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**THE MEASURE OF THE WOMAN: EUGENICS AND
DOMESTIC SCIENCE IN THE 1924 SOCIOLOGICAL
SURVEY OF WHITE WOMEN IN NORTH
QUEENSLAND**

Thesis submitted by

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on February 11 2008**

**for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Arts and Social Sciences
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Abstract

This thesis considers experiences of white women in Queensland's north in the early years of 'white' Australia, in this case from Federation until the late 1920s. Because of government and health authority interest in determining issues that might influence the health and well-being of white northern women, and hence their families and a future white labour force, in 1924 the Institute of Tropical Medicine conducted a comprehensive Sociological Survey of White Women in selected northern towns. Designed to address and resolve concerns of government and medical authorities with anxieties about sanitation, hygiene and eugenic wellbeing, the Survey used domestic science criteria to measure the health knowledge of its subjects: in so doing, it gathered detailed information about their lives. Guided by the Survey assessment categories, together with local and overseas literature on racial ideas, the thesis examines salient social and scientific concerns about white women in Queensland's tropical north and in white-dominated societies elsewhere and considers them against the oral reminiscences of women who recalled their lives in the North for the North Queensland Oral History Project. Ultimately, the combination of sources enables an examination of the application of prevailing racial ideas and the development of a broad social history of 1920s North Queensland women.

Statement of Sources

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education.

Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Signature

Date

Statement of Access

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Acknowledgement of Contributions & Assistance

This project could not have begun or completed without the funding that James Cook University provided through a Postgraduate Research Scholarship. Scholarship funds covered fees, project and travel costs, technical and administrative support and office space, brought me into an outstanding academic community and enabled a remarkable journey into the past. I am thankful for this assistance and the opportunities it provided.

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Born of undergraduate fascinations with women's history, the history of disease and the spread and adoption of ideas throughout the layers of societies, this thesis began to take shape after my discovery of Lori Harloe's reference to the Survey and the realisation that it was possible to integrate all of my interests in one work. In its embryonic and later stages it depended heavily on the guidance and patience of my supervisors Diane Menghetti and Russell McGregor, to whom I am deeply grateful. At the same time, it invaded my home and personal space in a way that was difficult to predict and probably more difficult to endure, despite the protests otherwise of several special people who soon learned how to shift large piles of paper without getting them out of order and to ask any question at least three times when my head was bent. Moreover, they did so for over four years. For that reason, I dedicate this work to Matthew, Pia and Hannah, with love and thanks.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Statement of Sources	iii
Statement of Access	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Illustrations	viii
Introduction and Literature Review.....	1
1 The Condition of the Setting is the Measure of the Woman.....	35
2 A Point of View that Changed the Aspect of the World.....	68
3 The Domestic Instinct is Very Lively in Young Girls	81
4 Survey Inspirations at a Local Level	105
5 Her Own Little Domain.....	127
6 What Was All Wrong in our Victorian Mothers' Days is All Right Now	148
7 Innocent, not Ignorant	185
8 A Long Sad Task.....	218
9 And on the Tenth Day, We Got Up.....	245
10 A Relatively Infinitesimal Degree of Racial Poison.....	271
11 Opaque Whiteness.....	294
Conclusion	325
Bibliography	330
Appendices	
1 - Survey health assessments	368
2 - Sample group child mortality occurrences	369
3 - Examples of births and deaths, sample group.	370
4 - Key NQOHP women	371

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Annie Gorman at her Graduation, 1918	180
Figure 2: Raphael West Cilento, 1923	180
Figure 3: Index Card	181
Figure 4: The ideal domestic science kitchen	182
Figure 5: Queensland Baby Clinic pamphlet.	183
Figure 6: Queensland Baby Clinics pamphlet	184