

Eugenics and its evolution in the history of western psychology: A critical archival review

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Abstract

Since its inception Western academic psychology has been influenced by and closely affiliated with eugenics, defined by its originators as the “science of racial betterment.” The role of eugenics has been minimally acknowledged in historical accounts of Western psychology, although it was fundamental to the establishment of empirical psychology methods as well as its applied theories, specifically behaviorism. The continued influence of eugenics in Western psychology, noted in this article, is traced to biologizing human differences while minimizing the role of social context as well as to dividing individuals into groups according to their supposedly innate fitness levels (such as intelligence and optimism). The impact of eugenics on the practice of psychotherapy is highlighted.

1 | EUGENICS AND ITS EVOLUTION IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY: AN ARCHIVAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

Like other organized disciplines, Western psychology developed within particular social and historical contexts (Greenwood, 2015; Pickren & Rutherford, 2018; Teo, 2006; Walsh, Teo, & Baydala, 2014). Commonly emphasized in disciplinary history textbooks are influences on the development of Western psychology such as religion, empiricism, positivism, as well as a commitment to liberal politics and social change (Greenwood, 2015; Pickren & Rutherford, 2018). Moreover, the history of psychology has been presented primarily as focused not only on progressive social values but also on a commitment to superior experimental scholarship in pursuit of these positive social goals (Evans, Sexton, & Cadwallader, 1992; Pickren & Rutherford, 2018). Past and current historical accounts of Western psychology claim an auspicious role for the profession in history, especially in the US (Green & Cautin, 2017). Some scholars have questioned the overly positive depictions of psychology, especially American psychology (Cushman, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Walsh et al., 2014). However, their critiques remain overshadowed by exclusively positive historical accounts of psychology as a discipline, which tend to either entirely ignore or minimize problematic accounts. This article focuses on considering an influential movement that contributed to the discipline of Western psychology

(i.e., psychology as an organized academic and professional institution), which seems to be ignored or minimized: the ideology and practice of eugenics. Commitment to eugenics was especially prominent among British and US psychologists of the first half of the twentieth century, and many noted psychologists throughout the twentieth century and on into present times have drawn on eugenic-based methodologies and values.

Western psychology as a discipline has direct links to and influence on the development of treatments, specifically psychotherapy. The values that guide psychotherapy practice in regard to what constitutes mental illness and mental wellness, what constitutes care for those considered mentally ill, and even what constitutes psychotherapy, draw significantly on Western psychology (Cushman, 1996; Walsh et al., 2014). Psychotherapists themselves, whose training involves exposure primarily to research produced by Western psychology scientists, are likely to embrace, explicitly or implicitly, the dominant values of the field, which are often hailed as empirically supported truths. Recognition of the significant impact of eugenic ideologies in Western psychology, past and present, may help elucidate how eugenics-based beliefs can enter not only into approaches to psychotherapy but also into what is perceived as human mental health or illness. Moreover, understanding the influence of eugenics on the origins of Western psychotherapeutic approaches as well as their contemporary iterations may help psychotherapists critically re-examine the socio-political paradigms that underlie their practice.

2 | EUGENICS: DEFINITIONS, HISTORY, AND GOALS

Eugenics is a scientific and social movement, based on Darwin's theories of human evolution, which was originally defined as the science of racial betterment—its name being based on the Greek words for “good” and “born” (Galton, 1865, 1869, 1904; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Eugenics is related to social Darwinism, which focuses on extending Darwin's theories of plant and animal evolution to the social lives of human beings, especially in regard to societal processes (Bannister, 2010). Eugenics also drew on Malthusian assertions that human social problems are caused by overpopulation by the poor and other marginalized groups as well as by a parallel decline in the birth rate among those perceived as socially superior (Chase, 1980). Eugenics, together with social Darwinism and Malthusian-based concerns about overpopulation, were highly influential in wealthy industrialist nations around the turn of the twentieth century, professed by those who claimed to be both socially conservative as well as the socially liberal (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Lombardo, 2011). These views granted wealthy Western groups an empirical standing for their supposed pre-eminence and the correctness of their political and social values, as well as absolution from their responsibility for inequality, wars, or poverty (Black, 2003; Kuhl, 2002; Lombardo, 2011). These theories were also central to the establishment of what became known as scientific racism and sexism, often treating varied ethnic groups as disparate species and women as an inferior sub-species (Chase, 1980; Ruti, 2015; Tucker, 1996). Eugenics remains a significant influence on the writings of contemporary white nationalists and promoters of white racial superiority, including psychologists who adhere to these values (Cattell, 1987; Duke, 1999; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Lynn, 2001).

