"Quality goes hand in hand with quantity": French Interwar Eugenic Ideology

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Abstract:

The French Eugenics Society (Société Français Eugénique, SFE) motto "Quality Goes Hand in Hand with Quantity" defined interwar French eugenics. There is a lasting perception that the SFE practiced positive Lamarckian eugenics that focused on improving the social wellbeing of their citizens. However, the SFE were also concerned with ensuring the "quality" of the French population. To that end, as early as the 1920s members of the SFE advocated for negative Mendelian eugenics. While they realized that they faced major obstacles given the pronatalist movement in France, the democratic ideals of the Third Republic, and the shifting political landscape, they continued to promote their views into the 1930s. The Vichy regime established in 1940 is often regarded as a turning point in French eugenics. Mendelian conceptions of eugenics, however, were gaining influence throughout the interwar years and developments after 1940 represent continuation and growth of the movement.

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SFE	Société Français Eugénique
FFEPH	Fondation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The French Eugenics Society (Société Français Eugénique, SFE) motto "Quality Goes Hand in Hand with Quantity" defined interwar French eugenics. In the 1920s, the SFE had just reformed following the First World War and its members were preparing a report on the eugenic implications of the war for French society. The group was deeply concerned with the effects of the conflict and its implications for the growth of the French population. However, it was also concerned with ensuring the "quality" of the French population. This is an important point, for there is a lasting perception that the SFE practiced positive Lamarckian eugenics that focused on improving the social wellbeing of its citizens. This would in turn increase the value of their population. However, an examination of writing from prominent members makes it clear that this perception needs sharpening. After the First World War, many members of the SFE advocated for negative Mendelian eugenics based on biological ideas of how to increase the quality, or "value" of the population through population control measures. The members knew that with the pronatalist movement in France being so central to governmental policy and funding, as well as the democratic ideals of the French Third Republic, and the shifting political landscape, that they would not be able to enact the kind of restrictive population controls they wanted. This caused the SFE to align with pronatalist, and social hygiene groups, but various publications by the Society's members indicate the growing appeal of Mendelian eugenics in the 1920s, a decade earlier than is often believed.

This conclusion has implications for understanding developments during the 1930s and 1940s. The establishment of the Vichy regime after the French defeat of 1940, and its subsequent implementation of some population control policies, is often

regarded as a sharp turning point in the history of eugenics in the country. However, this report argues that a Mendelian conception of eugenics was gaining influence in France throughout the interwar years; developments after 1940 represent continuation and growth, rather than a sharp turn.

The term eugenics was coined in the 1880s by Francis Galton. It is the study of selecting desired traits, reproducing those traits, and improving the population as a result.[1] By the 1920s, there were two main theories or branches of the eugenics movement, Neo-Lamarckian and Neo-Mendelian. Neo-Lamarckism, or so-called positive eugenics, is based on French biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's (1744-1829), ideas of biological determinism. Neo-Lamarckian eugenicists held the view that by improving the quality and health of the population, they could raise the birthrate and ensure that certain qualities, which they viewed as desirable and superior, would be passed along genetically.[2] Mendelian eugenics, so-called negative eugenics, are based on the views of Gregor Mendel (1822-1884). Neo-Mendelian eugenics state that in order to improve the population, biologically inferior people must be excluded or removed so their inherent traits would not be inherited by future generations. These inherited traits included physical, mental and personality "deficiencies".[3]

France was one of the few Western countries in the interwar period with a eugenics society rooted in positive eugenics. The history of French eugenics has been relatively overlooked due to a concern with German and English-speaking eugenic

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[1] Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 14.
[2] Robert Sussman, *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 43.
[3] Sussman, 50.

movements. This, combined with a lower level of research into French eugenics has led to a misconception that French eugenicists in the 1920s and early 1930s followed and perfectly modeled this positive, education-based eugenics.

Up until the 1980s, eugenics was viewed by historians as a marginal movement in French society.[4] This has been refuted by scholars such as Paul-André Rosental and William Schneider, however there is still a view that French eugenicists' beliefs were firmly rooted in Neo-Lamarckian ideals of society. As this report will illustrate, many French eugenicists in fact had Mendelian leanings. But the Third Republic still valued individuality, democratic ideals and raising the birthrate too much to allow Mendelian eugenics to predominate. This caused various French eugenicists to embrace their country's Neo-Lamarckist roots to gain influence and find allies among French politicians and public health advocates. Even though eugenics policy in France was rooted in Lamarckism, French advocates of eugenics made their discontent with this situation known in their writings by making frequent reference to desired Mendelian policy. While social hygiene measures were practiced, Mendelian ideas of social control weaved in and out of their writing and speeches. Thus, while endorsing Neo-Lamarckism, Mendelian views were nevertheless significant which facilitated a shift in outlook and policy during the 1930s and into the Vichy Regime.

The SFE was founded in 1912, shortly after the International Eugenics Conference in London. France sent delegates to the conference and many of these

[4] Paul-André Rosental, "Eugenics and Social Security in France before and after the Vichy Regime," *Journal of Modern European History* 10, no. 4 (2012): 540.

delegates became founding members.[5] The Society held its founding meeting at the School of Medicine in Paris, and included members from medical, government and research fields. The Society was put on hold during the First World War but re-formed in 1918 with many of the same members and the goal of addressing questions of social hygiene and population growth following the war.[6] The Society was aware of France's demographic challenges following the First World War. France had lost 1.4 million citizens and endured a million civilian injuries. As a result, the French state found itself with many dependants and the interwar years saw the highest levels of municipal funding and support for social services.[7] This contributed to the apparent embrace of positive eugenics. The SFE worked with many social hygiene organizations throughout the interwar period. In 1922, for example, they formed a joint board with the Committee of Union against Venereal Peril and financially supported the National League against the Venereal Peril.[8] These two organizations ran public health campaigns to educate citizens on venereal diseases, their effects, and prevention. The SFE also worked with the Social Hygiene Office created in 1924. One of the projects the SFE supported was a propaganda campaign against tuberculosis which was primarily an education campaign. These activities fell in line with the Lamarckian mandate of the organization. The SFE would continue to financially support, and to actively involve itself in social hygiene

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[5] William Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," *The Journal of Modern History* 54, no. 2 (1982): 275.
[6] Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," 278.
[7] Timothy Smith, *Creating the Welfare State in France, 1880-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 95.
[8] Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," 281.

educational campaigns until the depression hit in the 1930s and many of these programs were cut.

I will examine the writing of high-ranking SFE members and of those who wrote for the Society frequently and were well respected within other fields, such as science and medicine. These include Dr. Charles Richet, vice president of the SFE in the interwar period. Richet won a Nobel Prize in 1913 for his work on anaphylaxis and contributed much to the scientific community in France.[9] Lucien March, treasurer of the SFE until his death in 1932, was also the chief statistician for the French government.[10] Dr. Georges Papillaut was a member of the SFE, as well as a professor at the école d'anthropologie in Paris.[11] Dr. Eugène Apert was the third president of the SFE, and was also president of the French Pediatric Society.[12] Dr. Georges Schreiber was the secretary of the Society in 1926 and a pediatric doctor.[13] Dr. Georges Hueyer was a member of the SFE, a doctor, a professor of medicine, and a member of the Académie nationale de médecine. Dr. Adolphe Pinard was the second president of the eugenics society, and popularized puericulture in France through his work as an obstetrician. He was also a deputy in the French national assembly as well as a member of the Académie nationale de médecine.[14] Finally, I will examine the writing of Sicard de Plauzoles, a member of

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[9] Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," 278.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] "Georges Papillault," *Bulletins et mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, 1934, 1.
[12] Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," 278.
[13] "Georges Schreiber" (British National Formulary, n.d), https://data.bnf.fr/fr/13463862/georges_schreiber/.
[14] Schneider, "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," 278.

the SFE and president of the French League against Venereal Disease.[15] These men were all eugenicists working with the SFE who also held high positions within French society and were well respected in their fields.[16]

The historiography of eugenics in interwar France is comparatively underdeveloped, as most of the related medical and social history works for the interwar period focus on the pronatalist movement. Paul André Rosental wrote that until the 1980s, France was viewed as "immune to eugenics."[17] This is reflected in the historiography. There are not many books on the subject, but there are chapters and articles that address the topic.

The first comprehensive book on French eugenics[18] is *L'Eugénique: problème, méthodes, résultats* was written by Jean Sutter and published in 1950.[19] According to Sutter, French eugenics was rooted in the discipline of puericulture, involving pre-natal care focused on the health of parents.[20] The doctor who popularized puericulture in France was Adolphe Pinard, and as Sutter demonstrates, he was also involved in the SFE. Although the declared focus of the book is French eugenics, Sutter focuses quite heavily on other countries, such as Germany, England, and the United States. Beyond

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[15] William Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 188.
[16] The first president of the SFE was Dr. Edmund Perrier, followed by Dr. Adolphe Pinard in 1921, and then Dr. Eugène Apert. The membership and following presidents are not well recorded.
[17] Rosental, "Eugenics and Social Security in France before and after the Vichy Regime," 540.
[18] Alex Carrel wrote *L'Homme, cet inconnu* in 1935 whilst in France, however his career was spent in the United States and therefore reflect American eugenics, rather than French eugenics.
[19] Jean Sutter, *L'eugénique, problemes-méthodes-résultats* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).
[20] Sutter, 130.

documenting the eugenics movement in France, Sutter argues that eugenics and politics had to be linked in order to effect change.[21] Sutter's emphasis on puericulture as the foundation for French eugenics is a theme that persists throughout the subsequent historiography.

