

**‘Fitter Families for Future Firesides’: Popular Eugenics and the Construction of a Rural Family Ideal in the United States**

Laura L. Lovett  
Department of History  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, MA 01003

*This paper is a draft chapter from a book manuscript concerning rural family ideals, reproduction, and social policies during the early twentieth century. This is very much a work in progress. I would greatly appreciate your advice as I struggle to find a balance between reporting a huge amount of historical information and presenting an engaging critical analysis. Please do not cite, copy, or distribute this draft without permission. Thank you.*

The 1911 "Million Dollar Parade" of prize livestock and other agricultural products at the Iowa State Fair concluded with an automobile filled with pre-school children. A runner on the side of the car proclaimed them to be "Iowa's Best Crop." A later report of the event noted that these children had participated in a preschool health examination competition in which the examiners followed the only criterion available to them at the time: the methods of observing used by stock judges for determining prize livestock.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Davenport, head of the Eugenics Record Office, wrote a post card to the Iowa contest-organizers stating that stock judges always took inheritance into account, warning "You should score 50% for heredity before you begin to examine a baby." The next year, Davenport admonished even more dramatically; "A prize winner at two may be an epileptic at ten."<sup>2</sup> The Iowa administrators took note

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<sup>1</sup> "Fitter Families for Future Firesides: A Report of the Eugenics Department of the Kansas Free Fair, 1920-1924." Prepared by the Kansas Bureau of Child Research. (Eugenics Committee of the United States of America, 1924) American Eugenics Society Papers. American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Fitter Families for Future Firesides," pp. 1-2; Mary T. Watts to Charles Davenport, June 17, 1922. Charles Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA. Watts notes the date of Davenport's second letter as September 13, 1913.

of this caution, but did not change the way they thought of their Better Baby Contests until they observed for themselves how calves were sometimes judged. At Iowa county fairs, a calf would be examined on its own and then carefully compared to each of its parents. To contest organizer Dr. Florence Sherbon, this comparison suggested that perhaps they needed to judge entire families instead of just individual children.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the next decade Sherbon and Mary T. Watts transformed their Iowa Better Baby Contest into Kansas' Fitter Family Contests. In Watts's words, "It remained for the Kansas Free Fair to give the Better Baby a Pedigree. It is now demanded that the Better Baby be supported by a Family, fit both in their inheritance and in the development of their mental, moral, and physical traits."<sup>4</sup>

Where Better Baby Contests had been developed as part of U. S. Children's Bureau campaign against infant mortality, Fitter Family Contests were developed as part of the popular education campaigns of the American eugenics movement.<sup>5</sup> Eugenics' concern with heredity certainly broadened the scope of these contests from "healthy" children to "fitter families," but the infusion of hereditarian thinking did not displace earlier concerns with diet, exercise, and home environment. The Fitter Family Contests merged eugenics with expansive and intrusive public health campaigns and practices. The result was a much more expansive type of eugenic reform encompassing heredity and environment within an ideal of the family and the home.<sup>6</sup>

Watts and Sherbon deliberately chose to hold these contests at agricultural fairs. Fitter Family Contests appealed to a deeply rooted sense of nostalgia for the rural family at a time when the

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<sup>3</sup> Florence Brown Sherbon, "Popular Education: The Agriculturalist," *Eugenics* 2 (1928), p.36.

<sup>4</sup> "Fitter Families for Future Firesides."

<sup>5</sup> Richard Meckel, *Save the Babies: American Public Health Reform and the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1850-1929*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 102-3.

<sup>6</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Martin Pernick, "Eugenics and Public Health in American History," *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (1997), 1767-1772; Alexandra M. Stern, "Making Better

nation was becoming increasingly urban, when rural children were choosing not to stay on the farm, and when the culture of the Roaring Twenties challenged "traditional values." Introducing Fitter Family Contests as human livestock competition encouraged families to re-imagine their histories as pedigrees subject to scientific analysis and control. As such, these contests fused nostalgia for the farm family with a modernist promise of scientific control.<sup>7</sup>

This paradoxical fondness for both tradition and progress represented in these contests was a familiar fixture in the work of historical societies, artists, politicians, and reformers in the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Reviving and reinforcing old cultural beliefs and values has been posited by historian Lawrence Levine as a salve for the anxiety resulting from social and cultural change in this period. From this perspective, recreations, such as Colonial Williamsburg, and the popularity "Old English" furnishings were not just simple expressions of nostalgic longing. These colonial revivals signified the privileges of ancestry and the centrality of an assumed Anglo-Saxon "racial heritage." Whether marked by the Daughters of the American Revolution or the Colonial Dames of Virginia, colonial ancestry marked a division between "old" and "new" Americans. In the hands of eugenicists and other would-be reformers, however, nostalgia did more than reinforce existing forms of elite white patriarchal privilege. I contend that using nostalgia made significant social, institutional, and political reforms possible by wrapping them in a vision of a past social order. Nostalgic ideology, thus,

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Babies: Public Health and Race betterment in Indiana, 1920-1935," *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (2002) 742-752.

<sup>7</sup> On this sense of modernism see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture, 1880-1900* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1992); Dorothy Ross, "Modernism Reconsidered," in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences, 1870-1930*. Dorothy Ross, ed. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 1-25; Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1982), 1-36.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Crunden, *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Sarah Burns, *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989);

became a powerful tool for early twentieth century reformers, especially with regard to reforms involving the family and reproduction.<sup>9</sup>

In the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the American family was widely perceived to be in a state of crisis. By 1889, the United States had the highest divorce rate in the world. Coupled with falling birth rates among “native-born” Americans, the divorce rate raised doubts about the survival of the family and the “American race.” Anxieties concerning race and divorce were associated with the changing roles of women. In general, white, middle and upper class women were working more outside the home, attending colleges and universities in greater numbers, and increasing their public activity in a variety of civic clubs and organizations. Motherhood and family seemed to be endangered as women’s morals, dress, and behavior changed in the early twentieth century.<sup>10</sup>

Anxiety over shifting gender roles was compounded by increasing immigration and urbanization. New immigrants from Asia and Southern Europe fueled fears that “American values” and traditions were slipping away as these new immigrants failed to adopt American traditions as their own. At the same time, the nation’s population was becoming more concentrated in the cities. In 1900, two out of every five people in the United States were farmers. Three out of every five lived in a rural community. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the numbers of farmers and rural inhabitants slowly declined, lowering the percentages of land ownership and increasing the amount of land tenancy. Demographically, fewer rural families contributed to declining birth rates, since the 1900

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Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Levine, "Progress and Nostalgia: The Self Image of the Nineteen Twenties," in *The Unpredictable Past* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 189-205; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 295.

<sup>10</sup> Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1988), 108-109. By “the race” or the “American race” reformers, politicians, and social commentators meant the white population of the United States usually of Northern European or Anglo-Saxon descent. For an overview of the various historical approaches to whiteness and race during this time period see Thomas Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1963]).

census revealed that the rural family was on average larger than its urban counterpart. The confluence of these trends contributed to a growing sense of crisis that many modernist reformers believed they could resolve. They made their new and invasive proposals to regulate reproduction more palatable by presenting them behind a façade of “the farmer,” “the rural home,” and “the traditional family.” Fitter Family Contests exemplify exactly one such effort at nostalgic modernist reform.<sup>11</sup>

Better Babies and the Children's Bureau.

The Children's Bureau was initiated as a government clearing house for information on child hygiene and rearing. The legend of the founding of the Children's Bureau holds that over breakfast one morning in 1903 settlement leaders Lillian Wald and Florence Kelley were reading their mail and the morning newspaper when Kelley read a letter asking her for information on the high summer death rates among children. Neither Kelley nor Wald had an answer. After reading a newspaper article on the Secretary of Agriculture's trip to the south to survey damage to the cotton crop from the boll weevil, Wald is said to have remarked: "If the government can have a department to take such an interest in what is happening to the cotton crop, why can't it have a bureau to look after the nation's child crop?"<sup>12</sup>

Ten years later the Children's Bureau was officially established.<sup>13</sup> The Bureau's mandate included "all matters pertaining to the welfare of children and child life among all classes of people,"

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<sup>11</sup> David Danbom, *The Resisted Revolution: Urban America and the Industrialization of Agriculture, 1900-1930*. (Ames, IA: The Iowa State University Press, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> Robyn Muncy, *Creating A Female Dominion*, p. 39; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 76; Alisa Klaus, *Every Child A Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890-1920* (Ithaca, NY; Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 227-240.