Galton, (1869, 1883/1907, 1904), hailed for his key contributions to the development of Western psychology and statistics, provided the initial development of the term eugenics and its meaning. In his works on the hereditary nature of human functioning, which he based on his extensive statistical studies of famous British (male) historical figures and graduates of Cambridge University as well as his travels to British colonies, he elaborated the meaning of eugenics as:

The science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had. The word “eugenics” would sufficiently express the idea. (1883/1907, p. 3)

By the mid-twentieth century eugenics had gained notoriety because of its association with Nazi Germany's policies of racial purity and, most especially, the extermination of Jewish people (Kuhl, 2002; Weikart, 2004). However, since

its inception to today, eugenics has functioned as a globally influential ideology that claimed to be scientific, offering to determine and manage supposedly superior or inferior human fitness in regard to all categories of human difference, but especially those that focus on differences in race, gender, sexuality, physical ability, and social class (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Lombardo, 2011).

Eugenicists assert that the original inspiration for eugenics came from Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle, for whom good societies and good life were achieved through breeding out unwanted individuals and ensuring that social and political power was placed in the hands of superior males based on their rational intellectual contributions (Lynn, 2001; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). However, it was Charles Darwin's, (1859, 1888, 1890) theories that offered a scientific foundation for the systematic development of eugenics as a form of improving human societies. In his primary work *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin, (1859) stated that the "grade of civilisation [supposedly civilised versus primitive cultures] . . . seems a most important element in the success of nations" (p. 239) and argued that among the species the "struggle [race] for life" privileged particular species so that only "the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply" (p. 96). In his correspondence with Galton, Darwin, (1898) openly supported Galton's eugenic work on "improving the human race" (p. 45), especially by identifying and endorsing those "few . . . above mediocrity in health, strength, morals and intellect" (p. 46).

Thus, in his influential book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin, (1888) further proclaimed that, based on scientific evolutionary evidence it is "the western nations of Europe, who now so immeasurably surpass their former savage progenitors, and stand at the summit of civilisation" (p. 141). In his book on emotions Darwin, (1890) routinely contrasted the affective expression of British men (that is, their emotional detachment) with those of women and children, typically discussed conjointly, and supposedly uncivilized groups (in terms of their lack of emotional control). According to Darwin and subsequent eugenicists, self-control in regard to emotions and thoughts was a mark of superior evolutionary fitness: "The highest stage in moral culture at which we can arrive, is when we recognize that we ought to control our thoughts" (Darwin, 1888, p. 101).

Allegedly advanced human groups were viewed as predisposed by their ancient climate-adaptation patterns not only to particular levels of intelligence and health but also to these patterns of emotional expression and self-control. In his *Descent of Man* Darwin, (1888) stated that the experiences of ancient cave-men meant "the races differ" not only in their physical appearance and functions, but specifically in "their mental characteristics . . . chiefly as it would appear in their emotional, but partly in their intellectual faculties . . . [such as] the contrast between the taciturn, even morose, aborigines . . . and the light-hearted, talkative negroes" (p. 131). Darwin claimed that these supposed evolutionary racial differences between groups were scientifically proven, repeatedly drawing his evidence from eugenic scholars, contemporary with him, such as Galton, Greg, and Wallace. According to Darwin, (1888) racial and ethnic groups were demonstrated to be suitable or unsuitable for evolutionary progress because of their supposed personality traits and intelligence,

Thus the reckless, degraded, and often vicious members of society, tend to increase at a quicker rate than the provident and generally virtuous members. Or as Mr. Greg puts the case: "The careless, squalid, unambitious Irishman multiplies like rabbits: the frugal, foreseeing, self-respecting, ambitious Scot, stern in his morality, spiritual in his faith, sagacious and disciplined in his intelligence, passes his best years in struggle and in celibacy, marries late, and leaves few behind him". (p. 93)

Another prevailing view during Darwin's time, which stressed women's inferiority to men, was also claimed by Darwin to be based on evolution. According to Darwin, evolution relegated women to a single focus on attracting a mate, having his progeny, and dedicating themselves to the comforts of that mate and his offspring. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin, (1888) made numerous assertions about women's inferior evolutionary status in regard to their intellect, emotions, and moral character, including drawing on the emerging disciplines of statistics and psychology:

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or

imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, painting, sculpture, music . . . history, science, and philosophy, with half-a-dozen names under each subject, the two lists would not bear comparison. We may also infer, from the law of the deviation from averages [statistics], so well illustrated by Mr. Galton, in his work on 'Hereditary Genius,' that if men are capable of a decided pre-eminence over women in many subjects, the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman. . . . Thus, man has ultimately become superior to woman. (p. 328)

In summary, Darwin's numerous scholarly contributions, which were unquestioningly accepted as foundational by early Western psychologists, held an emphasis on determinations of evolutionary fitness as evidenced by supposedly superior intelligence, emotional and behavioral self-control, moral behavior, and other standards associated with the values of wealthy Anglo-Saxon males.

