.
[37] A. E. Osborne, "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures 1886, California," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*, (1887): 442–46.
[38] "A New Field of Benevolence," *Los Angeles Herald*, August 10, 1883, CDNC.
[39] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Santa Cruz Weekly*, September 8, 1883, CDNC; "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, September 12, 1883, CDNC.

follow suit.[40] The Oakland Old Ladies Home raised more than $1000 with a tea and croquet and tennis entertainment.[41] Collections were also taken up in California Sunday schools to help fund the new institution.[42] By November 1883, sufficient funding had been secured for the Association to begin running newspaper ads soliciting paying pupils for the new institution which was, optimistically, scheduled to open on January 1, 1884, if enough revenue could be raised.[43] Enough funding was finally raised by April 1884, and the Board of Directors leased 160 acres with several buildings near Vallejo for the institution, the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children (California Home), and hired a superintendent, Miss A. E. Wood, and teachers, Mrs. M. E. Cook, Mrs. A. E. Fountain, and Miss Clark.[44] In May, the institution began operating with two pupils.[45] As the institution was operating with donated funds, expanding the number of students would be limited unless state funding could be obtained or more paying students could be found.[46]

In 1885, bills again appeared in the California legislature to establish a state financed institution for the feeble-minded, this time by taking over the private California Home that was already established.[47] The bills faced considerable opposition, primarily due to concerns over costs.[48] While legislators argued about the bill, newspaper editorials, like the one in the *Sacramento Daily Union* supported it.[49] By the end of

[40] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, September 12, 1883, CDNC.
[41] "San Francisco Letter," *Sacramento Daily Union*, October 20, 1883, CDNC.
[42] "Notes," *Russian River Flag*, November 22, 1883, CDNC.
[43] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, November 7, 1883, CDNC.
[44] "Items of Interest," *Los Angeles Herald*, April 25, 1884, CDNC; "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, April 23, 1884, CDNC.
[45] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, May 30, 1884, CDNC.
[46] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, July 31, 1884, CDNC.
[47] "Assembly," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 30, 1885, CDNC.
[48] "The Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, March 4, 1885, CDNC.
[49] "A Worthy Bill," *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 5, 1885, CDNC.

March, 1885, the legislation was passed and $45,000 appropriated for the purchase and maintenance of the site.[50] By May 8, 1885, a property was leased in Alameda for the California Home.[51] The governor, George Stoneman, appointed a Board of Directors made up of a 5 of women, including Katherine Lathrop, and William Harney, county clerk for San Francisco and the fourth district court held in San Francisco.[52] Lathrop was appointed President of the Board of Directors.[53] The Board of Directors met in June 1885 and decided to purchase a land for a permanent institution in Santa Clara County for $14,000.[54]

Private fundraising to benefit the institution continued, even after the state took over the financial responsibility for the institution. For example, Nellie Calhoun, an actress, volunteered for a benefit entertainment in San Jose.[55] By April 1886, the construction of new buildings and furnishings was completed and the new institution was ready for occupancy, with space for 150 children.[56] By mid-November, 1886, the California Home had 15 residents and a new superintendent had been engaged. Dr. A. E. Osborne, of the Pennsylvania Home for Feeble-minded Children, was hired as superintendent and his wife as matron.[57] The number of applicants rapidly increased as information about the California Home spread. The Board of Trustees applied to the legislature for increased funds for more new buildings. This request was supported by lengthy, positive editorials in several California newspapers, touting the benefit the

[50] "Home for Children," *Daily Alta California*, May 4, 1885, CDNC.
[51] "Across the Bay--Alameda," *Daily Alta California*, May 8, 1885, CDNC.
[52] "Brief Notes," *Sacramento Daily Union*, March 30, 1885, CDNC.
[53] A. E. Osborne, "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures 1886, California," 442–46.
[54] "A Benevolent Plan," *Daily Alta California*, June 18, 1885, CDNC.
[55] "San Jose Gossip," *Daily Alta California*, September 29, 1885, CDNC.
[56] "Home for the Feeble-Minded," *Pacific Rural Press*, April 17, 1886, CDNC.
[57] "Home for Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, November 19, 1886, CDNC.

institution had already accrued to the state, both as an important employer and consumer of goods and services and for freeing care givers of feeble-minded persons back into the labor force.[58] The new institution welcomed numerous visitors, including Governor Stoneman.[59] As the institution was now state funded, the Senate Committee on Public Buildings needed to visit the institution prior to any legislative approval of additional funding.[60] The site in Santa Clara County was, however, deemed problematic for the expansion required to support the number of applications for admission received and, thus, bills for increased funding proved controversial.[61] By March 9, 1887, however, a bill appropriating $65,000 for the California Home was approved and signed by the Governor.[62]

Although the legislature had appropriated funds, public opinion was not universally supportive. The public's concerns focused on the "great rush for the Home," which was necessitating the need for expansion at considerable cost to the state.[63] In a year and a half, the California Home had grown from 15 to 80 residents and had 24 employees at a cost of $24,000.[64] In the next six months, 27 new residents had been added[65] and 200 awaited admission.[66] The Board of Trustees had determined by January 1889 that the Santa Clara site was no longer an appropriate location for the California Home as the large influx of residents severely taxed the water supply and the problem

[58] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, January 20, 1887, CDNC.
[59] "Social and Personal," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 15, 1886, CDNC.
[60] "On a Round of Inspection," *Daily Alta California*, January 30, 1887, CDNC.
[61] "Senate," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 24, 1887, CDNC.
[62] "The Senate," *Los Angeles Herald*, March 9, 1887, CDNC.
[63] "Grange Picnic at Granville," *Pacific Rural Press*, May 14, 1887, CDNC.
[64] "Charitable California," *Daily Alta California*, May 19, 1888, CDNC..
[65] "Christmas for Helpless Children," *Daily Alta California*, December 13, 1888, CDNC.
[66] "In Relation to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 9, 1889, CDNC.

was deemed unfixable.[67] Discussions were held in the legislature, as Santa Clara County was loath to lose the institution because of the economic benefit it brought to the county.[68] The California Home contributed to the local economy through the purchase of goods and services needed by the institution.[69] Articles in the *Sacramento Daily Union* and other newspapers condemned those seeking to maintain the California Home in Santa Clara County as being ignorant of the needs of the institution. Given the expert opinion that the current institution's inadequate water and sewage system was a public health hazard, the newspaper articles advocated for a new site and argued that spending more state money on a system that could not be ameliorated was a waste of resources.[70] An editorial stated that the residents of the California Home "cannot be treated in confined quarters and ill-adapted institutions. They must have air, sunshine, plenty of room, opportunities for employment and be subject to a minimum of conditions that induce discontent and restlessness."[71]

In January 1889, a bill was introduced in the state legislature to begin the process of locating a new site for the California Home.[72] Prior to any action on the bill, legislative committee members deemed it necessary to visit the Santa Clara site.[73] Concerns were raised about the proposed cost of the new institution. With the large number of children on the waiting list, fiscal responsibility dictated building for the future

[67] "In Relation to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 9, 1889, CDNC.
[68] "Properly Locate It," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 9, 1889, CDNC.
[69] "New Advertisements," *Daily Alta California*, June 13, 1888, CDNC.
[70] "In Relation to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded"; "Governor's Message," *Daily Alta California*, January 10, 1889, CDNC.
[71] "Some Other and Important Considerations Concerning the Home for the Feebel-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 17, 1889, CDNC.
[72] "California Legislature," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 17, 1889, CDNC.
[73] "Senate," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 18, 1889, CDNC.

need, not just the current one. Work done by the residents was seen as one way to lower costs.[74] Newspapers continued to be supportive of the proposal to build a new institution for the feeble-minded. For example, Carrie Stevens Walter, in an editorial in the *Daily Alta California,* detailed her visit to the California Home, describing the residents and their activities for the newspaper's audience. She saw great value in the activities, favorably comparing them to older, well-established institutions for the feeble-minded in the eastern United States. As the California Home was the only institution for the feeble-minded on the West Coast, she declared it should not only incorporate the successes of eastern institutions, but strive to be even better.[75] Legislative deliberation on the bill sparked a great deal of interest across the state. Legislators received letters supporting the establishment of a new site from parents whose children were current residents. These letters detailed the improvement seen in their children, such as improved self-care skills, and stressed the need for the services for children on the waiting list. Some of the letters were released to the newspapers.[76] In an effort to demonstrate that the amount of money proposed to be spent on the new institution was appropriate, newspapers reiterated the work of Isaac Kerlin, MD, a renowned expert in the care of the feeble-minded, on the important features of an institution for the feeble-minded. If anything, the editorials contended, the bill should appropriate even more funds as the California Home was also providing educational services which was a state responsibility. An article in the *Sacramento Daily Union* labeled those supporting the new institution as enlightened, civic minded people who believed in humane care, and those opposing the funding as

[74] "Further Reasons for a Liberal Policy," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 19, 1889, CDNC.
[75] Carrie Stevens Walter, "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, January 22, 1889, CDNC.
[76] "Legislative Notes," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 24, 1889, CDNC.

ignorant, inhumane people who would rather see the feeble-minded rounded up, confined to a large barn with the exit guarded to prevent escape.[77] Not all newspapers were supportive of the proposed move out of Santa Clara County. According to the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, the *San Jose Herald*, located in Santa Clara County, denounced Governor Waterman's support for the measure, being reluctant to lose the economic benefit to the county of the institution.[78]

The bill was first heard in the Finance committee, a hearing that proved to be contentious. The entire legislative contingent from Santa Clara County and the two members of the Board of Trustees from Santa Clara County opposed the bill, questioning the validity of the expert opinion on the exorbitant cost to upgrade the water and sewer system. The majority of the Board of Trustees favored the move to a new site. Lathrop,[79] President of the Board, and Judah, a Board member, not only answered questions from the Committee indicating their extensive knowledge about the California Home, but also challenged Trustees Black and Windey, the members from Santa Clara County. Those who sought to move the institution cited a report from the Surveyor of San Francisco stating the current problems were not amenable to repair. The State sanitary engineer, David Bush, reiterated his department's findings that the water and sewers could not be fixed and moving the California Home was the only solution. Governor Robert Waterman appeared before the Committee and detailed his visit to the California Home a few days prior. While he found the management of the California Home to be admirable, the stench of sewer gas was unbearable, the grounds and buildings

[77] "Two Ends the State May Conserve," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 24, 1889, CDNC.
[78] *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, January 24, 1889, CDNC.
[79] Katherine Lathrop was Leland Stanford's sister-in-law. Stanford served as both a senator and governor of California.

were cold and clammy, and the trees on the site were dying due to improper drainage. He considered it poor judgment to maintain the institution on the same site. Others chimed in. Dr. W. R. Cluness and Dr. G. G. Tyrrell, of the State Board of Health, testified that the site was unsuitable for its present purpose. Assemblyman Mathews, of the Ways and Means Committee, stated the committee had visited the site and also found it unsuitable and unanimously supported moving the institution.[80] The Finance Committee voted against funding the California Home at its present site.[81]

Meanwhile, in another hearing, the Senate Committee on Hospitals produced a majority report stating the conditions at the California Home were excellent and the sewage problems could be easily solved and thus, there was no reason to move the institution to a new site. The minority report, however, was diametrically opposed to the findings of the majority report, stating there was not enough land for the increasing number of residents, and the water and sewage systems were inadequate. Additionally, redoing the sewer system meant connecting it to the Santa Clara system and no agreement existed between the state and the county on how the expensive costs would be divided.[82] The Assembly Committee on Hospitals, in contrast to the Senate Committee, strongly condemned the present location and any effort to attempt to make it somewhat passable.[83] Neither committee, however, had any jurisdiction over the funding bills, as these bills were under the purview of the Finance Committees.[84]

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[80] "Home for the Feeble-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 25, 1889, CDNC.
[81] "Committees at Work," *Daily Alta California*, January 29, 1889, CDNC.
[82] "State Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, January 29, 1889, CDNC.
[83] "The Reports on the Home for the Feeble-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 30, 1889, CDNC.
[84] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Sacramento Daily Union*, January 31, 1889, CDNC.

The Finance Committee, in an apparent effort to placate the various factions, voted to have the Governor appoint three more Trustees and mandated that the new site for the California Home be in Santa Clara County.[85] Days of argument and discussion ensued. The *Daily Alta California*, which supported a new site for the California Home, expressed frustration with the extended arguments taking place in the legislature. It stated "while the legislature is about this business of the Home for Feeble-minded Children, it ought to make provision for the care of feeble-minded legislators. Something of the sort seems badly needed."[86] During these extended arguments, Katherine Lathrop, her husband Ariel Lathrop, Julia Judah, and Dr. A. E. Osborne, superintendent of the California Home, spent time in Sacramento lobbying the legislature to move the institution to a new site.[87] The Senate eventually passed an appropriation bill to relocate the California Home to a new site in Santa Clara County.[88] An amendment to the bill stated that any money received for the care of out-of-state children was to be paid to the State Treasury, not the California Home.[89] The Assembly, however, amended the Senate bill by allowing the Board of Trustees to select a new site outside of Santa Clara County and returned it to the Senate.[90] On a tight vote, the Senate concurred on the Assembly's amendment.[91] The Governor approved the bill.[92]

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[85] "The Sacramento Solons," *Daily Alta California*, February 1, 1889, CDNC.
[86] "Municipal Improvement Again," *Daily Alta California*, February 15, 1889, CDNC.
[87] "Social and Personal," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 1, 1889, CDNC.. Katherine Lathrop and Julia Judah were members of the Board of Trustees. "Legislative Notes," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 15, 1889, CDNC.
[88] "The State Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, February 16, 1889, CDNC.
[89] "State Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, February 19, 1889, CDNC.
[90] "Home for Feeble-Minded Children," *San Bernardino Daily Courier*, March 3, 1889, CDNC.
[91] "Sacramento News," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, March 8, 1889, CDNC.
[92] "State Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, March 8, 1889, CDNC.

To diminish the wrangling among numerous legislators eager to have a site in their district chosen for the new California Home, presuming it would be an economic benefit to their district, some legislators proposed that the Governor appoint a commission to determine the site.[93] However, the Governor chose to give the Board of Trustees that task. By April 10, 1889, newspaper ads soliciting bids on at least 300 acres for the new California Home began to appear. Bids were to be sent to Lathrop, President of the Board of Trustees.[94] Over 80 bids were received, with some municipalities offering free land in an attempt to secure the institution.[95]

The bill to move the California Home, even though it passed the legislature, continued to generate controversy. Ex-senator Thomas Laine of Santa Clara County contacted Attorney General Johnson, in April, arguing that the bill was defective and therefore the California Home could not move from its present location.[96] Following a ten day period for comment on the possible issues with the bill, the Attorney General ruled that Laine's claims were spurious and he attested to the legitimacy of the bill.[97] In June, Commissioner H. C. Dibble, applied to State Controller Dunn for reimbursement of his travel expenses related to selecting a new site. Even though the Attorney General ruled the Act was valid, Dunn was not sure and stated that due to the controversy surrounding the Act, he did not believe he had the authority to disburse funds until the State Supreme Court ruled on the legitimacy of the Act.[98] The Board of Trustees of the California Home filed a petition with the Supreme Court asking for a writ of mandamus

[93] "State Legislature," *Daily Alta California*, February 13, 1889, CDNC.
[94] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 10, 1889, CDNC.
[95] "Feeble-Minded Children," *Daily Alta California*, May 3, 1889, CDNC.
[96] "Attacking a Legislative Act," *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 15, 1889, CDNC.
[97] "Regarding the Legality of Recent Acts," *Sacramento Daily Union*, April 27, 1889, CDNC.
[98] "Dunn in Doubt," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 17, 1889, CDNC.

against Dunn to force him to pay expenses.[99] The Supreme Court served a writ of mandate on Dunn to show cause on why he refused payment.[100] A hearing was held on August 26th, after which the Court ruled the Act was constitutional.[101] By late September, after visiting various proposed sites, the Board of Trustees determined that the site in Sonoma County near Glen Ellen was best suited for the new institution. Several newspapers applauded the selection, noting it would economically benefit the county.[102] Governor Waterman approved the Board's selection.[103] The land needed to be surveyed prior to drawing up plans for the new buildings.[104] Representatives of Santa Clara County continued to protest the relocation of the California Home outside of the county, something the newspapers lampooned as ungracious opposition.[105] Another protest was filed with the state that prior to the land purchase by the Board of Trustees, the property was bonded to Captain Grosse, who then sold it to the State at cost, irritating the original owner, Mr. Hill. As there was an ongoing suit concerning water rights, the Governor and two other citizens promised to buy the property and reimburse the State if the litigation interfered with the establishment of the new California Home.[106] Controversy continued over the purchase of the property. In order to complete the purchase, the State Board of Examiners needed to approve the claim of the original owner, which Governor Waterman and Secretary of State Hendricks did. However,

[99] "Trouble Over Expenses in Selecting the Site for a Home," *Daily Alta California*, June 22, 1889, CDNC.
[100] "Writ of Mandate," *Sacramento Daily Union*, June 22, 1889, CDNC.
[101] "The Feeble-Minded Children Safe," *Daily Alta California*, August 27, 1889, CDNC.
[102] "Home for Feeble-Minded Children Located," *Press Democrat*, September 20, 1889, CDNC. "(No Title)," *Sonoma Democrat*, September 1889, CDNC.
[103] "No Title," *Press Democrat,* September 28, 1889, CDNC.
[104] "Local Brevities," *Press Democrat*, September 24, 1889, CDNC.
[105] *Sonoma Democrat*, October 5, 1889, CDNC.
[106] "The Hill Sale," *Press Democrat*, October 22, 1889, CDNC.

Hendricks withdrew his approval pending consultation with the Attorney General.[107] Bitterness continued over the new site continued. Trustees from other state run facilities, such as J. W. Pratt, of the State Normal School, resigned over the removal of the California Home to Sonoma County.[108] Governor Waterman accused Pratt of the basest ingratitude for publishing his accusations in the newspaper without talking to Waterman first, especially since Waterman had appointed him as trustee and had done several other favors for him.[109] Finally, on December 7, 1889, the deed to the property sold to the State was recorded.[110] Construction was to start in the new year.[111]

Even after the deed was recorded, controversy continued. For example, the Board of Trustees had not determined what material was to be used in construction of the buildings: stone, brick, concrete or wood. The *Press Democrat* advocated for stone since it would be cheaper as there were many quarries in Sonoma County. Additionally, stone was more durable and attractive than other materials.[112] Others advocated for brick, which was finally chosen, although whether it would be made on site was as yet undetermined. Agriculture Commissioner Woodley Maslin was named Superintendent of the new Home to oversee construction, a process that was delayed due to ongoing issues with water rights.[113] Advertisements for sealed construction bids started appearing on May 18, 1890.[114] The cornerstone of the main building was not laid until November 19,

[107] "The Feeble-Minded Home," *Sacramento Daily Union*, November 28, 1889, CDNC.
[108] "Personal," *Daily Alta California*, December 4, 1889, CDNC.
[109] "Base Ingratitude," *Daily Alta California*, December 5, 1889, CDNC.
[110] "Deeded to the State," *Los Angeles Herald*, December 8, 1889, CDNC.
[111] "Local Brevities," *Press Democrat*, December 21, 1889, CDNC.
[112] "County News," *Press Democrat*, January 11, 1890, CDNC.
[113] "Home for the Feeble-Minded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 8, 1890, CDNC.
[114] "Notice to Contractors," *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 18, 1890, CDNC.

1890.[115] The cornerstone laying was a well-attended event with the Governor and his staff participating and a special train bringing over 300 honored guests to the ceremony.[116] The Grand Lodge of Masons was in charge of the ceremony.[117] The event was well covered in California newspapers, with an extended article in the *San Francisco Call*.[118] In an attempt to hold down costs and to involve the community and help it develop a sense of ownership in the new California Home, the Superintendent of the Horticulture Department of the California Home solicited plants and cutting from the community to be used in the Home's landscaping.[119] The California newspapers covered the ongoing construction of the new California Home with the *San Francisco Call* publishing drawings of the new buildings.[120] The construction was finished and the residents moved to the new California Home on November 24, 1891.[121]

The process of establishing the California Home in its permanent location in Sonoma County was complicated and went far beyond the mission or function of the actual institution. It involved political figures, local citizens, prominent members of California society, and the press, which kept the citizens of the state informed. While the Board of Trustees and the superintendent of the institution were involved in the process, the establishment of the California Home was shaped by a wide range of agendas, some of which were not compatible. Communities were anxious for the perceived economic

[115] "Home for the Feeble-Minded," *Daily Alta California*, November 11, 1890, CDNC.
[116] "The Cornerstone Laid," *Daily Alta California*, November 20, 1890, CDNC.
[117] "Cornerstone of the Main Building Soon to Be Laid," *Press Democrat*, November 11, 1890, CDNC.
[118] "A Noble Charity," *San Francisco Call*, November 20, 1890, CDNC.
[119] "Local Brevities," *Press Democrat*, May 18, 1890, CDNC.
[120] "Home for Imbeciles," *San Francisco Call*, August 27, 1891, CDNC; "The Institution for the Feeble-Minded," *Healdsburg Tribune, Enterprise and Scimitar*, August 27, 1891, CDNC.
[121] "Transferred the Children," *San Francisco Call*, November 25, 1891, CDNC; Cahn and Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934*.

benefit of locating the institution in their location, while the state legislature was anxious to control costs. The fundraising by local groups and the large number of people attending the cornerstone laying ceremony indicated public support for the institution and the services it provided. The legislature eventually provided generous funding for the new California Home, an indication that it was supported by their constituents.

The advent of the new California Home raised other questions. At the School Principals' Association meeting, for example, some wondered if, now that the new California Home would serve more feeble-minded children, should feeble-minded children even attempt public school or should they be referred to the institution for educational programming.[122] These questions received much greater consideration by educators, institutional staff, and the general public in the following decades.

Every state faced challenges and based policies on particular circumstances. In Minnesota, for example, its institution was set up in 1879 as an experimental school. Concern about feeble-minded children in the Saint Peter Insane Asylum, as it the only setting that accepted feeble-minded children, led to a law that required all initial pupils for the experimental school must come from the Insane Asylum. In Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Teachers Association was one of the primary forces advocating for a state institution for the feeble-minded, arguing that an institution for the feeble-minded would solve two different problems. First, it would provide the specialized training needed by the feeble-minded child that could not be provided by a regular teacher, and second, it

[122] "School Principals Meet," *Daily Alta California*, May 10, 1890, CDNC.

would free up time that was currently spent on the feeble-minded child and redirect it to the regular students.[123]

In 1888, the New Jersey Home for the Education and Care of Feeble-minded Children (later simply known as Vineland) opened. This was a private institution but received substantial funding from the state in the form of warrants, whereby the state paid a set amount for the care of a specific number of feeble-minded children whose parents could not pay themselves. As a result, parents unable to afford the cost of placing their child at the New Jersey Home, not only had to fill out the application forms, but they also had to petition the governor for a warrant slot.[124] In New Jersey, while the superintendent had input into the decision, the authority for admission of public pay children rested with the Governor's office and was, thus, subject to political pressure from lawmakers and political connections who advocated for admission of certain cases.[125] Other East Coast institutions were also a private/public mix of funding, but in them the superintendent usually determined who was admitted.

Just as the antebellum institutions began with small numbers, so did those that developed after the Civil War. Here, too, positive publicity campaigns about the individual and collective achievements enabled the institutions for the feeble-minded to become established and attain the resources to expand. A circular pattern soon evolved, as the number of residents increased until no more space was available and waiting lists

[123] "The School for the Feeble-Minded," *Wisconsin Journal of Education* XXV, no. 7 (July 1895): 147–48.
[124] E. R. Johnstone, Letter to Mr. Swayze," May 2, 1902, Box 7 Folder 195 Governor Murphy Correspondence, New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, New Jersey.
[125] One consequence of the power resting in the Governor's office is that letters from parents to the governor are considered governmental records and not health records so they do not fall under HIPAA regulations and are thus available to researchers.

filled. Supporters and administrators petitioned for more money to build additional facilities, the money was approved, buildings were built, and children were admitted until waiting lists again appeared. Some institutions for the feeble-minded ended up with waiting lists of 300 to 500 children. Initially, no provision was made for a custodial function. It was assumed students would enter, receive training, and then return to their home communities. Founders assumed an equilibrium of incoming and outgoing students would exist, thus limiting the need to expand the physical plant. According to historian Sarah Rose, in the early decades of the New York State Asylum the discharge rate "averaged 52.4 percent during the asylum's first four decades."[126] The Massachusetts asylum had similar rates. On average, residents at the Illinois Institution for Feeble-minded Children stayed two years. Prior to the Civil War, many of the residents were private pay, coming from intact, usually rural, families. In these rural settings, families could make use of feeble-minded children who could contribute to the family's economic status in some way. Supervision could also be provided. This changed dramatically in the decades after the Civil War with the movement of rural populations to the industrial cities where partial engagement in work activities and supervision became much more difficult.[127] Henry Knight of Connecticut reported in 1879 that over one-quarter of the children who left his institution were self-supporting. However, this number was decreasing as a "more defective class" of children were admitted to the institution.[128] H. B. Wilbur of New York stated that a large proportion of the graduates of his institution were able to engage in useful occupations in the

[126] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 36.
[127] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 50-51.
[128] "Status of the Work before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 96.

community when they received supervision from their families. However, those that had no homes or families to return to, where support could be offered, presented a problem.[129] Thus, many residents now had no homes to return to, necessitating an increased custodial function for the institutions. The increase in residents upset the balance between those being admitted and those being released, increasing the population of residents.[130] With the increased population of residents, came increased staffing, organizational structures and funding issues.

Education

At the time that the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO) was organized in 1876, superintendents considered educational services, somewhat broadly defined, as the primary function for their institutions. They established the guidelines and parameters for their work at that initial national meeting. They divided the category of feeble-mindedness into three, distinct groups, the superior grade, the imbecile and the idiot. Each category was to have a different program plan based on the work of Seguin. The focus for the superior grades was to develop personal care and vocational skills so they could be discharged back to their families in five to ten years as functional members of society. Imbeciles were candidates for lifetime care as their skill attainment would not rise to the level where they could function without adult supervision. Thus, they should be taught skills of use to the institution. The final group, the idiots, would not benefit from educational or industrial training. As they required lifetime care, their programming should consist of

[129] "Status of the Work before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced during the Years 1878 and 1879," 97.
[130] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*, 28-9.

amusements, exercise, and the development of good habits.[131] However, most of those admitted to the institution were those seen as benefiting from the programming, not imbeciles or idiots. As there were few of those in the latter groups admitted in the early years, their admittance and care requirements were not seen as an issue by the superintendents. However, as more residents were retained and the size of institutions increased, along with an increase in the custodial function for those deemed incapable of education, the institutional commitment to Seguin's methods underwent adjustments and adaptations.

In the early years, in addition to selective admission of only those thought to benefit from the educational programming, efforts were made by institution staff and policies to maintain the residents' connections to their families and communities. Parents were free to withdraw their child at any time. The children's clothing was provided by the parents or, if parents could not afford the cost, the county. The goal was to maintain parental and family ties so that at the end of training, often 16 or 18, the child could return to the community and live out a semi-productive life sunder the care of family members.

The routines in these later institutions followed a pattern. In an 1882 article, Dr. Charles Toppan Wilbur of Lincoln, Illinois, provided a detailed account of the class work undertaken by the 210 children at his institution. All children attended chapel from 9-9:30 each morning. Classes ran from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM and from 2 PM to 4PM. Children could choose to participate in singing, sewing or art classes. All children

[131] Isaac N. Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," *Proceedings* (1877): 19-24.

participated in an exercise and movement class in the gymnasium and a calisthenics class. Classes generally ran for a half hour. The children were grouped by sex and ability level. The higher level residents received lessons in reading, arithmetic, writing, spelling, and grammar, similar to the content taught in public schools, but using Seguin's methods. Middle level residents encountered similar topics but at a lower level. Lower level residents engaged in kindergarten type activities such as stringing beads, counting objects, and simple braiding.[132]

Some institutions incorporated other social and cultural experiences for those who seemed to have an aptitude. For example, Dr. Gustavus A. Doren of the Ohio Institution for Feeble-minded Youth reported that he had formed an orchestra and noted that the children willingly gave up their play time in order to practice.[133] Similarly, Dr. William B. Fish at the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-minded Children at Lincoln, Illinois, organized a cornet band composed of seventeen boys that performed at public concerts and community events.[134] These enrichment opportunities revealed skills and qualities that the public might not have anticipated even as they provided a richer quality of life within the institutions. Kerlin, of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-minded Children, stated that the addition of a kindergarten class[135] at his institution promoted "less incorrigibility and viciousness and very much more hand-co-ordination at twelve years of

[132] C. T. Wilbur, "Class Work of a School Year at the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children 1882," *Proceedings* (1883): 240.
[133] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879", 95-108.
[134] William B. Fish, "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1886), 353.
[135] All young students started in a kindergarten class which contained children at a certain skill level (such as would be found in a regular school kindergarten); it was not age dependent, although by age twelve, many students were moved to the higher school classes or were in a strictly vocational program.

age, to advance to our higher school classes and industries."[136] In the asylum department for custodial cases, he reported that school training quickly became a necessity, for "without desks, teachers, music, and all the paraphernalia of school methods, our asylum would sink into utter wretchedness. It was significant how soon the disturbing cries, irritability, and restlessness ceased upon adding the teacher and her school-room."[137] Dr. Alexander Beaton of Ontario, Canada, lamented the inability to provide educational services to his residents due to lack of funding. He commented that, "Until ample provision is made for the education of the idiot it cannot be said that we have kept pace with the age."[138]

Industrial and vocational education was an important focus in the institutions for the feeble-minded because it was initially anticipated that children admitted to the institution would return to their home communities at the end of their educational training, a period of five to ten years, and would need to be self-sufficient. However, the fine line developed between vocational training and the use of resident labor to administratively reduce institutional costs was not always achieved. The focus on vocational training/institutional labor force represented a major tension for the superintendents between the role of educator and the role of administrator. This tension was heightened when state laws changed so there was no longer a time limit placed on the length of stay, especially where custodial asylums were located on the same grounds.

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[136] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879", *Proceedings* (1879): 102-103.
[137] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," *Proceedings* (1885): 370.
[138] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 163.

With many of the institutions for the feeble-minded reliant on state funding, economic swings and changes in state priories often resulted in fluctuations in financial support for the institutions which made using resident labor a necessity in order to continue operation. For example, the sewing class at the Illinois institution was responsible for darning all the residents' socks. The girls and women were trained in domestic occupations, such as baking, cooking, laundry and cleaning. The higher grade women were also taught to care for lower grade residents. Their training coincided with the institution's need for these services. The boys and men were trained in farm work, tending stock, carpentry, shoe making and broom making. Dr. J. Q. A. Stewart of Kentucky reported in 1882 that his industrial department was now self-supporting, with the shoe shop actually producing more shoes than needed by the institution and the sale of the extra shoes was turning a profit. The cost of training the boys in carpentry was offset by the work done on the institution. In the laundry, they were able to discharge a paid employee because of the labor provided by the residents. While the labor was useful to the institution, it was also training that would allow the residents to leave the institution and find similar work. Stewart spoke of placing three girls in the past four months into families where they could earn "more than a mere living, by doing laundry"[139] There was an on-going effort at the Kentucky institution for the feeble-minded to find paying jobs outside the institution for their residents.[140] O. W. Archibald of the Iowa Asylum for Feeble-minded Children reported that after three years of

[139] Stewart, J. Q. A., "The Industrial Department of the Kentucky Institution for the Education and Training of Feeble-Minded Children 1882," *Proceedings* (1883), 238.
[140] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1881 and 1882," *Proceedings* (1882): 265-278.

existence, the training received by the residents resulted in them being able to do two thirds of the work needed by the institution.[141] In Illinois, several boys were trained to operate knitting machines, producing all of the stockings needed by the institution.[142]

In Kentucky, the law stated that feeble-minded children must be dismissed from the institution after ten years. Stewart stated that if they were only taught reading and writing, when they left the institution, they would have no employable skills and would likely become vagrants or worse. There was a marked difference between genders on what was seen as a good outcome. For females, the hope was to have them placed into good homes where they could earn wages as domestic workers and be protected, presumably from having illegitimate children. For males, the hope was that they would have the skills to earn a living wage and thus avoid the evils caused by idleness.[143] He also stated that through the industrial and educational programs at the institution, "The imbecile population of the State will be rescued from utter degradation and raised to a respectable position in society."[144]

Medical Care

Public health initiatives were a common consideration of the AMO members, especially with the construction of new buildings. Already at its meeting in 1877, Kerlin presented a paper, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile

[141] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 163-176.
[142] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," (350–72.
[143] Stewart, J. Q. A., "The Industrial Department of the Kentucky Institution for the Education and Training of Feeble-Minded Children 1882," 236.
[144] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 175.

Classes," which proposed standards in the construction of new institutions for the feeble-minded that were far advanced for institutional building at prisons and insane asylums of the time. He stated that, "the most modern and best approved methods of ventilation, heating, drainage, sewerage, etc., should be adopted."[145] His ideas were quite specific, arguing that the first floor of the buildings should be completely above ground with high ceilings and lots of windows to ensure the purity of air needed for health and several large day rooms with a limit of no more than twenty children in a day room at one time. Playgrounds and ample space for outdoor pursuits were also considered essential. Bathroom facilities were to be large and well equipped since training in personal hygiene was considered of paramount importance in the training of feeble-minded children. H. B. Wilbur MD, in his report on the status of the work in New York in 1878, brought up the importance of sanitary precautions when establishing an institution with over a hundred residents. He reiterated the need for appropriate heating and ventilating systems along with an adequate water supply. Both men recommended that institutions for the feeble-minded be enclosed by a fence for the safety of the residents and to protect their privacy.[146] Locating institutions for the feeble-minded in the country, away from the congestion, filth and poor hygienic practices occurring in urban areas accomplished many of their goals.

Most of the superintendents were physicians. *The Proceedings* of the Association detailed a strong interest in the medical care of the residents of the institutions for the feeble-minded, based on the number of medical-themed articles in their journal. Fish,

[145] Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," 24.
[146] Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," 24; "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 95-108.

superintendent of the Elwyn institution in Pennsylvania, argued in an 1882 paper that, even though they could not cure feeble-mindedness, as physicians, they had an obligation to provide ordinary medical care to their charges. This was counter to the actions of many physicians outside the field who did not believe in treating ordinary illness in feeble-minded children. Fish argued for careful observation, especially of the lower classes of imbeciles, since they may not display the same symptoms or responses to disease as higher classes did. He observed that respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia, diphtheria and croup, tended to be the leading cause of death in the institution, while phthisis (tuberculosis) was the most difficult to treat. Citing contemporary expert understanding that tuberculosis was non-infectious, he speculated that it might be more prevalent among "a special species of mankind, the 'scrofulous'."[147] He also dealt diarrhea and skin conditions which were two classes of illness common to large, congregate living situations, such as prisons and poorhouses.[148] While he relied on "respected experts" for treatment options, he concluded his article with the following statement:

> There is a homely old adage to the effect that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Particularly does this apply to the prevention of disease among our patients. Predisposed as many of them are by heredity to disease, and unfitted to cope with its depressing influences, its prevention becomes a matter of vital importance to the medical officer of an institution for their care and training. A careful study of the sanitary condition of the institution, a close and intimate familiarity with the minute details of dress, food, occupation, and exercise, is by no means the least important of his duties.[149]

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[147] William B. Fish, "The Medical Treatment of Idiots and Imbeciles 1882," *Proceedings* (1883): 220.
[148] Francis Russell. *Recent Advances in the Science of Hygiene: An Address Delivered to Haslemere and District Sanitary Aid Association, 1896.* 1897. http://www.jstor.org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/stable/60241176. Mooney, Graham. "Diagnostic Spaces: Workhouse, Hospital, and Home in Mid-Victorian London." *Social Science History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 357-90. http://www.jstor.org.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/stable/40268006.
[149] William B. Fish, "The Medical Treatment of Idiots and Imbeciles 1882," 224-225.

He, thus, tied public health concerns to the treatment of illnesses common to large congregate facilities.

It was likely that institutional staff came in more frequent contact with certain conditions, such as epilepsy, than did a physician in general practice, leading to expertise in certain types of conditions. A number of articles on the description, care and treatment of epilepsy appeared in the first decade of the AMO's publications. This seemed to be a special area of interest for Dr. George H. Knight, the first Superintendent of the Minnesota Training School for Idiots and Imbeciles located in Faribault, Minnesota. In 1884, the membership discussed the feasibility of admitting children with epilepsy to the institutions. The general consensus was that they should be admitted as epileptic and feeble-minded, as long as the institution maintained medical oversight.[150] Various case studies were presented with treatment options described. Dr. Martin Barr of Pennsylvania presented statistics on the epileptics in his institution. There were 89 cases of epilepsy as of September 30, 1885, an increase of eight over the previous year. Three people died from epileptic convulsions. While thirty-eight patients improved with treatment, thirty-five did not, with no information available on the rest. Several of the members stressed environmental controls, such as dietary restrictions and daily exercise, as essential for the treatment of epilepsy.[151] Barr also described other health issues such as enuresis, commonly known as bed-wetting. While tincture of belladonna worked for this problem, he believed preventative measures such as limiting fluids at supper, making

[150] Later, the superintendents would advocate for separate institutions for epileptics as they often did not fit in well with the feeble-minded residents.
[151] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 370-371.

sure the child went to the bathroom before bed and waking the child up once during the night to use the bathroom were far more effective than medication.[152]

Physicians in institutions for the feeble-minded necessarily dealt both with individual illnesses as well as with the kind of diseases more often confronted by public health authorities as they dealt with contagion and sanitation. Determining the etiology of feeble-mindedness, in an effort at prevention since there was no known cure, was a particular focus of the AMO.

