



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Arm in Arm: Gender, Eugenics, and Virginia's Racial Integrity Acts of the 1920s

Dorr, Lisa Lindquist.

Journal of Women's History, Volume 11, Number 1, Spring 1999,
pp. 143-166 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: [10.1353/jowh.2003.0094](https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0094)



 For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jowh/summary/v011/11.1dorr.html>

ARM IN ARM:

Gender, Eugenics, and Virginia's Racial Integrity Acts of the 1920s

Lisa Lindquist Dorr

In 1924, Virginia passed a law "to preserve racial integrity" as part of a wave of eugenic legislation. Debate surrounding the passage of the Racial Integrity Act, a law forbidding a white person to marry anyone of another race, reveals how eugenicists manipulated ideas about race, class, and gender to create a social crisis that apparently could only be solved through their policies. Women's growing independence and new social behaviors, they feared, would lead to increasing sexual relations between white women and black men. Proponents of the act articulated a new female vulnerability, encouraged women's return to their traditional roles, and supported efforts to control women who did not conform to moral expectations. Justified by eugenicists' desire to protect and improve white genetic stock, and ostensibly enacted to prevent racial mixture, the law ultimately served to prescribe the attitudes and behavior of Virginia's white women.

In 1925, Walter Ashby Plecker, head of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*; "It is said that some of our Richmond people admit into their homes these people of triple race mixture, and some of our young women attend 'fish-fries' given by these young men. These are certainly practices which should cease."¹ Another letter to Plecker's friend John Powell, a musician affiliated with the University of Virginia, warned that "some months ago they [blacks and whites] actually did eat together at Randolph-Macon's Women's College at Lynchburg. I think this sort of thing ought to be nipped in the bud."² Such statements echoed fears that social interactions between whites and blacks, specifically between white women and black men, had increased sharply in Virginia during the early 1920s. Plecker and other Virginians who shared his concerns worried that social contact between the races would lead to sexual relationships and result in the destruction of traditional white civilization. Proponents of the "science" of eugenics, these men believed that social order depended upon maintaining the purity of the white race. Together, they launched a successful campaign promoting legislative action to preserve racial integrity in Virginia. The key to their

agenda was prescribing the behavior and attitudes of Virginia's white women.

Lillian Smith, a Southern social critic, observed that "whenever, wherever, race relations are discussed in the United States, sex moves arm in arm with the concept of segregation."³ Historians are beginning to explore the interdependent ideologies supporting both racial and sexual hierarchies.⁴ This article continues this process and includes gender in the discussion of racial purity. Examining Virginia's legal history provides a case study of the interaction between conceptions of gender and antimiscegenation law. A small group of lobbyists who supported, along with eugenics, traditional principles of family and government, promoted Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924 as part of a wave of legislation that sought to control marginalized populations. Responding to changing social norms and gender roles, proponents of eugenic legislation used their scientific beliefs to manipulate class, race, and gender stereotypes to manufacture a social crisis that apparently could only be solved through eugenic policies. Examining the Racial Integrity Act through the lens of gender does not merely illuminate another side of an old story.⁵ This act represents a modern, rationalized means of simultaneously controlling black men and white women at a time when extralegal means of control were falling out of favor. Eugenics offered seemingly inarguable scientific justification for traditional ideals, and thus became both a positive belief system and convenient rationale for counteracting changes in social and gender norms.

In 1924, Plecker and his ideological compatriots focused their efforts on the passage of the Racial Integrity Act, a law forbidding a white person to marry anyone of another race. Ostensibly enacted in response to growing fears of moral decay, Virginia broke new ground in racial legislation with this act. The act did not intend to determine the "race" of blood itself; instead, eugenicists were concerned with ancestry. The bill defined a white person as one with no discernible trace of nonwhite (including African-American, Native-American, Malaysian, or Asian) blood, ideally preventing near-whites from claiming white status. Although the act claimed to preserve the integrity of all races, it only defined whites, making no provisions for intermarriage between African Americans, Native Americans, or Asian Americans. In addition, the bill required all newborns and adults born before 1912 to be registered by race at the Bureau of Vital Statistics, the state agency assigned the task of implementing and policing compliance with the act. (Ultimately, this latter provision was removed during debate in Virginia's General Assembly because it was prohibitively expensive and might classify "good" families as "mongrel."⁶) By defining whites as those with no trace of nonwhite blood, the act reaffirmed the

assertion of the absolute purity of the white race. Moreover, by requiring registration upon marriage and the registration of offspring, the act empowered local officials to withhold marriage licenses from couples whose racial status might be suspect, and placed the burden of providing evidence of racial purity on the couple.

The Racial Integrity Act in 1924 was not the first act to prohibit interracial marriage, nor was Virginia the only state to forbid such unions. Laws against fornication passed by the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1661 were followed in 1662 with an amendment that doubled punishment if either party was of African descent. The legislature banned racial intermarriage entirely in 1692. The reduction of most African Americans to slaves made control of miscegenation easier. Children born of white men and slave women inherited race identity and bondage from their mothers. Although white Southerners were aware of continuing racial intermixture, slavery masked its consequences.⁷

Emancipation ended this legalized system of racial control. Increased intolerance for interracial sexual liaisons between white women and black men after the Civil War reflected whites' determination to enforce racial hierarchy through the absolute separation of the races. Control of interracial sexual congress became a means of political control over newly freed blacks.⁸ The Virginia legislature strengthened seventeenth-century racial classification laws in 1866 when it defined a colored person as an individual with one-quarter or more black blood, and again in 1910 when the fraction was decreased to one-sixteenth. Early-twentieth-century laws requiring racial registration were part of the web of laws that constituted Jim Crow segregation.

Southerners had long advocated racial separation, yet scientific developments in the first decades of the twentieth century shifted the debate from culture to biology. Scientists mingled theories from genetics, biology, anthropology, and sociology to create the new "science" of eugenics.⁹ Eugenicians argued that both physical and character traits of individuals were biologically determined, and thus the genetic quality of society could be made better or worse through artificial selection. While encouraging positive eugenics—reproduction among those with salutary genetic traits—American eugenicians concentrated on negative eugenics—preventing reproduction among the "unfit." To eliminate "unfit" genetic stock, eugenicians advocated four main policies: immigration restriction, racial segregation, restrictive marriage laws, and compulsory sterilization.

