Every child a wanted child vs babies in the right place: the early birth control movements of Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes

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Every Child a Wanted Child Vs Babies in the Right Place. The Early Birth Control Movements…

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Every Child A Wanted Child Vs Babies in the Right Place
The Early Birth Control Movements of
Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes

By
Patricia Lynn Walsh Coates

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ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates how Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes led two different birth control movements despite having similar backgrounds and personal experiences. Both advocated a common message yet worked towards different goals. The argument of this paper states that two remarkably similar women in background and philosophy developed distinctly different birth control movements shaped by the culture in which they operated.

The paper begins by introducing the two women who became leaders of the birth control movements in the United States and Great Britain. A comparison is made of the biographies of each woman to illustrate the similarities in their upbringing and married lives. Both women had a similar mission: to make birth control available to women of all classes. This philosophy was shaped by personal experiences, mutual influences, and shared views. Similar motherhood experiences, such as the pain of childbirth or the loss of a child, affected these women in a common way that was reflected in their writing and speeches. Both were also exposed to the Eugenics and Neo-Malthusian movements of the day, often influenced by the same people. Finally, each expressed the need for birth control as a means for personal fulfillment in marriage, believing that motherhood was a right, not a duty.

Although the women shared a common philosophy, their methods and
goals were different. These differences were a direct reflection of the society in which they lived and can be gauged by their engagement in politics, the organizations and clinics they established and the audience they attempted to reach. The extent to which each woman engaged in politics depended on their society's acceptance of birth control methods and the availability of contraceptive devices. The organizations they established and whether or not they created clinics reflected the need and allowance for each within their culture. Finally, each tailored her writing and organization to the audience she was trying to reach. Both employed different methods for the purpose of achieving various goals based on their countries acceptance of birth control.

The paper concludes with a summary of the current organizations they helped to establish.
In July 1915, the British Neo-Malthusian League invited American birth control advocate Margaret Sanger to speak at a meeting held at Fabian Hall in London. In exile from the United States over the publication of a controversial birth control pamphlet, Sanger would energize the crowd with a lecture on her political struggle in America and her views on effective contraception. In the crowd was a young paleontologist, Marie Stopes, who was also interested in birth control rights. Stopes invited Sanger to her home and the two women discussed their views on marriage and contraception. “We talked freely and intimately on that eventful afternoon,” Sanger wrote of the meeting. “She was then writing a book, ‘Married Love,’ … She expected it to ‘electrify England’. “¹ This meeting initiated a long relationship between two women who changed the way people in the United States and Great Britain viewed women and their sexual role in society.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the formation of two distinct birth control movements in the United States and Great Britain and the emergence of two pioneering women who would lead the struggle for contraceptive freedom in their countries. Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes were two women of remarkably similar backgrounds who publicly set out to emancipate women by advocating birth control. It is the goal of this paper to illustrate how Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes, despite having similar

¹ Margaret Sanger, My Fight for Birth Control (New York: Pergamon Press, 1959), 104.
backgrounds and experiences, led two very different birth control movements. Both women advocated a common message yet would search and work towards different goals that were shaped, in part, by the cultures in which they operated. The political climate of their perspective countries dictated the type of movement each established. In the United States, birth control information and the dissemination of contraception were illegal. Thus, Sanger organized a politically liberal campaign to get laws changed in the United States. British society was more tolerant of birth control. Stopes’ efforts focused on establishing clinics. The first part of the paper will focus on their common backgrounds, experiences, and philosophies. The second portion will outline the differences in their aims, goals, and audience.

**COMMON BACKGROUND**

The similarities within the biographies of these women are undeniable. The women were contemporaries. The Higgins and Stopes families came from middle class roots and situated their families in the fashionable suburbs of metropolitan areas. Both women had educated parents who stressed the importance of their daughters receiving a proper education. Each attended preparatory school and both continued their education, receiving degrees in either medicine or the sciences. The Higgins and Stopes homes were both reflective of middle class attitudes towards education and social appearances.