Causation

Prior to the Civil War, determining the causes of feeble-mindedness was not a high priority as medical science had few methods available to investigate the causation of feeble-mindedness. This changed after the Civil War as new methodologies were available to medical personnel. It became an area of primary importance to the members of the AMO, even appearing in the organization's constitution. At that first meeting, the following points were made regarding the causes of feeble-mindedness.

1. Idiocy and imbecility are conditions in which there is a want of natural or harmonious development of the mental, active, and moral powers of the individual affected, usually associated with some visible defect or infirmity of the physical organization and functional anomalies; expressed in various forms and degrees of disordered vital action, in defect or absence of one or more of the special senses, in irregular or uncertain volition, in dullness, or absence of sensibility and perception.
2. Idiocy and imbecility are dependent *generally* on hereditary or prenatal causes; *occasionally* on the diseases or accidents of infancy; *rarely* also, upon certain debilitation influences of childhood.

[152] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 371.

3. Tendencies to congenital cerebral disease of offspring are established through practices and vices which lower the morale, impair the strength, and vitiate the blood of ancestors and parents; hence the infirmity is avertable in a very large degree, or may be greatly diminished in any community, by increase of general knowledge, the practice of virtue, and the universal obedience to hygienic laws.[153]

Numerous questions regarding the cause of idiocy were raised. "What have marriages of consanguinity to do with it? What influence has intemperance and other vices in its creation? Are the sins of the parents thus visited upon their children and their children's children?"[154] Thus, the science of heredity became an important aspect of determining causation. At mid-nineteenth century, a variety of different theories existed. While it was known that organisms inherited characteristics, the mechanism was unknown. The publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859 seemed, to many, to be the definitive marker between the old views of heritability and the new, scientific ones. However, between the publication of *The Origin of Species* and the end of the nineteenth century, Darwinian natural selection faced mounting opposition from the scientific community.[155] Among a variety of alternatives to natural selection and, by association, strongly fixed heredity, there was a renewed interest by prominent North American scientists in Lamackism in a modified form, often referred to as neo-Lamarckism. This late-nineteenth-century theory of evolution suggested the inheritance of acquired characteristics. According to neo-Lamarckism, when an organism changed its habits, there would be changes based on either the use or disuse of the body part. If the new habit was maintained over generations and the effect was transmitted from parent to offspring, even if only slightly, then the change would build up over time and become permanent. If the entire

[153] Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," 20.
[154] Henry H. Smith, "Remarks 1882," *Proceedings* (1883), 262.
[155] Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 196-202.

population adopted the change then the change would be adaptive and purposeful. If this were true, then, according to Bowler, "Variation within the species was directed, not random, so there were no unfit individuals to be eliminated by struggle."[156]

Neo-Lamarckism had considerable support at the end of the nineteenth century from scientists in a variety of fields, including botany and paleontology. Science and religion were still closely connected at this time and advocates of neo-Lamarckism viewed the "inheritance of acquired characteristics as the kind of mechanism a wise and benevolent God would institute to produce adaptation and progress."[157] The possibility that improving the skills of the feeble-minded would result in their offspring inheriting the better characteristics through neo-Lamarckian inheritance influenced institutions for the feeble-minded.[158]

A variety of methods were employed toward determining the causes of idiocy. Institutional leaders reacted to the public stereotypes that the feeble-minded were some sort of lesser creatures and argued that idiots were human beings, not inhuman or lesser creatures. While different and with apparent defects, they were human-beings, nonetheless. Most analyses posited that the defect causing the feeble-mindedness was connected to a defect in the brain of the feeble-minded person.[159] In an era when causation of illness and defect was being actively explored, physical examination of the brain was deemed an important scientific method. In 1882, the AMO discussed the importance of using autopsies and trained pathologists to assist with post-mortem

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[156] Bowler, *Evolution*, 3rd ed., 237.
[157] Bowler, *Evolution*, 3rd ed., 237.
[158] The rediscovery of Mendel's work in 1900 altered this understanding and resulted in a greater emphasis on eugenics
[159] Hervey B. Wilbur, "Instinct not Predominant in Idiocy," *Proceedings* (1880), 141.

microscopy studies. While most of the superintendents were physicians, few had sufficient knowledge of brain histology to do such work. The information gathered from the post-mortem when correlated with the history of the resident to would help determine if there were any patterns where the defect and the behavioral observations seemed to be in tandem.[160] Dr. Henry Knight, in his 1879 article on hydrocephalus, reiterated this need to focus on the pathology of idiocy as some conditions were stable but others represented active disease and mitigated against improvement. The post-mortem examination of patients with hydrocephalus, for example, showed significant destruction of brain tissue. This was correlated with a progressive decrease in physical functioning as well.[161] Dr. A. W. Wilmarth, of the Elwyn Institution, reported post-mortem findings of depressions on the skull in the temporal regions, just above and behind the ears. In four cases there was reliable history of a difficult forceps delivery. Wilmarth stated that, "These facts lead us to suspect that the violent localized pressure of this invaluable instrument on the delicate tissue of the fetal brain is not always so harmless as is generally believed."[162]

Another way of trying to determine the etiology of feeble-mindedness was to look at family history for clues regarding its hereditary nature. In his 1880 article, "Etiology of Idiocy," Kerlin presented a table of one hundred different cases of idiocy. Each case had information on the sex, grade of idiocy, other conditions and birth order. It also contained a history of the pregnancy, birth and infancy, total number of maternal births, information on siblings, age of parents at the time of birth, age of parents when they died,

[160] "Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting 1882," *Proceedings* (1883): 183–87.
[161] Henry M. Knight, "On Internal Hydrocephalus," *Proceedings* (1879): 81.
[162] A. W. Wilmarth, "Notes on the Anatomy of the Idiot Brain 1885," *Proceedings* (1886): 323.

and information on the health of both the parents and grandparents.[163] The information from this table was then tabulated in a chart adapted from Richard Dugdale's work on the Jukes family.[164] The chart correlated the mental status of the child with parental and grandparental medical and social conditions, such as consumption, intemperance, epilepsy, consanguinity and insanity. It showed that, for example, in thirty-eight cases of idiocy, intemperance was present in the parents or grandparents.[165] Several of the institutions attempted to carry out studies on the etiology of feeble-mindedness by having questionnaires regarding a resident's family history filled out by family members. Dr. A. C. Rogers conducted one such study at the Glenwood Institution in Iowa. He integrated the family history with the careful documentation on the child and the information gained from the pathology study done post-mortem. For Rogers, the importance of finding the etiology of idiocy went beyond being able to focus treatment and training more effectively. He believed knowing the etiology of idiocy would lead to prophylaxis; once the public understood the causes of idiocy, they would cease engaging in the actions that brought it about.[166]

Intemperance and the abuse of substances other than alcohol were seen as definite causes of idiocy. Dr. J. C. Carson of Syracuse, New York, presented a paper in 1885 entitled, "Report of a Case of the Opium Habit in an Idiot Boy." The child's mother had

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[163] Isaac N. Kerlin, "Etiology of Idiocy," *Proceedings* (1880): 152-153.
[164] Richard Dugdale conducted a study of the Jukes family (a pseudonym) in 1877. Tracing the family tree back to 1740, He determined that the Jukes family had cost the New York state government over $1,000,000 in public relief, and costs related to criminal activity including prostitution and theft. While he argued that many of these problems were related to poverty and not heredity, later authors tied his study to the emerging literature on eugenics.
[165] The temperance movement and the eugenics movement were tightly connected to public concern about feeblemindedness.
[166] Arthur C. Rogers, "On the Ascribed Causation of Idiocy, as Illustrated in Reports to the Iowa Institution for Feeble-Minded Children 1884," *Proceedings* (1886): 296-301.

been taking opium for neuralgia for seven or eight years prior to his birth. Carson described the behavior of the new infant as jerky and nonstop crying beginning about six hours after birth. This behavior continued for hours until the child was given some opium, whereupon he quieted immediately. Carson described the on-going addiction of the child until age seven when he was gradually weaned off of it. Carson believed, that, given that intemperance in one or both parents could cause idiocy in their offspring, it was likely that opium addiction caused similar results. He was concerned that the increase in the opium habit in civilized countries was perhaps leading to an increase in idiocy.[167]

Intemperance was frequently cited as a cause of imbecility during this first decade of the AMO. It had a prominent place in the family histories collected by the superintendents as part of the intake process. H. M. Greene, the superintendent of the institution for the feeble-minded in Lawrence, Kansas, claimed in a paper read at the 1882 meeting that the children of those who are ruined by alcohol were "doomed to an eternal passion for debauch or to an existence of helpless imbecility."[168] He held the State accountable for the care of these unfortunates, because the State was responsible for licensing the establishments that sold alcohol and therefore should assume responsibility for the innocent victims of this vice. Dr. G. E. Shuttleworth of Great Britain, however, questioned the direct influence of intemperance in the parents on idiocy in the offspring. He saw it as a contributing factor.

[167] J. C. Carson, "Report of a Case of the Opium Habit in an Idiot Boy 1885," *Proceedings* (1886): 337.
[168] H. M. Greene, "The Relation of the State to Its Charities 1882," *Proceedings* (1883): 257.

He questioned the statistics reported from American institutions for the feeble-minded that nearly 50% of their residents had intemperate parents. Even with the criticism from Shuttleworth, the on-going American concern over intemperance as a cause of idiocy led the AMO to pass the following resolution in 1886.

> Whereas the members of this Association are convinced from their observation and the records of their institutions that a large percentage of idiocy and feeblemindedness is due to the transmitted effects of alcohol; therefore, resolved, that it is their conviction that, together with the educational training of the young in the avoidance of the evils in intemperance, there should be some legal repression upon the indiscriminate sale of intoxicating beverages.[169]

This concern of the AMO was a part of a larger societal movement against intemperance. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, a powerful reform organization, viewed temperance as the solution to most of the problems of the lower classes, such as poverty, prostitution, and criminality.[170]

The institutions for the feeble-minded at this time were serving about five percent of the total population of feeble-minded persons. The superintendents regularly reported long waiting lists for admission. They believed that if the causes of idiocy could be determined, then appropriate preventative measures could be initiated, as in the case of the AMO's response to intemperance.[171] By having a pathologist working on post-mortem examination and correlating that information with physical signs to produce a scientific explanation of causation, AMO members felt that this would lead to decreases in the number of feeble-minded people in the country.[172] Dugdale's report on the Jukes

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[169] "Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting 1886," *Proceedings* (1886): 375-81.
[170] Joseph R. Gusfield, "Social Structure and Moral Reform: A Study of the Women's Christian Temperance Union," *American Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 3 (November 1955): 221–32.
[171] Greene, "The Relation of the State to Its Charities 1882," 257.
[172] "Minutes of the Tenth Annual Meeting 1886," 375-381.

was used as a model in organizing family history information.[173] It figured prominently in later work on eugenics and influenced the work in the institutions. Other family studies, such as the Kallikaks, Nams, and Estabrook's re-examination of the Jukes family, which appeared after the turn of the twentieth century, conflated Dugdale's examination of the Jukes with the hereditary taint of feeble-mindedness.

However, the types of questions asked, such as, were the sins of the fathers visited upon their children, indicate a moral rather than a scientific underpinning. The early work of the superintendents was often spoken of in the AMO's publications as being God's work, although the connection to established religion was general and not closely linked to specific institutions. Henry Knight described the work of the training schools as, "holy, beneficent labor."[174] Religious underpinnings were not limited to superintendents of the institutions. Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Kentucky, J. Desha Pickett, who addressed the 1881 meeting stated

> You form them into good and useful citizens, and prepare them as intelligent candidates of the kingdom of God. This is the highest form of secondary creation. This is the highest expression of Christian civilization. It is, indeed, Godlike in its conception, Godlike in its processes, Godlike in its blessed results.[175]

Powell of Iowa called the residents of his institution, "the most pitiable and deserving of God's creatures."[176]

The expression of Christian duty, the Darwinian ideas of natural selection, and Spencer's ideas of selection of the fittest were important but sometimes inconsistent

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[173] Isaac N. Kerlin, "Provision for Imbeciles, Addendum," *Proceedings* (1886): 1–18.
[174] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 96.
[175] J. Desha Pickett, "Remarks 1881," *Proceedings* (1883): 213.
[176] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 359.

aspects of the AMO members' thinking. This created an inherent tension in the work of caring for the feeble-minded that reflected a similar ambiguity in the work of caring for such vulnerable populations, as dependent children, delinquents, alcoholics, prostitutes and poor people in general. Catherine Brown captured this tension between the religious aspect of the work and the scientific when she wrote in 1877, that according to the dictates of Christianity the members of the AMO were "a friend to humanity," while according to modern science, we are "enemies of the human race."[177] The resolution was, according to Brown, to care for the feeble-minded who already existed and work to staunch the ranks of ever increasing numbers of feeble-minded people.[178] This dichotomy resulted in a need for outreach to various constituencies such as government officials and the general public.

Classification

Historically, feeble-mindedness had been considered a form of insanity.[179] Attempts to define the term idiocy and differentiate it from other mental conditions began in the early nineteenth century. In an era when classification was a preoccupation in medicine and science, the emerging behavioral sciences were becoming interested in classification of intellect as a broader descriptor of people. The inconsistency in terminology, especially regarding feeble-mindedness, was an issue and created confusion as to the specifics of the observed conditions. For example, Seguin had divided idiocy, the term he used for feeble-mindedness, into four different categories, idiocy, imbecility,

[177] Catherine W. Brown, "Prevention of Mental Disease," *Proceedings* (1877): 25
[178] Brown, "Prevention of Mental Disease," 25.
[179] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation,* 25-50. Legally, this designation continued into the twentieth century.

backwardness, and simpleness, while Kerlin used superior grade, imbecile, and idiot.[180] As part of their efforts at professionalization, the members of the AMO were particularly concerned with finding a robust system of classification for feeble-mindedness that could be systematically used across the various institutions. Wilbur, in a paper presented at the second annual meeting of the AMO, stated that feeble-mindedness was a "default of mental faculties that is congenital, or manifests itself at an early age,"[181] in contrast to dementia where the person lost already attained mental abilities. He described the feeble-minded individual as undeveloped and lacking in normal instincts and intuitions. Within the category of feeble-mindedness, he argued, a wide spectrum existed. Wilbur acknowledged that each member of the AMO had methods, based on experience, for determining the level of idiocy. He suggested that with the expansion of institutions for the feeble-minded, a more consistent and definitive way of classifying should be developed in order to measure progress and eventually establish a prognosis of future improvement.[182] The discussion among the members, following the paper, came to the general conclusion that "all existing systems of classification are imperfect and unsatisfactory."[183] However, they agreed that a standard classification system would help to standardize admission forms across the institutions, allowing for improved statistical analysis. It would also allow staff from the various institutions to more easily compare techniques and strategies for various categories of children.

On one level the issue of classification was simply a means of organizing a large amount of data obtained from parental interviews, admission forms, and practitioner

[180] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation,* 54.
[181] Hervey B. Wilbur, "The Classification of Idiocy," *Proceedings* (1877): 29.
[182] Wilbur, "The Classification of Idiocy," 29-35.
[183] "Meeting for Organization 1876," *Proceedings* (1877): 3–6.

notes. On another level, however, the quest for a classification system indicated the increasing professionalization of the field and its accompanying bureaucracy. When the first institutions for the feeble-minded were opened, they tended to be small endeavors, often in the home of the founder. The children were known personally by the superintendent. The work was considered experimental, and while funding had always been an issue, with experimental programs and limited numbers, specifying more global issues was not as critical as it would become later. With an increased number of institutions, many housing more than three hundred students, and requiring state funding, it became imperative to determine who would benefit from the training programs. A classification system would allow for better information exchange between institutions regarding effective programs for children with different grades of feeble-mindedness. It would also lead to better predictions of outcomes, a necessary piece of information when the superintendents were lobbying the legislature for increased funding.

Outreach

The AMO worked diligently with state legislatures to secure funding to establish new institutions. The members realized, however, that to secure ongoing funding they would need to enlist the support of the general public on the value of the service they provided. Several means were employed to do this. The AMO sought to inform a wide public audience of the importance of their work through the publication of their work. At its first meeting, the Executive Committee sought to find a publisher for the proceedings of the annual meetings. J. B. Lippincott and Company of Philadelphia agreed to publish the papers presented at the annual meetings in pamphlet form. These pamphlets were distributed, "All over the land, showing the utility and necessity of idiotic asylums in the

country."[184] One important target was the educated public in the states that were contemplating the establishment of institutions for the feeble-minded, as influential leaders were key figures in obtaining support from legislators. Some individual institutions created their own pamphlet or newspaper publications and reported on them at the annual meetings. At the 1879 meeting, Kerlin of Pennsylvania reported that his institution had published and distributed five thousand copies of a circular of information containing thirty-five pages intended to provide the public with information on the institution's methods of training.[185] In Illinois, C. T. Wilbur reported that the institutional staff had established a monthly newspaper, *The Asylum Index and Review*, which had over eight hundred subscribers throughout the country.[186] Other officials worked to get local and regional newspapers to publish articles on the work of the institution. For example, Fish reported an increase in public interest in his institution's work, citing an article in *Chicago Inter-Ocean* by Lydia R. Clarke on the work of the Illinois institution for the feeble-minded.[187] An editorial was published in the *Omaha Bee* in October, 1884, called for the establishment of a training school for the feeble-minded.[188]

Publications were not the only means of publicizing the AMO's work. Superintendents, most of whom were physicians, attended both national and international medical conferences as official representatives of the AMO. They, and other members,

[184] "Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting 1877," *Proceedings* (1877): 8.
[185] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 102.
[186] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1881 and 1882," 206.
[187] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 354.
[188] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 363.

attended and presented papers at educational, charity and other professional conferences on the work being done at the institutions. For example, Edouard Seguin presented a paper titled "The Psycho-Physiological Training of an Idiotic Hand" at the 1879 meeting of the British Medical Association and it was also published in the *Archives of Medicine* in October 1879. Their aim was to educate other professionals, but also to claim the authority over the field of feeble-mindedness. The AMO hoped that hearing the professional descriptions of the work done in the institutions around the country and seeing the improvement in the some children, the professionals would pressure legislators to maintain or, even, increase funding.

Funding

As adequate funding from the state was always an ongoing issue and were a constant concern of the superintendents and the Boards of Trustees. As institutions for the feeble-minded were gradually established in many states, legislatures not only had to be convinced of the need for the institutions, they also had to be convinced to allocate tax dollars to build and staff them. Thus, the governor and legislators of the state where the annual meeting was held were consistently invited. While occasionally a governor sent his regrets, most often these officials did attend. For example, in 1881, Governor Luke Blackburn of Kentucky and his wife attended, along with numerous prominent state officials.[189] In 1887, ex-Governor Alexander Hamilton Holley of Connecticut presented the opening speech, remarking on the excellent management of the Connecticut School for Imbeciles and noting his opinion was based on over fifteen years of annual legislative

[189] "Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting 1881," *Proceedings* (1883): 181.

visits.[190] By inviting governmental officials to attend the annual meetings, institutional administrators hoped to educate them about the needs of feeble-minded children and the expense involved in providing care and training.[191] The presentations given by the children provided evidence that current funding of the institutions allowed these children to be trained in useful activities. However, since there were huge waiting lists for admittance to the institutions, additional funding was necessary to address the unmet needs for service.

The arguments for adequate funding were approached from several different directions. Henry Smith, a member of the Board of Directors of the Elwyn institution in Pennsylvania, stressed in his speech that not only did the institution staff provide service to feeble-minded children and, by extension, to their families and communities, but they also carried out vital scientific work on the causes and prevention of feeble-mindedness. By lauding the vast amount of neurological knowledge that the staff attained through their work, he accentuated the fact that current investment would lead to future progress.[192] Judge William Ashman, another member of the Board, argued for increased funding by calling on the paternal duty of the state to care for her citizens. Not only was the State responsible for its most helpless wards, he suggested that institutionalization was one way to prevent these wards from passing on their infirmities to their potential progeny; the State needed to take action to preserve society from the calamity that an increasing number of miscreants would have on the state budget. Segregation in

[190] Alexander Hamilton Holley, "Address of Welcome 1887," *Proceedings* (1889): 12.
[191] "Discussion of Articles, 1901," *JPA* VI, no. 1 (1901): 16.
[192] Smith, "Remarks 1882," 259.

institutions was humane and fiscally responsible but required the State to proactively expend funds now as a preventative measure.[193]

Cost and economies of scale became important areas as institutions grew and had more complex responsibilities. By 1876, with the second wave of institution building starting to take off, the era of small schools for the feeble-minded gave way to an era of much larger facilities. Within a few years of opening, most of the institutions for the feeble-minded had over three hundred residents. For example, the Minnesota State School for the Feeble-minded opened with 15 residents in 1879, by 1888 had 180, and by 1890 had 300. The Iowa institution started with 2 residents in 1876, by 1878 had 136, and by 1888 had 380.[194] Nearly all depended on funding from the state legislature. This funding appeared to be divided into two categories: money for construction and upgrading the physical plant and money for providing services. For example, C. T. Wilbur of Illinois stated at the 1879 meeting that the Illinois legislature appropriated $60,000 a year for two years to cover expenses of the institution. The legislature also appropriated $18,000 for special purposes, which went toward the construction of new buildings.[195] Many of the superintendents reported on legislative support for not only new buildings but also upgrades to the existing buildings.

Initially, when institutions had small populations, superintendents served in multiple roles including medical doctor, school superintendent, business manager, administrator, fund raiser, and publicist. As the institutions grew in size, superintendents

[193] Ashman, "Remarks 1882" *Proceedings* (1883): 262-264.
[194] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures" *Proceedings* (1876, 1878, 1879, 1888, 1890).
[195] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 105.

retained the role of administrator while relinquishing many of the other roles to staff, creating a bureaucratic structure within the institutions. Issues of funding became one of the important considerations of the superintendents. As administrators, they all operated under budget constraints. Several members referred to the difficulty of lobbying the legislature for increased funding. O. W. Archibald of Iowa stated,

> the various 'aspiring candidates for Congress' that each session fill our legislative halls do not very liberally provide for our necessities for fear their constituents might think them extravagant and forget to send them to Washington; in consequence of all these conditions we are allowed to struggle along, about half provided for.[196]

H. M. Greene of Kansas bemoaned the time away from their work to lobby for needed appropriations and worried that at the last minute all their hard work would be undone by the stroke of a pen. He said,

> What the officials and patrons of these institutions demand is not the vacillating support of an ethereal sentiment, or the doles of an omnibus appropriation bill, subject to expansion or contraction as certain policies prevail or whims dictate, but the strong, constant sustenance of the right hand of the State, as secure in the knowledge that the asylums of the commonwealth will be built and maintained as that the penitentiaries will be supported or the courts upheld. All we ask for is justice.[197]

The fluctuations in funding led superintendents to focus on making their institutions as self-supporting as possible. Kerlin believed that, since, due to lack of funding, only a fraction of the feeble-minded children needing help would receive it, "it becomes

[196] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 173-174.
[197] Greene, "The Relation of the State to Its Charities 1882," 256.

imperative for us to devise economical methods by which a moderate good shall be done for the *greatest number*."[198]

Residents

During the AMO's first decade leaders estimated that institutions for the feeble-minded housed only a small portion of the population of feeble-minded children in a state.[199] The pressures were multiple. Stewart, of Kentucky, stated that the majority of children in his institution were either orphans or had indigent parents, a common finding in other institutions. Thus, he argued, the children needed to learn to work, otherwise they would be a constant drain on the public coffers as ongoing dependents in asylums for the insane, poorhouses or in jails. Dr. Robert P. Knight of Connecticut reported that his state had a law barring children between the ages of 2 and 16 from residing in almshouses and that brought more feeble-minded children to the attention of the authorities.[200] George H. Knight reported that the 15 feeble-minded children first admitted to the Minnesota institution had all come from the St. Peter State Hospital for the Insane. Only three of these children were English-speaking when they were admitted, thus complicating the work as the children needed to learn English first.[201] As governmental bureaucratic structures changed to more involvement in social welfare issues, such as banning children from almshouses, alternatives needed to be found. The institutions for the feeble-minded thus became a resource for the state, although no state

[198] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 166.
[199] Ashman, "Remarks," 264.
[200] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 351.
[201] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1879 and 1880," 172.

had the power to compel admittance to an institution. Admittance still required an application from a community member, such as a parent, social worker, or minister.

The AMO, hoping to provide guidance to the states on providing care for feeble-minded children, adopted guiding principles on the placement of feeble-minded children. These principles stated:

> a. That idiots and imbeciles should be treated distinctively from all other classes.
> b. That they cannot with advantage be placed in ordinary schools with other children.
> c. That they ought not to be associated with the insane in asylums.
> d. That they should not be incarcerated in penal institutions.
> e. That they should not be congregated with the pauper residents of alms-houses.
> f. That in the great majority of instances they are better and more successfully treated in well-organized institutions than is possible at their homes.[202]

While the statement that the children would be better served in the institution than in their homes has been seen by some authors as self-serving,[203] the guiding principles indicated that the homes of children likely to be admitted to an institution for the feeble-minded were not homes but insane asylums, almshouses and penal institutions. According to H. M. Greene the rationale for placing the feeble-minded child in an institution was, "that the ignorant, the superstitious, the abjectly poor, even the openly vicious should be intrusted [sic] with the care and improvement of the most desperately deplorable cases requiring aid, is a proposition, abhorrent as it seems, which is often urged by pretended statesmen."[204] Beaton, of Ontario, furthered this point in discussing his new facility. The

[202] Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," 21.
[203] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*; Steven Noll and James W. Trent Jr., *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies."
[204] Greene, "The Relation of the State to Its Charities 1882," 255.

250 children now in his institution came from insane asylums, jails and poverty-stricken homes. The children, he says,

> are now orderly, where heretofore they were noisy and unruly; they are neat and tidy in their person, where they were dirty and slovenly; they are now regular in their habits, where heretofore they were the very opposite. They are well clothed, well fed, kindly treated, and have a comfortable home, instead of being ragged, starved, kicked and cuffed, and faring no better generally than domestic animals.[205]

According to the superintendents, most feeble-minded children from middle and upper class homes were not being institutionalized, as families had the assets to provide for their care. All parents though had concerns about the care and training of their children.

Parents

Parents often expressed a fear that their child would be mistreated at the institution, possibly based on accounts of maltreatment at other facilities, such as insane asylums. To ameliorate some of these concerns, the California Home often presented parents with a circular of information.[206] While it touched on many subjects, of interest for parents were the rules established for the staff regarding the children. All staff were expected to, "to perform with cheerfulness and to the best of their ability all duties that may be assigned to them…and…to do what they can to promote the comfort and happiness of the inmates,…never speak disrespectfully of …inmates."[207] Furthermore, the staff was to, "treat the inmates and every one having business to do at the Institution,

[205] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1884 and 1885," 350.
[206] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children" (Sacramento: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Children, 1887), California State Library.
[207] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information," 16-17.

and each other, with courtesy and respect."[208] The circular even laid out criteria for hiring. "If you are prevented, by either disposition or any other circumstance, from being cheerfully prompt and responsive to every demand made upon you, winsome and forbearing with the children, and strictly courteous and conscientious under every circumstance, *you are sadly unfitted for a position in this Institution*."[209]

The rules for attendants, who were the adults who spent the most time with the children were even stricter. First, "attendants shall…always treat children with respect and civility; address them in proper tone of voice; avoid violence and rudeness; give attention to their reasonable requests; restrain your temper under severe provocation; (and) never scold or dictate authoritatively."[210] Duties were proscribed, such as assisting in the dining room in order to teach proper skills, and assisting with dressing and personal cares. Several activities were prohibited;

> Attendants and others are positively prohibited carrying switches, sticks, canes, etc., while on duty, or about the grounds….the passionate smacking, rapping of knuckles, pulling ears, pinching, scolding, teasing, threatening, etc., are barbarous and disgusting methods, and are only referred to here to warn all against such indulgences….never put a restraint upon a child without permission from the proper officer. To strike a blow will insure your discharge unless clearly shown in self-defense. It is distinctly and positively enjoined that the rule of our government is that of kindness, and no severities or meanness towards our children will be tolerated.[211]

These not only governed the treatment of the residents of the institution, but were also designed to reassure parents that their child would be well cared for at the institution.

[208] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information," 17.
[209] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information," 17. Italics in the original.
[210] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information," 18.
[211] Board of Trustees, "Circular of Information," 19-20.

Most of the institutions maintained some form of contact with parents and guardians. The California institution sent out monthly reports, which under Superintendent A. E. Osborne, appeared to have details regarding a child's progress and health. Although copies of these reports do not exist, letters written by parents to the superintendent refer to information in their child's report. In Illinois, teacher reports were sent to parents.[212] The institution also did parent satisfaction surveys and, although the originals are considered health records and thus are not available, a summary report was published with the purported exact copy of the hand written answers.[213] While the institution was considered a school by both staff and parents, the survey had few questions regarding educational attainment. Parents responded that their child had made improvement in those areas, although the responses were relatively short. Most of the questions focused on perceptions of improved health and behavior, especially behaviors that showed improvement in the child's ability to function in a family setting, one of the goals of the institution. Parents replied that their child was now able to do hygiene tasks, dress and undress themselves, had better table manners, followed directions better, and was much less troublesome than formerly. It shows how the broad educational goals of the institution strove to make the child more functional in daily life. Parents were generally pleased with their child's progress. Of interest was the question on whether their children wished to return to the institution following summer vacation. This appeared to be one of the few times information on the residents' perceptions of the

[212] Although these reports exist in the Illinois state archive, Illinois state law views them as health records because the education was provided at the institution for the feeble-minded, which fell under the jurisdiction of what would today be the Department of Health and Human Services. In Illinois, health records, no matter how old, can only be released to a relative or by court order.

[213] "Eighth Annual Report of the Illinois Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Children," (Springfield, Illinois, December 1872), https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=chi.72941352;view=1up;seq=6, 43-45.

institution were solicited, although still through the voices of parents. One parent wrote, "Yes, she asks every day when I am going to take her to school." Another stated, "nothing stimulates her so much in right doing as the promise of returning." Still another said, "She calls the Institution home, and says she wants to go home." "Yes, he has a great desire to do so," stated one parent. Another commented, "Yes, many times a day he asks to go to Jacksonville, (the site of the institution) and every time he sees a team harnessed, he wants to go to Jacksonville."[214] These responses indicated that children viewed the institution positively.[215] The last question was, "In what ways are you disappointed in his or her progress since he or she came to the institution?"[216] Out of a long list of responses, the only negative expressed was disappointment that their child had not learned to talk. This disappointment was tempered by the child's improvement in other areas. A sampling of the comments included, "He appears to have made considerable progress in reading and geography, and a great improvement in his judgment of practical matters of every day [sic] life. In short, we consider that the Institution has been the greatest of blessings to him and to his parents and friends, for we are confident that the training and instruction he has received in the Institution could not have been given him anywhere else in the State," "We are not disappointed, but pleased with her personal appearance and her good behavior at Sabbath School, her fondness of dress, her willingness to work and her good manners at the table, for which, dear sir, I desire to express to you my gratitude for what you have done for my child I fear her obscured mind might forever have remained in darkness, had it not been for your worthy

[214] "Eighth Annual Report of the Illinois Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Children," 43-45.
[215] There is no way of knowing if this was a consensus viewpoint as parents whose child did not like the institution were unlikely to fill out the survey.
[216] "Eighth Annual Report of the Illinois Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Children," 44-45.

and charitable Institution." Another reported, "In no respect are we disappointed in his progress, and shall hail with joy the extension of the privileges of the Institution to a much greater number of this unfortunate class."[217] Most parents were well satisfied with their child's progress and grateful to the institution for fostering it.

Custodial care

Providing custodial care in the institutions raised a number of issues as state legislatures often limited the length of time a child could remain at the institution. Superintendents recognized the need for custodial care but debated whether this was part of their obligation. Some believed that separate wings or buildings should be established at the existing institutions for the feeble-minded. Others, such as Wilbur, believed custodial institutions should be separate facilities, located away from what they viewed as their identity as training schools. One of the reasons for locating them away from the established institutions related to funding issues. Wilbur recognized that state legislatures were willing to support the institutions for the feeble-minded as training schools since the ultimate cost for each resident would be diminished due to the training received there. However, the long-term nature of the financial commitment for custodial asylums would stress already tight economies or change the nature of their programs. In New York, for example, a separate asylum was built for imbecilic and idiotic women who were currently residing in public almshouses with their illegitimate children. One of the ways of reducing the expenses of the new asylum was to train the residents in the needed household occupations such as cleaning, laundry and cooking. As lower functioning

[217] "Eighth Annual Report of the Illinois Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Children," 44-5.

residents were admitted to the asylum, the higher functioning residents were trained to care for them. The use of residents as a labor force occurred no matter where the custodial institutions were located.[218]

There seemed to be a gender split when discussing the need for custodial asylums by the members of the AMO. During the first decade of the AMO, C. T. Wilbur of Illinois and others suggested that custodial institutions for males should be farms to "permanently utilize and keep employed, under the guardianship of the asylum, the large boys …who may not have good homes to go to."[219] The need for a custodial institution for feeble-minded females, however, was referred to frequently. One of the primary purposes for this type of custodial institution was to protect the women from the abuses they suffered in the almshouses. Sexual abuse meant that many had illegitimate children. Several superintendents stated that this outcome was not due to any wantonness on the part of the women but was the result of their being taken advantage of due to their feeble-mindedness.[220] Custodial institutions were to provide permanent homes for these women for their care, protection, and safe-keeping, while at the same time, segregate them from men and thus limit the possibilities for more illegitimate children, many of whom would also be judged as feeble-minded. As eugenics became more discussed in public, the inheritance of feeble-mindedness joined public concern about dependency and illegitimacy.

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[218] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 96-101.
[219] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 105.
[220] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 105.

The need for custodial institutions for lower grades of feeble-minded children was readily accepted by the superintendents. However, how that should be provided seemed to be somewhat unsettled. Given the socioeconomic background of the majority of the children in the institution, protection may have been a motivation. Views on heredity, no doubt, also played a part. This was a complicated area because it was intimately tied to the political and social thinking of the time. Legislatures needed to fund not only the construction of a custodial institution but also its maintenance costs. Legislatures were notoriously loath to spend taxpayers' money on things not considered essential. The question became not so much, why did the superintendents advocate for custodial institutions, but rather, why were the legislatures and people of the states in favor of them? During this time period, feeble-mindedness became associated with criminality, promiscuity, and other degenerate behaviors, often referred to as moral imbecility. Baynton makes the case that the use of moral imbecility was an effort to explain deviant behaviors in biological terms and move away from the notion of sin.[221] This movement from a concept of sin, from which redemption was possible, to a biological explanation which deemed the behavior immutable helps explain the public's push for increasing custodial institutions.

Criminality

The connection between feeble-mindedness and criminality was considered by many to be an established fact. Stewart of Kentucky reported at the 1879 AMO meeting that, "as there is no reformatory for juvenile offenders in Kentucky, doubtless the

[221] Douglas C. Baynton, *Defectives in the Land: Disability and Immigration in the Age of Eugenics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8.

tendency to crime in a child was easily interpreted to be what it probably is in fact, imbecility."[222] Therefore, the Kentucky institution for the feeble-minded accepted children who were identified as incorrigible but not children who were idiots, the lowest class of feeble-mindedness. Kerlin broached the subject at the same meeting in his paper entitled, *Juvenile Insanity*. Kerlin drew on the similarity of physical characteristics between youth that were idiots and youth that were in the insane asylums and the juvenile criminal class.[223] He reported that one-third of the juvenile criminal class was comprised of imbeciles and the morally insane. A movement had started to provide lifetime confinement for this segment of the population in order that, "their propagation shall cease, and crime be thus measurably diminished by the partial extinction of criminals."[224] He went on to say, "A like inquiry extended among the degraded public women of our streets would doubtless develop the fact of their moral and mental incapacity, which should be a righteous claim upon our charity, and a reason for protecting them and their victims by absolute restraint of the former in curative or custodial homes."[225]

Eugenics

Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin and an intellectual who investigated a variety of scientific subjects, including heredity, coined the word *eugenics* in his book, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, published in 1883. The term was

[222] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," 108.
[223] Milton H. Erickson, "Some Aspects of Abandonment, Feeble-Mindedness, and Crime." *American Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 5 (1931): 758-69. http://www.jstor.org.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/stable/2766939; George A. Auden "Feeble-Mindedness and Juvenile Crime." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 2, no. 2 (1911): 228-38; L. W. Crafts "A Bibliography on the Relations of Crime and Feeble-Mindedness." *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 7, no. 4 (1916): 544-54, http://www.jstor.org.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/stable/1133998.
[224] Isaac N. Kerlin, "Juvenile Insanity," *Proceedings* (1879): 94
[225] Kerlin, "Juvenile Insanity," 94.

from the Greek word, *eugenes*, meaning good in stock, that promoted the idea that people were hereditarily endowed with certain qualities.[226] Galton argued that the human race could be improved through purposeful breeding emphasizing increasing procreation by those with desirable characteristics and, by implication, limiting procreation by those possessing undesirable characteristics and increasing the procreation by those with desirable characteristics.