<sup>13</sup> The popularity of the child crop story elides the more complicated political origins of the Children's Bureau. See Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work*; Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Raising a Baby the Government Way : Mothers' Letters to the Children's Bureau, 1915-1932*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

though infant mortality and the birth rate were highlighted as concerns of the agency.<sup>14</sup> Toward this end, the Children's Bureau officially created Baby Day in 1915, Baby Week in 1916 and Children's Year in 1918 to publicize the need for better infant and maternal care, although the (Children's Bureau) pamphlet introducing the Baby Week campaigns makes it clear that such events had been organized on the local level for years out of growing interest in the welfare of babies.<sup>15</sup> The Children's Bureau's efforts culminated in the 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act promoting infant and maternal health.<sup>16</sup>

In 1916, the Children's Bureau commissioned a number of studies of different communities in order to assess the relative rates and causes of infant mortality in rural and urban settings. While the director of the Children's Bureau, Julia Lathrop, was trained at Hull House and more familiar with problems of child welfare in urban settings, she thought the comparison of rural and urban, as well as native and immigrant communities to be an important part of the Bureau's approach to infant mortality. Part of Lathrop's and her successor, Grace Abbot's, agenda was ending child labor. Opposition to this agenda, especially from Southern textile manufacturers, miners, and farmers, meant that it was politically expedient to focus on the deaths of infants rather than intervene on behalf of child workers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Muncy, *Creating A Female Dominion*, p. 47; Meckel, *Save the Babies*, pp. 102-3.

<sup>15</sup> *Baby Week Campaigns: Suggestions for Communities of Various Sizes*, Misc. series No. 5, Children's Bureau Publ. No. 15, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> The Sheppard-Towner Act allocated seven million dollars from the Federal Government to states for to "pioneer" grants-in-aid programs to promote infant and maternal health. It was allowed to expire in 1929, according to Zelizer because of intense opposition from the medical profession and according to Muncy because of opposition from the insurance industry. Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1987); Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion*; also see William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1993), 180-1.

<sup>17</sup> U. S. Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality: Results of a Field Study in Waterbury, CT., Based On Births in One Year*, Publication No. 29 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918); U. S. Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality: Results of a Field Study in Manchester, NH., Based On Births in One Year*, Publication No. 20 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917); U. S. Children's Bureau, *Infant Mortality: Results of a Field Study in Johnstown, PA., Based On Births in One Calendar Year*, Publication No. 9 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918); U. S. Children's Bureau,

Florence Sherbon was hired by the Children's Bureau in 1915 to conduct a series of Children's Health Conferences in rural communities throughout Indiana and Wisconsin.<sup>18</sup> Born in Iowa in 1869, Sherbon earned a nursing degree from the Iowa State Hospital where she later worked as a nurse and Superintendent of the Training School in the 1890s. She entered medical school at Iowa State University at the turn of the century and earned her MD in 1904. That same year she married a classmate James Bayard Sherbon. With her husband and father, Sherbon moved to Colfax, Iowa where they took over the Victoria Sanatorium and Mineral Spring. The Sanatorium filled the first year and would be expanded and renovated by the Sherbons.<sup>19</sup> At some point, the Sanatorium began losing money or perhaps the Sherbons could not pay off the cost of renovations or a new annex. When her father died in 1912, Sherbon was counting on his estate to pay outstanding liens.<sup>20</sup> The value of the estate was much less than expected and when the estate was settled in 1916, Sherbon was forced to sell the Sanatorium. Moreover, her husband was gone, leaving Sherbon the mother of twin girls, Alice and Elizabeth born in 1908.<sup>21</sup>

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*Infant Mortality: Results of a Field Study in Akron, Ohio., Based On Births in One Year 1920*, Publication No. 72(Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920); U. S. Children's Bureau, *Causal Factors in Infant Mortality: A Statistical Study Based On Investigations in Eight Cities*, Publication No. 142 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1925). See also Viola Paradise, *Maternity Care and the Welfare of Young Children in a Homesteading County in Montana*, U. S. Children's Bureau, Rural Child Welfare Series No. 3, Bureau Publication No. 34. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917).

<sup>18</sup> Grace Meigs, "Memorandum for Heads of Divisions," January 1916 (U.S. Children's Bureau, 4-11-0, National Archives), p. 1. At the same time, another female physician, Dr. Bradley, was hired to conduct Children's Health Conferences in North Carolina.

<sup>19</sup> "Victoria Sanatorium," *Past and Present of Jasper County Iowa* (Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowden and Co., 1912), pp. 681-683.

<sup>20</sup> Horace S. Hollingsworth to Florence Sherbon, March 12, 1916. Florence Sherbon Collection, Personal Papers 97 1916, Spencer Research Library, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.

<sup>21</sup> Sherbon and her husband divorced.

Perhaps inspired by her own interest in her daughters, in 1911, Sherbon joined Mary T. Watts to organize a Better Baby Contest that year in Iowa.<sup>22</sup> Once again, the disparity between the care provided to livestock and children evident at an agricultural fair was credited in popular accounts with inspiring Watts to begin judging babies at agricultural fairs.<sup>23</sup> The Iowa contest was sponsored by members of the American Medical Association's Committee for Public Health Among Women and the Iowa Congress of Mothers.<sup>24</sup> The success of the first contest spurred its organizers to form the American Baby Health Organization with both Watts and Sherbon as officers. In 1913, Watts wrote to Julia Lathrop at the Children's Bureau of the contest's popularity and interestingly noted that they usually tried to have "Eugenic Expositions" associated with the contests.<sup>25</sup> Iowa organizers quickly developed their own scorecard and instituted rural and urban categories. The sudden popularity of Better Baby contests after 1911 was remarkable thanks in part to publicity and organization of similar Better Baby contests by *Woman's Home Companion*.<sup>26</sup> In fact in 1913, *Woman's Home Companion* reported that their Better Babies Bureau had examined almost 150,000 babies during that fair season alone.<sup>27</sup> The popularity of these child health contests and Sherbon's experience with them certainly helped her land a job at the Children's Bureau in 1915.

Sherbon's new position at the Children's Bureau required her to travel extensively focusing specifically on infant and maternal health. Fourteen conferences in three months with twins in tow was clearly not feasible, so Sherbon persuaded her sister, Maud, to move to Iowa and join in the "joint

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<sup>22</sup> Annette K. Vance Dorey, *Better Baby Contests: The Scientific Quest for Perfect Childhood Health in the Early Twentieth Century* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Comparisons between animal and human care and breeding abound during this time period. For more examples see Derry, *Better Babies*, pp. 25-26 and Pernick, *Black Stork*.

<sup>24</sup> Dorey, *Better Babies*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Dorey, *Better Babies*, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> For the use of Better Babies in magazine advertising see Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002), and Derry *Better Babies*, 192-196.



mothering" of her daughters while she was in the field.<sup>28</sup> Maud Brown had trained to teach high school sciences by getting a master's in Biology and Psychology at the University of Iowa in 1901. She returned in 1908 to get a credential in Educational Administration, which allowed her to use her experience teaching high school science in Butte, Montana and Des Moines, Iowa to move into curriculum development. From 1912 to 1916, she served as the Supervisor of Nature Study for the Los Angeles Public School system. Later, as the Supervisor of Hygiene in Kansas City, Missouri, she started the first work in health education linked to measurements in public schools, crediting her with originating the "first permanent record cards recording height, weight, immunizations, growth records" now routine in public schools.<sup>29</sup>

When Florence Sherbon began her fieldwork in Wisconsin, she carried with her a medical ideal of child and maternal health backed by her authority as a physician. She had an agenda for reducing infant mortality and improving the health care of both infant and mother which was based on institutionalized and medically supervised obstetrical care. Sherbon reports that when she began in 1916 she was certain that "midwives had to go."<sup>30</sup> Her imposition of urban medical standards was frequently resisted, however, and with good reason. As other field workers reported, local practices of obstetric care were often safer.<sup>31</sup> After observing midwives and maternity practices in rural Wisconsin in the summer of 1916, Sherbon abandoned her earlier preconceptions of what constituted medically

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<sup>27</sup> Dorey, *Better Babies*, p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Florence Sherbon to Julia Lathrop, June 22, 1916. (U. S. Children's Bureau, 4-12-4, National Archives), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Unknown, "Maud Brown," in Elizabeth Sherbon Papers, Spencer Library, KU Manuscripts and Archives Collection. University of Kansas (Lawrence, Kansas: n.d.).

<sup>30</sup> In Grace Meigs, "Rural Obstetrics," *Transactions of the American Association for the Study of Infant Mortality* 7 (1916): 65.

