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HEREDITARIANISM, EUGENICS, AND AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN THE INTERWAR YEARS: MEET THE CARVERIANS

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Like other Progressive Era reformers, Thomas Nixon Carver promoted a form of biology-infused social science that included both eugenics and a strong version of hereditarianism. Carver was also a charismatic teacher who trained several generations of economists and sociologists at Harvard. In this paper we will focus on the contribution of three of them: James A. Field, Norman E. Himes, and Carl S. Joslyn. These authors differ in terms of style, method, and emphasis—with Field and Himes more interested in population and birth control issues, and Joslyn in the dynamics of social stratification. As it will be shown below, however, all of them reveal an explicit commitment to hereditarianism and eugenics, which can be directly traced back to Carver's influence during their student days at Harvard.

I am much interested in what you say regarding your analysis of my social philosophy. If I understand it myself, I believe that starting point is that social activities should be studied under the general concept of biological adaptation.

–Thomas N. Carver to Norman E. Himes, December 18, 1933[1]

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[1] Norman H. Himes Papers (hereinafter NHP), Box 33, Folder 371. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard University.

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I. THE ISSUE

While largely forgotten today, Thomas Nixon Carver can be considered one of the key figures in the early development of social science at Harvard, where he taught economics and sociology for more than three decades (1900 to 1933). As an economist, he was among those who most significantly contributed to establish and consolidate neoclassicism in the United States. In his appreciation of twentieth-century economics, Theo Suranyi-Unger (1931, p. 245) observed that Carver "deserves without doubt the most eminent place in the construction of economic systems that have appeared in America since the war," and even Joseph A. Schumpeter (1954, p. 836) felt compelled to observe that "[a]mong theoretical writings of importance, the one that comes nearest to developing Clarkian doctrine is Carver's."[2] But Carver was not just a fine theorist. He developed his economics within a distinct Darwinian framework, which was reflected in his sociological teachings (Hofstadter 1945, p. 151). As Carver himself summed up in his reminiscences (1949, p. 172), his "Principles of Sociology," the course he taught until the arrival at Harvard of Pitirim Sorokin in 1930, "developed into a study of the Darwinian theory as applied to social groups." In his approach, he continued, variations among different "forms of social organization and of moral systems," and the "selection or survival of those system or forms that make for group strength," were considered to constitute the central "method of social evolution" (p. 172).

What Carver omitted to mention here is the close connection between his Darwinian view of social evolution and eugenics. Like other Progressive Era reformers, in fact, Carver promoted a form of biology-infused social science based on the acceptance of three related concepts that were central to eugenics: "the primacy of heredity, human hierarchy rather than human equality, and the necessarily illiberal idea that human heredity must be socially controlled" (Leonard 2016, p. 109). In this connection, suffice it to mention that although Carver was cautious enough to cloak his arguments under a mantle of respectable science, his *Essays on Social Justice* (1915) were hailed as "a very important step in the coordination of the various sciences which make up applied eugenics" (*Journal of Heredity*, 1917, p. 120). Carver, to be sure, was far more conservative than most of his contemporaries and on more than one occasion he did not hesitate to attack the unconditional faith in the administrative state professed by his progressive counterparts. Nonetheless, when it came to eugenics, he (1929, p. 3) sided with the progressives in advocating "social control," to the extent that "it tends to substitute social for natural selection in the determination of individual survival."

Carver was certainly a controversial figure. His outspoken conservativism exposed him to the attacks of pro-labor progressives (Fiorito and Orsi 2017), while his explicit commitment to eugenics made him a perfect target for a sharp critic like Frank Knight (1925), who looked with contempt at any attempt to introduce biologically deterministic arguments into the social sciences. Yet, and probably because of the divisive nature of his thought, Carver was a charismatic teacher whose corps of devoted students was thought by some to resemble a cult. As Carver again recounts in his autobiography (1949, p. 172), around 1906, "the Harvard Illustrated, a student publication, conducted a

[2] Paul A. Samuelson (1981, p. 358n1) went as far as to include Carver among those who may have won the Nobel Prize in economics had it been established since 1901.

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poll of the senior class, asking the students to name the best courses they had taken. For a number of years professor [George Herbert] Palmer's course in ethics ranked highest. My course on principles of sociology began to climb until it finally achieved first place." Not only did Carver stand among the most popular professors at Harvard, but he made "such an impression on the student mind" that some "began to call themselves Carverians, and to be called Carverians" (Carver 1949, p. 206). Among these devoted students who remained in academia, many continued their career as agricultural economists, as in the case of Joseph Stancliffe Davis at Stanford, Roland S. Vaile at the University of Minnesota, or Elmer J. Working at the University of Illinois. Others, like Theodore J. Kreps at Stanford and Richard S. Meriam at Harvard, turned to industrial economics. John Philippe Vernet at Harvard published extensively on business cycles, while Earl J. Hamilton at Duke became one of the most distinguished economic historians of his days. Carver's fame went well beyond American circles. Bertil Ohlin spent the academic year 1922–23 at Harvard expressly to study under Carver, "whose book on income distribution he had read and whom he admired for his 'unremitting logic'" (Flam 1993, p. 145).

Another group of students, and this is the aspect that is of interest here, devoted its efforts to economic sociology and more specifically to population studies, largely a province of sociology at the time. In this paper we will focus on the contribution of three of them: James A. Field, Norman E. Himes, and Carl S. Joslyn. These authors differ in terms of style, method, and emphasis—with Field and Himes more interested in population and birth control issues, and Joslyn in the dynamics of social stratification. As it will be shown below, however, all of them reveal an explicit commitment to hereditarianism and eugenics, which can be directly traced back to Carver's influence during their student days at Harvard. The names under scrutiny here do not exhaust the list of sociologically inclined students influenced (both positively and negatively) by Carver. Others, such as Frederick Bushee, Niles Carpenter, Albert. B. Wolfe, and Walter Lippmann, will also enter our narrative. Our main goal here is to document Carver's influence as a teacher and to shed further light on Harvard's role as the "brain trust" of American eugenics (Fiorito 2019). At the same time, in more general terms, what follows adds to our general understanding of the extent to which biological considerations continued to permeate American social science well after the first two decades of the last century, the period that marked the "golden age" of eugenics (Leonard 2016).

II. CARVER, EUGENICS, AND OCCUPATIONAL CONGESTION

Our story begins with a brief discussion of the main coordinates of Carver's thought and its relation to eugenics and hereditarianism. Carver's use of the Darwinian metaphor and his opposition to expansive governmental action have led interpreters like Richard Hofstadter (1945, p. 152) to argue that "Carver's ideas sound like a pale echo of the doctrines made familiar by Sumner a quarter of a century before." There are, to be sure, some affinities between the two men. Like William Sumner, Carver (1915) saw the Darwinian factors of variation, selection, transmission, and adaptation as operating in societies much as they do in living organisms. Crucial to this view was the idea that aggregates of human beings are engaged in a struggle for existence. Carver considered

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fitness as equivalent to a higher capacity to produce and believed in competition as a biologically selective mechanism. At the individual level, he held (1915, p. 174) that "the man who produces nothing but consumes lavishly has a negative net value to the country as a whole"; that is, "the country is better off when he dies than when he lives." At the aggregate level, Carver invoked a form of group selection—natural selection acting at the level of intergroup competition—to account for the emergence of cooperation among individuals. Carver (1915, p. 163), however, explicitly rejected the notion of the survival of the fittest in the "ultra-Darwinian sense." In the absence of some form of social control, he warned, survival would depend "simply upon the ability to survive" and not upon "fitness in any sense implying worth, merit, or usefulness." Social control is thus necessary to ban all forms of parasitical and predatory competition that result in a waste of energy for the social whole: "[g]overnment and government alone prevents competition from lapsing into the brutal struggle for existence, where self-interest leads … to destructive as well as to productive activity on the part of the individual" (1915, p. 108).

