

Eugenics and the Power of Persuasion

*It is generally thought that eugenics, the idea that humans should selectively breed, ended with the conclusion of World War II. However, Albert Edward Wiggam serves as a paradigmatic example of a disturbing twentieth century trend to popularize eugenics. In *The Fruit of the Family Tree*, published in 1924, he outlined the basic ideology behind eugenics in a more understandable way that appeals to the public, whereas the accounts of past eugenicists proved less accessible. It is because of this ability of eugenicists to transform their arguments to suit the needs of their audience that eugenic ways of thinking remain a part of society today.*

The eugenics movement in America is crucial to our history, not only because it was based on a dangerous pseudoscience, but also because it gained a wide-spread appeal from the scientific, political, and social communities. The theory of eugenics was multifaceted and complex, but it essentially stated that characteristics, both good and bad, could be inherited and thus bred out. Harry Brunius observes, “As students of evolution, eugenicists believed the human race must begin to take control of human reproduction and ethnic intermingling. With the rational and objective methods of science, they hoped to breed only the biologically best of the races and prevent the propagation of the worst”¹. Eugenics in practice consisted of striving to create the perfect race by encouraging only the best of humanity to reproduce and attempting to eliminate undesirable characteristics. It was mainstreamed in the early 1900s, and historians tend to dismiss eugenics as an isolated movement ending with the Holocaust and World War II². However, the popularization of eugenic arguments created an environment that allows those arguments to exist in our culture today.

Albert Edward Wiggam demonstrated in his book, *The Fruit of the Family Tree*, persuasive methods that were intended to convince the public to apply eugenics to education. His book illustrating an important shift in the movement toward popularizing eugenics, reflects the goals and assumptions of many involved in the eugenics movement. Wiggam was a respected eugenicist who had published several books and articles, many of which were intended for amateur audiences and were neither excessively technical nor theoretical. Paul Popenoe, the co-author of *Applied Eugenics*, states in a review of “New Techniques of Happiness,” another of Wiggam’s publications, that “Wiggam has always had a wide approving audience.” Popenoe also mentions that Wiggam compiled his material “in popular form,”³ revealing that Wiggam was a part of the movement in the 1920s and 1930s to take eugenics out of the strictly scientific realm and bring it into the public sphere where everyday citizens could apply the principles to their lives. In his work Wiggam seeks to inform his readers of the nature of eugenics, but he does not do so through a structured and objective text, as Johnson and Popenoe do in *Applied Eugenics*. Instead, Wiggam chose to craft a persuasive argument for eugenics that would appeal to mass media consumers and offer an emotionally charged perspective on an often cold and over-rationalized science. He states in his appendix that “this book has fulfilled its purpose if it has stimulated the reader to continue his interest in the subject [of eugenics].”⁴ It is clear that his intention is not to give readers a thorough scientific knowledge of eugenics, but instead to persuade and interest them in the topic. Thus, Wiggam, who later became a popular psychologist, was one of the first to integrate eugenic theories into popular culture.

With the publication of *The Fruit of the Family Tree*, Wiggam became a part of the effort

¹ Harry Brunius, *Better for All the World* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 10

² *Ibid.*, 15

³ Paul Popenoe, Review of “New Techniques of Happiness,” by Albert Edward Wiggam, *Marriage and Family Living* 11, no. 3 (1949), 121 (JSTOR).

⁴ Albert Edward Wiggam, *The Fruit of the Family Tree* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1924), app.

to introduce eugenics into American culture by making it more socially and emotionally accessible. This effort is illustrated by the anthology *Popular Eugenics*, which consists of a series of essays that show the ways in which eugenics was incorporated into mass culture and the daily lives of American citizens. Books on eugenics for a lay audience, like *The Fruit of the Family Tree*, were just one method of popularizing eugenics. Eugenecists used other media, such as films, comic strips, novels, plays, and museum exhibits. According to the introduction of *Popular Eugenics*, “by the 1920s eugenic thought permeated modern cultures and societies on a global scale.”⁵ Most disturbingly, Alexandra Stern argued in her book *Eugenic Nation* that eugenics has maintained its place in popular culture through eugenecists, like Wiggam, who became counselors or psychologists and marketed eugenic ideas in less obvious and more personal ways⁶. Without this movement, eugenics might have died out of our culture years ago.