<sup>31</sup> Alisa Klaus, *Every Child A Lion*, pp. 231-243.

appropriate obstetric care.<sup>32</sup> Sherbon did not surrender her authority as a physician with this shift in attitude. Instead, her appreciation of local medical practices signifies her understanding that she was entering already existing health networks. Her effectiveness at communicating health standards depended on this understanding.<sup>33</sup>

One of the most important lessons for Sherbon and the Children's Bureau concerned the way in which they communicated their message about child health and hygiene. In 1915, Dr. Lydia DeVilbiss from the Kansas Department of Health persuaded Julia Lathrop of the value of using contests by arguing, "Instead of going into the country districts and trying to persuade the farmer folk to do what we want them to do, this plan proposes to put them on their mettle and let them do for themselves what we want them to do and what we should have difficulty in getting them to do in any other way."<sup>34</sup> DeVilbiss's suggestion to use contests as an indirect means of social control was persuasive within the Children's Bureau, and Sherbon's experience with the Iowa Better Baby Contests reinforced her confidence in this approach. In 1916, Sherbon held conferences where infants and children were examined and their mothers interviewed. Not all contests were the same, however. Sherbon complained to the Children's Bureau that Better Baby Contests sponsored by the *Woman's Home Companion's* produced a situation in Wausau with "disorderly mobs of crying babies coming without appointments--more than one hundred a day."<sup>35</sup> Sherbon preferred a more orderly format where fewer children would be seen, but she could spend at least twenty minutes with each one and then work with a local follow-up committee. Sherbon wanted to promote child health, but also wanted to carefully document and communicate health standards in individual medical exams. The Children's Bureau

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<sup>32</sup> Florence Sherbon to Julia Lathrop, 6-22-16, (U.S. Children's Bureau, 4-12-4, National Archives); Florence Sherbon to Viola Paradise, 7-4-16, (U.S. Children's Bureau, 4-11-3-5, National Archives).

<sup>33</sup> Marilyn Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1995), pp. 105-108.

<sup>34</sup> Lydia DeVilbiss to Julia Lathrop, 11-23-15, (U.S. Children's Bureau, 4-15-2-1-8, National Archives).

wanted Sherbon to reach as many people as possible. In fact, Sherbon's mission of surveying a large number of rural communities in Indiana and Wisconsin had proven much more expensive than originally anticipated. Lathrop and Meigs had wanted Sherbon and her "crew" to travel by horse and buggy, but Sherbon was forced to rent a car and driver to keep on schedule. In the end, the Children's Bureau decided cut expenses by letting Sherbon go and instead promoted child health contests nationally through networks of women's clubs as part of their Baby Week Campaign.<sup>36</sup>

#### Florence Sherbon and the Fitter Families Contests.

When Sherbon found out in 1916 that her work for the Children's Bureau would not be extended past the next year, she admitted to Julia Lathrop that child welfare work had "got" her. Sherbon dreamed of settling with her sister and daughters in a small town in rural Wisconsin in order to conduct a complete study of every woman from "one day to ninety year" with regard to the manifold effects of maternity of a woman's life. It is clear that Sherbon wanted to continue her survey work, but there was no further appropriation for her at the Children's Bureau, her mortgage was in foreclosure, and she had decided not to leave her daughters again. As a result, Sherbon applied to State Boards of Health and Extension Services throughout the Midwest in order to continue her work on child hygiene.<sup>37</sup>

In 1917, Sherbon was brought to Kansas by Dr. Samuel Crumbine and the Kansas State Board of Health to temporarily replace Dr. Lydia DeVilbiss, who was on a lecture tour.<sup>38</sup> By the fall she was named the Director of Physical Education for Women at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Her duties included teaching courses on the physical development of the child, physical examination technique, and hygiene. She also supervised physical examinations for every woman student and gave

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<sup>35</sup> Florence Sherbon to Grace Meigs, 1-27-16, (U.S. Children's Bureau, 4-11-1-5, National Archives).

<sup>36</sup> Klaus, *Every Child A Lion*, pp. 227-240.

<sup>37</sup> Sherbon to Lathrop, 6-22-16, pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> "Doctor Sherbon Named," *Topeka Capital* 29 June, 1919. On Kansas public health and Dr. Crumbine see Holt, *Linoleum, Better Babies, and the Modern Farm Woman*.

advice on exercise and nutrition.<sup>39</sup> Her position was moved in 1920 to the Department of Home Economics where she was appointed Professor of Child Care.<sup>40</sup> This new position appropriately reflected her work in the Better Baby contests and for the Children's Bureau. However, just as she was appointed to this position, she greatly expanded the scope of her earlier contest work.

In 1920, Sherbon and Watts orchestrated the first Fitter Family Contest. By this time, both were experts at using the contest format to reach rural communities. Their goal was to "stimulate" the "interest of intelligent families" and arouse a "family consciousness by which each family will conceive of itself as a genetic unit with a definite obligation to study its heredity and build up its health status."<sup>41</sup> As will be discussed below, the format and design of the Fitter Family Contests had special appeal, but eugenics in general was enormously popular during the 1920s.

Eugenics in the United States had been growing in popularity since the turn of the century despite increasing scientific criticism. By 1928, 376 universities and colleges in the United States offered courses in eugenics.<sup>42</sup> During the first three decades of the twentieth century, eugenicists in the United States successfully pressed for national legislation restricting immigration as well as state legislation for marriage restriction, and institutionalization and sterilization of the "unfit."<sup>43</sup>

Florence Sherbon's eugenics was not typical of mainstream eugenics, however. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Charles Davenport led the American eugenics movement as he

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<sup>39</sup> Kansas University Catalogue 1917, University Archives, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.

<sup>40</sup> Her child care course from 1920 was described as covering "practical facts regarding maternity and child care; prenatal and infant mortality, cause and prevention; prenatal care; maternal mortality; development, hygiene, morbidity and mortality of children by age groups; health of the mother as a factor in family living; modern health movements directed toward the improvement of health standards in the home." Board of Administration, The University of Kansas, Lawrence General Information, Catalogues (Topeka, KS: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920-1921).

<sup>41</sup> "Fitter Families for Future Firesides," pp. 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Diane Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities International Press, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

combined research on patterns of human inheritance with a desire to preserve the sanctity of the germ plasm.<sup>44</sup> Davenport, like most geneticists who were also eugenicists, was a strict hereditarian who allocated a relatively minor role to the environment in the determination of biological traits. As Director of the Eugenics Record Office from 1910 to 1934, Davenport promoted eugenic research including the collection and organization of family pedigree data collected by trained eugenic field workers. In the 1920's, however, organization of the American eugenics movement began to shift away from Davenport's efforts in the Eugenics Record Office toward the activities of the American Eugenics Society.<sup>45</sup>

The American Eugenics Society (AES) arose from the 1921 Second International Congress of Eugenics.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the Eugenics Record Office, the AES emphasized education and the promotion of eugenics in American society more than scientific research. The AES Chairman from 1922 to 1926 was Irving Fisher, a Professor of Political Economy at Yale University and founder of the Life Extension Institute. Fisher's interests were very broad. An expert on monetary policy, he had a long-standing involvement in public health policy, chairing the Committee of One Hundred, which has proposed a national health service in 1908.. The Life Extension Institute, which he founded in 1914, promoted health practices through annual health exams and related literature on healthy living and lifestyles distributed through insurance companies like Metropolitan Life.<sup>47</sup> Guided by Fisher and later by Frederick Osborn, the AES would significantly broaden the scope of what was considered to be eugenic

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 54

<sup>45</sup> Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*, 120.

<sup>46</sup> It was first called the Ad Interim Committee of the United States of America, which became the Eugenics Committee of the USA, then the Eugenics Society of American, and in 1925 the AES. Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* (New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 1999), 22.

<sup>47</sup> L. D. Hirshbein, "Masculinity, work and the fountain of youth: Irving Fisher and the life extension Institute, 1914-31," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 16 (1999), 89-124.

reform.<sup>48</sup> The broader goals of the AES were reflected in the motto from their letterhead from 1935, which read, "The children of the United States must be born of parents who will provide the essentials necessary for the development of character, physique and intelligence."<sup>49</sup> This motto "disturbed" more hereditarian eugenicists like Charles Davenport, who thought that the motto placed too much emphasis on "conditioning" when it should be emphasizing "racial" and "genetical" traits. Indeed, Davenport worried that that he would not "be welcome" at meetings of the AES any longer, because, as a result of their change in emphasis, what he would be "apt to say" would "cause enmity rather than promote friendship."<sup>50</sup>

From their headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut, the AES in the 1920s and 1930s organized conferences, contests, and publications on a wide range of topics related to eugenics. Indeed throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s the American Eugenics Society became much more oriented toward improving the environment and extended the domain of eugenic reform to living conditions, nutrition, home life and social life more generally. In many ways, the organization's understanding of heredity was more in line with popular concepts of heredity, which incorporated both nature and nurture. As historian Martin Pernick argues, when most Americans spoke of "good breeding" they meant the combination of good ancestry and good upbringing. The Fitter Family Contests appealed to and embodied this popular conception of "good breeding."<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that all eugenicists neglected the role of the environment before the AES. For the role of environmental reform in early eugenics see Kathy J. Cooke, "The Limits of Heredity: Nature and Nurture in American Eugenics Before 1915," *Journal of the History of Biology* 31 (1998), 263-278 and Kathy J. Cooke, "Duty or Dream? Edwin G. Conklin's Critique of Eugenics and Support for American Individualism," *Journal of the History of Biology* 35 (2002), 365-384.