To Southerners, eugenic policies reinforced existing racial hierarchies. They also legitimized heretofore culturally based social policies in the name of science. Most Southerners assumed the "superiority" of the white race and the importance of racial separation, but they feared, and eugenics

offered "proof," that racial amalgamation would result in future generations dominated by "inferior" racial characteristics. Eugenacists maintained that the biological traits of the weaker race dominated those of the superior race when admixture occurred. If allowed to continue, miscegenation would ultimately destroy white civilization.¹⁰

Eugenacists also reified traditional gender distinctions and sought to reduce white women's social roles to their primary role as mothers. Eugenacists argued against advanced education, careers outside the home, and the use of birth control among middle-class white women. Eugenic policies thus wove together racial, class, and gender biases in the name of scientifically justified social reform.¹¹ Separation of the races matched a parallel system of gender role differentiation. Although limited in public, white women contributed to the good of society in their private role as mothers.¹² Women's public role, however, could not be separated from their reproductive duties. Thus, social stability also depended on controlling women's sexuality as a means of assuring they were virtuous enough to raise virtuous children.¹³

Southern society inflicted severe punishment on white women who transgressed racial boundaries. From birth, Southern white women knew they would forfeit their right to white men's protection if they tested the limits of racial and sexual taboos. Black men and white women were restricted to sexual relations within their own races, a restriction that did not apply to white men and black women. The fear that consensual relations between white women and black men could occur played a large part in the construction of legalized racial boundaries. Moreover, lynching served to show black men the potential cost of interest in white women, while it presented white women with the consequences of desiring black men, and thereby foregoing their claim to protection. Lynching was the fulcrum around which pivoted control over both white women and black men.¹⁴

More recent analyses of relationships between white women and African-American men show that while in the nineteenth century, a woman's economic status or sexual history could abrogate her claim to protection, by the twentieth century, all white women could claim protection under the cloak of chivalry. The primacy of racial solidarity suggests that by the 1920s, *all* sexual relationships between white women and black men should inevitably have ended in violence against or legal prosecution of black men, regardless of the woman's class or sexual history.¹⁵ As the discourse surrounding the Racial Integrity Act indicates, class stereotypes of women's sexuality continued to influence Southerners' responses to interracial sexual relationships. Lower-class white women might experience community disapproval for participating in such relationships, but

liaisons occurred without provoking violence or legal interference. More important, efforts to control interracial sexual congress blamed white women of different classes in distinct ways.

Ideologies predicated upon racial separation and gender differentiation worked well when women of both races and blacks of both genders conformed to their expected roles. But by the 1920s, age-old gender roles were no longer clearly defined, and Victorian sexual values were beginning to undergo a transformation. New gender relations affected people in personal and troubling ways, especially in the private sphere. The changes in the 1920s were not entirely new or completely foreign. Working-class women had flouted middle-class norms of behavior, heterosocial interaction, and sexuality since the 1890s. What was new, however, was the middle class' eager adoption of these cultural and social forms. Activities that previously had made working-class women seem different were appearing in the homes of middle-class whites. Increasingly, young women expressed their newfound independence and sexuality in public ways and public venues.¹⁶ Tensions in social institutions surfaced in the guise of rising divorce rates, continued falling birth rates, and a growing percentage of young women who professed little desire to marry at all.¹⁷

Historians have focused on gender tensions in the North, but Virginia newspapers during the early 1920s indicate that the South struggled with similar issues.¹⁸ Many newspaper articles in Virginia located the cause and effect of social decline in new forms of popular culture. Ministers warned that motion pictures, close dancing, and "auto-petting" were causing female delinquency. One minister argued these were symptoms of "decaying civilization" and clear evidence of loss of parental authority. He asserted that more than 375,000 women in the United States "have fallen through the influence of the dance."¹⁹

Some readers appreciated the possibilities for modern women,²⁰ yet many of the older generation saw only dangers. They believed the independence and ease with which women invaded public spaces were forces driving women to ruin. For instance, Mina C. Van Winkle, head of the Washington, D.C., Women's Division of Police, argued that while delinquency was declining among boys, the prevalence of cabarets and cheap literature had caused an increase among girls, making them unfit to be wives and mothers. Some experts contended that modern girls were adrift from standard moral moorings, and no longer knew "what was right and what was wrong."²¹

While parents, experts, and newspaper editors lamented the disappearance of the old-fashioned girl, they simultaneously reinforced traditional notions of women's roles. Articles declaring that women's proper place was in the home appeared alongside articles condemning the

influences of modern popular culture. One letter to the editor asserted that women had no right to expect the support of men if they shirked their proper role through idleness or the use of birth control.²² Articles sported such headlines as "Richmond Women Say Home Is Paramount to a Career," and "Woman Preacher Sees Home as Women's Sphere."²³

The number of women desiring to postpone marriage raised the fear that marriage was a declining institution. In 1923, a survey of female college students revealed that 78 percent planned to have a career, and most did not believe that marriage and a career were mutually exclusive. A comparatively meager 50 percent said they hoped to marry.²⁴ Many Virginia residents, alarmed by the apparent crumbling of the moral stronghold of marriage, saw the rising divorce rate as "a sure sign of a decaying society."²⁵ The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* published an editorial responding to "the widespread belief that the country is headed for 'a bad place' as a result of petting, movies, romance novels and women working." To many people, complete moral decline in the United States would result from changing gender roles, new social activities, and mass popular culture.²⁶

It is difficult to determine how accurately newspapers reflected public opinion, yet the sheer number of articles attests to the pervasiveness of social controversies over gender. Moreover, these articles reveal a belief in a connection between women's familial role and the maintenance of culture and civilization. To buttress the institution of the family, seen as the bedrock upon which the rest of society was founded, public discourse encouraged women to marry, stay at home, and raise children. For eugenicists, changes in traditional social institutions presaged disaster in the form of "racial suicide," while changing gender norms and the decline of traditional institutions contributed to a falling birth rate among the most desirable segments of the population: middle- and upper-class Anglo-Saxons. This decline, in turn, would lead to a society overrun by the "dysgenic" offspring of the "lower orders."

This dysgenic population sprang from regionally defined lower orders. Both Northern and Southern eugenicists worried about the ability of people they labeled "high grade morons" to "pass" into and reproduce with "superior" stock. Northerners also were concerned that immigrants from "undesirable" countries would do the same. Southerners, by contrast, lacking a large influx of immigrants, concentrated their eugenic fears on the resident population of African Americans whom they believed could potentially "pass" into and reproduce with white society. This fear walked arm in arm with concern about the behavior of women.

