

“Tired and Hungry” in North Carolina: A Critical Approach to Contesting Eugenic Discourse

Elliot M. Hamer, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Margaret M. Quinlan, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Daniel A. Grano, *University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

Abstract

Historical interpretations of America’s eugenics programs show that no unified account exists and that a multiplicity of oftentimes competing ideological configurations contribute to the term *eugenics*. This essay focuses on recent controversies surrounding the decades-long eugenics programs in North Carolina and their illustration of the discursive and material implications of eugenic practices for marginalized populations. We examine the case of Elaine Riddick Jessie in order to critique the labeling (by state and medical institutions) of eugenics program subjects as deviant and disabled persons and to highlight the possibilities for creating alternative identities of gender, race, and disability. Our analysis of Jessie’s voice provides (1) a confrontation to scientifically derived meanings of disability imposed on her body, (2) a substitution of perceived cultural differences, and (3) evidence of these differences in embodied forms. The study concludes with a discussion highlighting the intersection of class, race, gender, and disability embedded in eugenic ideologies extending into the twenty-first century.

If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.

—Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*

Disenfranchised citizens in North Carolina were subjected to coerced sterilizations for over half a century through a state-run program. Although the program ended in 1978, the details of sterilization cases remained locked in the annals of North Carolina’s State Archives for decades. Virtually unacknowledged until 2002, it took the persistence of Johanna Schoen, a historian of women, medicine, and reproductive rights, to uncover

thousands of petitions that described the decision to sterilize “feble-minded” subjects (Schoen 2005).¹ Schoen’s unprecedented access to the archives led to her collaboration with two local journalists who brought news of North Carolina’s eugenics policies to the public’s attention. The *Winston-Salem Journal* documented the inner workings of the program in the 1950s and 1960s, when the state performed an overwhelming majority of sterilizations on women in its poorest black communities (Railey and Begos 2002).

Elaine Riddick Jessie was one of the most prominent voices featured in the *Winston-Salem Journal*’s special series “Against Their Will.” Writers John Railey and Kevin Begos led the series with Jessie’s story, supported by a combination of recently uncovered sterilization case files, interviews, and commentary. Her story began in 1968, when a surgeon preformed Jessie’s tubal ligation immediately after she delivered her first and only child. Jessie, a fourteen-year old African American from a poor rural family, was sterilized after it was determined she was mentally “unfit” to reproduce (Railey and Begos 2002).

The North Carolina Eugenics Board, consisting of five strangers Jessie had never seen or heard of before, recommended she receive an irreversible procedure (Begos and Railey 2002). Their recommendation was composed in a sterilization petition, which summarized Jessie’s life story in a few terse and condemning sentences. She was labeled as feble-minded and promiscuous, a person lacking moral character as evidenced by her “running around . . . out late at night” (ibid., 4). This was presumed to be sufficient proof of an innate disability that threatened to denigrate the purity of the white race (Stubblefield 2007). Her case was reviewed in mere minutes before her sterilization was approved. She was labeled promiscuous because she had been raped; she was labeled feble-minded because of one Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test.

This study is devoted to an exploration of rhetoric used to uphold and contest eugenics as an ideology of racial betterment. We examine recovered sterilization petitions (Railey and Begos 2002) and proeugenic publications contemporaneous with Jessie’s sterilization (Human Betterment League 1946, 1950) that reflect the systemic biases used to maintain eugenic ideology. To convey the constitutive power of eugenic discourse, we offer an interpretation of how medically derived subjectivities of disability, such as “feble-mindedness,” were created through an appropriation of scientific rationality. By means of eugenic rhetoric, “the concept of feble-mindedness came to operate as an umbrella concept that linked off-white ethnicity, poverty, and gendered conceptions of lack of moral character together” (Stubblefield 2007, 162). The “feble-minded,” subjects defined by their deviance, could be found wherever

the North Carolina Eugenics Board exacted empiricism because eugenic notions of disability were reified through scientific rationalization.

The examination of language is paramount in this context as discourse can be a way to maintain dominant modes of thought as well as contest and create new possibilities (Foucault 1979). We suggest that Jessie's account provides the public with a text that testifies against the elitist eugenic labels of disability used socially to construct a gendered and racially inferior underclass. The rhetoric of proeugenics texts exists in tension with Jessie's own language, which cites her environment as the source of her perceived disability. The *Winston-Salem Journal's* series "Against Their Will" and other texts that feature Jessie's story, question dominant scientific discourses purporting the biological link between physical and mental deviance used in North Carolina. These survivor's narratives form a discourse that can be seized by victims of sterilization to contest the eugenic labels given to them and promote a redescription of the self in more socially equitable terms. Jessie's views on her sterilization also call to mind remaining traces of the "logic" of eugenics, especially idealizations of unending progress in scientific understanding.

Jessie was sterilized without her consent and only learned of her sterilization while trying to conceive years later. She was determined to be mentally and physically disabled by a government that had argued her condition was the result of inherent genetic flaws: a decision that precluded any attention to the systemic failures of our social institutions. Her story, and its recounting of perverse cruelties, provokes the lingering question we allude to with our opening quotation: How was this allowed to happen to *her*?

In the following sections, we examine the use of eugenic rhetoric and develop the interconnectedness of class, race, and sex in the discursive creation of a sterilization candidate. We then share our analysis, in which proeugenics discourses are juxtaposed with Jessie's account of her own sterilization. The major themes are Jessie's inscription and rejection of promiscuity and feeble-mindedness, her substitution of cultural (rather than natural) differences as the cause of her sterilization, and her son's embodied defiance of eugenic logic. Finally, in our conclusion, we offer theoretical and practical implications that can be gleaned from this work for the ongoing contestation of proeugenic ideologies.

Eugenic Rhetoric and the Feeble-minded Subject

Eugenic ideals of racial betterment have been legislated through government-sanctioned sterilization policies upheld in the U.S. Supreme Court, funded by

iconic American aristocrats, and even taught in college courses (Black 2003; Kevles 1985). Although the methods used to contain the spread of hereditary “flaws” have varied throughout history (Kluchin 2009), more than thirty states drafted eugenic laws permitting the sterilization of mentally “defective” individuals (Larson 1995; Lombardo 2011). Across the nation, law-abiding doctors performed vasectomies and castrated men, and a disproportionate number of women received tubal ligations (Kaelber 2012). In North Carolina, an estimated 7,600 sterilizations were performed in a legally upheld eugenics program that stretched from 1929 to 1975 (Begos 2002).