<sup>49</sup> Letterhead for AES, dated June 5, 1935, Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Subject File American Eugenics Society Group 1; Series IV; Box 31; Folder 319, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

<sup>50</sup> Charles Davenport to Ellsworth Huntington, April 3, 1937. Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Subject File American Eugenics Society Group 1; Series IV; Box 28; Folder 284, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of "Defective" Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures Since 1915*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 44; Martin

Sherbon and many leaders in American eugenics saw the Fitter Family Contests as opportunities for education and the promotion of eugenics. Together with sermon contests and traveling exhibits, the Fitter Family Contests became central parts of the publicity effort of the American Eugenics Society in the 1920s.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, the Fitter Family Contests were a means to collect detailed family information that could be used for research. These two goals for the contests came into conflict when Watts and Sherbon tried to standardize the procedures and the forms for the contests. As they prepared for their third contest in 1922, Watts asked permission to send Davenport a copy of the family history form they had been using for his criticism and feedback.<sup>53</sup> Davenport replied that he approved of the contests' emphasis on the family over the individual and asked that copies of the completed forms be placed on file at the Eugenics Record Office.<sup>54</sup> Once Davenport had received a copy of the form, he responded with detailed comments on the categories, the types of measurements, and the instructions for taking the measurements. Davenport was especially impressed with the length of the examination, because his goal of collecting a database of hereditary information for all human traits required as much information as he could reliably gather. The information from the Fitter Family Contests was raw data that eventually could provide a basis for eugenic manipulation. Davenport was eager to have the contest data and repeatedly offered to analyze it statistically for Sherbon.<sup>55</sup>

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Pernick, "Eugenics and Public Health in American History," *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (1997), 1767-1772.

<sup>52</sup> "Annual Report," (1927) American Eugenics Association, American Eugenics Association Papers, American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA. Also see Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Mary Watts to Charles Davenport, June 17, 1922. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Davenport to Mary Watts, June 26, 1922. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Davenport to Mary Watts, August 19, 1922. Charles Davenport Papers, APS. One of the prerequisites for eugenic action in Nazi Germany was the creation of a national health registry.

The length of the exams became an issue between Watts and Sherbon in 1924. Watts favored a shorter exam that would have more appeal and so be more effective as a popularizing tool for eugenics. Sherbon believed that a shorter form, taking anything less than an hour and a half to complete, would not be a "fair test." Invoking the industrial ideal of assembly-line automation, Watts exclaimed, "This is the day of the Ford," and urged Davenport to intervene and propose a form that would be both quick and thorough.<sup>56</sup> Davenport, like Sherbon, favored more data rather than less. In letters to Irving Fisher and Davenport, Sherbon appreciated Watts' ability to forge an "indispensable link between science and the public," but she argued that a short form that would "sell the goods" would not be grounds for awarding prizes or collecting scientific information.<sup>57</sup> Sherbon's goal, however was to synthesize efforts by Davenport's Eugenics Record Office, Fisher's Life Extension Institute, John Harvey Kellogg's Race Betterment Foundation, and many different pre-school and elementary school health examinations. She wanted a "unified procedure" for studying the family group.<sup>58</sup> Davenport agreed and, over the course of the next year, they exchanged many letters as they standardized the Fitter Family Contest forms to include a wide range of eugenic and medical information. Watts agreed to the longer forms rather than alienate Sherbon and weaken the medical authority associated with the contests.<sup>59</sup> Watts did press Davenport for funds to print copies of the forms and in 1925 Davenport urged the Eugenics Society (soon to become the AES) to fund the printing of the examination forms and instructions.<sup>60</sup> With Watts and Sherbon already serving on the Exhibits Committee, the Eugenics Committee agreed to financially support and sponsor of the Fitter Family Contests in 1925. Watts'

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<sup>56</sup> Mary Watts to Charles Davenport, December 31, 1924. Also Florence Sherbon to Charles Davenport, November 13, 1924. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>57</sup> Florence Sherbon to Irving Fisher (Copied to Charles Davenport), December 9, 1924. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>58</sup> Florence Sherbon to Irving Fisher (Copied to Charles Davenport), December 9, 1924. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Watts to Charles Davenport, April 18, 1925. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Davenport to Mary Watts, June 6, 1925. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.



advocacy of short forms was not lost on Sherbon. After Watts's death in 1928, Sherbon advocated three types of exams: a short Popular Exam for fairs, an Official Exam used in Fitter Family Examination Centers, and a Eugenics Registry Exam for those who passed the Official Exam and wished to deposit their family records in a registry.<sup>61</sup> Despite the time involved in completing it, the longer form remained in use at Fitter Family contests into the 1930s.

#### Making the Grade.

In 1925 forty families participated in the "Fitter Families for Future Firesides" Contest at the Kansas Free Fair. These families were interviewed about their social and medical history, and examined by psychiatrists, psychometricists, physicians, nutritionists, nurses and dentists. They had their bodily fluids collected and analyzed, along with a "Eugenic History" of family members, including those not at the fair. The participants came from a range of occupations, although two thirds had some experience with farming and listed multiple occupations. While 26% reported having immigrant grandparents and 10% reported having immigrant parents, all of these had originated in England, Canada, or Northern Europe. Several participants of them had apparently competed in similar contests in previous years and the majority of them were encouraged to return again the following year, promised by contest officials that if corrections were made to the family diet that "Olive "or "Herbert," or whatever the most promising child was named, would likely medal the next year.

To enter the contest, a family made an appointment for a particular time and day. Upon arrival at the tent or wooden building of the exhibit, the family (no individuals were seen and few childless couples unless they were seeking "eugenic" marriage counseling before they paired off) might have taken in a show at the "Mendel Theater" in which marionettes were used to illustrate Mendelian principles, seen the cage of black and white guinea pigs used as a live demonstration of dominant and

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<sup>61</sup> Appendix II in a letter from Florence Sherbon to E. H. Lindley, April 2, 1929. E. H. Lindley Papers, University Archives, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.

recessive inheritable traits or read the chart on literacy in which literacy rates for "NATIVE-BORN," "FOREIGN-BORN," and "NEGROES" were compared.<sup>62</sup> The contestant family then entered the building through an entrance designed to remind them of why they were participating in the health examination. In Watt's words,

We use the words "Eugenics" as a sign over the door of the building at the Kansas Fair where we test human stock and it causes considerable discussion. When someone asks what it is all about, we say, "While the stock judges are testing the Holsteins, Jerseys, and White-faces in the stock pavilion, we are testing the Joneses, Smiths, and the Johnsons," and nearly every one replies: "I think it is about time people had a little of the attention that is given to animals."<sup>63</sup>

One historian took a "eugenic family history" of members not seen at the fair while clerks filled in a "Social and Other History" section of each family member's individual form. (Each member had her or his own form. Questions differed only in the section pertaining to reproductive history, with a special form for children under three.) The social section was designed to establish the educational, occupational and social background (meaning participation in church, political, fraternal, social affiliations, etc.) with a query about the individual's size and condition at birth, illnesses, accidents and inoculations. Mental condition was evaluated in psychometric and psychiatric sections based on mental test scores and an exam evaluating reflexes, personality, and temperament. Physical condition was evaluated first with an anthropometric structural assessment, a medical exam, and laboratory tests including blood tests, urinalysis, and a Wasserman test for syphilis. A dental exam, vision test, and hearing test rounded out the physical condition survey. The last section concerned health habits

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<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that these categories were the same ones used for most of the publications by the Children's Bureau in their work on maternal, infant and children's health concerns. While the demonstration clearly equates ethnic and racial traits with literacy, many eugenicists during this period embraced the idea of racial hierarchies with regard to almost every trait. Indeed these supposedly biologically based racial scales were used to justify immigration restriction culminating in the 1924 system of racially and ethnically based immigration quotas. See Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* and Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity*.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Rydell, *World of Fairs*, pp. 40-50.

and focused on nutrition, including how much meat and coffee a person consumed, as well as work, sleep, exercise, and recreation habits. Completing all of the ten sections took about three and a half hours.