Eugenics movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries claimed to utilize Darwin's empirical theories together with new scientific tools (e.g., statistics) to identify which cultures and individuals display the highest and lowest levels of evolutionary development and what kind of individuals were optimal for procreating subsequent fit generations (Davenport, 1910; Galton, 1869, 1883/1907; Pearson, 1905; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Galton (1883/1907, 1904) routinely discussed eugenics as a scientific method of increasing the pace of evolution, and encouraged its adoption as a form of social religion. Eugenicists claimed to have empirical methods of not only determining human fitness but also developing methods of promoting evolution by ridding the world of the unfit, especially through limiting their procreative choices (i.e., negative eugenics) as well as by facilitating conditions for the fit to behave in proper ways (positive eugenics) (Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). For example, US scientist Guyer, (1916) in his book entitled *Being Well Born: An Introduction to Eugenics*, outlined the supposedly vital need for Western nations to develop strategies of "barring the untold hordes of actual defectives" and determining "positive criteria by which we can measure the real fitness of the remainder," arguing that scientists were central to this "campaign of positive eugenics" in order to "have some standard by which to steer" without the sway of unscientific "public opinion" (p. 304). Fitness was to be judged via advanced statistical methods such as measuring perceived levels of contribution to society, viewing the existing social order as reflective of evolution (i.e., the dominance of Western nations over their colonies, White individuals over non-White, the wealthy over the poor, males over females), and assessing supposedly inherited individual characteristics (such as intelligence, health, emotional self-control and moral behaviors) (Galton, 1883/1907; McDougall, 1914; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Karl Pearson, a eugenicist and the founder of the field of statistics, stated in his 1905 book entitled *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* that Darwin's evolutionary theory was scientifically corroborated "chiefly by way of war with inferior races" (p. 46). Pearson specifically praised the extermination of the "Red Indian" by those who colonized the Americas as a sign of such evolutionary progress and shamed those who romanticized indigenous peoples such as the writer James Fenimore Cooper. Pearson, (1905) insisted the scientific foundations of eugenics made it "powerful . . . [as] a true scientific education, which enables a man or woman to form judgments freed from individual bias", especially from their tendencies to humanize and care for people who were claimed to be unfit (p. 107).

Although alternative evolutionary explanations arose within the same timeframe—in theories by French biologist Lamarck, Russian scholar Kropotkin, and developmentalist Jean Piaget—these perspectives were dismissed because they emphasized differential environmental and individual influences on evolution as well as the importance of social context and interdependence (Honeywill, 2008; Kropotkin, 1902/2012; Messerly, 1996). However, these non-Darwinist evolutionary theories were proclaimed to be non-scientific (Watson, 1919) and supposedly responsible for social, moral, and racial decline (Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). By contrast, Darwinism-based eugenics claimed to offer the only scientific vision of evolutionary development, exclusively offering "harmony with the underlying plan of the universe . . . [and] totality of happiness of all sentient beings or of all men" (Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935, p. 214). Eugenicists asserted that adhering to their scientifically derived methods of improving the human breeding stock would result in significant progress, including the elimination of physical and mental illnesses, poverty, and wars

(Davenport, 1910; Galton, 1869, 1883/1907; Kellikot, 1915; Pearson, 1911; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Eugenists past and present promised the public scientifically designed utopias, offering to socially engineer societies populated by racially pure, highly intelligent, physically flawless, emotionally even-tempered, optimistic, self-controlled, and faultlessly behaving individuals (Cattell, 1987; W. Evans, 1931; Galton, 1869; Lynn, 2001; McDougall, 1914; Morawski, 1982; Watson, 1928). This “Super Race” was to be created by “breeding” the “Super Man” (Nearing, 1912, pp. 25–26).