The theory of eugenics that Wiggam outlines in his book is based on a process of bettering the human race by encouraging superior humans to reproduce—known as positive eugenics—and discouraging inferior humans from reproducing—known as negative eugenics. Sir Francis Galton first proposed the idea of controlling human reproduction in order to force the human race to evolve into a “perfect race” and coined the term “eugenics” to describe his philosophy. Galton drew from the works of his cousin Charles Darwin as well as Gregor Mendel. Mendel was influential in the study of inheritance, and Darwin is credited with establishing the ideas of evolution and natural selection in the scientific community.⁷ Proponents of eugenics advocated a variety of methods that would help achieve their goal of building a better species. For example, healthy individuals were heavily encouraged by eugenecists to give birth, and birth control or forced sterilization for those with defective genes.⁸ The theory of eugenics gained popularity in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s and important American figures like President Theodore Roosevelt,⁹ supported the movement. In 1924, the year Wiggam published *The Fruit of the Family Tree*, the Immigration Restriction Act and the Virginia Act to Preserve Racial Purity were passed.¹⁰ Just three years later, the *Buck vs. Bell* decision helped to legalize forced sterilization of “unfit” women nationwide.¹¹

In addition to the legal system, the educational system was an important medium for eugenecists. By the early 1900s, children were required to attend elementary school making it convenient for eugenecists to screen youth to find both defective children as well as geniuses.¹² They were able to determine at an early age whether a child was fit to reproduce or not. Teaching people about eugenics was profoundly important to the eugenics movement. Eugenecists understood that if the next generation was not taught the science of eugenics the required process would not be continued and all previous ground work would be in vain. Many eugenecists believed that children were the field in which the success or failure of eugenics would ultimately play out. The main goal of a eugenic education was to instruct children who were designated as fit for reproduction the ideals of American society so they would be able to choose an

⁵ Susan Currel and Christina Cogdell, eds., *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 2.

⁶ Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁷ Brunius, 9

⁸ Ibid., 3

⁹ Ibid., 4

¹⁰ Walter Burns, “*Buck v. Bell*: Due Process of Law?”, *The Western Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (1953), 762 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/443203?seq=1>)

¹¹ Brunius, 1

¹² Deeptha Thattai, “A History of Public Education in the United States” (<http://www.servintfree.net/~aidmn-ejournal/publications/2001-11/PublicEducationInTheUnitedStates.html>)

appropriate mate and produce a new generation fitting those ideals.¹³

One might suppose that eugenicists would try to minimize education because the theory of eugenics was based on the idea that heredity was more important in deciding the personality and success of an individual. Wiggam claimed that education along with other forms of philanthropy were short term solutions to long term problems. He wrote, "If a man educated himself, will his children for that reason be born with any better minds than if he had spent his life digging ditches or in a jungle with savages?...Science can at last answer [this] question with a great deal of assurance in the negative."¹⁴ Wiggam believed that even if educators cured the symptoms of feeble-mindedness the improvements of education could not be passed down to one's children. Therefore, if feeble-minded people were allowed to reproduce those symptoms would show up again in the next generation.¹⁵ He also argued that education would not be able to wholly mask the symptoms of feeble-mindedness because one's environment could never overcome one's heredity.¹⁶ Wiggam based this argument on an experiment conducted by Edward L. Thorndike, a professor at Columbia University. In this experiment, two groups of people were tested. The first group could solve math problems twice as quickly as the second group before entering the experiment. Both groups were given equal time to study and improve their math skills throughout the course of the experiment. In the end, "as the direct result of 'equal opportunity,' the fast group was further ahead than ever."¹⁷ Equal education, therefore, could only increase the gap between the feeble-minded and the strong minded because the strong minded would naturally be more adept learners. Wiggam did concede that education could benefit individuals during their lifetime. However, it did not always benefit the human species in the long term. Wiggam suggests that "the work of environment has to be done over and over again for each generation. But the work of heredity done once lasts "until the stock commits the unforgivable sin of marrying lower and meaner stock."¹⁸ Therefore, in his opinion the only true solution to the problem of unintelligent humans is the application of eugenic processes.