Although the term, "eugenics," did not appear in the published accounts of the meetings of the AMO between 1876 and 1890, there was ample discussion of the Darwinian inheritance of traits along with a focus on moral imbecility, viewed as the cause of criminality, drunkenness and prostitution. As early as 1877, an AMO member suggested that, "Even philanthropists and alienists are too busily employed…alleviating the condition of, the present generation of unfortunates, to consider carefully the best means of purifying the sources of supply."[227] By 1882, more explicit concern was expressed about the hereditary character of the criminal, inebriate, and pauper, "not in their own persons only, but with all the power of an ever-widening offspring…(the State) is bound to see that every representative of these classes shall be so secluded and restrained that he shall not transmit his infirmities to a still more degraded progeny."[228] Concern extended to women housed in almshouses, who frequently became mothers due to their association with male paupers. Most of these women and their children were deemed feeble-minded and in need of residency in places where they could be protected. During this time period, these concerns led to the establishment of an institution in New

[226] Nicholas Wright Gillham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 207.
[227] Brown, "Prevention of Mental Disease," 25.
[228] Ashman, "Remarks 1882," 263-264.

York and another in New Jersey for the exclusive care of feeble-minded women, along with the establishment of separate wings or buildings in other institutions.[229]

Nor were these concerns limited to the superintendents of the institutions. An 1886 report from the Iowa General Assembly stated,

> This institution should be made perpetual, and so enlarged at the earliest possible date as to accommodate all this unfortunate class. This should be done, not so much upon the theory of charity as on the ground of public safety. To turn these out upon the world with such fearful possibilities before them, especially that of reproducing their kind, is,…not only cruel but a high crime against the spirit of our laws, both human and divine.[230]

States, ever concerned about budgets, advocated lifetime segregation as a means of controlling state expenditures that would be required by another generation of feeble-minded. Not only were the feeble-minded to be sequestered in institutions, they were also to be segregated by sex within the institution.

Eugenic rationales, were, however, not the only reasons people had for advocating segregation into an institutional setting. For residents who had parents, especially aging parents, the parents expressed concern over how their child would be cared for once the parent was unable to do it. An institution could provide care and protection when family or others could or would not.[231] The question of what to do with a feeble-minded person once they reach adulthood weighed heavily on those involved in providing care. Even with the vocational training, placement in the community had risks, especially if there was no family supervision available. With little supervision, along with exposure to assorted vices, evidence seemed to point to degeneration of skills and behavior.[232] By

[229] J. C. Carson, "Status of the Work-New York," *Proceedings* (1886): 364–67.
[230] F. M. Powell, "President's Address," *Proceedings* (1887): 390.
[231] Powell, "President's Address," 389-390.
[232] Catherine W. Brown, "The Future of the Educated Imbecile," *Proceedings* (1886): 401–6.

keeping residents in an institutional setting, institutional staff, many parents and relatives, legislators, and members of the wider society believed that the residents would have social interactions with a peer group instead of being isolated in a family home, would be employed at tasks that interested them, and could engage in the various entertainments. They would have a lifetime home. One of the important aspects of such a lifetime home was the paternalistic concern for women. There was also a tradition of women caring for women in health and in communities that played a role in the new institutions.

Women

At a time when educated women could not always find appropriate employment, the expansion of American care-giving institutions for people categorized as feeble-minded at the turn of the twentieth century provided women with employment opportunities as well as positions of prestige and authority at a time when educated women could not always find appropriate employment. Many of them assumed administrative and leadership positions and their success provided models of possibility for other women. In Victorian society, there were also limitations, but the women often found a supportive and respectful environment of male peers, who were well-aware that their women colleagues were critical in the development of these institutions and in the public support that led to their rapid expansion. Along with their male counterparts, women were directly responsible for shaping the field. They received recognition not only from their institutions and their professional organization, but also from the wider society, including government officials, the National Education Association, foreign experts, medical groups, and higher education authorities. Women's history reveals

many parallel expansions for other women, especially in elementary schools, and in certain medical and scientific fields.[233]

Catherine Brown's career is but one example of the importance of women in the development of institutions for the feeble-minded. She was one of five new members elected at the first meeting of the AMO in 1876. A matron of the Elm Hill institution since 1851 (when her husband, Dr. George Brown, became superintendent), Brown was responsible for setting up and overseeing the educational programming, which she based on the writings of Edouard Seguin. This included individualized lessons, musical instruction, development of good manners and personal hygiene, and weekly entertainments.[234] Following her election to the Association, she presented papers at several annual meetings. In 1881, Brown visited four English institutions to compare them to institutions in the United States, which resulted in the publication of reports on her findings. One important difference she documented was that English institutions relied on voluntary contributions while American institutions depended primarily on state funding. She presented a summary of her observations, along with a written document, at the 1882 annual meeting of the AMO. This elicited a discussion of increasing private donations to provide extras like Christmas presents and magazine subscriptions for the children.[235] A regular participant in the discussions following the presentation of papers

[233] Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*, vol. 1, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); David Rosner, "Health Care for the 'Truly Needy': Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Concept," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly.Health and Society* 60, no. 3 (1982): 355–85.
[234] Disability History Museum, "Private Institution For The Education Of Feeble-Minded Youth. Barre, Massachusetts. Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report" (Charles E. Rogers, 1898), http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=1707&page=all.
[235] Catherine W. Brown, "A Visit to Four English Institutions," *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons*, (1882), 226-235.

at the AMO's annual meetings, Brown was a proponent of small, home-like institutions, criticizing the push for large facilities, such as the one for feeble-minded women that had been proposed in the New York legislature by Josephine Lowell.[236] Upon Brown's death in 1907, the Association recognized her for her integrity, intelligence, and executive ability, calling her the Mother of the Association. This honorary title indicated Brown's fundamental influence, especially because her husband, one of the first members of the association, was not considered among its founding fathers. Other wives of founding members were very involved in the Association's work, although none achieved the recognition accorded to Brown in shaping the organization. She was in the vanguard of an emerging group of women seeking to combine both a family life and a professional life. She followed a traditional path of some women in science by collaborating with her husband until his death in 1892.[237] While she assisted her husband in the running of the Elm Hill institution, she was recognized for her contributions in her own right. Unlike many women who collaborated with their husbands, she, like Ellen Swallow Richards, was gainfully employed, receiving compensation for her work as matron.

Conclusion

Institutions for the feeble-minded in the United States began as small, private endeavors in the decades prior to the Civil War. Concerned reformers, usually physicians, saw it as their Christian duty to care for the feeble-minded, a population that had not received the attention of other marginalized groups. Changes in the focus of

[236] Catherine W. Brown, "Discussion of Custodial Care of Adult Idiots," *Proceedings* (1891): 216.
[237] Helena M. Pycior, Nancy G. Slack, and Pnina G. Abir-Am, eds., *Creative Couples in the Sciences* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940*; Suzanne Le-May Sheffield, *Women and Science: Social Impact and Interaction*, Science and Society Series (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

charitable entities after the Civil War and ten years of reconstruction increasingly sought to prevent public dependency. The emphasis was on scientific charity programs to deal with dependent populations by appropriate segregation policies. The feeble-minded came under their auspices as a population associated with dependency, crime, and prostitution. As this segregation was not financially viable as a purely charitable endeavor, there was an increase push for new institutions for the feeble-minded to be operated by the state. With the concurrent increase in the bureaucratic and oversight functions of state government, care of the feeble-minded was seen as an appropriate governmental function.[238] This was also a period of self-definition as the staff of these institutions worked to create an appropriate framework for their mission to provide care for the feeble-minded, even as the term took on new social meanings. The establishment of the professional organization, the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO), was one of the mechanisms for accomplishing this. By 1890, for the most part, the establishment phase of institution building had been completed and the next phase, the consolidation of professional expertise in institutional staff along with outreach to the wider society began.

[238] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.

Chapter 3 Consolidation of Authority, 1890-1900

By 1890, life in the United States had changed from the still largely rural nation of the immediate post-Civil War period to an industrial, urban nation coping with massive immigration, advancements in science, increasing state bureaucracy, scientific management, and social welfare for the dependent classes. The last decade of the nineteenth century was a time of consolidation for many institutions for the feeble-minded, as they reached a kind of public visibility and institutional stability. The work of convincing state legislatures to establish institutions for the feeble-minded was, for the most part, over. Now came the work of consolidating the institution's place, not only within the increasingly bureaucratic structures of the state, but also as a critical part of the social fabric for caring for this dependent population. The wider society was also becoming more aware of feeble-mindedness, although by this time the designation was frequently associated within the more negative context of increasing crime, prostitution, and alcoholism.

In addition, as other occupations became professionalized, superintendents and institutional staff also began a similar process, positioning themselves as the experts on feeble-mindedness. The census of 1890 raised concerns not just with the members of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO), but with legislatures and in the general public. The total number of feeble-minded persons listed in the 1890 census was 95,609, although it was estimated that at least 55,000 individuals had not been counted. This equated to 153 individuals per 100,000 in the population, and it was quickly evident that institutions for the feeble-

minded served a relatively small proportion of that population. According to the census, only 5,254 of the 95,609 feeble-minded individuals were in institutions for the feeble-minded and 2469 were in insane asylums.[1] According to Dr. Isaac Kerlin of Pennsylvania, the census showed a steady increase in the proportion of feeble-minded people. While in the 1890s, Pennsylvania had a 22% increase in feeble-mindedness among the native born, that percentage jumped to 228% among those of foreign birth.[2]

Institutions for the feeble-minded were also undergoing changes as they grew in number across the country. By 1890, public institutions for the feeble-minded had been established in 20 of the 42 states. By 1904 that number had increased to 28 public institutions in 45 states, while the number of private institutions increased from 4 to 14.[3] Although not every state had an institution for the feeble-minded, advocates existed in most states.[4] In Wisconsin, the State Teachers' Association led the public advocacy for a state institution.[5] The rapid industrialization and urbanization, massive immigration, and increased state bureaucracy resulted in changing social attitudes regarding the feeble-minded by the American public. By 1890, the public sentiment about the feeble-minded changed from a category of people who, due Christian charity, could be returned to the agrarian society as productive contributors, to a category of people unable to function in

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[1] John Shaw Billings, *Report on the Insane, Feeble-Minded, Deaf and Dumb, and Blind in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890*, (New York: Norman Ross Publishing, 1993).
[2] Isaac N. Kerlin, "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* (1892): 275.
[3] Joseph A. Hill and Lewis Meriam, *Insane and Feeble-Minded in Institutions 1910* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 206.
[4] Western states with lower population, like Wyoming and Montana, and southern states did not establish institutions for the feeble-minded until several years into the twentieth century; Billings, *Report on the Insane, Feeble-Minded, Deaf and Dumb, and Blind in the United States at the Eleventh Census*; Steven Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
[5] William Fish, "Status of the Work before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 382.

the increasingly complex social arena.[6] They were thought to fill the ranks of the criminals, prostitutes and alcoholics infesting the nation's cities causing rising crime rates and their purported high birth rates were leading the nation toward race suicide.[7]

Increased state bureaucracy and oversight responsibility of special populations expanded to meet the crises created by the rapidly changing American scene. Economic depressions, like the one in 1893, put over eighteen percent of the labor force out of work. Rapid industrialization impacted the ability of families to care for dependent members as the work was now in a factory and not on the farm.[8] These crises overwhelmed small municipalities which had traditionally manage their own dependent populations. State government stepped in to manage those populations through centralized administrative coordination. This resulted in a consolidation of political power in the state which expanded its supervisory capacity through newly created agencies and departments.[9] Specialized state management over dependent and marginalized populations became the norm because it was believed that under centralized state management these services and institutions could be run more efficiently, at less cost, and have greater control over the particular populations. As power became more centralized in the state government, supervisory control of these special institutions moved from the legislature, itself, to a subsidiary body that reported to the legislature.[10]

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[6] Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1840s-1930s* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 49-73.
[7] Peter L. Tyor and Leland V. Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America: A History*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984); James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present*, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1998).
[8] Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*, 50-1.
[9] William G. Staples, *Castles of Our Conscience: Social Control and the American State, 1800-1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 66-7.
[10] Staples, *Castles of Our Conscience, 72-7*.

For example, direct legislative control of the California Home was ceded to State Commission in Lunacy in 1897; in Iowa, direct supervisory control was delegated to the Board of Control in 1901.[11]

As mentioned in chapter two, as institutions expanded across the country, changes in institutional development occurred with concomitant changes in the funding mechanism. Prior to the Civil War, many services were provided in a private home or school where families paid the entire cost of care. These facilities served primarily members of wealthy families who could afford them. With interest increasing about caring for the feeble-minded, a new form of funding developed. This was a private corporation that ran on philanthropy, but also received some aid from the state. In these institutions, the initial burst of philanthropy often decreased and the state stepped in, providing funding for buildings and supporting the costs for indigent children. However, because these institutions had been established by charter as a private corporation, the state had no control over the management of these institutions. Its only recourse was to abrogate the original charter as a means of exerting management control. By the late 1880s and 1890s, as more emphasis was placed on providing services for feeble-minded children in segregated spaces, and as state bureaucracy and the drive for centralized control increased, most new institutions were built by the state and entirely dependent on it, making them vulnerable to the vagrancies of state funding. These were governed by an appointed board of trustees and subject to shifts in opinion, fluctuating support, and political intrusion into their operation. Governmental supervision was done by a State

[11] California State Archives Staff, "Inventory of the Department of Mental Hygiene - Sonoma State Hospital Records," California State Archives, accessed February 12, 2019. https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf4x0nb05h/entire_text/; L. G. Kinne, "The Origin, Growth and Development of the Board of Control System in Iowa," *The Annals of Iowa* 6, no. 5 (1904): 321–39.

Board, for example, the Commission in Lunacy in California and the Board of Control in Iowa, in an effort to see that state funds were appropriately expended. The trend was for newer institutions for the feeble-minded to be established as state institutions.[12]

Professor Albert Salisbury, President of the Normal School in Whitewater, Wisconsin, illustrated what he viewed as a progressive insight when he outlined five reasons the State should care for people who were feeble-minded. First, the State owed the feeble-minded the same duty and public charity owed to the blind and deaf in order, to prepare them for self-support and a better life. Second, he equated the needs of the feeble-minded with the needs of the insane, in that public safety demanded sequestration from society, both to protect society from offense against dignity that the feeble-minded represented and because institutional settings provided trained staff who used scientific methods in addressing their conditions. In addition, he offered an economic argument that since a significant number of people with feeble-mindedness were from the lower classes, institutionalization would free the rest of the family to rise out of pauperism as caretaking would now be done in the institution. Third was a eugenic argument that care for the feeble-minded was a form of social self-preservation for the physical and moral health of the state. Citing several unnamed reports and reflecting contemporary social perceptions, Salisbury argued that feeble-mindedness was hereditary and led to prostitution, criminal behavior, and drunkenness. Thus, the state had an obligation to keep feeble-minded females in institutions to prevent them from having progeny who would engage in anti-social behavior. Fourth, private charity was inadequate to secure the funding necessary to provide for the large-scale institutions needed to protect the

[12] Kerlin, "President's Annual Address," 282-284.

state. Finally, Salisbury advocated state responsibility because it was unjust for the State to discriminate against a single defective class while providing services to other classes.[13] These rationales reflected the move toward increased state responsibility and control over feeble-minded citizens.

In large states with high populations, the original institutions for the feeble-minded reached what became a self-limiting capacity at around a thousand residents. With long waiting lists, pressure built up within state governments to erect an additional institution as expansion of the existing institution beyond a thousand residents not considered feasible. In 1892, in Pennsylvania, the State Medical Society of Pennsylvania, County Medical Societies, and the State Board of Public Charities all advocated for an additional institution to be built in the western part of the state. By that time the Pennsylvania Training School had 850 residents and had no space to accept additional residents. This was something the Pennsylvania Training School heartily endorsed.[14] The State *Institution* for *Feeble-minded* of Western *Pennsylvania* was approved by the legislature in 1893 and opened in 1897. California faced a similar issue somewhat later when advocates lobbied to establish another institution near Los Angeles to serve the southern part of the state, to complement the one in Sonoma County which would then serve the northern part of California. The legislature approved funding for the new institution in 1917 and it was ready for occupancy in 1921.[15]

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[13] Albert Salisbury, "The Education of the Feeble-Minded," *Proceedings* (1891): 229–32.
[14] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children" (Elwyn, Pennsylvania, 1892), Pam, College of Physicians of Philadelphia: 6.
[15] Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936): 130.

Increased state responsibility for institutions for the feeble-minded resulted in a shift, from working to establish new institutions, to incorporating the institutions into the evolving bureaucratic structures of state governments and a changing society. Reciprocal ties began developing between institutional staff and professional organizations, universities, and societal leaders as the site of expertise on feeble-mindedness became situated within the institution for the feeble-minded. Not only were institutional administrators and staff reaching out to others to share their expertise, others, both nationally and internationally, were reaching out to them, seeking their expertise and advice on caring for people who were feeble-minded.

Institutional Bureaucracy

The increasing population in institutions for the feeble-minded brought about a myriad of changes within the institutions themselves. When they had first been established, the superintendent served as the medical director, administrator, school superintendent, government lobbyist, and fundraiser. The children were known personally to the superintendent. Staffing consisted of the matron, a few attendants, a teacher or two, and service staff such as a cook and laundress. One of the changes that occurred with increasing size was an increase in staff and the development of a more complex organizational structure. Job duties and roles once held by the superintendent were handed over to other staff members. Managers were often appointed to oversee the running of the institution and supervising the financial health of the organization.[16] The superintendent's role became primarily that of an administrator. Assistant physicians

[16] Joseph R. Rhodes, "The Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded from the Standpoint of a Manager," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* V, no. 3 (March 1901): 79–85.

were hired.[17] Assistant matrons and cooks, along with additional teachers and attendants were employed. Hierarchies and rules became routine. The rules for the California Home were modeled after those at the Institution for the feeble-minded at Elwyn, Pennsylvania. All employees were expected to cheerfully perform their duties and to promote the comfort and happiness of the residents. Care practices were standardized. Striking a resident was grounds for immediate discharge. Following the guidelines of Seguin, other punishments were not allowed; Osborne stated "punishment is cruel, unjust, uncalled for, and inhuman."[18] Residents could be corrected in an attempt to teach right and wrong. All of the rules pertained to staff; there were no rules for the residents, as it was assumed that the children were not aware of appropriate behavior and needed to be taught.[19] Forms became standardized, often shared across institutions to assist with comparative data collection and teaching methodologies.[20]

As institutions grew in size, the need for ongoing training also increased. While some staff moved from one institution to another, each institution had its own set of standards and protocols, and their size mandated they organized in house training programs for teachers and nurses. By 1896, the Iowa Institution for Feeble-Minded Children had moved from holding teachers' meetings to an organized system of pedagogical instruction. The instruction consisted of subjects including pedagogy, psychology, and physiology from textbooks, along with lectures on the history of

[17] Dorothea Moore, "The Work of Women's Clubs in California," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 28 (September 1906): 59–62.
[18] "The Institutional Bulletin" (Eldridge, California, November 1, 1895), Department of Mental Hygiene - Sonoma State Hospital Records, F3607-26C, 19, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.
[19] "The Institutional Bulletin" (Eldridge, California, November 1, 1895), 10-21.
[20] "Report of Committee on Psychological Research," *JPA* VI, no. 1 (September 1901): 21–26.

institutions and talks on the teachers' daily work. Examinations were held throughout the training and diplomas or certificates of proficiency awarded at the end of the two year course. Not only did this result in a highly trained teaching staff with a common core of knowledge, it also increased the prestige and professional status of the teachers.[21] Other institutions, like the Indiana institution for the feeble-minded located near the Fort Wayne Medical College, had a cadre of specialists who held clinics at the institution. Medical and dental interns typically came in to provide services on a consulting basis.[22] These studies were conducted as part of a trend in psychology seeking to find "normalcy" and standards.[23]

Nursing and Attendants

In 1901, Dr. W. A. Polglase, medical superintendent of the Michigan Home for the Feeble-minded and Epileptic, and president of the AMO, stated, "The advance in methods of training and care of the defective has called for more skillful and specially equipped attendants and nurses, so that a number of institutions have established training schools within their own border and jurisdiction with commendable results."[24] This was a reflection of broader societal trends in nursing education. Independent training schools for nurses had proliferated but, due to issues of cost, many were attempting to affiliate with established medical or educational institutions where equipment and instructional

[21] F. M. Powell, "Notes on Institutions-Iowa," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 35–36.
[22] "From the Institutions--Indiana," *JPA* I, no. 2 (December 1896): 70.
[23] Hamilton Cravens and John Chynoweth Burnham, "Psychology and Evolutionary Naturalism in American Thought, 1890-1940," *American Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (December 1971): 635–57; Hamilton Cravens, *The Triumph of Evolution : The Heredity-Environment Controversy, 1900-1941*, (Baltimore: Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); Marianne N. Bloch, "Critical Science and the History of Child Development's Influence on Early Education Research," *Early Education and Development* 2, no. 2 (June 8, 2010): 95–108.
[24] W. A. Polglase, "President's Address," *JPA* V, no. 4 (1901): 96.

costs could be handled by that institution. Institutions for the feeble-minded often took on this training responsibility because they had medical staff, equipment, available patients, and a need for trained nurses.[25]

Initially, nursing training programs incorporated many of the same techniques taught to attendants with adaptations made for sick children. Subjects included personal hygiene, proper ventilation, care of bedding, and maintenance of residents' clothing. Medical rationales were given for certain activities such as bathing, which could be used for cleanliness, reducing a fever, as a sedative, or to modify blood flow. Strict behavioral guidelines were established, especially for the nurses in training. Information on common medical conditions and their treatment was part of the training. By 1900, the training became more formalized and lasted between two and three years.[26]

As institutions and professional staff grew, so did the ranks of attendants, raising issues of training, pay, and job duties. Dr. Delia Howe, of Indiana, discussed the need for training schools for attendants in the first issue of the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*. Howe argued that they must be a repository of knowledge to assist all children in reaching their potential. Attendants were considered informal instructors of the children during their time out of school. Since the treatment methods were based on the neurological development of the brain, attendants needed knowledge of normal development in order to observe even the slightest variation and alter the treatment protocol in response. As Seguin's educational theory stressed that pleasurable activity

[25] Mary Jean Hurdley, "How Can Training Schools Best Co-operate with Educational Institutions," *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses* 18 (1912): 26–32.
[26] "Lincoln State School & Colony, Nurses Training School," 1913, 254.055, Illinois State Archive.

was the best stimulator of brain cells, attendants needed to be trained in helping the child learn through pleasurable activities. The extensive training necessary for developing a good attendant required more than a book of rules or occasional lecture. A good training school, according to Howe, should combine both lectures and practical experience. People that completed the training, she argued, should have an eight to ten hour work day; the typical work day of thirteen to fifteen hours was tiring and counterproductive. Attendants also needed to be taught the importance of dealing with the children in a polite and kind manner as they served as role models for the children. To do otherwise was considered a failure in the attendant's duty as an educator. For example, Margaret Osborne, matron of the California Home, fired Miss O'Hagan for slapping, pulling hair, and throwing water on the residents. Osborne cautioned her not to seek this type of work in the future.[27] While such a training school for attendants would increase the cost to the state, Howe believed the benefit outweighed the cost. Not only would the graduate of such a school benefit, the institution would too, with a more competent workforce likely to remain for longer time periods and thus decrease recruitment and recurring training costs.[28]

Buildings

With institutions for the feeble-minded moving from experimental entities to established state facilities, the physical size of the institutions also increased to accommodate the increased number of residents. Attention to detail in the institution's structures was an ongoing concern, as evident in reports during and after the second

[27] Margaret P. Osborne, "Letter to Miss M. O'Hagan," October 27, 1900, F3607-52 Children's Letterbooks, CSA.
[28] Delia H. Howe, "Training Schools for Attendants," *JPA* I, no. 3 (1897): 75–84.

meeting of the AMO in 1877, when Kerlin presented a paper, "The Organization of Establishments for the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes."[29] By 1900, changes in construction reflected changing ideas on the organization of the institution. Dr. A. W. Wilmarth, superintendent of the Wisconsin Home for the Feeble-minded, detailed some of the new considerations. A location outside commercial center (perhaps within 25 to 50 miles) provided cheaper land prices for the amount of acreage needed (typically a thousand acres) for buildings, farm land and play areas. Such a location kept transportation costs within reason and would keep visitations from being so frequent as to interrupt the work of the institution; at the same time, the site should be close enough for oversight and parental visits. In addition, an abundant water supply was necessary. The enormous amount of water needed for food preparation, sanitation, and other indoor and outdoor activities was something that was difficult to explain to legislative commissions. A further consideration was that buildings for custodial cases be far enough away from passing trains such, "that the various noises from our excitable cases may not disturb passers by (sic) and be misconstrued as evidence of cruelty and suffering."[30] In the early decades, institutions for the feeble-minded were constructed with large, multi-story, even grand, imposing buildings. As the number of residents increased, these gave way to smaller, cottage-like buildings where residents were grouped by functional status. Separate buildings housed custodial cases. Residents were also segregated by sex and separate buildings eased management concerns about sexual activity. In the aftermath of fires at several institutions, A. W. Wilmarth made a strong point of using non-

[29] Isaac N. Kerlin, "The Organization of Establishments or the Idiotic and Imbecile Classes," *Proceedings* (1877): 19-24.
[30] A. W. Wilmarth, "Institution Construction and Organization," *JPA* V, no. 2 (December 1900): 59.

combustible building materials whenever possible, even if it increased costs.[31] Dr. A. E. Osborne, of California, outlined the advantages of the "colonial system" of care whereby, instead of maintaining large dormitory buildings, residents lived in smaller, more homelike buildings with house parents. The smaller buildings were less costly to build and maintain. The colonial system became very prominent among the various institutions and was often used to house boys engaged in farming on the farm site, sometimes at a distance from the main buildings. The use of the colonial system allowed for reduced per capita cost to the State, while maintaining services due to the value of the residents' labor.[32]

Research Done in Institutions for the Feeble-minded

Research had been an interest of the superintendents and staff of institutions for the feeble-minded from the beginning. However, the enormous effort required to establish and maintain the institutions precluded conducting such systematic studies. This began to change during the consolidation phase from 1890 to 1900. One of the primary reasons for this was that with the increase in the number of residents, there was an increase in the number of staff with a concomitant division of responsibilities. The larger numbers also made the hiring of professionals, like psychologists and pathologists more cost-effective. Several areas of research were most evident, including heredity and medical conditions associated with feeble-mindedness, such as cretinism and epilepsy.

[31] Wilmarth, "Institution Construction and Organization," 58-64.
[32] A. E. Osborne, "The Founding of a Great Institution and Some of Its Problems," *Proceedings* (1891): 173–81.

Moreover, as historians have argued, these populations were readily accessible and not likely to protest being part of experimental research.[33]

Well-known physicians, such as Dr. William Osler of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, conducted research at the Pennsylvania Training School. Osler observed twenty-four residents with cerebral palsy and then published his ground-breaking text, *Cerebral Palsies of Children*. Other researchers included Dr. Oliver of Philadelphia, who looked at eye conditions of institutional residents with Mongolism (today designated as Down Syndrome) and Dr. Walter Channing of Boston, who did anthropomorphic measurements of residents at both the Pennsylvania and Massachusetts institutions and compared them with normal children.[34] These studies were conducted as part of a trend in psychology seeking to define "normalcy" and standards.

Oversight and governmental bureaucracy

In some states, like Ohio, the institution for the feeble-minded was a part of the common school system.[35] However, in most states, the public institutions for the feeble-minded were, by this time, directly under the supervision of the state legislatures. As the institutions grew in size and moved from experimental schools to accepted state operations, and as government bureaucracy increased, supervision moved out of the legislatures to oversight agencies, such as Boards of Control, Lunacy Commissions, or Boards of Administration. While state schools for the blind and deaf came under the purview of the state boards of education, rarely did the oversight of institutions for the

[33] Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (Anchor Books: New York 1961), 3-70.
[34] Kerlin, "President's Annual Address," 278-279.
[35] "Status of the Work Before the People and Legislatures: Development and Progress of Institutions--Improvements in School Training and Hospital Care Introduced During the Years 1878 and 1879," *Proceedings* (1879): 95-108.

feeble-minded come under that designator. This reflected a difference in the societal and governmental understanding between feeble-mindedness and blind or deaf in regards to the type of services needed. By grouping institutions for the feeble-minded with prisons and insane asylums, the expectation was that people who were feeble-minded would require ongoing care and segregation.

With more institutions for the feeble-minded becoming state run, funding became an increasingly important topic among members of the AMO. Many states grouped institutions for the feeble-minded with prisons, reformatories and insane asylums when considering funding requests. Samuel Fort, 1896 president of the AMO, believed such a grouping was inappropriate, as the feeble-minded were not in institutions as a form of punishment, but, rather, were there because of their affliction. Economic price comparisons for cost of care should not, therefore, be equivalent because excellent nutrition, dedicated attendants and teachers, and other factors were part of the treatment protocols in institutions for the feeble-minded but not in other institutions such as prisons.[36]

The dependence on state funding resulted in some differences among the institutions for the feeble-minded in the different states as, for example in 1892, when Kansas received no appropriations from the its legislature, and Illinois received six thousand dollars for a heating plant and three thousand dollars for fire protection. Other institutions, like the one in Iowa, received no increase in funding even though the public demand for institutional services had increased. Dr. Powell, of the Iowa institution,

[36] Samuel J. Fort, "President's Address 1896," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 28.

believed public pressure would be needed at the next legislative session to secure increased funding.[37]

State funding of institutions for the feeble-minded put constraints on the state's budgets. While the California Home had been a private institution when it was established in 1883, the state took it over in 1885 and, in addition to paying the educational the expenses it would have been paying if the children were in public school, the state government also committed to paying all other costs associated with the institution. In 1897, the increasing number of admissions forced the state to amend the law and required parents to pay a monthly fee. If parents were unable to pay, counties had to contribute $10 a month for each child they committed to an institution.[38]

Outreach by Institutions for the Feeble-minded

Part of the work of consolidating the place of institutions for the feeble-minded in the social and governmental structures was through various forms of outreach. This outreach was an integral part of professionalization and the claiming of expertise in the field of feeble-mindedness. This required building societal support for the mission of institutions for the feeble-minded as that mission became increasingly custodial. This societal support was critical in obtaining adequate funding from legislatures facing limited funds and competing priorities.

The clientele that the institutions served, feeble-minded children, were often invisible to the larger society or, when acknowledged, written off as hopeless cases.

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[37] "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 371-373.
[38] Frances Cahn and Valeska Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934*, 127. $10 in 1897 was equivalent to $281.40 in 2017.

However, the care and training provided to feeble-minded children by the institutions was actively sought out by parents, social workers, and others in direct contact with the families. The staff in these institutions faced a number of challenges to making this new way of providing care and treatment to feeble-minded people more visible and prominent in the public view, since public support was critical in funding the additional facilities and staff needed to meet the demand for service. The annual meetings of the AMO were carefully orchestrated to appeal to various audiences and deal with specific issues affecting the institutions. One of the key aspects of this orchestration was the evening of entertainment at each annual meeting.

The AMO's annual meetings were usually held at various institutions for the feeble-minded. An important public relations component of the meetings centered on the evening of entertainment that was open to a wide range of invited guests. The entertainment featured a number of speeches, and performances by the children residing in the institution. Often a highlight, they featured dancing, singing, and gymnastic exercises that reflected many of the training activities in the institutions. By the 1890 meeting in Faribault, Minnesota, for example, the entertainment had become elaborate. Over 500 guests assembled to watch the operetta, "Babes in the Woods," which featured 35 children in an arrangement adapted by teachers. According to reports in the AMO's journal, the scenery and costumes were well done and the singing, recitations and acting were not only delightful but astonishingly natural.[39] During the first intermission, a number of the younger boys and girls with tambourines and fans presented an exhibition of dancing, posing and drilling to much acclaim. The ten piece cornet band, composed of

[39] "Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting 1890," *Proceedings* (1890): 90, 91.

pupils of the school, also performed, demonstrating that they could play their parts from written music.[40] According to Alice Morrison, principal at Vineland Training School in New Jersey, entertainments gave the "institution character and standing that could not have been gained in any other way."[41] A well done performance brought recognition and established the very serious work done by the teachers and staff involved in producing the various plays, musical numbers, tableaux, recitations, and drills.[42] These translated into skills and behaviors that marked the residents as having familiar aptitudes and aspirations.

The invitations to the evening's entertainment were very selective. From reports of the meetings, the children's parents were not among the invited guests.[43] The invitation list was crafted with an eye toward the various issues facing the institutions and the public leaders who could help address them. The purpose was to deliver specific information about the institution and the care of the feeble-minded, as well as to increase the respect for and professional standing of the superintendents and staff among the invited guests. The guests included government officials, the media, leaders in the religious, scientific, medical, and educational community, and prominent community members. The public audience for the entertainment could range from 200 to 500 invited guests. The composition of the invited audience remained relatively constant over the years; however, the messages delivered to the audience in speeches by the

[40] "Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting 1890," 91.
[41] Alice Morrison, "Entertainments as a Practical Factor in the Training of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* VIII, no. 1 (1903): 78.
[42] Morrison, "Entertainments as a Practical Factor in the Training of the Feeble-Minded," 78.
[43] Parental visitation was done on an individual basis.

superintendents and members of the Board of Trustees of the institution reflected the changing concerns over time.

In the early days of the AMO, as institutions for the feeble-minded were gradually established in many states, legislatures not only had to be convinced of the need for the institutions, they also had to be convinced to allocate tax dollars to build and staff them. Thus, the governor and legislators of the state where the meeting was held were consistently invited. While occasionally a governor sent his regrets, most often these officials did attend. For example, in 1881, Governor Luke Blackburn of Kentucky and his wife attended, along with numerous prominent state officials.[44] In 1887, ex-Governor Alexander Hamilton Holley of Connecticut presented the opening speech, remarking on the excellent management of the Connecticut School for Imbeciles, noting his opinion was based on over fifteen years of annual legislative visits.[45] In the early years, appropriate funding levels were a constant concern of the superintendents and the Boards of Trustees. These administrators hoped to educate government officials about the needs of feeble-minded children and the expense involved in providing care and training.[46] The presentations by the children provided evidence that current funding of the institutions allowed these children to be trained in useful activities. However, since there were huge waiting lists for admittance to the institutions, additional funding was necessary to address the unmet needs for service.

The arguments for adequate funding were approached from several different directions. Henry Smith, a member of the Board of Directors of the Elwyn institution in

[44] "Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting 1881," *Proceedings* (1883): 181.
[45] Alexander Hamilton Holley, "Address of Welcome 1887," *Proceedings* (1889): 11-13.
[46] "Discussion of Articles, 1901," *JPA* VI, no. 1 (1901): 16.

Pennsylvania, stressed in his speech that not only did the institution staff provide service to feeble-minded children and, by extension, to their families and communities, but they also carried out vital scientific work on the causes and prevention of feeble-mindedness. By lauding the vast amount of neurological knowledge that the staff attained through their work, he accentuated the fact that current investment would lead to future progress in discovering the etiologies of feeble-mindedness.[47] Judge William Ashman, another member of the Board, argued for increased funding by calling on the paternal duty of the state to care for her citizens. Not only was the State responsible for its most helpless wards, he suggested that institutionalization was one way to prevent these wards from passing on their infirmities to their potential progeny; the State needed to take action to preserve society from the calamity that an increasing number of miscreants would have on the state budget. Segregation in institutions was humane and fiscally responsible but required the State to proactively expend funds now as a preventative measure.[48]

By 1887, the message began to change from an emphasis on funding the establishment of institutions to the need to expand services. The address by AMO President Dr. George Knight highlighted for the audience the many improvements that had been accomplished: fifteen states had institutions, the public was now supporting the educational and training work done at the institutions, and the work was expanding to include services for all grades of feeble-mindedness. By expounding on the progress of the different states, George H. Knight was able to compare and contrast the differences in programming and legislation among the states, educating the audience on what were

[47] Henry H. Smith, "Remarks 1882," *Proceedings* (1883): 259.
[48] William N. Ashman, "Remarks 1882" *Proceedings* (1883): 262-264.

considered best practices.[49] At the 1889 meeting, President Dr. J. C. Carson's address detailed the widely expanded scope of service he hoped would be provided. Children who were unteachable and adults who were unable to live without supervision and support were also to be cared for by the experts at the institutions. This expanded scope, which required new staff and new buildings, would also enhance the professional association by drawing in new members.[50] President Dr. A. C. Rogers, in his 1890 address, argued that institutions should be able to provide care and training that included feeble-minded adults in addition to feeble-minded children. This was especially needed in the case of elderly parents who could no longer provide care and supervision for their adult feeble-minded children.[51] President E. R. Johnstone's address in 1904 argued for an increased emphasis on segregation as a means of protecting society from the taint of feeble-mindedness.[52] These addresses sought to educate the audience about the needs of feeble-minded individuals and the expenses associated with that care.