An expert graded each section, and an overall individual score was assigned at the end.<sup>64</sup> At the 1925 fair, experts included Dr. James Naismith, inventor of basketball, who conducted the structural exams, and Karl Menninger, founder of the Menninger Clinic, who conducted the psychometric exams. Winning families inevitably had their pictures published in the local newspaper, while winning individuals were awarded a medal inscribed with a verse from the 16<sup>th</sup> Psalm, "Yea, I have a goodly heritage."<sup>65</sup>

The fact that the range of items comprising the Fitter Family contest form could have been considered as "grade-able" points to both the "stock"-judging and public health origins of this activity as well as Sherbon's resistance to have it reduced to "merely a study of heredity" as some eugenicists would have preferred.<sup>66</sup> As interest in American Kennel Club (begun in 1884) or the "fad" in poultry breeding, or stockbreeders clubs attests, the concern with breeding was fairly widespread in the nineteenth century. After the late 1880s, it became almost a passion. Until that time, for example, a hunting dog was simply a big dog with a good nose. With the spread of dog fancying in the twentieth century, specific breed clubs proliferated. The breed concept had ideological ramifications as it codified traits and, according to Enrique De Cal, ascribed "to a given combination certain moral values (a breed that is, for example, inherently 'loyal')." Breeds were also nationalized as they were "increasingly conceived of as 'national types ('German' shepherds versus 'Alsations', to cite an obvious

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<sup>64</sup> A sample fitter family contest form is reprinted in Luther S. West, "The Practical Application of Eugenic Principles," *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference* (Battle Creek, MI: The Race Betterment Foundation, 1928), pp. 91-117. Also see Figure 3 at the end of this paper.

<sup>65</sup> Sherbon attributed her innovative and collaborative use of experts with inspiring the Yale Institute for Human Relations. While I've not found direct evidence of this influence in print, it does speak to her vision of the contests' impact.

<sup>66</sup> Florence Sherbon to Charles Davenport, January 28, 1925. Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

case).<sup>67</sup> Some leading eugenicists, such as Leon Whitney of the American Eugenics Society, were also animal breeders. In fact, Whitney used dog breeds at fairs and exhibits to demonstrate eugenic principles.<sup>68</sup>

Similar concern with "normalcy" came to dominate aspects of public health education in the 1920s. The introduction of weighing and measuring children using growth charts was popularized by Emmett Holt's manual on childcare in 1894, and institutionalized by the Children's Bureau in their guidelines for evaluation child health. Sherbon, who had authored the 1917 Children's Bureau guidelines for child measurement, had helped inaugurate these weighing and measuring procedures in child health contests. Her sister Maud helped promote the statistical norms embodied in growth charts as social norms for students in school health programs. One five-year child health demonstration supported by the Commonwealth Fund sought to remake hygiene education for rural populations. Maud Brown was the health education consultant in Fargo, North Dakota from 1923 to 1928, where she supervised the measurement of 6000 children. Weight and height were measured every six weeks and a weight-height-age ratio was compared to a scale produced by the Minnesota State Board of Health. Frequent measurement allowed the teacher or nurse to "confront" the student with their actual weight. In Brown's words, "the few words of encouragement or of caution from teacher or nurse, mutually reinforced, make this the most important single health event of the six weeks' period." Weight gain was emphasized and almost every grade graphed student weights in their classrooms. In addition weight reports were sent home, but with some safeguards. Parents and children were told that growth was a complex process and following all the "health rules" taught in school did

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<sup>67</sup> Enrique Ucelay Da Cal, "The Influence of Animal Breeding on Political Racism" *History of European Ideas*, 15, No. 4-6, (1992) 717-725, 720. Also see Margaret Derry, *Bred for Perfection: Shorthorn Cattle, Collies, and Arabian Horses Since 1800* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> "Eugenics at State Fairs," *Eugenical News* 10 (October 1925), 130. In the 1930s, one of the most popular exhibits in Yale's Peabody Museum was Whitney's Dog Hall.

not guarantee “satisfactory growth.”<sup>69</sup> Because these statistical norms for growth rarely incorporated differences in race and class, there were well-known deviations from normalcy that could not be easily explained within the rubric of growth charts. The problems of establishing a robust statistical norm did not stop educators from using growth charts to help construct and communicate norms about body size. How individual children measured up was made public in growth charts and classroom displays. Social standards of a “normal body” were reinforced by comparisons to classmates, by comments from teachers and nurses, and by weight reports sent home. These actions contributed to a growing awareness of body size and deviations from purported scientific norms of health.<sup>70</sup>

Shifting attitudes toward body norms and scientific standardization of health and diet are also reflected in changing attitudes toward the contests. In 1920, the Fitter Families Contest at the Kansas State Fair was greeted with some skepticism from Fair officials: “The notion of judging human livestock was so novel, . . . that Mr. Eastman [the manager of the Fair] did not deem it wise to place human stock first on the [Fair] program.” Instead the Fitter Family contest was sandwiched between the “Pet Stock” and the “Milch Goat” categories.<sup>71</sup> By 1925, however, the situation had changed; contests were now held at the Michigan State Fair, the Kansas Free Fair, the Eastern States Exposition in Massachusetts, the Oklahoma Free State Fair, the Arkansas State Fair, the Texas State Fair, and the Texas Cotton Palace Exposition in Waco. In fact, in 1926, the Committee on Exhibits of the American Eugenics Society, then headed by Mary Watts, was receiving so many requests from fairs to

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<sup>69</sup> Maud A. Brown, *Fargo and the Health Habits*. Reprinted from *Hygeia*, May & June 1928 (also October, 1927).

<sup>70</sup> Shawn Smith locates these ideas on bodily and eugenic norms in practices of measurement and photography advocated by eugenics’ founder Francis Galton, see Shawn Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Charles Colbert’s analysis of the impact of phrenology on popular perceptions of the body, as exemplified in Hiram Power’s sculpture “The Greek Slave,” draws a clear connection between science and cultural norms. Christina Cogdell extends this argument connecting eugenicists’ idealization of efficiency and form with the emergence of streamlined design in the 1930s. See Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

run Fitter Family contests that they decided to limit the number of fairs to those that could be personally supervised by committee members (about 25).<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the contests were getting rave reviews from fair organizers. Ethel Simonds from the Oklahoma Free State Fair claimed, "The Entrants and Winners at our last years' contest seem very enthusiastic about it and state that it is one of the best things that we had." The Arkansas State Fair was doubling the space available for the contest and a number of organizers credited the contest with drawing the interest of the local medical community, educators, and professionals.<sup>73</sup>

Sinclair Lewis lampoons the "Eugenic Family" in his attack upon the medical and public health professions in his 1925 novel *Arrowsmith*. The contests were such a widely recognized cultural phenomena that the protagonist's boss, a "two-fisted fighting poet doc" decides to cement his political ambitions by sponsoring a health fair. Chief among the exhibits, which also included the Boy Scouts, anti-nicotine, teeth-brushing demonstrations, was the Eugenic Family, "who had volunteered to give, for a mere forty dollars a day, an example of the benefits of healthful living." As Lewis describes the "beautiful and powerful" group of a mother, father and five children, none of whom "smoked, drank, spit upon pavements, used foul language, or ate meat," it becomes clear that it is the dysgenic practices, which are most important in defining the family. The irony of the scene, of course, emerges from the reader's understanding of the principles of inheritance. When the detective sergeant recognizes the Eugenic Family as the Holton gang ("the man and the woman ain't married, and only one of them kids is theirs"), who've done time for "selling licker to the Indians," the reader is supposed to understand the principles of inheritance that saw criminality or feeble-mindedness as the result of 'bad breeding.'

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<sup>71</sup> A. E. Wiggam, "New Styles in Ancestors: Science asks, "Are you fit to be a Forefather?," *World's Work*, Vol. LV (December 1927), 142-150, p. 144.

<sup>72</sup> "The 'Fitter Family Contest,'" *Eugenical News*, 8 (1923), 88. "Eugenics at State Fairs," *Eugenical News* 10 (1925) 130. Rydell reports that eugenics workers selected the families eligible to participate and that at least one hundred had been selected within the first four years of the Kansas contests (1920-1924). Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.51.

This line is further developed when the "youngest blossom" of the fraudulent family collapses on-stage in an epileptic fit.<sup>74</sup> Epilepsy was assumed to be an inherited "weakness" or outward manifestation of weakness. For Lewis, the public zealotry of eugenics seemed to have a shaky foundation at best.