Although Wiggam believed that a well rounded education could allow a man to reach his full potential and that "[The argument that brain power is inherited] does not mean that the weakest and laziest will not be enormously improved and energized by education and moral suasion," he also believed that the most important type of education was one that allowed man to reproduce to his fullest potential.¹⁹ What Wiggam perceived to be the most valuable aspect of education was the opportunity to instill in children a eugenic way of thinking that they could use when they decided whether or not to reproduce, and with whom. He dramatically stated in the conclusion of his chapter on education "that the training of our young men and women to admire and select beauty and excellence in marriage and thus to perpetuate them in the very blood and character of the race through their children is the richest romance and the loftiest ideal of a truly righteous, full and satisfying life."²⁰ Wiggam believed that if the best and brightest children were educated correctly, they would gain an aesthetic that would make them romantically desire and wish to mate with the best and brightest of their peers. Wiggam showed his dedication to this belief through writing books on eugenics meant to educate the best and the brightest. Thus, he practiced the message of the book within the book itself.

Michael Rembis shows in his essay *Explaining Sexual Life to Your Daughter* that

¹³ Michael A. Rembis "Explaining Sexual Life to Your Daughter" in *Popular Eugenics* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 91-114.

¹⁴ Wiggam, 64.

¹⁵ Ibid., 174.

¹⁶ Ibid., 74.

¹⁷ Ibid., 174.

¹⁸ Ibid., 74.

¹⁹ Ibid., 176.

²⁰ Ibid., 83.

Wiggam's views on the value of education to the eugenics movement were similar to the views of eugenicists who popularized eugenic education in the 1930s. Rembis explains that "by the early 1930s, members of the [American Eugenics Society] had outlined a very detailed eugenic curriculum" that they planned to incorporate into classrooms at various levels of education.²¹ He went on to say that like Wiggam, "most eugenicists wanted to use education as a means of reestablishing marriage and family as a priority among the nation's most fit women and men", a notion with popular appeal.²² Rembis states that "although specific data are difficult to obtain, anecdotal evidence suggests that the advocates of eugenics were quite successful in implementing their program during the 1930s."²³ This shows that Wiggam's argument for a eugenic education functioned successfully as part of a movement to popularize eugenic education.

The way Wiggam attempts to persuade his reader in *The Fruit of the Family Tree* reflects the convictions about proper breeding and shaping the human race that many eugenicists had and how they attempted to establish those convictions to the public. During the time that eugenics was popular, there was an emphasis on progress and a reliance on science to provide it. David Micklos and Elof Carson stated in their article "Engineering American Science: The Lesson of Eugenics" that "eugenics arose in the wake of the industrial revolution, when the fruits of science and technology were improving public and private life... a growing professional middle class believed that scientific progress could be used to cure all social ills, and many educated people accepted that humans, like all animals, were subject to natural selection."²⁴ What Wiggam revealed to be his assumptions about his audience and the manner in which he attempts to convince suggests that he targeted an audience similar to the one that Micklos and Carson described. Therefore, it is apparent that Wiggam reflected the time that he was writing in and the larger eugenics movement of which he was a part. Wiggam was skilled at arguing his case to an audience that was familiar with eugenic ideas. He used techniques that would have been relevant to his readers to make a compelling argument for what is today considered an unfounded and racist science.