Media discussion of the dangers facing modern women and their implicit threat to social stability betrayed a growing apprehension that

the moral values of the lower orders of society were beginning to influence young, white, middle-class women. Eugenic supporters of the Racial Integrity Act later articulated this concern: women, intoxicated by the exciting adventures of youth, might ignore the opinions of their elders, their traditions, and, ultimately, their racial pride, which, because of women's reproductive capacity, was especially important. Away from parental supervision and protection, these women would be increasingly vulnerable to the manipulations of new "confidence men"—men with unknown racial origins seeking to infiltrate the middle-class white world.²⁷ Eugenicists capitalized on this perceived vulnerability to promote their programs.

When the Virginia General Assembly met in 1924, women's desire for increased opportunities was more than media debate. During this session that passed the Racial Integrity Act, both the Virginia House and Senate were confronted with equal rights bills designed to ensure women "the same rights, privileges and immunities under the laws of this state as men."²⁸ The Virginia House committee approved the bill, even though members insisted they had passed it "unwittingly" and were "embarrassed" that passage erroneously indicated their support.²⁹ Although the bill was soon killed, the approval launched a flurry of editorials and articles. Coverage of the women's equal rights bill far exceeded that of the Racial Integrity Act. In February 1924, there were more than twenty articles on the equal rights bill compared to nine about the Racial Integrity Act.³⁰ Such attention to both women's roles and the equal rights bill placed women's issues at the forefront of public discourse.

Fears about women's new freedoms and changing roles converged with eugenic concerns about racial order. Racial policies, however, were not the only means by which policy makers sought to protect the purity of the white gene pool. Eugenic beliefs about racial decline also motivated the National Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 and state-level compulsory sterilization policies throughout the United States during the 1920s.³¹ Immigration restrictions, according to eugenicists, did not grow out of racism or ethnocentrism, but rather were a scientifically based response to the threat immigrants posed to American society. Eugenicists pointed to increased levels of insanity among immigrants and believed ethnic women were morally bankrupt, impoverished, and feeble-minded. By the laws of heredity, immigrants would pass their moral and intellectual taint to succeeding generations, who would become burdens on society.³² The U.S. Congress heeded eugenicists' warnings; many of the witnesses at hearings for the National Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 were nationally recognized eugenicists, men who later testified in favor of the Racial Integrity Act before the Virginia General Assembly.³³

Eugenicists believed undesirable ethnic blood was one source dilut-

ing native-born American strains, but they regarded uncontrolled breeding among the working class a threat as well. Victorian ideologies about women's sexual purity did not apply to working-class and nonwhite women. In the nineteenth century, however, people blamed these women's "loose" morals on sin or lack of character. By the twentieth century, medical experts blamed women's "lascivious" behavior on inherited taints or genetic abnormalities.³⁴ Thus, sexual promiscuity became both symptom and evidence of the new categories of "feeble-mindedness" and "moral imbecility." To Southerners, feeble-minded women, because they were "irrational" and genetically controlled by powerful sexual desires, could not appreciate the need to maintain racial purity; thus, they could not be trusted to avoid any sexual liaisons, including those between races. Reproduction by feeble-minded women could potentially increase the feeble-minded population, pollute the white genetic pool, and, worse, possibly lead to miscegenation.

In the 1920s, Virginia was a national leader in controlling its undesirable populations through legislation. Although sterilization policies affected men as well as women, women were their primary targets. Of those sterilized under Virginia's forced sterilization law between 1924 and 1972, almost two-thirds were women.³⁵ Such institutions as the Lynchburg Colony housed feeble-minded women during their childbearing years, and doctors forcibly sterilized many of them as a precondition for their release. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Buck v. Bell* which upheld the constitutionality of forced sterilization resulted from a Virginia case originating at Lynchburg. "Plaintiff" Carrie Buck seemed typically "feeble-minded." She was a poor, unmarried daughter of a feeble-minded woman. Carrie had given birth to an illegitimate child, although not because of her "innate depravity" or "moral imbecility," but because she had been raped by her cousin. Rather than being the plaintiff in the case, however, she was more accurately its target. Lawyers for both the prosecution and the defense colluded to insure the case, and thus the forced sterilization law, would pass constitutional scrutiny.³⁶

Although couched in terms of objective, genetic science, eugenic legislation sought to mitigate the threat certain populations posed to society. It is not a coincidence that laws promoting immigration restrictions and sterilization of the "feeble-minded" were enacted contemporaneously with the Racial Integrity Act. Class- and race-specific assumptions about female sexual behavior shaped these policies; they reflected fears of changing gender roles and increasing female sexual agency and independence. The equal rights bill, which confronted gender issues directly, was ridiculed and defeated, while the Racial Integrity Act and sterilization acts, both of which implicitly buttressed traditional gender hierarchies, sailed

through the Virginia General Assembly with considerably less debate. Eugenicists provided concrete policies for addressing concerns about women's sexual behaviors, masking them in rhetoric about science's duty to protect society.

Legalized forms of racial separation, with the help of other eugenic legislation, circumscribed opportunities for interracial sexual relations, yet supporters of the Racial Integrity Act doubted whether they were adequate. To such supporters, there was a gap, perhaps even a growing one, between ideal gender and race relations and reality. Men lobbying for the act's passage recounted many examples of sexual relations between white women and black men that occurred without lynching or interference from local authorities, and did not result in charges of rape.³⁷ A law enacted to further limit interracial marriage, justified under the rubric of eugenic salvation of the white race, responded to this gap and criminalized previously liminal, but not illegal, behavior.