William Schneider is one the leading historians of French eugenics, having published one of the few monographs on the subject, as well as articles and chapters. His book *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* was published in 1990. His articles include "Puericulture, and the Style of French Eugenics"[22] and "Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France," as well as a contribution to a collection on eugenics entitled "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940."[23] Schneider attempts to assess the founding, rise, and evolution of the SFE in relation to its allies and opponents. He views neo-Lamarckian ideas of education as closely related to puericulture, concluding that the two went hand in hand in the early decades of the twentieth century.[24] With respect to the interwar years, he argues that "[t]he more limited objective of simply trying to improve the existing population biologically through social hygiene measures was much more compatible with the post war spirit of rebuilding, both physically and psychologically."[25] Schneider emphasizes French eugenics' Lamarckian roots and the

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[21] Sutter, 230.
[22] William Schneider, "Puericulture, and the Style of French Eugenics," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1986): 265-77
[23] William Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," in *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia,* ed. Mark Adams, 69-109 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[24] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 73.
[25] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 119.

persistence of Neo-Lamarckism throughout the interwar period, concluding that, "[i]n fact, Mendelian eugenics appeared in France only in the 1930s."[26] As with other scholars of French eugenics, Schneider hold that the SFE was Neo-Larmackian in nature and fully embraced the ideologies of positive eugenics.

Anne Carol authored the other monograph on French eugenics, *Histoire de l'eugénisme en France: les médicins et la procreation, XIXe-XX2 siècle*, published in 1995.[27] While Schneider concentrates on the SFE, Carol focuses on French doctors. She traces a longer history of eugenics in France and the ways that it emerged within the medical field. Like Schneider, she covers puericulture and degeneration, sometimes referencing Schneider's work on the subject. However, she focuses on puericulture's impact on eugenics, rather than Lamarckism. It is interesting to note that while Schneider's work has not been translated, it is frequently cited in Carol's French language study, demonstrating the limited amount of work by French scholars on the subject.

Other scholars have addressed aspects of eugenics in France specifically, thus rejecting earlier views of France's supposed eugenic immunity. The historiography of French eugenics began growing in the 1990s. Pierre-André Taguieff[28] and Gwen Terrenoire,[29] for example, consider the different explanations and translations in the French language regarding eugenics. This is something that French scholars bring up,

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[26] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 97.
[27] Anne Carol, *Histoire de l'eugénisme en France: Les médecins et la procréation, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).
[28] Pierre-André Taguieff, "Eugénisme Ou Décadence ? L'exception Française," *Ethnologie française* 24, no. 1 (1994): 81–103.
[29] Gwen Terrenoire, "L'eugénisme En France Avant 1939," *Revue d'histoire de La Shoah* 2, no. 183 (2005): 49–67.

but I have not seen represented in the English language literature. According to Terrenoire, there is an important distinction with *eugénique* meaning "above average hereditary abilities or qualities" and *eugénisme*, meaning the "opposite of degeneration."[30] This emphasis on language is prevalent in recent work on eugenic movements in Europe. Rosental compares the use of the word eugenics in Britain to that of France to illuminate how often the terms were used in public policy.[31] However he does not make the translation distinctions that scholars such as Taguieff and Terrnoire do. It is interesting that Rosental uses the term "eugenics" to measure prevalence in Britain, and "eugénique" to measure prevalence in France. He indicates the number of times the word shows up in French use to show how little impact eugenics had in France.[32] However, he does not account for different translations and meanings of the word as Terrenoire does, which may indicate an underestimation of eugenics' significance within French society.

French pronatalism, driven by long-standing concerns about the country's comparatively low birth rate in comparison to its neighbours, had a profound impact on the eugenics movement. There are articles on pronatalism that explore eugenics in this context. They include Richard Sonn's work "Your Body is Yours: Anarchism, Birth Control, and Eugenics in Interwar France,"[33] and Geoff Read's work "Citizens Useful to their Country and to Humanity: The Convergence of Eugenics and Pro-Natalism in

[30] Terrenoire, 52.
[31] Rosental, 544.
[32] Rosental, 545.
[33] Richard Sonn, "'Your Body Is Yours': Anarchism, Birth Control, and Eugenics in Interwar France," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 4 (2005): 415–32.

Interwar French Politics, 1918-1940."[34] Sonn maintains that the birth control movement in France highlighted tensions between the desire to grow the population and the desire to allow freedom of choice in reproduction. Sonn ties this into eugenics by showing how the followers of Neo-Malthusianism (those with a fear of overpopulation who proposed population control measures as a solution), saw themselves as aligned with the eugenics movement.[35] Read's work shows how the pronatalist movement in France shifted towards the right, in the 1930s, reflecting general political trends. Although he does not focus on the 1920s, he explains that eugenics shifted by the end of the 1930s in tandem with the evolving pronatalist movement. For Read, this is a consequence of France moving towards the right in politics.[36] This led the pronatalist movements to embrace eugenic ideas of "quality over quantity," accepting the idea that ensuring the quality of the overall population was more important than simply raising the rate of population growth. Coupled with a growing xenophobic concern about the degeneration of the "French race," this created a more restrictive environment that allowed the two to become allies.

French eugenics is addressed in an international context through the work of Jacques Léonard[37] and Jakob Tanner.[38] Tanner's work "Eugenics before 1945" explores

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[34] Geoff Read, "'Citizens Useful to Their Country and to Humanity': The Convergence of Eugenics and Pro-Natalism in Interwar French Politics, 1918-1940," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History/ Bulletin Canadien d'histoire de La Medecine* 29, no. 2 (2012): 373–97.
[35] Sonn, 431.
[36] Read, "'Citizens Useful to Their Country and to Humanity': The Convergence of Eugenics and Pro-Natalism in Interwar French Politics, 1918-1940," 391.
[37] Jacques Léonard, "Congrès International d'eugénique (Londres, 1912) et ses conséquences françaises," *History of Science and Medicine* 17, no. 2 (1983): 141–46.
[38] Jakob Tanner, "Eugenics before 1945," *Journal of Modern European History* 10, no. 4 (2012): 458–79.

how eugenics took shape internationally and the theories preceding it. Although the focus is on countries such as Britain, Germany and the US, France is mentioned as a country in which Lamarckian influences held sway, reflecting established views on the subject.[39] France is not mentioned in the section on eugenics in democratic countries, but rather in the section about eugenics and modernity.[40] Tanner alludes to Schneider's writing to demonstrate that eugenics in France persisted past the Second World War, which he notes was unusual. Léonard's work, *Congrès International d'eugénique* is also an overview of the international eugenics congress in 1912 and how the French Eugenics Society formed out of it, in relation to other countries.[41]

The historiography of French eugenics, in sum, concentrates largely on Lamarckism and pronatalism. There is little attention to the SFE's desired Mendelian policy throughout the interwar period. Schneider is one of the few historians whose investigation of the SFE expands on their activities during the interwar period. Schneider and Carol focus on the medical background of Lamarckian eugenics and its basis in puericulture. There is also an emphasis on pronatalism within the historiography, with such scholars as Sonn and Read examining the pronatalist movement, and the influence of eugenics within that context. Finally, France is used as a contrast to other European countries when examining eugenics on an international scale. This report will add to the historiography of French eugenics by demonstrating how the context of French society at large shaped policies of the French Eugenics Society's policy. It also establishes the persistent significance of the Mendelian approach during the interwar years. This

[39] Tanner, 465.
[40] Tanner, 475.
[41] Léonard, 143.

allowed for growth and continuation in Mendelian eugenics in France throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s.

Chapter 2: The Interwar French Context

There were many factors in interwar France that influenced the evolution of the eugenics movement and encouraged the seeming primacy of Lamarckian eugenics. Some of these factors include the pronatalist movement and the desire for European immigration after 1918, as well as the complex religious and political context. There was a very strong pronatalist movement in France which impacted the French Eugenics Society's potential policies. The pronatalist movement in France also impacted immigration policy, as the goal was to grow the French population. Various French governments created incentives and help for families to immigrate to France. Immigration was seen as a way to increase the population and create naturalized French citizens. The political landscape which had long valued democratic ideals, experienced many shifts throughout the interwar period. In addition, the still powerful influence of Catholicism on French culture and its connections to the pronatalist movement influenced the atmosphere in which the French Eugenics Society operated. Although various SFE members preferred Mendelian policy in the interwar period, it is clear their ideas were not compatible with the post war spirit of rebuilding in France. These social conditions prevented the SFE from enacting Mendelian policies. Instead, they were only able to write about them, while financing and assisting with social hygiene policy and organizations.

Following a humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, the rate of population growth became an issue of great concern in France, and would remain that

way for decades.[42] Before the First World War, the greater size, and more rapid increase, of Germany's population in relation to that of France preoccupied various segments of public opinion. In general, the Third Republic seemed to be falling behind its neighbours. Demographic studies showed that between 1800 and 1900 France's population grew by 43 percent, where countries such as Britain grew by 164%.[43] This concern was amplified following the First World War and the 1918 influenza pandemic. The country sustained many deaths, especially with respect to young men. France lost 1.4 million people throughout the First World War. Moreover, the birthrate continued to drop throughout the war years (see figure 1 below). To reverse this trend, it was widely believed that at least three children per family were necessary, two to replace the parents, and an extra to add to the population or in case one child died before reproducing.[44]

[42] Margaret Cook Andersen, *Regeneration through Empire: French Pronatalists and Colonial Settlement in the Third Republic*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 1.
[43] Anderson, 3.
[44] Virginie De Luca Barrusse, "Pro-Natalism and Hygienism in France, 1900-1940. The Example of the Fight against Venereal Disease," *Population* 64, no. 3 (2009), 477.