Recent media coverage of North Carolina’s eugenic policies provides scholars with emergent sterilization narratives that can expand the “official” history of eugenics. Notably, these narratives provide insight into how sterilization victims perceive the eugenic labels that were used to validate their sentencing. Subjects of the program have always been in a unique position to provide details about their own sterilizations, but the eugenics programs’ lack of transparency has resulted in decades of silence. It was common for many to go for years without any knowledge of their procedure because they were either young enough that no consultation was legally necessary (Railey and Begos 2002) or told they would be receiving a more innocuous procedure (Washington 2006). In addition, families had no idea that so many others were deceived or coerced into a similar procedure, leaving them stigmatized, ashamed, and alone with their questions (Schoen 2005). Fortunately, through the collective efforts of scholars, journalists, and subjects of the program, the “Against Their Will” series sparked a frenzy of publicity on the topic of eugenic sterilizations across the nation (Gardner 2003; Hutchison 2011). More importantly, revisiting North Carolina’s eugenic past has culminated in the emergence of missing voices from marginalized and cocultural groups, which has uncovered a unique perspective on our nation’s historical embrace of eugenics.

Previous scholarship provides only slight attention to the active roles that sterilized women had in making sense of the eugenics movement. Treatments of eugenics that feature women’s perspectives have drawn attention to their varied stances and choices (Kluchin 2009; Krome-Lukens 2009; Schoen 2005), elucidating the role of women as *both* victims *and* proponents of eugenic ideology. Similarly, Hasian (1996) examined eugenics as a term seized by both dominant and marginalized constituencies with an array of political interests, thereby imbuing the term *eugenics* with competing ideological configurations. Indeed, there is no unified history of this controversial

phenomenon, and eugenics is fertile ground for an examination of power as it is established, maintained, and potentially contested through rhetoric.

Jessie's narrative, as detailed in the "Against Their Will" series, joins an existing body of literature that condemns our nation's eugenic legacy. Scholars have treated eugenics as an ideology with numerous historical permutations (Black 2003; Kevles 1985; Lombardo 2011) and detailed it as a race-science used to mask institutionalized biases against women and people of color (Gould 1996; Kluchin 2009). Kline (2001) notes that compulsory sterilization programs reified societal stereotypes of deviance, but these biases were masked by the authority of scientific inquiry (Rembis 2011; Rosenberg 1997). State and local governments, and the medical communities at their disposal, were permitted to classify and police poor, African American, and female bodies through scientific inquiry (Terry and Urla 1995), where sterilization subjects were primarily identified through their economic, racial, and sexual deviance (Kaelber 2012; Railey 2002; Schoen 2005) and then attributed genetic "flaws" retroactively.

Black (2003) and Kevles (1985) have characterized eugenics as a bastardization of the elegant Mendelian theory of heredity, reshaped and applied it to the human body by creating fallacious causal links between observable social characteristics and genetic traits. Snyder and Mitchell (2006) have pointed to the role of scientific measurement in validating eugenic sterilizations through the creation of an erroneous, yet necessary, correlation between *physical* and *mental* deviance. Eugenicists' observed physically deviant behaviors (for example, sexual deviance), and these behaviors were causally linked with low mental capabilities. This allowed eugenicists empirically to translate chosen forms of deviance through the presumably objective results of IQ tests (Gould 1996; Rembis 2011; Rosenberg 1997). The culture's dominant aesthetic (the gendered and racialized preferences of those in power) was converted to a measurable scientific standard through a self-fulfilling search for subnormal intelligence (Rembis 2011; Snyder and Mitchell 2006; Stubblefield 2007). IQ tests were not merely tools to measure intelligence but were also used as "proof" for the biologically determined genesis of African American women's physically deviant behaviors.

The link between physical and mental deviance further explains the high percentage of African American mothers referred to and sterilized by the Eugenics Board of North Carolina. The frequency of sterilizations performed on African American women in North Carolina rose exponentially during the 1950s (Kaelber 2012; Railey 2002), an issue that was exacerbated by the

Welfare Department's role in reducing aid for families in need. Social workers actively lobbied for the sterilization of mothers on government assistance (Kluchin 2009; Krome-Lukens 2009) in an effort to "save thousands of dollars, needless human tragedy, and wasted lives" (Human Betterment League 1950, 9). To this end, public servants used coercive techniques on many women, often pitting a pregnant youth's fertility against her family's access to state benefits (Schoen 2003).

Importantly, North Carolina's social workers helped create a system of sterilization that conflated feeble-mindedness with welfare dependency (Schoen 2005). Women and girls of color, some as young as twelve years old, were referred to the Eugenics Board and received tubal ligations when the state, county welfare directors, and social workers used culturally relative notions of physical deviance (for example, a pregnancy) to signify mental traits (for example, feeble-mindedness). This reminds us how deviance is a discursive indexing *always already* embodied within subjects (Terry and Urla 1995). Eugenecists' fascinations with deviant bodies were a culmination of a Eurocentric narrative of black female bodies as the preeminent icon of deviant sexuality, a cultural production that was sustained by grounding deviance in its natural, physical embodiment (hooks 1997). These specific characterizations of womanhood and blackness were used by the Eugenics Board to enact policies that overwhelmingly constituted North Carolina's poorest African American women as feeble-minded and in need of sterilization.

Proeugenic rhetoric appropriated classist, racist, and gendered stereotypes to create notions of disability (Snyder and Mitchell 2006). It is critical, then, to study eugenics not only as a flawed application of scientific principles but also as a discursive construct that naturalized state power through scientific rationality. In essence, eugenic rhetoric constituted poor women of color *as* disabled subjects in need of institutional intervention. In North Carolina, the state justified sterilizations by labeling gendered and racialized persons as members of an underclass innately prone to "feeble-mindedness" and "sexually uncontrollable" urges. In light of this constitutive act, sterilization survivors found it important to refute biologically deterministic labels imposed on their bodies. As we detail in the following analysis, Jessie's narrative contradicts official accounts of the physical and mental defects used to justify her sterilization and works to redescribe her value and sense of self. Moreover, Jessie's narrative can be critically examined as a unique dilemma and generalizable to individuals who question the pseudoscientific rationalizations behind their own sterilization.