Margaret Higgins was born on September 14, 1879, in Corning, New
York, the sixth child of Michael Higgins and Anne Purcell. Michael Higgins, an Irish-American stonecutter, was an outspoken man who enjoyed conversation and drinking over hard work. After losing his own business in 1892, Higgins relied on his sons for financial assistance and his wife to run the household. Despite these hardships, Margaret spoke favorably about her childhood and especially about her father. "It was from him I learned the value of freedom of speech and freedom of liberty," she explained in her autobiography. "He fought for free libraries, free education, free books in public schools, and the freedom of mind from dogma and cant... He was a philosopher, a rebel, an artist." 

It was from her father that she would also learn to mistrust the Catholic Church, her lifelong foe. Sanger wrote respectfully of her mother and the burden she bore in raising eleven children. "Our home life," Sanger wrote, "nevertheless was colored by the mutual love of our parents and by intellectual, rational, tolerant discussions, religious and political."

The Higgins family provided for their daughter's formal education. Margaret attended St. Mary's in Corning up to the eighth grade, finishing her secondary education at Claverlack College, a private boarding school in Hudson County with a steep tuition. Both Margaret and her sister Nan would work at the school to pay for room and board. Upon graduation, she made arrangements to attend a two-year nursing program at the White Plains

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2 Ibid., 6.
3 Ibid., 9.
Hospital in Westchester County. She completed the program and embarked on a career as a visiting nurse and midwife.

Marie Stopes was born into the Victorian home of Henry Stopes and Charlotte Carmichael Stopes on October 5, 1880. The first of two daughters, Marie was born in Edinburgh but raised in the London suburb of Cintra Grove. Both her parents were university trained, her father becoming a scientist and her mother a well published Shakespearean expert. The Stopes family traveled extensively and espoused the virtues of the outdoor life. Marie was sent on holiday to hike on the Isle of Wight and often vacationed at seaside spas and resorts. Marie considered her mother distant and tended to turn to her father for advice and guidance. Yet the family remained close lipped on matters of sex and religion. June Rose writes of the Stopes, “Sex was never discussed in the family and although both Charlotte and Henry were progressive and broadminded in accepting intellectual ideas, Marie and Winnie were brought up in the clamp of Victorian prudery.” The Stopes home was stern, with studies taking precedent over play. Marie carried this air of seriousness with her throughout her life.

Marie's education was of the utmost importance. Charlotte was especially concerned with her daughter's schooling, writing of her intellectual development at one month old. Being a former governess, Charlotte started

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Marie's formal education at five years old, teaching her English and geography as well as the fundamentals of Latin and Greek. Like Sanger, Marie attended private, secondary boarding school and was then moved to Hampstead to attend the North London Collegiate, one of the leading girls schools in England. She entered University College, London, at seventeen, pursuing a degree in science. By 1904, she became eligible for a Doctor of Philosophy and started her career as a paleontologist and lecturer.

The type of man each woman would date and marry is also indicative of their similar backgrounds. Although raised in conservative Catholic home, Sanger married a socialist, Jewish bohemian. William Sanger was a 28 year old architect and artist when Sanger married him in 1902. After a brief period in the suburb or Corning, New York, the Sanger family moved to the bohemian enclave of Greenwich Village in Manhattan and aligned themselves with the socialist party. The Higgins family accepted their son-in-law, despite the fact that he was of Jewish descent. Marie Stopes' first love was also unconventional. While studying at the University of Munich, 23 year old Marie fell in love with Kuyiro Fujii, a married Japanese professor with a child. Believing that he was going to divorce his wife, Stopes entered a relationship with him that lasted 5 years. Upon visiting him in Japan in 1907 on a research grant, Stopes learned that Fujii had no intention of leaving his wife.