One of these techniques was the idea of "selling" eugenics to the public by crafting arguments appealing to the emotions. Wiggam's desire to show the emotional side of eugenics illustrates the fact that the scientific and rational side of eugenics did not appeal to the public, or at least not all of it. He stated which aspects of eugenics he supported within the full text of *The Fruit of the Family Tree*. Among them were the regulation of birth control, stricter immigration laws, and the integration of eugenics in education. Instead of attempting to persuade the elite to enact this type of eugenic legislation through scientific documents, many eugenicists reached out to the general public through mass media. This is represented in the cartoons of Chester Gould, who depicted criminals as having certain inherited physical features, and in American horror films such as *Frankenstein* which depicted monsters as genetic anomalies.²⁵ These helped to familiarize the public with eugenic ideas and arguments in an entertaining and mainstream way. *Fruit of the Family Tree* also represents the trend to involve the general public in eugenic arguments.

The Fruit of the Family Tree was a book intended to persuade a lay audience, as Wiggam stated in the preface, and as such it made use of a number of persuasive techniques. He used these persuasive techniques to present an argument for eugenics that the average person would be sympathetic also. In the opening of the preface Wiggam stated:

The special student will find large omissions in the literature of heredity, genetics,

²¹ Rembis, 94.

²² Wiggam, 103.

²³ Ibid., 108.

²⁴ David Micklos and Elof Carlson, "Engineering American Science: The Lesson of Eugenics," *Nature Reviews Genetics* 1, no. 2 (2000), 155 (<http://www.nature.com/nrg/index.html>).

²⁵ Currell and Cogdell, 269-332.

and eugenics--especially in the field of biometrics--that might have been brought together and surveyed. But when we sum it all up, there have been few investigators in these fields who have developed knowledge that seems immediately available for the work of social construction, or which can just now be made interesting to the general reader.²⁶

Wiggam did not intend to delve into the technical details of eugenics in *The Fruit of the Family Tree*. Rather, as Eyer Newton Simpson who reviewed the book for the *American Sociology Journal* pointed out, Wiggam sought "to present in a dramatic and readable manner the findings of biological science relating to heredity and eugenics which 'have passed the gauntlet of scientific criticism.'"²⁷ In many instances, he briefly addressed technical details, especially in the earlier chapters, when he offered the reader an introduction to Mendelism and heredity. However, rather than discuss scientific theories and studies at length, he referred the reader to outside sources that would give them a fuller understanding of the topic. Wiggam's methods of persuasion included using simple and expressive language, making relevant analogies, providing anecdotes illustrating his point, and including charts and other visual aids. Each of these methods was designed to make a proposal of race inequality agreeable and even imperative to a common audience.

An examination of Chapter IV, entitled "What Education Tells," of *The Fruit of the Family Tree* reveals contains prime examples of methods Wiggam used to persuade his audience. He began Chapter IV, in which he tried to show the reader that educational improvements could not be passed down from generation to generation, with a technique intended to draw in the reader. He posed a series of simple questions about everyday people: an ordinary man who educated himself, a common criminal, a worker, a mother, etc. These questions, relevant to everyday citizens, include, "If a blacksmith uses his arm in his work, will that cause his children to be born with any stronger arms or sounder constitution than if he had all his life carried his arm in a sling?"²⁸ Readers could then engage with the text by asking these questions about their own lives. Once he has the readers considering these questions and what the answer could mean for them, Wiggam gives them the answer in the negative, citing scientific evidence. He does not overwhelm the readers with any scientific details, though he does briefly explain the foundation for his claim later in the chapter. Instead, he relies on science and the discoveries of others to support his nearly absolute claims. He went on to say that "we can say with just about as much certainty as we speak of gravitation or relativity that what happens to parents during their lives...has no appreciable influence in causing their children to either better or worse, brighter or more stupid, weaker or stronger, wiser or more foolish."²⁹ At the time Wiggam wrote, relativity was a new theory still being debated within the scientific community, as was eugenics. By comparing relativity and eugenics, he called upon the readers to engage with the science of eugenics as a new idea with which they would have the chance to shape.

In order to engage the readers in such an emotional manner, it took great care to form the right words and phrases so that they could connect to the argument. The language that Wiggam used in his argument is expressive and sometimes extreme. He also used colloquial terms such as "that old bogey,"³⁰ which made the text easy for the general public to relate to. He stated that "there is a *limited* technical sense in which it *may be possible* that some *slight* influence which comes from improvement or injury to the parents is in *extremely rare* cases and under

²⁶ Wiggam, i.