Eugenists also argued that treatment of physical and mental disorders (such as melancholy, alcoholism, syphilis, tuberculosis), especially among racial minorities and the poor, was detrimental to evolution because this work negated the natural resilience to these illnesses as well as extended the life of individuals who could produce evolutionary unfit offspring (Kellikot, 1915; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). In their best-selling book *Applied Eugenics*, used in both academic institutions and promoted to the public, Popenoe and Johnson (1918/1935) referenced numerous scientific studies, and made suggestions such as that “many of those who commit suicide are to be credited to the mentally diseased part of the population, and if they could make way with themselves 20 or 30 years earlier, their demise might be a eugenic gain” (p. 98). Eugenic experiments were conducted to examine resilience to disease by not offering available treatments (Lombardo, 2011). For example, the infamous Tuskegee syphilis study in the US South focused on analyzing evolutionary resilience as well as in-vivo disease progression by denying treatments, especially to African Americans and other minority groups (Lombardo, 2011). As Popenoe and Johnson (1918/1935) stated, permitting infected individuals to die benefitted evolution because “the selective action of the disease (syphilis) . . . tends to eliminate some of the mentally deficient and mentally diseased, and also those lacking in self-control” (p. 94). In addition, Western eugenists frequently declared that treatment of the unfit resulted in enormous economic and social costs, and that those who offered medical or social services to these groups were mercenary and misguided (Huxley, 1936; Pearson, 1905; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Claims were also made that aiding individuals from supposedly evolutionary inferior groups would make them even more “discontent”, “neurotic” and “inefficient” (Huxley, 1936, p. 24). Julian Huxley, a British promoter of eugenics, referred to multiple scientific studies on differences between individuals of the upper and lower social classes, which he stated proved that “docility” and “industrious submissiveness” were descriptive of “the lower majority” whereas “intelligence, leadership, and strength of character” were common “in the upper few” (1936, p. 25). Lastly, practices such as segregation and sterilization of the unfit as well as policies that facilitated either their elimination (e.g., the Final Solution) or their self-elimination (through untreated illnesses) were viewed as necessary “negative” eugenics tasks to breed out unwanted groups (Goddard, 1911; Guyer, 1916; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Guyer, for example, warned that empirical studies both in the UK and the US showed that “more children are born to alcoholics than to normal parents”, citing that “Goddard’s [American psychologist who conducted infamous feeble-mindedness studies] investigations in America corroborate this fact” (Guyer, 1916, p. 174).

In contrast, socially engineering the evolutionary fit to reach their highest evolutionary potential (particularly emphases on advanced education for men, sexual morality, self-control, optimism, high productivity), was pursued as a “positive eugenic” aim (Galton, 1869, 1883/1907; McDougall, 1914; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). According to a book entitled *The Science of Eugenics* (Jefferis & Nichols, 1919), which claimed to have sold over a million copies in the US, evolutionary fit men had to be taught absolute self-control over their minds and bodies, because refusal to exercise such control was a form of “disobedience to nature’s dictates” that carried “evil consequences inflicted on their descendants and on future generations are often as great as those caused by crime” (p. 7).

Thus, eugenics especially emphasized ensuring that males of socially and culturally superior groups made procreative choices toward the racial betterment of humanity by selecting racially fit females as “mothers of the race” (Baker, 1912; Galton, 1869, 1883/1907; Jefferis & Nichols, 1919; Melendy, 1914; Saleeby, 1911). As noted earlier, Darwin, (1888) proclaimed that females of every species were less developed than males, and that their exclusive evolutionary focus was on securing procreation with the fittest male. According to Galton, (1869), although “coyness and caprice have in consequence become a heritage of the [female] sex together with a cohort of allied weaknesses and petty deceits,” men had to tolerate these female characteristics because “the race would degenerate through the

absence of that sexual selection" (p. 39). Consequently, women who were viewed as appropriate for breeding the fittest next generation were encouraged to accept their dependence on males because of their reproductive position, including by remaining chaste until marriage, being sufficiently seductive to attract and keep the male, and prioritizing their optimistic motherly and wifely skills (Baker, 1912; Galton, 1869; Jefferis & Nichols, 1919; Guyer, 1916; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935; Saleeby, 1911).