The members of the AMO were aware of the tension between Christian charity and modern science in providing care and training for the feeble-minded. The most common way they attempted to reconcile this tension was to advocate for care and training for the existing feeble-minded population while also advocating for means of controlling their reproductive capacity. The guest list of the annual meetings reflected this attempt at reconciliation. Prominent religious leaders in the state were invited and many of them also gave speeches on the moral imperative of providing care. For instance, at the 1890 meeting in Minnesota, A. C. Rogers, the superintendent of the

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[49] George H. Knight, "President's Address 1888," *Proceedings* (1889): 51-53.
[50] J. C. Carson, "President's Address 1889," *Proceedings* (1889): 94-99.
[51] Arthur C. Rogers, "President's Address 1890," *Proceedings* (1890): 110-116.
[52] E. R. Johnstone, "President's Address," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (1904): 63-68.

Minnesota institution and editor of the Association's journal, reported that Bishop George Whipple commended the work done at the institutions as the "highest evidence of Christian civilization."[53] In 1904, Reverend Alford Butler dedicated a new recreation hall at the Minnesota institution, where he discussed the importance of the institution's work in re-creating the lives of the children in God's image.[54]

The AMO's leaders used their organization to promote their work and training through the public and newspaper reports on the annual meetings. Press reports conveyed both the moral and scientific rationale for the institutions. In 1884, Mr. J. S. Frazee, editor of the *Glenwood Opinion,* of Glenwood, Iowa, not only attended but also gave a speech.[55] The minutes of the 1891 meeting included thanks to Mr. William Newhall of the *Louisville Courier Journal* and the Frankfort, Kentucky newspapers for their excellent reports.[56] Many of these newspaper reports provided information the AMO's leaders hoped to disseminate about how training and segregation could enable the feeble-minded to be productive members in that setting.[57] Information given to newspapers from institutional administrators emphasized not only the skills attained by the feeble-minded children, but also that the institutions were places where they would be happy and productive as well as cared for.[58]

Although most institutions were not under the supervision of state departments of education, the director of such departments as well as staff members were invited to the

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[53] "Minutes of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting 1890," 91
[54] "Minutes of the Twenty-eighth Annual Meeting 1904," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (1904): 89.
[55] "Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting 1884," *Proceedings* (1886): 283-286.
[56] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891," *Proceedings* (1891).
[57] "Minutes of the Orilla Meeting 1897, *JPA* I, no. 4 (1897): 35.
[58] Woods Hutchinson, "Children Who Never Grow Up," *Good Housekeeping* 60, no. 4 (1915): 421-426.

annual meetings. Prior to the widespread extension and enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws in the early 1900s, these invitations were important in order to demonstrate what could be accomplished with feeble-minded children who were otherwise denied public school educational training. President Dr. J. C. Carson made the simple claim all children had the right to receive education of benefit to them.[59] J. W. Akers, Iowa Superintendent of Education, spoke at the 1884 meeting of the need that the institution filled in caring for and educating the feeble-minded children of the state.[60] Particularly as mandatory schooling encompassed all children, educators were invited to the entertainment to strengthen the connection between the school program in the institutions and the special classes in the public schools.[61] President Dr. J. M. Murdoch tackled the increasingly complex relationship between the institutions and the public schools in his 1903 address. While some feeble-minded children were served in the public school, Murdoch argued that since many of them would not be self-sufficient, placement in an institution was more conducive to their happiness and at the very least they should enter an institution when they left public school.[62] Murdoch widened the appeal of the AMO to include the interests of public school personnel and others, like social workers, who were tasked with helping feeble-minded students after they left the public schools.

One other important category of people invited to the entertainment were prominent citizens, including mayors, business leaders, heads of philanthropic

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[59] Carson, "President's Address 1889," 94-99.
[60] J. W. Akers, "Glenwood Reception Address," *Proceedings* (1886): 329-331.
[61] Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 463.
[62] J. M. Murdoch, "President's Address," *JPA* VII, no. 4 (1903): 67-72.

organizations, and leading society figures. The goal was to cultivate good relationships between the institution and the surrounding community. President J. M. Murdoch, addressed the audience directly, complimenting the intelligent people of the state on their increased interest in the care and training of feeble-minded people and then went on to say that the time was coming when the public would further demand the segregation of the feeble-minded to prevent crime, pauperism and feeble-minded progeny.[63] As the institutions moved beyond being an important local employer to an important statewide enterprise, prominent citizens took note and, as key opinion leaders, often became advocates in support of the institutions.[64] They also were involved with hosting members of the AMO during the annual meetings, extending opportunities to visit local attractions and holding receptions.[65] The entertainment was much more than simply providing amusement.

Advocating for Networks

With the work of establishing institutions for the feeble-minded well underway, new efforts of the AMO focused on establishing connections with other organizations to broaden their professional networks and establish their expertise. Thus, the AMO held its 1896 meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan, following the Conference of Charities so some members could attend both. At the Conference of Charities meeting, Alexander Johnson, superintendent of the Indiana Institution, was elected President of that body.[66] Dr. Fish

[63] Murdoch, "President's Address," 67-72.
[64] Polglase, "President's Address," 94-98.
[65] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891," 153.
[66] "Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Session 1896," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 21.

presented the paper, "The Custodial Care of Adult Idiots," in 1891, signaling the increasing importance of addressing that population.[67]

One of the close connections with outside organizations was with the National Educational Association (NEA). Superintendents served as chairs of the section on feeble-mindedness, and they and their staff presented papers at its annual meetings.[68] For instance, at the 1899 meeting of the NEA, Dr. Martin W. Barr, Chief Physician at the Pennsylvania Training School gave an overview, discussing, "The How, the Why, and the Wherefore of the Training of Feeble-Minded Children." In this paper, Barr summarized the rationale behind the training of various grades of feeble-mindedness and acknowledged that unlike the original philanthropic rationale, the current rationale was "a socialistic reform as a matter of self-preservation, a necessity to preserve the nation from the encroachments of imbecility, of crime, and all the fateful consequences of a highly nervous age."[69] It was, "a necessity to preserve the nation from the encroachments of imbecility, of crime, and all the fateful consequences of a highly nervous age."[70] He further argued that the ascendancy of scientific knowledge, as opposed to Christian charity, mandated national action to weed out the feeble-minded from society and place them in institutions. This would, however, mean that the lowest grades would need to have specific custodial institutions, while the needs of the higher grades would require more space and significantly more funding as increased training in vocational skills would need to occur. Barr suggested that the increased funding for these institutions

[67] "Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting 1891," 155.
[68] *National Education Association Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting 1899* (National Education Association, 1899).
[69] Martin W. Barr, "The How, the Why, and the Wherefore of the Training of Feeble-Minded Children," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 209.
[70] Barr, "The How, the Why, and the Wherefore of the Training of Feeble-Minded Children," 209.

would, in the long run, save money due to decreased crime, vagrancy and other illegal activities ascribed to the feeble-minded.[71] His presentation at the NEA was one instance of how the growing influence of the concept of eugenic segregation was disseminated in the public sphere. By 1899 almost all superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded were eugenicists. As prominent members of the NEA and the recognized professional experts regarding feeble-mindedness, their presentations underscored the themes emerging in the eugenics movement about the social dangers of the uncontrolled fecundity of the feeble-minded. Segregation was the option most superintendents proposed; the push for sterilization came later. Public opinion had not yet reached the point of accepting surgical intervention.[72]

The staff of institutions for the feeble-minded also took advantage of larger public events to connect with the public. For example, in 1892, the AMO formed committees to put together exhibits for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this case, they decided on an exhibit featuring the most characteristic and best from each institution, as a representation of the work with the feeble-minded in America. Each state institution was encouraged to have an extensive display as part of their state's exhibit.[73] In Illinois, for example, the State Board of Agriculture contributed one thousand dollars to the Illinois institution to prepare an exhibit featuring the experimental agricultural work being done there.[74] Exhibits from fifteen American institutions were presented.[75] These exhibits constructed a specific narrative regarding institutions for the feeble-minded: the positive

[71] Barr, "The How, the Why, and the Wherefore of the Training of Feeble-Minded Children," 209.
[72] Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*.
[73] "Minutes, Sixteenth Annual Session," *Proceedings* (June 14, 1892): 260-262.
[74] Fish, "Status of the Work before the People and the Legislatures," 371.
[75] Institutions with exhibits were from the states of California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio Pennsylvania, and Washington.

aspects of segregation, both as a positive and protected environment for the feeble-minded, while at the same time protecting the larger society from the negative consequences of unrestrained feeble-minded people which resulted in increased crime, prostitution, and poverty which necessitated state intervention. The anticipated result of these presentations was having an informed public that could pressure the state legislature for increased funding for the institutions.

International Connections to Institutions for the Feeble-minded

As institutions for the feeble-minded became established entities in the states, their staffs' expertise was sought after from a variety of sources, including internationally. For example, the Norwegian government paid the expenses of two teachers working in Norwegian institutions to travel to the United States to observe training techniques and then return to Norway and disseminate the information.[76] Two teachers from Keller's Danish School in Copenhagen spent two years at the Pennsylvania Training School teaching Danish special educational techniques and learning American ones.[77]

Members of the AMO and others concerned with the care and training of the feeble-minded were aware of European as well as American initiatives. For example, Rhoda Esten cited information on special schools in Germany, Norway and England in her discussion of special schools. She provided details on class size, which ranged from 12 to 21 students, and teacher pay rates, which in Germany were $25 to $100 a year

[76] George Brown, Catherine W. Brown, and George A. Brown, "Twenty-First Biennial Report, Private Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Youth" (Barre, Massachusetts: Elm Hill, 1892), MSS 6.0013-01, College of Physicians of Philadelphia, 7; "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 7.
[77] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 7.

above the regular pay for teachers.[78] Samuel J. Fort, of Maryland, contributed an article to the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* on the similarities and differences between special schools for children with intellectual weakness, but above the grade of idiot, in Germany and Great Britain.[79]

Community Connections

Institutional reports typically provided sections on visitors, special or notable events, and donations.[80] The range of visitors was typical of most institutions indicative of several interest groups. Staff members from other institutions for the feeble-minded were interested in learning from colleagues, many of whom they had met at annual meetings. Patrons, too, visited. For example, the Pennsylvania Training School was not a state run institution and so it relied on various charities to fund some of the costs. Representatives of those charities were intent on their oversight function. Sometimes, staff from prisons and insane asylums visited because they were curious about the

[78] Rhoda A. Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," *JPA* V, no. 1 (Sept 1900): 15-16. Amounts equal to $688 to $2754 in 2017 dollars.
[79] Samuel J. Fort, "Special School for Special Children," *JPA* V, no. 1 (Sept 1900): 28–38.
[80] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 36-43.The list, dated from October 1891 through September 1892 included Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Biddle from Board of Public Charities; Dr. and Mrs. Gallaudet of the Columbia College for Deaf Mutes; former matron, Mrs. Sally P. Clapp; directors of the Poor of Chester County; Mr. Folk and Mr. Milliken of the Children's Aid Society of Philadelphia who came to oversee their charges; Dr. Beaton, superintendent of the institution for feeble-minded children in Orillia, Canada, along with his wife; Dr. J. C. Carson from the institution for the feeble-minded in Syracuse, New York; Dr. Chapin, from the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane; members of the Board of Trustees; George W. Hall and Dr. and Mrs. Rodman of Louisville, Kentucky; Dr. and Mrs. Evans of the Maryland institution for the feeble-minded; Mr. E. E. Allen, superintendent of the Blind Asylum of Philadelphia along with his wife; Paul Gerhard, sanitary engineer from New York; Dr. Brooks, Superintendent of the schools in Philadelphia; Dr. Meredith, superintendent of the state hospital for the insane in Danville; Dr. Evans, medical superintendent of the Almshouse of Lackawanna County; Miss Damrell, matron of the institution for feeble-minded children in Waltham, Massachusetts; Judge Logan, Reverend Mr. Watson and Superintendent C. J. Bechdolt of the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad; Mrs. Carrie Wetherbee Fort of the private institution at Fort Hill; the Danish Counsel's family from Philadelphia; the Grove Tabernacle; Professor Typjerg of Copenhagen, Denmark; Mr. J. H. Smith, Mrs. McGonnigle and Mrs. Boyer of the Soldiers' Orphan School; Dr. L.K. Baldwin and friends from Swarthmore; Capt. Philip, USN of San Francisco; Miss McWade, a teacher from the Columbus institution; and Mrs. Orr, matron of the Indiana State Institution.

management as they also ran large-scale institutions with parallel concerns. The long lists of visitors, both foreign and domestic, provide evidence of the interest in the operation and services they might see by coming in person for a tour.[81]

The Pennsylvania institution was particularly active in using community resources to provide special events for the residents. These included music performances by the students, teachers, and community members. Community members provided special lectures including personal reminiscences by Amos Bonsall of the Kane expedition to the North Pole, William N. Ashman on fiction, B. F. Duane's comic entertainment, Commander James Parker's "Personal Reminiscences of the Rebellion," and Mr. A. M. Spangler of the Philadelphia *Evening Star* on Yellowstone National Park. Special events, usually several within each month, included holiday celebrations, picnics, sledding parties, ice cream parties, performances by a magician, and on a sadder note, an occasional funeral for a resident with the institution band playing a funeral march and the institutional residents in the Military School department acting as an honor guard.[82]

Donations were an important part of an institution's ability to afford holiday parties and other events. For instance, for Christmas 1892, the Pennsylvania institution received three hundred and sixty-six boxes and packages plus $1767[83] in cash donations from both individuals and companies. Contributions of candy, fruit, toys, plants, books and newspaper subscriptions came largely from people in Pennsylvania. However, some

[81] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children; "Fifth Biennial Report of the Visitors of the Maryland Asylum and Training School For Feeble-Minded" (Owing Mills, Maryland, 1897), 36-43; WM 28 AM3 M36b 1897 Sadoff Library, College of Physicians of Philadelphia: 22; *Charitable Observer, Published in the Interest of the Feeble-Minded Children of the State of Illinois* (Lincoln, Illinois: Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children, 1896), vol 3: 15.
[82] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 36-43.
[83] Approximately equivalent to $46,500 in 2017 dollars.

came from out of state; for instance, Katherine Lathrop, President of the Board of Trustees of the California institution, donated six California roses, Mrs. M. A. MacColl of Vermont donated a parlor organ, and H.W. Hallett of Colorado donated a Colorado fawn for the Deer Park.[84] Similar types of support were common in other institutions which seems to indicate exceptionally strong donation support for institutions for the feeble-minded.[85]

The establishment of institutions for the feeble-minded in rural areas had a decided impact on the local economy, sometimes becoming one of the larger employers as they hired local people. For example, in 1890, the Indiana School for Feeble-Minded Youth, located in Fort Wayne, employed 67 people in at a monthly cost of $1,229.85.[86] This included 11 teachers, 17 attendants, 15 household staff such as dining room staff, nurse and janitor, 18 industrial staff such as electrician, baker, and farmer, and 7 administrative staff, including the superintendent, matron, bookkeeper and school principal. The California Home used an employment agency to fill some jobs such as waiters or kitchen staff. Especially during the economic downturn in the 1890s, superintendent, A. E. Osborne, received multiple letters from people seeking employment. Some were from teachers, most of whom had experience, some in other institutions, like M. Sherry who had worked at both the Pennsylvania Training School and at Vineland[87] and some, like Jennie Roberts, who had taught in public schools.[88]

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[84] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 47-52.
[85] "Sixth Annual Report: The New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Monded Children" (Vineland, New Jersey, 1894).
[86] This is approximately $34,000 in 2018 dollars.
[87] M. Sherry, "M. Sherry to Dr. A. E. Osborne," February 28, 1898, F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence, CSA. Similar letters are found in this folder.
[88] Jennie Roberts, "Jennie W. Roberts to Dr. A. E. Osborne," August 18, 1898, F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence, CSA. Similar letters are found in this folder.

Almost all were college graduates. On Gwendolyn Stewart's application form for a teaching position, she listed her professors at Stanford University as people to contact for recommendations. The impressive list included Edward A. Ross, the noted sociologist, Mary Roberts Smith, another important sociologist, and Frank A. Fetter, a well-known economist.[89] Even people seeking to be assistant physicians applied for work. In 1898, Osborne received a letter from a medical student, H. F. Van DeGrift, seeking a position. He had worked at the Pennsylvania Training School as a druggist.[90] Musicians, too, applied for work at the California Home. Marian Tracie, for example, was a graduate of the Cleveland, Ohio, Conservatory in vocal music, a pipe organist, could play the violin, cello, and piano, and could conduct an orchestra.[91] Unsolicited nominations came to Osborne from local suppliers, patrons of the institution, judges, some of whom were involved in commitment hearings, or social agencies such as the Young Women's Christian Association.[92] While most of the employees lived on the institution grounds with room and board part of their compensation, the local economy benefited as employees purchased items from local merchants. The background information provided by the applicants indicated they were well trained and from the volume of application letters, it appeared that the superintendent could be selective in who he chose to employ; those not considered qualified were marked, "do not want."[93]

Parents and Concerned Others

[89] Gwendolyn Stewart, "Gwendolyn Stewart to Dr. A. E. Osborne Application for Employment and Accompanying Letter," May 2, 1900, F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence, CSA.
[90] H. F. Van DeGrift, "H. F. Van DeGrift to Dr. A. E. Osbourne," July 9, 1898, F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence, CSA.
[91] Marian Tracie, "Marian Tracie to Mr. Kaufman," December 28, 1898, F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence CSA.
[92] F 3607-138 Incoming Correspondence 1891-1900 r-z, CSA.
[93] Incoming Correspondence 1891-1900 r-z, F 3607-138, CSA.

Parents, and by extension, family members and concerned community members actively engaged with institutional staff regarding their children. The California State Archives contain numerous letters from mothers and fathers, siblings and others. The letters from family indicate that the monthly reports sent by the staff were not just form letters but contained personal information about the child. For example, Nora Bulman thanked Dr. Osborne for the information she received that Irene was in good health and had made a slight improvement in her studies.[94] M. A. Baker wrote to Mrs. Osborne thanking her for information about his daughter's illness.[95] A number of parents offered suggestions regarding care for their child. For instance, in an earlier letter, Baker wrote that he read in a medical work that milk was a great restorative. He enclosed $5, which he stated was all he had in the world, to make sure his daughter had enough milk.[96] T. Q. Tinnur wrote that when his daughter is angry or afraid, she will try to run away and hide in the tops of trees or in low places in the ground and will not answer when called. It was best to slip up and catch her, try to interest her in an activity, or tell her that boys and girls who run away will be arrested because she doesn't want to be arrested. He also mentioned that she wants something in her bed when she has her "monthly sickness" to prevent staining.[97]

Many parents expressed their gratitude to Dr. and Mrs. Osborne, the superintendent and matron, for the care their child received.[98] However, parents also

[94] Nora A. Bulman, "Letter to Dr. A. E. Osborne," March 3, 1897, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[95] M. A. Baker, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," November 14, 1898, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[96] Baker, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," May 18, 1896.
[97] T. Q. Tinnur, "Letter to Mrs. M D Osborne," September 12, 1895, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[98] I. S. Church, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," December 1, 1895, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA; Amy B. Jenkins, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," June 3, 1897, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA; N McDowdle, "Letter to Mrs. Dr. Osborne," November 10, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.

contacted them when they had concerns about their child's care. Mrs. H. C. Parks complained that when she had her son out for a visit, she found his lame hand full of dirt. She was worried that, if it remained that way, he would develop a sore that might not heal and asked Osborne to attend to this problem at once.[99] Although the following incident occurred in 1905, it demonstrated the detail parents observed and their willingness to ask authorities for help. In an April 27, 1905 letter to Dr. William Dawson, the new superintendent of the California Home, Mrs. Joseph Badger complained that her daughter, who had been at the Home for seven years, had had her head shaved, like a convict. Previously, it had been long, braided and tied with a ribbon. In his reply, Dawson stated that her daughter's hair was clipped not shaved. The reason given for this action was that the daughter was a bad epileptic and had saliva lodge in her hair during her seizures, giving her hair an unpleasant odor. In his conversation with the daughter, she didn't seem to mind the hair clipping. Mrs. Badger was evidently not satisfied with Dawson's response and appears to have contacted the Governor because on May 6th Dawson responded to a May 4th letter from Governor George Pardee, requesting information about the incident. Dawson sent the Governor a copy of his response to the mother, commenting that she seemed more concerned with the child's physical appearance than her health and safety.[100] This incident seems to indicate a change in philosophy in providing care. The child, who was labeled as a "bad epileptic," had been in the institution for seven years, through the tenure of two superintendents who had

[99] H. C. Parks, "Letter to Dr. Osborne," January 26, 1897, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[100] Mrs. Joseph Badger, "Letter to Dr. W. J.G. Dawson," April 27, 1905, George Pardee Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; William J. G. Dawson, "Letter to Mrs. Joseph Bedger," May 1, 1905, George Pardee Papers, BL; William J. G. Dawson, "Letter to Governor George Pardee," May 6, 1905, George Pardee Papers, BL.

managed to maintain the child's hair. In addition, this child was not the only one who had her hair cut with clippers instead of scissors. Dawson admitted to Governor Pardee that the girls' hair "presents a "croppy" appearance, but after a time it grows out again."[101] For Dawson, cutting off girls' hair seemed to be to ease the work load of the staff. This marked a shift in focus from the care of the individual child being the primary consideration to it becoming subsidiary to the work load of the staff.

Numerous parents expressed concern that their child would forget them and wanted reassurance on that matter.[102] Even a sister desired confirmation that her sister was happy at the institution. She and her husband were contemplating moving from San Jose to Los Angeles and would not be able to see her regularly.[103]

Unfortunately, children at the institution sometimes died. Notices, by letter or telegram were sent to parents, if an illness was deemed serious by the medical staff. If, in fact, the child died, parents were immediately contacted. Two options for burial were presented; either the body could be sent home by train, or, if that cost was too high, the child could be buried at the institution and parents would receive a letter detailing the service. Helena Beyer was buried at the California Home. Her mother wrote Mrs. Osborne, thanking her for the kindness shown Helena. She assumed a postmortem was done and requested the information gleaned from it as she hoped to find out the cause of her child's malady.[104] Grace Colvin had her son's body shipped home. She commented that his body was in good condition, considering the heat, and that after he was

[101] William J. G. Dawson, "Letter to Governor George Pardee," May 6, 1905, George Pardee Papers, BL.
[102] Mrs. Osborne Correspondence, F3601-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[103] Carrie Krouse, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," February 16, 1897, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[104] A. Beyer, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," December 4, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.

embalmed, he looked quite natural. He was buried in a local cemetery. She refused the offer to return his clothes, asking that they be given to another child who could use them.[105] Mrs. E. B. Gray was able to be at the institution when her daughter, Nellie, died and accompanied the body home. Mrs. Osborne sent some of Nellie's work to her mother as a remembrance, which gave Mrs. Gray a great deal of pleasure.[106]

The archived correspondence from parents and others indicates that most parents were well satisfied with the care their child received at the institution, or, if not, felt their concern would be attended to at once. It also indicates that there was ongoing communication between institutional staff and families, for those residents that had families. Very little is mentioned in the secondary literature regarding parents and their interaction with their child and/or the institutional staff. Yet, the correspondence indicates that there were significant interactions and that the institutional staff was sympathetic to parental concerns. With limited community services available, especially in rural communities, many parents felt there was a tension between wanting to do what they considered best for their child, which meant sending the child to live at an institution, and keeping the child at home with the family, which often meant no educational services.

Special classes

By the late 1890s as public schools consolidated and expanded their services and when mandatory school attendance began to be enforced, the issue of the best place for feeble-minded children attracted more attention. Would it be best if they attended regular

[105] Grace Colvin, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," September 16, 1895, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[106] E. B. Gray, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," April 7, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.

public schools, attended special, segregated day schools, or went to institutions for the feeble-minded? At the 1899 meeting of the AMO, a discussion ranged over the various possibilities these options presented. Some, like Dr. Barr, stated that, as more feeble-minded children entered public schools, he was seeing increased applications for admission to his institution as parents felt their children were being harassed in the public schools. The meeting discussion pondered whether day schools or special classes could be as effective as institutional placements. Aleš Hrdlička, a physical anthropologist and a member of the AMO, cautioned against removing children to special classes or schools without careful diagnostics. For instance, conditions such as malnutrition often presented as feeble-mindedness, but once children received adequate nutrition, the apparent feeble-mindedness faded away. Furthermore, removing a child from public school caused other problems. Special schools and institutions were invariably perceived as places for inferior children, thus compromising the reputation of a child sent there. It also resulted in a decrease in stimulation and role models. In addition, for a child to attend a special school and then return to their neighborhoods and associates each night, compromised the training done in the special school. Early placement in an institution would, he believed, be more effective.[107]

The variation in possibilities was evident because each state had its own laws regarding school attendance, with specific rules and exclusions, and school systems sometimes had limited offerings in terms of special classes or schools and/or applied them in various ways.[108] However, special education was gradually becoming a more

[107] Aleš Hrdlička, "Minutes of the Association, Septmber 1899," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 223–25.
[108] *Compulsory School Attendance*, Bulletin 1914 2 (United States Bureau of Education, Washington Government Printing Office, 1914).

prominent educational service. Special classes were established in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Providence, Worcester, and Springfield by 1901.[109] As Rhoda Esten, supervisor of special schools in Providence, Rhode Island, stated, "As education has extended to the masses it has also descended to a lower grade of society that was formerly abandoned to ignorance and neglect."[110] These children presented a challenge as two new categories of children began attending public schools: those considered backward and those considered feeble-minded. For both categories, separate classes and even separate schools were advocated. While these categories were viewed as distinct, the teaching methodologies was quite similar: hands-on activities, physical exercise to stimulate the brain, nature study, and vocational education. Classes were to be short and enjoyable, and discipline was to be gentle with corporal punishment not allowed. This echoed the teaching methodology of the institutions for the feeble-minded advocated by Seguin. Esten argued that separate schools offered several advantages. One of the most important was the economic consideration of the school district. The cost of equipping and staffing each school to meet the needs of a few children was inefficient and would not be as effective as providing services in a centralized location. The cost of transporting children to a central location would be far less than providing services in each individual school. In addition, grouping students together by ability level would facilitate more effective teaching as teachers could focus their instruction to the needs of a more homogeneous group. A centralized school also offered teachers mutual support and, for new teachers, hands-on training and supervision, something not available in

[109] Elizabeth Daniels Nash, "Special Schools for Defective Children," *JPA* VI, no. 2 (December 1901): 42.
[110] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 10.

neighborhood schools where there would be only one or two special education teachers.[111]

Dr. Walter Channing, of Massachusetts argued that although institutions for the feeble-minded were to be encouraged, the number of feeble-minded persons and the varying degrees of feeble-mindedness precluded institutions from being able to serve all those in need. Special classes in public schools should, therefore, to be established to meet the needs of this population. Channing offered an interesting possibility for providing special education in the public schools. While formal classes often didn't begin until a child turned seven, kindergartens often took children between the ages of two and four. While this was too young for a child to be admitted to an institution, providing special education services to children this young in a kindergarten setting had the potential to evaluate their condition and to improve their learning. Channing suggested this was an important area of study for the AMO. In order to provide these services, Channing suggested that, in Massachusetts, teachers spend two years training at their institution to learn the necessary skills for teaching such young children who were feeble-minded.[112]

Teacher Training for Work in Institutions for the Feeble-minded

Teachers in institutions for the feeble-minded were often trained in kindergarten methods, given the presumed level of their pupils. New teachers were usually assigned a mentor teacher, someone who had a number of years of experience and could provide

[111] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 10-16.
[112] Walter Channing, "Special Classes for Mentally Defective School Children," *JPA* V, no. 2 (December 1900): 40–46.

guidance. Some institutions, as in California, had paid educational consultants from universities provide ongoing in-service training for the teachers. In other institutions, teachers held weekly meetings to discuss teaching strategies, problem solving difficult situations, and improving observational skills to better serve the children.[113] In Massachusetts, several teachers took an extended course at an industrial training school in Boston to improve their teaching of manual skills.[114] Superintendents and trustees in California felt that in order for the education and training of feeble-minded children to be effective, each child must, "receive especial attention from experienced and well-qualified teachers, rendering it necessary to employ more teachers in proportion to the number of pupils than in ordinary schools."[115] At a time when urban public school classrooms were often overcrowded and rural schools undersubscribed, the 1894 Annual Report of the New Jersey Training School indicated it had 13 teachers for 191 children, approximately 1 teacher for every 15 children.[116]

Vocational Education

As part of vocational training, the boys and men in the institution were taught various aspects of farming, with the goal of producing food for the institution as well as for public sale. At the California Home, three to four tons of dried fruit were sold, at market rate, to the State's prison and a ton of dried pears was sold to a nearby insane

[113] "Minutes of the Association, 24th Annual Meeting, June 1900, First Session," *JPA* IV, no. 4 (June 1900): 152–56.
[114] W. E. Fernald, "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 375.
[115] "Fifth Annual Report of the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children, 1893," in *Annual Reports of the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children 1893-1902*, New Jersey State Library, Trenton, New Jersey, (Vineland, New Jersey, 1902): 5.
[116] Philip P. Baker, "Report of the Board of Directors," *6th Annual Report The New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children*, New Jersey State Library, Trenton, New Jersey, (1894): 9-10.

asylum.[117] In Kentucky, the sale of items produced in vocational departments covered the cost of the materials and the teachers. Dr. Stewart reported that through the skills gained through vocational education, a number of residents were able to be discharged to work in the community. As successful students left new residents were admitted. In the case of Pennsylvania, the vocational program was divided into a number of vocational programs. The culinary school program focused on desserts. A new building request was before the legislature that would allow residents to do all the cooking. The tailor shop produced $770.64 ($21,205 in 2017 dollars) by its work, while in the sewing room the value of the labor was estimated to be $1,200 ($33,769 in 2017 dollars). The Torchon Lace class taught some residents to be able to manage fifty bobbins. The shoe shop's work, which produced shoes for the institutional residents and others, covered the cost of the instructor and materials. The laundry school did thirty thousand pieces of laundry a week. The military school, which taught disciple, working as a team, and drilling, had two hundred boys. The farm and garden department produced food for the institution but was limited by the small amount of land available. He noted that additional land was needed for farming but due to the high cost of land, a separate colony, away from the institution, would be more feasible.[118]

By 1899, educational programming in the institutions was giving way to increased vocational training. This was also true in public secondary schools. Vocational education had become an integral part of public education during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and had grown out of the manual training movement.[119] According to Herbert

[117] A. E. Osborne, "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 368.
[118] "Fortieth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children," 36-43.
[119] Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Howard R. D. Gordon, *The History and Growth of Career and*

Kliebard, manual training was viewed as "especially beneficial for those segments of American society that were believed to require remedial treatment for one reason or another."[120] He further elaborated that

> Manual training was widely prescribed for delinquent children in northeastern cities, and it was the education of choice for children with physical disabilities. The poor as a class were also among the earliest target groups for the supporters of manual training since their impoverished condition was in part deemed to be a function of defective values. Increasingly, manual training was also believed to have remedial powers for immigrants as well as for various ethnic and racial minorities whose poverty and poor social position was deemed a function of defective moral values.[121]

Manual training was promoted as a means of inculcating the Protestant work ethic into those viewed as part of the permanent underclass. As standardization of curriculum occurred, children began to be sorted into various tracks, depending on what was perceived as their likely occupation after leaving school. It was considered a waste of funding to provide college preparatory classes to children who would become factory workers. The same rhetoric was used to justify programming shifts in the institutions; too much schooling was wasted on residents who would be doing manual labor. Educational programming was reduced in many institutions from 5-6 hours a day to 2-3 hours. In some institutions, younger children spent the day in school on educational activities, but other institutions adhered to the shortened educational time for all of the

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Technical Education in America, Third ed. (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2008); Arthur F. McClure, James Riley Chrisman and Perry Mock, *Education for Work: The Historical Evolution of Vocational and Distributive Education in America* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985); Roy W. Roberts, *Vocational and Practical Arts Education: History, Development, and Principles*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965).

[120] Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, 13

[121] Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, 13

residents with work activities filling the rest of the day. Residents over age 16 often received only vocational training.

Causes of Feeble-mindedness

By 1890, staff experience demonstrated that the remarkable advances for residents that had been anticipated by some in an earlier period were not occurring. One of the reasons was the changes in admission criteria and the resulting influx of lower functioning children, those who would have been denied admittance in the earlier period.[122] As superintendents and staff came to realize feeble-mindedness was a heritable condition, their emphasis shifted to causation in an effort to promote prevention. During this period of consolidation, 1890 to 1900, experts hoped to find a scientific explanation for feeble-mindedness that would help prevent the "problem" in the future. Pathologists, employed by the institutions, attempted to match brain lesions with the resident's outward appearance and functional abilities, in a search for physiological explanations. A study of autopsy records, for example, indicated a correlation between forceps delivery and feeble-mindedness.[123] Statistical methods were employed and produced a number of results, suggesting that severe labor of the mother appeared to be another indicator of future problems. But, the data was limited and most superintendents felt parents did not answer the etiology questions in a reliable manner, rendering the statistics unusable.[124]

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[122] State funded institutions moved to a first come, first served method of processing admissions and with the increased visibility of the institutions in the general public, the number of applications increased substantially.
[123] A. W. Wilmarth, "Prognosis of Epilepsy," *Proceeding* (1889): 107–10.
[124] "Minutes of the Association, 24th Annual Meeting, June 1900, First Session," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* IV, no. 4 (1900): 152-56.

Managing the Feeble-minded

By the 1890s, societal attitudes regarding people considered feeble-minded had begun to show more racial and ethnic sensibilities. Several reasons accounted for this shift. Eugenic theory played a role as the feeble-minded were increasingly viewed as a detriment to society because they seemed to populate the ranks of the criminal classes as thieves, prostitutes, vagrants, and alcoholics. The purported high birth rates of these criminal classes, with their offspring also considered feeble-minded, raised concerns of race suicide, societal degeneration, and exploding state budgets. Massive immigration from southern and eastern Europe also increased these fears as the new immigrants were considered to come from stock that was not hardy. Studies of the Jukes and Kallikak families reinforced these assertions.[125]

Changing societal attitudes toward feeblemindedness, however, were not the only reason for increases in the custodial function of the institutions. Parents were concerned about the long-term care of their children and some sought to establish custodial care as an insurance for the future. The Training School at Vineland and the California Home offered lifetime care options. At Vineland, a donation of $5000 secured lifetime care for a resident.[126] At the California Home, the Board of Trustees could authorize lifetime care based on donations or bequests that the Board deemed appropriate.[127] At a time of

[125] Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995); Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 2nd ed.; Steven Noll and James W. Trent Jr., *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Nicole Hahn Rafter, *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988); Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*; Tyor and Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America*.
[126] "Fifteenth Annual Report New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys" (Vineland, New Jersey: New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Girls and Boys, 1903), New Jersey State Library, 63.
[127] "The Institutional Bulletin" (Eldridge, California, November 1, 1895): 8.

limited community services and a highly mobile society, what institutions called "lifetime care" provided a solution for parents and, simultaneously relieved the community of dealing with a problem if parents moved away or died.

Returning residents to the community without support was also viewed as problematic by the superintendents and the public. The move to an increasingly wage-based urban economy meant that the informal support that had been available from families in a rural setting was no longer available. As historian Sarah Rose argues, with limited community services available to assist families, superintendents were often faced with the choice of releasing residents to the poorhouse or retaining them in the institution.[128] While many of the residents had received vocational training, most still required supervision, making independent employment difficult to obtain and many former residents ended up in the almshouse or in bad company. This was viewed as especially problematic for former female residents who could easily become pregnant in those situations. Additionally, most institutions had, by this time, a class of residents that required constant care, for whom return to the community was considered ill-advised. How to provide care for this class was the subject of discussions among the superintendents. They generally agreed with the Massachusetts plan where the legislature had appropriated money to buy 1700 acres in order to establish a colony system of care. The plan was to build a village of one or two story cottages and provide structured activities so the residents' work could offset the cost of their care. More able residents provided care for those more dependent in order to reduce maintenance costs.[129]

[128] Rose, *No Right to Be Idle,* 68.
[129] George G. Tarbell, "Minutes of the Association, Second Session, Discussion," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 226–28.

