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Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell. By Paul A. Lombardo. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. xiv + 365 p., ill., app., notes, index. ISBN 978-0-8018-9010-9 \$29.95)

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services” (p.104), noting among other things that this development significantly raised Canada’s exposure to American trade protectionism (p.105). His problem is that the rest of his elaborate analytical framework serves to obscure, rather than underscore, this fundamental driver of the policy shifts which his book is meant to explain.

Thus, the value of this book to its readers is likely to depend very largely on the use they intend to make of it. If a reader is looking for a succinct, generally clear and reliably accurate overview of Canada’s several attempts at an industrial strategy between the early ‘70s and the recent past, he or she is likely to be relatively satisfied. (Course instructors might adopt particular chapters as usefully brief additions to their reading lists on appropriate aspects of Canadian political economy.) If, however, scholars of Canadian political economy are looking for an original causal analysis of the sources of change in Canadian adjustment policies over the past several decades, they can afford to pass on this study.

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Medicine / Médecine

Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell. By Paul A. Lombardo. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. xiv + 365 p., ill., app., notes, index. ISBN 978-0-8018-9010-9 \$29.95).

An examination of the eugenics movement is an investigation into the convoluted manner in which science, technology, and medicine can be used to either express or suppress the human vagaries that make societies laboratories where those deemed ‘unfit’ are subjected to unequal treatment. Paul Lombardo uses the United States Supreme Court case *Buck v. Bell* to examine one such example. The historic case involving Carrie Buck who was sterilized following the Supreme Court’s validation of a Virginia law which mandated the sexual sterilization of people deemed “socially inadequate” was in Lombardo’s words “the legal high point” in the U.S. eugenics movement. As Lombardo illustrates, the 1927 case set a legal precedent the effects of which are still being felt. In examining the details of the *Buck* case and its journey to the Supreme Court, Lombardo methodically and systematically weaves together issues, trends, and events far beyond the minutiae of Buck’s life, but which significantly shaped the outcome of the legal case.

Dissecting the complicated manner in which medicine, science, and technology interact with politics, economics, racism, sexism, and the agendas of individuals is a significant undertaking. Paul Lombardo seeks to do precisely this when he notes in his introduction that “*Buck* is regularly mentioned in books on law, science, and medical history but has never been adequately explained in a well-documented book of its own. This book tells that story, a notorious—and still open—chapter of U.S. history” (p.xiii).

Three Generations is a work that began for Lombardo over twenty five years ago. Careful perusal of legal documents, newspaper reports, meeting minutes, personal diaries, letters and papers of the individuals involved, school report cards, photos, and interviews with Carrie Buck herself, to name a few sources of information, contributed to Lombardo’s piecing together of this account. After the initial standard foundational chapter that explains the science and social ideals underlying the eugenics movement, Lombardo provides an overview of U.S. state sterilization laws and highlights the roles of key players and research institutions.

Having set the context, Lombardo next scrutinizes the significance of the legal system to eugenicists. Describing in detail the precursor to the *Buck* case (*Mallory v. Priddy*), including the behind-the-scenes legal and political maneuvers which would eventually lead to the constitutional test of the model sterilization law in Virginia (the *Buck* case), Lombardo offers a comprehensive look at the deliberate construction of the *Buck* case (medically and politically) in a way that would ensure the sterilization law would withstand the Supreme Court test. Indirectly connected to *Buck* but certainly critical to the broader eugenics saga are the linkages between the U.S. and Germany at the time; Lombardo provides substantial evidence that makes clear the tight connections between eugenicists in both countries. Finally, the author reports on the eventual cessation of the Virginia sterilization program and others like it. His personal activism resulted in Virginia becoming the first state to officially apologize for surgically sterilizing citizens using laws validated by the *Buck* decision (p.262). However, the concluding chapters report that despite the apology, *Buck v. Bell* has not been overturned and continues to exert legal influence. Lombardo’s long list of chilling, recent examples of moves toward modern forms of eugenic policies and practices leaves one wondering if past mistakes are destined to be repeated.

Although a number of articles and books on the eugenics movement exist, Lombardo’s tops the list as a must-read for individuals interested in the topic. Particularly refreshing is his integration of the various data sources listed above along with the biographies and personal and professional agendas of key actors in the eugenics movement. While

critics might contend that Lombardo's own activism compromises his objectivity, an equally compelling argument can be made that his personal involvement complements his integrated "biographical" approach and provides insight into a 'side' of the story that has too long been unexposed.

The author's integrated approach is perhaps what is most appealing about Lombardo's work. Taking a case study—the case of Carrie Buck and the three generations of imbeciles of which she was apparently a part—Lombardo cleverly situates this micro level of analysis (a family whose destiny was forever changed) within the bigger picture. He adeptly moves from micro to macro, tying the details of the Buck case to broader trends and patterns, and vice versa. We see how the scientific ethos surrounding eugenics contributed to the use of medical treatments on (against?) one family, representative, doubtless, of thousands of others. We read about the professional and personal activities of doctors, surgeons, lawyers, judges, psychiatrists, and other helping professionals, how these individuals used particular scientific, medical, and legal discourses to implement a moral belief system. Lombardo educates us on not only the legalities of the Buck case and its legacy, but also provides us with a foundational understanding of the global, historical, political, economic, moral, and personal elements that characterized this period in history.

More emphasis perhaps on the role of women not only as "the sterilized," but as eugenicists and members of the helping and medical professions who actively sought to implement sterilization legislation would have added to the story. In the case of the Alberta sterilization program, for example, women played key roles throughout; the United Farm Women of Alberta actively pressed to have the province's sexual sterilization act passed and women played key roles as social workers and mental hospital workers, both of which played pivotal roles in determining who should be sterilized and why.

Despite this relatively minor point, in my estimation Paul Lombardo succeeds not only in providing a well-documented case study, but situates the Buck story within the context of the time. This is a brilliant piece, whose contribution is to reveal the injustice and abuse that can accrue when science, technology, medicine, and social power combine with hypocritical, sexist, racist, and classist personal and political agendas. The book is compelling; perhaps most significant are the cautions that 1) the repercussions of *Buck v. Bell* continue to have influence and 2) that eugenics is not dead. This work urges—nay, demands—that we question not only the manner in which such decisions are made but their legacy as well.

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