From these Darwinian premises Carver proceeded directly toward eugenics—and here is where the similarities with Sumner end (Leonard 2005). The eugenic foundations of Carver's thought become manifest in his discussion of labor problems. Carver (1904, p. 171) saw wages as fixed by the interaction of a falling marginal productivity of labor schedule with a rising "standard of living" schedule. By "standard of living" he meant "the number of other wants whose satisfaction the individual considers of more importance than that of the procreative instinct"—so that "the individual who places very few wants before that instinct has a very low standard of living, and he who places many wants before that one has a high standard." Such a "biological" definition allowed Carver (1894, pp. 393–394) to re-establish the classical correspondence between the long-run supply price of labor (as of any other commodity) and its cost of reproduction. He could thus maintain that a "rise in the standard of living of laborers tends to reduce the amount of labor that will be supplied at any given rate of wages by diminishing the birth-rate"; and "[w]ith a given standard of living, a rise in the rate of wages will result in a higher birth-rate and a larger supply of labor." Against this background, Carver held that the main cause of poverty in America was the congestion in the lower segments of the labor market caused by a continuous flow of unskilled immigrants with lower standards of living. Carver (1904, p. 171) could then elaborate his own version of the race suicide narrative:

> [W]here the average standard of living is high, numbers will not increase beyond the point which will enable the laboring population to live up to its standard, unless the immigration of laborers of a lower standard from some other community should set in, in which case the laborers of a lower standard will displace those of a higher standard, causing the latter to migrate or stop multiplying, leaving the field ultimately in the possession of the low standard, as surely as cheap money will drive out dear money, or as sheep will drive cattle off the western ranges.

It was therefore necessary (Carver 1912a, p. 22) to support "those methods of protecting the higher standard of living against the competition of the lower," such as immigration restriction and minimum wage legislation. Carver was adamant in emphasizing the eugenic virtues of a binding minimum wage. In the first place, he explained (1915, p. 140), "it is apparent that such a policy would tend to weed out the less

competent members of the community so that, in the course of time, there would be none left whose services were not worth at least the minimum wage." In the second place, "it can scarcely be doubted that after that was accomplished, the community would be vastly superior to the present one, for it would be peopled by a superior class of individuals, and the general quality of the population would not be deteriorated by the human dregs who now form the so-called submerged element." But this was not all, since "immigration from heaven produces very much the same results as immigration from Europe." In this regard, Carver (1915, p. 262) held that two dollars a day was the minimum salary necessary to support a family, and he went so far as to propose legal prohibition to marriage for all citizens (native- and foreign-born) who could not reach an annual income of six hundred dollars: "If no man would marry until he had a good job with two dollars a day, the result would be so to retard the marriage rate and the birth rate among unskilled laborers and so to thin out the ranks of unskilled labor that, barring immigration, in about one generation every man could find a job that would pay him at least two dollars a day."

In Carver's later writings his advocacy for birth control acquired a distinct eugenic character and a far more explicit commitment to hereditarianism. The most evident sign of this shift in emphasis is a short paper emblematically titled "The Economic Test of Fitness" (1929), published in *Eugenics: A Journal of Race Betterment*, the official organ of the American Eugenics Society. There, Carver established a firm correspondence between an individual's economic success and his biological superiority. If a man is so limited in his skills as to be employed only in those occupations that are already overcrowded, Carver (1929, p. 6) held, "the country not only does not need him but it does not need any more like him." In the end, "[t]here is no reason for encouraging his type to breed." Carver did not exclude that from "genuinely poor stock we may expect once in a while an extreme variation," and even conceded that some of these extreme variations may be "highly desirable from the standpoint of nation-building" (1929, p. 6). Yet, he immediately rectified, sound social policies must be based upon averages and not individual exceptions. These "qualifications" led Carver to assert the eugenic virtue of what he called the "economic test of fitness." He made his point through a telling example:

> Let us, for example, take the case of native Americans of the northern half of the United States whose ancestors have been in this country for three or more generations. Let us divide these people into two groups, namely, those who have managed to make an economic success of their lives and those who have made failures. By their economic success I mean that they have made a good living for themselves and their families, by failure I mean their failure to provide an independent livelihood necessitating help either from public or private charity. If we compare the two groups thus described from the standpoint of fitness, there is not much doubt that the successful will grade higher on the average than the failures, no matter what kind of a test of fitness we adopt. The economic test would be a fair one. Those who can do something which the community wants done badly enough to be willing to pay well for it are obviously worth more to the community than those who are not able to do anything which anybody is willing to pay for. Making all necessary allowances for individual exceptions even to this rule, there is not much doubt as to which group would grade higher not only economically but eugenicly. (1929, p. 7)

The problem was thus not just quantitative but fundamentally qualitative. As Carver further explained in a contribution to Margaret Sanger's *Birth Control Review* (Carver 1930, p. 199), "there is a close connection between the differential birth rate and occupational congestion." In other words,

> if … it could be brought about that business and professional men should have larger families and unskilled laborers smaller families, we should greatly relieve occupational congestion. The larger families of the business and professional classes would produce larger numbers of business leaders. This would expand industries and increase the demand for other kinds of labor. The smaller families among the unskilled laborers would reduce the supply of such laborers. (Carver 1930, p. 199)

In the end, "the combination of expanding industries and decreasing labor supplies would go a long way toward relieving occupational congestion where it now exists" (Carver 1930, p. 199). These aspects will be taken up again below.

III. JAMES A. FIELD

James Alfred Field (1880–1927) is the first of Carver's students under scrutiny. Born in Milton, Massachusetts, Field obtained his MS in economics at Harvard in 1903, where he remained the following two years as Austin Teaching Fellow in Economics. Field spent the academic year of 1905–06 abroad. During the winter he stayed in Berlin, attending the lectures of Georg Simmel, Gustav Schmoller, and the polymath historian Kurt Breysig. He then traveled through Germany, France, and England. Field's early penchant for population studies is clearly evinced by a visit he made to Karl Pearson, English eugenicist and founding father of modern statistical theory, at the Eugenics Laboratory at the University of London. In the autumn of 1906 Field returned to Harvard to pursue graduate work under Carver. Although he had been first attracted by "discussions of eugenics," he eventually decided to devote his research efforts to the history of population debates, a topic that had been suggested by Carver himself. What came out of Field's pen was a lengthy manuscript, "The Malthusian Controversy in England," an essay probably prepared with the idea of using it as a doctoral dissertation and which was only posthumously published.[3] In late 1908, when he had abandoned the idea of getting a PhD, Field was offered a position in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Chicago, which he immediately accepted.

Upon his arrival at Chicago, Field took over the newly established course "Population Theory," one of the first specifically devoted to the topic to be offered in the US.[4] The university catalog described it in 1908 as a "study of population as the basis of economic society" with a specific focus on "such present-day phenomena as the relatively slight propagation of the well-to-do classes [and] the eugenics movement" (Fiorito and Nerozzi 2018). The following year the course changed its name to "Population, the Standard of Living, and Eugenics," and so remained until 1924, when it was split into a

[3] See Field (1931).

[4] According to Albert B. Wolfe (1928, p. 532), the first courses on population in the US were offered "at the University of Chicago by the late J. A. Field, at the University of Wisconsin by E. A. Ross, and at Oberlin College by the present writer."

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"Population" course, with no reference to eugenics left in its description, and a "Standard of Living" course, mostly devoted to the analysis and statistics of consumption. Field was also the author, along with his department colleagues Leon C. Marshall and Chester W. Wright, of the introductory textbook *Outlines of Economics* (Marshall, Wright, and Field 1910). The book, which was the outcome of certain experiments in undergraduate teaching of economics at Chicago, invited students to discuss aspects explicitly related to eugenics and the biological quality of population.[5] In 1911 Field published his two most well-known essays. "The Early Propagandist Movement in English Population Theory," in the *American Economic Review* (Field 1911b), established the history of birth control as a historical field (Himes 1932, p. 118), and offered the first systematic account of Francis Place's involvement in the birth control movement. The other, which mostly concerns us here, was a long survey, "The Progress of Eugenics," in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (Field 1911a). Here, Field abandoned the role of the detached observer and let his own convictions come to the surface. "Despite the progress of science," he lamented (1911a, p. 25), "one still encounters students of social problems who, finding that eugenic principles discredit some favorite scheme of amelioration, … are fain to profess their disbelief in heredity." Yet, Field objected (1911a, pp. 62–63), over the last decades "the details of the biological mechanism by which changes are effected have become far better known." Although the "fittest state of society" may be "beyond our perception," it would still be possible to achieve by means of eugenic selection a "succession of experimental changes which seem to us for the better." In this process, Field emphatically stated, the biologist and the economist must work side by side: "health and strength and intellect work out the good or ill fortunes of their possessors according to the ways of economic civilization, and not by process of brute struggle for existence." He concluded that "eugenics is not mere biology … the problems of eugenics are problems of human society."