E. P. Bicknell, Secretary of the Indiana State Board of Charities, related another concern. Indiana had an estimated 5,568 feeble-minded persons in the state in the 1890 census, only 500 of whom were in an institution for the feeble-minded. However, at least a thousand feeble-minded persons were in county poor asylums where they received little training or supervision. While some families were able to care for their feeble-minded child at home, many were not. Bicknell justified institutional placement for economic reasons. Residents were better clothed and fed than if they were in the poor house or at home because the institutional staff viewed training them effectively as fundamental to their education mandate. Unlike in the poor house, the institution provided skill development that profitable to the institution and enjoyable to the resident. The estimated cost of maintaining a resident in an institution for the feeble-minded would be approximately that of maintaining him in the poor house but with more positive outcomes. Bicknell also made the argument that a feeble-minded person would be more content around others of a similar functional status, where, instead of being the lowest functioning person in a group, the child was just as good as anyone else. The children's entire environment was adapted to their needs, with amusements happening on a regular basis. Shifting his focus to the needs of the larger society, Bicknell argued that society needed to protect itself from the "children of feeble-mindedness—Idiocy, Pauperism and Illegitimacy."[130] At the 42 poor houses in Indiana, 75 feeble-minded women gave birth to 137 illegitimate and presumably feeble-minded children.[131] While not all feeble-mindedness was caused by heredity, segregation of feeble-minded women during their

[130] E. P. Bicknell, "Custodial Care of the Adult Feeble-Minded," *JPA* I, no. 2 (December 1896): 57.
[131] Bicknell, "Custodial Care of the Adult Feeble-Minded," 62.

child bearing years would, he argued, significantly decrease the feeble-minded population.[132]

With increasing pressure for long-term, custodial care of feeble-minded adults, institutions needed to adapt their programming beyond the classroom. The California institution instituted an auxiliary corps. The children selected to be part of the corps performed tasks around the institution and were paid between twenty-five cents and two dollars a month. Members of the corps wore uniforms, had reasonable parole privileges, and had no restrictions on how they spent their pay. They were regarded as sub-officers of the institution, with rights and responsibilities. Not only did they serve as a model for other residents, but their labor was a cost-saving measure, decreasing the monthly budget by thirty percent. Osborne, superintendent of the California Home, often preferred the trained residents declaring they outperformed the "reckless, irresponsible paid help that, in our misfortune, we so frequently have to deal with."[133] At the Pennsylvania Training School, residents that acted as aides in the custodial department were paid a penny a day, although instead of paying out the pennies, a cashier kept track of the wages, apparently to deter petty theft. A bi-weekly visit by an ice cream wagon in summer and a store in the winter offered a supervised mode for oversight and tended to exhaust the residents' funds. In Minnesota, a select number of students received a small amount of pay and at least one girl was discharged from the institution and hired as a regular employee.[134]

Legislatures, partly influenced by eugenic thinking, also enacted or amended laws regarding age limits for residents which increased the number of custodial cases. For

[132] Bicknell, "Custodial Care of the Adult Feeble-Minded," 51-63.
[133] Osborne, "The Founding of a Great Institution and Some of Its Problems," 179–80.
[134] A. E. Rogers, "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 376.

example, in California, the initial age range was five to eighteen, as it was assumed the feeble-minded children could be trained and would be discharged as self-supporting. In 1887, the upper age limit was raised to 21. By 1901, as the legislature became convinced of the need for permanent custodial care, all age limits were removed.[135] By the turn of the twentieth century, many states changed their laws to admit women during their child-bearing years, up to the age of 45 or 46.[136] These changes created issues related to housing and educational space, funding and resources, and even the fundamental purpose of the institution. Keeping residents for longer periods, while accepting new residents led some institutions to establish satellite colonies, usually on farm land for adult male residents. For female residents, domestic service and caring for younger residents helped the institution's bottom line. Alexander Johnson, superintendent of the Indiana institution, argued in reports to the legislature, that the costs associated with each class should be segregated out to demonstrate actual costs per resident. Certain residents were, what he called "self-supporting," in that the value of their labor met or exceeded the cost of their care, while others, especially the school children, had much larger costs associated with their care. The trained, adult resident, according to Johnson, should be called a laborer, not a patient, pupil or prisoner.[137] As the labor of the residents created products, especially food products beyond what could be used in the institution, markets for these goods needed to be found. Selling produce or other manufactured articles could infringe on local private enterprises and could cause community relations difficulties. However, various other institutional settings, like prisons, insane asylums, reformatories,

[135] Cahn and Bary, *Welfare Activities of Federal, State, and Local Governments in California, 1850-1934*, 127.
[136] *JPA* VI, no. 3-4 (March-June 1902): 93-98.
[137] Alexander Johnson, "The Self-Supporting Imbecile," *JPA* IV, no. 2 (December 1899), 91–100.

and schools for the blind and deaf were potential markets.[138] These markets could be accessed on either a cash or exchange basis.

Eugenics

During the period from 1890 to 1900, the growing influence of eugenics had a direct impact on institutions for the feeble-minded. The concept that most of the residents could achieve close to normal function and be returned to the community was gradually replaced with the idea that the residents would always need supervision to prevent procreation and the development of criminal tendencies. The idea of limiting the fecundity of those considered unfit became an accepted part of mainstream dialogue regarding the feeble-minded.

By 1896, increased emphasis was being placed on permanent segregation of the feeble-minded in order to limit procreation. According to Samuel J. Fort, president of the AMO, too many were in almshouses, insane asylums, jails, and reformatories where lack of restraint resulted in an increase in the population likely to engage in crime, prostitution, and alcoholism. So it was essential for lifetime segregated populations to acquire skills useful to the institution.[139] This was not, however, a universal opinion. J. Q. A. Stewart also made an interesting statement about the discharge of female residents, given the increasing emphasis on eugenic segregation. He stated that although he had previously thought it improper to discharge female residents, he found that the number that fell into "evil ways" were no more than females in other stations of life.[140]

[138] Johnson, "The Self-Supporting Imbecile," 91–100.
[139] Samuel J. Fort, "President's Address 1896," *JPA* I, no. 1 (September 1896): 29, 30, 33.
[140] J. Q. A. Stewart, "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 374.

Influenced by eugenic thinking, by 1899, superintendents began lobbying to involve the court system instead of leaving admission and discharge in the hands of parents. In this model, a resident would be examined by two court-appointed physicians. If the resident was found to be a suitable candidate for the institution, she was committed for an indefinite period with discharge being under the discretion of the superintendent. This was necessary, the superintendents argued, because some parents, those unfit for the care and supervision of their maturing daughter, were removing them from the institution. These children then became a "danger" to the community. Where the superintendent found adequate supervision would be provided, parents could easily arrange the release.[141] This structuring of custodial care and lifetime commitment had definite social class and socioeconomic underpinnings. As most of the residents were from lower class families, the possibility of providing constant supervision was remote. Therefore, the superintendents argued, the likelihood of a young adult, especially a young female adult, being discharged should also be remote. The larger society, however, was not yet ready to accept lifetime commitment of the feeble-minded, equating it to a lifetime sentence of incarceration given to some criminals. To justify the extension of the age limits, arguments were developed touting the benefits of lifetime care. Feeble-minded people who lived in the community would be subjected to the ridicule of their peers and live in poverty since, without supervision, they lacked the mental capacity for sustaining adequate income to support themselves. The maternal instinct in young, unsupervised, feeble-minded women, the superintendents argued, would lead to illegitimate children, who would also be feeble-minded. In contrast, life in an institution surrounded the

[141] "Methods of Admission to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* IV, no. 2 (December 1899): 73–76.

resident with others at his level, provided work from which satisfaction could be gleaned, and provided housing, food, medical care, and entertainment. Female residents could satisfy their maternal feelings by caring for younger residents. That the residents, themselves, preferred life in the institution, was evidenced, the argument went, by the readiness and anticipation the residents felt upon returning from vacations, some even returning early.[142]

Eugenics was not just about segregation and sterilization of the unfit. According to Lawrence B. Goodheart, while the original founders of institutions for the feeble-minded were motivated by religious benevolence, by 1890, most of them had died and were replaced by superintendents favoring eugenics and segregation. For example, where Henry M. Knight, M.D. of the Connecticut School for Imbeciles knew each of the residents on a personal basis due to small numbers, his son and successor, George H. Knight, was a leading advocate of the "colony plan" whereby the institution could house a thousand residents. George actively advocated for eugenic segregation, especially of women. He was responsible for getting Connecticut's law prohibiting marriage between feeble-minded persons passed in 1895. This was the first law restricting marriage in the nation. The law was rarely enforced, however. George's advocacy for segregation, and later for sterilization, was also manifested in the recommendations of the AMO.[143] At the 1899 meeting of the AMO, the members discussed advocating for marriage restriction laws by enlisting other organizations, like the Medico-Psychological Society, the Medico-Legal Society, the Prison Congress, the American Bar Association, and the

[142] "Methods of Admission to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," 73-76.
[143] Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917."

Conference of Charities and Corrections, to collaborate on a report to the state legislatures on the benefits of marriage restriction laws.[144] The group had moved from advocacy for their individual institutions to ambitious aspirations to influence social policies that were only tangentially related to their daily operations.

Women at Work

Women experienced increasing public visibility in their work roles related to institutions for the feeble-minded. This included women who worked in the institutions, those charged with managing them, and women in the public sphere who advocated for care. From the outset, women had served in institutions and in a variety of roles such as physicians, superintendents, teachers, and matrons. Their leadership often impelled them into positions of power in the AMO. As more women took medical degrees, institutional positions were often more readily available than private practice and administrators often expressly sought to hire them. Dr. Barr of Pennsylvania, stated,

> The medical staff has been augmented by the addition of a woman physician, a long felt want in this institution. Dr. Louise H. Llewellyn, a graduate of the Woman's College in Philadelphia, also formerly resident physician at the Delaware State Insane Hospital, with an added experience at the Salpetriere in Paris under Charcot, fills this position with credit to herself and the institution.[145]

It should be noted that Charcot was one of the foremost neurologists of his time. His students included Sigmund Freud. Institutions were employing women like Dr. Llewellyn who were extremely well credentialed. Dr. Anna E. Broomhall was the consulting gynecologist at the Pennsylvania institution in 1894. "Broomall was chief resident physician at the Woman's Hospital of the Woman's Medical College of

[144] "Minutes of the Association, Discussion," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (1899): 239.
[145] M. W. Barr, "Report from the States-Pennsylvania," *Proceedings* (1894): 511.

Pennsylvania from 1875 to 1883."[146] Dr. Ida E. Richardson was appointed as gynecologist at the New Jersey Training School at Vineland in 1896 and also served as an associate lecturer at the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania.[147] Some of these female physicians used their positions to gather data for professional publications. Articles by female physicians, such as, "A Case of Sporadic Cretinism" by Dr. Julia St. J. Wygant, appeared in the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*.[148] Wygant also assisted Aleš Hrdlička in his anthropological studies at the Syracuse State Institution for Feeble-minded Children.[149]

Many women were directly involved in advocating for care as they had been before the Civil War. Over time, they found more public roles for that advocacy. For example, Martha Brown of Washington, North Carolina, was the center of the successful movement to establish an institution for her state.[150] In Brooklyn, New York, nearly 200 young society women organized a club to canvass the city of New York to determine the condition of feeble-minded children in the city and advocate for proper care.[151] In New Jersey, Emily E. Williamson founded and was secretary of the women-led State Charities Aid Association which was responsible for visiting state and county institutions and reporting their findings to the governor. In her 1889 report on the Home for Feeble-minded Children in Vineland, she commented on the state of the various cottages,

[146] "Dr. Anna Elizabeth Broomhall," https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography_45.html. Broomhall was instructor of obstetrics from 1875 to 1879. She became chair of obstetrics in 1879, and served as a professor in the department from 1880 to 1903.
[147] "Fortieth Annual Announcement, Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvanis" (Jas. B. Rodgers Printing Co., May 1889), http://xdl.drexelmed.edu/pdfs/a076_115.pdf.
[148] Julia St. J. Wygant, "A Case of Sporadic Cretinism," *JPA* I, no. 2 (December 1896): 43–46.
[149] Aleš Hrdlička, "Anthropological Studies," *JPA* III, no. 2 (December 1898): 47–75.
[150] Isaac Kerlin, "Status of the Work Before the People and the Legislatures," *Proceedings* (1892): 381.
[151] A. E. Osborne, "President's Annual Address," *Proceedings* (1894): 391.

ranging from a "fine building" to "totally unfit for the extreme cases placed there."[152] She was also the secretary of the New Jersey State Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Women in Vineland and reported to the governor on the conditions there, especially the issue of a huge waiting list.[153] The California Club, an important women's club, was instrumental in passing a law that mandated that every fourth assistant physician in an institution be female.[154] Their concern was that women in the institution have a woman doctor and, perhaps, that women physicians found suitable employment.

Dr. Mary Dunlop is one example of a woman whose talents and ambition led her to a position of authority. In 1888, Dunlap was specifically recruited by Reverend Olin Garrison, who had established and was the first superintendent of the New Jersey State Institution for Feeble-minded Girls and Women in Vineland, New Jersey.[155] She took over from Garrison as both superintendent and medical director, a full-time position. After taking her medical degree from Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1886, she worked for two years as director of Dr. Joseph Parrish's sanitarium in Burlington, New Jersey. In 1888, when she took over the state institution,[156] she and Dr.

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[152] Emily E. Williamson, "Home for Feeble-Minded Children," *Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the State Charities Aid Association of New Jersey*, no. 39 (1889): 50–51, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101075697753;view=1up;seq=175.

[153] Emily E. Williamson, "Report of the Board of Managers," in *Annual Report of the State Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Women at Vineland 1901*, (Trenton, NJ: John L. Murphy Publishing Company, 1902), 5–6, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?q1=Emily%20Williamson;id=njp.32101075697753;view=image;start=1;sz=10;page=root;size=100;seq=175;num=51.

[154] Moore, "The Work of Women's Clubs in California" 59-62.

[155] "Profiles in Special Education: S. Olin Garrison," 1983, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002246698301700402. Garrison had a brother and a sister who were considered feeble-minded. His father, a New Jersey legislator, had tried to make the state responsible for its' feeble-minded citizens years earlier.

[156] John William Leonard ed., *Woman's Who's Who of America; a Biographical Dictionary of Contemporary Women of the United States and Canada 1914-1915* (New York: American Commonwealth Company, 1914), 766, http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015026074107;view=1up;seq=10.

Alice Bennett[157] were the only two female physicians in the United States at that time to have full control over both the superintendent and medical director positions at facilities for the feeble-minded.[158] According to the 1914-1915 edition of *Woman's Who's Who in America*, Dr. Dunlap was internationally distinguished as a physiologist and neurologist specializing in the care and treatment of the feeble-minded. She was elected President of the AMO by the predominantly male membership in 1899. That same year, she chaired the section on feeble-mindedness at the conference of the National Association of Charities and Correction. In 1901, Dunlap became the first female member of the Cumberland County Medical Society and was elected its vice president in 1903 and president in 1904, at a time when 44 of the 46 members were male. She later became a member of the American Medical Association, which had refused to admit women as members until the early twentieth century.[159] These medical connections were important because general practitioners were often not well-informed about feeble-mindedness.[160] A biographer claimed that her presentations to local medical societies helped local physicians become more accurate in their diagnoses and provide families with information regarding services at the institutions.[161] She published on the care of the feeble-minded, both in medical journals and in general-audience publications. Dunlap

[157] Dr. Alice Bennett was the first woman superintendent of the women's section of the State Hopital for the Insane in Norristown, Pennsylvania.
[158] Frances Elizabeth Willard and Mary A. Livermore, *A Woman of the Century : Fourteen Hundred-Seventy Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, (Buffalo: C.W. Moulton, 1893), 264.
[159] Martha R. Clevenger, "From Lay Practitioner to Doctor of Medicine: Woman Physicians in St. Louis, 1860-1920," http://beckerexhibits.wustl.edu/mowihsp/articles/practitioner.htm.
[160] G. R. Hunter, "Mary Dunlap, Cumberland County," *New Jersey Medicine* 87, no. 3 (1990): 207–8.
[161] Hunter, "Mary Dunlap, Cumberland County," 207–8.

was also influential in local civic affairs.[162] By engaging with prominent members of the community, she put a public face on the work being done at her institution, prompting the community to view the institution favorably and to support it. In 1909, her effective role made it straight-forward for the board to choose another woman, Dr. Madeline Hallowell, to succeed her as superintendent.

In *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine*, Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez discusses how working in institutions and asylums as resident doctors opened an important career opportunity for female physicians. A 1900 poll of 189 graduates of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania showed 60 had been or were currently employed by institutions, primarily insane asylums. Thirty-eight out of 133 public institutions for the insane employed female physicians.[163] Working in an asylum offered several advantages to female physicians: the opportunity to treat a variety of physical and mental infirmities, economic security that was often lacking in private practice, and the development of community contacts and involvement. However, especially in psychiatric institutions, female physicians faced discrimination and unequal treatment that often encouraged them to seek other positions. Marantz-Sanchez argues that they were, "regularly passed over for promotion, systematically paid lower salaries, and frequently forced to confront an unsupportive superintendent."[164] In addition, "women were not welcomed at the meetings of the American Psychiatric Association

[162] She was director of the New Jersey Legal Aid Association for Women, a life member of the Vineland Historical and Antiquarian Society, charter member of the Vineland Women's Club, and organizer of the Vineland Public Library Association.
[163] Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 91.
[164] Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science*, 156.

until the turn of the century."[165] While Dunlap's life fit within the broad parameters of the career path available to female physicians during this time frame, the details offer a quite specific picture because she worked in an institution for the feeble-minded rather than a psychiatric institution. She had been specifically recruited by Garrison and was not simply a resident physician but rather the superintendent and medical director of an institution. This suggests that the environment at institutions for the feeble-minded and the AMO were significantly different and more welcoming for female physicians than other institutional environments.

Mary Dunlap functioned as a leader within her institution. Katherine Lathrop, on the other hand, was instrumental in establishing an institution in California and guiding it through its first years of operation. Lathrop was well-known in California philanthropic circles as Leland Stanford's sister-in-law and the wife of a wealthy entrepreneur. In 1885, Lathrop was appointed by the governor to serve as president of the Board of Trustees for the new California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Children. Letters from the superintendent indicate that she routinely oversaw decisions, both large and small, regarding the institution's business, such as selecting outside vendors for supplies, determining whether to allow a magazine to profile the institution, and instructing the superintendent on institutional goals. She resigned her position as president of the board in 1893 when she moved out of California.[166] According to the California legislative journal, at the time of her resignation, "She was greatly devoted to

[165] Morantz-Sanchez, *Sympathy and Science*, 156.
[166] "First Biennial Message of Governor H. H. Markham to the Legislature of the State of California, Thirtieth Session," in *Appendix to the Journals of the Senate and Assembly of the Thirtieth Session of the Legislature of the State of California*, vol. 1 (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1893): 9, https://books.google.com/books?id=z2FBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA41&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false.

the Home and its inmates. The management had the benefit of her executive ability, which was of high order, and of her business experience, which had been varied. In addition, she was possessed of wealth, and was of a charitable disposition, and the Home was the recipient of many benefactions at her hand."[167] The institution Lathrop helped establish was not only the first institution for the feeble-minded in California, but also the only such institution west of Iowa. As a state institution, it only accepted state residents, which prompted some families to move to California and establish residency.

According to Friedman and Shade, expanded educational opportunities led to middle-class women entering professional occupations, such as nursing, teaching and library work, which had low status and low pay.[168] Lower-class women were employed in domestic service and other menial labor. What has received little attention is the subject of wealthy women's employment. While some, such as Hetty Green, increased their fortune by investing in the stock market, others became entrepreneurs.[169] One of the outlets for middle- and upper-class women, especially married women, was social activism through women's organizations, seen as an expression of Christian charity. Women like Jane Addams established missions and settlement houses designed to assist poor women. In these enterprises, the clients and the staff were predominantly female: "Men were also discarded as irrelevant in the planning of … women's settlements because they were … motivated to action entirely by commercial rewards."[170] Wealthy

[167] First Biennial Message, *Appendix to the Journals*, 9.
[168] Jean E. Friedman and William G. Shade, *Our American Sisters: Women in American Life and Thought*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976), 223–225.
[169] Susan M. Yohn, "Crippled Capitalists: The Inscription of Economic Dependence and the Challenge of Female Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century America," *Feminist Economics* 12, no. 1–2 (April 2006): 85–109.
[170] Friedman and Shade, *Our American Sisters*, 307.

women were often engaged in fundraising events for charitable enterprises, enlisting others of their social status for contributions for worthy causes.

Katherine Lathrop's life fits into this narrative in some ways and stands in sharp contrast in others. As a wealthy woman, she engaged in charitable fundraising and donated to worthy causes.[171] It is of interest to note that she was frequently referred to as Mrs. Ariel Lathrop when she was engaged in social activities, tacitly acknowledging social convention. Her work in establishing and overseeing the first California institution was, however, distinctly different. She was almost exclusively referred to as Katherine Lathrop when she was involved in her work for the feeble-minded, something highly unusual during this time. Unlike many women's organizations of the time, where the directors were all women, her board of trustees was primarily male and a man was superintendent. She was not simply a figurehead; she exerted control over decisions both large and small. The archival record does not provide any direct evidence concerning the reasons for Lathrop's interest in providing care for the feeble-minded, although her friend Julia Judah, who served as a trustee of the California Home, had a child with a disability although what the disability was is not spelled out in the archival record. It is also unclear how she was able to navigate the separate identities of Mrs. Ariel Lathrop and Katherine Lathrop. As with the other women, there appear to be factors within the environment of caring for the feeble-minded that facilitated women in obtaining positions of leadership and authority.

Conclusion

[171] "A Novel Entertainment," San Francisco Call 5 April 1890, CDNC.

The decade between 1890 and 1900 was a time of consolidation for institutions for the feeble-minded. Institutions had expanded across the United States and in this decade the emphasis changed from convincing legislatures and the public of the need for institutions for the feeble-minded, to establishing their place within the societal and governmental structures. As the institutions grew from a few residents to often over a thousand, an internal bureaucracy developed. While the early superintendents held the roles of physician, administrator, lobbyist, and school superintendent, the institution superintendent at the end of the century primarily functioned as an administrator, with the various other roles taken up by an expanded cadre of employees. Lines of authority were established, along with formalized rules regarding job performance and personal behavior. The institutional missions were also changing. Initially conceived as residential schools for feeble-minded children who would return home after their schooling. In the 1890s the emphasis changed to providing more long-term custodial care. A growing interest in eugenics, not yet formalized in organizations that formed after the turn of the century, was partly behind this shift. The 1890 census had documented a large increase in the number of feeble-minded people within the general population. This may have been due to an increased awareness of the public around feeble-mindedness. With rapid industrialization, massive immigration, and urbanization influencing society's perception of stability, safety, and social mores, the feeble-minded were viewed as socially less competent and thus likely to be linked to what seemed to be a rising criminal class of prostitutes, alcoholics and derelicts. The belief that the feeble-minded had high birth rates and that those children would also be feeble-minded and grow up to be criminals led to an increased focus on custodial care, especially for feeble-

minded women of child-bearing age. Vocational education and work programs that benefited the institution's bottom line became more prominent.

Part of the consolidation occurring in this decade related to increasing reliance on governmental support. Most of the newly developed institutions, those outside of the northeast, were a part of state administrative structures and, as such, were subject to governmental oversight. This provided certain financial underpinning but, at the same time, made institutions subject to political patronage, unstable legislative budgetary priorities and supervisory issues. In this decade, multiple progressive programs intended for vulnerable or dependent populations vied with each other for state support. Superintendents spent a great deal of time lobbying legislators about their increased needs and the growing demands for service of their particular population. The increased number of residents mandated new buildings, while public expectations about sanitation and other infrastructure matters required renovation work as well.

Throughout the period, the institutional leaders continued to expand their outreach and consolidated their particular niche in the broader spectrum of social services. Besides the community members engaged with the institution based on commerce and service providers, superintendents and staff worked to form connections with prominent members of both the local and statewide communities. They did this through presentations at national conventions of organizations interested in feeble-mindedness, through encouraging visits to the institution to observe the work, and through providing information to the press. Public outreach often had as a central purpose gaining citizen support that would influence legislators. Another equally important aim of the AMO was to establish the expertise of staff regarding feeble-mindedness. With the

professionalization of psychologists, sociologists and others, the AMO worked to build its reputation as the central forum for discussion regarding the care and treatment of feeble-minded persons.

The turn of the century brought new challenges for institutions for the feeble-minded. The rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity required a readjustment to the concept of the heritability of feeble-mindedness. Eugenics became a more prominent argument among scientists, professionals, and the general educated public. Compulsory attendance laws expanded and were enforced. This raised the issue of what to do with children who did not seem to have the prerequisite capabilities to make progress in a public school setting and how to best provide educational services. These changes and others led to a period of reconsideration and readjustment of the mission and specific functions of the special institutions for the feeble-minded.

Chapter 4 Standardization of Practice and Reconsiderations 1900-1916

As the new century began, social reformers continued their efforts at progressive reform using the tools of the social sciences, in what historian Robert Wiebe described as a "search for order." Progress, according to many progressive leaders, depended on an efficient and bureaucratic state guided by experts.[1] Warnings about the inferiority and danger of marginalized populations were informed by scientific discourses on heredity, including Darwinism, eugenics, and race science. Social behaviors, previously identified as moral failures, such as criminality, prostitution, and poverty, were recast as biological inferiority which needed to be managed by objective and systematically run state agencies.[2] For institutions for the feeble-minded, the period of consolidation from 1890 to 1900 gave way to a period of challenges and reconsiderations that emerged around 1900, although many issues had been fomenting earlier. Along with industrialization and massive immigration, which most historians see as creating societal tension, two specific developments occurred, one in education, and one in science, that significantly influenced society's view of people considered feeble-minded and thus greatly impacted institutions for the feeble-minded. The first was the enactment and enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws which brought feeble-minded children to the attention of school authorities. The second was the rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity in 1900 which ushered in an era of hard heredity that significantly changed the conception of feeble-mindedness,

[1] Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Nathaniel Comfort, *The Science of Human Perfection: How Genes Became the Heart of American Medicine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 45-47.
[2] Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), xii.

From the early days of the institutions for the feeble-minded, educational priorities and practices were often aligned with educational trends in the public schools, although the methodologies for attaining those educational goals were, in many cases, different. Thus, the ongoing expansion and reorientation in public education at the beginning of the twentieth century directly impacted institutions for the feeble-minded. In response to the tide of immigrants entering the United States, the public school became seen as the one institution that had the potential to train immigrant and poor children in proper moral character, even as they learned the English language and other skills. Compulsory schooling, especially in the middle-class values of hard work and obedience and deference to authority, was portrayed as necessary to ensure the survival of the American republic and its democratic institutions. Economically, education was touted as creating better and more productive workers who would advance the American economy.[3] Thus, in the first decade of the twentieth century, states began enacting and enforcing new compulsory education laws. An unintended consequence of these laws was that feeble-minded children, who had previously not been admitted to public schools, were now being enrolled.

According to Margret Winzer, author of *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration*,[4] children with disabilities were not forgotten by the educational reformers of the nineteenth century. Education was promoted as a means of counteracting lifelong dependency and helping such children acquire the sills that would enable them to become contributing members of the larger society. Special education did

[3] David B. Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, Inc, 1982).
[4] Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993).

not, however, fit into the existing framework of public education because reformers advocating for education for children with disabilities believed that the children required different methods of teaching and specific content that would be useful. The distinction was reinforced by growing attention to a medical model, by both educators and reformers, which placed emphasis on the etiology of disabilities and classification of students. Under this medical model, the problem was located in the individual and reinforced the common belief that many children with disabilities required different teaching techniques not available in existing public schools. Historically, the public schools excluded children with disabilities because they had neither the social mandate nor the teachers trained to deal with these students. The small residential institutions in the post-Civil War period which grew into large residential institutions were seen as the positive alternative for providing specialized care and educational services. At the turn of the century, these views needed to be reconsidered. Feeble-mindedness had become fused in the public mind with ideas about criminality, vice, crime and delinquency and was increasingly seen as an impending threat to the social order of the United States.[5] According to Winzer, between the mid-1880s and 1920, the eugenics movement successfully promoted its' tenet that heredity was immutable and public support for providing and funding services for a population now considered hereditarily incapable of improving declined.[6] In regard to disability issues, this more pessimistic societal view found little value in expending public money on special education, especially on students with mental retardation.[7]

[5] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 251.
[6] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 280-1.
[7] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 251.

While compulsory school attendance laws had been on the books for decades, it was only at the turn of the twentieth century that they began to be enforced, in response to the newer immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. An unforeseen consequence of these laws was that they also brought children considered feeble-minded into the public schools. Uncertain how to deal with these students, public school managers reached out to the institutions. Collaboration among public school staff, institutional staff, and other stakeholders forged and strengthened the connection between the school programs in the institution and the special classes in the public schools.[8] J. M. Murdoch tackled the increasingly complex relationship between residential institutions and the publics in his 1903 address to the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO). While some children were served in the public schools, he argued that, since many of them would not be self-sufficient, placement in a custodial institution that offered educational, vocational, and entertainment services when they left public school was more conducive to their happiness.[9] Murdoch argued that the AMO should solicit membership from public school personnel and others, like social workers who were tasked with helping feeble-minded students after they left the public schools, so they could understand what the institutions had to offer. However, the ever expanding public schools, pushed by compulsory attendance laws, often did not willingly accept children with disabilities, especially severe disabilities. They were concerned that such children, who they considered untrainable, were a financial drain on the school system. Institutional staff often saw the admittance of these children as undesirable as they were unable to

[8] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 463.
[9] J. M. Murdoch, "President's Address," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics,* VII, no. 4 (1903): 67-72.

contribute to the maintenance of the institution and who took up staff time, exacerbating the funding issues facing the institutions.[10] Both educators and institution superintendents advocated permanent custodial care as children aged out of other systems.[11]

With the rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity in 1900, the rationale for custodial care and the unlikelihood of achieving self-sufficiency became connected to biological thinking. Mendel's work, combined with eugenic thought and Herbert Spencer's ideology of social evolutionary progress and survival of the fittest, became intertwined with the rationale and mission of institutions for the feeble-minded, not only in the minds of the institutional staff, but also in the general public.[12] This new ideology, a combination of hereditary science, progress, and a concern for the future of the broader society, reshaped the impetus for charity away from assisting an individual to a concern for a vague social goal of improving society. The largest subset, perhaps the most inclusive subset, impacted by this change were people considered to be feeble-minded.

As biological science moved increasingly toward experimentation as the method of proving or disproving a hypothesis, support for neo-Lamarckism began to diminish. The rediscovery of Mendel's work in 1900, with its concept of a gene transmitted unchanged from parent to later generations, eventually led to the decline of neo-Lamarckism.[13] Mendel's laws of inheritance were seen as a mechanism for evolution,

[10] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 330.
[11] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 299.
[12] See Carl N. Degler, *In Search of Human Nature: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[13] Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 236-247.

distinct from Darwinian natural selection. Early Mendelian geneticists were strongly biased toward the view that evolution occurred by saltation or sudden leaps. They believed that through the recombination of the hereditary determinants, a radical transformation of a species could occur, thus creating a new species. Evolution in species was, therefore, shaped by the genetic determinants, not by adaptation and natural selection. According to Mendel's laws, each characteristic of an organism had two determinants, one from each parental line. Each of these determinants had a dominant and a recessive form. The recessive characteristic would only be expressed when both determinants were recessive. The inheritance of these determinants seemed to follow mathematical laws of probability. It ushered in a new focus in biology on experimentation designed to control the inheritance of living animals and was adopted by breeders and horticulturists.[14]

The movement of hereditary science from neo-Lamarckism to Mendelism had a profound impact on the rationale for service delivery to marginalized populations. According to Pickens, prior to the spread of Mendel's ideas in the first decades of the twentieth century, many American biologists believed in the inheritance of acquired characteristics with, what he labeled, an "aristocratic orientation," whereby white Anglo-Saxons were believed to be the fittest through better adaptation. This relegated other ethnic groups and people who were poor or otherwise substandard in some way to the ranks of the unfit that needed to be scientifically managed. "By 1905, American scientists and the educated public in general increasingly accepted the Mendelian law of

[14] Barbara A. Kimmelman, "The American Breeders' Association: Genetics and Eugenics in an Agricultural Context, 1903-13," *Social Studies of Science* 13, no. 2 (May 1983): 163–204. See also the Journal of Heredity by the American Breeders' Association.

heredity, the mutation theory of evolution, the inability of selection to build up species from fluctuations, and the chromosomal mechanism of sex determination."[15] This emphasis on hard heredity was used to explain the biological inevitability of the feeble-minded, habitual criminals and the poor continuing to pass on their negative traits to future generations.

The rediscovery of Mendel's work played a key role in enlisting scientists and physicians into the eugenics movement. Kenneth Ludmerer argued in *Genetics and American Society*[16] that early geneticists, advocated eugenics applicability to solving social problems. "Many early geneticists…were confident that a biological analysis would enable many pressing social questions to be solved; a eugenics program was appealing to them because it was the answer suggested by biological science."[17] The genetic discoveries of Weismann and the rediscovery of Mendel's work sparked increased participation by geneticists in the eugenics movement, up to about fifty percent.[18] Philip Reilly, in his 1991 book, *The Surgical Solution*,[19] stated that during the last two decades of the nineteenth century there was, "a steady growth in the number of proponents of a biological basis for feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, insanity, and crime."[20] According to Reilly, Weismann's work resonated with Galton's eugenic theory and focused scientific interest on biological determinism. Philip Pauly, in *Biologists and the*

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[15] Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 49.
[16] Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society: A Historical Appraisal*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).
[17] Ludmerer, *Genetics and American Society*, 37.
[18] Kenneth M. Ludmerer, "American Geneticists and the Eugenics Movement: 1905-1935," *Journal of the History of Biology* 2, no. 2 (1969): 345.
[19] Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
[20] Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, 8.

Promise of American Life,[21] argued that American biologists became involved in eugenics, "not because of developments in genetics, but as part of their heightened interest in social problems at the climax of the Progressive Era."[22] Mark Largent, in *Breeding Contempt*,[23] related how the ongoing changes in the science of heredity influenced both eugenics and the professionalization of American biology. He stated, "It is difficult to find many early-twentieth-century American biologists who were not advocates of eugenics in some form or another."[24] According to Largent, biologists' research after the rediscovery of Mendel's laws provided scientific justification for eugenic sterilization laws. In addition, biologists' involvement in eugenics led to increased research funding and valuable social status by demonstrating how "basic scientific research on evolution and heredity could ultimately improve the nation."[25] The interpretation of biological data available at the time seemed to provide proof that the less fit members of society were members of a lower class. Research on the reproductive levels of the poor, usually assumed to be feeble-minded, reinforced concerns that the fecundity of the unfit was far surpassing the fit.

One of the methods of trying to establish hereditary patterns was through the use of family studies that attempted to trace human characteristics through the previous generations. Pickens, in his book, *Eugenics and the Progressives*, argued that an early study, Richard Dugdale's *The Jukes*, done in 1877, "sparked scientific interest in the

[21] Philip J. Pauly, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life: From Meriwether Lewis to Alfred Kinsey*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[22] Pauly, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life*, 216.
[23] Mark Largent, *Breeding Contempt: The History of Coerced Sterilization in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).
[24] Largent, *Breeding Contempt*, 2.
[25] Largent, *Breeding Contempt*, 40.

relationship between charity and heredity."[26] Dugdale, an American sociologist, was one of the first investigators to study familial feeble-mindedness and criminality. Using a neo-Lamarkian framework, he put considerable emphasis on the role of environment as responsible for the production of the unfit. Later family studies, however, invoked the Mendelian law of heredity as the causative factor. By 1900, superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded were arguing for standardized admission forms to collect hereditary statistics on the child, going back several generations, if possible.[27] A proposed form was presented at the 1902 annual meeting and was sent to all institutions for the feeble-minded belonging to the AMO. The statistics collected were to be sent to the chairman of the statistical committee who was to report back at the next meeting.[28] Arthur Estrabrook, of the Eugenic Record Office, in his book, *The Jukes in 1915*, reversed Dugdale's findings, strongly emphasized the hereditary component of feeble-mindedness, and argued that no amount of environmental improvement would alter the feeble-minded's propensity toward criminality. This evidence was important in the push for increased eugenic sterilizations. Estrabrook argued against state prison for criminals, since the crimes were a result of feeble-mindedness. Rather, he was in favor of state custodial care and sterilizations.[29]

Other family studies appeared during the first quarter of the twentieth century, changing over time, and thus providing a reflection of the changes in the understanding of hereditary processes. Nicole Rafter states, "Four lines of development were

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[26] Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives*, 89.
[27] Martin W. Barr, et al., "Discussion of 'The Etiology of Feeble-Mindedness,'" *JPA* IV, no. 4 (June 1900): 152–56.
[28] Walter E. Fernald, "Scheme for Etiological Study," *JPA* VI, no. 3, 4 (June 1902): 88–89.
[29] Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives,* 90.

particularly important: gradual rejection of the possibility that environmental factors might contribute to social problems; introduction of concepts from the rapidly developing field of genetics; increasing hostility toward "the feeble-minded"; and ever stronger endorsement of eugenic solutions."[30]

Frank J. Bruno, professor of applied sociology and later the head of the department of Social Work of Washington University, stated that the combination of Dugdale's study of the Jukes, the rediscovery of Mendel's work and Binet's intelligence testing established a strong assumption among scientists and the general public of the dominance of heredity over environment. It was not until the 1920s that the interdependence of heredity and environment was again seriously considered. The social consequences for people who were feeble-minded reflected the mercurial thinking during this period, especially after 1910. According to Bruno, the leaders in the field of feeble-mindedness in the closing decades of the nineteenth century worked diligently to bring out the latent talents of the feeble-minded while their successors, trained in the deterministic view of heredity, did not.[31]

According to Diane Paul, while neo-Lamarckians believed deviant behaviors such as criminality, pauperism and feeble-mindedness were inherited, they simultaneously attributed them to bad environments that were in need of reform. Social improvements in education, housing and public health would, therefore, improve the genetic endowment of future generations. With the transition to hard heredity following the rediscovery of

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[30] Nicole Hahn Rafter, ed., *White Trash: The Eugenic Family Studies, 1877-1919* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 8.