The public enthusiasm for Fitter Families Contests, however, brought them to fairs in over forty states by the 1930s. John Harvey Kellogg, popularizer of cornflakes, decided to promote eugenic contests as well as part of the Third Race Betterment Conference held in January 1928 at his Battle Creek Sanitarium, Sherbon orchestrated the demonstration competition. Working with Luther S. West, a professor of biology and eugenics at Battle Creek College, Sherbon and Leon Whitney ran a Fitter Family contest for a group of pre-selected "desirable families."<sup>75</sup> Sherbon admitted that this contest was a "unique experience" in that 125 "superior individuals" were evaluated. The "velvet carpets" and "exquisite food" helped set it apart from the country fair grounds, as well.<sup>76</sup>

The Battle Creek contest was meant to promote the contests within the particularly well-endowed Race Betterment Foundation. The supposedly superior families though raised a number of issues. As Luther West noted, it was difficult for judges to give low social scores to families considered locally imminent and even harder to give anything below an A in the psychiatric test without the participant demanding a "lengthy explanation."<sup>77</sup> In fact the only category with consistently low scores was dental, and these were explained away in terms of the "low survival value" of good teeth in a modern environment.<sup>78</sup> Under the auspices of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, West wanted to continue

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<sup>73</sup> Quoted and reported in Irving Fisher, "Report of the President of the American Eugenics Society," June 29, 1926, pp. 27-29.

<sup>74</sup> Sinclair Lewis, *Arrowsmith* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1925).

<sup>75</sup> Luther S. West, "The Practical Application of Eugenic Principles," *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference* (Battle Creek, MI: The Race Betterment Foundation, 1928), pp. 91-117, 94.

<sup>76</sup> Florence Sherbon, "A Unique Experience," *Proceedings of the Third Race Betterment Conference* (Battle Creek, MI: The Race Betterment Foundation, 1928), pp. 120-121.

<sup>77</sup> West, "Practical Application," 106.

<sup>78</sup> West, "Practical Application," 110-111.

examining selected families over at least five years. He hoped that the data from such a study would help distinguish a “normal” individual, as in “ideal norm,” from an “average” individual. This distinction would allow him to define what he considered to be genuine superiority and “true aristocracy” based on genetic principles. Individuals from “superior stock” would then be placed in a Eugenic Registry. The Fitter Family Contests remained with the AES until 1931 in part because the AES was reluctant to lose control of one of their most effective means of popular education.<sup>79</sup>

While the Fitter Family Contests were certainly popular, they should not be interpreted as a piece of mass culture deftly produced for passive consumption. The fitter family contests tapped a widely shared interest in genealogy and especially in having ancestors of “sturdy pioneer stock.” The contest forms included a five to ten page section where contest participants provided their insight into their families histories. The 1925 contestants frequently described their relations for contest officials in highly nostalgic terms. Most of these descriptions reflect an idealized type, with the “sturdy, pioneer type” or “rugged type” being the descriptions that were repeated most often. One of the contestants identified her father as a “splendid pioneer in the early days of Kansas,” while four families explained their love of order and discipline as descending from their parents who kept well-bred livestock. Families also identified themselves as inheriting their inventive, musical, or prohibitionist tendencies from their predecessors. This interest in ancestry was translated by the Fitter Family contest into a nostalgic vision of the rural family. The Fitter Family contests provided its self-selected participants with an opportunity to celebrate their families at a time when America was becoming increasingly more urban, more mobile, and more industrialized.

For the eugenicists, the end product of popular campaigns, like the Kansas contest, was a denial of the individual as a unit in favor of the family. Their writings specifically identified modernity with the individual in opposition to the traditional family. Eugenicists were not alone in this

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<sup>79</sup> Appendix II in a letter from Florence Sherbon to E. H. Lindley, April 2, 1929. E. H. Lindley Papers, University Archives, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.



identification. As a series of farm newspapers in the Midwest noted, the migration of rural youth to the city was a rejection of the cooperative unit of the family farm for the uncaring and atomized modernity of the city. If contestants privileged the family unit over modernity's celebration of the individual, then the family begins to signify a constant amid changing circumstances. The contestants were people on the move. Even as their sons and daughters forsook the family farm for Chicago and other urban centers, the contestants and their parents also moved often: only nine out of twenty-four families in the 1925 Kansas contest had not moved in the preceding twenty years. . . Knowing one's ancestors or at least stories of one's ancestors provided a sense of constancy to people whose immediate circumstances may have been in flux.

Eugenicists in particular idealized the rural family. Consider, for instance, the first President's Report for the American Eugenics Society written by Yale economist Irving Fisher in 1926. Noting that "rural districts supply a disproportionately large part of the future population" because of larger family sizes, Fisher's report urges greater control over rural-urban migration. Because they wanted to keep the "best stocks" in the country and attract "new good stocks" from the city, the AES urged a set of policies to improve rural life. From their perspective, "farm credits, farmer's cooperatives, community art, suburban life for city workers, favorable agricultural legislation, agricultural colleges and schools, abolition of tariffs, etc., would appear to be eugenic measures par excellence." Automobile travel was also relevant to this "rural-urban problem," because "it tends to reduce in-breeding from propinquity and to widen the range of marriage selection in rural districts."<sup>80</sup> Writing as Secretary of the AES in 1926, Leon Whitney made the usual demographic case for the value of the farm family. In his words, "The average farm family is at least sufficient to carry on the goodly heritage, while the average city family is too small." But farmers had a deeper appreciation of eugenics, because they were animal

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<sup>80</sup> Irving Fisher, "Report of the President of the American Eugenics Society," June 29, 1926, p.14. Fisher's perspective on rural life was put into action in Vermont. See Nancy Gallagher, *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenics Project in the Green Mountain State* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999).

breeders themselves.<sup>81</sup> Indeed Mary Watts frequently emphasized the farm families that attended the Fitter Family contests. "The farmer," she wrote, "is easiest to reach because he is the best posted on stock raising."<sup>82</sup> It is not surprising that in 1929, Sherbon could report that "Farm families are again in the majority among the winners, five first and second places going to families of farmers, two to ministers, one to a physician, one to a salesman, one to a banker, and one to a hatchery manager."<sup>83</sup> Farmers may have had a greater appreciation of the value of breeding, but it is not clear that they shared eugenicists' demographic concerns. In fact, a short note in the *New York Times* noted that in 1927 the large family competition at the Kansas Free Fair had to be cancelled because no families with more than five children applied.<sup>84</sup>

#### Positive Eugenics and Sherbon's "Science of Parenthood"

For Sherbon, the Fitter Family contests were also a tool for advancing her own research agenda as a Child Researcher and Professor at the University of Kansas. From a professional standpoint, these contests became part of her larger program to study the modern family, child development, children's health, and education. This program resonated with the direction that would be charted by the AES in the 1930s.

By 1920 Sherbon was a permanent member of the faculty in the Department of Home Economics at the University of Kansas. Sherbon's program of child research marked a significant shift in the direction of the home economics program toward child welfare.<sup>85</sup> The emphasis within home economics on the home and the family simultaneously pushed Sherbon to redefine her research in terms

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<sup>81</sup> Leon Whitney, "Fitter Families Again," *Journal of Heredity* 17 (1926) 68-69.

<sup>82</sup> Mary Watts to Charles Davenport, July 6, 1922, Charles Davenport Papers, APS.

<sup>83</sup> Florence Sherbon, "Popular Education: Fitter Family Winners," *Eugenics* 2 (November 1929), 36.

<sup>84</sup> "Large Families are Few," *New York Times*, October 2, 1927, p. E6.

<sup>85</sup> Viola Anderson, *The Department of Home Economics: The First 50 Years, 1910-1960*. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1963), p. 23. Similar shifts were occurring nationwide. See Julia Grant, "Modernizing Mothers: Home Economics and the Parent Education Movement, 1920-1945," *Rethinking*

of the extended environment of the child, especially its family.<sup>86</sup> This institutional context was very supportive of the Fitter Family Contests. Indeed, the success of the contests spurred Sherbon to envision what she called a "science of parenthood." In conjunction with Luther West and the Race Betterment Foundation, Sherbon had proposed an ambitious program including a School of Family Life with courses of instruction, a community forum, a pre-school health center, a research division, and a Fitter Family Extension Service, modeled on the Agricultural Extension and Home Demonstration Services. In an overview of her research, Sherbon proclaimed, "Eventually I see this movement spread until it ought to contribute to the strengthening of the family as the organic racial and social unit."<sup>87</sup> In effect Sherbon advocated a "positive eugenics" program, which sought to encourage the spread of desired traits by supporting supposedly "worthy" families and eugenic marriages.<sup>88</sup>

Sherbon's department of scientific parenthood never came to be, but Sherbon's professional agenda of blending child study, eugenics, and home economics continued to develop in the 1920s. Sherbon held workshops for graduate students on the Fitter Family Contests, which culminated in at least one Master's thesis.<sup>89</sup> At the request of the Federal Board for Vocational Education, Sherbon developed a self-study program concerning family health in relation to the home and the community.<sup>90</sup> More far reaching were Sherbon's courses on the child and the family, which advocated a philosophy of the whole child; i.e., the child as the complex whole emerging from the combination

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*Home Economics*. Sarah Stage and Virginia Vincenti, Eds. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 55-76.