In January 1924, the Virginia General Assembly received a petition signed by almost two thousand Virginians requesting the passage of a bill to preserve racial purity. The General Assembly passed the Racial Integrity Act because of the concerted lobbying efforts of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, an organization Virginians John Powell, Walter Ashby Plecker, and Earnest Sevier Cox, a prominent race theorist, formed in 1923. These men, all advocates of eugenics, united to conduct a campaign for racial purity that eschewed the tactics of the Ku Klux Klan. Under their leadership, the clubs grew to more than thirty-six branch posts by 1925, including one in Pennsylvania and two in New York. The aims of the clubs, according to their constitution, were threefold: to strengthen the Anglo-Saxon instincts, principles, and traditions of its members, and society at large; to restrict immigration; and, fundamentally, to arrive at what they chillingly termed "a final solution" to the "Negro problem."³⁸

The clubs' constitution and set of principles combined beliefs about racial hierarchy, liberal democratic political thought, and the concepts of the nation's forefathers. Membership in the clubs was limited to native-born, white men over the age of eighteen who were of "good character" and expressed an intention to vote. Implicitly, the clubs catered to men who were middle-class and well-educated, and who espoused traditional ideals that benefited those who shared their social, economic, and racial privileges. Moreover, the focus on voting indicates the clubs' plan to use legislation to achieve their goals.³⁹

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs also articulated a moral imperative to protect "the most sacred of all cultural heritages," and invoked the imagery of a religious crusade against the destruction of civilization. Feeling called to protect "all that is highest and holiest," club members conflated patrio-

tism, fear of racial amalgamation, and the supremacy of white men in American culture.⁴⁰ References to patriotism, a "white man's country," and the "civilization and ideals of our forefathers" buttressed a belief system that emphasized white male superiority, the traditional family, and the proper role of white women. They believed these notions separated North American civilization from more "savage" civilizations. The settlers of the New World, they argued, "came not as did the Spanish and Portuguese adventurers of the Southern Continent, without their women, bent only on conquest and the gaining of wealth and power, but they came bringing their families, the Bible, and high ideals of religious and civic freedoms. They came to create homes, to create a nation, and to found a civilization of the highest type, not to originate a mongrel population combining the worst traits of both conquerors and conquered, with the subsequent mixture of a third still lower element transported from Africa, as was done by the men from the Hispanic Peninsula."⁴¹ The superiority of white civilization, according to the clubs, was founded upon the integrity of the white patriarchal family and the purity of the blood of its members.

The goals of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs sought to reinforce the line between the races, which its members believed to be in danger of collapsing. Imbedded in their principles, however, was a gendered discourse. In their eyes, white, middle-class, American women were responsible for the decline in the white birth rate through their entry into higher education and the paid labor force, their increased use of birth control, and the allegedly growing numbers of women delaying marriage. Consequently, club members and their supporters blamed changing gender roles for the demise of American values and civilization. To reclaim these ideals, women needed to return to their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

White women, however, were excluded from what became one of Virginia's most influential citizens' groups against miscegenation. This exclusion marginalized their participation in the political process, reflecting members' belief in women's proper role. Elite white women who supported racial purity, by their membership in less influential auxiliaries, tacitly showed their acceptance of white men as their defenders. The clubs' policy of sexual segregation embodied eugenic beliefs that man-made and man-enforced laws should control women's sexual and reproductive functions because women were not able to do so on their own. The Anglo-Saxon Clubs saw white women as crucial to the maintenance of the racial and social structure, not as actors but as recipients of the decisions of privileged white men.

White women played a pivotal role in racial amalgamation, both as the prime victims the Racial Integrity Act sought to protect, and as those

responsible for miscegenation because of their modern behaviors. The Bureau of Vital Statistics developed a system that worked to expose and punish anyone guilty of violating the provisions of the act. In practice, however, this system focused on the easiest targets—new, white mothers who were required to register the race of their child. The following letter is representative of those sent to such women, a copy of which Plecker forwarded to Powell to allow him to see “a specimen of our daily troubles and how we are handling them.” This particular letter was sent to a white woman whose child was the result of an allegedly adulterous affair with an African-American man.

Dear Madam,

We have report of the birth of your child, 30 July 1923, signed by Mary Gilden, midwife. She says that you are white and that the father of the child is white.

We have a correction to this certificate sent to us from the City Health Department at Lynchburg, in which they say that the father of the child is a negro.

This is to give you warning that this is a mulatto child and you cannot pass it off as white. A new law passed by the last legislature says that if a child has one drop of negro blood in it, it cannot be counted as white. You will have to do something about this matter and see that the child is not allowed to mix with white children, it cannot go to white schools and can never marry a white person in Virginia.

It is an awful thing.⁴²

The ominous tone of the letter carries an explicit moral condemnation. As the letters were sent to mothers, white men largely escaped responsibility for their illicit sexual relations with African-American women. This letter, however, served another purpose. Although state authorities could not always prevent illicit interracial unions, with the help of willing doctors, midwives, and local registrars, the children of these unions were immediately branded as nonwhite. Thus, the act provided a legal means for the state to prevent mixed-race children born of white mothers from benefiting from the privileges of their whiteness.

The convergence of class, race, and gender becomes evident in “The Last Stand,” a series of articles John Powell wrote for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. The newspaper published the series during legislative debates for the second version of the Racial Integrity Act in 1926, which sought to close loopholes that allowed those with Native-American ancestry to marry whites. Eugenicists wanted the amendment because they believed Afri-

can Americans were claiming Native-American heritage in order to pass into white society.⁴³ To garner support for the 1926 act, Powell used the media to convince the public that further restrictions were necessary. In this series, Powell presented a collection of instances wherein racial integrity had been compromised. The daily articles recounted some eighty instances of miscegenation, and were organized regionally. It is unclear if the cases describe actual events, as Powell was cryptic about his sources.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, their basis in reality is less important than the trajectory of racial amalgamation they claim. Powell located the threat to white society in a variety of sources, all the result of new economic and social realities, and each carrying specific implications for white women. While it is difficult to trace the series' impact on legislative debate, as the amendments failed to become law, these articles illustrate Powell's characterization of the new victims and villains of miscegenation: those whom new social norms made vulnerable and those who exploited these norms for personal gain.