Even white middle- to upper-class women, according to Darwinists and eugenicists were viewed as incapable of contributing to society in any way other than in their capacity to breed, supposedly evident in a general lack of their skills related to sciences, the arts, technology, or philosophy as exemplified in Darwin's quote above (Darwin, 1888; Galton, 1869, 1883/1907). In turn, women's refusal to devote themselves to family life was viewed as detrimental to evolution (Baker, 1912; Melendy, 1914; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Women's depression, anxiety, consumption of any alcohol, interest in reading romantic novels, non-marital sexual interests, and pursuit of what were considered masculine occupations (such as advanced education) or practices (such as competitive sports) were claimed to be racially "parasitic" (Baker, 1912; Jefferis & Nichols, 1919; Melendy, 1914; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935; Saleeby, 1911). Melendy, (1914), a US eugenic scholar, in her widely distributed book for women entitled *The Science of Eugenics and Sex Life* offered numerous pieces of empirical advice for correct evolutionary female behavior:

Never look on the dark side of anything. If it has no bright side, don't look at it at all. Look at something else. Never speak or even think ill of another. . . . Read good books, think good thoughts, lead pure lives, observing the laws of health. These habits once formed become literal brain-paths along which it grows easier and easier for the thoughts to travel, bringing gladness, health and symmetry to every nerve and tissue. (p. 83).

Even rape was interpreted as having a salubrious evolutionary effect, especially when white men raped non-white women, with such claims as "doubtless some better germ-plasms [genetic materials] were added to the Negro race through the black concubines taken by white men" (Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935, p. 299). Moreover, evolutionary unfit women were believed to be more likely to accelerate evolutionary decline than men: throughout the last century women and adolescent girls, especially women and girls of color, were sterilized at a greater rate than any other group, especially for breaches of sexual morality, including for being victims of incest or rape (Kline, 2001; Lombardo, 2011; Stern, 2015). During the first part of the twentieth century sterilization of women involved dangerous medical procedures, such as oophorectomies (the removal of ovaries), early trials in tubal ligation, and large doses of radiation (Goddard, 1911; Stern, 2015).

To establish the supposedly unbiased empirical merits for these practices, eugenicists produced a tremendous number of scholarly books, scientific journals, and research articles, directed toward both scientific and popular audiences (Brigham, 1923; Goddard, 1912; McDougall, 1914; Pearson, 1905; Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935; and *Eugenical News*, a monthly publication of the Eugenics Record Office, Cold Springs, NY, 1916–1922). Eugenicists' superior scholarly status has been repeatedly highlighted through their membership in professional organizations, through their collaborations with famous scholars worldwide, and through highlighting their posts at highly regarded educational institutions (Popenoe & Johnson, 1918/1935). Across the globe many scholarly eugenic organizations were formed and included leading scientists intent on applying Darwinist and Galtonian principles to supposedly better their societies. In the UK, the British Eugenic Society (later re-named the Galton Institute) boasted the membership of many distinguished academics and leading figures in politics and society (including Arthur Neville Chamberlain, Julian Huxley, Karl Pearson, and Havelock Ellis). In the US many other organizations focused on eugenics, including the American Eugenic Organization, the American Eugenic Research Association, the American Breeders Association, and the US Mental Hygiene societies, all of them offering platforms for eugenicists to educate the public about the dangers of racial deterioration and to encourage proper evolutionary behavior (see, for example, *The American Breeders Magazine: A Journal of Genetics and Eugenics*; *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment*, 1928; Watson & Lashley, 1920). Many Western laws and government policies were based on eugenic research, including those that supported involuntary sterilization, racial segregation in schools, expansion of the asylum system, closing

borders to the majority of non-Nordic immigrants, tracking women and racial minorities into particular occupations, establishment of colonial policies, and reduction in social services to people living in poverty (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Black, 2003; Lombardo, 2011; Stern, 2015).

3 | EUGENICS AND EARLY-TWENTIETH-CENTURY PSYCHOLOGY

Seeking to differentiate itself from other disciplines, especially psychoanalytic influences, Western psychology embraced primarily biological and animal-based explanations of human behavior based on Darwinist evolutionary theories (Hall, 1909; McDougall, 1914; Thorndike, 1909; Watson, 1919). Although moral religious traditions played a factor in shaping early psychology, these influences were always placed within a context of the primacy of experimental empirical research and its connection to universal, neutral, acontextual, and biological human functioning (Greenwood, 2015). Early-twentieth-century European psychology became significantly influenced by psychoanalysis, but the influence became limited after devastating wars, anti-Semitic violence, and other forms of political and cultural instability (Cordón, 2012; Frosh, 2004). Thus, it was American psychology, drawing on British evolutionary and eugenic developments, that became a key force in further expanding eugenic focus in both the discipline and society, including through specific emphasis on what constituted a “healthy” human being. A review of the official publications of American eugenic societies reveals that 31 presidents of the American Psychological Association between 1892 (Stanley G. Hall's presidency) and 1947 (Carl Rogers's presidency) were publicly listed as leaders of various eugenic organizations. Numerous other American psychology leaders, while not listed in these eugenic leadership rosters, nevertheless produced or openly supported eugenic works. For example, S. Franz (APA president in 1920) and J. Dashiell (APA president in 1938), while not listed as eugenic leaders, published numerous positive reviews of eugenic works with titles such as “The Field of Eugenic Reform”. M. Washburn, APA president in 1921, one of few female APA presidents, not only published positive reviews of eugenic books but also produced studies on supposed differences in national character showing the “striking national difference” apparently found between Jewish participants' lack of empathy in contrast to their non-Jewish counterparts (Washburn, 1923, p. 429).