<sup>86</sup> Sherbon's program of research is laid out in reports for the Bureau of Child Research at the University of Kansas in "Child Research," Lindley Papers, University Archives, Kansas University, Lawrence, KS.

<sup>87</sup> Dr. Florence Sherbon to Prof. Irving Fisher, November 9, 1924. Copy sent to Charles Davenport. Davenport Papers, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>88</sup> Child Research 1928/1929, Lindley, Florence Sherbon Papers, University of Kansas Archives, Lawrence, KS.

<sup>89</sup> Edith Clark Collier, "Some Findings in the 'Fitter Families' Examinations Held at the Kansas Free Fair." Department of Sociology, Kansas University. (Unpublished Dissertation, 1928).

of its ancestry, its biology, its parents, society, and environment. These courses led to her successful textbook, *The Child*. Aimed at parents as well as students, *The Child* was intended to be a comprehensive scientific treatment of parenthood from conception to birth and beyond.<sup>91</sup> In 1934, *Parent's* magazine awarded it an Honorable Mention in its contest for the Most Helpful Book of the Year.

The Fitter Family Contests were not discussed in *The Child*, but the medal given in the contests served as the book's frontispiece. Sherbon's caption reads, "'Fitter Families' Medal formerly presented by the American Eugenics Society to families meeting certain standards of mental, physical and hereditary excellence. The artist here has well expressed the spirit of this book."<sup>92</sup> Eugenics, heredity, and evolution were prominent features of Sherbon's philosophy of the child. Sherbon made the study of the child scientific by representing the child as a product of biological and social evolution. This perspective was crucial. In her words, "It makes an essential and illuminating difference whether one views a child in his relation to the entire past and to the future of the human race, or as a personal possession, a personal miracle, who too often develops a baffling, uncontrollable personality."<sup>93</sup> Full consideration of a child's heritage in Sherbon's view allowed her to claim "There is no break from soil to soul."<sup>94</sup> Accordingly, in her discussion of eugenics, Sherbon appealed to social evolution to further delineate the child's "inheritance" in terms of not only her mother and father, but the units of her evolving society, i.e., her family, her state, her country, and her race.<sup>95</sup> This holistic view of the body and society was a fundamental feature of Sherbon's science and allowed her to replace

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<sup>90</sup> Florence Sherbon, *Health of the Family: A Program for the Study of Personal, Home, and Community Health Problems*. (Washington, DC: Federal Board for Vocational Education, 1923).

<sup>91</sup> Florence Sherbon, *The Child: His Origin, Development, and Care*. First Edition. (New York, NY: Mc Graw-Hill Book Co., 1934). Second Edition, 1941.

<sup>92</sup> Sherbon, *The Child* (1941), frontispiece.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the dichotomous debate over nature and nurture within a more complex and interactive model of human development.

Sherbon's holistic approach to integrating the body, society, and the physical environment allowed her to extend the domain of her science beyond the body. For instance, in 1937, Sherbon produced a second book for McGraw-Hill's series on Euthenics. *The Family in Health and Illness* was based upon her university lectures. Sherbon's aim was to educate young women on the best means for creating and maintaining a healthy family. As such, its topics ranged from how to select a home to how to care for the ill. Sherbon's definition of health integrated the individual with the larger society and environment in such a way as to make community organization and social experience directly relevant to bodily health. Health, according to Sherbon, involved "not only a chemically efficient body but socially efficient relationships with other human biochemical organisms." Put another way, according to Sherbon, "the human being is a unity within himself, and he is also a unit within a complexly integrated organization of human beings known as society. So intimate is this integration that his social experiences may definitely effect his body chemistry."<sup>96</sup> The health of the family, therefore, necessarily involved ancestry and environment. Securing the health of the family required women to be actively concerned with the condition of their homes, communities and states as well as their bodily traits.<sup>97</sup>

Sherbon's concern with environmental and domestic reforms, commonly associated with home economics, represent a popular conception of eugenics as well as a fusion of approaches from public health and mainstream eugenics.<sup>98</sup> Her efforts were widely acknowledged by the AES in the 1920s,

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>96</sup> Florence Sherbon, *The Family in Health and Illness*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1937), pp. 22-23.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-164.

<sup>98</sup> This type of approach was initially labeled euthenics by nutritional chemist Ellen Swallow Richards. Cooke, "Limits of Heredity," p. 270.

but the Great Depression led the AES to cut its funding severely -- it ceased publishing the journal *Eugenics* and ended financial support for the Fitter Family contests. When the AES emerged from the Great Depression, Sherbon was no longer officially associated with it, but positive eugenics was.<sup>99</sup>

From its incorporation in 1926, leaders of the AES were interested in a range of reforms that would promote reproduction and large families among those they considered to be "superior." This interest in positive eugenics became much more pronounced after the Great Depression. From 1934 to 1938, the President of the AES was Ellsworth Huntington, a Professor of Geography at Yale University well known for his advocacy of the place of evolution in geography.<sup>100</sup> Huntington articulated and advocated a new positive eugenics program that he hoped would "produce actual results measurable in the number and quality of children."<sup>101</sup> From his perspective, negative eugenic efforts of the 1920s, such as segregation and sterilization, had produced "concrete" changes that education about the "desirability of large families," marriage advice, and medical exams had not. Huntington's advocacy of positive eugenics had been influenced by AES Secretary Frederick Osborn, who had earlier sent a set of notes on eugenics programs, which included the warning that "there is no evidence that preaching

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<sup>99</sup> The historiography of the transition in the AES is very rich. Kevles describes it as a shift from mainline to reform eugenics associated with increasing scientific criticism of the genetic basis for eugenic claims about mental and racial differences, see Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*. Others question that there was a sharp transition, see Pauline Mazumdar "'Reform' eugenics and the decline of Mendelism," *Trends in Genetics* 18 (2002), 48-52. Others question the causes of the transition, see Selden, *Inheriting Shame*, or the character of the transition, see Kline, *Building a Better Race*. I emphasize the continuity and increasing prominence of positive eugenics in this transition. My account stands in contrasts with that of Wendy Kline, who narrowly identifies positive eugenics with marriage and family counseling in the 1930s. Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 123, 189n5.

<sup>100</sup> Geoffrey Martin, *Ellsworth Huntington: His Life and Thought* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1973).

<sup>101</sup> Ellsworth Huntington, "Tentative Suggestions as to Future Policies of the American Eugenics Society," December 1934. Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Classified Subject File, Group 1; Series IV, Box 29, Folder no. 293. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

large families as a matter of individual morality has any effect. This should be avoided.”<sup>102</sup> Among the “practical steps” to promote larger families urged by Osborn were the “elimination of city slums,” raising economic standards on farms, encouraging “endowment and dowry systems,” and supporting marriage and childbearing among college students. These practical steps were all in support of a Four-Child Ideal of the family meant to replace the “dysgenic” Small Family Ideal.<sup>103</sup> Huntington transformed this advice into a set of three positive eugenic programs, which he proposed to the Board of Directors in December 1934.