²⁷ Eyer Newton Simpson, Review of *The Fruit of the Family Tree* by Albert Edward Wiggam, *The American Journal of Sociology* 31, no. 6 (1926), 830 (<http://www.jstor.org/>).

²⁸ Wiggam, 63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

extraordinary conditions transmitted to the children"(emphasis added).³¹ In this way he appeared to make a concession, which helped later in his argument when he explained that syphilis is one of these "extremely rare cases," but it is a concession with so many limiters that the readers would remain unconvinced. Another example of this expressive language was the dramatic contrast he illustrated with this comparison: "...in the famous case of Martin Kallikak, one of whose matings to a feeble-minded girl gave rise to 446 worthless and largely criminal descendants; while to a noble woman gave rise to nearly 400 lawyers, doctors, clergymen, merchants, and good citizens generally."³² Wiggam purposely went to the extremes on both sides to make his argument more powerful. He infused a passion into his speech that allowed him to reach out to his audience on an emotional level, while making an argument that seemed cold and clinical. It offered a welcome contrast to some of his more emotionless statements, such as, "If this custom [beheading an entire family for the crimes of one of its members] were applied to in our time in civilized countries it would probably result in race improvement."³³

After Wiggam presented his initial argument that improvements made over a lifetime could not be inherited, he followed it with the three most common reactions that he anticipated his readers would have: that the argument was false, that it was pessimistic, and that it contradicted a biblical passage which states that the sins of the father will be visited upon his sons.³⁴ He uses these as counterpoints to his argument and spent a few pages showing why they were wrong. First he addresses the claim about the Bible reference, but in doing so he did not argue that the Bible itself was wrong, only that a particular interpretation of the Bible was wrong. *The Fruit of the Family Tree* was published just a few years after the Scopes trial, in which a teacher was sued for attempting to teach evolution because it contradicted the Bible. Even though the fundamentalists lost the trial in 1925, Wiggam would have known that avoiding direct contradiction of the Bible would endear him to his readers and make his argument less controversial. His attempt to avoid controversy shows Wiggam's sensitivity to the emotions of his readers. After he expanded on the scientific proof that supported his argument, he went on to refute the idea that it is pessimistic. Wiggam's counter to the idea that his argument is pessimistic showed his skill in persuasion. He shapes a dramatically different perspective on eugenics and gives the readers a way to view eugenics in an optimistic light. Wiggam says that one should not take the view that education is all in vain because it has no long term effect. Rather, one should take a positive view, because *bad* education could have no long term effect. Wiggam emphasized the idea that humans were likely to make mistakes in education and therefore it was fortunate that those mistakes were not passed on to our children. The only mistakes humans needed to worry about, then, were mistakes in breeding.

Another favorite rhetorical method of Wiggam's is the use of anecdotes or analogies. The anecdotes that he used were usually about his friends or colleagues or people who had written to him. In Chapter IV, however, he told the readers, "I know when I was a boy I was kept in mortal terror for fear some sin committed by my great-grandfather, whom I had never seen, might suddenly be visited upon my poor unoffending head."³⁵ This adds a personal note to his story and shows that Wiggam was sympathetic to readers' fears. However, at the same time it dismisses those fears as childlike and reinforced his refutation. In general, Wiggam uses analogies to demonstrate his point in a way that his audience could understand. For example, he used the example of Chinese female foot-binding to illustrate the point that changes over a life-span have to be re-done each generation. Mothers continued to pass down the gene for big feet and young girls needed to bind their feet, as their mothers and grandmothers had. He argues that if Chinese men only married women with naturally small feet, eventually the majority of

³¹ Ibid., 64

³² Ibid., 71

³³ Ibid., 65

³⁴ Ibid., 64

³⁵ Ibid.