[31] Frank J. Bruno, "The Influence of Biology on Theories of Human Behavior," *The American Biology Teacher* 5, no. 3 (1942): 55-59.

Mendel's work, the view that improving social conditions could improve subsequent generations was transformed into the view that decreasing the birth rate of the unfit, generally considered to be feeble-minded, was the only way to improve the genetic stock of the nation.[32] This shift had dramatic shifts for social policy. Previously, care for the unfit was provided on a local level where there was some self-interest in providing services. The increase in state management of social services, along with Mendel's work, seemed to indicate that habilitating the feeble-minded was not possible and thus containment, sterilization, or elimination was necessary to control the state's costs associated with the increased birth rate among the feeble-minded, something that threatened to overwhelm state budgets. As a result, state policies shifted to provide more oversight for the dependent populations.

The change in the underlying concept of how human heredity occurred, from neo-Lamarckism to Mendelism had a profound impact on institutions for the feeble-minded.[33] The hard heredity of Mendelism, when applied to eugenic thought, paved the way for an increased emphasis on controlling the lives of people considered feeble-minded. This idea directly challenged the earlier belief that charity should focus on uplifting the individual, replacing it with a mandate to uplift the whole society, often at the expense of the poor and feeble-minded. Eliminating the reproduction of the feeble-minded, through segregation or sterilization, became a prominent focus, not only of the institutions and their staffs, but also in the wider society and linked directly to the push for custodial care

[32] Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1998), 42-45.

[33] This change affected more than institutions for the feeble-minded. Concerns over race suicide, immigration of the racially unfit (Asian and Southern European), and the need for inferior peoples to be supervised came to the forefront at this time.

when feeble-minded children became adults. These new understandings became intertwined with virtually every aspect of the institutions.

Education, Special Education, and Institutions for the Feeble-minded

According to historians of education, the educational reform of the last half of the nineteenth century tended to be infused with the Social Gospel. Mary McDougall Gordon argues that, "The educational awakening was a Protestant crusade to establish a culture that became the dominant system of values in the new nation."[34] The public school was perceived as the one institution that had the potential to ameliorate concerns raised by immigrants by training all children in the proper moral character.[35] Economically, education was touted as creating better and more productive workers who would advance the American economy.[36] While the fervor for educational reform was maintained through the Progressive Era, the focus shifted to controlling human evolution through the application of scientific principles to education. Schools were perceived as a means of achieving progress, although the racial and class inequalities that were built into the reformers' concept of progress were generally not acknowledged; it was unlikely that many of the reformers were even aware of them. Business had a large impact on the reform of public education during the Progressive Era, advocating vocational schools as a means of turning out better prepared workers. As standardization of curriculum occurred, children began to be sorted into various tracks, depending on what was perceived as their likely occupation after leaving school. It was considered a waste of funding to provide

[34] Mary McDougall Gordon, "Patriots and Christians: A Reassessment of Nineteenth-Century School Reformers," *Journal of Social History* 11, no. 4 (1978): 554.
[35] Gordon, "Patriots and Christians," 554.
[36] Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue.*

college preparatory classes to children who would become factory workers. Given this environment, children who did not fit into the prescribed mold for whatever reason (truancy, feeble-mindedness, delinquency, etc.) were channeled into distinct educational settings.

The Victorian view was that children who were delinquent, destitute, or dependent were that way because their surroundings were teeming with vice, echoing neo-Lamarckian thought. Only by removing the children from their inhospitable environments, such as sweatshops,[37] could their lives be improved. Reform schools, industrial schools and state schools, all of which were residential, were established as a more appropriate environment than the almshouse or the adult prison. "The idea of salvaging children who might otherwise grow up to do serious social and economic damage was most attractive in terms of both practical Christianity and the utilitarian operation of society."[38] Public education seemed to be the most efficient means of carrying out child saving and thus producing a better generation in the future. However, public education was not readily available. For example, in 1892, Florence Kelley found that for 7000 children between the ages of six and fourteen in the Nineteenth Ward in Chicago, neighborhood schools had places for only 2579 of them; the rest were engaged in child labor.[39]

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[37] David John Hogan, *Class and Reform: School and Society in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).
[38] Graham Parker, "American Child-Saving: The Climate of Reform as Reflected in the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1875-1900," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 18, no. 4 (1968): 374.
[39] Hogan, *Class and Reform*, 53.

The introduction of manual training into secondary education was a way to bridge the widening gap between the traditional agrarian society and the modern, often impersonal, industrial society that had undermined standard apprenticeship methods of building work skills. By 1890, several cities had established manual training high schools and manual training was incorporated into the curriculum of many of the high schools in urban centers.[40] According to Herbert Kliebard, manual training was viewed as "especially beneficial for those segments of American society that were believed to require remedial treatment for one reason or another."[41] Institutions for the feeble-minded followed the trends of the public schools regarding increased vocational training. For example, according to C. Emerson Nash, assistant superintendent, by 1903, children entering Vineland were assessed on their vocational potential as an adult because it was considered inefficient to provide more education than the students would need for the labor they would engage in at the institution as adults.[42]

Rhoda Esten, supervisor of special schools in Providence, Rhode Island, argued for special schools from several perspectives. From the point of view of teachers, a special school provided opportunities for mutual help and encouragement for the difficult job of teaching the feeble-minded. Having larger numbers of students allowed the children to be grouped according to ability, leading to more effective teaching. Esten, as an administrator, also made the point that a special school was more cost effective than having numerous small, scattered programs.[43] Another argument was that segregation of

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[40] Herbert M. Kliebard, *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).
[41] Kliebard, *Schooled to Work*, 13.
[42] Charles Emerson Nash, "Industrial Training--Its Place in Schools for the Feeble-Minded," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* VIII, no. 1 (September 1903): 8–11.
[43] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 15-16.

children with disabilities served two main purposes: it increased the efficiency of the regular classroom by removing students who took up too much of the teacher's time to the detriment of the other students and it provided individualized attention to students with disabilities by gearing work to the child's level.[44]

Samuel J. Fort, of Ellicott City, Maryland, expressed the difficulty faced by public schools in determining special education curriculum when the goal of special education was under debate in society. Was the goal, through special education, to awaken the brain, and thus enable the child to earn a living and become a responsible citizen, or was special education a preparation for life in an institution because the evils of heredity, alcohol, syphilis, and other social ills could not be overcome by education? Fort advocated placing a primary emphasis on manual training, beginning during the elementary years, because problematic childhood behaviors could be readily observed and corrections applied.[45] Superintendents of institutions for the feeble-minded argued from the beginning that feeble-minded children were entitled to "the education to which every child in the union is entitled---whatsoever is best fitted for it."[46] The question of where that education should take place remained under discussion.

While considerable attention had earlier been given to institutional education for the blind, deaf, and feeble-minded, in the new progressive environment and compulsory education laws, it became imperative to determine how to provide services for these populations in the regular public school system. One of the first public school classes in

[44] Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008); Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 463.
[45] Fort, "Special School for Special Children," 28-38.
[46] E. R. Johnstone, "President's Address," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (1904): 68.

the nation for children with a mental deficiency started in Boston in 1899. By 1927, 218 cities had special classes for over 52,000 children labeled as mentally deficient. Some of the original special classes had both students who were considered feeble-minded and, also, students who were behind in their learning and too old to be placed in lower grades, due to family circumstances, lack of availability of schooling and/or child labor.[47] Superintendents were well aware of the potential challenge to their institutions with this shift to providing educational services in the public system.[48] In his study of the development of special education in the Boston schools, Osgood traced the early history and emerging ties between the educational programming in the residential institution for the feeble-minded and the special public school classrooms for those children. He observed,

> The New England region, and Boston in particular, served as home for a number of individuals and institutions dedicated to improving the diagnosis, treatment and education of individuals of all ages with disabilities. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, Samuel Gridley Howe, Edouard Seguin, Hervey Wilbur, and Walter Fernald were the most notable among many individuals who established and/or directed institutions for individuals with disabilities in the region. These institutions served as centers for teaching and research as well as easily accessible resources for Boston's school system as it built its special education programs.[49]

Both Fernald, superintendent of the Massachusetts School for the Feeble-minded, and E. R. Johnstone, superintendent at the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-minded Children, strongly supported special education classes in the public schools, especially for the less "severely involved" child, who was considered capable of learning, although at a slower rate. Anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička cautioned against segregating children

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[47] Frances E. Cheney, "Five Years' Experience in Teaching Mentally Defective Children in a Public School," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 39–41.
[48] "Minutes of the Twenty-third Annual Meeting 1899," *JPA*, IV, no. 1 (1899): 222-223.
[49] Robert L. Osgood, *For "Children Who Vary From The Normal Type": Special Education in Boston, 1838-1930* (Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2000), 7.

into special classes without adequate evaluation. First, according to Hrdlička, some of the mental slowness might be due to treatable conditions like malnutrition, and secondly, a special class removed the child from the influence and imitation of higher functioning children. Moreover, the stigma of attending a special class might remain with him throughout his lifetime.[50] On the other hand, Edwin P. Seaver, superintendent of the Boston public schools from 1880 to 1904, argued that the more severely involved child with mental retardation would be best served in an institutional setting. Admissions to institutions were limited due to severe overcrowding in the institutions, so even feeble-minded students thought to be appropriate for institutional placement needed to be served in the public schools.

The ties between the development of special education in the public schools and institutions for the feeble-minded went beyond the rhetoric of administrators. Collaboration between school officials and institutions resulted in training programs for public school special education teachers. For example, in 1902, The Boston School Committee

> approved a general leave of absence, for a maximum of a year with pay and travel expenses, to five grammar and primary schoolteachers for training in teaching "mentally defective, or backward children" at the School for Feeble-Minded Children in Elwyn, Pennsylvania… other teachers were sent to the Seguin School …or the Massachusetts state school at Waverley.[51]

By 1915, the institution for the feeble-minded in Waverly, Massachusetts, was providing specialized teacher training and was thus instrumental in developing the public school special education classes in the state. Teachers received special certification after

[50] Aleš Hrdlička, "Minutes of the Association, September 1899," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 223–25.
[51] Osgood, *For "Children Who Vary From The Normal Type", 7*.

completing the training.[52] Professional summer training programs for public school teachers began in 1902 at Vineland, the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-minded Children, building on earlier internship models of training. Teachers of feeble-minded students in an institution had developed skills in learning in in-depth study of the child, grouping the child with like children, knowledge of possibilities and limitations, and to individualize instruction. These approaches and pedagogical skills were taught to public school teachers in a variety of programs, including summer schools held at institutions.[53] To attend the summer school, public school teachers were required to have at least one year of teaching experience and to provide a letter of recommendation from their supervisor. The fee was twenty-five dollars which included room and board at Vineland. The course ran for six weeks with the first three weeks devoted to the general subject of feeble-minded children, causes and classification of feeble-mindedness, and the sociological aspects of feeble-mindedness and issues of caring for the feeble-minded. The last three weeks were devoted to methodology. In addition, a course of reading was also required. Teachers completing the course and passing the examination were awarded a certificate.[54] By 1913, over 300 teachers had been trained through the summer school program at Vineland.[55]In 1895, the Worcester Normal School gave special attention to training teachers to work with "abnormal" children.[56] The University of Pennsylvania began offering a three-course sequence on teaching children with feeble-mindedness in 1897. By 1913, courses were offered at the University of Washington,

[52] Osgood, *The History of Special Education*.
[53] Martin W. Barr, "What Teachers of Normal Children Learn from the Teachers of Defectives," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 55–59.
[54] "A Summer School for Teachers," *JPA* VIII, no. 2–3 (December 1903): 61–62.
[55] Walter E. Fernald, "The Burden of Feeble-Mindedness," *JPA* XVII, no. 3 (March 1912): 87–111.
[56] "Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting 1895," *Proceedings of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* (1895): 601.

New York University, University of Pittsburgh, University of Pennsylvania, University of California, Harvard University, Columbia University and the State Normal College of Greeley, Colorado.[57]

The expansion of special education was marked by the establishment of a Department of Special Education in the major educational professional organization, the National Education Association shortly after 1900. Articles on research and teaching strategies soon appeared in *NEA Proceedings*, *Training School Bulletin*, *Ungraded* and the *Journal of Psycho-Athenics*.[58] By 1930, special education pedagogy had an established presence in higher education and the training at the institutions for the feeble-minded gradually declined as regular teacher training colleges picked up that responsibility.

As Scheerenberger points out, it was not a linear path from education in an institutional setting to special education in the public schools. There were disagreements about the level of feeble-mindedness that could be accommodated in the public schools, with superintendents in both the institutions and the public schools taking a variety of positions on the issue. Emily Williamson, secretary of both the New Jersey State Home for Feeble-minded Women and the New Jersey State Charities Aid Association argued that, based on expert opinion, children should be admitted to the institution between the ages of 5 and 7.[59] The New Jersey State Board of Education cited a 1911 state law that

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[57] E. R. Johnstone, "Report of the Superintendent," in *25th Annual Report : The New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children* (Vineland, New Jersey: New Jersey Training School for Feeble-minded Children, 1913), 24-25.
[58] Osgood, *The History of Special Education*.
[59] Emily E. Williamson, "Report of the Board of Managers," in *Annual Report of the State Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Women at Vineland* (Trenton, NJ: John L. Murphy Publishing Company, 1902), 6.

mandated that any children three years or more below normal be educated in a special class of no more than 15 students. These classes were to be discontinued when the proper provision could be made by the state for the children's education in an institutional setting, thus giving priority to institutional placement for feeble-minded children, but acknowledging the overcrowding in the state's institutions. One method used to determine which students fell into this category were the "'grade and progress cards' prepared by Dr. Leonard P Ayres of the Russell Sage Foundation."[60] However, there was consensus that the public schools should be responsible for providing educational programs for more advanced children with feeble-mindedness. The debate was not about if a person should enter an institution, but when; should it happen when the child was young, when the child finished primary school, or when he/she completed secondary school? Dr. Martin Barr saw a benefit to admitting higher grade children once they had finished public school. These new admissions would enable the institution to carry on its work with vocational education because the newcomers would already have the certain basic skill sets.[61]

Rhoda A. Esten, the supervisor of special schools in Providence, Rhode Island, argued for segregated public schools because, "As education has extended to the masses it has also descended to a lower grade of society that was formerly abandoned to ignorance and neglect. … (P)roper training and education …cannot be supplied in our schools established for the normal child."[62] Esten's criteria for special education teachers

[60] "Annual Report of the State Board of Education and of the Commissioner of Education of New Jersey 1912" (Somerville, New Jersey, 1913), New Jersey State Library, 64.
[61] Martin W. Barr, "Chief Physician's Report for 1898-99," in *Forty-Seventh Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children* (Philadelphia: Burk & McFetridge Co., 1899).
[62] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 10.1

mirrored those established for teachers in institutions for the feeble-minded. They must have had specialized training on the reciprocal influences of mind and body, be versatile and original in devising instruction, have patience with providing constant repetition, and above all have an enduring love for their students. In addition, they must be able to offer a graded course of exercise, from simple calisthenics to industrial training, adapted to each child's needs so that the whole child may be developed. Academic instruction was to begin with a modified kindergarten curriculum and was to be simple, direct, concrete and of a short duration so as to prevent exhaustion on the part of the student. Nature study, because it was real and concrete and was of interest to students with feeble-mindedness, was be employed whenever possible for teaching a variety of concepts.[63] Discipline, "should be mild, gentle and firm, and in no case should corporal punishment be used."[64]

Esten's argument for special class placement as early as possible was based on the belief that maintaining feeble-minded children in regular classes where the subject matter was incomprehensible led to apathy and discouragement. She felt if these students remained in regular classrooms until their teens, "little can be done for them outside of custodial care in an institution."[65] Providing special education services through public schools, she argued, was necessitated by both a scientific rationale and moral dogma. Scientifically, it was believed that a large proportion of criminals, drunkards and prostitutes came from the feeble-minded class that had not been educated to be useful citizens. Esten's argument was that it was more fiscally responsible for the state to pay

[63] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 11.
[64] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 12.
[65] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 13.

for special education now rather than support the feeble-minded and their progeny in almshouses or prisons. "Every sentiment of humanity and Christianity,"[66] argued Esten, demanded that feeble-minded children be educated so they could reach their potential.

Presaging debates that became much more intense in the new century, Will S. Monroe of Stanford University, argued that there was no consensus on the degree of mental defect that made a child unfit to attend public school. The results of his survey of California public schools indicated that ten percent of the students were feeble-minded. The dilemma he articulated was, "Are they to over-crowd our special institutions, by adding to the state's burden? Or are they to remain a hinderance [sic] to the ninety or more per cent of normal children of the community?"[67] He went on to question why the United States did not have available public schools for exceptional children with small classes of no more than twelve feeble-minded children as was done in Norway.[68] Initially, many special educators believed once students finished in the public schools they would be admitted to institutions for the feeble-minded because they would not be able to support themselves. A 1915 study of 350 former special education students from the New York City public schools called that assumption into question, though it did not have a significant effect on future arguments regarding placement. The study found that 54.8% were employed for wages, 8.8% were temporarily out of work and 24.6% were cared for at home and considered of economic value to their family.[69]

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[66] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 14.
[67] Will S. Monroe, "Feeble-Minded Children in the Public Schools," *Proceedings* (1894): 430–33.
[68] Monroe, "Feeble-Minded Children in the Public Schools," 430-33.
[69] R. C. Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation* (Baltimore: Paul. H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1983), 170.

As in public schools, institutions for the feeble-minded sought to tailor a child's education to a presumed adult role in the institution and this meant decreasing the time and content spent on educational fundamentals. The length of the academic day was shortened. By the turn of the twentieth century, high-grade feeble-minded children were receiving three hours of instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic, usually in the morning, with industrial training or work on institutional upkeep filling the afternoon. At the 1899 annual meeting of the AMO, several superintendents advocated for a school day of two and a half hours, even for children as young as seven, with the rest of the day devoted to vocational and manual labor.[70] Farming for the boys and household and caretaking for the girls were seen as the most useful preparation for each child's adult future. Moreover, the superintendents argued the work gave a sense of satisfaction while at the same time improved the institution's bottom line, something increasingly important as numbers increased with the emphasis on segregation of the feeble-minded and significant economic downturns in the 1890s. The focus of education in even the kindergarten was thus changed. A prospective painter needed to learn his colors, playing with blocks was the beginning of carpentry, and needlework was the beginning of dressmaking.[71] By 1911, Vineland, for example, had a tailor shop and woodworking facility. Children were taught "tailoring, shoemaking, dressmaking, laundering, painting and drawing, carpentry, netting and chair caning, mattress making, farming, and dairying."[72] Martin Barr, superintendent at the Pennsylvania Training School, pointed out some difficulties with the work model. For example, when Pennsylvania opened a

[70] George G. Tarbell, "Minutes of the Association, Second Session, Discussion," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899): 228–29.
[71] Nash, "Industrial Training--Its Place in Schools for the Feeble-Minded," 10.
[72] Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 181.

new institution in the western part of the state and moved a number of residents from the eastern institution, the institution in Elwyn lost a number of competent workers critical to the institution's operation. The children admitted to the empty slots were quite young and more frequently custodial cases rather than trainable ones. Furthermore, with long-standing custodial care, a number of residents had become too old to work, requiring special care as they aged. Effective training also undermined the goal of having institutions be self-sufficient economically because competent workers were sometimes withdrawn at the insistence of philanthropists and parents who believed the residents could and should compete on the open labor market.[73] These withdrawals were usually opposed by the superintendents as they believed that while the resident may be a competent worker, the demands of living in society would ultimately lead to the poor house, the streets, or to illegitimate children.

Isabel C. Barrows was active in prison reform and the treatment of the feeble-minded. She was a member of the AMO and acted as the stenographer for the organization.[74] She set the tone for the argument for vocational training in the new century when she argued for the necessity of work within the institutional environment. In an address in connection with an exhibit of Handiwork from Institutions for the Feeble-Minded, she reported on the goals and outcomes of work:

> (The) epitome of what the manual training of the imbecile should be,---self-help, the help of others, and resulting happiness. That happiness is one result of a capacity for usefulness is a truism, when we think of our own lives. It is equally

[73] Barr, "Chief Physician's Report for 1898-99," 12.
[74] In addition, she was the first woman to work for Congress as a stenographer, the first American female ophthalmologist, the first woman to have a private practice in medicine in Washington, D.C., one of the first woman professors at Howard University's School of Medicine, and a key player of reform movements of the day.

> true of those with fewer faculties…. The trustees of the Massachusetts School for Feeble-Minded say,
>
> > "Even excavating and road-making make the boys very content and happy."
>
> Dr. Fernald adds in his report,
>
> > "The girls are always proud of their work, and are distinctly happier and better as a result of being occupied, and of being of some use in the world."
>
> Dr. Dunlap, of New Jersey, says that with the imbecile
>
> > "to be busy is to be happy: to be deprived of work is a mark of displeasure."….
>
> The Barre report defines the nature of the work required. It must be
>
> > "work that is plainly useful….work that trains the hand and eye and heart, and develops character at the same time that it performs a manifest duty---that we consider manual training in the broadest and highest sense."[75]

Thus, vocational training, in service to the needs of the institution, was equated to creating happiness for the residents.

By 1906, the pre-Civil War idea that educational training could enable the feeble-minded child to be a functional member of the community had largely been abandoned by the superintendents in favor of custodial care. Increasingly, states were mandating that, as a state funded institutions, all grades of feeble-minded children must be admitted which led to increased care needs and increased costs.[76] During the period from 1900 to 1916, determining the extent of feeble-mindedness in order make the most appropriate placement within the institution meant that classification assumed a prominent place in the work of caring for the feeble-minded. Classification created categories that could be used by trained staff because the superintendents now rarely dealt with their charges. A standard means of classifying feeble-minded individuals was deemed necessary as now a variety of staff were determining where in the institution a child should be placed. While

[75] Isabel C. Barrows, "Manual Training For the Feeble-Minded," *Proceedings* (1894): 443-444.
[76] George H. Knight, "President's Address 1888," *Proceedings* (1889): 51–53.

in 1876, a superintendent held the roles of administrator, physician, school principal, and lobbyist, by 1900, these roles had been taken over by specialized staff members. Along with vocational educators, assistant physicians, music masters and grounds keepers, a new category of expert, the psychologist, was playing an important role within the institution, often allocated specialized rooms for research and testing. Two of the most well-known psychologists were Henry Goddard at Vineland, New Jersey, and Frederick Kuhlmann at the Minnesota institution in Faribault. In addition, the increased emphasis on segregation of the feeble-minded required a definitive means of defining exactly who the feeble-minded were in order to allay fears among the public that somehow normal individuals were being removed from society.[77]

In 1905, Alfred Binet, a prominent experimental psychologist, developed an adaptive IQ test for French children, at the request of the French Ministry of Education. The test, developed with Theodore Simon, was to identify children who needed more assistance with learning than the classroom teacher could provide. Henry Goddard, on a trip to Europe in 1908, consulted with other prominent psychologists and physicians, attempting to find a useful way to classify mental deficiency. It was on this trip that he obtained a copy of the Binet-Simon test which he translated into English. Binet's test separated mental performance from motor functions in contrast to Edouard Seguin's emphasis on the connection between the two sets of characteristics. Binet's test, rather than establishing differences among the feeble-minded, classified differences in relation to normal children, thereby setting the normal child as the standard from which the

[77] Frederick Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XXI, no. 1, 2 (1916): 3–24.

feeble-minded child differed.[78] Goddard, upon his return to Vineland, tried the test on the residents there and found good correlation between the results of the test and the observational assessment by the staff.[79]

In 1909, Goddard presented his assessment of Binet's findings at the annual meeting of the AMO. He first criticized classification systems based on pathology as not being specific enough in determining mental ability, arguing that children could have more than one pathological condition. The trainability scale used in some institutions for the feeble-minded was helpful but required too much time for people to get to know the child before they could assess them. Goddard argued that Binet's test, while perhaps not the best method, was at least a start in developing consensus on classification among the institutions for the feeble-minded.[80] The *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* (Sept 1910-June 1911), was primarily devoted to issues of classification. Its centerpiece was Goddard's paper from the 1910 annual meeting of the AMO reporting on his experience using Binet's test to classify the residents quickly. After testing 400 residents at Vineland, Goddard then confirmed the test's classification by comparing it to teachers' and attendants' observations and assessments. The Binet score correlated quite closely to those observations.[81] The Binet test was revised in 1908 and in 1911. Louis Terman, a noted psychologist at Stanford University, revised the test again in 1916.

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[78] This classification system, whereby a 12 year old child may test as having the skills of a four year old, set up static functional expectations as the child's IQ was considered stable, impacting expectations and training in both the public school and the institution.
[79] Leila Zenderland, *Measuring Minds : Henry Herbert Goddard and the Origins of American Intelligence Testing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 91-104.
[80] Henry Herbert Goddard, "Suggestions for a Prognostical Classification of Mental Defectives," *JPA* XIV (1909-1910): 48–52; Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 98-99.
[81] Henry Herbert Goddard, "Four Hundred Feeble-Minded Children Classified by the Binet Method," *JPA* XV, no. 1, 2 (December 1910): 17–30; Zenderland, *Measuring Minds*, 100-102.

At the 1909 meeting of the AMO, a committee was formed consisting of Drs. Fernald, Goddard, Wylie, Bullard and Murdoch to discuss classification and attempt to reach common ground. Dr. A. C. Rogers reported on the committee's work at the 1910 meeting. The committee recommended that the term, "feeble-minded", be used as a general term for a mental defect in which a person was "incapable of competing on equal terms with his normal fellows or managing himself or his affairs with ordinary prudence."[82] There were to be three categories under the heading of feeble-minded: idiots, whose function did not exceed that of a two-year-old; imbeciles, whose function was between a two-year-old and a seven-year-old; and morons, a term Goddard invented, whose function was between a seven-year-old and a twelve-year-old. These categories were then subdivided into high, middle and low grades, depending on each individual's functional level. The committee advised that the Binet tests were the most reliable method of determining "the mental status of feeble-minded children."[83]

Goddard was not the only one to use Binet's tests on institutional residents. Frederick Kuhlmann tested 150 residents at the Minnesota institution for the feeble-minded in Faribault, with similar results. Kuhlmann advocated the use of the Binet test far beyond the residents in institutions. The tests, according to Kuhlmann were, "adapted to determine the cause as well as this degree of deficit."[84] Thus, they could be used to

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[82] Arthur C. Rogers, "Report of Committee on Classification of Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XV (1910): 61–67. Harry Laughlin, in "The Socially Inadequate: How Shall We Designate and Sort Them?" in American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Jul., 1921), 54-70, used similar language to define "socially inadequate" as a replacement for dependent, delinquent and defective. Laughlin said, the term "socially inadequate" means a condition whereby the individuals included are unable to meet the demands of organized society in properly caring for themselves, and in behaving toward their fellows in the manner required of useful citizens.

[83] Rogers, "Report of Committee on Classification of Feeble-Minded," 61.

[84] Frederick Kuhlmann, "Binet and Simon's System for Measuring the Intelligence in Children," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* XV, no. 3, 4 (1911): 92.

determine the degree of backwardness in public school children, the mental status of people accused of crimes, and the capabilities of those entering military service.[85]

The issue of the causation of feeble-mindedness, while a concern of the AMO from its inception, moved into the scientific realm with increased calls and specific plans for securing the services of neuro-pathologists to determine the causes of feeble-mindedness, as part of the professionalization of services for the feeble-minded. These pathology findings would provide information that could be linked to prevention strategies, such as extra care in forceps deliveries. These pathological findings on autopsy could presumably be linked with classification tests to provide additional information regarding feeble-mindedness.[86]

Increasing Bureaucratic Structure of the Institutions

By the turn of the twentieth century, many of the institutions for the feeble-minded resembled small towns. Professional managers were often in charge of the physical running of the institution. Joseph Rhodes, a manager at the Pennsylvania Training School for over thirty years, detailed some of the issues he was responsible for overseeing, including,

> Questions of ways and means; questions of discipline; questions of legacies and donations from the charitable; appropriations from the legislature for buildings and for maintenance; a good and sufficient water supply on our lofty hills; good, safe drainage; plentiful and economical heating and lighting; the cost of provisions and the proper cooking of the same; …the work of the farm and garden and the dairy.[87]

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[85] Kuhlmann, "Binet and Simon's System for Measuring the Intelligence in Children," 76-92.
[86] W. N. Bullard, "The Importance of Well-Made and Accurately Reported Autopsies in the Determination of the Etiology of Weak-Mindedness and Idiocy," *JPA* VIII, no. 1 (September 1903): 11–15; Hubert Richardson, "The Etiology of Mental Deficiency," *JPA* VIII, no. 1 (September 1903): 16–22.
[87] Joseph R. Rhodes, "The Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded from the Standpoint of a Manager," *JPA* V, no. 3 (March 1901): 81.

As institutions for the feeble-minded grew in size, finding well trained staff became an increasingly difficult task. A number of institutions dealt with the problem of adequately trained nurses and attendants, as indicated earlier, by establishing training schools within the institution for these workers. This practice assumed a greater role in the early twentieth century.[88] These programs dovetailed with the push toward professionalization by creating a group of care-givers who had documentation of their training and skills. An example of these programs was the Rome State Custodial Asylum Training School for Attendants for Men and Women in Rome, New York. The program required two years of training, with the first year covering the "physical care of the physically infirm and mentally enfeebled, and the second year devoted to … the physical, mental, moral and industrial training of the feeble-minded."[89] The program included both theoretical and practical training courses. Each participant was paid $16 a month (about $400 in 2017 dollars) and received two weeks of vacation with pay. During the first year they were on duty between twelve and thirteen hours a day and by the second year the time commitment decreased to seven to nine hours a day.[90] Bernstein, unfortunately, did not provide any information on the outcome of this program, but this type of program would have created a cadre of skilled workers who had credentials sought after by the institutions.

In most American institutions, attendants and teachers were female, except for some of the vocational instructors. Seguin had earlier expressed his opinion that "Female vigilance (made) it possible to keep boys and girls together at work and play without

[88] W. A. Polglase, "President's Address," *JPA* V, no. 4 (1901): 96.
[89] Charles Bernstein, "Training School for Attendants for the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XII, no. 1, 2, 3, 4 (September 1907): 31–43.
[90] Bernstein, "Training School for Attendants for the Feeble-Minded."

inconvenience, and to great advantages in morals and manners."[91] The implicit assumption seems to have been that such employees, as in general primary schools would be women.[92] Osborne of the California Home for Feeble-minded Children claimed that feeble-minded children required extraordinary teachers in order to remediate the deficiencies found in that class of student. He wrote, "To equip our schools to do the work which I clearly foresee is needed, requires the presence of the most conscientious and best trained teachers. To secure these people we must pay the salaries that their brains in the open market demand."[93] In addition, superintendents and trustees felt that in order for the education and training of feeble-minded children to be effective, each child must, "Receive especial attention from experienced and well-qualified teachers, rendering it necessary to employ more teachers in proportion to the number of pupils than in ordinary schools."[94] George Mogridge, MD, the superintendent of the Iowa Institution for Feeble-minded Children in Glenwood, Iowa, cautioned against hiring the "institution tramp," who considered herself as experienced help, but did poor work.[95]

On-going teacher training for institutional staff took place in the institutions for the feeble-minded. For example, in 1896, Dr. Thomas P. Bailey, Jr., of the Pedagogic Department of the University of California, an expert in the teaching of feeble-minded

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[91] Edward Seguin, *Report on Education*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: DoerflingerBook & Publishing Co., 1880), 108.
[92] Sheila M. Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 56.
[93] A. E. Osborne, "Educational," *The Institutional Bulletin* 7, no. 2 (1896): 39, College of Physicians of Philadelphia.
[94] "Fifth Annual Report of the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children, 1893," in *Annual Reports of the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Children 1893-1902* (Vineland, New Jersey, 1902), 5.
[95] George Mogridge, "President's Annual Address," *JPA* XI, no. 1 (September 1906): 33–36; A. M. Miller, "The Study of Abnormal Psychology as an Aid in Training the Feeble-Minded," *Proceedings* (1895: 532-39).

children, delivered lectures to the teachers at the California Home for Feeble-minded Children to improve the efficacy of the teachers in the school rooms. This insider training was challenged in the early twentieth century by the increasing well-established normal schools as they expanded their curriculum and created specialized tracts.

Connections and Outreach

By the turn of the twentieth century, the institutions for the feeble-minded had adopted many of the Progressive Era goals of bureaucracy and scientific management. Institutional superintendents and staff had established credentials and acquired tools like the Binet test that allowed them to be recognized as experts took on feeble-mindedness. Where previously they had been concerned educators and physicians advocating for better care for the feeble-minded, who were otherwise often neglected, now their advocacy relied on their positions as experts to tell the public the best management for those deemed feeble-minded. They did this directly through participation with community leaders, interactions with colleges and universities and other professional organizations, and through various publications.

The AMO sought to demonstrate their scientific interests and their claim to expertise concerning feeble-mindedness by inviting to their annual meetings prominent scientists, physicians and psychologists from around the state, many of whom were college faculty. For example, in 1908, Professor Naomi Nosworthy, of Columbia College, gave a speech on the psychology of mentally deficient children in which she argued that educational programming for feeble-minded children, "should grow directly from his everyday life at the institution….To mean anything to him…these facts must

form an integral part of his life."[96] In 1913, Dr. Victor Vaughn, dean of the medical department of the University of Michigan gave a speech entitled "Race Betterment" and argued that feeble-minded children should be segregated out of the public schools and that laws should continue to be enacted that prevented people who are feeble-minded from marrying.[97] While the proposals largely reinforced members thinking, they provided a new endorsement from the relatively young social sciences.