About 10 percent of these miscegenation cases involved Virginia's "Indian" population. These groups, Powell argued, were able to pass into the white population because of the "romantic sentimentality or self-interest" of "mis-guided" whites who married them. Another group of cases report instances where white men married women who had small fractions of African-American ancestry. In many of these cases, primarily involving "respectable" men and women, the women were ignorant of their mixed-race heritage; it only came to light when a child was born who "reverted to type"—whose appearance showed the presence of non-white ancestry. One couple did a genealogical search and determined that the wife was "one two-hundred and fifty-sixth negro." These unhappy circumstances, Powell implied, would be avoided if the Racial Integrity Act was amended to force couples to prove their racial purity before marriage.⁴⁵

Wealth and beauty enticed some men to turn a blind eye to their "racial pride." In Charlottesville, a wealthy near-white father of two "beautiful" daughters "offered \$30,000 to any white man who would marry one of his daughters." The source of this anecdote reported that "he realized the imminence of amalgamation when he saw students of the university paying a social call on these women, being in total ignorance of their mixed derivation." In Staunton, two daughters of a "yellow negroid" married "white men of prominent families." Despite knowledge of the women's origins, "these two men and their prominent kinspeople are exerting great pressure—successfully—to force [their] children into the most refined and cultured associations." The Racial Integrity Act, however, ensured such marriages never took place.⁴⁶

Of the eighty cases Powell reported, only two involved white men's illicit sexual relations with African-American women. In both cases, the woman worked as a domestic in the unmarried man's household. One woman supposedly tried to kill her miscegenous child, but a white family rescued and adopted her. The other case involved a long-term relationship, in which the daughter of the union was "lithe as a panther." Although she eventually married an African-American man, it nonetheless was "the most striking example of the complete disintegration of racial pride, produced by degrading illicit contacts."⁴⁷

White men, however, were not the primary focus of this newspaper series. White women received the most criticism for causing amalgamation. These cases "exhibit[ed] the most appalling instance of the decay of decency and race pride" and were "inexpressibly humiliating to discuss."⁴⁸ While all the cases involving white women produced amalgamation, not all were equally indicative of moral decay. In some cases, the white woman was ignorant of her husband's racial mixture. Powell lamented the fate of Mrs. T., who placed her clearly nonwhite child with the Board of Public Welfare. When questioned about her fidelity, she insisted "the father is my husband. He has a little negro blood, and the child came black." Even though the rest of the children were white, "the marital relation between the parents continued undisturbed."⁴⁹ These women were to be pitied, according to Powell, yet he also condemned their unwillingness to end sexual relations that might lead to further amalgamation. Powell believed the Racial Integrity Act would step in where love overcame racial pride and prevent these marriages in the first place.

If romance was one cause of diminished racial pride, economic necessity was another, as the case of a farming family near Richmond illustrates. The husband, unable to support his family and pay his mortgage, left for a job in the North, while his wife remained on the farm. Overwhelmed with responsibility, she accepted help from a black man who offered her whiskey, with "tragic" results. The husband returned some months later to find his wife had given birth to a mixed-race child. Welfare workers brought the family into court to force them to give the child to the authorities, but the woman refused, saying "the child was her own flesh and blood and she was responsible for it." In a backhanded compliment, Powell declared that "the husband's thrift, honesty, and ambition, and the woman's strong maternal responsibility emphasize the horror of this case." Interestingly, the woman's adultery and the black man's sexual "aggression" escaped Powell's condemnation. Instead, he blamed changing economic conditions that forced the husband to abdicate his place as provider and protector of his wife and family. Other cases describe "respectable" yet destitute daughters who took to lives of "mercenary vice,

eventually sinking to associations with negroes." Amalgamation could thus be the child of poverty, and the price women paid for survival.⁵⁰

These "tragic" stories, however, did not account for the crux of the problem: "the most ghastly evidence of the increasing frequency of the birth of mixed breed children to white women." The following cases focus on the danger to white women in an age of social independence, when they are susceptible to "confidence men" who migrated to new communities to escape their racial origins. One near-white man from a nearby state married a white Virginia woman. While pregnant with her second child, she discovered that the African-American nanny who cared for her child was really her husband's mother. In shock, she gave premature birth, which "in the climax of ghastly horror, was a complete reversion to African type." The wife subsequently went insane and killed herself. Another young woman in Richmond "of excellent family and high social position" met a man of unknown racial origins who was new to the area. "Attracted by his unrestrained gaiety, high spirits and amiability," they fell in love. Despite rumors that he "was a negroid," she insisted on marrying him. "Shortly afterwards the rumor was confirmed, but the marriage relation was not disturbed." Young confidence men, intent on "passing," swept respectable white women off their feet and made racial demise imminent. As Powell argued, "Pride of family no longer inhibits acquaintance and association with persons of unknown ancestry in a society whose standards are based less on family and culture than on material possessions." These modern villains targeted the most innocent victims—presumably naïve, young, modern women newly free from traditional familial supervision. The Racial Integrity Act sought to prevent these suspect marriages and reveal mixed-race origins that otherwise smitten young girls would refuse to see.⁵¹

These cases underline how all families, rich and poor, were vulnerable to the infiltration of mixed-blood rogues. Indeed, "all classes of the white race will stand or fall together." With this racial solidarity in mind, Powell turned his attention to disreputable women who were "deplorable examples of [the] breakdown of racial pride and decency." He listed numerous cases of young white women having illegitimate mixed-race children, of married white women engaging in consensual adulterous affairs with black men, and of white widows taking up with African Americans. Representing more than fifteen cases, these "disreputable" women presented a different threat to racial purity than did their middle-class counterparts. One woman defended the father of her illegitimate child, claiming his "face may be yellow but his heart is the heart of a pure white gentleman." Powell encouraged his reading audience to regard these women and their children as genetically tainted. Indeed, in one case where

a thirteen-year-old girl allegedly bore an illegitimate mixed-race baby fathered by her mother's black lover, Powell implied that the mother passed on both her sexual depravity and low intelligence to her child. Another woman, perhaps the exception that proved the rule, had five illegitimate children, four of whom were white and "bright and good-looking." The state registrar who reported this case remarked with surprise that, although she had one colored child, "she is in no way feeble-minded."⁵²

Powell seemed convinced that interracial relationships between white women and African-American men occurred frequently, with little interference by local authorities. Powell's series illustrates the different means, at society's disposal, for controlling white women who produced mixed-race children. Defining certain women as feeble-minded allowed authorities to legally institutionalize or sterilize them, thus protecting society. Women with degraded racial pride, however, could not be controlled as easily. Parents could not dictate whom their daughters met at dance halls and movie theaters, or on college campuses; thus, the Racial Integrity Act was necessary. Powell outlined the comparative danger these "at-risk" women posed, explicitly excusing white male miscegenation: "But as the race of illegitimate children is determined by that of the mother, such amalgamation [with black women] is more readily controlled by the color line. Where the mothers of mixbreeds are white, however, the danger is increased a thousandfold. Formerly such cases were exceedingly rare, even among the lowest grades of whites. The present relative frequency should give us serious pause, especially as constituting the most convincing evidence of the decadence of racial pride and self-respect."⁵³ Mixed-race children of white mothers usually remained in the white community, thereby increasing the likelihood that they would marry whites. This complex collection of racial threats illustrates how class-based beliefs about women's roles and stereotypes about their sexuality were manipulated to support the effort to strengthen racial boundaries through the Racial Integrity Act.