In the following analysis, we offer four major themes that frame Jessie's redescription as well as the antecedent labels used to justify her sterilization. This study examines proeugenic archival data (authored by both public and private organizations) written in the 1950s and 1960s to contextualize how eugenic ideals and pursuits were described around the time that Jessie was sterilized. In light of these accounts, we also chose to analyze works located in recent mediated discourse, containing a redescription of Jessie, often in her own words. The result is a unique textual dialogue, where works confirming and disconfirming eugenics are juxtaposed. The first and second themes center on Jessie's rejection of the scientifically derived labels of "feeble-mindedness" and "promiscuity", two significant terms that, as in the example of Jessie's case, were common reasons for sterilization. After detailing the rejection of these labels, we turn to Jessie's own culturally grounded account for her sterilization. The final theme we develop is a justification of Jessie's claims against the logic of eugenics, embodied in the accomplishments of her only child.

Jessie's Inscription and Rejection of the Promiscuous Label

Proponents of eugenics articulated their gendered biases in a pamphlet mailed to homes in Winston-Salem, North Carolina: "girls are particularly in need of the protection of sterilization since they cannot be expected to assume adequate moral or social responsibility for their actions" (Human Betterment League 1946, 2). "Feeble-minded" girls were considered exceptionally dangerous to evolutionary purity because they were nearly indistinguishable from the general population. According to an article published in North Carolina in 1958, feeble-minded women that tested low in intelligence, but exhibited no apparent signs of disability, belonged to the "moron group," which included "a host of physically attractive individuals whose IQs are lower than a January thermometer reading. . . . Among other things, they breed like mink" (Cahn 2007, 128). The term "moron" was imbued with sexual stereotypes and then codified through presumably "scientific" methods of discovery and verification. Eugenicists deemed women to be an extraordinary hereditary risk to the general population (Kluchin 2009) and young women of the "moron group" were considered moral "imbeciles" who could not be relied on to control their innate sexual deviance.

A fear of genetic contamination contributed to the unsubstantiated claims appearing in Jessie's case report. Jessie was described in terms the Eugenics

Board predominantly reserved for women of color, such as reference to “community reports of her ‘running around’ and out late at night unchaperoned” (Railey and Begos 2002, 4). Her casework cites vague rumors insinuating unbridled sexual desires being explored under cover of darkness and unfounded, paternalistic assertions about her sexual promiscuity. The black female body has historically been framed as naturally embodying sexual deviance (hooks 1997), and Jessie appeared to be the perfect candidate for eugenic control in North Carolina: a young, African American girl on government assistance. The system that surrounded Jessie was sexually and racially biased and potentially targeted all women that *always already* strayed from a gendered aesthetic of white womanhood. Jessie’s variance from this aesthetic allowed the Eugenics Board to label her as promiscuous and sterilize her body.

In contrast to official eugenics program discourses, Jessie is described through a set of alternative terms in recent coverage of the state program. These texts work to reject her labeling through a description of her body’s physical trauma resulting from the rape, pregnancy, and sterilization, and ultimately form a claim of her moral innocence. In the article “Still Hiding” by Railey and Begos (2002), Jessie cites her rape as the result of a sexually coerced encounter with a neighbor in his twenties when she was thirteen years old. This paints a different picture than does her sterilization petition, which contains no mention of her rape. The omission of Jessie’s rape in her sterilization petition recalls an erasure of sexual terrorism during that era (Cuklanz 2006). The Eugenics Board contributed to an institutional denial of rape, a patriarchal tendency that has perpetuated the belief that rape counts only as an act of violence, not sexuality (MacKinnon 1997). In her own words, Jessie stated that she felt raped twice (Hutchison 2011), a statement that references her rape by an adult neighbor and connotes her sterilization by the state as a second rape.

Jessie described her body’s physical trauma resulting from the rape, pregnancy, and subsequent tubal ligation in her testimony to the Governor’s Task Force (2011): “I kept getting sick, kept falling out, kept hemorrhaging, bleeding, almost died ‘cause my body was too young for what they did to me” (D-7). She went on to say, “my body was too young for being raped. I wasn’t ready” (D-7). The eugenic labels of promiscuity and innate hypersexuality that were placed on her are challenged by the scale of her body’s physical trauma. Jessie goes on to recount her shock of learning she was sterilized: “Out of all the people in the world, I was, I am, a good girl, you know?” (Railey and Begos 2002, 5). She claimed, “[I] was just a baby . . . just a child” (ibid., 1). Her statements, and the very need to utter them, remind us of racial stereotypes that have long been used to deny the innocence of women and,

in particular, frame black rape victims' lack of innocence (Cuklanz 2006). Jessie attempts to make sense of the blame affixed to her in bodily terms by calling herself a child: too young and innocent to be deemed promiscuous, judged for her pregnancy, or fit to be sterilized.

This recent eugenic discourse contests the Eugenics Board's assertions of her promiscuity and obviates any possible categorization of a thirteen-year-old as an uncontrollable hereditary threat. Jessie read her trauma as her body's attempt to reject her pregnancy and her sterilization procedure, a rhetorical move that helps symbolize her innocence and root her in a child-like status unfit for eugenic claims of promiscuity or hypersexuality. Jessie's need to reject the eugenic premise of innate sexual deviance exemplifies the signifying power that scientific language had in creating her as a subject suitable for sterilization. Evident in the works we have analyzed thus far, eugenicists viewed Jessie's body, and bodies like hers, as the preeminent threat to racial betterment. Yet the inscription of her body with gendered stereotypes was rejected and exists as part of an ongoing eugenic dialogue.