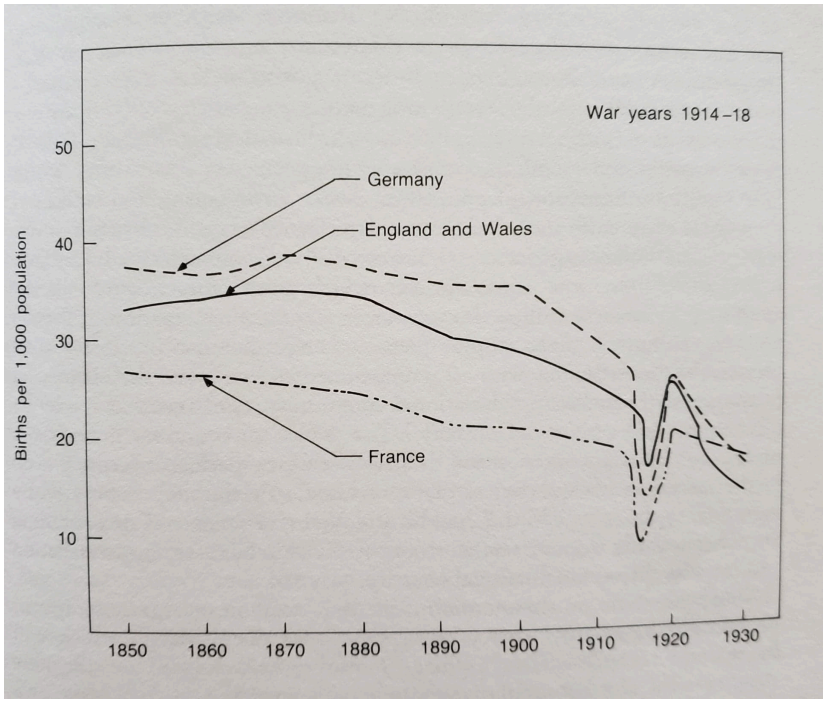

Figure 1 Crude birthrates for France, Germany, England, and Wales, 1850-1930

Source: Sylvia. Schafer, *Children in Moral Danger and the Problem of Government in Third Republic France.* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

The pronatalist movement impacted France in many ways, from government policy to popular culture. There were family welfare programs, financial incentives and further research into childbirth and maternal care.[45] There were also films, postcards, and books with pronatalist messages. This created an environment that made policies that could restrict or reduce birth rates, such as those that could result from negative eugenics, difficult to implement.

The pronatalist movement in France quickly gained government support in the interwar period. The country's low birthrate was viewed as a national problem that

[45] Andrés Horacio Reggiani, "Procreating France: The Politics of Demography, 1919-1945," *French Historical Studies* 19, no. 3 (1996), 729.

needed to be addressed at many levels. The Alliance nationale contre la dépopulation was endorsed by the president, Raymond Poincaré, in 1914.[46] The following president, Alexandre Millerand, was a member of the Alliance nationale pour l'accroisement de la population.[47] There was a recognition of the importance of pronatalism within government, with parties even running on pronatalist platforms and campaign advertisements demonstrating the number of children their party leaders had.[48] There was also a conference held every year from 1920 to 1938, the Congrès national de la natalité et des familles nombreuses, which focused on questions of population and increasing the birthrate.[49] Along with this came a marked increase in governmental spending for welfare and social services that would encourage families to have more children and would keep families healthy. For example, in 1914 the Assistance publique de Paris had 54% of its operating budget covered by governmental funding, by 1920 that it was 71.6%.[50] In addition to increased spending on welfare programs, there were specific programs and incentives implemented to raise the birth rate.

President Millerand passed pronatalist and population policies throughout his term. In 1920, abortion, the sale and the circulation of information pertaining to contraception, and anti-natalist information was banned in France.[51] This bill was enacted with 521 votes in favour and only 55 against. The influence of pronatalism was

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[46] Marie-Monique Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990), 43.
[47] Nikolas Dörr, "'As Far as Numbers Are Concerned, We Are Beaten' *Finis Galliae* and the Nexus between Fears of Depopulation, Welfare Reform, and the Military in France during the Third Republic, 1870-1940," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 45, no. 2 (172) (2020), 91.
[48] Dorr, 92.
[49] Huss, 44.
[50] Smith, 95.
[51] Dorr, 93.

grew rapidly. By 1923, this led to four-year prison sentences for those performing abortions and six-month sentences for women undergoing an abortion.[52] There were tax measures implemented to encourage having families. For example, individuals who were over 30 and unmarried had to pay extra taxes, and the same applied to married couples who did not have children within 10 years of marriage.[53] The social insurance act of 1928 included family allowances for families with children between the age of six weeks and 16 years. There were also reimbursements for midwives, doctors, maternity benefits, and breast-feeding compensation included in the insurance act. This was considered the start of the French welfare system and represented very advanced welfare reform measures within Europe at the time. In addition to the insurance act, the status of "motherhood was also enhanced symbolically"[54] throughout the interwar period. For instance, Mother's Day was celebrated officially for the first time in May 1920. There were also medals for "patriotic services to the French nation"[55] which were awarded to women with five or more children.

The impact of pronatalism was not confined to government and state policy, it was also pervasive in popular culture. An example of this was the public health's focus on venereal disease, especially syphilis, because of its potential effect on the general population. In the late 1800s, venereal disease was associated with brothels and therefore public health policy centered around the control of prostitution. However, this shifted during the interwar years with the concept of "syphilis of the innocent," the notion that rather than just affecting the men, the disease would pass unknowingly to

[52] Sonn, 416.
[53] Dorr, 93.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*

their wives and children. [56] This recognition of how syphilis could affect wives and mothers and subsequent generations of French children was reflected in public health policy and education campaigns.[57]

The Office national d'hygiène sociale was founded in 1924 with the goal of centralizing the fight against such social ills. The secretary of the propaganda commission at the Office national, Lucien Viborel, became very interested in the use of film to influence public behaviour following a trip to the United States. He began to invest in educational cinema in 1926.[58] By 1931, 11 propaganda trucks travelled from town to town screening educational anti-syphilis films. The films were written with the help of doctors, and usually showed how children were affected by the disease, which was believed to cause a variety of different physical and mental symptoms, including feeblemindedness.[59] They typically displayed the father as criminal for marrying before receiving treatment for syphilis. As Barrusse observes, "The department for the prophylaxis of venereal diseases counted 1,207 film showings in 1929, 806 in 1930, and a striking 4335 in 1931."[60] Although it is difficult to ascertain the precise impact of the films on viewers, it is clear that the campaign had infiltrated media and popular culture with its animated and real-life films for children and adults. Venereal disease was seen as an impediment to population growth, a major concern for public health and the wider state in the interwar period.

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[56] Barrusse 484.
[57] Barrusse, 484.
[58] Barrusse, 489.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Barrusse, 490.

Beyond public health films, pronatalist views featured in aspects of popular culture such as literature. Although the pronatalist movement was very prevalent in the interwar period, pronatalist sentiments in France had been promoted for decades. Author Émile Zola published *Fécondité* in 1900 and was a member of the Alliance nationale pour l'accroisement de la population française.[61] The book is part of a series about the principles of human life. Zola writes, "Fruitfulness creates the home. Thence springs the city. From the idea of citizenship comes that of the fatherland."[62] The book calls for an increased birth rate by touting its benefits for French society.[63] Such depictions later served to counter the revolutionary idea of the "*Garçonne*," an independent post war woman who did not need a husband and children.[64] Advocates of pronatalism wanted to ingrain the conviction that higher birthrates and larger families were the duty of the French people.

Pronatalist images were disseminated in the interwar period, through media such as postcards. This was another form of popular culture used to ingrain pronatalism within society. Unlike other countries, where postcards of couples or postcards of babies were common, French postcards linked the two explicitly with the message that family and children were central to happiness and vital to the nation.[65] These postcards reflected the "common assumption of what is good in life"[66] was having children. Some examples of the postcards include a couple kissing to "win" healthy babies,

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[61] Dorr, 78.
[62] Émile Zola. *Fruitfulness* (United Kingdom: Chatto and Windus: 1900), vi.
[63] Dorr, 78.
[64] Andersen, 163.
[65] Huss, 45.
[66] *Ibid*.

honeymooners with babies holding a banner stating “do not forget about us”[67] and babies being a prize in a lottery.[68] (See figures 2 and 3 below.)

Figure 1: Honeymoon. Do not forget about us.

Source: Marie-Monique Huss, “Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990), 47

[67] Huss, 46.
[68] Huss, 46

Figure 2: Newlyweds Delight. Baby Lottery.

Source: Marie-Monique Huss, "Pronatalism in the Inter-War Period in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990), 48

Immigration, of a controlled and selective sort, was another way to address interwar France's demographic challenges. For many politicians and advocates, the goal was to create naturalized French citizens who could contribute to the French population. As a result, foreign women had more access to social services in France than in other countries.[69] As Nimisha Barton puts it, "[a]gainst the background of what contemporaries viewed as a dire depopulation crisis, ideas about gender, family, and reproduction embedded in social policy, official practice, and everyday encounters played a decisive role in defining the terms on which working-class immigrant women and men engaged with members of the French state and society."[70] There were

[69] Nimisha Barton, *Reproductive Citizens: Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 12.
[70] *Ibid*.

significant efforts in the 1920s to bring in European workers to add to the workforce, and to the population.

Various pronatalist measures altered French immigration policy throughout the interwar period. For example, a law that French women who married foreign men automatically lost their French citizenship and became citizens of their husband's home country was overturned in 1927 with the Law of Independent Nationality.[71] The change was intended to promote the preservation of French citizenship. French women, it was thought, would be able to assimilate their foreign husbands and their children into the French nation more readily than French men.

There were also organisations of namely middle-class women devoted to the support of mothers, both French and foreign. While pronatalist organizations and lobbyists were frequently male, especially within the government, organizations to support women were started by other women. One such organization was the Ligue pour la protection des mères abandonnées founded in 1925.[72] Its founder, Germaine Besnard de Quelen, believed that women like herself were more than just vehicles to raise the birthrate, but warranted the assistance and support for tackling the nation's population problem more broadly. France was regarded as a haven to immigrant women due to the pronatalist policies of the interwar years. Immigrant women, especially those pregnant or of childbearing age were taken care of by the state.

Coupled with the desire to expand the French population through immigration, however, was the desire that newcomers to France be culturally and ethnically "suitable." The most sought-after immigrant mothers were from Italy, Belgium, and

[71] Barton, 32.
[72] Barton, 79.

Poland.[73] The goal of increasing the number of French citizens often stood in tension with the racialized view of mothers within the French nation. There was a need for workers and mothers, but there was also an emphasis on attracting those who could "easily" assimilate into French society, such as those from Catholic regions. "According to their reciprocity treaties, Italian, Polish, and Belgian families were entitled to large family pensions as long as they could prove at least five years of residence in France."[74] Privileging migrants from Europe who were deemed compatible, was one way the Third Republic racialized its nationalist understanding of family values.