Prominent citizens near the area where an institution was hosting the AMO's annual meeting continued to be invited to the entertainment provided by the children in the institution. These included mayors, business leaders, heads of philanthropic organizations, and prominent society figures who could presumably comment on the good work being done and provide support for it, both through lobbying the legislature and by donations. AMO President J. M. Murdoch, addressing this assembled audience, complimented the intelligent people of the state on their increased interest in the care and training of feeble-minded people. He also suggested to the audience, that in his expert opinion, the time was coming when the public would demand the segregation of the feeble-minded to prevent crime, pauperism and feeble-minded progeny.[98] This statement was perhaps intended to gather increased public support as the institutions moved beyond being an important local employer to an important statewide enterprise.[99]

Visitors were common at institutions for the feeble-minded. In 1909, the Illinois institution had 1398 visitors registered in their visitor log. The log was used by

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[96] Naomi Nosworthy, "Suggestions Concerning the Psychology of Mentally Deficient Children," *JPA* 12, no. 1 (1908): 16.
[97] Victor C. Vaughn, "Race Betterment," *JPA* XVIII, no. 3 (1914): 135.
[98] Murdoch, "President's Address," 67-72.
[99] Polglase, "President's Address," 94-98.

institutional staff to solicit funding for things like Christmas gifts for the children. Dr. C. B. Cadwell, of the Illinois Asylum for Feeble-minded Children, cited four different types of visitors, first, people with a connection to the resident such as a parent or friend, second, people with an interest in charitable work, third, public officials, and finally, people who came out of curiosity. He decided, however, to abolish curiosity seekers so his staff could concentrate on the other types of visitors. Most had a genuine interest in their child's well-being but, he reported, they often had difficulty understanding that there was no cure, only the possibility of improvement. His staff needed to provide parents with information regarding their child's activities and also gain information and advice to improve the child's training. This engagement gave parents the feeling that they were helping their child. His staff also attempted to gain heredity information from the parents for the institution's files and for the surveys carried out on feeble-mindedness by the AMO.[100]

Visitation policies varied among the institutions. Trying to balance the needs of the children and staff with the needs of families was difficult. In California, a regular visiting day was established. While it had originally been on a Tuesday, it was changed to Saturday to better accommodate the schedules of working families. A reduced train fare was negotiated for round trip tickets between San Francisco and Eldridge, where the institution was located. Visitation was expressly prohibited on Sundays to provide a day of rest for staff.[101] This visitation schedule, however, presented a potential obstacle to families as many adults worked six days a week. Other reasons for lack of visitation

[100] C. B. Cadwell, "The Institution from a Visitor's Standpoint," *JPA* XV, no. 3, 4 (June 1911): 117–22.
[101] "Institution Bulletin" (Sacramento, November 1, 1896), Department of Mental Hygiene - Sonoma State Hospital Records, F3607-26c, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

were expressed in letters to Mrs. Osborne, the matron. (While these letters were from the late 1890s, there is little reason to expect the reasons for lack of visitation to have changed a great deal in the subsequent decade.) Family illness and lack of funds were prominent issues. Lizzie Alley stated the family had had a lot of sickness and, consequently, money was scarce, too scarce to spend on the cost of a visit, although they hoped to come soon.[102] Mrs. S. W. Boice regretted that she was unable to come when her daughter was ill, but she felt she could not afford the traveling expenses unless it was an emergency.[103] Responding to a letter that his son was ill, Peter Freese, editor of the Danish language newspaper, *Bien*, published in San Francisco, wondered if he should come to offer his son comfort, asking Mrs. Osborne if she felt it would be of benefit. He reflected that it was his duty and would provide him some comfort to be with his son "in his last struggles with a cruel existence."[104] Mrs. J. N. Miller's reason for not visiting was that spring roads were too miserable for her to drive over so she sent a package with new dress for her daughter.[105] In a later letter, she stated that she was caring for a young relative and, thus, could not visit.[106] These letters offer a rare glimpse into the issues facing families and undoubtedly reflect the reality that many of the residents of the institution in California and, by extension, of institutions for the feeble-minded elsewhere, came from poor families. Illness, often related to poverty, also precluded visitation. Most of the letter writers expressed love and concern for their child and many of the families were grateful for the care their child received at the institution which

[102] Lizzie Alley, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," December 24, 1895, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[103] S. W. Boice, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," October 14, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[104] Peter Freese, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," November 10, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[105] J. N. Miller, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," October 20, 1896, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[106] J. N. Miller, "Letter to Mrs. Osborne," May 24, 1897, F 3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.

included a good diet, supervision, education, and a safe environment, things they had difficulty providing.[107]

Some visitors, particularly those evaluating charitable work, were more likely to be interested in statistical information and management concerns. The services provided and the associated costs in comparison to other forms of care or other dependent populations were areas of interest. These visitors were often invaluable to the institution because they could advocate for improvement in the care for dependent classes with the public and with the legislatures. For example, the New Jersey State Charities Aid Association assisted in establishing the Vineland State Institution for Feeble-minded Women in 1888.[108] Many of the people involved with the State Charities Aid Association were prominent New Jersey citizens. Emily Williamson, as secretary of the organization and a child welfare advocate, distributed copies of the organizations reports to both the state government and the general public.[109] Certainly by the early twentieth century public officials were considered part of the management team of the institution, either as part of its oversight or as legislators responsible for funding it. This type of visitor typically reported on all aspects of the institution from the educational work to the financial status. Institutional staff viewed this type of visitation as a means of molding public opinion because observant outsiders could raise issues about their needs, especially financial needs.[110]

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[107] Mrs. Osborne's Correspondence, F3607-103 1892-1898, CSA.
[108] James Leiby, *Charity and Correction in New Jersey: A History of State Welfare Institutions* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967).
[109] "Eighteenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the State Charities Aid Association of New Jersey," (1903), 7, New Jersey State Library.
[110] Cadwell, "The Institution from a Visitor's Standpoint," 117–22.

As the general public limited reasons to visit the institutions, staff reached out to them at major exhibitions like the World's Fair in St. Louis, in 1904. The World's Fair, with its emphasis on education seemed an ideal venue for the AMO to highlight what was happening for the feeble-minded. Dr. W. H. C. Smith, of the private institution, Beverly Farm, just outside of St. Louis, reported that the supply of literature regarding the institutions for the feeble-minded was disappearing quickly, indicating the public was interested in obtaining information about the institutions.[111]

Outreach and educational efforts were also made to other professionals. As most of the superintendents were physicians, the medical population was easily reached. Dr. Fernald held a well-attended clinic at the 1906 meeting of the American Medical Association, where he brought a number of cases from his institution in order to illustrate various aspects of feeble-mindedness. This was an example of not only establishing expertise in the field of feeble-mindedness but also helping other physicians diagnose problems with their patients, especially evidence of feeble-mindedness. As members of state and local medical associations, the superintendents hosted some of these groups' meetings at their institutions, making sure to convey information regarding feeble-mindedness since little of such information was provided in medical schools.[112]

Another method of outreach was to University and normal school professors teaching prospective public school teachers. There were two foci of instruction: one, to teach about the various classifications of feeble-mindedness and two, to elucidate the

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[111] Arthur C. Rogers, "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons," *JPA* VIII, no. 4 (June 1904): 85.
[112] A. W. Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," *JPA* X, no. 4 (June 1906): 203–20.

teaching methods used, many of which were also applicable to regular students. In Massachusetts, classes of prospective teachers from nearby universities were brought to the institution to have direct learning experiences by observing classes and in some cases participating in them. This was encouraged by Wilmarth, the superintendent, as he felt the students would learn specialized teaching techniques and, also, convey the information they learned to the general public, thus, spreading the word on the proper care of people who were feeble-minded.[113]

The continuing purpose of the institutions was to provide educational training, broadly defined, to feeble-minded children, so a connection to a group like the National Educational Association (NEA) remained particularly strong. For example, Martin Barr, superintendent of the Pennsylvania Training School, presented a paper on the training of feeble-minded children at its 1899 meeting to identify the Training School's program as a scientific one, based on the eugenic thought of preventing procreation of the unfit through segregation. By using NEA as a forum for this address, Barr not only sought to inform a wider audience, he also used his position as a superintendent as a marker of expertise on the subject.[114] Institutional staff were rising to positions of authority based on their perceived expertise. In 1898, A. E. Osborne of the California Home was Vice-President of the NEA subsection on Mental Deficiency; A. C. Rogers of the Minnesota institution followed him into this position in 1899, with E. R. Johnstone of Vineland following in 1900.[115] In some cases, institutional staff remained in positions of authority for years.

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[113] Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," 213.
[114] Martin W. Barr, "The How, the Why, and the Wherefore of the Training of Feeble-Minded Children," *JPA* IV, no. 1 (September 1899).
[115] See the listings for Department Officers in the National Education Association Journal of Proceedings and Addresses for the years listed.

As the training of special education teachers gradually transitioned from the institutions for the feeble-minded to colleges and universities, leadership roles transitioned from superintendents of institutions to members of educational communities.[116]

By the end of the century institutions became an established means of providing care for the feeble-minded and encouraged newspaper reports that emphasized the benefits of training and of segregation.[117] These reports were intended to demonstrate not only the skills that the feeble-minded children could be taught, but also that the institutions were places where they would be happy and productive as well as cared for.[118] Magazine articles, sometimes initiated by administrators also appeared, in an effort to educate the public and push for particular public policies. For instance, "Children Who Never Grow Up," by Woods Hutchinson, MD, appeared *Good Housekeeping* in April 1915. Hutchinson was a prolific writer of health-related books and was one of the first physicians to write for newspapers and popular magazines on a regular basis. The *San Francisco Call* stated that he was an "eminent physician known not only for his high standing- in the medical profession in the United States, but recognized as the most gifted American writer on the subject of human health."[119] In his article, Hutchinson raised the specter of feeble-minded people living in poverty and who "reek with disease and vice."[120] The cause, according to Hutchinson, had been proven to be the hereditary mental defect and was not related to environment, and thus, there was nothing that could "cure" the feeble-minded. Morons, the highest grade of feeble-

[116] By 1913, none of the officers of the subsection on Feeble-mindedness were institutional staff, according to listings of officers in the *NEA Journal*.
[117] "Minutes of the Orilla Meeting 1897," *JPA* I, no. 4 (1897): 35.
[118] "No Room for the Weaklings," *Los Angeles Herald*, March 3, 1907, vol 34, number 153, CDNC.
[119] "Important Articles by Dr. Woods Hutchinson," *San Francisco Call*, April 27, 1909, vol 105, CDNC.
[120] Woods Hutchinson, "Children Who Never Grow Up," *Good Housekeeping* 60, no. 4 (1915), 422.

mindedness, were "one of the greatest menaces which civilized society has to face"[121] because their development was uneven and, although they appeared to be normal adults, their intellect and moral stability was often that of an eleven-year-old. Hutchinson's indictment against the morons was, primarily, that they would breed nothing but defective stock; the women had "brainless prettiness,"[122] while the men's good physical appearance would trick normal people into marrying them. Moreover, he pointed out that seven-eighths of the criminal class came from this group. Hutchinson advocated that "taking care of the morons" would eliminate three-fourths of the criminals, delinquents, dependents and paupers. He advised segregating them into pastoral colonies where they could be with their own kind and engage in light-hearted amusements.[123]

While some secondary sources[124] claim that there was little public attention given to institutions for the feeble-minded, the extensive newspaper coverage of the case of Dr. William M. Lawlor, superintendent of the California Home, at least partially refutes this. In September, 1901, Osborne was displaced from his position as superintendent of the California Home Lawlor, whom the editor of the *San Francisco Call* referred to as a political hack,[125] and political henchman of the Chief Executive, Governor Gage.[126] Governor Gage had replaced Osborne with the political appointment of Lawlor, who had no experience with caring for the feeble-minded; his previous

[121] Hutchinson, "Children Who Never Grow Up," 425.
[122] Hutchinson, "Children Who Never Grow Up," 425.
[123] Hutchinson, "Children Who Never Grow Up," 425.
[124] James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Peter L. Tyor and Leland V. Bell, *Caring for the Retarded in America: A History*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984).
[125] "Dr. A. E. Osborne Leaves the Feeble-Minded Home," *San Francisco Call*, September 12, 1901, CDNC.
[126] "Lawlor Confesses Use of Black Hole and Straitjacket," *San Francisco Call*, July 10, 1902, CDNC.

appointment had been as chief physician at San Quentin Prison. Charges of heinous behavior by Lawlor appeared in San Francisco in the beginning of July, 1902. Lawlor was accused of placing children in a dungeon with no light, tying them to the floor, feeding them on bread and water, and withholding care, accusations that Lawlor referred to as an error in his judgment.[127] Governor Gage ordered an investigation which substantiated many of the claims of the newspapers, although in less lurid terms. Although Lawlor resigned on July 12, 1902, his letter of resignation was to be effective upon the appointment of his successor, a situation the newspapers condemned as a means of his staying on the state's payroll. The Board of Trustees of the California Home met on August 2, 1902, at the Grand Hotel in San Francisco, to elect Dr. William J.G. Dawson as superintendent, a meeting Lawlor attended. According to newspaper accounts, the meeting became heated with Colonel J. F. Harrington, a trustee, and Lawlor, accusing each other of lying, at which point Harrington produced a pistol and leveled it at Lawlor. The gun was wrestled away from Harrington and the meeting ended. The San Francisco newspapers continued their coverage until mid-October when Lawlor finally left and Dawson took over.[128] The newspapers presented this incident as part of a political controversy. However, the stories of abusive punishment in the institution clearly fueled public outrage and correlated with the public's worst fears about what could happen to vulnerable populations. They also undermined the carefully constructed public campaign undertaken by Osborne to reassure parents that their

[127] Joseph R. McElrath Jr. and Jesse S. Crisler, *Frank Norris, A Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 418-419. Norris was a friend of Lawlor's.
[128] McElrath Jr. and Crisler, *Frank Norris*, 418-422.

children would be treated with kindness as laid out in the institutions circular of information.[129]

Growth of Custodial Care

The members of AMO were aware of the tension between a philosophy of charity and philanthropy and one that relied on the theories of modern science in providing care and training for the feeble-minded. The most common way the AMO members attempted to reconcile this tension was to advocate for care and training for the existing feeble-minded population while also advocating for means of controlling their reproductive capacity and thus future populations. Most institutions for the feeble-minded had become state-run entities and each institution had its own admission and discharge policy. Superintendents began advocating for consistent policies among the various states. As placement in an institution for the feeble-minded was voluntary, as was discharge, the superintendents advocated for a commitment process in which institutional staff controlled discharge, arguing that they were experts who could gauge the potential danger to the community. Lifetime segregation, or segregation during child bearing years, was viewed as an important tactic in managing what was seen as a growing horde of feeble-minded people.[130] Indiana and California had originally placed an age limit of sixteen years old on maintaining residents in the institution. In 1901, both states amended their laws, raising the age to 45 for women, though not men, and each state appropriated funds to provide custodial care for feeble-minded women of child bearing

[129] Board of Trustees, *Circular of Information: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children* (Sacramento: California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-minded Children, 1887), 0200710204914, California State Library.
[130] Arthur C. Rogers, "Methods of Admission to Institutions for the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* IV, no. 2 (December 1899): 73–76.

age in an effort to prevent feeble-mindedness in the next generation.[131] In Massachusetts, the probate courts committed a large number of poor women between the ages of twenty and thirty to the institution for the feeble-minded as criminals, even though they had not committed a crime, as it was assumed they would have illegitimate children or engage in prostitution. Limiting reproduction by males was usually done by sterilization, although some were castrated. In California, approximately the same number of men were sterilized as women.[132]

While eugenic segregation was a primary reason for promoting custodial care, some of the concern about releasing residents back into the community was based on social welfare concerns. While some residents might become self-supporting or return to families as companions or helpers, many more would impose a hardship on their families by the enormity of their care needs. Custodial care of these residents was thought to release two to four family members into remunerative activity since they would not be responsible for the care of the feeble-minded family member. In addition, most of the residents came from poor and working-class families; families that often did not have the resources to provide the same benefits, such as a good diet, medical care, supervision, or work, that were offered in the institution. Institutional staff worried that releasing residents back to the community meant, in reality, releasing them to the poor house or into a life of crime.[133] The attitude toward the feeble-minded was, according to Lawrence Goodheart, also influenced by late nineteenth century events and attitudes that emerged

[131] "Concerning Recent Legislation," *JPA* VI, no. 3, 4 (June 1902): 85. William Lawlor, "Report from the States," *JPA* VI, no. 3, 4 (June 1902): 93.
[132] Lutz Kaelber, "California," *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States* (2012), http://www.uvm.edu/%7Elkaelber/eugenics/.
[133] Rhodes, "The Pennsylvania Training School for the Feeble-Minded from the Standpoint of a Manager," 80-82.

after the Spanish-American War. Hawkish literature promoted the idea of colonization, where a superior class of people ruled over groups of inferior people. He suggests that the colony plan, whereby institutions established satellite sites, often farming enclaves, fit the imperialistic notion of supervising lower status people.[134]

The national argument in the first decades of the twentieth century over a minimum wage also played into the issue of segregation. The argument was not about securing a minimum so that workers could have a guarantee of a specific wage, it was about eliminating substandard workers from the work force who drove wages down for all workers. Many economic Progressives saw the minimum wage as a way to root out inferior employees (women, immigrants, and people with disabilities) leading to a more efficient and, presumably, better society. The inferior workers who could not command such a wage would then be brought under the surveillance of the state as they would have no means of supporting themselves. Their gendered segregation in rural colonies would also limit their opportunity for sexual reproduction, a rationale already in place in institutions for the feeble-minded.[135]

In his 1904 Presidential Address to the AMO, E. R. Johnstone made the point that the ultimate goal was to eliminate feeble-mindedness. He presented three means for accomplishing this, painless death (eugenic euthanasia), unsexing (sterilization), and segregation.[136] While Johnstone declared that the painless death option was "but a temporary flutter and died out."[137] Nonetheless, the first decade of 1900 saw a concerted

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[134] Lawrence B. Goodheart, "Rethinking Mental Retardation: Education and Eugenics in Connecticut, 1818-1917," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 59, no. 1 (2004): 103.
[135] Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers*, 161.
[136] Johnstone, "President's Address," 65.
[137] Johnstone, "President's Address," 65.

push by a strong minority for actively eliminating the feeble-minded. In 1900, in his book and newspaper articles, William D. McKim, a prominent New York physician, advocated the killing of defectives, including idiots, imbeciles, epileptics, and drunkards. His argument wat that this was necessary to improve society and protect it from the degeneration propagated by these defectives. His proposals were specific, suggesting carbonic acid gas to carry out these eliminations. From his point of view, the only constraint was the need to perhaps change state laws and/or constitutions. However, he believed these would be little impediment to his changes, without, however, truly considering public attitudes that had created those laws and religious objections to the proposed changes.[138] Historian Martin Pernick's book, *The Black Stork*, has documented multiple other advocates for eliminating the feeble-minded. Prominent medical and legal professionals, such as Chicago medical professional Dr. Eugene S. Talbot, author of the 1898 treatise, *Degeneracy*, and Yale law professor, Simeon Baldwin, the 1899 President of the American Social Science Association, advocated active measures, like suffocation, or passive measures, like withholding medical treatment, especially for defective infants.[139] In 1906, Chicago physician G. Frank Lydston, "proposed both sterilizing the unfit and gassing to death "the driveling idiot," while New York physician Edward Wallace Lee demanded the "extermination" of dependent defectives, urging that criminals, the insane, and idiots should be "eradicated."[140] Psychologist G. Stanley Hall

[138] William D. McKim, *Heredity and Human Progress* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000204695; William D. McKim, "New York Doctor, to Improve Society, Says He Would Kill 500,000 People!," *The World*, June 28, 1900, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/1900-02-28/ed-1/seq-3.pdf.
[139] G. Frank Lydston Quoted in Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures since 1915*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 23.
[140] Edward Wallace Lee quoted in Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 24.

believed medical efforts to save defectives interfered with natural selection.[141] Madison Grant believed that selective infanticide was merely the first step in ridding the world of degenerates.[142] Advocates for killing the feeble-minded extended beyond well-known professionals. Dr. Johnson, superintendent of the Nebraska institution for the feeble-minded, recounted a visit by members of the Nebraska State Medical Society during which one of the physicians suggested a sure cure for the low grades; two grains of morphine given by syringe or through the use of chloroform. Most of the physicians that visited the institution agreed, although none wanted to be the person delivering the fatal dose. A bill was introduced in the Iowa legislature providing for the use of chloroform to remove those permanently incapacitated by mental weakness. Preventing the existence of feeble-minded children through immediate infanticide or abortion was considered morally equivalent to killing them after birth.[143] There were legislative debates in Ohio where it was proposed that idiotic children should be exterminated with an overdose of anesthetic. In Michigan, an amendment was attached to the state funding bill for the state institution to electrocute mentally defective infants.[144]

The advocacy for infanticide for defective infants was not universal. Catholics were almost entirely against it as infanticide broke the Biblical commandment, "thou shalt not kill." They were against eugenics in general.[145] Some people pointed out that defective infants could become socially valuable adults, such as Helen Keller. Some

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[141] Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 24.
[142] Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 75.
[143] J. M. Murdoch, "The Psychic Treatment of Mental Defectives," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* X, no. 4 (June 1906): 224.
[144] Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 24.
[145] Pernick, *The Black Stork*; Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995); Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Progressives, including Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop, were also against deliberately killing defective infants. Other Progressives were in favor of withholding treatment, but not actively killing the infants. Socialists were generally in favor of the practice. The views of physicians were varied, often along specialty lines, with two-thirds of obstetricians but only one-third of general surgeons or public health physicians favoring treatment of medical conditions that left untreated would result in death. Even along gender lines, the largest proportion of men and women favored treatment of only some infants, although few advocated actively killing them. The reasoning behind these viewpoints varied. Some saw it as the beginning of a slippery slope that would ultimately affect the elderly. Many felt that infanticide was necessary only because other methods to prevent procreation, such as birth control, sterilization, and segregation were illegal, not being used or promoted ineffectively. Harry Haiselden, a well-known physician and an advocate for improving America's genetic stock, believed that sterilizing all defectives for three generations would eliminate the need for infanticide or withholding treatment as that type of infant would no longer be born.[146]

However, in 1906, A. C. Rogers of the Minnesota institution raised an important counterpoint to this last argument. While agreeing that feeble-minded women produced only feeble-minded children, he argued that, "if every defective child in the institution and in the state … were killed, absolutely disposed of … in a few years we would have practically the same percentage we have now of feeble-minded. Because the majority of cases come to us from people who are not only normal but very often brilliant."[147]

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[146] Pernick, *The Black Stork*, 31-39,74-75, 75-78, 81-82.
[147] Murdoch, "The Psychic Treatment of Mental Defectives,"; A. C. Rogers, "Discussion of article," *JPA* X, no. 4 (June 1906): 228.

While sterilizations offered a means of controlling procreation, Johnstone believed the general public was opposed to sterilization because they did not understand the dangers of the "class" in perpetrating crime and prostitution or they did not understand the nature of the surgical intervention. In this climate of opinion, he argued for an increased emphasis on segregation as a means of protecting society from the taint of feeble-mindedness. Segregation was already being practiced with public support and did not offend anyone's sense of "propriety, humanity and Christianity."[148] In order to eliminate feeble-mindedness, feeble-minded people must be removed from any site where they might be engaged with society. The solution was to remove them from families, almshouses, children's homes, and public schools in order to scour the taint of feeble-mindedness from society. To accomplish this, by 1906, the AMO was advocating laws mandating permanent custodial care, along with marriage restriction laws for feeble-minded people.[149] This also served the AMO's self-interest in maintaining institutions for the feeble-minded as new challenges, such as public school special education, posed a challenge to the status quo. While many members of the AMO were not ready at the turn of the twentieth century to call for sterilizations of the feeble-minded as they felt the general public was not in support of the idea, others were not so reticent. At the 1901 annual meeting of Charities and Corrections in Atlanta, Mary E. Perry, corresponding secretary of the Missouri chapter, stated, "It would now be well to prepare our several states to call to their assistance the surgeon's knife to prevent the entailing of this curse upon innocent numbers of yet unborn children."[150]

[148] Johnstone, "President's Address," 65.
[149] Johnstone, "President's Address," 66.
[150] Johnson, "The Segregation and Permanent Detention of the Feeble-Minded," 233.

The superintendents were all, to some extent, eugenicists and, although there were differences of opinion on sterilizations, segregation was strongly advocated in their interactions among themselves and with the general public. In 1897, Dr. Barr of the Elwyn Institution in Pennsylvania sent out a questionnaire regarding superintendents' views on sterilizations. The responses suggest there was some consensus that individuals who would remain segregated in the institution were not the primary focus for sterilizations; rather, those who would return to the community where the opportunity for sexual activity existed, were the prime candidates.[151] Dr. W. A. Polglase, president of the AMO in 1901, was one of the first to use his position to argue beyond segregation. He argued for legal commitment of residents to prevent discharge from the institution unless approved by the superintendent. As many feeble-minded persons were not in institutions, he urged the AMO to support marriage restriction laws and the legalization of "the operation of asexualization (sterilization) under certain restrictions."[152] In 1916, Joseph P. Byers, executive secretary of the Committee on Provision for the Feeble-minded in Philadelphia and an AMO member, advocated that all states continue the push to eliminate feeble-mindedness by controlling reproductive capacity through permanent segregation.[153] In 1911, F. C. Cave of the Kansas State Home for the Feeble-minded reported on sterilizations performed there in the late 1890s. The fourteen girls and forty-four boys who had been castrated showed typical signs of loss of hormones, such as weight gain. Dr. F. Hoyt Pilcher, the former superintendent, performed the operations,

[151] F. C. Cave, "Report of Sterilization in the Kansas State Home for Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XV, no. 3, 4 (June 1911): 123–25.
[152] Polglase, "President's Address," 97.
[153] Joseph P. Byers, "A State Plan for the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XXI, no. 1, 2 (December 1916): 39.

even though they were not legal at the time. He felt castration was a better option because simply cutting the Fallopian tubes or the vas deferens did not control sexual appetites and thus would lead to debauchery once the risk of pregnancy had been removed. No mention was made of any medical necessity for the operations nor whether any type of permission was obtained prior to the surgeries. According to James Trent Jr., the *Kansas City Times* covered the castrations, attacking the practice, although it was covered as a political attack on the governor. Pilcher was removed from his post, however, with the election of a new governor, he was reinstated and continued the practice of castration.[154] While Cave supported the castrations, he did make the point that the procedures were not necessary for those residents remaining in a segregated setting under proper supervision. However, citing the rapid increase in the number of feeble-minded people, he urged castration of any resident returning to society.[155] The date range and variety of opinions indicate that segregation and sterilization were not settled issues.

The 1911 volume of the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* featured two articles focused on eugenics. Charles Davenport, founder of the Eugenics Record Office, became a close associate of the members of the AMO. In his article, he championed the work done at Vineland on pedigree studies of feeble-mindedness and urged other institutions to do likewise. Furthermore, he advocated that the information from the pedigree studies be presented to each state legislature urging action be taken to prevent reproduction of feeble-minded women, either using segregation from ages 15 to 45 or sterilization.[156]

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[154] James W. Trent Jr, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 193-194.
[155] Cave, "Report of Sterilization in the Kansas State Home for Feeble-Minded."
[156] Charles Davenport, "Application of Mendel's Law to Human Heredity," *JPA* XV, no. 3, 4 (March, June 1911): 93–95.

Reasons for Admission

By 1916, institutions for the feeble-minded had grown, from a few hundred residents in the 1880s to approximately five to ten percent of the identified feeble-minded population in states with institutions.[157] Kulhmann arrived at these numbers by using the number of feeble-minded in the institutions in the 1910 census and correlating it with the number of feeble-minded in the community in the 1880 and 1890 census and smaller surveys, such as the one conducted in Lapeer County, Michigan. Waiting lists of between two hundred and five hundred applicants were common in most states.[158] Although the eugenics movement and its advocacy for segregation became much more visible after 1906, it does not adequately explain the increase in the population of institutions for the feeble-minded that had occurred by 1916. In 1890, the population was 5,354 in both private and public institutions for the feeble-minded. By 1903 the population had risen to 14,347.[159]

Superintendents had some influence over who was accepted into the institution; however, they were not in control of the pool of applicants from which admission decisions were made. The long waiting lists indicate that the motivations of families and concerned others offer important explanations of the growth of these institutions. Every public institution required that admission forms be filled out by someone with knowledge of the individual to be admitted. The person filling out the forms varied; often it was parents, but teachers, social workers, clergy, lawyers and members of charity

[157] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 5
[158] George A. Wallace, "The Type of Feeble-Minded Who Can Be Cared for in The Community," *JPA* 21, no. 1, 2 (1916): 89.
[159] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 2nd edition, 160.

organizations were also responsible. Their motivations indicate a more complex and nuanced set of reasons behind the admission of a person to an institution for the feeble-minded at the beginning of the twentieth century than has been offered previously.[160]

New Jersey offers a window into parental concerns because of its admission practices. The Vineland institution was a private institution, but received over half of its yearly support from the state in the form of warrants to fund admittance of feeble-minded children whose parents were unable to pay the cost. Parents or concerned others were required to fill out applications and petition the New Jersey governor, asking that he admit the child to Vineland. The letters to the governor from parents highlight a variety of concerns. As many of the parents were poor, it is unlikely that they were even aware of the eugenic rhetoric of the time.[161] Rather, their concerns articulate reasons that relate to the best interest of the child and the family. For instance, in a 1903 letter to Governor Murphy requesting admission for her daughter, a mother enclosed a personal letter along with a letter from the family physician. She stated that her, "little girl is demented at times. She is dangerous, biting and annoying children on the streets. People tell me I must take her to an asylum, but hearing of the Vineland Home I apply to you for application blanks. I am poor…and I cannot afford to pay board for her but can furnish all the clothes my child may need."[162] In another letter to Governor Murphy, a woman wrote that she had two feeble-minded children, one age four and the other age six, who had medical conditions that she could not afford to treat. In the past five years, she said, the children's father contributed only sixty cents for their care. The woman was also

[160] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind*; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*; Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.
[161] These records are considered governmental and are, thus, not covered by HIPAA.
[162] Mrs. Etore Fiorentine to Governor Frank Murphy, September 18, 1903, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, box 7 folder 186, NJSA.

responsible for the support of her elderly parents. She included a letter of support from the mayor of Camden where she resided.[163] Letters from non-family members emphasized a concern for the family. In letter from 1902, J. S. Manness, principal of the Waverly Avenue School in Newark, requested assistance for a family. He said, "The case is in every way a worthy one and the boy one who by proper training in such an institution would undoubtably (sic) become self-sustaining, otherwise he will grow up to become, perhaps, a public charge."[164] Reverend G. M. Dorwart wrote to Superintendent Johnstone requesting assistance for a family attending his church. The mother became insane and was in the Morris Plains Asylum. Three of the four children were admitted to the Orphan Asylum. The youngest child, a five-year-old, described as not particularly bright, had been in the Kindergarten Home until it closed. The father was a laborer and unable to provide for the child financially.[165] State Senator Edward S. Lee contacted Governor Franklin Murphy in 1902 regarding a family in his district. He asked the Governor to admit the son to Vineland because the mother had run off leaving the invalid son in the care of his father. The father had met with serious reverses but had a good name. He was forced to board his son with strangers so he could work.[166] In seeking institutional placement, parents and concerned others sought care and training, patently ignoring eugenic principles.

[163] Mrs. John Ropp to Governor Frank Murphy, February23, 1903, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, Box 11 folder 320 B, NJSA.
[164] J. S. Manness to Governor Frank Murphy, January 22, 1902, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, Box 11 folder 320 B, NJSA.
[165] Reverend G. M. Dorwart to Superintendent Johnstone, February 21, 1902, Box 11 folder 320 B, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, NJSA.
[166] State Senator Edward S. Lee to Governor Franklin Murphy, October 22, 1902, Box 7 folder 195, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, NJSA.

Superintendents, even as they espoused eugenic ideas, seem to have made admission decisions for a variety of reasons, perhaps not primarily eugenic ones. These management decisions appear to have much more in common with the needs and desires of families than with eugenic considerations. If eugenic considerations were paramount in the decision to admit a person to the institution, then the moron, a high grade feeble-minded person who was much more likely to be sexually active if left in the community, would be the most frequently admitted. However, a 1916 survey indicated that only 23% of the institutional population were classified as morons. Since the category of morons was considered the most frequent in the general population, the percentage of morons cared for in institutions for the feeble-minded was, according to the survey, only 2% of that special population.[167] As the survey indicated, the superintendents' public rhetoric favoring eugenic principles was often at odds with private management decisions. In 1902, E. R. Johnstone wrote John Swayze, the Governor's secretary, regarding who should be admitted to Vineland with state funding. Of the several hundred children on the waiting list, Johnstone suggested eleven children who he thought most appropriate for admission. Ten of the eleven were boys, three of whom were teenagers. The girl, age 5, and three of the boys, ages 5, 10 and 14, were described as low grade. The reasons cited by Johnstone for selecting these children include several children who were good candidates to improve with training, several others had only one surviving parent who could not manage to care for their other children, the feeble-minded child, and work at the same time, and several children who were unable to walk. The oldest child recommended for admission was a 16-year-old boy, who had the support of the mayor

[167] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 11.

and overseer of the poor of Plainfield, New Jersey. In a number of cases, the primary reason Johnstone gave for admission was that the family needed relief. In only one case did Johnstone refer even obliquely to a possible eugenic motivation, when he said George was a good case for admission because he, "especially needs taking off the streets, where he is in bad company."[168] Based on the eugenic rationales Johnstone espoused in public pronouncements, especially the importance of segregation to prevent procreation, one would have expected Johnstone to choose high-grade adolescents from the waiting list, not low-grade young children. It appears that Johnstone was, in many instances, responding sympathetically to the needs of families. His rationale seems to be compatible with parents' reasons for seeking admission for a child to the institution.

Institutional Populations

Superintendents were quite cognizant of the rights of parents, family members and concerned community members about the individuals among the institutionalized, feeble-minded population. Twenty-five states permitted a parent or guardian to remove family members from the institution after they had been legally committed.[169] Parents and guardians in the states without commitment requirements were generally free to remove a family member from the institution at any time.[170] As early as 1906, lengthy discussions occurred among various superintendents regarding the need for legal, lifetime commitments.[171] Release from an institution, they advocated, should be based on the intelligent judgment of the superintendent who had the training necessary to determine

[168] E. R. Johnstone to John L. Swayze, May 2, 1902, Box 7 folder 195, Governor Frank Murphy correspondence, NJSA.
[169] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 19.
[170] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 19.
[171] Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," 205.

who would be successful back in society, not on the whims or desires of parents or family members. They were concerned that in the six states without retention laws,[172] over five percent of the residents left each year between 1910 and 1915. Virginia passed a retention law in the early 1900s.[173] Missouri's laws on retention in an institutions for the feeble-minded were based on ability to pay. Those admitted under a court order could be removed by their guardians at any time. Residents who could only pay part of the cost, with the state picking up the rest, could also be removed at any time. Residents committed by the county court, who had no ability to pay, were funded by the state treasury and were committed for life.[174]

While the AMO moved in the direction of long-term commitment, there was not uniform agreement. Some superintendents, like Fernald of Massachusetts, did not see the need for lifetime commitment for all children, stating, "It seems to me that these women (those determined by the superintendent as ready for release) should have a chance---they certainly should not be sentenced to life-imprisonment upon a theory that they might do harm."[175] Others thought that most parents of institutionalized children were feeble-minded themselves and would not comprehend the legitimate concerns related to the release of their child and therefore should not be able to remove the child from the institution. Most of the superintendents were uncomfortable with parents and other relatives, whether or not they were feeble-minded themselves, making the decision to remove the child from the institution. Fernald stated,

[172] California, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Polk, Pa., and Wisconsin.
[173] Carson, "Feeble-Minded and Epileptic."
[174] Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," 209-210.
[175] Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," 208.

> It is impossible to keep a certain proportion of our patients in the institution. A certain number of these cases are bound to be taken home by the parents or friends. They cannot be retained. I believe we weaken our position by insisting that some sort of a dragnet must be put over the community and every defective forcibly taken away and supported and maintained by the state…The permanent care of the majority of feeble-minded persons becomes a necessity as the result of the death of the father, or the mother, or of friends.[176]

He thus made clear that custodial or long-term commitment would be most important for those without other family support.

In 1916, the *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* reported on a study titled, "*Part Played by the State in the Care of the Feeble-minded*." According to the report, the frequency of admissions by age gradually increased until age fourteen, with most children admitted between the ages of 5 and 14. A lower percentage of teenagers were admitted between the ages of 15 and 19, and admissions dropped precipitously after age 20.[177] Even though, for eugenic reasons, it was important to provide institutional care for the higher grades of feeble-mindedness during their procreative years, in reality, the tendency was to admit the lower grade cases and younger children first.[178] In addition, the report stated that over five percent of the children, primarily high-grade children, left the institution each year. According to the report,

> Sending a child to an institution is with most parents a last resort measure. In very many instances the parents have a very erroneous idea either of the intelligence of the child sent or of the possibilities of a special training in an institution. The results do not meet their expectation and the child is taken back home after a short time. Again many children are taken home again after their training or school period is regarded to be passed, that is, as they approach maturity … Possibly also there is an additional tendency to take the older girls back home rather than the older boys because it is felt by parents that in either

[176] A. W. Wilmarth, "To Whom May the Term Feeble-Minded Be Applied?," *JPA* X, no. 4 (June 1906): 226.
[177] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 17.
[178] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 9-10.

> case the boy or girl would have to be kept in the home, and the girl is regarded as more useful in the home than the boy.[179]

The report acknowledged that the current setup of institutions for the feeble-minded was not addressing the eugenic concerns of the superintendents and the wider society to prevent pauperism, crime and feeble-minded progeny. Among other arguments, superintendents noted that some parents were not willing to send their higher grade children to the current institutions because they did not want them associating with the lower grades.[180] One of the recommendations of the report was the need to create institutions specifically for the higher grades and paying the residents for the value of their work that exceeded the cost of their care.[181]

Various historians have assessed the ways in which decisions were made and what that revealed about the attitudes at the time. Scheerenberger stressed that the early superintendents sought to remove the children from insane asylums and the poorhouses where they were neglected and often abused. He argues that a lack of adequate resources in the community, (most would be discharged not to parental homes but to the poorhouse) rather than a focus on social control, had led to retention of the students in custodial situations.[182] James Trent, Jr., a social control sociologist, argued in both editions of his book that the primary motivation of the superintendents was in exerting social control over a marginal population. Bruce Bellingham, a revisionist scholar, criticized the use of social control arguments in the study of deviance because it presupposes an exclusive agency by elite and/or professional actors and passivity on the

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[179] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 21-22.
[180] Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," 24
[181] Some institutions were already paying residents for the value of their work that was above the cost of their maintenance. See Polglase, "President's Address," 96.
[182] Scheerenberger, *A History of Mental Retardation*.

part of the group being acted upon. These accounts do not deal with the complex social relationships between the administrators of the institution and the people who they served, namely families, teachers, and even the students. Particularly useful is the work by Michael Katz which repudiates the social control explanation of New York State's Children's Act of 1875, which removed children from the poorhouse and moved them to orphanages. While the social control interpretation indicated it was done to break up pauper families, Katz showed that poor parents thought of the orphanages as a free boarding school for their children.[183]

Institutions for the feeble-minded seemed to serve a similar function for families who were often poor. In New Jersey, parents unable to pay the institution fee needed to contact the Governor in order to qualify for state funding. Funding was appropriated by the legislature and was limited. Many parents received letters from the Governor's office that indicated that the funding had been exhausted and their application would be put on file.[184] Letters from parents and others indicated active advocacy on their part for the child. For instance, Benjamin Rovay wrote to Governor Stokes, to request admittance to the institution for a young woman who, he lamented, currently had to be locked up in her room because of her amorous nature. He wished for her to have more educational opportunities than she currently had even as he understood the motivation of her parents to keep her locked up.[185] Bleeker Van Wagenen wrote to Stokes about a girl currently in the insane asylum in Newark who was feeble-minded and unhappy in the asylum because she had nothing to occupy her mind and body. He believed she would do better in the

[183] Michael B. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1986).
[184] John Swayze, "Letters," Box 11, folder 320a, NJSA.
[185] Benjamin Rovay, "Letter to Governor Edward Stokes," July 12, 1906, Box 8, folder 632b, NJSL.