Immigrants, however, were not immune to Powell's disapproval. In such areas as Norfolk, with its international shipping business, immigrants mixed "freely both with local whites and with Negroes."⁵⁴ Another danger came in the form of citizens who were part African American and moved to Norfolk and Portsmouth, claiming to be of Native-American extraction. Here they "intermarried with white people—usually Poles or other foreigners—and have tried to enter white schools." The threat from European immigrants was not only their own racial origins, but also that African Americans attempting to pass into white society through intermarriage with immigrants could victimize them. Thus, Powell gave a nod to the problem of immigration and demonstrated his allegiance to eugenicists across the country.⁵⁵

Letters to the editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* supported the aims of the act. On 28 February 1926, M. B. Davis wrote of her interest in the subject. "Speaking from the standpoint of a mother, I am anxious to see the law passed and enforced. How could parents of children who will marry be indifferent?" I. F. Love criticized the author for chastising the entire South for the sins of a few, maintaining the contrary that "these ideals [of racial purity] are not so conspicuous anywhere else in the world as in the South." Others took issue with Love, noting that, according to Mary Mabane, "intermarriage between foreign white and negroes is increasing at an alarming rate." Although the majority of the public supported the larger goals of the series, many letters questioned whether the focus of the series was misplaced. R. Cary Montague argued that "the races do not mix to any extent through intermarriage. The real source of the evil is illegal intercourse between the races." He advocated a law to force white men to take financial responsibility for their illegitimate offspring. Donald C. Wingo stressed the sexual vulnerability of black women, claiming "there is not a day that passes that some of our respectable colored women are not insulted by some poor ill-bred white youth." Mrs. R. J. Owen took the strongest stand and advised that "if old men, married men, and young men were made to support their offspring from negro women there would be less of such. A lady would not marry a man that was supporting a half-breed." She reasserted respectable white women's racial pride and the power it could exert over white men. The more restrictive 1926 amendment, containing a provision to address white men's miscegenation, could not gain enough support and was never passed.⁵⁶

Powell, despite these criticisms, maintained his focus on white women to the end of the series, decrying "cases of white men marrying colored women and of white women marrying or illicitly interbreeding with colored men. . . . This last is the most appalling and threatening feature of the situation and immediate steps for control must be taken." Powell laid blame for such happenings on the increased opportunities for social interaction, as "amalgamation was the inevitable result of social equality and social contacts cannot in courtesy or decency exist without the implication of equality." Powell advocated a measure to ensure "the separation of the races in places of public entertainment" in order to "embody the sane thesis that friendly political and economic relations between the races can best be preserved by avoiding the very appearance of social relations."⁵⁷ Although the Virginia General Assembly failed to pass the 1926 amendments to the Racial Integrity Act, it did pass the Massenburg Public Assemblage Act, which legislated separate seating for blacks and whites at "motion picture houses, theaters, and other places of public entertainment." Furthermore, the provisions of this act made the operators of such venues

and their customers liable for prosecution.⁵⁸ The law specifically targeted places where white women exercised their new social freedoms, and replaced the authority of absent parents with that of the law. Possible interracial interaction grew out of new gender norms, new forms of social interaction and courtship, and women's more open independence and sexuality. Powell's antidote was the social control of white women.

Powell created a new type of victimhood for upper-class white women, although their own behavior partly prompted it, but he reserved his strongest ire for poor white women. What is most striking about Powell's condemnation of marginalized white women in interracial relationships is the relative lack of blame he accords to their black partners, even though they too could be prosecuted under the act's provisions. He did not speak of protecting these women from sexual aggression. Instead, society needed to be protected from these women's sexual depravity. By foisting the blame primarily upon the woman and promoting the intervention of the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the form of shaming letters, rather than criminal prosecution of the man, Powell reclaimed public and institutionalized control over women's sexual lives. He created a procedure which, in his view, cut to the heart of the problem—the women themselves. Thus, debate over the Racial Integrity Act is not merely the story of reifying the legal codes around society's protection of white women. Indeed, eugenicists sought to reverse the equation, lobbying for new social policies that would protect society from white women.

Arm in arm, gender and race relations buttressed the social order, and when one faltered, white society was quick to steady them both. In the first decades of the twentieth century, women began to break out of their prescribed roles. In response, proponents of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 articulated a new female vulnerability, encouraged women's return to their traditional roles, and supported efforts to control women who did not conform to moral expectations. With eugenicists' clarion call that the moral order was near collapse, Virginia passed this act, limiting sexual relations between white women and nonwhite men, and implemented sterilization policies that specifically targeted white women who transgressed racial and sexual boundaries. The Anglo-Saxon Clubs, major players in this drama, ultimately sought to turn back the social, sexual, and racial clock to a time when both African-American men and women and women, both black and white, knew their places. Whether or not new social patterns resulted in black men and white women fraternizing in previously unthinkable ways, supporters of the act combined discourse about women's sexuality and miscegenation to create a specter of taboo sexual relations in the public consciousness, a consciousness already well-aware of white women's growing independence.

NOTES

¹ W. A. Plecker to editor of *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 April 1925, John Powell Collection, no. 7284, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia (hereafter cited as JPC).

² W. S. Gooch to John Powell, 18 April 1924, Box 56, JPC.

³ Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), 120.

⁴ Historical studies exploring racial and gender hierarchies include Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* 14 (summer 1989): 912–20; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ For a discussion of the origins and passage of the Racial Integrity Act, see Paul A. Lombardo, "Miscegenation, Eugenics, and Racism: Historical Footnotes to *Loving v. Virginia*," *University of California, Davis, Law Review* 21 (1988): 421–52; and Richard B. Sherman, "'The Last Stand': The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s," *Journal of Southern History* 54 (February 1988): 69–92.

⁶ Many of the "best" Virginia families claimed to descend from the union of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, and would be classified as nonwhite under the original provisions of the proposed law. Consequent amendments to the act allowed people with less than one-sixteenth Native-American blood to be legally classified as white. Failed attempts to amend the law in 1926 sought to close this loophole. Lombardo, "Miscegenation, Eugenics, and Racism," 434.