With the passing of time Field lost much of this original enthusiasm and became far more aware of the concrete limitations of eugenics. This does not imply that Field rejected eugenics *in toto*—he continued to express concerns over the physical quality of population, and he did consider eugenics as a measure to reduce the welfare cost associated with the care and maintenance of the "unemployables." His skepticism was rather directed at the possibility of founding a full program of social amelioration on eugenic considerations. This shift in attitude is epitomized by a paper entitled "Eugenic Worth and Economic Value," which he read before the British Association for Advancement of Science in Toronto in 1924. "Unconsciously," Field (1931, pp. 238–239) wrote, "the eugenist himself judges success by the standards of the marketplace." This is the view of those authors who, drawing directly upon Francis Galton's studies on the hereditability of genius, advocate the "great-man theory of eugenics"—i.e., the idea

[5] The textbook (Marshall, Wright, and Field 1910, pp. 23–24) included the following questions: "In general, is it disadvantageous for society that the educated, successful, and well-to-do classes should be characterized by a comparatively low marriage-rate and an extremely low birth-rate? Why? Can strictly hereditary human characteristics be distinguished from the influences of parental example, education, and the environment in general? In the interest of social reform is it important that we should be able to make the distinction? Why? The new science of eugenics 'deals with those social agencies that influence, mentally or physically, the racial qualities of future generations.' In practice, eugenic reform may attempt primarily either (a) to encourage the increase of the best elements in the population, or (b) to prevent the increase of the worst. Which policy seems to you more likely to be successful?"

that individuals of higher eugenic worth are "those of most distinguished special ability, judged according to standards of the present." Accordingly, since genius is scarce by definition, eugenic and economic incentives must necessarily point in the same direction. The flaws of such an approach, Field objected, are to be found in the difficulty of its application and in the "biological problem" it posed. First, if the eugenist succeeded in multiplying "genius," he would then cheapen its market price and destroy the "cult of greatness" associated with it—therefore making the "great-man formula of eugenic excellence … incompatible with exchange-value theory." But even if this were possible, the problem of deciding which among the several individual "qualities" should be bred would still remain:

> There are all kinds of superlatives. Could a single race, actuated by a single eugenic ideal, breed to separate perfection all sorts of genius at once? Galton himself seems to have fallen into perplexity at this point, and to have made only a lame escape. "The aim of Eugenics," he concluded, "is to represent each class or sect by its best specimens; that done, to leave them to work out their common civilization in their own way." The proposal to represent each class by its best comes very near to a meaningless begging of the whole question. Perhaps Galton was tacitly thinking of types already somewhat defined in other ways—as types of economic specialization, for example. At all events, if these were left to themselves to work out their own destiny—intermarrying, and changing their standards as time went on—the result would probably be biological mediocrity as confused as the intentions that first set the experiment in motion. (Field 1931, pp. 240–241)

Negative eugenics, selection against undesirable traits, was as problematic as the positive idea of breeding exceptional talent. Field elaborated on this aspect in a subsequent paper.[6] First, he admonished (Field 1931, p. 285), targeting a minority, negative eugenics was not immune from the taint of "invidious comparison." While, in fact, it is by no means easy to find agreement as to those individuals who possess superior traits, "we are all willing to admit that we are better than the poor wretches we desire to see cut off" and "we are likely to favor types which have the virtues of our own class." Second, contrary to what was asserted in certain oversimplified versions of Mendelian genetics based on the segregation of indivisible "unit characters" (genes) that appeared either completely or not at all, "certain dysgenic traits may be correlated with other characters of a highly desirable nature." Third (Field 1931, p. 286), eugenic reform is by definition a long-term program and as a consequence the "results which were sought after by one generation are likely to be unappreciated by the generation which enjoys them."

Over the years Field became no less disillusioned with some aspects of birth control—and this is significant since earlier in his life he had served as first president of the Illinois Birth Control League, one of the most energetic leagues in the US, which operated six clinics in Chicago (Himes 1931). Specifically, what bothered him was the "simple and direct" relation of birth control to poverty assumed by contemporary apologists of neo-Malthusianism. Field criticized the idea that a simple reduction of "occupational congestion" (and this may have been an implicit reference to Carver) could eliminate

[6] "Paradoxes of Population Problems," in Field (1931). It should be noted that the notion of "negative eugenics" did not originate from Francis Galton. It seems to have been first put forward by George Darwin and generated a considerable controversy with George Mirvart. See the discussion in Levy and Peart (2015).

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poverty. His rebuttal was grounded on such an explicit use of the relative income hypothesis that the relevant passage should be quoted at full length:

> What, we may ask, is poverty, and how much income must a man have to raise him above the poverty line. From a long-run view, poverty is not an absolute state, but one that varies with the time, the place, and the general conditions of well-being. Similarly, from the point of view of the individual, poverty is relative to what one has and what one would like to have. In a sense, one's degree of poverty depends upon the vividness of one's imagination. It is possible that the general level of economic welfare of a community may be raised or lowered by virtue of an increase or decrease in the number of individuals who compose it, and to that extent the economic motive of birth-control may be sound. But, in the more intimate meaning of poverty, as the failure to attain a standard of living which a person or a society deems the minimum of tolerance, something more than the mere limitation of numbers is necessary. We are accustomed to regard those at the bottom of the economic scale as poor, and so they often are in an absolute sense. But in a relative sense, those persons are poor also who fail to attain a minimum standard of living which they hold to be tolerable, and these suffer quite as much from the psychological inhibitions of poverty, even though in a physiological sense they may meet the test of adequate income. Poverty, in other words, is a function of economic inequality. (Field 1931, pp. 317–318)

The idea that poverty is the failure to attain a socially desirable standard of living led Field to reject, and this time explicitly, Carver's notion of standard of life as the "number of desires which … take precedence over that group of desires which result in the multiplication of numbers" (Carver 1919, p. 393). Not only does such a biological definition not apply to those individuals who have passed the age of procreation, but it also fails to explain the tendency, common among certain classes, to "live regularly above one's standard of living." Ultimately, Field wrote (1931, pp. 388–389), "Carver's definition seems to belittle the course of development of one's standard through life, by focusing the test on one point in life. Is one's decision to marry perhaps based on a plan and forecast of life?" Field discussed these themes in class, as documented by his outline of the "Standard of Living" course given in 1927, the year of his premature death.

IV. NORMAN E. HIMES

Norman Edwin Himes was probably the most devoted among Carver's students. Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on August 4, 1899, Himes completed his entire course of study at Harvard, where he received a BS in 1923, an MA in 1924, and a PhD in sociology in 1932. Himes began his academic career as an instructor of economics at Cornell (Iowa) College (1925–26), and then at Simmons College and Simmons School of Social Work (1928 to 1930). After a year at Clark University as associate professor of economics, he settled at Colgate University, where he taught economics and sociology until his resignation in 1942. Throughout his life Himes always professed his intellectual gratitude to Carver, and in 1935 he was the editor of the *Festschrift* for Carver's seventieth birthday. Incidentally, it was Himes's undergraduate reading of Field's works on neo-Malthusianism in one of Carver's sociology courses that prompted his interest in

the history of the birth control movement (Stack 2018, p. 776). "I am the only economist here or abroad who is following up Field's work. Since I never studied under him I have an objective attitude toward his work," wrote Himes to Eldon Moore in 1931.[7] With respect to Field, however, Himes was a far more prolific writer, and throughout his life he published extensively on historical and clinical aspects of birth control. Himes's major contributions include two contributions on John Stuart Mill and neo-Malthusianism (1928a; 1929), for which he is mostly remembered today, and his encyclopedic *Medical History of Contraception* (1936a).