Chinese women would have naturally small feet and the binding process would be unnecessary. This was a "simple illustration" that helped the reader process the idea that the correct way to achieve beauty ideals was to only allow beautiful men and women to reproduce.³⁶

In many of his analogies, Wiggam begins by showing how heredity works in plants and animals and then applied that knowledge to humans. He presented these analogies in a rational tone and expected that the readers would see the comparison as valid. However, he offers no argument as to why they should. When he introduced his argument for using education to instill cultural ideals in children, he mentions a priest who claimed the ideals of a community could be discovered through the way they breed their horses. "He said, 'If they have fine, spick and span horses, those people have high ideals... But if they have poor, broken-down, half starved, low-bred horses, get out of there.'"³⁷ Wiggam followed this tale by simply stating "and all these selective forces apply to human beings."³⁸ It seems that Wiggam did not anticipate anyone who would argue that breeding horses and breeding humans were different. These points demonstrate his commitment to his argument that humans should reproduce with as much a clinical and scientific approach as if we were breeding a species of horse. But it also illustrates a failure to connect to the reader's emotional sense of pride.

A final way that Wiggam attempted to make his argument more accessible and understandable to his audience was through charts, diagrams, and pictures. He used a number of charts in chapters XII and XIII to offer visual representation of experiments and observational studies, such as the chart which illustrated Thorndike's experiment that showed the results of equal education.³⁹ He also inserted a number of family trees throughout the book to illustrate the nature of heredity. The opening page of the book showed a family tree that highlights prominent members--Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dr. George Vincent, Grover Cleveland, and General Ulysses Grant--who had a common relative to prove that the potential for greatness ran in families.⁴⁰ Wiggam's purpose for creating this family tree is apparent in the way it is presented. He picked specific people recognizable as prominent figures to his readers while keeping names of less prominent members of the family small, labeling them "commonplace," or even excluding them. He also minimized the distance of the relationships between these figures by keeping the rest of the chart small.

A close examination of Wiggam's method of crafting his argument reveals his objectives, assumptions, and manipulations with respect to the reader. It is clear that he was writing to an amateur audience. Though he was not making a strictly scientific argument, he was not making a completely emotional argument either. Instead, he struck a balance by calling in both sides. Sometimes he relied on scientific fact, and sometimes he garnered sympathy with impassioned speech. The way Wiggam balanced the rational and the emotional is reflected in his argument for eugenics in general. Although eugenics was professionally acceptable, it did not have the popular enthusiasm it would need to survive. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* entitled "The Broader Eugenics," a reader of the newspaper, T. Gotto, stated that a eugenics organization was "urgently in need to press forward the educational aspect of race improvement on sound and scientific lines."⁴¹ The science of eugenics was in fact taught in many secondary schools and later in the letter to the editor Gotto said "we are now engaged in an effort to introduce eugenics in the systems of elementary education in this country... so many hope that within the next few years all children will be inoculate with the larger idea of patriotism, which the eugenic ideal

³⁶ Ibid., 75.

³⁷ Ibid., 77

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 175

⁴⁰ Ibid., coverflap

⁴¹ T. Gotto, "The Broader Eugenics," *New York Times*, November 12, 1912, 14.

implies."⁴² In order to implement this education, which Wiggam would agree was important, the support and approval of the public would be necessary. This is why books such as Wiggam's were essential to the eugenics movement.

While actual data about the number of copies of *The Fruit of the Family Tree* sold are nearly impossible to find, it can be assumed that the book had some popularity. According to WorldCat and Amazon, it can currently be found in 303 libraries worldwide and other copies can be purchased in bookstores, such as Barnes and Noble and Borders. To give a sense of what this figure represents, WorldCat shows that the leading work on eugenics, *Applied Eugenics* by Johnson and Popenoe, can be found in 320 libraries worldwide, and *Apes, Men, and Morons*, a popular eugenics book published in 1937, can be found in 544 libraries worldwide. As *The Fruit of the Family Tree* was published nearly 100 years ago, the fact that its copies can still be found in 303 libraries shows that many copies must have been made and sold. Thus it served a crucial part of its purpose: to spread eugenic thought to the largest number of American people possible. This book increased the amount of people who could be persuaded to get them on board with eugenic procedures and legislation.