Immigration policy makers wanted to grow the population and increase the workforce. However, there were contradictions between wanting immigrants who would reproduce and racialized ideas of who was a productive worker.[75] Elisa Camiscioli states, "While the demographic crisis and the wartime demand for labour might have tempted employers, labour recruiters, and government representatives to view all bodies as potential creators of surplus, instead they soon distinguished between European labor and colonial labor, whose productivity and skill they systematically devalued."[76] During the First World War, France encouraged immigration from the colonies to supplement its workforce, however this shifted in the 1920s, reflecting an increasingly racialized view what it meant to be French. Racialized ideas about immigration, motherhood, and the workforce increasingly tempered the desire to increase the population at all costs.

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[73] Barton, 38.
[74] Barton, 75.
[75] Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 20.
[76] Camiscioli, 72.

Concerns about "undesirable" foreign immigration and its impact on the French people and society was echoed in eugenic ideology. France was seemingly torn between a need for workers and citizens following the war and a desire for an "assimilable immigrant population." This emphasis on selectivity conflicted with the strong pronatalist consensus in various sectors of French society, which did not create an environment that encouraged eugenic intervention in birthrates.

The pronatalism and promotion of immigration prominent during the 1920s, were reshaped by the Great Depression. Funding for social programs was often cut severely. In 1935, the Office nationale d'hygiène was dissolved in order to save money, and all of its propaganda efforts were halted.[77] In addition, the Depression made funding for foreign mothers more difficult to access as government wanted to preserve the funding for native-born mothers. Mother care centers in Paris enacted nationality restrictions that became quite strict during the 1930s.[78] The depression also led to growing xenophobia in France as public opinion shifted to favouring French citizens and workers over potential immigrant competition. Workplaces such as coal mines were forced to expel their foreign workers by the government in order to open up jobs for French born citizens.[79] Foreign and naturalized doctors faced significant restrictions, such as having to be a French citizen for ten years before being able to practice medicine.[80] Some groups met greater hostility, such as Jews from Germany and Eastern

[77] Barrusse, 479.
[78] Barton, 69.
[79] Philip H Slaby, *The Contradictions of Controlled Immigration: Mines, Foreign Labor, and the State in Interwar France* (Wilmington: Business History Conference, 2010), 10.
[80] Julie Fette, *Exclusions: Practicing Prejudice in French Law and Medicine, 1920-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 75.

Europe. Funding cuts and exclusion of "foreigners" also reflected the shifting political landscape of depression era France.

The French Third Republic was founded on the commitment to liberté, égalité, et fraternité.[81] There were many defenders of these values. One was the Ligue des droits de l'homme, an organization with the express purpose of defending human rights in all forms.[82] It was created during the Dreyfus affair and rapidly grew in membership. By the interwar period, its membership numbered 140,000 with many facets of the French population represented, especially from the academic, legal, and government professions.[83] While the Ligue advocated for individual rights, however, it also endorsed the 1926 marriage bill put forth by the SFE after pressure from one of its vice presidents, Sicard de Plauzoles, who was a Mendelian eugenicist.[84]

The political landscape of France shifted several times during the interwar period. A right-wing nationalist coalition, the Bloc national, triumphed in the 1919 elections, but there was a shift to the left in the 1924 elections, when the Cartel des Gauches took office.[85] However, with the collapse of the Cartel two years later governments veered back to the right, and a conservative coalition won the elections of 1928. A centre-left coalition won the 1932 elections, but was forced out of power by an explosive nationalist riot on 6 February 1934. A left-wing coalition, the Popular Front,

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[81] Campbell, 3.
[82] Anja Johansen, "Defending the Individual: The Personal Rights Association and the Ligue des Droits de l'homme, 1871–1916," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 20, no. 4 (2013), 562.
[83] William Irvine, *Between Justice and Politics : The Ligue Des Droits de l'homme, 1898-1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.
[84] Read, 385.
[85] Samuel Kalman and Sean Kennedy, eds., *The French Right between the Wars : Political and Intellectual Movements from Conservatism to Fascism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 2

won the 1936 elections, and France's first Socialist-led government took office.[86] However, the Popular Front encountered fierce opposition and fragmented; by 1938 a centre-right administration, under the leadership of Édouard Daladier, was in charge. Despite these numerous changes in government, a number of historians have contended that by the eve of the Second World War the Republic had, while remaining democratic, generally evolved in a more conservative direction, with growing anti-Communist sentiment, evidence of hostility to refugees, and a rise in pronatalist and traditional family values. The Daladier government, for instance, enacted a Family Code in 1939 containing various measures aimed at boosting the birthrate.[87] While progressive social reform was not conducive to Mendelian eugenics, its growing prevalence during the interwar period was symptomatic of underlying political developments. Movements such as the Croix de feu, subsequently transformed into the Parti Social Français, signalled France's rightward drift.[88] Caroline Campbell has demonstrated how the Croix de Feu highlighted social issues and social degeneracy and the conservative solutions they proposed to fix these problems. [89] These parties were symptomatic of the shifting political culture of France during the late Third Republic, foreshadowing the repressive Vichy regime.

Historians have construed French eugenics during the Vichy Regime as an extreme departure from the practices of the Third Republic, but there was an increasing acceptance of Mendelian eugenics beginning after the First World War. There was also a

[86] Kalman and Kennedy, 5.
[87] Geoff Read, *The Republic of Men: Gender and the Political Parties in Interwar France* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 13.
[88] Campbell, 10.
[89] Campbell, 10.

growing racialization of society within France throughout the interwar period, especially during the Great Depression.

Religious factors were also significant. Catholicism had long played a crucial role in French culture, however with the official separation of the Church and state in 1905, there was a sense that France was moving away from its official religious ties.[90] The First World War changed things; the Catholic religion was included in the *Union sacrée*[91], and the hardships of war propelled a turn toward religion.[92] In the interwar period, the Catholic Church mobilized to preserve its relevance and influence. Catholics began children's programs to get youth more active in the church through organizations such as the Fédération nationale catholique des Scouts de France, founded in 1920.[93] Politically active Catholics also formed organizations, such as the Fédération nationale catholique, to fight against the majority Left's campaign to continue its program of secularization following the election of the Cartel des Gauches in 1924.[94] Despite the calls for secularization, when its pro-family aims coincided with the goals of the pronatalist movement, indirect alliances between the church and other political groups became possible.[95]

The Catholic Church addressed eugenics specifically in the interwar period. In 1930, the Association of Christian Marriage held a conference on eugenics and the

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[90] Philip Nord, "Catholic Culture in Interwar France," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 21, no. 3 (2003), 2.
[91] The *Union Sacrée* was a political truce during the War in which the Left agreed not to oppose government or call any strikes. It also called for French unity in the war effort.
[92] Joseph F. Byrnes, "Priests and Instituteurs in the Union Sacrée: Reconciliation and Its Limits," *French Historical Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999), 265.
[93] Nord, 2.
[94] Nord, 4.
[95] Antoine Prost, "Catholic Conservatives, Population, and the Family in Twentieth Century France," *Population and Development Review* 14 (1988), 153.

church in Marseilles.[96] While the conference found sterilization "absolutely repugnant to Catholic morality,"[97] and soundly condemned birth control for eugenic purposes, the delegates did not entirely rule out eugenic measures such as examination before marriage. These examinations might include checks for diseases and overall health. However, Pius XI's bull of 31 December 1930, *Casti Conubii* put an end to this trend.[98] The papal bull condemned several eugenic practices and a few months later, the "Holy Office issued a decree on 21 March 1931 that 'declared false and condemned the theory of eugenics, either positive or negative.'"[99] This effectively halted any church involvement with eugenics and created a more hostile environment towards eugenic policy or ideology in France.

There were many factors that influenced eugenics in interwar France. It is clear that French society was becoming increasingly racist and nationalistic even in the early interwar period. However, advocates of eugenics operated in an environment that valued increasing the birthrate rapidly and promoted pronatalist measures. Even with the desire to ensure the ethnic "integrity" of French society, there was also a desire to bring in mothers, workers, and grow the population. The influence of the Third Republic's ideas of rights and freedoms, as well as the lasting influence of the Catholic Church, created an environment that made Mendelian eugenic policy difficult to implement. This did not, however, stop members of the ostensibly Lamarckian French Eugenic Society from advocating for Mendelian population control and policy.

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[96] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 80.
[97] *Ibid*.
[98] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 82.
[99] *Ibid*.

Chapter 3: The Appeal of Mendelian Principles

To assess the interwar ideology of the French Eugenics Society, this chapter will examine various publications by its members, in both individual and collaborative works. It will specifically analyze works by prominent members of the Society who were also well respected in other fields, such as government and medicine. Following the war, the Society began working on a conference devoted to, and articles outlining the eugenic consequences of, the conflict. However, before the conference was organized, Dr. Charles Richet, vice-president of the SFE and a professor of Physiology at the University of Paris, published his book *La sélection humaine* in 1919.[100] Richet went on to become the second president of the SFE, taking over from the Neo-Lamarckian zoologist Edmond Perrier in 1920.[101]

Throughout the book Richet deplores how society will use natural selection to improve the quality of plants and animals, yet modern civilization has not seen fit to do so with people. He, by contrast, encourages the creation of a superior race through selective reproduction.[102] He is especially concerned with degeneration, a pervasive theme in Mendelian eugenics, and states that all humans must satisfy certain qualifications, or the population will fall into degeneration.[103] He states that "In a word, for the soul as for the body, normality. Any abnormal individual cannot be considered as a reproducer capable of procreating healthy children."[104] In Richet's view, anyone not

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[100] Charles Richet, *La séléction humaine* (Paris, 1919), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k54480276.texteImage, 1.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] Charles Richet, 107.
[103] Richet, 161.
[104] *Ibid*.

within his confines of normality should not be allowed to procreate, as they will not produce healthy children. He goes so far as to suggest that this selective reproduction will not be effective until "elimination of the lesser,"[105] namely all people with hereditarily degenerative conditions. By that, he includes what he calls, "cripples," "idiots," deaf people, those with rickets, epileptics, criminals, and many others.[106] Throughout the book, he emphasizes how traits are hereditary and raises concerns about the implications for society if the "unfit" are left to reproduce on their own. Richet states that medical advancements have eliminated natural selection among humans, so it is now the responsibility of eugenicists to make those decisions.