Jessie's Inscription and Rejection of the Feeble-minded Label

According to a justification of the state eugenics program published in 1950 by the Human Betterment League, an organization heavily funded by an heir to North Carolina's textiles fortunes, "[the law] protects its mentally handicapped men and women, the children of future generations, and the community at large" (Human Betterment League 1950, 9). Eugenicists construed therapeutic care and protection as a necessary control for hereditary defects passed directly from "feeble-minded" parents to their "feeble-minded" children (Human Betterment League 1946). They prophesied that the characteristics that damned the feeble-minded "could not be changed any more than the color of their eyes can be altered" (*ibid.*, 1). Sterilization supporters firmly grounded their paternalistic care for the feeble-minded in the existence of innate mental "deficiencies" belonging to a gendered and racialized underclass.

Jessie's case files contain similar descriptions used to signify her as having an inherent mental disability and, therefore, being a permanent social risk. Her sterilization petition read:

IQ: 75 . . . Because of Elaine's inability to control herself, and her promiscuity—there are community reports of her "running around" and out late at night unchaperoned, the physician has advised sterilization . . . Diagnosis: Feeble-minded. (Railey and Begos 2002, 4, emphasis added)

Jessie's recorded IQ score of 75 was above North Carolina's instituted cut-off of 70 for "feble-mindedness," yet this test did not save her from being sterilized. Like so many others, Jessie's judge and jury interpreted her risk to society using low IQ scores as a baseline. Their own assumptions were retroactively verified through IQ scores, making institutionalized biases against people of color and women invisible.

Jessie's case file conflated the seemingly objective results of her IQ test with the stigmatizations of a black woman possessing questionable morality. Her file served as an account of both her intelligence and hypersexuality, thus constituting a "scientifically" contrived relationship between her mental, moral, and physical (that is, behavioral) deviance. The case file quotation in the preceding paragraph juxtaposes Jessie's IQ test results (evidence of her innate "feble-mindedness") with generalized accusations of uncontrollable promiscuity, essentially connecting the dots of eugenic logic that led to her sentencing. This logic holds as long as her uncontrollable sexuality could be used as the link connecting her mental deviance to perceived societal risks. Jessie's mind was a danger only if her body remained unchecked. More importantly, she was considered a threat, according to eugenic doctrine, if the innate mental "defects" contained in her body were allowed to leak out to the larger population through unregulated sexual activities. This crucial link put an emphasis on Jessie's mental ability existing as a danger to the greater population. Even though Jessie's case file was filled with vague descriptions of deviant behaviors and she did not qualify as "feble-minded" according to IQ standards, she was inscribed with a mental disability. Her sentence was a permanent sterilization, a supposedly therapeutic form of care that would quell the threat of mental "defects" from infiltrating the general population.

Five years after her sterilization, Jessie's documented resistance to the feble-minded label began. Shortly after learning about her procedure, she became part of a failed class-action lawsuit filed in 1973 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Her attorneys argued that the Eugenics Board ruled unreasonably in her sterilization case because they never spoke with her or received her permission for the procedure. Jessie would then voice her objections to a wider public audience in 2002. The opening sentences of the *Winston Salem Journal* article "'Still Hiding': Woman Sterilized at 14 Carries a Load of Shame" again question the validity of her sterilization:

Elaine Riddick Jessie can't forgive the state of North Carolina for what it did to her in an Edenton hospital in 1968. She tenses as she talks about being sterilized soon after delivering her first and only child when she was 14. "I was just a baby," said Jessie, 48. "I (was) just a child. They did not, could not

have gotten my permission because I wasn't old enough." (Railey and Begos 2002, 1)

In this interview Jessie publically stated that her sterilization was performed against her will. Even though she was left without an opportunity to resist her sterilization before her tubal ligation, Jessie has since contested eugenics in the communicative forms available to her. Jessie's narrative promotes discourse that features the voice of a sterilization survivor. Contradictory to proeugenic discourse condemning the "feeble-minded," her voice is one of thousands in North Carolina, mired in pain and resistant to the use of eugenic labels. Jessie's interviews and testimony make her an important spokesperson for recalling the eugenics program's evils and offer a compelling personal example of survivors' renewed voices.

Jessie continued to speak out against her feeble-minded label in 2001 during testimony for the Governor's Task Force to determine the method of compensation for victims of North Carolina's Eugenics Board (2011): "[I] never got out of the eighth grade . . . never went into high school but yet and still I'm labeled feeble-minded" (D-8). Standing in front of a government-convened panel once again, there to decide a part of her future, she adamantly confronted the label: "I am not feeble-minded. I've never been feeble-minded" (D-7). In this extremely public space, broadcast on national television, she confronted the faceless Eugenics Board that influenced the lives of those labeled with disabilities and left with mutilated bodies. Jessie stood in front of the microphone and testified against her labeling, a performative act that registered as an important milestone in legitimizing the voices of the sterilized and dispersing compensation for living victims of North Carolina's eugenics program.

The Eugenics Board's power to sterilize Jessie was rooted in scientific rationality and wielded through the creation of labels that were unquestioned because of a supposed natural grounding. This theme provides rhetorical and performative evidence that positions Jessie as resistant to eugenic markings of innate "feeble-mindedness" inscribed on her body in her youth. After carrying these labels throughout her life, she has contested labels of mental deviance in recent discourse. She has rejected the eugenic label of feeble-mindedness by taking legal action against the state, stating she was not informed of her operation and also by openly testifying at the Governor's Task Force meeting. Beyond a psychological redefinition of who Jessie is, her actions have culminated to create discursive space for the voice of the sterilized and resulted in material compensation. In the next section, we detail how this discursive space opened through Jessie's rejection of eugenic labeling is characterized by more socially equitable rhetoric.

“Tired and Hungry”: Naming Environmental Factors

Jessie’s rejection of biologically determined labels, as detailed in the previous sections of our analysis, is textually supported in disclosures about her upbringing. In line with contemporary scientists’ rejection of eugenics (Gould 1996), recent eugenic discourse has pointed to the environmental issues that surrounded Jessie in her youth. Divergent from proeugenic claims, Jessie’s story proposes another impetus for her sterilization. Jessie has specifically named poverty and poor hygiene as the true sources of her perceived deviance, a substitution of terms that suggests structural causes at the heart of social and economic ills.