Himes was at once an active participator in, and an observer of, the birth control movement. As David Stack (2018) recently put it, he was a polemicist and propagandist as well, and his main intention was to bring population to the forefront of policy. One recurrent theme was his attribution of population problems to the laissez-faire of nature, essentially positioning birth control policies as a correction to what he saw as a form of market failure. In this connection, Himes found a solid foundation in Carver's notion of "occupational congestion." Himes (1936a, p, 402) wrote that Carver "has discussed this subject so thoroughly that little remains to be said, save to stress … that diffused contraception is the most economical method of achieving that control over human reproduction which the theory of occupational balance presupposes." Carver, he insisted, "has demonstrated, as no economist or sociologist here or abroad has ever demonstrated, that approximate economic equality under liberty is impossible without democratized contraception." Himes even ventured emphatically that "someday this demonstration will be recognized as one of the most valuable contributions to social and economic theory made by anyone for a century" (1936a, p. 402). Himes's complete reliance upon Carver distanced him from Field's more critical stance. Himes (1931, p. 259), for instance, dismissed Field's claim that population containment could not alleviate "relative" poverty as mere "hair-splitting" and irrelevant to the discussion. As he sarcastically put it, "the person who is not poor, but who thinks he is, is a problem not for the economist, but for the psychiatrist. To say that giving such people contraceptive information would not solve their problems of mental health is hardly profound." Other differences between the two men will emerge below.

Himes's intellectual debt toward Carver went beyond the idea of occupational congestion. Like his mentor, Himes based his support for birth control on firm qualitative foundations and his commitment to eugenics surfaces in almost every one of his works. In his assessment of the effectiveness of the British birth control clinics, for instance, Himes reported (1928b, pp. 163–164) that "the clinics have been powerless … to limit the reproduction of those fertile individuals in the community who constitute a serious problem," namely, "the feeble-minded, the insane, the chronic paupers and the persistent leaners on the State." The problem once again was that the racial degeneration brought about the higher fertility rate to be found among the "inferior" and "degenerate" segments of population. To contrast this dysgenic trend, Himes proposed the "democratization" of contraception, so to allow lower classes adequate access to contraceptive methods. Democratized contraception would work quantitatively, since it would "relieve occupational congestion and the low wages of the unskilled" (Himes

[7] Norman E. Himes to Eldon Moore, 12 August 1931, NHP, Box 22, Folder 230.

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1936a, p. 418), but it would also have qualitative effects. In making this claim Himes was far more forceful than many of his contemporaries:

> Above all, democratization is a eugenic trend. The wide gap now existing between high reproduction and high genetic endowment will be somewhat closed. This will be all to the good not only genetically but socially. But personally I expect that the intelligence of the American population will decline five to eight percent in the next two hundred years before the process of reversal of differential fertility is complete. And it is quite conceivable that, even when given two hundred years, societies will not prove rational enough socially to direct and speed up the process of reversal by appropriate social measures. After that, we will not have brains enough left to worry much about the biological quality of future generations. (1936a, pp. 418–419)

By the end of the 1930s Himes's views changed considerably, as he accepted the evidence that In the United States demographic patterns had begun to stabilize. While his earlier writings were characterized by a combined emphasis on issues of quantity and quality, Himes now justified population control solely on eugenics grounds. This is clearly evinced from an address, "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," he gave in New York in March 1939, where he advocated improvement of population quality as a means of both increasing employment efficiency and upholding the standards of a democratic society.[8] Democracy, Himes asserted, is not based on the notion that all men "are created with equal abilities and potentialities"—an assumption that he considered "contrary to fact." The rational for democracy is rather to be found in the idea that our national interest will be best served "if we so arrange our social institutions that each individual will secure social status and other rewards in accordance with his abilities and his efforts in promoting economic and socially desired objectives." Such an efficiency-based definition of democracy allowed Himes to bridge democracy with eugenics, holding individual rights subordinate to the "socially efficient" objective of racial betterment. Speaking at a time in which many among social scientists and demographers sought to move beyond eugenics propaganda to understand the actual causes and consequences of population dynamics, Himes continued to place the biological well-being of the nation at the center of his preoccupation:

> A well-conceived program of eugenics must strive for the following objectives, among others: (1) Every child well born. This implies larger than average families among the intelligent, healthy, educated, resourceful, economically-productive people and smaller than average families among the unhealthy, relatively unintelligent people. Such an adjustment implies in turn democratization of birth-control knowledge and some workable system for getting scientific medical care for everybody. It also implies wider use of eugenical sterilization. (2) We must so adjust our institution that every child will have a decent economic chance in life. This implies the need for a more efficient economic system, one of greater output and less inequality in distribution. (3) An open road to talent.[9]

[8] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867.

[9] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867. Himes even contemplated the possibility of eutelegenesis, the adoption of artificial

Himes's main contention was that "eugenics and democracy are not only internally consistent but that they are indispensable to one another."[10] Here the distance with Field becomes once again manifest. Whereas Field (1931, p. 247) looked at the reconciliation of eugenics with democracy as a "humanly insoluble" problem, Himes went as far as to affirm that "the survival of democracy in the long run is dependent … upon the development of a greater eugenic consciousness."[11] This conviction was based on Himes's commitment to a strong form of biological hereditarianism that at the time of his address was placed under attack by Frederick Osborn and the proponents of the so called new or environmental eugenics. To temper the extremism of the earlier movement, Osborn was willing to broaden the definition of eugenics, moving beyond simple biological determinants to include several forms of environmental influences on human heredity (Rosen 2004). This shift was met with opposition by Himes. "It is unwise," he stated, "to confuse eugenics with every conceivable kind of environmental improvement hoping thereby to win over either the half informed or the sentimental environmentalist who will continue to deny the potency of eugenics because it agrees with his sentiments."[12] Himes continued to hold to a typically Progressive Era conception of eugenics, which aimed at controlling physical and personality traits in human beings through selective breeding and could thus contribute to liberty, justice and social efficiency:

> We can breed for good health, intelligence, resourcefulness, and economic self-support even though the last quality may not be directly inherited as such.… Our whole economic structure would be strengthened by such a step. Incidentally it would raise the standard of living. If applied eugenics can see to it that a larger proportion of our children are well born, not only will the general level of happiness be raised, but individuals will be more efficient because more people will be healthy and have normal mental endowments. As individuals become more efficient, our political, economic and social system will become more efficient and less wasteful. I would remind you that an efficient productive system is one of the best sinews of national defense.[13]

insemination for eugenics purposes: "Eutelegenesis," he ventured, "offers vast possibilities for racial improvement if we can adopt it before we get completely moronized by the differential birth rate and by the differential rates of reproduction on the part of stocks differing genetically. Eutelegenesis has almost unlimited possibilities." On the origins of eutelegenesis, see Richards (2008).

[10] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867.

[11] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867.

[12] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867. Himes was not alone in his criticism of Osborn's "environmentalist" turn. In 1947, one year after Osborn's election as president of the American Eugenics Society, the leading sociologist Frank H. Hankins wrote Himes: "Am now out of the Eugenics Society. I got to the point where I could no longer stomach the dominance of Osborn.… Perhaps the move to abandon all genetic basis for Eugenics, which Osborn tried to father, was only a passing whim. I hope so, for if there is no genetic basis there is no eugenics" (Frank H. Hankins to Norman E. Himes, August 16th, 194, NHP, Box 38, Folder 428).

[13] "Eugenics and Democracy: A Call to Action," an address read at a meeting of the International Spanish Speaking Association of Physicians, Dentists and Pharmacists, New York, March, 1939, NHP, Box 81, Folder 867.

