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SRC Abstract

Compulsory Sterilization of Native Americans and the Racist Motivations Within the Eugenics Movement

When examining reproductive rights issues throughout American history, one can take note of the arguable disproportion of reproductive infringements on Native Americans and other minorities. My analysis of existing research examines the historical construction of racism in the United States and the implications for reproductive rights of Native Americans, with specific focus on compulsory sexual sterilizations during the initial eugenics period the reemergence of such policies in the 1960's and 1970's. Existing research has suggested that such legalized discrimination throughout history has allowed for violations of Native Americans' reproductive freedoms throughout history, including anti-miscegenation legislation and relocation mandates for Native Americans. In looking at eugenics literature from the 1930's, the language used to describe the Native American population as being prone to various "undesirable" traits illustrates the subtle targeting of this population through the eugenics movement. Furthermore, examining the arguments against legalization of birth control suggests an inherent concern for the degeneration of dominant white culture and, therein, a concern that the growth of minority populations threatened the white race. Core findings in my research have also provided evidence that various social and political factors, such as the development of Indian Health Services and its centralized control over Native American health care, lack of proper translators within the IHS, and underrepresentation of the Native American population contributed to the reemergence of compulsory sterilizations in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century and failure to convict the IHS for the illegal procedures performed upon Native Americans. My research addresses the means by which underlying racist ideals are transferred into public policies, and the underlying racist motivations within reproductive legislation in American history.