⁷ For discussion of Virginia's laws against interracial marriage, see Leon Higginbotham, Jr., and Barbara K. Kopytoff, "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia," *Georgetown Law Journal* 77, no. 6 (1989): 1967–2029; and Peter Wallenstein, "Race, Marriage, and the Law of Freedom: Alabama and Virginia, 1860s–1960s," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 70, no. 2 (1994): 371–437. Although Wallenstein gives an accurate chronicle of the laws, he attributes them to the continuing influence of slavery, rather than recognizing that eugenics shifted the nature of the debate about interracial marriage and sexuality. For a discussion of white men's sexual exploitation of slave women, see Deborah Gray White, "Ar'n't I a Woman?": *Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 34, 43.

⁸ Although whites acknowledged a need to separate the races, this did not extend to white men's sexual access to black women. Martha Hodes, "Sex across the Color Line: White Women and Black Men in the Nineteenth-Century American South" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1991), and Martha Hodes, "The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War," in *American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender, and Race since the Civil War*, ed. John C. Fout and Maura Shaw Tantillo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 59–74; Diane Miller Sommerville, "The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered," *Journal of Southern History* 61 (August 1995): 481–518; and Laura F.

Edwards, "The Disappearance of Susan Daniel and Henderson Cooper: Gender and Narratives of Political Conflict in the Reconstruction-Era U.S. South," *Feminist Studies* 22 (summer 1996): 363–86. Sommerville concludes that by the 1920s, racial solidarity across gender lines prevailed. My research on interracial rape in Virginia in the twentieth century shows this shift was not nearly so complete.

⁹ For discussion of the "science" of eugenics, see Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

¹⁰ Eugenics intensified the racial radicalism that Joel Williamson and C. Van Woodward identified and which ultimately led to Jim Crow. See Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); and C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). Major treatises promoting the racial elements of the eugenics movement include Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race, or The Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Scribners, 1923); and Earnest Sevier Cox, *White America* (Los Angeles: The Noontide Press, 1923).

¹¹ Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattos in the United States* (New York: The Free Press, 1980).

¹² Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980). For discussions of Southern women's domestic sphere, see Victoria Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 51, 47. The historiography of separate spheres is largely based on research on northeastern families where the division between public and private is most apparent. The South's rural economy made this bifurcation less stark. Nevertheless, women still upheld hearth and home, and, to some degree, maintained the ideals of virtue and morality. See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 171–91.

¹³ By the nineteenth century, "passionlessness" among elite women was a mark of class status. Eugenicists added a twist to this. Not only must women be morally virtuous enough to raise moral children, they must also be genetically virtuous enough to produce biologically "good" children. The idea of "passionlessness," of course, was reserved for elite white women. Victorians considered black women and working-class women to be innately sexual. Nancy Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790–1850," *Signs* 4 (winter 1978): 219–36; White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 31–39; and John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 100–104.

¹⁴ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 151–54; Williamson, *Crucible of Race*, 122; and George M. Frederickson, "The Negro as Beast: Southern Negrophobia at the Turn of the Century," in *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

¹⁵ Hodes, "Sex across the Color Line"; Sommerville, "The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered"; and Laura Edwards, "Sexual Violence, Gender, and Reconstruction in Granville County, North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 68 (July 1991): 237–60.

¹⁶ For discussions of working-class women's sexuality, see Kathy Peiss, "'Charity Girls' and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880–1920," in *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, ed. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 57–69; and Joanne Meyerowitz, "Sexuality, Geography, and Gender Economy: The Furnished Room Districts of Chicago, 1890–1930," in *Gender and American History since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (London: Routledge, 1993), 43–71. For middle-class adoption of these standards, see Christina Simmons, "Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression," in *Passion and Power*, 157–77. For information on the emerging youth culture and homosocial activities in public space, see Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). Amy Thompson McCandless argues that Southern women college students did not act as did Northern students. But these schools' commitment to restrictions speak to a fear that without them, their women students would quickly follow the example of their Northern peers, and certainly some Southern women did, rules or no. Amy Thompson McCandless, "Preserving the Pedestal: Restrictions on Social Life at Southern Colleges for Women, 1920–1940," *History of Higher Education Annual* 7 (1987): 45–67.

¹⁷ Steven Seidman, *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830–1930* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 68–72. Lawrence R. Broer and John D. Walther, eds., *Dancing Fools and Weary Blues: The Great Escape of the Twenties* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1990), 13–45.

¹⁸ Nancy McLean found evidence of new sexual mores among factory girls in Atlanta as early as 1913, and demonstrates how profoundly disturbing they were to patriarchal authority. Nancy McLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *Journal of American History* 78 (December 1991): 917–48.

¹⁹ "Dr. Wilbur J. Craft Talks on 'New Peril of Girls,'" *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 October 1922, 3; "Restrict Young People at Public Dances Here," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 December 1922, 4; and "Decaying Civilization Seen in Marathon Dance Craze," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 April 1923, 7.

²⁰ An editor of the *Roanoke World News* argued that women's new behaviors represented "both good and evil." "The Flappers and The Rest of Us," *Roanoke World News*, 5 February 1924, 6.

²¹ "Girls More Wayward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 10 November 1923, 1; and "Girls Puzzled by Conventional Standards," *Staunton Evening Leader*, 12 February 1924, 5.

²² "Voice of the People," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 October 1922, 4.

²³ "Richmond Woman Says Home is Paramount to a Career," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 November 1922, 6; "Woman Preacher Sees Home as Sphere of Her Own Sex," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 March 1928, 6; "Difficult to Blend Public Career with Wifehood," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 29 April 1923, 9; "Woman Not Created to Do Work of Man," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 April 1923, 7; and "Lass Will Provide Puffs and Powder for Girl Convicts: Salvation Army Major Believes 'Looking Best Aids Being Good,'" *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 11 March 1923, 1.

²⁴ "Nearly Half of Coeds Have Eye on Wedding Ring," *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 5 February 1924, 5.

²⁵ "Leading in Divorce," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 February 1923, 4.

²⁶ "A Clean People," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 February 1923, editorial section, 1; and "Nation-wide Move to Teach Morals in the Schools of the Country," *Roanoke World News*, 1 February 1924, 5.