It is clear throughout Richet's book that his ideas of eugenics are Mendelian-based, he is concerned with the inherent nature of traits and the subsequent need to control population growth. However he is also aware of the social situation in France and how his ideas will be received. He acknowledges that his book may not be widely read or well received but he hopes that a few intelligent people will read it and it may inform future practices.[107] While he was president of the SFE, Richet continued to encourage and suggest Mendelian eugenic practices but did not go so far as to try to enact policy due to his connections with pronatalist groups. Due to the social climate in France, Richet had to make raising the birthrate a priority, with eugenics taking second place.

In the historiography, Richet is sometimes seen as an outlier within French eugenics, as his views are depicted as being more radical and less Lamarckian compared

[105] Richet, 165.
[106] Richet, 166.
[107] Richet, III

to other members.[108] However, in examining writing from other members in the same time frame, we see that he is not really an outlier. He is more vocal about his Mendelian views, however other members make frequent references to desired Mendelian policy which is not fully acknowledged in the current historiography. For example, following the First World War, the SFE members held a conference on "les conséquences eugéniques de la guerre."[109] Some of their conclusions and writings on the subject appeared in a collaborative work entitled *Eugénique et selection* published in 1922.[110] The book includes writing from influential members of the SFE, including, Lucien March, Georges Papillaut, and Eugène Apert. It provides an indication of shifting views within the French Eugenics Society following the hiatus during the First World War.

Lucien March contributed a chapter to *Eugénique et sélection* entitled "natalité et eugénique", as well as a separate article on the subject entitled "The Consequences of the War and Birth Rate in France," which had appeared in the *Scientific Monthly* in 1921.[111] Throughout March's article and chapter he makes frequent reference to hereditary diseases and the risks that they pose to society, similar to Richet's work. He states that "As to artificial selection, we may endeavor to decrease births among those who show defects and faults."[112] Lamarckian eugenics would tell us that by improving the conditions in which those with "defects and faults" live, that we are able to enhance their situation and ensure resulting births are healthy. However, that is not what March is

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[108] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Bgiological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 149.
[109] *Ibid*., 94.
[110] Edmund Perrier, E. Apert, and L. Cuénot, *Eugénique et sélection* (Paris, 1922).
[111] Lucien March, "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France," *The Scientific Monthly* 13, no. 5 (1921), 399-419.
[112] *Ibid.*, 402.

advocating for. It is clear throughout March's writing that he does acknowledge the concept of Lamarckian eugenics. He states multiple times that environment can have an influence, such as crowded urban centers, where families with too many children are at undue risk.[113] He also states that the influence of environment and education can have a strong impact on the quality of the population. However, it is also clear that March believes sections of the population should be kept from having children due to the hereditary and inherent nature of things like feeblemindedness, alcoholism, syphilis, and predispositions to insanity.[114] March states that those with inheritable diseases or traits have a duty not to procreate. It is interesting to note that in his chapter "natalité et eugénique" when discussing hereditary traits, he references the work of eugenic societies in New York and London which were Mendelian in their approach.[115]

March also echoes Richet's sentiments that natural selection is no longer able to function due to the nature of contemporary society, noting that "when human fraternity, pity, science and hygiene unite their efforts to defend the weak, many individuals who would have disappeared if left to themselves, live in spite of their disabilities and transmit these to their descendants."[116] While he acknowledges Lamarckian eugenics, he does state multiple times that rather than just making the population healthier, that eugenicists must favor perfecting the race. He also references the limits that current society places on eugenics given the pronatalist attitudes in France. He states that in looking through history, it is possible to track evolution, and it is necessary to ensure

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[113] Lucien March, "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France," 404.
[114] *Ibid*., "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France,"406.
[115] Lucien March, "Natalité et eugénique," in *Eugénique et sélection* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1922), 84.
[116] March, "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France,", 403.

that France's population continues to evolve as well as grow in numbers.[117] In keeping with the motto of the SFE, March states that it is necessary to be concerned with the quality of the population, and not solely the quantity.

Throughout the rest of the book, other members of the society advocate for a Mendelian model of eugenics. For example, Dr. Georges Papillaut, a member of the SFE, wrote articles on the eugenic consequences of the war following the meetings on the subject. Papillaut also contributed a chapter to the book *Eugénique et sélection* entitled "Conséquences psycho-sociales de la dernière guerre au point de vue eugènique" in 1922. [118] In the chapter, he states that the psychological value of French citizens had to be measured both before and after the First World War in order to see the full effects of the conflict.[119] He acknowledges that this is very hard to estimate because he does not know what everyone went through during the war, however he can measure things like rates of criminality, prostitution and rates of "insanity."[120] These are frequently indicators used in Mendelian eugenics. Papillaut goes on to state that he will have to consider race as both eugenics and anthropology see difference in races. He then acknowledges Lamarckian eugenics, but then refutes it using Mendelian ideas. Papillaut states that different races and "human subspecies" will have physical, mental, and moral characteristics that are not altered or influenced by changes in their environment and

[117] March, "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France,"400.
[118] Georges Papillaut, "Conséquences Psycho-Sociales de La Dernière Guerre Au Point de Vue Eugénique," in *Eugénique et Sélection* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1922), 131.
[119] Papillaut, 133.
[120] Papillaut, 134.

education.[121] "The resistance of hereditary characteristics dominates the fluctuations due to mesological influences and reduces them to unimportant modifications."[122]

This is not to say that every member of the eugenics society had Mendelian leanings in the early 1920s, there were members who held to the Lamarckian roots, and the difference in language is quite clear. For example, Dr. Eugène Apert, a pediatrician and founding member of the SFE wrote a chapter in the book *Eugénique et sélection* entitled "Eugénique et santé nationale."[123] In the chapter he expresses concern about the state of France following the war. He makes a point of saying that while the men injured in the war were not able to pass on their injuries to their children hereditarily, however the children are being impacted in other ways.[124] They are more prone to nervousness, what we would now refer to as anxiety, and having been born and raised in a time of struggle, he states this is understandable, but he is concerned about the impact this will have on future generations. Apert expresses particular worry about the fight against alcoholism, syphilis and tuberculosis.[125] In discussing how to combat these ailments, he does use Lamarckian ideology including reduced access to alcohol, educating people on effects of syphilis and researching ways to improve treatment of tuberculosis.[126] These approaches all consider environmental and educational factors that are prevalent in Lamarckian practices. However, while Apert provides an example of the persistence of Lamarckian views within the SFE, as we have seen, key figures within the SFE such as Richet, March, and Papillaut advocated for a Mendelian model of eugenics, even though

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[121] Papillaut, 135.
[122] *Ibid*.
[123] Eugène Apert, "Eugénique et santé nationale," in *Eugénique et sélection*, 1922.
[124] Apert, 69.
[125] Apert, 72.
[126] Apert, 73.

their writings also imply that due to the strength of pronatalist sentiment and other factors, their model was not going to be accepted within France at the time. Over the course of the 1920s we will see tempered proposals that acknowledge the social situation but do try to pass legislation that incorporates aspects of Mendelian eugenic measures.

By 1926, most of the founding members of the French Eugenics Society had retired or passed away.[127] This allowed a new cohort of eugenicists to influence policy in interwar France. In 1926, the SFE put forth a proposal for a physical examination before marriage. This would require that all French men undergo a physical examination before being allowed to marry; this examination would check for contagious diseases.[128] This suggests the growing influence of Mendelian eugenics. However, the SFE proposal was toned down in order to be accepted by pronatalist and Catholic communities. In addition to the proposal, conferences in support of the proposal were held in May and June 1926 at the Musée Social in Paris.[129] The conferences included talks from members of the SFE, as well as other eugenic societies in Europe. These talks were compiled into a book entitled *L'examen médical en vue de marriage*, published in 1927.[130]

The book begins with an introduction of other countries' practices and their laws on marriage. In the introduction, Dr. Georges Schreiber, a pediatric doctor who served as the secretary of the Society in 1926, points out the sterilization practices legal in countries like United States and Sweden, but acknowledges this is not possible in France due to the moral implications. However, he deplores the idea of allowing unrestrained

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[127] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 79.
[128] Société française d'eugénique*, L'examen médical en vue du mariage,* (Paris: imprimerie des établissements André Brulliard, 1927).
[129] *L'examen médical en vue du mariage*, 6.
[130] *L'examen médical en vue du Mariage*, 5.

procreation.[131] This was especially the case, he argued, given what he described as the trend of those he deems as 'unfit' procreating more quickly. Throughout his chapter, Schreiber demonstrates the ways that France differs socially from other countries with respect to eugenic marriage laws. For example, he points to the practice in Scandinavian countries that allows doctors to break confidentiality if they discover a disease in someone about to marry, noting the outcry this breach of confidentiality would cause in France.[132] After examining the legislation in other countries, Dr. Schreiber concludes that the marriage bill would be useful for France and humanity as a whole, however the SFE must take care against being too restrictive, or they will see liberal groups move against them.[133]

The rest of the book includes contributions from respected doctors on what should be recorded in the check, such as height, weight, family history; previous diagnoses of syphilis, and mental illnesses.[134] The section on mental illness and intoxication by Dr. Georges Heuyer, a doctor at the Hospital of Paris, is another section that reflects the influence of Mendelian hereditary control quite plainly. He states that when examining people with nervous or psychopathic traits, the parents usually share the conditions.[135] He even states explicitly that it is necessary to "to study the conditions of heredity of mental nervous diseases in the light of Mendel's ideas."[136] He advocated