Huntington’s first programmatic proposal was to create a eugenic insurance company, called the Family Insurance Corporation, that would, for a small premium, provide coverage for the mother’s healthcare during pregnancy, the costs of childbirth and care in early infancy, and perhaps postnatal unemployment. Young couples interested in purchasing this insurance would have to pass a set of exams to establish their eugenic worth. As with his other programs, Huntington wanted this program to take advantage of similar kinds of social programs, but turn them toward eugenic goals. Next Huntington argued for a system of nursery schools and collective parenting that he called “Maternal Cooperation.” These voluntary associations would ease the “nervous strain” of mothering and make larger families more attractive. Moreover, Huntington believed that “the mothers who carried out the plan would have to be the cooperative, efficient, tactful type who are the very best material from which to construct a high grade community.”<sup>104</sup> Successful cooperative nurseries would therefore be eugenically self-screening. Lastly Huntington proposed eugenic housing. Starting from the assumption that urbanization lowers birthrate, Huntington proposed forming a building corporation to design

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<sup>102</sup> Frederick Osborn, “Notes for Eugenic Program,” November 7, 1934. Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Classified Subject File, Group 1; Series IV, Box 73, Folder no. 2815. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Huntington also claimed that “Cooperative measures have proved wonderfully successful among people like the farmers of Denmark and the fruit growers of California. They are growing in favor along

communities and houses for the kinds of young couples that took out eugenic insurance. The key element of these suburban and rural communities would be their rural character, “which seem(s) to be favorable not only to the growth of children themselves, but to the production of comparatively large families.” Such communities would have communal facilities for laundry, cooperative nurseries, and playgrounds for the hordes of supposedly superior children.<sup>105</sup>

The Eugenic Housing scheme is particularly noteworthy. Huntington’s enthusiasm for housing is produced by New Deal spending on housing and community development.<sup>106</sup> Huntington wished to act immediately and put federal funds in the service a “eugenic ideal” of housing. To this end, he sought to “secure the appointment of a representative of the American Eugenics Society upon the President’s Housing Commission.”<sup>107</sup> It is not clear that he succeeded in this, but Irving Fisher did begin writing to the Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation urging them to adopt child-friendly community designs that would meet eugenic goals. Miles Colean, Technical Director of the Federal Housing Administration, responded, “we heartily approve the idea [of] ...day nurseries, playgrounds, and other desirable social features.”<sup>108</sup> Huntington himself began promoting the eugenic housing idea in an essay entitled, “A Family Community” for *The Atlantic Monthly’s* Million Dollar Community Contest in 1936 and in his book *Tomorrow’s Children* (1935).<sup>109</sup> Huntington’s efforts culminated in a

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many lines. In the present instance the best method may not be to leave the care of the children entirely to the volunteer efforts of the mothers.” Huntington, “Tentative Suggestions.”

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Paul Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959).

<sup>107</sup> Huntington, “Tentative Suggestions.”

<sup>108</sup> Miles Colean to Irving Fisher, March 29, 1935. Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Classified Subject File, Group 1; Series IV, Box 34, Folder no. 358. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT.

<sup>109</sup> Ellsworth Huntington, “A Family Community,” Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Classified Subject File, Group 1; Series IV, Box 27, Folder no. 277. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT. Ellsworth Huntington, *Tomorrow’s Children: The Goal of Eugenics* (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1935). Although Huntington is listed as author, the book was a revision of Leon Whitney’s *A Eugenics Catechism* (1923) and had received considerable input from AES directors. The discussion of housing in



1938 conference on “Eugenic Aspects of Housing.” Willystine Goodsell, a Professor at Teachers College of Columbia University and AES Vice President, sponsored the conference, which featured speakers from the New York City Housing Authority, the American City Planning Institute, the National Association of Housing Officials, and the Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems.<sup>110</sup> Housing activist Edith Elmer Wood had been advocating slum clearance and redevelopment since at least 1931 when she advocated giving “every American child something like an even break to show the stuff that was in him.”<sup>111</sup> As a member of the Regional Planning Association of America, she helped redefine residential neighborhoods and influenced the Greenbelt developments of the Resettlement Administration.<sup>112</sup> After the Eugenic Housing Conference, her advocacy of housing reform emphasized health and “a normal family life.” In her words, “houses are also like factories. Their output is children—the citizens of tomorrow.”<sup>113</sup> While lacking the eugenicists’ emphasis on quality, Wood and other housing advocates certainly embraced a pro-natalist vision of the suburbs, putting a different spin on their identification as “bedroom communities.”

### Conclusion.

The Fitter Family contests were a campaign of popular education that lent scientific credence to a nostalgic vision of the rural family. Sherbon tapped an anti-modernist sentiment that capitalized on a nostalgic moral order centered in the family, but the ability to realize that nostalgic ideal depended

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Tomorrow’s Children reflects Huntington’s proposal to the Board. Also see Cogdell, *Eugenic Design*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>110</sup> Conference on Eugenics Aspects of Housing, April 1, 1938. Ellsworth Huntington Papers, Classified Subject File, Group 1; *S Recent Trends in American Housing* series IV, Box 27, Folder no. 280. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT. This conference was in fact one of a series of outreach conferences in 1937 and 1938 where the AES sought to forge links to recreation experts, housing planners, religious leaders, “family relations” experts, birth control advocates, educators, nurses, physicians, and publicists.

<sup>111</sup> Edith Wood, *Recent Trends in American Housing* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 296.

<sup>112</sup> Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2003), p. 125-126.

<sup>113</sup> Edith Wood, “That “One Third of a Nation”,” *Survey Graphic* 29 (1940), 83.

crucially on modern knowledge and her idea of innovation. Sherbon's success as a eugenicist lay in her ability to articulate her modern and scientific agenda in these anti-modernist and nostalgic terms. Although we now think of Sherbon's efforts as seriously misguided, at the time, this nostalgic modernism simultaneously legitimated Sherbon's reform and research agenda as well as the participation of those seeking to reaffirm their identity and value as fitter families.

Some historians of eugenics consider Fitter Family contests to have been a “piddling” achievement given the goals of American eugenicists.<sup>114</sup> Others recognize them as “a source of amusing anecdotes” in contrast to the more horrific eugenic campaigns of segregation, immigration restriction, sterilization, and euthanasia.<sup>115</sup> The Fitter Family contests do stand in contrast to the eugenic actions against the supposedly “unfit.” They represent the first national effort by American eugenicists to promote selective reproduction and exemplified “positive eugenics” in the 1920s. Indeed, their success contributed to a shift toward positive eugenics by the American eugenics movement as a whole in the 1930s.

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<sup>114</sup> Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1963), p. 175.

<sup>115</sup> Martin S. Pernick, “Taking Better Baby Contests Seriously,” *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (2002) 707-708, p. 707.

Figure 1



*Fitter Family Medal awarded by the American Eugenics Society, American Eugenics Society Collection, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.*

Figure 2



*Florence Sherbon, Mary Watts, and Leon Whitney in front of the Eugenics Building at the Kansas Free Fair in 1924, and a prize winning family from the 1927 Kansas Fitter Family Contest. American Eugenics Society Scrapbook, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.*

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Figure 3

REF 1927 615

**FITTER FAMILIES EXAMINATION**  
Eugenics Society of the United States of America

Family name: Watt Address: Kansas Tel. No. 560 Place: Kansas Date: Sept. 13, 1927 Entry No. (1) Family Score: \_\_\_\_\_ Family Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

Eugenic History of members of family not seen <small>Enter in following order F.F., F.M., F.Sib., M.F., M.M., M.Sib.</small>	Consanguinity	Present Age	Age at Death	Cause of Death	Serious Illness	Place of Birth	Extent of Education	Leading Occupation	Physical, mental or temperamental defects	Special talents, gifts, tastes, or superior qualities											
											1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		62				Ind.	U.S.	Farmer		Temperate, frugal, reliable											
		61				Ind.	CSch	Housewife		Domestic, reliable											
		57				Kansas	Col.	Farmer		Very public spirited											
		35				"	Col.	as to Eng		Business											
		23				"	U.S.	Housewife		Kind, ambitious											
		27				Ind.	U.S.	Housewife	Nervous	Musical											
		26				Ind.	Col.	as to Eng		Business											
		20				Ind.	U.S.	Farmer		Eventful											
		61				Ind.	CSch	Teacher		Musical											
		58				Kansas	"	Housewife		Home maker, energetic											
		33				"	"	as to Eng		Musical											
		31				"	U.S.	Housewife		Musical-artistic											
		28				"	CSch	Teacher		Musical											
		25				"	U.S.	Synagogue		Musical											

Father's Eugenic Score		Mother's Eugenic Score										Children's (Family) Eugenic Score		
Individual scores of those examined <small>Enter in order of age</small>	Eugenic	Social	Psychometric	Psychiatric	Structural	Medical	Laboratory	Dental	Special Studies	Health Habits	Total Ind. Score	Int. Awards	Summary of leading strong points and weak points with advice	
	A	B	B	-	B	B	-	B	A	A	A	C.M.		
	A	D	A	-	B	B	-	A	A	A	B	C.M.		
	A	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	A	A	A	C.M.		
	A	A	-	-	A	B	-	-	A	A	A	C.M.		
	A	A	-	-	A	A	-	-	B	A	A	C.M.		

NOV 10 1927

Family Score: \_\_\_\_\_ Family Trophies or Awards: \_\_\_\_\_

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A summary sheet form from the 1927 Kansas Fitter Family Contest. American Eugenics Society, American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia, PA.