In spite of his firm eugenic beliefs, however, Himes was not a racist, and on more than one occasion he did not hesitate to protest against those who advocated, on biological grounds, for racial discrimination and anti-miscegenation laws (1936b). In this regard, the most telling episode took place in 1940, and it was triggered by Himes's review of Leonas L. Burlingame, *Heredity and Social Problems* (1940). Burlingame, a professor of biology at Stanford, had suggested four possible solutions to alleviate the Negro problem: "(1) biological isolation, (2) hybridization, (3) reduction in net fertility substantially below white rate, (4) emigration" (Burlingame 1940, p. 248). Himes (1940, p. 154) found Burlingame's attitude toward African Americans not to be "particularly enlightened sociologically." In his view, "one might have supposed that it would have occurred to a biologist that we might try decent treatment and then attempt to live side by side with the Negro." Himes's criticism of Burlingame did not pass unnoticed and became the object of an epistolary exchange between Carver and Himes. On May 9, 1940, Carver wrote to his pupil:

> That we should try decent treatment I think no scientific mind would question. But the attempt to live side by side with the negro would, I think, result in amalgamation. This may be what Burlingame means by hybridization. If so, I would be inclined to identify your suggestion with the second of his. In my own treatment of the negro and other race problems I have suggested only four possibilities, not quite identical with his. 1. Amalgamation, 2. Occupational separation into non-competing groups (caste). 3. Territorial separation. 4. Continued bitterness involving race hostility in greater or less degree. They are all bad and I am in doubt as to which is worst. With immigrants from Europe, amalgamation solves all other problems—or eliminates them. It would probably do the same for the negro problem, but we don't know yet whether that is eugenically desirable or not. Until we know, it is obviously better to play safe. If, at some future time it is discovered that amalgamation is desirable or harmless, it will be easy to amalgamate. But if it is discovered to be undesirable we may be able to avoid it, whereas if we shall have amalgamated, it will be as difficult to un-amalgamate as to un-scramble eggs.[14]

In his reply, Himes insisted on the necessity to grant everyone equality of opportunity, irrespective of race and class, in order to strengthen national efficiency:

> I was not consciously advocating amalgamation; and I am not at all convinced that what I call "decent treatment" would necessarily lead to it. You and I, I take it, both believe that any nation to maintain its strength at maximum efficiency should discover and promote high-grade ability regardless of race, color, or class. There is considerable objective evidence that this is not done in the case of Negro. That, as a consequence, American national strength loses.[15]

Himes also somehow dismissed the actual chances of "amalgamation," venturing some form of predilection for unions between individuals of the same "racial" group: "I think we forget that most Negroes have their ethnocentric views as well as whites. They have their own distinct preferences for their own group as a rule." In his reply of May 21, 1940, the one that closes the exchange, Carver bluntly scorned Himes's assumption

[14] Thomas N. Carver to Norman E. Himes, May 9, 1940, NHP, Box 33, Folder 371.
[15] Norman E. Himes to Thomas N. Carver, May 15, 1940, NHP, Box 33, Folder 371.

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about mating preferences: "as to amalgamation. I doubt if the 'preferences' of the average negro, will be the determining factor … some other preferences may sometimes outweigh the preference for mates of the same color."[16] Ultimately, Himes did not succeed in making Carver change his mind. Carver's final sentence leaves little doubt in this respect: "Of course we all believe in fair treatment for negroes, but we must also face the fact that it may lead to a somewhat more rapid rate of amalgamation. Maybe some way can be found to prevent it without race prejudice."

V. CARL S. JOSLYN

Although the name of Carl Smith Joslyn is usually associated with that of Frank W. Taussig, with whom he published the volume *American Business Leaders* in 1932, he was in all respects "Carver's disciple" (Nichols 1992, p. 208).[17] Born in Springfield, MA, on August 20, 1899, Joslyn studied at Harvard, receiving a BA in sociology in 1920 and a PhD in economics (special field sociology) in 1930. In 1921 Joslyn reached early academic notoriety when he was awarded the second Karelsen Prize by the American Economic Association for the best essay on "What Can a Man Afford?" (Joslyn 1921). Promoted instructor in economics and tutor in the Division of History, Government and Economics in 1925, Joslyn co-taught with Carver the course "Principles of Sociology" from 1926 until Carver's definite departure from Harvard in 1933.[18] The course, described as a study of the "biological as well as the psychological, moral, economic, and political factors of human adaption," included an entire section on the "Qualitative Control of Population; Eugenic and Dysgenic Factors in Modern Society," based on Paul Popenoe and Roswell H. Johnson's Applied Eugenics (1918).

Joslyn enters our narrative in 1927 when he was asked—likely by Carver himself—to write a review article of Pitirim Sorokin's *Social Mobility* for the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.[19] The book was a pioneering study on the origins of social stratification, which revealed a strong commitment to hereditarianism. In all societies, Sorokin postulated, those jobs that are most important to group survival tend to be attributed to the best elements among the existing population. Drawing upon both American and European sources, mostly from the eugenic literature of the period, Sorokin (1927, p. 268) affirmed that "[t]he upper classes are taller, have a greater weight, greater cranial capacity, greater handsomeness and less serious and less numerous anomalies and defects than the lower classes." This led him to state that "[s]ocial stratification … is correlated and considerably coincides with biological stratification of the same

[16] Thomas N. Carver to Norman E. Himes, May 21, 1940, NHP, Box 33, Folder 371.

[17] In spite of Himes's invitation, Joslyn did not contribute to Carver's *Festschrift.* According to Himes this was mostly due to "political" reasons, in the sense that "he would lose cast with Sorokin if he contributed." At the time Joslyn was an assistant professor of sociology at Harvard and Sorokin was the chair of the newly established department of sociology. Norman E. Himes to Earl J. Hamilton, February 12, 1933, NHP, Box 38, Folder 423.

[18] In 1936 Joslyn moved to the University of Maryland, where he was promoted to full professor of sociology three years later. In 1941, as head of the Department of Sociology, he was responsible for the hiring at Maryland of Charles Wright Mills.

[19] Carver knew Sorokin personally and in 1929 he played a major role in promoting his hiring at Harvard in 1930 as chair of the newly established Department of Sociology (Fiorito 2019).

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population from the standpoint of the physical superiority" (p. 268). This applied to mental characteristics as well. In his view (1927, p. 311), "the higher social classes, on the whole, are more intelligent than the lower ones," and, as a general rule, the "social and mental distribution of individuals within a given society are positively correlated."

Joslyn's review of Sorokin's volume was rather critical in tone. In the main, he found Sorokin's methodology inadequate and his main conclusions incautiously drawn. As to the alleged physical pre-eminence of the upper classes, for instance, Joslyn (1927, pp. 137–138) pointed out that it may be explained in terms of their superior nutrition and healthier physical environment. Taken by themselves, he stated, "the author's findings do not warrant an exclusive interpretation either as the cause or as the result of a superior social status." Similarly, Joslyn insisted, once a proper distinction between innate and acquired intelligence is introduced, Sorokin's whole discussion over the possible correlation between social achievement and mental superiority reduces to the obvious fact that the "developed intelligence of the higher social classes is superior to that of the lower." Ultimately, Sorokin's contention of biological heredity as the main factor contributing to the establishment of social hierarchies was built on too fragile foundations:

> In support of this view the author emphasizes the fact, too often forgotten by environmentalist advocates, that identity of environment frequently results, not in identical achievement, but in differential achievement. If there is any one truth that needs to be hammered into the heads of the Simon-pure environmentalists and egalitarians, it is this. Doing so, however, does not provide us with a quantitative solution to what is, in its essence, a quantitative problem. Of the observed differences in achievement, how much is due to the conditions of nature and how much to those of nurture? (Joslyn 1927, p. 138)

In Joslyn's view, "[i]t seems fair to say that Professor Sorokin has left this central problem in social stratification practically untouched" (Joslyn 1927, p. 138).

Joslyn's reaction to Sorokin's book, however, should not be misinterpreted. His criticism was mostly methodological, and it was not directed towards Sorokin's hereditarianism. As Joslyn himself put it in a letter he sent to Sorokin on May 11, 1928, the published version of the review "does not represent, of course, my own opinion of your work." Joslyn explained:

> I had many things in mind of a favorable nature which I should have liked to have included in the review—but space forbade! As it is customary to say all the horrible things we can think of about a book on the occasion of its review—thus showing how superior we are to the author!—I adopted this practice, and failed, thru lack of space, to say all the favorable things that might have been said about it. So far as my opinion of your "Social Mobility" is concerned, you may be interested to learn that Professor Carver and I are using it in the course in Sociology in this department.[20]

Joslyn's dissatisfaction about Sorokin's book was not without consequences. Later in 1929, under Taussig's supervision, Joslyn began to work on his dissertation, "The Social

[20] Carl S. Joslyn to Pitirim A. Sorokin, October 24, 1929, Pitirim A. Sorokin Papers, University of Saskatchewan Archives.