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[131] Georges Schreiber, "L'examen médical prénuptial dans les différents pays," in *L'examen médical en vue du mariage* (Paris: impr. des établissements André Brulliard, 1927), 11.
[132] *Ibid*, 15.
[133] *Ibid*., 29.
[134] Georges Heuyer, "Conditions de santé à envisager au point de vue du marriage dans les maladies mentales et nerveuses et les intoxications," in *L'examen médical en vue du mariage* (Paris: imprimerie des établissements André Brulliard, 1927), 123.
[135] *Ibid.*, 124.
[136] *Ibid*.

for specifically Mendelian studies into the hereditary nature of so-called psychopathic traits. Dr. Heuyer states that those with "instinctive perversions" such as delinquency and criminality cannot be allowed to marry. [137]

While this bill was brought before the French parliament in 1927, and it initially seemed that circumstances favoured its passage, it was delayed due to disagreements on the practicality of how the examinations would happen and how the results would be used, as well as whether it would interfere with pronatalist policy.[138] There was also push back from Catholic groups who did not agree to any interference in reproduction, even indirectly.[139] It is clear through the language from the conferences and the efforts to get the bill passed, that there was a growing desire for Mendelian eugenic policy and control, however the social and political situation prevented immediate policy changes. In addition, the Society faced financial difficulties that impacted its ability to gain a wider influence in France. In 1926, while advocating for the marriage bill, the SFE had to begin publishing in the *Revue anthropologique* in a partnership with the Insititut International d'anthropologie, after previously having their own publication *Eugénique.*[140]

It is noteworthy that these conference talks and bills also represent shifts in outlook by established eugenicists in France. For example, Dr. Adolphe Pinard, who popularised puericulture in France, advocated for education and social services to help mothers and parents both before and after the baby was born, in his earlier work. This

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[137] Heuyer, 136.
[138] The Bill was brought before parliament on different occasions throughout the 1930s, and eventually was enacted during the Vichy regime in 1942.
[139] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 80.
[140] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 96.

was a means to improve the health of the newborn and the family unit.[141] However, by 1926, Pinard was the one to write the first draft of the premarital Medical Examination proposal and advocate for stricter measures in terms of hereditary diseases, even outlawing marriage for those with hereditary diseases or traits.[142] In addition, Pinard wrote the introduction to Justin Sicard de Plauzoles' 1927 book *Principes d'hygiène sociale*.[143] In the book, Sicard evaluates the inherent value of French citizens versus the cost of raising them and caring for them as a way to determine the eugenic value of different citizens (See figure 4). He was concerned with the quality of the population, as well as the economics of maintaining a healthy population. His equation measured the cost of a French citizen versus the "return" they would have for French society. It is not clear why Dr. Pinard's views shifted towards restrictive measures. It may have been a result of his time with the SFE, exposure to other countries' eugenic measures or evolved through other means.

[141] P M Dunn, "Adolphe Pinard (1844-1934) of Paris and Intrauterine Paediatric Care," *Archives of Disease in Childhood. Fetal and Neonatal Edition* 91, no. 3 (May 2006): F231–32, https://doi.org/10.1136/adc.2005.074518.
[142] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* , 150.
[143] Sicard de Plauzoles M. le Dr (Just), and Adolphe Pinard. *Principes d'hygiène sociale. Cours libre professé à la Sorbonne (1922-1927).* Paris: Ed. médicales, 1927.

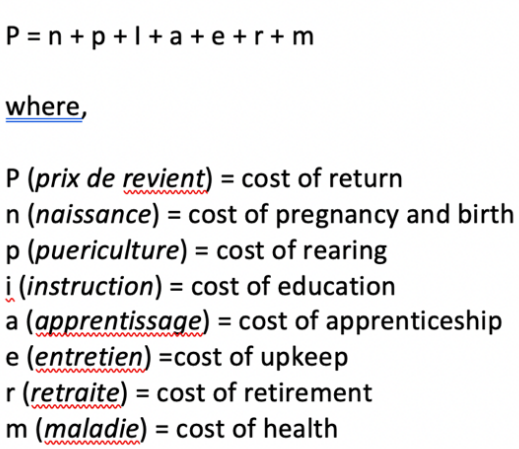

Figure 4: Justin Sicard de Plauzoles equation

Source: Schneider, William. *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 179

While it has been acknowledged that during the 1930s there was a shift towards Mendelian eugenics in France, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that it did not constitute a radical shift on the part of eugenicists compared to their attitudes during the 1920s. Looking at other countries' eugenic language, it is clear how French eugenicists found Mendelian policy compelling, frequently using language that connected to countries with Mendelian policies. To demonstrate the similarity in language, I will assess some examples from the British Eugenics Society, which published the *Eugenics Review* from 1909 to 1968 out of the Galton Institute. I will begin with an article from 1923 by British eugenicist Leonard Darwin entitled "Sterilization in America."[144] In the article, he is laying out the facts about American sterilization practices, which was based in Mendelian eugenic ideas of inherent traits,

[144] L Darwin, "Sterilisation in America," *The Eugenics Review* 15, no. 1 (April 1923): 335–44.

and the implications, both positive and negative, that Darwin viewed as important for British eugenics. Darwin states that it is necessary to explore sterilization because "The eugenical advantages of sterilization may be indicated by the one fact that an immense amount of human misery, degradation, and inefficiency might be avoided in all future generations by now preventing parenthood amongst those endowed with bad hereditary qualities."[145] Like Richet and March, Darwin points to the hereditary nature of traits and qualities that he wishes to avoid in the population. However, he was able to introduce sterilization and examine its uses, rather than just examinations such as the marriage bills, due to a greater acceptance of negative eugenics in Britain compared to France. Darwin also points to how firmly Mendelian eugenics stresses the hereditary nature of traits. He quotes criminal law in the United States which stated "It is not germs of criminality we ought to fear, but lack of constructive parental capacity."[146] Darwin then states "The eugenist will not agree with the last sentence"[147] The criminal law states that parents would have the biggest influence on future criminality in a child, however Darwin argues that eugenicists see traits as inherent, therefore parental conduct would not have the determining influence on future criminality, rather it was genetic. Like Dr. Papillaut, Darwin advocates the Mendelian principle that traits are not influenced by environment, but rather are inheritable and cannot be changed.

British and French eugenics connected in other respects as well. Eugenicist R.A Fischer wrote in 1926 expressing concern that lower classes in London reproduced more

[145] Darwin, 335.
[146] Darwin, 343.
[147] Darwin, 343.

quickly, and that this would lead to an increase in the degeneration of society.[148] This is similar to Dr. Schreiber's concerns about unrestrained procreation in France. In addition, both eugenicists in France and Britain had a constant concern with those they deemed to be 'unfit.' In 1926, R.A Gibbons defined 'unfit' as "the individual is unsuitable as to behaviour and conduct for the everyday duties of life, and carries with it the impression of mental deficiency."[149] This ties into the language in France about perfecting the French race and ensuring that the population will be healthy hereditarily.

Eugenics in Canada provides another point of comparison. Although Canada did not have a specific national eugenics society until the 1930s, there were individuals, doctors, and other groups advocating for eugenics practices.[150] One such person was Helen MacMurchy, a public health advocate, doctor, and a known eugenicist, who was appointed as provincial inspector of the 'feebleminded' in Ontario from 1906 to 1919. MacMurchy's book *The Almosts: A Study of the Feeble-Minded* is largely based on her experiences as inspector of the Ontario asylums in the early 1900s.[151] One of her concerns was the growing number of 'feebleminded' that she saw within the asylums, as well as the cost of housing them. She felt that with a better system for recognising them at an early stage, there may be a way to lower their prevalence in the population, through early segregation and sterilization, even if this resulted in a temporary cost increase, to lower the overall 'unfit' population. MacMurchy felt if asylum officials could address

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[148] R A Fisher, "Eugenics: Can It Solve the Problem of Decay of Civilizations?," *The Eugenics Review* 18, no. 2 (July 1926), 131.
[149] R A Gibbons, "The Treatment of the Congenitally Unfit and of Convicts by Sterilization," *The Eugenics Review* 18, no. 2 (July 1926), 100.
[150] Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice*, (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 5.
[151] Helen MacMurchy, *The Almosts a Study of the Feeble-Minded.* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920).

this concern, such benefits would ripple out to the larger Canadian society.[152] She states that in the homes, parents always had an excuse for why their child was 'feebleminded' such as a fall or an accident. As a Mendelian eugenicist, MacMurchy believed that they were born as they were due a parental defect.[153] This language ties in plainly with Dr. Heyuer's points about instinctive qualities that would be passed hereditarily, regardless of the environment.

Thus, while France is often identified with support for Lamarckian eugenics, or Latin eugenics as it is often called,[154] it is clear by comparing the language used in other Latin eugenic societies, that France aligned with Mendelian eugenics during the 1920s. For example, a eugenics society was formed in Brazil in 1918, following the First World War, and later joined the League of Mental Hygiene.[155] Brazilian eugenics were especially concerned with social questions and problems. Rather than the focus on hereditarily transmitted inherent traits, they were concerned with improving social conditions in Brazil. "Brazilian eugenics was associated with the call for the introduction of such social welfare legislation as a way of improving the Brazilian people, and influenced the form it took."[156] British eugenicist K. E. Trounson criticized the eugenic policy in Brazil for its emphasis on hygiene and its sociological, rather than biological outlook.[157]

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[152] McClaren, 43.
[153] MacMurchy, *The Almosts: A Study of the Feeble-Minded*, 42
[154] Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette, *Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.
[155] Nancy Leys Stepan, "Eugenics in Brazil 1917-1940," in *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia,* ed. Mark Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 112, 117.
[156] Stepan, 113.
[157] Stepan, 130.