The psychologist who evaluated Jessie noted that her home life was of great concern, and he presented an alternative to sterilization. McAndrew wrote in his recommendations: “[Jessie’s] chief problem is her poor home. . . . We expect this girl to perform more adequately in an improved environment, but it may be desirable to think about vocational training in her future” (Railey and Begos 2002, 3). This alternative course of action, a substitute to sterilization, would have removed Jessie from her problematic home conditions and provided her with education. McAndrew’s recommendation reminds us of the monetary cost of cleansing the human race, which would have been better served in the education of rural minority populations. If calls for vocational training and environmental adjustments were followed, rather than the systematic mandate for sterilizing children, a generation of children might have closed eugenicist’s measured gap in intelligence.

Far removed from the pseudoscientific claims of eugenicists, Jessie reasons that she was deemed “feeble-minded” because she was environmentally deprived. She was neglected by a family in shambles, and her surroundings were the cause of her perceived deviance (Railey and Begos 2002). In an interview with *Charlotte Talks* host Julie Rose (2011), Jessie painted a narrative of her impoverished surroundings and the conditions of a home where she was constantly hungry and bothered by her family’s lack of care for her. Her IQ test results are attributed to poor conditions in a tear-filled testimony:

First I want you to know about my problem, my problem was environmental. . . . I was hungry, I was cold, I was dirty, I was unkempt. I was having problems with my environment. (Governor’s Task Force 2011, D-6)

Like any child who repeatedly skipped consecutive meals throughout the day, she had problems focusing at school because she was without any sustenance or proper nutrition (Governor’s Task Force 2011). Jessie maintained that her

environment was the only thing to blame for her perceived level of intellect, an argument that extends her rejection of innate mental deficiency to point to the structural problem of child hunger in the education system. Instead of turning an eye to bodies hosting genetic “flaws,” this viewpoint reflects our systemic failure to serve marginalized citizens adequately.

Jessie is not the only one to argue that environmental aspects contributed to the lower IQ scores of North Carolina’s poor African American community. According to Kaelber (2012), throughout slavery, whites prodded the reproduction of black bodies for purposes of labor, but, with the mechanization of the workplace in the 1950s, much of the same aristocracy adamantly rejected support for African American families. The ideological machinery that stimulated reproduction for the creation of excess labor in the South reversed its stance and now pointed a scathing criticism on government-dependent children (Kluchin 2009; Railey 2002). In an article that cites North Carolina as a unique testing ground for eugenic sterilizations, Schoen (2003) calls attention to the strong link between the economic conditions of families receiving government assistance and the high number of sterilizations in rural North Carolina; he later added that North Carolina’s eugenics program unquestionably targeted poor, young women because they possessed the highest potential to be a burden to the state’s coffers (Schoen 2005). By ignoring the pervasive structural issues that faced the state’s poorest population, public servants continually and aggressively acted on eugenic ideologies rife with social stereotypes to suppress the rising public cost of dependent children.

A financial burden was lifted from the state at Jessie’s expense. She was blamed for having a mental defect and being a perceived sexual risk because of an impoverished lifestyle that was equally out of her control. She was tired and hungry, not, as the Eugenics Board casework implied, promiscuous or a “moron.” Jessie’s arguments, which explain the environmental contributions to her sterilization, are similar to those made by scholars in that they break with eugenic ideations of social and economic ills taking root in biologically deterministic categorizations. Recent eugenic discourse serves as a powerful tool to reform the image of forced sterilization victims, grounding their perceived deviance in socially constructed structural issues, rather than unchangeable hereditary “defects.”

My Tony: Arguments Embodied in Offspring

Another reoccurring theme in recent eugenic discourse centers on Jessie’s motherhood and her son, Tony Riddick. Riddick is an important figure in Jessie’s narrative because he represents physical proof of Jessie’s relabeling

and redescription outside eugenic terms, thus extending Jessie's attribution of environmental factors. In this section, we first explain proeugenic claims of "feeble-minded" parenting and then provide a counterargument to these claims through Tony Riddick's embodiment of "desirable" human traits.

Proponents of eugenics not only claimed that feeble-mindedness was spread from mother to child but that the mentally "deficient" were incapable of being parents. A Human Betterment League (1950) pamphlet offered the dangers of "moron" parents through haunting syllogistic prose:

You wouldn't expect a moron to run a train or a feeble-minded woman to teach school. . . . Yet each day the feeble-minded and the mentally defective are entrusted with the most important job of all. . . . The job of PARENTHOOD! . . . the creation of new life and the responsibility of rearing. Like running a train, teaching school, or handling money, the job of *parenthood* is too much to expect of feeble-minded men and women. (2–6, original emphasis)

The Human Betterment League mailed over 575,000 pamphlets to North Carolina residences in a paternalistic campaign touting the practice of "safe" and "legal" sterilizations for feeble-minded individuals unable to provide adequate care for their own children. This eugenic concept was mirrored in Jessie's case file, which stated that her sterilization "will at least prevent additional children from being born to this child who cannot care for herself, and can never function in any way as a parent" (Railey and Begos 2002, 4). Proeugenic publications and government policies proliferated the idea that the "feeble-minded" and their children were predestined to a life of failure.

Instead of detailing Jessie's failings as a parent, recent eugenic discourse reported her frustrating inability to conceive a second child between her procedure and its revelation in 1973: "Elaine [Jessie] dreamed of motherhood. She and her husband tried to conceive for months without luck, so they consulted a doctor. The diagnosis was shocking: she had been sterilized four years earlier without her knowledge" (Sinderbrand 2005, 33). Jessie was unknowingly robbed of the ability to have more children. She married without knowing of her inability to conceive again, and afterward Jessie's relationship with her husband deteriorated under unattainable expectations to mother offspring. Jessie's struggles emanate from the institution of motherhood being conflated with her ability to bear children (Dubriwny 2013). As these intertwined cultural expectations weighed on her, she could not be the "woman" expected of her only because her ability to have children was taken away by the state.