Origins of American Business Leaders" (1930). The thesis owed much to Sorokin in spirit—to the extent that its goal was to assess whether success in business resulted mainly from the environment, which Joslyn identified with access to capital, personal connections, and higher education, or from innate ability. Carver's theory of occupational congestion was another source of influence. As Joslyn (1930, p. 11) stated in the introduction, such an inquiry would also shed light on the relative influence of nurture, on one hand, and nature, on the other, in restricting the "freedom of movement of individuals out of the poorly or indifferently paid occupations into the well-paid occupations." Differently from Sorokin's, however, Joslyn's approach was strictly empirical. The evidence he provided was based on the replies to a questionnaire he had sent to a sample of about 15,000 business leaders drawn from the 1928 edition of the *Poor's Register of Directors*. The data thus obtained were tabulated on the basis of the size of the business, of which five grades were distinguished, ranging from a gross income of $500,000 to $5,000,000. Interestingly, Joslyn considered the grades of business as an indication of the differences in business ability—the larger the size of business, the higher the ability necessary to run it.

As to class provenance, the questionnaires showed that in 56.7% of the cases, the typical business executive was the son of a businessman, and professional men contributed 13.4% and farmers 12.4%. The percentage of "farm boys" reaching positions of business leadership was decreasing while the percentage of sons of businessmen was increasing—a tendency that was consistent with the changing occupational distribution of the United States. Now, Joslyn observed, if movement from the lower and middle occupational classes into the class of business leaders were perfectly fluid, we should expect that the number of business leaders produced by these classes would somehow reflect their relative shares of the population. Their "failure" to do so, he wrote, is indicative of "some amount of restriction, emanating either from the conditions of nature or from those of nurture, on freedom of movement out of these classes into the class of business leaders" (Joslyn 1930, p. 423). Joslyn's interpretation of the data, albeit with some form of caution, pointed toward the pre-eminence of heredity over environmental factors:

> If the factors underlying this differential restriction consisted for the most part in differences in the representative opportunities to achieve in business afforded by the conditions of nurture prevailing in the several classes, it would seem reasonable to expect: (1) that the degree of achievement of individuals "favored" by these conditions would be distinctly superior to that of individuals not so "favored"; (2) that the achievement-time of individuals born into the "favored" classes would be considerably shorter than that of individuals born into the classes not "favored". Neither of these expectations is, as we have seen, supported by the evidence made available by this inquiry. The degree of business achievement of individuals "favored" as to influential connections and financial aid is not in the least superior to that of individuals not so "favored." (Joslyn 1930, p. 423)

Joslyn was willing to concede that the responses to the questionnaires revealed some "unmistakable" correlation between degree of schooling and business achievement.[21]

[21] Evidence showed that only 1% of the respondents had no formal schooling; 25.7% had a grammar-school education; 28% had a high-school education; I3.4% had some college education; and 31.9% were college graduates.

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Here is where his hereditarian bias surfaces more evidently. Rather than interpreting it as a corroboration of the environmentalist view, he argued that success in business and superior educational attainments are the common results of higher innate ability.

> The fact that the positive correlation begins at the grammar school stage, and is perfectly continuous thereafter, suggests that the negative influence of educational selection is at least as potent a factor in producing the correlation in question as the positive influence of the training received. The kind of men who manage to survive the process of selection involved in the several stages of schooling are also likely to be, in a general way at least, the kind of men who succeed in getting ahead in business. From this standpoint the higher degree of schooling of these men may be regarded simply as a superior degree of educational achievement, essentially parallel with the superior degree of their business achievement. (Joslyn 1930, p. 417)

All this led Joslyn to affirm that "the data yielded by this inquiry, when taken as a whole, are more easily and reasonably explained under the 'nature' hypothesis than under the 'nurture' hypothesis." It is therefore probable that the "level of innate ability representative of the lower and middle classes in society is inferior to that representative of the higher classes." It is for this reason, more than for any other, that the "productivity of the lower occupational classes in business leaders is so markedly inferior to that of the higher classes" (1930, pp. 427–428).

The empirical apparatus of Joslyn's thesis was then absorbed, without any substantial modification, into *American Business Leaders*, the volume he co-authored with Frank Taussig in 1932. The book's conclusions followed, almost verbatim, those of Joslyn's dissertation, with the two authors now calling attention to an "interesting parallel" between their finding and those presented by Francis Galton in his *Hereditary Genius* (1869).[22] *American Business Leaders* was not well received in academic circles. This is relevant since it signals an important change in attitude with respect to the previous decades, when hereditarian accounts of superiority and inferiority were received without much resistance. Virtually all reviewers lamented that the questionnaire on which the investigation was based could not capture the pervasive influence of those unquantifiable environmental factors that today would fall into the heading of "social capital" (see Fiorito 2019 for a discussion). Tipton R. Snavely (1933, p. 288), from the University of Virginia, spoke for all when he asserted that "It is impossible to measure the importance of the social atmosphere surrounding the growing boy." The son of the business or professional man makes contacts from which he absorbs "ambition" and the "psychology of success," so that from early youth he is "encouraged and stimulated to a life of achievement." Who can say, Snavely rhetorically asked, "what the result would be if the environment of the sons of unskilled laborers and of the sons of successful business leaders were reversed?"

The only positive reactions came from Harvard—and this is hardly surprising. Himes (1934, p. 64), who reviewed the volume for the *Eugenics Review*, wrote that Taussig and

[22] As to Galton's (1869) contention that the ascent of a person with a high level of natural intellectual potential would not be deterred by social obstacles, Taussig and Joslyn (1932, p. 256) wondered: "If Galton was led to this conclusion by data based on the careers of men who achieved distinction as judges, statesmen, men of letters, men of science, artists, military commanders, and religious leaders most of which are vocations closed to the men without higher education is it not likely that a similar conclusion applies to a group of men who have achieved distinction in a field of endeavor much more open to the man without special training?"

Joslyn "have contributed notably to our understanding of a basic problem of eugenical theory: the differential productivity of various social classes in producing leaders of a specific type." The book, to Himes's eyes (1934, p. 65), had the great merit of "verifying … the conclusions of all other investigators in showing that the 'proletariat' or unskilled and semi-skilled workers, though a substantial proportion of the population, contribute few leaders." But Himes's eugenic enthusiasm could not match that of his mentor. Carver did not write a review of *American Business Leaders* but heavily drew upon it in his *The Essential Factors of Social Evolution* (1935a). Carver's intellectual debt toward Taussig and Joslyn surfaces in connection to his discussion of the effects of an oversupply of unskilled workers on the labor market. Rather than facing the problem quantitatively, he explicitly pointed to its direct consequences on the quality of population by use of a simple illustration:

> A community which has more ditch diggers than it can use in combination with its limited supply of competent engineers will always be in a bad way. Any process of multiplication which will increase the proportion of engineers to ditch diggers would be an eugenic program. Any process which would increase the proportion of ditch diggers would have to be called dysgenic. (Carver 1935a, p. 431)

For Carver (1935a, p. 432), the way in which demographic growth may affect the relative proportion between those who are economically superfluous (diggers) and those who are scarce (engineers) in a community is a consequence of the "percentage of economic success among the children of the two classes," and this, in turn, depends upon the extent to which the qualities "which made the parents high or low producers" are transmitted to their children. In Carver's hands, the whole problem could thus be reduced to a simple question: "[A]re we likely to get as large a proportion of competent engineers from the progeny of ditch diggers as from the progeny of engineers?" The results brought by Taussig and Joslyn's "most thorough-going investigation up to date of this problem" made him confident enough to answer in the negative. He was disposed to recognize that "the combination of traits which go to make up what we have called productivity is an exceedingly complex one" (1935a, p. 433), yet he firmly believed that statistical prediction of the hereditability of certain inborn traits was, "within wide limits," possible. Referring again with approval to Taussig and Joslyn, Carver held that, within wide limits, it could be possible to determine "the percentages of those born to parents who are high producers who will themselves be high producers" and "the percentage of children born to low producers who will, in spite of their unpromising parentage, prove to be high producers." Educational opportunities open to all who are qualified may partially offset the dysgenic effect of fertility differentials between high and low producers, he admitted (1935a, pp. 435–436), but if the average quality of those to be educated is declining, then "no matter how rapidly the schools may be improved, eventually they will reach a very definite limit beyond which they cannot train successive generations."