In Belgium, Latin or Lamarckian eugenics was also practiced. Its mandate focused on social hygiene, and education. Eugenicist, social worker, and doctor Renée Sand stated that the point of eugenics in Belgium was the "improvement of the sanitary condition of the population."[158] Like France, Belgium had a strong focus on growing the population, however unlike a growing number of French eugenicists the members saw the primary threats to that goal as overworking of women and children, abuse, and infectious diseases, rather than inherent personality traits.[159] In Belgium, the *Société Belge de Medicine et eugénique* was created in 1929 and defined eugenics solely within a focus of social hygiene, preventative medicine, and pronatalism.[160]

French eugenics in the 1930s saw a growing acceptance of some negative eugenic measures, however these still faced some resistance from various sectors of French society. While the marriage bill was gaining traction, the Catholic Church issued the papal bull condemning eugenics, which stalled its progress. France also entered a depression and funding for programs and propaganda was cut. Another important factor was the position of the pronatalist movement in the 1930s. The organizations had lost a lot of funding during the depression, but there was also a levelling of the population decline rate as France's population growth caught up with Britain and Germany. By 1932, France's rate of population growth was slightly higher than both Britain and Germany.[161] This alleviated worry about the birth rate, until the Second World War seemed likely. This respite in birth rate concerns allowed for a shift in viewpoint from quantity to quality of the population in the 1930s. There was also growing xenophobia in

[158] Turda and Gillette, 69.
[159] Turda and Gillette, 70.
[160] *Ibid*.
[161] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 86.

France and with increasing shifts in politics, society was converging with the Mendelian attitudes held by members of the SFE in the 1920s. Looking at examples from eugenicists in France, it is clear that Mendelian eugenics were growing within the discourse and building upon the 1920s.

Advocacy for sterilization, screening, and restrictive population control were becoming common in eugenic writing, especially among members of the SFE. For example, in 1930, Dr. Georges Schreiber expanded on his worries about unrestrained procreation and wrote of his views on therapeutic sterilization.[162] When he first began writing about sterilization, he viewed it as a way to help mothers who had too many children or faced hardship continuing with the pregnancy. However, by 1930, he viewed sterilization as an answer to hereditary criminality, citing Dr. Heyuer's ideas on the inheritable nature of criminality. Like other members did in the 1920s, he pointed to the need to look past perceived morality or sentiment when considering these questions, challenging what he deemed to be "the false sentimentality which risks simply multiplying the number of miserable beings."[163]

In 1932, the Third International Eugenics Congress was due to be held, and the American eugenicists asked the SFE their views on sterilization as a means to reduce the "socially inadequate."[164] In order to prepare, Henri Vigues from the École d'Anthropologie, as well as the SFE, sent around a survey to doctors and sociologists to get their opinion on the question. Although Vigues did not receive many responses, the ones that did respond were overwhelmingly in favour of sterilization in order to prevent

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[162] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 180.
[163] *Ibid.,* 188.
[164] *Ibid*.

undesirables from procreating.[165] It is interesting to note that the one response that suggested there was not enough known about heredity to make that decision was written by a novelist, Georges Inman. The medical professionals responded positively to the idea of sterilization. In addition, other doctors began to suggest sterilization measures in the 1930s. Dr. Georges d'Heucqueville, an asylum doctor, suggested sterilization for some alcoholics within the asylums. While not all alcoholics within asylums should be sterilized, he advocated those who had been hospitalized more than once, and those who had already had a child with a defect, should be.[166] There was a growing acceptance within the medical community of direct and specifically Mendelian eugenic ideas, building on the writing from the 1920s.

In the 1930s, Justin Sicard de Plauzoles was the president of the French League against Venereal Disease, as well as a member of the SFE, and became quite vocal about eugenic measures, building on his ideas of value from the 1920s. In the 1930s, he ran a social hygiene course entitled "The Future and the Preservation of the Race: Eugenics."[167] Throughout the course, he expressed particular concern about the degeneration of the French population and argued that eugenics were necessary to safeguard the French race.[168]

While Mendelian thought was becoming more prominent within the SFE in the 1930s, their Lamarckian roots were still present and known throughout the international eugenics community. In 1937, the *1er Congrès Latin d'Eugénique* was held in Paris at

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[165] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 188.
[166] *Ibid*., 189.
[167] Schneider, "The Eugenics Movement in France: 1890-1940," 89.
[168] *Ibid*.

the Faculté de Médicine de Paris.[169] In attendance were representatives from France, Italy, Romania, Portugal, and French speaking Switzerland. Delegates from Brazil, and Argentina were unable to attend but did send in summaries to be read.[170] Throughout the conference, it is clear that Mendelian influences were gaining traction in the eugenics community, indicated by a greater interest in race and inheritability. However, representatives from France were more outspoken with Mendelian ideas of eugenics, while other representatives still leaned on Lamarckian ideas of the improvement of society.

The president of the Commission Centrale Brésilienne d'Eugénique, Doctor Renato Kehl, gave a talk on the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Brazilian population.[171] The talk was based on a study involving 500 couples and their number of living children, deceased children, abortions and took into account many factors such as jobs, economics, and where families lived.[172] In keeping with Lamarckian eugenics, Kehl places emphasis on poverty levels and education levels as causes for the quality of the population. He compares the rate of families with a deceased child to Spain which has similar education and economic situations but points out that they have a better ratio due to their climate being less compatible with disease than Brazil's.[173]

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[169] Congrès latin d'eugénique, *1er Congrès latin d'eugénique: Rapport, Paris, 1er-3 Août 1937* (Paris: Fédération internationale latine des sociétés d'eugénique. Éditeur scientifique, 1938), 5.
[170] *Ibid*.
[171] Renato Kehl, "Valeur comparée de l'accroisement qualitatif et quantitatif d'une population," in *1er Congrès Latin d'eugénique : Rapport, Paris, 1er-3 Août 1937* (Paris: Fédération internationale latine des sociétés d'eugénique. Éditeur scientifique, 1938), 73.
[172] Kehl, 76.
[173] *Ibid*., 77.

This emphasis on the role environment plays is echoed by other eugenicists at the conference, such as Italian professor Vincenzo Castrilli who delivered a talk on marriage and fertility among secondary school graduates in Norway.[174] He starts of his talk by stating, "It is recognised that the tendency of individuals to reproduce is influenced by the social environment."[175] Catrilli is examining the social conditions of the graduates to examine their fertility. This look at social aspects is consistent with Lamarckian eugenic indicators. However, he is also quite concerned with the social class implications of fertility and class differences in the duration of marriage which begins to show Mendelian ideas, however he keeps the emphasis on careers and education.[176]

When comparing these to talks by the French contributors, the difference is clear. Dr. Heuyer and Dr. Carrère gave a brief talk outlining the family history of the patient with psychopathic traits.[177] They traced the family history to see how these traits presented and how they were passed along hereditarily throughout generations. For example, the first family they traced had 3 descendants, one with schizophrenia, and two with epilepsy, mental deficiency, and alcoholism.[178] They traced their lineage and found that there was epilepsy, alcoholism, and histories of violence throughout their maternal and paternal lines. This evidence was used to show how these hereditary conditions

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[174] Vicenzo Castrilli, "La nuptialité et la fécondité des diplomés de l'enseignement secondaire en Norvège," in *1er Congrès Latin d'eugénique : Rapport, Paris, 1er-3 Août 1937* (Paris: Fédération internationale latine des sociétés d'eugénique. Éditeur scientifique, 1938), 110.
[175] *Ibid*.
[176] *Ibid.*, 119.
[177] Georges Heuyer and M. Carrère, "Hérédité psychopathique polymorphe," in *1er Congrès Latin d'eugénique : Rapport, Paris, 1er-3 Août 1937* (Paris: Fédération internationale latine des sociétés d'eugénique. Éditeur scientifique, 1938), 369.
[178] Georges Heuyer and M. Carrère, 369.

changed or evolved throughout their family line.[179] Dr. Heuyer and Dr. Carrère were specifically looking for traits they considered inherent. Unlike the talks from Dr. Kehl or Castrilli, there was no mention of environmental factors or acknowledgement that the environment had an influence on the families. Instead, it was solely focused on the inheritability of these traits. This ties in with Mendelian ideas of eugenics.

Mendelian eugenics were more commonplace in France in the 1930s, even appearing in supposedly Lamarckian conferences. This trend was also reflected in continued advocacy for the marriage bill introduced in 1926. Though previously stalled by opposition from the Vatican, it became part of a larger campaign to institute a *carnet de santé*, a health card, that all citizens would be required to have for life. It would include all health information and could be used as part of the marriage examination. There was a lot of support for the health card, and popular culture was also involved in its promotion. Louise Hervieu, a painter, and writer, who had contracted syphilis at birth, wrote a dramatization of her story in two bestselling novels, *Sangs* and *Crime.* Although the public loved her books, eugenicists and other government officials did not need persuading. The ministry of public health made the cards mandatory in 1939 but added that they were strictly for personal use and information did not need to be divulged.[180] This was changed during the Vichy Regime in 1942 when a bill was implemented stipulating that the information had to be divulged.

While it has previously been acknowledged by historians that Mendelian thought was gaining traction in France during the 1930s, it is clear that it was already present

[179] Georges Heuyer and M. Carrère, 370.
[180] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 84.

from the start of the interwar period. Rather than there being a sudden departure from the Lamarckian positive eugenic roots, Mendelian sentiment had gradually become prominent within the SFE throughout the interwar period. Looking at the 1930s, it is clear that the eugenicists were building on precedents they had set in the 1920s.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

` The Second World War began in 1939 and France once again experienced a shift with respect to the nature and influence of eugenic thinking. After a six week battle, France lost to Germany and signed an armistice which included an occupation of half of France and the other half under a 'free' government pursuing a "policy of collaboration with Germany."[181] This was the beginning of the Vichy regime, an authoritarian regime which changed the motto of France from "Liberty, equality, fraternity" to "Work, family, fatherland."[182] Determined to remake what it regarded as a decadent society through implementing sweeping changes known as "the National Revolution," the Vichy regime would have a major impact on eugenics in France. Where the SFE was put on hold during the First World War, eugenics were given a higher status within the Vichy government. The word family within the motto was not any family but instead a family that preserved race and Mendelian eugenic ideals. Alexis Carrel, a Mendelian eugenicist from France who had worked mostly in the United States, lobbied to create the Fondation française pour l'étude des problèmes humains (FFEPH). He was successful and in 1941 became the head of the FFEPH with a budget of 40 million francs.[183] In 1935 Carrel had written *Man, the unknown* which outlined his ideas and thoughts on eugenics. The book was quite popular and appeared in French as well. Carrell's Mendelian-inspired eugenics advocated for repressive measures to protect the population from what he saw as social ills. He advocated for an efficient and economical way to

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[181] Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.
[182] Jackson, 269.
[183] Andrés Horacio Reggiani, *God's Eugenicist: Alex Carrel and the Sociobiology of Decline* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 112.

deal with criminality and insanity, recommending that those afflicted be "humanely and economically disposed of in small euthanasia institutions supplied with proper gases."[184] These Mendelian ideas of population control and population perfection are the ideology that he brought to the FFEPH in Vichy France.