²⁷ I borrow the term "confidence men" from Karen Halttunen. A confidence man "begins his assault on the innocent youth by winning his confidence through an offer of friendship and entertainment." Eventually, "the youth's character has been destroyed step by fatal step, because he has been tricked into offering his confidence to a man without principle, a man whose art is to deceive others through false appearances." Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 2-5, quotations on 2.

²⁸ "Literal Sex Equality Impossible," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 February 1924, 6. The purpose of the women's equal rights bill was to allow women to serve on juries, give them equal rights in the custody of children, and the right to enroll at the University of Virginia. The bill was supported by the National Women's Party, which had just begun its campaign for a national equal rights amendment.

²⁹ "Equal Rights Bill is Winner in Committee," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 February 1924, 1; and "'Equal Rights' Bill Reported," *Richmond News-Leader*, 8 February 1924, 28.

³⁰ The articles were in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Richmond News-Leader*, *Virginia Pilot-Norfolk Landmark*, *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, *Richmond Planet*, *Portsmouth Star*, *Harrisonburg Daily News Record*, *Staunton Evening Leader*, and *Roanoke World News*.

³¹ See Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 92-95, 103-12.

³² Nicole Hahn Rafter argues that the eugenics campaign in the late nineteenth century sought to criminalize, not an act, but a woman's body, if it was deemed a carrier of bad heredity. Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Claims-Making and Socio-Cultural Context in the First U.S. Eugenics Campaign," *Social Problems* 39 (February 1992): 17-34. Also see Ruth M. Alexander, *The "Girl Problem": Female Sexual Delinquency in New York, 1900-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 15, 22-23, 64-65; and Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing*

Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885–1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 96–97.

³³ Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 96–98.

³⁴ See Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); and Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900–1918* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

³⁵ Steven Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); and Philip R. Reilly, *The Surgical Solution: A History of Involuntary Sterilization in the United States* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 98. Reilly's statistics, although not always accurate, provide a national picture of sterilizations. Retired political scientist Julius Paul provides the most accurate and comprehensive picture of sterilizations in Virginia. Unfortunately, his manuscript is not published. Julius Paul, "' . . . Three Generation of Imbeciles Are Enough . . .': State Eugenic Sterilization Laws in American Thought and Practice," unpublished manuscript in possession of Paul A. Lombardo, 511.

³⁶ Paul A. Lombardo, "Three Generations, No Imbeciles: New Light on *Buck v. Bell*," *New York University Law Review* 60 (April 1985): 30–62.

³⁷ Virginia, unlike the rest of the South, relied on the legal system and "scientific" solutions, rather than extralegal violence, to uphold the racial hierarchy. See Eric Rise, *The Martinsville Seven: Race, Rape, and Capital Punishment* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 3; Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 141–43; and Gregory M. Dorr, "Assuring America's Place in the Sun: Ivey F. Lewis and the Teaching of Eugenics at the University of Virginia," paper presented at the joint meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science and the Society for the History of Technology, October 1995, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³⁸ John Powell, "What We Are Striving For," Box 56, JPC.

³⁹ "Methods of Inaugurating Posts," Anglo-Saxon Clubs, miscellaneous articles, Box 56, JPC.

⁴⁰ Powell, "What We Are Striving For"; and Lawrence T. Price to General Assembly, n.d., Box 56, JPC.

⁴¹ W. A. Plecker, Registrar, Bureau of Vital Statistics, "Virginia's Attempt to Adjust the Color Problem," typed manuscript, Box 56, JPC.

⁴² W. A. Plecker to Mrs. Robert H. Cheatham, 30 April 1924, copy to John Powell, Box 56, JPC. Such letters, as well as requiring proof of racial heritage when requesting a marriage license, were the primary means of enforcing the act. Arrests for intermarriage were much less common.

⁴³ For an analysis of the legal cases that led to the 1926 amendments, see Lombardo, "Miscegenation, Eugenics, and Racism"; and Sherman, "The Last

Stand." Efforts to amend the Racial Integrity Act were in response to several court challenges. Although a judge ruled against the provisions of the act, calling the burden of proof placed on the applicant to determine whether all his or her ancestors were white, a "hopeless task," he nonetheless sympathized with the intent of the act. His position encouraged members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs to strengthen the act.

⁴⁴ Lombardo speculates that they likely came from Walter Plecker's files at the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Lombardo, "Miscegenation, Eugenics, and Racism," 446.

⁴⁵ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 17 February 1926, 7; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 February 1926, 8.

⁴⁶ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 February 1926, 7; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1 March 1926, 14.

⁴⁷ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 February 1926, 9; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 February 1926, 8.

⁴⁸ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 17 February 1926, 7.

⁴⁹ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 February 1926, 8.

⁵⁰ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 February 1926, 5; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 February 1926, 8.

⁵¹ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 February 1926, 9; "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 February 1926, 14; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 February 1926, 5. Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 3, 19–21. Bailey discusses the shift in courtship from parents to the suitor. "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 February 1926, 14.

⁵² "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 February 1926, 5; "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 February 1926, 7; "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 February 1926, 5; "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 February 1926, 8; "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 February 1926, 9; and "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 February 1926, 7.

⁵³ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 February 1926, 8.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, in 1955, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed Virginia's Racial Integrity Act for the last time and dodged a case that involved a white woman and a man of Asian descent. The wife invoked the act as a means of annulling her troubled marriage. The act survived until the 1967 landmark civil rights case *Loving v. Virginia* in which the court unanimously declared racial restriction of marriage unconstitutional. See Gregory M. Dorr, "From the Classroom to the Bedroom: Miscegenation, Eugenics, Desegregation, and *Naim v. Naim*," *American Journal of Legal History*, 42, no. 2 (spring 1999).

⁵⁵ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 February 1926, 14.

⁵⁶ "Letters from Readers," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 28 February 1926, 7;

"Letters from Readers," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 21 February 1926, 7; "Voice of the People," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 February 1926, 6; "Voice of the People," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 February 1926, 8; and "From a 'Grandma,'" *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1 March 1926, 6.

⁵⁷ "The Last Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 March 1926, 20.

⁵⁸ Richard B. Sherman, "The 'Teachings at Hampton Institute': Social Equality, Racial Integrity, and the Virginia Public Assemblage Act of 1926," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 95 (July 1987): 275–300. This act was passed in response to allegations that the Hampton Institute promoted social equality by allowing desegregated audiences at its theater.