Empirical research published in American journals of psychology often featured eugenics-based focus, interpretations, and book reviews. In the first issue of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, its editor Stanley G. Hall proclaimed that it was important for US psychology to “draw any lesson . . . from the present war, in which the great Nordic race which embraces the dominant elements of all the belligerent nations is committing suicide” (Hall, 1917, p. 9). Among these lessons were new opportunities for US psychology to take over the scientific lead from (Northern) Europeans while warning Americans against the “revisionary conceptions of Freud . . . that it is . . . normal for man at times to plunge back and down the evolutionary ladder” (p. 12). Hall, (1909, 1917), who was a leader of many eugenic organizations and the first president of the American Psychological Association, vehemently attacked “Freudian” forms of psychotherapy while promoting “moral” treatments that focused on self-control.

American psychology became established in the academy and society through large-scale military-funded projects such as the Army mental tests (Black, 2003; Guthrie, 2004; Tucker, 1996). These tests, developed, conducted, analyzed and published by preeminent US psychologists such as Yerkes (Harvard), Brigham (Princeton), Terman (Stanford), Thorndike (Columbia), John B. Watson (Johns Hopkins) and many others, openly proclaimed that they drew on eugenics and contributed to eugenic policies (Brigham, 1923; Yerkes, 1918). In testing nearly two million military personnel, via both written and non-written intelligence tests, these eugenic scholars asserted that they had empirically established inferior levels of intelligence among African Americans, recent non-Nordic immigrants, and Jews (Brigham, 1923). In another eugenic effort that had both national and international impact, psychologist Henry H. Goddard (1912) conducted a famed Kallikak study that traced the origins of an allegedly feeble-minded young woman, confined in his asylum, generations back to a union between an evolutionary fit man and an unfit woman. Goddard's, (1911, 1912, 1919) behavioral genetics work was widely distributed to the public. It was also used in legal cases supporting involuntary sterilization, employed as grounds for the deportation of non-Nordic immigrants at the

borders, utilized in the development of extensive asylum systems, referred to when advocating the removal of voting rights from all but the elites, and translated by Nazi scientists to serve as the foundation for their racial purity campaigns (Kuhl, 2002; Smith, 1985; Tucker, 1996; Weikart, 2004). Numerous other eugenics-based works were carried out by early American psychologists that focused on establishing the overall inferiority of racial minorities, emphasizing traditional gender roles for women, facilitating racial segregation in schools, and vilifying negative emotions and mental disorders (Brigham, 1923; Goddard, 1912; Hall, 1909; McDougall, 1914; Terman, 1916; Thorndike, 1909; Watson, 1914, 1919). Their empirical foci were on the development of intelligence and personality testing, measurements of “white blood” and other human group differences, large-scale data collections, experimentation on caged mutilated animals, and studies of orphaned children (Hall, 1909, 1917; Terman, 1916; Thorndike, 1909; Watson, 1919, 1928; Yerkes, 1918).