As for the SFE, it did not survive the Vichy Regime. The last official act of the society was a publication in 1941 in the *Revue Anthropologique*, before the Anthropology school and the *Revue Anthropologique* was dissolved by the government as the Vichy regime created their own departments.[185] Eugenics in France then became associated with the FFEPH and Alexis Carrel. The FFEPH did experience struggles due to personal problems between Carrel and his vice-president, François Perroux, who did not agree on the running of the foundation. However even with these struggles, the FFEPH was a large organization with over 400 permanent members. The FFEPH led many studies into problems affecting France during the Vichy regime, such as nutrition and youth in a rationed society, as well as the psychological impact of occupation.[186] It also conducted a large study on eugenics and natalism in France, focusing on the hereditary nature of traits. The FFEPH was trying to prove the inheritability of traits that would make the French population stronger. Working with the Confédération Générale des associations des familles nombreuses and the Centre de coordination des movements familiaux, they compiled 2500 files on desirable and undesirable traits.[187] In part of his

[184] Alexis Carrel, *Man, the Unknown*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1935), 290.
[185] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 95.
[186] Reggiani, 135.
[187] *Ibid*., 139.

report to Marshal Philippe Pétain, Carrel "warned that the presence of 'biologically undesirable' immigrants posed 'a threat to the French population."[188]

The Foundation also studied children and youth extensively throughout the Vichy Regime. Its staff measured, weighed, x-rayed, and photographed thousands of children with the goal of determining hereditary background, learning abilities, and personal tastes. This allowed them to write reports on types of children and careers these types may be suited for.[189] There were also studies on youth who played sports and how the look of their bodies could represent desirable personality traits.

In addition to conducting various studies, the FFEPH revisited the marriage bill that had been brought forward in 1926 and had seen many revisions since then (see figure 5.) In 1942, a mandatory marriage examination, for both women and men, was finally instituted. However, it did not disallow marriage depending on the results, but instead placed the responsibility on the engaged to decide whether to marry after getting the results. However, the legislation did stipulate that this approach might be temporary, and changes would be coming along the lines that Alexis Carrel advocated, namely that doctors would not issue a health certificate for marriage if they had concerns.[190] Mothers would also go through multiple examinations before birth in order to be eligible for monetary support after birth.[191] Although this was the only eugenic policy enacted under the Vichy regime, it had its roots in the 1920s. It was further promoted by French doctors when a revision to the law allowed them to break confidentiality if a venereal

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[188] Reggiani, 140.
[189] *Ibid*., 142.
[190] *Ibid.,* 141.
[191] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 268.

disease was diagnosed. .[192] Interestingly, the post Vichy Fourth Republic retained the medical examination before marriage after 1945.[193] The Foundation was able to treat France as a testing ground for eugenic theories and amassed data to support Mendelian ideas of inheritability and inherent traits that threatened the population. The FFEPH was active until the end of the Vichy Regime and Alexis Carrel's death in 1944.

Date	Proposal
May–June 1926	French Eugenics Society conference
November 24, 1926	Pinard bill (Chamber of Deputies)
January 1927	Guérin bill (Chamber of Deputies)
December 1927	Duval-Arnould bill (Chamber of Deputies)
June 24, 1930	French Eugenics Society resolution
January 28, 1932	Justin Godart bill (Senate)
December 16, 1942	Vichy decree
July 29, 1943	Vichy decree (amendment)
November 2, 1945	Provisional government ordinance

Figure 5 Premarital examination legislation in France, 1926-45

Source: William Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 155

It should be noted that there is debate surrounding the possibility that the French government was deliberately starving psychiatric patients during the Vichy regime as a eugenic measure.[194] The evidence used suggests that there were between 43,158 and 44,144 "surplus deaths" in psychiatric hospitals during the Vichy regime, meaning 40,000 more patients died than would have been the case, on the basis of trends from the

[192] *Ibid*., 270.
[193] The medical examination existed in France until 2008 and included blood tests checking for diseases such as rubeola, toxoplasmosis, and hepatitis B.
[194] Isabelle von. Bueltzingsloewen, *L'hécatombe des fous: La famine dans les hôpitaux psychiatriques français sous l'occupation* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009).

interwar period. Psychiatrist Max Lafont wrote a book entitled *L'Extermination douce. La Cause des fous 40000 malades mentaux morts de faim dans les hôpitaux sous Vichy* which argued that the deaths were the result of an extermination through deliberate starvation by the Vichy government which had eugenic backing.[195] However many historians, such as Isabelle von Bueltzingsloewen, contest this claim and state that rather than a deliberate eugenic measure, the higher rates of death were more a result of rationing in France, with psychiatric inmates being on low on the priority list, and these patients being unable to access other unofficial avenues for obtaining more food. She agrees that patient suffering was terrible with psychiatric hospitals not being given enough food but denies a deliberate eugenic plan.[196]

In the historiography, Carrel's foundation is seen as inspired by Carrel's own ideas and work in the United States and very separate from France's eugenic background and foundation.[197] However, in examining the ideology and writing of the French Eugenics Society, Mendelian negative eugenics had established a significant presence. In the interwar period, Mendelian eugenic ideology was promoted in various works by SFE members. Eugenicists such as March and Richet agreed that natural selection was no longer viable due to advances in medicine. They both decried the moralism and sentimentalism that they had had to contend with in French society and which they viewed as threatening the growth of a desirable population.[198] Other eugenicists like Dr.

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[195] Max Lafont, *L'Extermination Douce. La Cause Des Fous 40000 Malades Mentaux Morts de Faim Dans Les Hôpitaux Sous Vichy* (Le Cellier Ligné: Atelier thérapeutique de l'AREFPPI, 1987).
[196] Bueltzingsloewen, *16*
[197] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France*, 272.
[198] March, "The Consequences of War and The Birth Rate in France," 403.

Papillaut frequently used Mendelian indicators when examining his presumed value of French citizens, such as criminality and insanity.[199] Value was also a concern of eugenicist Sicard who aimed to measure whether a person's life would be valuable to French society. Dr. Pinard shared this concern and wrote the introduction to Sicard's book. Lamarckian eugenics had the aim of improving people's lives through social hygiene, environment, and education, however many French eugenicists in the 1920s were more concerned with how the population was supposedly degenerating, the result of the growing number of people who, they believed, did not add to the value of the society.

However, while Mendelian ideology was already gaining ground in the 1920s, official policy enactments until the 1926 marriage bill were largely Lamarckian, such as the improvement of social hygiene and treating conditions like tuberculosis. France was concerned with raising the birthrate and safeguarding the French republic's democratic ideals, this coupled with the considerable influence of Catholicism did not allow for policies that would limit the population through artificial measures. The marriage bill in 1926 was also toned down to appeal to the SFE's allies within France. Dr. Schreiber believed that the sterilization methods practiced in other countries would be effective, but he knew French society would not allow it.[200]

Looking throughout the 1920s, many of France's eugenicists who were influential within the SFE were advocating for Mendelian measures, however the social conditions in France did not allow such measures to be translated into policies. By the 1930s, French society was becoming more concerned with the "quality" of population,

[199] Pappilaut, 135.
[200] Schreiber, 11.

as the threat of depopulation was lessening. This allowed eugenicists to be more outspoken in their Mendelian views, as indicated by Dr. Schreiber's promotion of sterilization as a solution for hereditary criminality.[201] When compared to the views of representatives of Lamarckian-inspired eugenic societies at the *1er Congrès Latin d'Eugénique*, the difference between France's and the other countries' delegates were clear. Countries such as Brazil and Italy focused on environment, and French delegates focused on inherent traits that would negatively impact their population.[202] While the ideas on sterilization advanced by Alexis Carrel during the Vichy regime are seen as a departure from French eugenics, it is clear that Mendelian ideas already shaped the national conversation during the 1930s. Public health cards were also made mandatory in 1939 which allowed the Vichy regime to enact further policy regarding health and the disclosure of that information in the 1940s.

The writings by SFE members during the interwar period analyzed in this report shows that by the interwar years, French eugenic thinking was no longer dominated by Lamarckian views. Rather, many of the eugenicists found Mendelian views compelling, and advocated for them. However, conditions in France throughout the interwar period which valued pronatalism and democracy did not allow for restrictive Mendelian policy. The appeal of Mendelian views apparent in the late 1930s and early 1940s were not a sharp turn in French eugenic ideology; rather, a shift in context allowed for Mendelian eugenic thought and policy to consolidate its influence. Mendelian influences on policy

[201] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth Century France,* 189.
[202] Georges Heuyer and M. Carrère, 370.

and on SFE members were clearer by the later 1930s, and gained more recognition after 1940, but can be traced back to the aftermath of the First World War.

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Conference Participation

"Quality or Quantity: French Interwar Eugenic Ideology." Presented in the panel "The Selfish Meme: Spreading Ideas, Ideologies & Knowledge Frameworks" at the **19th Annual McGill-Queen's Graduate Conference in History,** virtual, 10-11 March 2022.

"Social Hygiene or Social Control? French Interwar Eugenic Ideology." Presented in the panel "Military and Influence" at the **21st Annual University of Maine-University of New Brunswick International History Graduate Student Conference**, virtual, 26-27 March, 2022.

Professional Experience

Research Assistant – The Gregg Centre – 2022
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Marketing and Communications Specialist – Beaverbrook Art Gallery – 2020-2021
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