VI. MORE ON CARVER AND HIS STUDENTS

As mentioned in the introduction, Field, Himes, and Joslyn do not exhaust the number of scholars who came under the influence of Carver. Among those deserving brief mention

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is Frederick A. Bushee, who graduated in 1902 with the dissertation "Ethnic Factors in the Population of Boston," which he completed under Carver.[23] Bushee's thesis was published the following year as a monograph for the Publications of the American Economic Association, along with an enthusiastic introduction by Harvard's William Z. Ripley, an economist trained at MIT and Columbia and the author of one of the most famous racial taxonomies of the period (1899). The lengthy essay, whose purpose was "to point out various desirable and undesirable qualities" (Bushee 1903, p. 149) of Boston's immigrant population, contained a compendium of much of the worst Progressive Era racial stereotyping. Irish people, for instance, were described as possessing no "natural instinct" for thrift, with the result that the "standard of life in Irish families would often indicate a smaller wage than is actually received" (Bushee 1903, p. 31). The Irish's "racial weakness" also appeared in their "exceptionally high death rate" as well as in the "large amount of pauperism and excess of misdemeanors resulting from a lack of stamina" (p. 120). No better treatment was reserved to African Americans. In discussing the effects of education, Bushee (p. 22) held that the "Negroes probably make the least use of their educational opportunities of all the racial factors." This was due to the fact that for "the Negro children the labor of attainment is too great." While in the earliest grades of schooling they appear "exceptionally mature," they become "less successful" and "their interest wanes" as they proceed towards college. Ultimately, Bushee insisted, "the best educated persons among the Negroes are usually mulattoes."

Bushee's major work, *Principles of Sociology*, appeared in 1923 and it immediately became one of Carver's main reference texts for his sociology courses.[24] In general terms, the book was an attempt to reconstruct the case for hereditarianism by conceding some credence to environmental factors. Although the environment cannot as a rule affect "native qualities," Bushee stated (1923, p. 385), it does determine the "degree to which inherent characters shall be developed or perfected," exerting a selective influence in favor of one inborn trait over another. This concession notwithstanding, Bushee accepted all the most disputable arguments then proposed by the eugenicists, advocating segregation for the defectives and "unemployables" and sterilization for those "racially unfit" who are individually independent or self-supporting. Echoing Carver, Bushee (1923, pp. 404–405) also expressed concern about the high fertility among the "lowest grade of the normal," mostly represented by unskilled labor. Recruiting future generations from this class, he affirmed, is not only contrary to the eugenic principle of "reproducing from the best," but it would exert an "economic pressure upon the class above which restricts the multiplication of the superior individuals in that higher class." Bushee somewhat mitigated these claims, recognizing that even among these lower classes can be found individuals who are "desirable and even indispensable members of

[23] Niles Carpenter (of whom more below) described Bushee as a "speculative didactic essayist after the Carverian tradition" (Niles Carpenter to Norman E. Himes, September 5, 1933, NEP, Box 33, Folder 369). Himes offered Bushee the editorship of Carver's *Festschrift* but he declined on the ground that "the editor should be someone who lives in or near Cambridge" (Frederick A. Bushee to Norman E. Himes, May 6, 1932, NHP, Box 49, Folder 561). In 1912 Bushee had become professor of economics and sociology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he remained until his retirement in 1939.

[24] In 1901–02 Carver and Bushee co-taught the first offering of "Socialism and Communism"—a course on "schemes of social improvement" that Carver continued to give until his retirement from Harvard.

society." Yet, he concluded, even the most ardent "environmentalist" must admit that the "inferior variations frequently become a burden on society."

Another student who remained in touch with Carver after his Harvard days was Niles Carpenter. Carpenter, who graduated in 1920 and obtained a position at the University of Buffalo four years later, was the author of *Immigrants and Their Children* (1927), a detailed sociological analysis of the social differences between first- and second-generation immigrants in America. Albeit somewhat more sympathetic towards immigrants than his mentor, Carpenter nonetheless saw immigrants as a "foreign stock," which "can be clearly set apart" (1927, p. 2). In his view, "any forecast of the probable long-run outcome of a population movement rests upon the prior estimate of the inherent nature of the racial elements involved" (p. 178), and he considered Americanization a "matter of social and political, as well as biological assimilation" (p. 250).[25] In 1936 Carpenter joined Carver as a member of the newly established Research Division of the Republican National Committee, a group of university professors that came to be known as the "Republican brain trust." The presence of Carver immediately turned out to be a liability. The previous year Carver had in fact published a pamphlet, entitled *What Must We Do to Save Our Economic System?* (1935b), where he proposed prohibition on marriage for those who could not "afford an automobile," as well as the segregation and sterilization of the "palpably unfit"—a measure he defined as "one of the few rational things which have come out of Hitlerism." Carver's views soon became a source of political embarrassment and just a few months after his official establishment, "the Republican brain trust was quietly but firmly set aside" (Galbraith 1987, p. 196).

Given the controversial nature of Carver, it should be hardly surprising that some of his students decided to distance themselves from his more extreme positions. This is the case, for instance, of Albert B. Wolfe, who served as president of the American Economic Association in 1943. When Himes asked him whether he was interested in contributing a chapter to Carver's *Festschrift*, Wolfe frankly expressed his mixed feelings about his Harvard teacher:

> I am somewhat doubtful as to what kind of reaction you will get from Carver's former students. I like Carver personally immensely, and in the past he has done me a good turn or two. Of late years, I have been told, he has been a bit sore at me because I adversely criticized some of his ideas in my "Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method" [1923]. I did not realize that I was saying anything which a presumably broadminded and objective scholar would take as personal. I must confess that for ten or a dozen years past I have been more and more skeptical of Carver's contribution. He did his real work in the 1890's, culminating in his "Distribution of Wealth" in 1904. He has never had any high regard among the sociologists, which perhaps is not entirely to his discredit, and of

[25] In discussing the qualities of ethnic stocks, Carpenter ambiguously blended biological and environmental factors. Writing in 1935, for instance, he pointed out the existence in "every other modern city" of distinct "black patches" that have been producing "feebleminded, immoral, epileptic, insane, criminalistic, indolent and semi-employable men and women for a succession of generations." Whether hereditary or environmental factors were predominant in these cases, Carpenter wrote, is a "matter largely of academic concern." Recent statistical evidence, was his conclusion, "would seem to indicate that both are operative" (1935, pp. 692–693).

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> late years I have heard more and more disparaging estimates of him on the part of economists—especially the younger men.[26]

Wolfe here did not mention that his first, and probably most explicit, criticism of Carver can be traced back to his 1912 review of *The Religion Worth Having*—a small volume, intended for a popular audience, where Carver had argued that even religion should be assessed as to its contribution to group survival.[27] Wolfe (1912, p. 681) took issue with Carver's "biologico-economic interpretation of society and ethics," which had led him to view the poor and the weak as threats requiring state and social restraint. "Much fault can be found with these sharp and unlovely conclusions," continued Wolfe, but it was Carver's discussion of population that mostly bothered him. As Wolfe wrote in his review:

> We have thought him [Carver] a Malthusian, but he shows indication of fearing race suicide much more than overpopulation, and even, like Karl Pearson, of welcoming overpopulation as a spur to conflict and thus to race progress. All this, too, raises the question whether his philosophy is not essentially a male philosophy for a man-made world, rather than a full human philosophy with both men and women in its purview. We are left with a feeling that the author would go with some of the popular eugenists of the day and make woman a mere reproductive mechanism rather than an integral part of this race, the progress of which is still to entail so much conflict and so much pain. (Wolfe 1912, p. 681)

Wolfe further developed his criticism of eugenics and hereditarianism in *Conservatism, Radicalism, and Scientific Method* (1923), a work much inspired by the then rampant behavioristic psychology (Fiorito 2013). Eugenic thinking, he wrote (1923, pp. 265–266), was guilty of what he called the "fallacy of linear reasoning," which he considered the "the besetting sin of 'one-track' minds." Supporters of eugenics, like Karl Pearson and Charles Davenport, are "so keen to trace out the influence of heredity that they constantly take for heredity much that non-linear observation would show to be due to ontogenetic variation under environmental influence." As biological entities, Wolfe continued, we all are "more nearly equal than any one now believes we are," and no one cannot on scientific grounds "condemn an individual to inferior status and deprive him of opportunity before he has been tried out for a time under opportunities equal to those granted others.… There is much that goes for hereditary feeble-mindedness," he concluded, "which is due to malnutrition and adenoids" (Wolfe 1923, pp. 265–266).[28]

Another student who took issue with Carver's positions was the American journalist Walter Lippmann, who entered Harvard as an undergraduate in the fall of 1906.[29] In his

[26] Albert B. Wolfe to Norman E. Himes, May 4, 1932, NHP, Box 49, Folder 561.