Jessie's trials with motherhood and identity complicated after learning about her sterilization:

I hide. I hid. I think I'm sort of still hiding, but there's nothing I can do. It made me dislike myself. And I don't ever think I can like myself. It is the most degrading thing, the most humiliating thing a person can do to a person is to take away a God-given right. (Railey and Begos 2002, 1)

Beyond the humiliating feelings of not fulfilling her or her partner's desire for progeny, Jessie has suffered from a prolonged depression. These emotions centered on feeling like "nothing" (Sinderbrand 2005, 33) because of an absence of sexual identity. Jessie even openly questioned her own sexuality in an interview: "Why didn't they just sew me up, just sew me up, period? I felt like I didn't have a sex . . . because if I was a woman I could have children" (Railey and Begos 2002, 1). Jessie judged herself against cultural expectations that narrowly configure women as healthy "in a context in which traditional expectations regarding femininity, womanhood, and motherhood influence expectations about health" (Dubriwny 2013, 28). Without a self-definition grounded in her biological sex and ability to reproduce Jessie was unable to fulfill these expectations, leaving her extremely frustrated and suffering from bouts of depression.

Alternatively, some news coverage on Jessie portrayed positive emotions when mentioning her relationship with her son. In an interview with Railey and Begos (2002), Jessie spoke about how Tony took her on cruises and beach weekends and how she was "spoiled to a point" (*ibid.*, 5). She mentioned how she appreciates spending time with her son, as he tries "to make up for things that happened to me" (*ibid.*). Riddick's awareness of his role as her only possible child provides him with the unique ability to "make up" for the past by establishing a strong child-parent bond. Through media coverage, Jessie has articulated positive self-descriptions, which emphasize the importance of Tony to her own identity. Far from the livelihood prognosticated in proeugenic discourse, Jessie and Riddick are portrayed as a family making up for the past through their relationship.

Jessie's success as a parent is framed through Riddick's mediated depiction. Riddick is featured in a video standing alongside his mother during their testimony to the 2011 Governor's Task Force. Positioned supportively at her side, he appears on camera defending her both through vocal and nonverbal communication. Riddick stands almost a foot taller than Jessie, with a moderate but muscular build, in a starched shirt and dark suit coat. One of his hands covers her smaller hand, and his other is draped around her shoulders to comfort her while she speaks to the audience. He even spoke out late in the proceedings against the actions of the Eugenics Board, and in defense of his mother:

You knew the reasons were wrong but you found ways to justify your wrong. Not just your wrong, your wickedness, cowardliness. You found ways to justify it. You said that they would produce a generation of people of children that would be feeble-minded, inept, unable to care for themselves. This is nonsense the justification behind it. (D-9)

Riddick acts and speaks in this footage like a very supportive and caring son. In this instance, he provided both performative and rhetorical evidence toward his prosocial role as a child raised in a “proper” manner, which illustrates the reality of Jessie’s strength as a parent. He is portrayed in terms that fall outside a wealth of eugenic prognostications about children of “feeble-minded” parents.

Building on Riddick’s portrayal outside eugenic terms, an “Against Their Will” article detailed his achievements in higher education: “Riddick, who still lives in Winfall [North Carolina], earned an associate’s degree in the applied science of electronics from DeVry Institute in Atlanta” (Railey and Begos 2002, 7). The article goes on to mention his professional success, as he is the president of his own computer-electronics company. These accomplishments, in addition to his performative role as a caring son, construct Riddick through the imagery of a thoughtful, successful, intelligent person—a description that clearly does not fit the rhetoric of “feeble-minded” offspring propagated in proeugenics discourse.

Recent discourse portrays Riddick as defying eugenic logics and unqualified predictions that the children of “feeble-minded” individuals would be doomed to failure. Rather than mirroring the prophetic details of a child without adequate care, Riddick’s story more closely matches the preferred cultural aesthetic laid out in proeugenics ideology. He represents the characteristics of an able-bodied, intellectually competent individual, characteristics that eugenic doctrines reject as inheritable from a “feeble-minded” mother.

Riddick’s physical and mental stature not only serves to signify his own ability but also work to develop his co-constructed identity with his mother. Riddick’s description as an able-bodied person builds a co-constructed identity contradictory to the labels of innate disability that were attached to Jessie through her sterilization. Most importantly, Riddick embodies physical proof that disconfirms eugenic claims and, by extension, confirms Jessie’s mislabeling. Along these lines of eugenic logic, Jessie is not, and never was, “feeble-minded”; consequentially, her sterilization was a wrongdoing. Jessie’s relabeling and redescription as able-bodied provides an embodied reminder that the state’s labels did not bear out and could not define her or her son. Collectively, Jessie’s survivor narrative confronts the biopolitical exercises

of power made through presumably objective and scientific interventions and run counter to the remaining traces of eugenic ideology woven into our cultural consciousness.

Discussion

Eugenics popularized a form of nontherapeutic medical care packaged as a cure for the bodies it was thrust on (Washington 2006). This unattainable panacea for racial betterment was directed onto marginalized bodies in the cruelest possible way. Rather than testing for disability to determine a course of therapeutic care, North Carolina's administration of IQ tests employed a longstanding eugenicist tactic of using scientific measurement "to identify the feeble-minded they targeted" for permanent sterilization (Black 2003, 78). The proeugenic discourse in Jessie's sterilization petition created an image of her through a tinted lens of cultural stereotypes about the black female body. Jessie's body was located as a site in need of technological control, and the Eugenic Board's classist, racialized, and gendered presumptions about sexuality and feeble-mindedness were made invisible through the subtle forces of paternalistic care and scientific rationality.

Placing racialized and gendered stereotypes of sexual deviance into pre-determined biological traits constructed Jessie as a threat, risking the contamination of not only the surrounding community but the entire human race. In this instance, Jessie's supposed inability to control her own body was placed over all other factors that led to her rape and pregnancy. Her lack of bodily control was definitively cited in her candidacy for sterilization, while details concerning her impregnation were omitted. The state blamed Jessie for her own rape. Cultural stereotypes linking blackness and innate hypersexuality (hooks 1997) underwrote Jessie's perceived promiscuity, making her rape inevitable and inconsequential by eugenic standards. Reports of Jessie "running around late at night" (Railey and Begos 2002, 4) reflect the colloquial image of a woman who was "asking for it," asking for sex, thus permitting her rape to be labeled as the inevitable outcome of inherently promiscuous womanhood. Following a patriarchal and racialized tendency to blame women for their own rape when constructed as consenting subjects (MacKinnon 1997), Jessie's case notes did not so much as hint at her being a victim of rape.