Another significant eugenic influence on the development of Western psychology can be found in the history of behaviorism, one of the most common forms of psychotherapy practiced globally. John B. Watson, (1914) emphasized that behaviorism, while drawing on Darwinism, germo-plasm theories of genetic inheritance, and other similar theories, was developed as a first true branch of supposedly purely American psychology. In his introductory book on the subject, containing what psychology textbooks refer to as the “Behaviorist Manifesto”, Watson (1914) stated that American psychology must become a “purely objective experimental branch of natural science”, holding firmly to “its goal of prediction and control of behavior” (p. 1). He (Watson, 1914, 1919, 1928) emphasized the same strategies, values, and terminology used in descriptions of positive eugenics, offering to socially engineer the evolutionary fit individuals to act in accord with eugenic values, and not only discussed the importance of Darwinian and hereditarian views while attacking Lamarkian evolutionary perspectives as lacking empirical evidence, but also was listed as a leader of eugenic organizations. Specifically, Watson, together with Robert Yerkes and Charles Davenport, two of the most noted American eugenicists, founded the Committee on the Hereditary Measurement of Mental Traits of the American Eugenics Research Association. His (1914) “Behaviorist Manifesto” closely mirrors values promoted by eugenicists, including the use of supposedly unbiased experimental research, denial of social context, proclamation of no difference between animals and humans, and reduction of human psychological factors to biology. Likewise, his (1914, 1919, 1928) behavioral manipulations specifically promoted ideal eugenic characteristics such as optimism, efficiency, and control over sexual impulses. Watson was also active in the eugenic Mental Hygiene movement: together with Lashley (APA president in 1929) he facilitated eugenic sexual education campaigns, studying the impact of films with titles such as *Fit to Win* (Watson & Lashley, 1920). Similarly, like Hall and other eugenic American psychologists, he frequently attacked Freud and psychoanalysis, using terms such as “voodooism” (Watson, 1924, p. 18) to describe it. After a scandal, which resulted in his removal from his academic position as well as all professional organizations and editorial posts (Buckley, 1989), Watson distanced himself from American psychology by open disagreements with its dominant values (such as moral psychology, hereditarian eugenics). Thus, in his revised textbook on behaviorism, Watson (1930) shifted his opinion to state that heredity of behavior was “the older idea, the idea which grew up” (p. 78), although he continued to deny the role of social context, using eugenics-based language and values in his writings, including offering to engineer people who were emotionally detached and sexually restrained (Watson, 1928, 1930).

In summary, eugenic ideologies about human differences as well as eugenic methodological and epistemological values were foundational in Western psychology, including in approaches that became central to practices of psychotherapy. Determinations of what constitutes mental health and human fitness, acceptance of normed assessment and testing practices, minimization of history, social context, or subjectivity, use of animal models of behavior, and focus on self-control and resilience may be among many eugenics-related values that remain dominant in Western psychotherapy practices (Cushman, 1996; Walsh et al., 2014). Moreover, psychotherapists, like the public they serve, may continue to be influenced by openly eugenic psychology works, which continue to be produced and published.

For example, the recipients of financing from the Pioneer Fund, a group denounced by the Southern Poverty Law Center, (2017) as “one of the most influential racist hate groups of the 20th century” (para. 5), have included primarily Western psychologists whose publications appear in leading scientific journals. According to the Pioneer Fund's

archived website, it claims to have “changed the face of the social and behavioural sciences by restoring the Darwinian-Galtonian perspective to the mainstream in traditional fields such as . . . psychology . . . as well as fostering the newer disciplines of behavioral genetics, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and sociobiology” (Pioneer Fund, 2013, paragraph 3). Its notable recipients have included many eminent Western psychologists (including Lynn, Rushton, Gottfredson, Bouchard, and Jensen), most of whom studied racial and gender heritability of intelligence and personality traits as well as openly supporting eugenics. Eugenic utopias, supposedly based on empirical studies, have continued to be pushed by prominent Western psychologists, such as Raymond Cattell's (1987) *Beyondism: Religion from Science*. Arthur R. Jensen (1998), a highly influential American psychologist, persisted in claiming psychology is a “natural science and [is] essentially a branch of biology” and “is Darwinian in that it views . . . behavior as products of the evolutionary process” (p. 203). Recently, Steven Pinker (2018), an evolutionary psychologist who frequently cites Pioneer-funded studies in his books, shamed the public for rejecting eugenics, which he claimed was part of an “anti-scientific propaganda” (p. 400). Moreover, eugenics-influenced psychology sciences are central to writings of contemporary racists, such as KKK leader David Duke's (1999) *My Awakening* or publications by white supremacist organizations such as the American Renaissance (see, for example, Lynn, 2007).

These contemporary eugenic and eugenics-influenced psychology contributions may have an influence not only on how psychotherapy is practiced but also on individuals who seek psychotherapy. Ideas that view human differences, such as mental health and personal characteristics, as biological, genetic, and inherited, like adherence to Western neoliberal social values of fitness, may cause human suffering (Cushman, 1996; Fanon, 1959/2008; Unger & Crawford, 1992).