The Fruit of the Family Tree received this popularity because of Wiggam's ability to mold a harsh science into an emotional idea. Although he could not determine what grade level or schools the text books he examined were used in, Steven Selden found when he examined forty biology textbooks published from 1914 to 1949 that "over 90% of the volumes included eugenics as legitimate science."⁴³ This shows that it was natural for eugenicists to rely on science to support their arguments and that they considered it a hard science. However, if they stayed completely in the scientific realm, they risked sounding too cold and clinical. The nature of the argument for eugenics, which promoted the breeding of humans based on their inherited characteristics rather than their individual character, suggested a depersonalization and emotional distance. Eugenicists, in particular Wiggam, believed that an argument absent of emotion would be challenging for the general public. As Wiggam demonstrates, many eugenicists who tried to win the approval of the public emphasized the positive and emotional aspects of eugenics. Wiggam was careful to explain that the intention of eugenics was for the greater good, that it would benefit the human race as a whole, and that it would prevent people being born into suffering.⁴⁴ Some or all of these arguments would help readers believe that eugenics was a movement in which to engage.

The nature of Wiggam's argument was careful and persuasive, which shows he was aware that popular opinion was not always in favor of eugenics. Wiggam clearly knew the counterarguments to his points, as he presented and refuted them in his book. This is not to say that Wiggam himself did not believe what he was arguing, but rather that he did not believe his reader would understand his argument the same way he did if he presented it in a straightforward manner. Instead, Wiggam attempted to persuade his audience with carefully applied techniques, for example the language that he used. He used expressive and emotional language that was intended to paint a certain picture for the reader. His visual representations are also presented so that they lend themselves to a particular interpretation. Even the way that he presented counterarguments to his points reveals his anxiety about winning over the public. After he presented his argument in the beginning of Chapter IV, he was quick to lay out all possible objections to that argument, thoroughly refuting every counter point he believed the reader could make. He was also careful in the way he refuted these arguments so to not offend the Church, which further shows his anxiety over public opinion.

The fact that Wiggam was so anxious to appeal to the public makes his failures to develop a strong argument important. The points where Wiggam presented a weak argument, or

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Steven Selden, "Selective Traditions and the Science Curriculum: Eugenics and the Biology Textbook, 1914-1949," *Science Education* 75, no. 5 (1991), 495. (<http://www.jstor.org>).

⁴⁴ Wiggam, 353

one not supported by various persuasive techniques, reveal that Wiggam had certain assumptions about the reader. He believed that his reader would find it acceptable when he stated that beheading a whole family for the crime of one member would lead to race improvement. His only reason for not instating this policy was that some children of bad parents may not have inherited their parent's inferior genetics, not because it was inherently morally wrong. He did not put a spin on that statement or try to present it in a way that lessened the its force, which suggests that Wiggam assumed his audience would not be alarmed by this view. It is interesting that Wiggam was aware that he might have offended his audience if he challenged the Bible but was not aware that the reader might be offended in the same passage by his suggestions of violent punishment for another's crime. Another assumption that Wiggam makes frequently is that the reader will accept his comparisons of animals and plants, how heredity works for them and how we treat them in comparison to humans. From a scientific view, plants and animals may have processes in common with humans, but from an emotional standpoint human tradition puts us above animals, which Wiggam did not appear to understand. These assumptions about the reader that Wiggam made reveal the deep conviction that Wiggam had for his argument. It suggests that Wiggam's true beliefs were of a clinical nature and reinforces the idea that he infused passion and emotion into his arguments for his reader's benefit.