Vineland Home for Women run by Dr. Dunlap.[186] Mrs. Tanner, in her letter to the Governor, stated that admission to the institution was, she felt, the only hope of improving her daughter's condition.[187] James Seymour, Mayor of Newark, presented the case of a hard working mother with a five-year-old feeble-minded daughter. The woman only earned five dollars a week, had no one to care for the child, and was going to have to stop working to care for her, putting them both on the dole.[188] J. Ranaire requested admission for her eight-year-old son. He had become a nuisance in the neighborhood where he was teased and abused by the other children. He was not allowed to attend public school. Admittance to Vineland would be, she said, an everlasting kindness, as her heart was breaking for him in his current situation.[189] As these letters indicate, in an era of extremely limited community services, parents or others sought institutional commitment because they believed was in the best interest of the child. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of whether or not these children were admitted in the archive.

Women, Gender, and Leadership

Women continued to serve in important positions of authority and leadership in the AMO. Dr. Mary Dunlap was the first woman elected President of the AMO in 1899 and in 1911, Mattie Gundry was similarly elected President, even though she was not a physician. Her father, Dr. Richard Gundry, was superintendent of various institutions for the insane and considered an expert in mental diseases. She was introduced to the care of the feeble-minded by her father "who in several reports called the attention of the state to

[186] Bleeker Van Wagenen, "Letter to Governor Stokes," December 10, 1906, Box 8, folder 632b, NJSL.
[187] Mrs. H. B. Tanner, "Letter to Governor Stokes," January 14, 1907, Box 8, folder 632b, NJSL.
[188] James Seymour, "Letter to Governor Murphy," April 25, 1902, Box 11, folder 320a, NJSL.
[189] Ranaire, "Letter to Governor Murphy," July 7, 1902, Box 11, folder 320a, NJSL.

the great need of doing something for the care and training of feeble-minded children."[190] According to a history of Falls Church, Virginia, "Mattie Gundry was given charge of the Maryland State School for the Feeble minded and realized the South needed such an institution.[191] She decided to locate in Falls Church where she opened the Gundry Home and Training School for Feeble-minded and Epileptics in 1893 and ran it for over 50 years. It was the only school for retarded children in the South.[192] Other institutions in the South were generally not started until the 1920s.[193] Gundry used her AMO presidential address, not for scientific or pedagogical subjects, but instead, to reflect on the importance of the institutional staff in carrying out the mission of the institution, perhaps because of the increased importance of having well-trained staff, especially teachers.[194]

Elizabeth Ross Shaw, a teacher, wrote in a 1911 letter to Dr. William H. C. Smith, the superintendent of the Beverly Farms institution, that there was an increasing demand for teachers with Normal school training and a working knowledge of psychopathology. She was applying for a principal teacher position at Beverly Farms, a private institution in Illinois, and for a psychologist position at the publicly funded, Lincoln State School and Colony. Her background included a year of college, three years of professional Kindergarten training, and four years as a primary teacher at the Massachusetts School

[190] Asylum Project, "Rosewood State Hospital," *Asylum Projects* (blog), May 12, 2017, http://www.asylumprojects.org/index.php/Rosewood_State_Hospital.
[191] "Virginia Training School," *Falls Church History*, accessed October 23, 2017, https://fallschurch.omeka.net/items/show/36.
[192] Hill and Meriam, *Insane and Feeble-Minded in Institutions 1910*.
[193] Steven Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Noll describes the noted differences of institutions in the South from those in the north and west.
[194] Mattie Gundry, "President's Address," *JPA* XV, no. 3, 4 (June 1911): 73–75.

for the Feeble Minded along with attending G. Stanley Hall's lectures on pedagogy at Clark University. She toured the institutions for the feeble-minded on the East Coast and then, at the recommendation of Dr. Adolph Meyer and Professor James Angell at the University of Chicago, she attended the University of Chicago for a year taking classes in experimental psychology, physiology and neurology. Following this training, she spent two years in Germany where she took courses in heredity in Giessen and Frankfurt-on-Main, and spent time doing child-study at the Hessian State Institution in Darmstadt. She spent a year working in the pathological anatomy lab under the supervision of Professor Sommer in applying his methods to the examination of patients. She returned to the United States and for the last year worked as the principal teacher in the Eastern Pennsylvania State Institution.[195] While her extensive training may have been unusual, it demonstrates the multiple ways that institutional staff worked to create credentials. By 1916, Shaw was working as a consulting psychologist at the Chicago Kindergarten Institute and the Vocational Guidance Institute and active in the National Education Association.[196]

Alice Morrison Nash spent her career engaged in training and leadership in caring for the feeble-minded. Although she spent time as a teacher at Vineland, for most of her professional life she was engaged in outreach to the community on the needs of the feeble-minded, interacting with a large public audience. She began teaching at the Training School for Feeble-Minded Children at Vineland, New Jersey, in 1900, at the age

[195] Elizabeth Ross Shaw, "Letter to Dr. William H. C. Smith," January 11, 1911, Box 5 folder 10, Louisa H. Bowen University Archives and Special Collections, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.
[196] *Yearbook and List of Active Members of the National Education Association* (National Education Association, 1916), https://books.google.com/books?id=9_NEAQAAMAAJ&dq=elizabeth+ross+shaw+national+education+association&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

of twenty. She had planned to stay for only a few years to earn money for college, however, remained for more than fifty years. Nash was instrumental in setting up and running Vineland's residential summer training program for public school teachers, which became world-renowned, educating teachers from as far away as Japan. It became the model for other institutionally based summer programs for public school teachers. In 1909, she became principal of the Vineland school department, a position that had previously been held by a man, and from 1925 to 1952, she was director of education with outreach responsibilities. From 1952 until her death in 1966, Nash was a national educational consultant. Starting in 1904, she was a co-editor, along with Henry Goddard, Vineland's Director of Research, and a frequent contributor to the monthly *Training School Bulletin*.[197] Nash continued serving on the editorial board until her death,[198] working to improve the public perception of people with cognitive impairment. She argued that they were much like anyone else. This belief was a focal point of her outreach efforts; it pervaded her summer school training programs, her prolific writing and her presentations to civic, professional and educational audiences.

Teaching was seen as a predominantly women's profession because it fit within the child care duties ascribed to women at the turn of the twentieth century. By 1910, women made up eighty percent of the nation's teachers.[199] Pay, however, was meager, often less than half of what a man would have been paid for the same job, leading school boards to hire women as a cost-saving measure. Various laws forced women out of the profession when they married, in part because school boards had no difficulty replacing

[197] *Ayer Directory, Newspapers, Magazines and Trade Publications*, 1921, 617.
[198] Frederik Ohles, Shirley M. Ohles, and John G. Ramsay, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern American Educators* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), 236–37.
[199] Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place,* 57.

them with unmarried women.[200] According to sociologist Sheila Rothman, social conventions dictated that women's work was temporary; its purpose was to "improve her marital choices…and to demonstrate her moral worth through self-support under the most trying circumstances."[201] Teaching was not intended to advance a woman's career, and assumptions that it was temporary prevented women from being considered for promotions. Those same norms also helped employers assume that women were not capable of functioning in executive positions. The trajectory of Alice Morrison Nash's professional career offers a stark contrast to the traditional path. Not only did she continue to work after she married in 1909, but she was also promoted to positions of authority usually held by men. She demonstrated executive abilities in the operation of the Vineland summer school and in coordinating educational outreach on a global scale. She was a sought-after speaker at national meetings of various professional organizations, including the National Educational Association and the American Association for the Study of the Feebleminded.[202] Morrison Nash was not the only female teacher to advance her career within an institution for the feeble-minded. This may be because they did not report to a school board but rather to the institution's superintendent. While her husband, Charles Nash, eventually became superintendent of the Vineland institution after World War I, her promotion to principal occurred prior to his advancement and she was his supervisor for a number of years.

[200] Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 243–48.
[201] Rothman, *Woman's Proper Place*, 47–48.
[202] The Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons changed its name to the American Association for the Study of the Feebleminded in 1906.

In the era of active club women, many of them became interested in the case of feeble-minded children.[203] For instance, Ida J. Scott described the effort of Mary McDowell of Chicago to establish a summer program for feeble-minded children. McDowell solicited seventy-five dollars from the Chicago Woman's Club to sponsor an intensive summer program for three children, two of whom had not received any previous training and none of them had verbal language skills. Alice C. Schilling, at teacher at the Seward School which served many children who lived in tenements, was placed in charge of the class. Over the two months of the program, all three children showed progress. This program was run as an experiment, since even with compulsory attendance laws Scott estimated that, at most, only ten percent of all feeble-minded children were receiving public school services. She postulated that services could be provided to feeble-minded children who were not in public schools or institutions by enlisting parents of normal children.[204] Another women's club, the California Club of California, was instrumental in getting a law passed in 1905 that every fourth physician in the insane asylums and the California Home for feeble-minded children had to be female.[205] They thus were instrumental in formalizing positions for female physicians in institutional settings.

Conclusion

[203] Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980).
[204] Ida J. Scott, "Report of the Vacation School for the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* IV, no. 2 (December 1899): 65–68. Privately funded day schools, most often run by women, continued to provide services to severely involved children until 1976 when Public Law 94-142 mandated that all children with disabilities be provided a public education.
[205] Moore, "The Work of Women's Clubs in California."

Following a period of consolidation at the end of the nineteenth century, the beginning of the twentieth century brought new challenges to the institutions for the feeble-minded as they coped with changing social and political policies and structures, and new scientific discoveries. Most public institutions were now state funded which, in the new century, meant they were now a part of a growing state bureaucracy and subject to state oversight by designated state agencies. Nearly all of the institutions fell under agencies originally designed to oversee prisons and insane asylums, not under state education departments.[206] Thus, even though the institutions were originally started as a type of boarding school similar to schools for the blind and deaf, state governments did not view them as such. State schools for the blind and deaf were overseen by state departments of education. Even in these early days of classifying disabilities, feeble-mindedness was seen as something distinctly different from a sensory impairment. Government oversight through an agency tasked with overseeing of prisons and insane asylums where return to the community was an infrequent occurrence, presented a number of issues for the institutions for the feeble-minded. First, and perhaps most critically, was the issue of funding. Prisons and insane asylums provided a custodial function and, based on muck-raking exposés, provided not much more than minimal care.[207] State funding was usually woefully inadequate. Institutions for the feeble-minded, in competition for funding with these other institutions, needed to find ways to economize in order to provide services that had little in common with services at other institutions. Thus, the changing societal structure of moving from a rural to a wage based

[206] Californis State Archives Staff, "Inventory of the Department of Mental Hygiene - Sonoma State Hospital Records," California State Archives, accessed February 12, 2019.
[207] David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America*, Revised edition, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1980), 17-40.

urban economy, where families had less ability to supervise a feeble-minded person, interacted with the government oversight structure to facilitate increased custodial care in institutions for the feeble-minded.

Scientific discoveries, like the rediscovery of Mendel's work on heredity, changed how inheritance was viewed. Prior to 1900, neo-Lamarckism held out the possibility that training could improve not only the feeble-minded person but also any offspring he/she might have. Eugenics pushed the view that the unfit should not procreate but neo-Lamarckism held out a faint hope that all was not lost if the feeble-minded had children. Mendelism changed that view. Since feeble-mindedness was considered a recessive trait, a feeble-minded person who conceived a child with another feeble-minded person could only have a feeble-minded child. As feeble-minded women were believed to have a greater number of children than normal intelligence women, public fears developed that the nation would be overrun by the feeble-minded. Eugenics offered a way to manage these fears. It offered the utilitarian view that the good of the individual should be sacrificed for the good of society and, thus, segregation and/or sterilization of the feeble-minded served a higher purpose.[208] While most superintendents were eugenicists, few during this time frame favored sterilization. Segregation was seen as the better plan as it had public support and in some cases added to the workforce of feeble-minded residents. However, eugenics was not the only reason administrators admitted children to the institutions. As described in the chapter, social welfare and parental concerns often influenced the administrative decisions.

[208] Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind,* 143.

Parental concerns varied. Some wanted specialized educational and vocational training which was not available in many public schools, especially in rural areas. Some wanted medical care that they could not afford. Some wanted their child in a safe environment, especially as parents aged and had increased difficulty providing care. Some wanted custodial care as a guarantee that the child would be taken care of after the parent died. Some wanted care for their feeble-minded child because care for the child was inhibiting the parent's ability to work and support the rest of the family. Communication between institutional staff and parents touched on all of these. Eugenics played no part in parental concerns and, given that most parents placing children in an institution were working-class or in poverty, it was unlikely that they were even aware of eugenic reasoning.

The enforcement of school attendance laws brought many of the feeble-minded children who were working-class or living in poverty and generally not attending public school, to the attention of public school authorities. This required a reconsideration not only in the public schools but also in the institutions as they needed to reconfigure their mission. Urban schools began offering special classes, or in some cases, established special schools. Most public school personnel were in favor of removing feeble-minded children from regular education classes as they believed not only did the feeble-minded child take away teacher time from the other students, but also the feeble-minded required special teaching techniques.[209] Institutions for the feeble-minded were already providing educational services to feeble-minded children and a number of school districts developed agreements with institutions for the feeble-minded to provide teacher training.

[209] Esten, "Backward Children in the Public School," 10-16.

Several institutions began offering special summer school training sessions, beginning in Vineland in 1902. This made training available to a wider range of teachers who could take the training during the summer when they did not have any teaching responsibilities. This had the effect of making institutional teaching methods the standard in public schools and of distributing this methodology to schools around the country. While institutions carried out this function for a number of years, they were not primarily teacher training establishments. As the twentieth century progressed, the era of increased professionalization and specialization became more prominent and universities and colleges that specialized in teacher training took over the function of training special education teachers. Institutions that had adapted to providing a new service found the need to readapt as teacher training moved beyond their purview. Questions abounded, not only on the function of special education, but also on the function of the institutions. Who were they to serve? Should mildly involved children go to public school or to an institution? When should a feeble-minded child enter an institution---as a young child, as a teenager, as an adult, or never? Very little consensus was reached in the first 16 years of the twentieth century. Superintendents did not neatly align on one side of the issue with school personnel on the other. The issues were complex and remained so in the following decades.

While many of the public school and institutional teachers were women, this was not the only role women had in providing care for the feeble-minded. Women continued in positions of authority and leadership within the AMO. Through activities of women's clubs, women shaped laws, such as the law requiring that every fourth assistant physician in an institution in California had to be female. They served on charity commissions and

had oversight functions. While charity work was often viewed as in a woman's sphere of influence, the various roles women held often put them in positions of authority over men. However, women considered feeble-minded held a much different status, often segregated away from society with no authority to control their own lives. This sharp distinction in status continued especially as women broke social mores regarding sexual behavior during World War I. Using the evidence of premarital sex as proof of feeble-mindedness, women were committed to institutions for the feeble-minded.[210]

The first sixteen years of the twentieth century brought to the forefront numerous issues impacting the function of institutions for the feeble-minded. Very few of them were resolved even after decades of experience. The changing social and political mores made the early twentieth century an unsettled time as some of the original tenets underwent reconsideration. There was movement away from Christian charity as the motivation for operating the institutions to a focus on a scientific operation based on classification and segregation. There was an increased emphasis on the good of society instead of the good of the individual. It was a time of increasing complexity of the social order in the United States and institutions for the feeble-minded needed to find ways to adapt.

[210] Alexandra Minna Stern, "STERILIZED in the Name of Public Health: Race, Immigration, and Reproductive Control in Modern California," *American Journal of Public Health* 95, no. 7 (July 2005): 1128–38.

Conclusion

By looking at institutions for the feeble-minded, this dissertation contributes new insights to the literature on these segregating institutions built between 1876 and 1916. Scholars who have commented on them, following either an emphasis on philanthropy and reform or on the disciplining and constraining influences also found in prisons and insane asylums,[1] had been less attentive to the actual practices and early educational influences in institutions for the feeble-minded. At a time when the United States was evolving from a rural to an industrial nation, institutions for the feeble-minded underwent significant changes as they grew from small, experimental schools focused on educating feeble-minded children to large, congregate, custodial, and state-funded government enterprises. These changes neither occurred in a vacuum, nor were they strictly the result of actions taken by the sponsors and superintendents. While the superintendents were important and typically served as spokespersons for their institutions, they needed to interact with a variety of groups whose members reflected changing societal viewpoints and political structures. Parents, legislators, educators, judges, medical providers, ministers, and even the general public were influential in the growth of the institutions. Other groups also had influence. The Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions of Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons (AMO), renamed American Association for the Study of the Feeble-minded (AASF) in 1906, provided a professional

[1] Nancy Tomes, *A Generous Confidence: Thomas Story Kirkbride and the Art of Asylum-Keeping, 1840-1883* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Ellen Dwyer, *Homes for the Mad: Life inside Two Nineteenth-Century Asylums* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); David J. Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America*, Revised edition, (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1980); David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, Revised (New York: Routledge, 2002); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

arena where members could interact, learn from each other, provide education on feeble-mindedness to other professionals and become recognized as the experts regarding feeble-mindedness.

The process for establishing new institutions after the Civil War indicated a complex interaction among legislatures, social leaders, superintendents, parents, and the public. The complicated pathway for establishing the California Home described in Chapter 2 offers an example of this process. Social capital, publicity, and a changing social structure regarding care for dependent populations all worked in concert, and, sometimes, in opposition, with each other. Each of the groups involved held distinct priorities, from legislatures that needed to control costs as they tried to address competing needs, to parents seeking care and training for their children, to social welfare agencies trying to remove feeble-minded persons from almshouses, to superintendents trying to manage the complex administrative tasks of running an institution. All of these priorities and concerns needed to be negotiated among the various stakeholders, with solutions that seldom satisfied everyone. Over time, the administrators gained status as experts, and thus, were positioned to establish policies, although never without considering the complex contexts of the other groups' priorities. There was constant tension between superintendents' requests for funding and legislatures willingness to provide it.

Added to these complex interactions, the changes in the scientific understanding of heredity, social changes related to immigration, industrialization, and urbanization, changes in education policies and attendance laws, and the increasing bureaucratic structure of state government presented additional challenges for institutions for the feeble-minded to navigate. Publicity, whether through institutional endeavors such as

public demonstrations at events like the World's Fair, institutional circulars sent to interested subscribers, or newspaper articles, especially around scandals or legislative activities related to institutions, influenced public opinion and, thus, in some cases, influenced the operation of the institution. These publicity efforts informed parents of possible services available for their child, created public pressure on the legislature, and, except for the scandals, created a public perception of the institution as a bucolic place for people with feeble-mindedness that was a better situation for them than remaining in the community, which often meant the almshouse. The rapid increase in population in the institutions and the long waiting lists seem to be among the results of this publicity.

One of the ways of managing the challenges facing the institutions was through the professional organization, the AMO. In many ways, the AMO became the public face of the institutions. It was the AMO that engaged with the public at events like the World's Fair through demonstrations and displays of work done by the feeble-minded residents. It was at the annual meetings held at different institutions where societal leaders, legislators, and others were invited to watch the "entertainments," which were, in reality, demonstrations designed to highlight the positive results of institutional intervention. The goal was not to entertain these leaders; it was to solicit support, often financial, for sustaining the institution. Financial support, initially through private philanthropy, and eventually through state funding, was always a concern for institutional staff. The changes in the funding mechanisms were one way to analyze the changing societal views of where the locus of support for the feeble-minded should reside, moving from a charitable endeavor to a legitimate function of state government, with concomitant state oversight. In addition, institutions often tracked the cost per resident per day for the

purpose of lobbying the state legislatures.[2] Tracking that cost, especially in the years after 1916 which saw an even greater increase in number of residents, provides a method of analyzing programs, services, and modifications that were made to stay within the yearly appropriation.

The AMO was also the professional face of providing care for the feeble-minded. Beginning with superintendents and through expansion of its membership to include other professionals interested in feeble-mindedness, it became the locus of expertise regarding all things related to the topic. By 1916, members of the AMO, and especially the superintendents, were considered the experts, called on by presidents, governors, university professors, and philanthropists.[3] The leaders spoke at national and international conventions and shaped the care of people with feeble-mindedness, both inside and outside of institutions. Things changed as the early superintendents, who were seen as innovators when the institutions were first established, died prior to the start of the twentieth century. Their replacements were now primarily administrators whose concerns were less about the individuals living in their institutions than about the running of a large enterprise.

The AMO did not act alone in orchestrating institutional care for the feeble-minded. As institutions came under the purview of state governments, legislatures became important factors in the functioning of the institutions because they held the

[2] Appendix to the Journal of the Senate and Assembly of the Twenty-third Session of the Legislature of the State of California, "First Annual Report of the Trustees of the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children 1886" (Sacramento, 1899), California State Archives; Appendix to the Journal of the Senate and Assembly of the Twenty-third Session of the Legislature of the State of California, "Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children. 1889" (Sacramento, 1899), CSA.
[3] James W. Trent Jr.., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 182.

power of the purse and of oversight. As a governmental entity, institutions were in competition with other government functions, such as prisons, insane asylums, road construction, and education. The financial pressures meant seeking ways to combine their educational and vocational mission with measures that resulted in cost savings, as government funding never seemed adequate. The superintendents often argued that the legislative funding for the institutions for the feeble-minded should be greater than for other institutions because they offered both educational and vocational services for feeble-minded children and the state contributed to these services for normal children, while other institutions like prisons and insane asylums merely provided custodial care.[4] These arguments often met resistance in state legislatures. While oversight of schools for the blind and deaf fell under state departments of education, institutions for the feeble-minded were usually under an independent Board of Control, or in California, the State Commission in Lunacy, which had oversight of prisons, insane asylums, and poorhouses. This indicates that state governments, from the beginning, classified institutions for the feeble-minded not as educational entities, but as long-term, custodial enterprises and often funded them accordingly. Legislatures, which had originally passed laws regulating the age of discharge to be 18 to 21, amended their laws to increase the age at which a resident could be released; often, for women it was at age 45, when they were presumed to be beyond childbearing age.[5] Thus, it was not just superintendents advocating for increased custodial care; state legislatures, through their oversight mechanisms and legislation, deemed it an appropriate state function.

[4] Samuel J. Fort, "Special School for Special Children," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics* V, no. 1 (Sept 1900): 28.
[5] "Concerning Recent Legislation," *JPA* VI, no. 3, 4 (June 1902): 85.

While staff in pre-Civil War institutions believed feeble-minded residents could be trained and returned to their families, post-Civil War institutional staff believed that custodial care was, in many cases, a more realistic option. Earlier institutions emphasized Edouard Seguin's methodology, which included basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, when possible. Their relatively small size and their restrictive admission policies, whereby only those deemed likely to benefit were admitted, sustained this view that institutional care and training was a temporary service. However, this no longer worked in state regulated, large institutions under funding and societal constraints. Educational focus changed from academic to vocational, especially emphasizing skills important for helping maintain the infrastructure of the institutions themselves through the residents' labor. By the 1970s, conditions in some institutions had greatly deteriorated. Educational and vocational programming virtually ceased to exist. Instead of staff working to help children learn self-care skills, manners, and vocational skills, as they had during the time period of this dissertation, staff "provided surveillance over residents that lived like animals…(including) the throwing of feces, drinking from toilets, and random violence."[6] Geraldo Rivera's exposé, *Willowbrook ; a Report on How It Is and Why It Doesn't Have to Be That Way,* photographically documented these conditions and, along with Burton Blatt's book, *Christmas in Purgatory,* detailed similar conditions

[6] C. Steve Holburn, "Rhetoric and Realities in Today's ICF/MR: Control out of Control," *Mental Retardation* 30, no. 3 (June 1, 1992): 133.

across the United States.[7] Claudia Malacrida documents these conditions in an institution in Alberta, Canada.[8]

The shift also meant treating residents as subjects. During the time frame of this dissertation, 1876-1916, medical professionals were beginning to use the institutionalized population to investigate specific medical conditions associated with some of the residents, such as Dr. Osler on cerebral palsy and Dr. Oliver on eye conditions.[9] These investigations seemed to be done to better understand the conditions and to try to ameliorate them. By the 1950s, residents in institutions were routinely used as experimental subjects for experiments that had nothing to do with their conditions. Albert Sabin's polio vaccine was field tested on residents of the Sonoma State Home (formerly the California Home) in California and the New Jersey State Colony for Feeble-minded Men. Jonas Salk's vaccine was tested on the residents of the Polk State School in Pennsylvania.[10] Boys in the Science Club at the Fernald State School, formerly the Massachusetts School for the Feeble-minded, were fed radioactive tracers in their morning oatmeal and milk, in experiments conducted through the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and approved by the Atomic Energy Commission, in order to understand chemical reactions of calcium in the human body.[11] At Willowbrook State School for mentally defective children in New York, 51 children were fed hepatitis infected fecal

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[7] Geraldo Rivera, *Willowbrook ; A Report on How It Is and Why It Doesn't Have to Be That Way.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Burton Blatt and Fred M. Kaplan, *Christmas in Purgatory ; a Photographic Essay on Mental Retardation* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1966).
[8] Claudia Malacrida, *A Special Hell: Institutional Life in Alberta's Eugenic Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).
[9] Isaac N. Kerlin, "President's Annual Address," *Proceeding of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons* (1892): 282–84.
[10] Michael D'Antonio, *The State Boys Rebellion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004).
[11] Lorraine Boissoneault, "A Spoonful of Sugar Helps the Radioactive Oatmeal Go Down," *Smithsonian*, March 8, 2017, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/spoonful-sugar-helps-radioactive-oatmeal-go-down-180962424/.

extracts in their milk in an experiment conducted by Dr. Saul Krugman, an infectious disease specialist at New York University Medical Center, to learn about disease progression. This transition, from educational and vocational programming, even with increased emphasis on custodial functions in this dissertation's time frame, to the inhumane conditions of the 1960s and 1970s needs much more investigation. In part this was related to issues of funding and overcrowding, but there was also a change from viewing the resident as a person to seeing residents collectively, as a lower class of people available to be research subjects. The beginnings of some of these changes can be seen in the issue of hair cutting described in chapter 3.

The advent of special education classes in public schools at the turn of the century raised questions regarding when and where feeble-minded children should be educated. Should institutions for the feeble-minded admit only custodial cases, or only children after they had completed their public schooling, or was there some mix that would be most effective? The question of where children should be educated was finally settled in 1975 with the passage of the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act (sometimes referred to as Public Law (PL) 94-142). The act was an amendment to Part B of the Education of the Handicapped Act enacted in 1966 and greatly expanded rights of children with disabilities to receive a public education, no matter the extent of their disability.

The question of where children with disabilities should live is still debated today, often relying on governmental or legal intervention. Institutions continued to exist into the twenty-first century. The Sonoma Developmental Center (formerly the California Home) closed in 2018. The Illinois Developmental Center closed in 2002. In 1962, it

housed 5,200 residents. David Braddock found there was a federal bias toward funding care in institutions. In fiscal year 1984, "41% of the $4.86 billion in federal spending for MR/DD (mental retardation/developmental disability) services supported approximately 100,000 placements in public institutions nationwide."[12] The remaining 59% supported over 630,000 noninstitutionalized individuals.[13] Many of the residents moving out of institutions went to Intermediate Care Facilities for the Developmentally Disabled, (ICF/MR), when legislation enacted in 1971 began funding them as an optional service under Medicaid.[14] According to C. Steve Holburn, "comparative studies have shown that ICFs/MR provide the poorest quality of life for persons with mental retardation."[15] The Medicaid Home and Community Services (HCBS) waiver program was established with the passage of section 2176 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981. Section 2176 created the new section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act, which authorized States to request the option of providing home and community-based alternatives to institutional care.[16] As the description states, it is an alternative to institutional care, which is still, legally, considered the first option for care for a person with a disability. In 1999, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in the case, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, that the "integration mandate" of the Americans with Disabilities Act required public agencies to provide services in the "most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of

[12] David Braddock, "From Roosevelt to Reagan: Federal Spending for Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities," *American Journal of Mental Deficiency* 90, no. 5 (1986): 486.
[13] Braddock, "From Roosevelt to Reagan," 486.
[14] Medicaid mandates certain services that must be provided by all states. States may opt to provide other services such as ICF/MRs. In reality, ICF/MRs, in many cases, were just smaller institutions.
[15] Holburn, "Rhetoric and Realities in Today's ICF/MR," 133.
[16] Allen J. LeBlanc, M. Christine Tonner, and Charlene Harrington, "Medicaid 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Services Across the States," *Health Care Finance Review* 22, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 159–74.

qualified individuals with disabilities,"[17] although who makes this decision is still not clear. The implications of this decision on housing and work settings are still being litigated today. This dissertation explores the beginnings of this bias toward providing institutional care for the feeble-minded.[18]

Much of the literature on institutions for the feeble-minded, when mentioning women, focus on women who were residents of the institutions.[19] However, as this dissertation has shown, women had a variety of roles both directly and indirectly in work for institutions for the feeble-minded. This dissertation expands the analysis of women associated with institutions, many of them highly educated and in positions of leadership and authority. Women were instrumental in establishing institutions, served as matrons who had supervisory authority over large numbers of employees and maintained contact with parents, were physicians for the institution, were presidents of the AMO, were education outreach directors tasked with educating the general public about feeble-mindedness, and provided governmental oversight of some institutions. This topic, women and institutions for the feeble-minded, merits additional research, not only during the time frame of this dissertation (1876-1916), but up to the present. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the current name of the AMO, continues to have women in positions of authority. Elizabeth Perkins, PhD, is the current president of the organization.[20]

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[17] *Olmstead* v. L.C., 527 U.S. 581, 119 S.Ct. 2176 (1999).
[18] The preferred term has evolved over the years from feeble-minded to mentally deficient to mentally retarded to the current term, intellectual impairment.
[19] James W. Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States*, 2nd ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Licia Carlson, "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies: Feminist Reflections on the History of Mental Retardation," *Hypatia* 16, no. 1 (2001): 124–46.
[20] Board of Directors of AAIDD, https://aaidd.org/about-aaidd/governance, (Accessed 3/9/2019).

Parent interaction with the institutions holds little space within the secondary literature, partly due to its paucity in the archival record. However, given that admission and discharge from institutions was voluntary on the part of parents,[21] their viewpoints are critically important in understanding how their engagement may have contributed to the institutions' growth and stability. The rapid increase in the residential population of new institutions and their long waiting lists indicates that the institutions were offering something parents wanted or needed for their children. Their expectations varied; some wanted education, some wanted improved self-care skills, some wanted vocational training, and some wanted custodial care, among other motivations. While the parental letters related to California Home staff represent only a subset of parental views, as not all parents wrote to the staff, they do show care, concern, and love as they identified these growing establishments as best for their children. Even as the institutions dramatically changed over the forty years of this dissertation, parental attitudes remained relatively consistent. Parental letter and other records of parental interactions with institutional staff and government agencies are available provide a rarely seen point of view. They are available at the California State Archives and at the New Jersey State Archives and may be available at other archives that house information on institutions for the feeble-minded. These records should be sought out as looking at parental concerns, especially when laws were changed so that admission required termination of parental rights, as they hold promise of incorporating an important viewpoint regarding the institutions. In addition, for children without families, the social agencies involved in placement and care

[21] The push by superintendents to eliminate voluntary admission and discharge changed had its beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century. In later decades, they were successful in making institutional admission and discharge part of a court ordered function. In some states, parents needed to terminate parental rights in order for their children to be admitted to an institution.

decisions often viewed institutional placement as a way to more appropriately manage indigent, feeble-minded children. The letters and other documentation between social workers and institutional staff offer information on the views of professional child welfare workers, another important resource for understanding the development of institutions.[22]

Parents, educators, institutional staff and legislators had important roles in establishing and maintaining institutions for the feeble-minded. The general public did, too, because their tax dollars were supporting them. As the establishment of the California Home indicated, the institutions were viewed as an economic benefit to the local community. They employed local citizens, hired contractors and laborers for construction and repair projects, and bought food, household supplies, medical supplies, and educational and vocational supplies from local businesses. Superintendents and legislators understood the need to keep the public aware of the benefits of the institution to their local communities. Especially toward the turn of the century, as feeble-mindedness was increasingly associated with crime, alcoholism, and prostitution, institutional segregation was marketed to the public as a way of ameliorating the problem by housing residents considered dangerous by the general public, thus removing them from the community.

Eugenics was introduced almost simultaneously with the development of large state institutions to manage populations that seemed deviant from some "norms" in the

[22] These are available at the California State Archives and The College of Physicians of Philadelphia and may be available in other archives.

community. While Francis Galton and others focused initially on how to improve populations, the emphasis quickly shifted to preventing the reproduction of such populations and individuals considered unfit to be part of the general population. By 1916, most superintendents were eugenicists, but their points of view varied, as did that of the general public which largely focused on segregation of the feeble-minded, even as some eugenics organizations began to advocate for sterilization or even euthanasia. The superintendents' managerial actions, moreover, were often based on perceived social welfare reasons rather than eugenic ones.[23] Convinced that the general public was not yet supportive of sterilization or eugenic euthanasia, superintendents advocated that the sex segregation in the institution precluded the opportunity for sexual activity among the residents. Therefore, sterilizations for eugenic reasons were not necessary. However, a different calculus favoring sterilization came into play for residents returning to the community and for the large number of feeble-minded people, often evaluated as high grade individuals, who were functioning in the community and thus, remained outside of institutional control. California passed its first sterilization law in 1909, with revisions in 1913 and 1917. Sterilizations were relatively rare, 12 per year, in the first 12 years under the law. Approximately 60 percent of those sterilizations were performed on mentally ill patients and about 35 percent on those considered feeble-minded, all of whom were either in an insane asylum or an institution for the feeble-minded. This rate expanded significantly after 1921 to approximately 450 per year.[24] Eugenics was a topic that had increased relevance for institutions in the years following 1916.

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[23] Frederick Kuhlmann, "Part Played by the State Institutions in the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *JPA* XXI, no. 1, 2 (1916): 3–24.
[24] Lutz Kaelber, "California," *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States* (blog), 2012, http://www.uvm.edu/%7Elkaelber/eugenics/.

Questions and reconsiderations about managing feeble-minded populations more actively became calls to action following World War I. The military leadership sought more information on recruits and that led to IQ testing. The results of these tests were widely published after the war and raised alarm over the average level and range of intelligence in the country because almost 50 percent of the white drafted population tested as feeble-minded. The percentage was much higher in African-American and immigrant populations.[25] Eliminating reproduction of the now potentially vast numbers of feeble-minded people became of paramount importance in order to maintain the status of the nation. Segregation in institutions for that large a number of people would now be prohibitively expensive for states. Institutions became the sites for sterilizations and yet the number of sterilizations varied widely. California institutions performed 20,108 sterilizations by 1964. Minnesota institutions performed 2350 sterilizations between 1928 and the late 1950s, (519 of the sterilizations were performed on males), while New York performed 42, all on women considered mentally ill, as their sterilization law which passed in 1912 was repealed in 1920. Virginia, where Carrie Buck was sterilized, carried out at least 7325 sterilizations. Approximately 50 percent were on people judged mentally ill and 62 percent were on women.[26]

This dissertation provides an examination of institutions for the feeble-minded in an early formational stage as they went from small, often privately owned establishments, to large congregate facilities in the years between 1876 and 1916. Within the discussion are the faint stirrings of later occurrences. This history is of critical importance in the

[25] Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present*, ed. Margaret C. Jacob, Spencer Weart, and Hal. Cooke, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1998).
[26] Kaelber, "California, Minnesota, New York, Virginia," *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States* (blog), 2012, http://www.uvm.edu/%7Elkaelber/eugenics/

lives of people with disabilities as echoes of the past continue to reverberate in the present. Application for a Medicaid waiver in order to receive funding for services in the community still demands confirmation that a person's disabilities qualify them for institutional placement. While the Americans with Disabilities Act, increases accessibility to a variety of services, it by no means addresses the multitude of issues people with disabilities face living in the community, such as a high unemployment rate, lack of accessible transportation, and high rates of poverty. Many of the current issues can be traced back to how government, philanthropy, and social welfare agencies attempted to manage the lives of people with disabilities, especially those considered feeble-minded, in the past.

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