[27] In Carver's words: "The religion worth having is the religion which brings the largest success in the final and ultimate sense to the peoples and nations which adopt it and enables them to survive in competition with peoples and nations possessing any other type of religion" (1912b, p. 22).

[28] Wolfe also became more and more critical of the American birth control movement and its overtly eugenic agenda. "A glance through the files of the *Birth Control Review*," he lamented (1929, p. 95), "will show that in late years the birth-control advocates have emphasized, in their propaganda, more and more the eugenic aspects, and have failed to be properly critical of the biological and statistical (statistics of differential fertility, and of mental tests) data."

[29] Lippmann graduated cum laude in three years but stayed on for a fourth year as an assistant to George Santayana, professor of philosophy.

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recollections, Lippmann made no secret of his opinion of Carver as a professor: "I regarded him as the opponent of all I believed in. I took his course to understand what I regarded as the opposition" (quoted in Goodwin 2014, p. 10). In late 1914, Lippmann, who at the time had become one the founding editors of the *New Republic*, wrote Carver in regard to his views on population control. His inquiry was phrased in pleasantly innocent terms: "The other day we received a fragmentary report of some speech or statement that you have made, in which you said that the proper approach to the problem of unemployment was to prevent the poor from marrying. Would it be possible for you to write me a line verifying this?"[30] Carver replied the very following day: "I have often suggested some form of restriction on marriage as one item in a comprehensive program for the elimination of poverty. When it comes to a real issue of this kind, however, the socialists are always laissez faire standpatters, as they are on every real issue."[31] He then continued reporting his experience as a trustee of the Massachusetts State School for the Feeble-Minded: "If there is anything which is definitely understood regarding the question of feeble-mindedness, it is the necessity of some kind of restriction to prevent their reproducing themselves." The same policy of restriction, Carver held, should apply to the poor:

> Feeble-minded people, if unrestricted, will multiply as fast as is physiologically possible. That tends to intensify the problem of dependency. Economically incompetent people tend to multiply almost at the same rate. That tends to increase the supply of the unemployable as well as of those with a low grade of skill. The presence of large numbers of such people, however, is a constant menace to the laborers who are just above that level.

To his letter Carver attached a brief outline of his full "Programme of Reform," which included, under the heading "For the redistribution of human talent," both restriction of marriage for the "economically independent" and the elimination of "defectives." We do not know whether Lippmann replied to Carver, since our archival research revealed no further correspondence between the two men. What we know is that in the early 1920s, Lippmann acquired national notoriety as a critic of the then acclaimed Army Intelligence Tests developed by the Stanford psychologist (and committed eugenicist) Lewis Terman. For Terman, the tests results showed that intelligence was largely fixed by heredity, and this in turn allowed eugenically minded figures like the Harvard social psychologist William McDougall (1921) to argue that most individuals, especially those of the lower social strata, were biologically inferior and inapt for democracy. Lippmann contested both the methodology employed to measure intelligence (a revision of Binet's scale), as well as Terman's evident bias in interpreting the data as a biological rationale for a hierarchical view of society. "The whole drift of the propaganda based on intelligence testing is to treat people with low intelligence quotients as congenitally and hopelessly inferior," he wrote in the New Republic (1922a, pp. 297–298). He was willing to concede that some performance-based testing may be a more accurate indicator of school success, but he did not equate school success with intelligence or fitness.

[30] Walter Lippmann to Thomas N. Carver, December 4, 1914, Walter Lippmann Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
[31] Thomas N. Carver to Walter Lippmann, December 5, 1914, Walter Lippmann Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Intelligence, he insisted, remains "an exceedingly complicated notion which nobody has as yet succeeded in defining" (Lippmann 1922b, p. 246).

VII. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

For biologically deterministic arguments in the social sciences, the years spanning the mid-1920s to the late 1930s represented a crucial period of transition. In the United States, contributions contesting the scientific credentials of eugenics began to appear more frequently after the end of World War I and intensified during the following decade (see Eggen 1926 for an early survey of the literature). This shift in attitude, Garland E. Allen (2011) suggests, may have come as a response to two major public issues in which hereditarian and eugenic arguments played a central role: (1) the heated debates (also within academia) surrounding immigration restriction, and (2) the 1927 famous US Supreme Court decision on *Buck v Bell*, which upheld the constitutionality of a Virginia sterilization statute of 1924 allowing for forcible sterilization of institutionalized individuals. As blatant racial and nativist claims came to spread and taint the immigration and population debates, Allen (2011, p. 323) explains, "a number of geneticists … began to realize that eugenics was not just oversimplified or bad scientific theory, but that it was being used to influence far reaching and significant political and social policy." In the social sciences a further thrust in this direction was imparted by the advent of behaviorism (Ross 1991, pp. 311–312; Asso and Fiorito 2004). With its emphasis on observable stimulus-response chains as the only acceptable explanation of behavior, the "new psychology" pointed toward an egalitarianism that left little or no room for heredity. In 1930, Horace Kallen in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Kallen 1930, p. 498) could assert that "[a]t birth human infants, regardless of their heredity, are as equal as Fords." For the behaviorist, he continued, it is only after birth that "the environment acts upon these units of unlearned behavior in an endless variety of ways."

Yet, in spite of such a rampant faith in human plasticity, biologically deterministic ideas survived well into the third decade of the last century. This was especially the case at Harvard, where people such as McDougall, Sorokin, Taussig, and Carver continued to propose a version of social science infused with eugenic and hereditarian elements. Carver was an important figure in many respects. Not only did the character and tone of his contribution place him among the most outspoken supporters of eugenics of his days, but as a charismatic (and certainly controversial) teacher he transfered much of his beliefs to his students. In this paper we have focused on contributions of three "representative" Carver students. Within a broad hereditarian framework, each of these authors proceeded along a distinct trajectory. Field was an early enthusiast of eugenics who, before enrolling in his PhD at Harvard, made a visit at the Eugenics Laboratory in the University of London. Later in his life, however, Field became far more skeptical of the actual practicability of eugenics as well as of some aspects of Carver's thought. Himes, by contrast, was far more on the Carverian track and so remained for the rest of his life. Like Carver, Himes equated biological fitness with economic worth and worried about the dysgenic consequences of differential fertility. Differently from Carver, however, Himes's eugenics was free of racialist considerations. Joslyn was not directly part of the eugenic network of the period—he was never affiliated with the American

Eugenics Society and neither did he advocate for eugenics in his writings. Yet, in his PhD thesis and in the volume on *American Business Leaders* co-authored with Taussig, he attempted to re-establish the primacy of nature over nurture in explaining patterns of difference in business success among individuals.

Brief mention has also been made of other students influenced by Carver, such as Bushee and Carpenter—but the list may have included also the names of Louis Bristol, Carle C. Zimmerman, and Wilford H. Crook, all individuals who flirted with eugenics at some point in their career.[32] In our narrative, instead, Wolfe and Lippmann have played the role of the early dissenters at pains to dissociate themselves from the views of Carver. However, and this is our final notation, neither Wolfe nor Lippmann was fully immune from the pervasive eugenic climate to which they had been exposed—and this bears witness to the difficulties in adopting a "one-way" interpretative key for those transitional years. Like Carver, in fact, Wolfe praised the eugenic virtues of minimum wage legislation. A binding minimum, he asserted, would have protected the "normal" worker, expunging the inefficient from employment and setting them aside, as was done with backward and subnormal schoolchildren. To Wolfe's eyes (1917, p. 278; see the discussion in Leonard 2016, pp. 161–162), "the elimination of the inefficient … is in line with the spirit and trend of modern social economics." Lippmann, in the latter part of *The Good Society* (1937), elaborated an "Agenda of Liberalism," which implied, among other proposals, "large social expenditure on eugenics and on education." Eugenics, Lippmann explained, is necessary for "those who are born handicapped," and because of the "deterioration of the stock from which they spring" they are without the "capacity to make their way" (1937, p. 212). To our knowledge, this passing (yet significant) concession to eugenics has gone unnoticed even in the most accurate accounts of Lippmann's liberalism—but at the time it did not escape the attention of an acute observer from Chicago (Knight 1938).

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[32] See Bristol (1915); Sorokin and Zimmerman (1928); and Crook (1935).

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