

Eugenics and Obstetric Violence in Texas 1907-1937

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Introduction

My research for the Natalicio Fellowship over the summer examined obstetric violence performed by doctors conducting experimental procedures on women during and after childbirth across Texas and Arizona. Articles published in medical journals documented numerous instances of obstetric violence in the early twentieth century. Since the professionalization of medicine was patriarchal century led to abusive obstetrical practices against their female patients by primarily male doctors seeking to legitimize certain procedures. Texas proposed multiple eugenic sterilization laws over a thirty-year period from 1907 through 1937, but each piece of legislation failed to pass the state legislature. Numerous medical practitioners in Texas advocated for the sterilization of men and women based on eugenics ideas of better breeding and the prevention of individuals with so-called negative genetic traits from procreating. Over a period of thirty years, the language of these proposed laws changed over time. Texas is typically seen as an exception to coercive sterilization compared to states like California.

Objectives

How did Texas politicians and the state's medical practitioners engage in broader conversations about eugenics and coercive sterilization from 1907 through 1937?

Did any of the maternal health procedures represent obstetric violence?

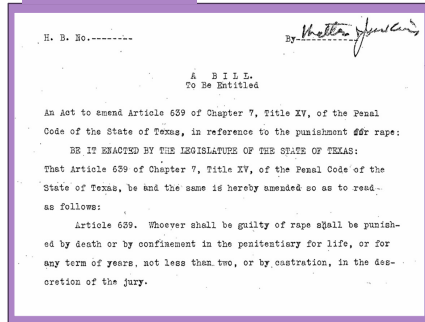
Materials

- Medical journals including *The Bulletin* and *Southwestern Medicine*, which were local publications from the El Paso Medical Society. The *Texas State Journal of Medicine* provided some input on obstetrical procedures and eugenic rhetoric from medical practitioners in Texas.
- Legislative records from the Texas House of Representatives and Senate
- Local newspapers including the *El Paso Time* and *El Paso Herald-Post*
- Elizabeth Kukura's definition of obstetric violence.
- Secondary sources focused on the history of eugenics, maternal health, and the racialization of women of color.

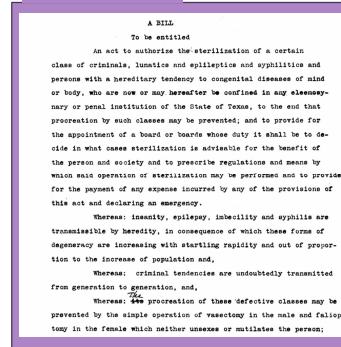
Conclusions

- Texas failed multiple times to pass a eugenic sterilization law from 1907 through 1937. The closest the Texas Senate came to passing this legislation occurred in 1913, with a vote of 14 to 11.
- The medical community in Texas advocated for eugenic sterilization of people they deemed unfit for procreation. Doctors from Arizona endorsed ideas of sterilization within their state.
- There are multiple instances of obstetric violence performed by medical practitioners in El Paso and across Texas within these three medical journals.
- Examples of obstetric violence included the experimentation of anesthesia and radiation, and unregulated ideas of consent for obstetrical procedures.

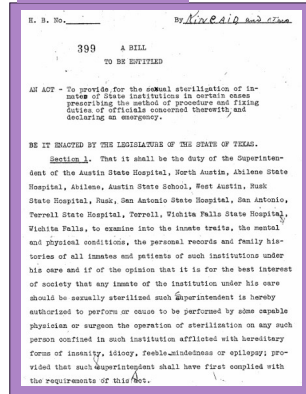
1907 Sterilization Law



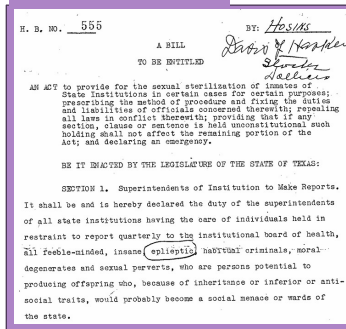
1913 Sterilization Law



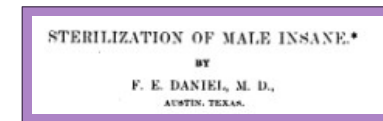
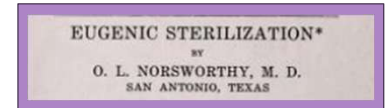
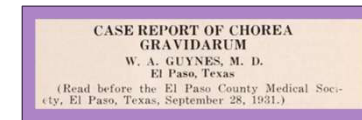
1929 Sterilization Law



1937 Sterilization Law



Articles from Medical Journals in Texas



References



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