Jessie's perceived sexual deviance, formed through preconceptions of black women's bodies, was used in combination with the flawed empirical evidence of "feeble-mindedness." Instruments for the measurement of mental ability masked

biases through the “objectivity” of scientific rationality. The IQ tests used by eugenicists to determine “feeble-mindedness” have been widely disproven and are considered culturally relative in the sense that low test scores only meant individuals were guilty of an unawareness to the specific cultural knowledge tested (Gould 1996). Gould wrote, “[T]he well documented 15-point average difference in IQ between blacks and whites in America, with substantial heritability of IQ in family lines within each group, permits no conclusion that truly equal opportunities might not raise black averages to equal or surpass the white mean” (369). This statement means that rural southern families possessed a knowledge base divergent from the one being tested. Families requiring government assistance were not testing “below average” because of biologically determined “flaws”; rather, they lacked the opportunities afforded to other individuals with a supposedly average IQ. Therefore, the conclusions drawn by eugenicists about mental deviance through the use of IQ testing were interpretations of data embedded with classist and racial biases. At this point, we should also be careful to note that Jessie’s false diagnosis of feeble-minded, while compelling, does count as the only failure of the Eugenics Board. The compulsory sterilization of disabled and able-bodied individuals is equally questionable, especially when performed without consent.

Our analysis of Jessie’s narrative articulates a previously unexamined extension of scholarly arguments rejecting eugenics. Recent eugenic discourse and these scholarly texts work to invalidate the “scientific” status of mental and physical deviance embodied by many forced sterilization victims; but the arguments in recent eugenic discourse work in a particular and privileged manner. Although these works may be similar in tone, discourse containing Jessie’s narrative can be read to employ a strategy beyond a rejection of eugenics and a move to suggesting a redescription of sterilization survivors in embodied terms.

Jessie’s firsthand account provides textual and embodied evidence against eugenic ideologies in empowering terms that are absent from historical and scientific refutations of eugenics. When Jessie claimed that she is not, nor has ever been, feeble-minded, she refuted the eugenic labels attached to her body in a very specific yet generalizable manner. Specifically, Jessie rejected the labels of mental deficiency and uncontrollable sexuality by proposing that she was an able-bodied subject errantly mislabeled in her youth. Jessie’s interrogation of eugenics progressed when she stated that her sterilization was due to environmental causes, definitively rooting the circumstances leading to her sterilization in stereotypes of race, class, gender, and ability. Her call for attention to a subjective embodiment of ability and the systemic breach

of opportunities afforded to minorities provides us with an instance of the discursive potential of sterilization survivors. By providing this empowering description of herself and the causes of her sterilization outside eugenic terms, she creates a generalizable redescription attributable to other forcibly sterilized victims of eugenics programs.

Jessie's position on eugenics is both different from that of scholars and uniquely powerful because she speaks from the perspective of a sterilization survivor. She argues through a devastatingly personal set of arguments enabling her to respond to eugenic labels in her own terms. Ultimately, the impact of Jessie's destabilization of eugenic labels, which have been grounded in the discourse of biologically determined categorizations, is a transference of her redefinition to other sterilization victims who can also substitute the cause of their sterilization in more equitable terms. Her account is but one coauthorship in this public discourse; surrounding her voice are those of other forced sterilization victims who can join a dialogue concerning our eugenic past. We hold that these current and potential narratives be privileged among historical and scientific accounts of eugenics because they represent the deconstruction of socially constructed links between physical and mental deviance, embodied by sterilization survivors. Future studies should be used to examine the coauthorship of sterilization accounts, which will continue to provide emergent viewpoints on the labeling and redescription of bodies impacted by eugenics programs.

Beyond their potential discursive impact, Jessie's words have also had material implications. North Carolina's legislature passed a budget in 2013 that included \$10 million to compensate victims of the state-sponsored sterilization program, the first state to pass such a measure (Collins 2013). In a radio interview, Rep. Larry Womble (D-NC) said that a great deal of credit should be given to Jessie, and several other sterilization survivors, for keeping the issue in front of the media (Collins 2013). Womble named her activism as part of the reason this repeatedly rejected bill compensating nearly two hundred living sterilization victims finally made it into the budget. In the same interview, Julie Rose suggested that, even though the bill faced continual partisan concerns, the tide turned after a national audience listened to Jessie speak of her pain and witnessed the anguish on her face, generating an unprecedented awareness of forced sterilizations. Jessie's activism and delivery of testimony with gut-wrenching verisimilitude were the turning point in restitution for sterilization survivors.

Of course, monetary compensation will never be enough to right past wrongs, no matter the amount. After considering refusal of what she termed

a “shut up and go away” payment of \$50,000 Jessie changed her mind (Riddick 2011). She now plans to spend the money to create a youth development program to “reconstruct our youth” and a “Sisters’ Sanctuary” to educate at-risk pregnant teens. Developing these programs would offer her the ability to be “a mother to everybody’s children” who are still being brought up in the same impoverished and neglectful environment that she came up in (Riddick 2011). In a hopeful twist, Jessie’s sterilization has the potential to stimulate an equally permanent activism to help children who are in need.

In closing, we must remain vigilant of naturalized, scientific justifications of inequities along the lines of class, race, gender, and disability. Jonathan Marks warns us, “The times change, the victims change, the technologies change and the issues change. What remains the same is the invocation of science, of progress—as an institutionalized authoritative for victimization” (2000, 243). North Carolina’s eugenics program has ended, yet eugenics as an ideology has certainly not been eradicated. Among even the very recent movement in North Carolina to compensate victims of sterilization, Rep. Jennifer Weiss (D-NC) questioned if the victims were even “set up to handle this” (Governor’s Task Force 2011). Her essentialist remarks serve as a crude reminder of how the official disbanding of eugenics programs nationwide may have done little for providing an end to generations of eugenic rhetoric. Although it starts with personal inquiry, we suggest that future scholarship continue to interrogate eugenic lines of reasoning. It is imperative that the power used discursively to form historically disregarded subjects be explored through its fluidity, so that holistic and equitable interpretations of disability can press on these ideologies for material, health-related change.