4 | CRITICAL RESPONSES TO EUGENICS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

The blatantly racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, and xenophobic assumptions mentioned above, which are claimed to be based on scholarly findings, should be alarming. Nevertheless, it is difficult to locate archival evidence of open resistance to eugenics and eugenic values in published or unpublished writings of early-twentieth-century psychologists. Among the few scholars who rejected eugenics and contested eugenic discourse in psychology prior to World War II were John Dewey and Gordon Allport (Tucker, 1996). In the later part of the twentieth century scientists across many disciplines have thought to expose and discredit eugenics-influenced psychology contributions in movements such as social biology, behavioral genetics, and evolutionary psychology (Dusek, 1999; Fausto-Sterling, 2012; Gould, 1996; Grossi, Kelly, Nash, & Parameswaran, 2014; Lewontin, Rose, & Kamin, 1984). The eugenic origins of intelligence testing have also been examined (Gould, 1996; Helms, 2012; Kamin, 2012; Zenderland, 2001). In addition, race, gender, sexuality and other human differences as social rather than biological constructions have also been re-emphasized in psychology (Oikkonen, 2013; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Unger & Crawford, 1992). Psychoanalysis, especially in psychoanalytic critical theories, remained a significant counterpoint to eugenic values, especially to values that deny the role of history, social context, human subjectivity, or unconscious social construction of human values (Cushman, 1996; Fanon, 1959/2008; Ruti, 2015).

Another source of public critique of the eugenic psychology of the early twentieth century was to be found in individuals outside of psychology. US journalist Walter Lippman, who developed the term stereotype and frequently addressed social inequalities, was among the key opponents of eugenics during the 1920s and 1930s (Lombardo, 2011; Tucker, 1996). Lippman dedicated a number of extensive special issues to questioning supposedly empirically grounded and indisputable psychology findings, especially the highly publicized psychology research on intelligence testing: Lippman openly wondered why “the blame” for lower IQ scores in intelligence studies was not placed on the “abnormal environment” but on “the germplasm of the orphans” (1922, p. 330). Recent publications in the *Guardian* and *New York Times* have made efforts, similar to those made by Lippman, to expose psychologists who adhere to eugenic and social Darwinist values, including their popularity on the so-called Intellectual Dark Web (G. Evans, 2018; Saini, 2018; Weiss, 2018).

Throughout the history of Western psychology eugenics has remained a dominant ideological force. Without a doubt, the productions of science that support racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, classist or ableist assumptions have had a profound negative influence on individuals and societies, which are typically central to what brings individuals into psychotherapy (Cushman, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Ruti, 2015; Tucker, 1996). A social critic of eugenics, British popular writer G. K. Chesterton, (1922) produced a highly regarded book entitled *Eugenics and Other Evils*. Chesterton, in his signature sardonic style, highlighted the absurdities of the upper class, privileged “human stud-farms” (p. 14), where wealth, happiness, and well-being were carried on the backs of the poor and the marginalized. Chesterton claimed that, since the abatement of religiously based abuses of people who were deemed evil (such as the witch-hunts), the “thing that really is trying to tyrannise through government is Science . . . that creed . . . which began with Evolution and has ended in Eugenics” (pp. 77–78). In my view, eugenics and its rhetoric continue to tyrannize human beings, especially those who are marginalized in society. In this article I have also sought to highlight that this tyranny has been based on scientific productions by Western psychologists. When presented to individuals and society at large as empirically grounded truths, eugenic values may be difficult to reject.

Fanon, an African psychoanalyst and the founder of the anti-colonial movement, noted how the relentless scientific representations of Black people as unintelligent, violent, and impulsive, supposedly proven through testing and genetic studies, resulted not only in reinforcement of racist colonial beliefs and practices but also stripped people of their humanity. Fanon (1959/2008) documented such empirical genetic findings as Black people’s “chromosomes” supposedly having “genes representing cannibalism,” denouncing these as “a shameful science!” (p. 120). Fanon noted that the greatest form of violence toward minority groups may be in enforcing oppressive ideas as truths so that they become unconsciously internalized even by individuals targeted by this social violence, making them “haunted by a galaxy of erosive stereotypes” (p. 129).

Chesterton’s, (1922) words remain accurate, “there is one strong, startling, outstanding thing about Eugenics, and that is its meanness. Wealth, and the social science supported by wealth, had tried an inhuman experiment” (p. 147). It seems vital that contemporary Western psychology acknowledges the historical and present-day inhumane sciences of eugenics and makes a genuine commitment to social justice and to profound respect for human dignity. This recognition of the explicit and implicit presence of eugenic ideology in society and the discipline of psychology may have direct implications for the practice of psychotherapy.

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