It could be argued that Wiggam did not make a compelling case for eugenics, even to the audience of American citizens of the 1920's. For example, Eyley Newton Simpson was not convinced by Wiggam's argument. He believed that "the generalizations about human heredity and eugenics which he sets up in so cavalier a manner have no foundation whatsoever in the science he seeks to expound."⁴⁵ In the same review, Simpson made note of another book, *The New Age of Faith* by John Langdon-Davies, a refutation of the eugenic theories Wiggam presents, and for which "Mr. Wiggam's biological bombast serves the amusing purpose of providing a foil."⁴⁶ However, every movement has its dissenters and it would be impossible for Wiggam to convince everyone of the use of eugenics. The fact that the views of Simpson and Langdon-Davies, strongly opposed to eugenics, were in the minority was shown in the way that Wiggam assumed certain eugenic arguments would be accepted. His assumption is backed up by a study of popular culture in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁷ Wiggam's arguments would have been compelling to a wide audience of individuals that may not have been proponents of eugenics but was not an avid opponent.

As I demonstrated in this paper, Wiggam's ability to present a compelling emotional argument for the rational pseudoscience of eugenics shows how propaganda and persuasive techniques allowed eugenicists to insinuate their ideas into popular culture. The essays in *Popular Eugenics* showed that in the 1930s, eugenic thoughts and principles were worked into art, education, movies, and even cartoons. Prior to the twentieth century eugenics was mostly confined to scientific discussion. Wiggam is part of the shift from eugenicists who present their argument from a purely scientific stand point, to eugenicists who attempt to connect to average citizens on a personal and emotional level in order to make their argument more powerful. This shift is important because it shows the subtlety that entered the argument for eugenics and that the ideas of eugenics may not have died out entirely. Although eugenics was identified as a pseudoscience in the aftermath of the Holocaust and World War II, some of the general ideas of eugenics remained throughout the twentieth century. For example, eugenic theories entered into discussions of welfare, birth control, abortion, and genetic discoveries. Selden noted the tendency of modern media to cite genetics as the source of any number characteristics or accomplishments. He defined this trend as biological determinism and stated that "when it comes

⁴⁵ Simpson, 830.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 831.

⁴⁷ Currell and Cogdell, *Popular Eugenics*.

to explaining complex human behavior, the media often report, 'It's all in the genes.'"⁴⁸ This shows how even in our present time, our society puts faith in nature over nurture, a key point in the eugenic argument. As Stern pointed out in *Eugenic Nation*, Americans tend to view eugenics in light of the Holocaust as "an abhorrent and benighted chapter of pseudoscience in which misguided authorities were ensnared by Nazi-inspired ideas" whereas our generation is "a much savvier and sagacious present in which such mistakes will not be repeated."⁴⁹ This idea allows people of the present to distance themselves from eugenic ideas entirely, which is a mistake. Eugenics was too deeply integrated into our culture for it to disappear entirely. As Stern stated, it "did not perish after World War II; it was repackaged."⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the Holocaust many eugenicists became genetic counselors and family planners and marketed eugenic ideas in that capacity. Stern argued that "they began to place greater emphasis on individual choice and private decision making,"⁵¹ which coincided with a decreased concern in modern society for the greater good and an increased concern with personal good. This serves to illustrate another way in which eugenicists were able to adapt their argument to their audience and continue to do so today. Analysis of works such as *The Fruit of the Family Tree* is important because it demonstrates this adaptability and shows why the legacy of eugenics remained past World War II: because eugenicists learned to present their argument in an emotional way, as Wiggam did. Therefore, Americans must understand the societal biases within the media and be aware of the subtle arguments that they take in through all forms of media.

⁴⁸ Steven Selden, "Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908-1930," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149, no. 2 (2005), 200. (<http://www.jstor.org/>).

⁴⁹ Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 2.

⁵⁰ Stern, 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

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â€¢ Observing the mating habits of animals, Darwin drew the parallel between selectively pairing certain breeds of animals in order to improve one's stock and the choice that lay before humanity: breed well, or breed ill. Controlling our destiny. â€¢ The idea was quite simple and Darwin noted that the most attractively colored, or strongest males were chosen by the females to mate with.Â â€¢ Have you ever known someone who had a kid and thought â€œthat is the last person in the world who should be having a childâ€? â€¢ These are all eugenics sentiments. Eugenic thoughts today. â€¢ While most people would admit that certain types of people are more qualified to have kids than others [nice, healthy, 18 and over, smart, etc.] almost no one is willing to take the steps to ensure