Notes

The authors are grateful to the editors and the two anonymous reviewers for their feedback on this manuscript. Also, they would like to thank the YWCA of Central Carolinas, especially Kirsten Sikkelee, for its support of this research. The authors would also like to thank Amanda Jean Hardie for her edits and feedback on numerous versions of this manuscript.

1. The original case documents containing the names of sterilized subjects referenced in this paper have since been redacted or resealed. Our analysis is carefully based on published articles that cite these inaccessible state documents.

References

Begos, Kevin. “Lifting the Curtain on a Shameful Era.” *Winston-Salem Journal*, December 9, 2002. Updated March 18, 2013. http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/article_fa19404e-8fdf-11e2-8fba-0019bb30f31a.html (accessed April 18, 2014).

- Begos, Kevin, and John Railey. "Sign This or Else . . . A Young Woman Made a Hard Choice, and Life Has Not Been Peaceful Since." *Winston-Salem Journal*, December 10, 2002. Updated March 19, 2013. http://m.journalnow.com/news/local/sign-this-or-else/article_3e865b26-8c03-11e2-b819-001a4bcf6878.html?mode=jqm (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Black, Edwin. *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003.
- Cahn, Susan. *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Collins, Mike. *Charlotte Talks' featuring Tom Tillis, Larry Womble, Julie Rose, and Elaine Riddick*. 90.7WFAE FM, Charlotte, NC, National Public Radio, August 14, 2013.
- Cuklanz, Lisa. "Gendered Violence and Mass Media Representation." In *The SAGE Handbook of Gendered Communication*, edited by Bonnie Dow and Julia Wood, 335-49. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006.
- Dubriwny, Tasha. *The Vulnerable Empowered Woman: Feminism, Postfeminism, and Women's Health*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.
- Gardner, Amy. "Women Recount Coerced Sterilizations." *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), March 15, 2003. Retrieved from <http://newsbank.com/>.
- Gould, Steven J. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: Norton, 1996.
- Governor's Task Force to Determine the Method of Compensation for Victims of North Carolina's Eugenics Board. *Preliminary Report to the Governor of the State of North Carolina (Pursuant To Executive Order 83)*. Raleigh, NC, 2011.
- Hasian, Marouf. *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- hooks, bell. "Selling Hot Pussy: Representation of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace." In *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, edited by Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, 113-28. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Human Betterment League. "Here Is the Truth about Sterilization and North Carolina's Laws concerning It." Winston-Salem, NC, 1946. Available at <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/search/searchterm/Public%20Health%20Collection!eugenics/field/relatig!all/mode/exact!any/conn/and!and/order/nosort/ad/asc/cosuppress/1>.
- . "You wouldn't expect . . ." Winston-Salem, NC, 1950.
- Hutchison, Courtney. "Sterilizing the Sick, Poor to Cut Welfare Costs: North Carolina's History of Eugenics," August 4, 2011. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/WomensHealth/sterilizing-sick-poor-cut-welfare-costs-north-carolinas/story?id=14093458> (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Kaelber, Lutz. "Eugenics/Sexual Sterilizations in North Carolina." *Eugenics: Compulsory Sterilization in 50 American States*. Last updated October 21, 2012. <http://www.uvm.edu/~lkaelber/eugenics/NC/NC.html> (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Kevles, Daniel. *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1985.
- Kline, Wendy. *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Kluchin, Rebecca M. *Fit to Be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1950-1980*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009.

- Krome-Lukens, Anne. "'A Great Blessing to Defective Humanity': Woman and the Eugenic Movement in North Carolina, 1910–1940." Master's thesis, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009.
- Larson, Edward. *Sex, Race, and Science: Eugenics in the Deep South*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Lombardo, Paul. "Introduction: Looking Back at Eugenics." In *A Century of Eugenics in America: From the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*, edited by Paul Lombardo, 1–10. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.
- MacKinnon, Catharine. "Rape: On Coercion and Consent." In *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, edited by Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, 42–58. New York: Colombia University Press, 1997.
- Marks, Jonathan. "Heredity and Genetics after the Holocaust." In *Humanity at the Limit: The Impact of the Holocaust Experience on Christians and Jews*, edited by Michael Singer, 241–49. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Railey, John. "'Wicked Silence.' *Winston-Salem Journal*, December 13, 2002. Updated March 18, 2013. http://m.journalnow.com/news/local/wicked-silence/article_32176086-8fe8-11e2-a99e-0019bb30f31a.html?mode=jqm (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Railey, John, and Kevin Begos. "'Still Hiding.'" *Winston-Salem Journal*, December 9, 2002. Updated March 19, 2013. http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/still-hiding/article_e26e967e-8fe4-11e2-b104-0019bb30f31a.html (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Rembis, Michael A. *Defining Deviance: Sex, Science, and Delinquent Girls, 1890–1960*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.
- Riddick, Elaine. "Victim of State-Sponsored Sterilization Speaks Up." *YouTube*. June 22, 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmGhe1RJJbY> (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Rose, Julie. "N.C. Considers Paying Forced Sterilization Victims." *National Public Radio*. June 22, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/22/137347548/n-c-considers-paying-forced-sterilization-victims> (accessed April 18, 2014).
- Rosenberg, Charles. *No Other Gods: On Science and American Social Thought*. Rvd. ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Schoen, Johanna. *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- . "Confronting N.C.'s Eugenics Legacy." *The Herald-Sun*, February 23, 2003.
- Sinderbrand, Rebecca. "A Shameful Little Secret." *Newsweek*, March 28, 2005, 33.
- Snyder, Sharon L., and David T. Mitchell. *Cultural Locations of Disability*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Stubblefield, Anna. "'Beyond the Pale': Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability, and Eugenic Sterilization." *Hypatia* 22, no. 2 (2007): 162–81.
- Terry, Jennifer, and Jacqueline Urla, eds. *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- Washington, Harriet. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Harlem Moon, 2006.