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and the relationship was severed. She was thirty-one years old when she met and married Dr. Reginald Ruggles, a fellow botanist. The marriage lasted less than a year with Stopes drifting into a depression because, according to her, the relationship was never sexually consummated. She uses this disappointing marriage experience as the basis for her writing *Married Love* (1918), stating "In my first marriage I paid such a terrible price for sex-ignorance that I feel the knowledge gained at such a cost should be placed at the service of humanity." 

Sanger and Stopes both divorced their first husbands and remarried wealthy businessmen. J. Noah H. Slee was the president of a major oil company and a widower twenty years older than Sanger. Humphrey Roe was a well-educated war hero and founder of the Avro Auto firm. Both men would devote their lives and their fortunes to their wives' birth control cause, financing their clinics and campaigns. Sanger and Stopes approached their second marriage searching for a sense of financial security. Whether for love or money, the two women found men of similar characteristics to marry.

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The most significant similarity between the women was their experiences with motherhood. Sanger and Stopes were both mothers who lost a child to disease or during childbirth. Sanger's daughter Peggy would die of pneumonia at age five after a brief illness. Ellen Chesler stated that "Margaret never fully stopped mourning Peggy or exorcised the guilt over having been absent during the final year of her brief life." Stopes's first child would die at birth, embittering her towards doctors and sending her into a depression. Both women were effected by tragedies that helped to shape their philosophies on birth control.

Each woman would draw upon a personal experience and use this experience as the basis for their involvement in the birth control cause. Stopes cited the emotionally-painful experience of her unconsummated first marriage and her own ignorance of contraceptive techniques as the basis for her devotion to birth control education. Sanger doesn't refer to a specific personal experience as her motivation for birth control. Instead, she referred to a young woman, Sadie Sachs, who would die from a botched abortion on the Lower East Side. Sanger was her visiting nurse at the time. She used the Sadie Sachs experience repeatedly throughout her long career as the catalyst that motivated her to action.

Sanger and Stopes had a similar, broadly stated mission: to make birth

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11 Chesler, Woman of Valor, 134.
control available to women of all classes. This philosophy was shaped by personal experiences, mutual influences, and shared views. Similar motherhood experiences, whether it was the pain of childbirth, the loss of a child, or the responsibility of a large family affected these women in a similar way that was reflected in their writing and speeches. The two women were also exposed to the eugenic and neo-Malthusian movements of the day. The same people often influenced them. Each woman also expressed the need for birth control as a means of person fulfillment in marriage and believed that motherhood was a right, not a duty.

**PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The relationship that each woman had with their mother helped to define their ideas on feminism and motherhood. Anne Purcell and Charlotte Carmichael were headstrong women who influenced their daughters through thought and action. Influential feminists such as Emma Goldman and Mary Ware Dennett defined for them the role a woman should play in the public sphere. The women who influenced Sanger's and Stopes's lives both publicly and privately contributed to their shared beliefs on what role a woman should take in deciding her future.

Margaret Sanger wrote in her 1959 autobiography, *My Fight for Birth Control*, "As I look back on my life, I see that every part of it was a preparation for the next...It seems to me that every person with whom I came into contact left an impression or
instilled in my life an influence that definitely formed a part of this design.”\textsuperscript{12} Anne Purcell Higgins undoubtedly left her mark on her daughter. Within her fifty years of life she would give birth to eleven children, of which only six would survive to adulthood. Referred to by Sanger as “fearless and independent,” she was the physical and spiritual matriarch of the Higgins family, often taking on traditionally male responsibilities ignored by her husband. Despite her tuberculosis, Higgins was always cooking, cleaning, and attending to her children’s needs. Yet she never gave them the emotional support they needed and craved.\textsuperscript{13} This pattern of neglect would be mirrored in Sanger’s relationship with her own children. Her first role model, her mother, was a woman embattled by a temperamental husband, multiple births and TB. Sanger paid tribute to her mother by dedicating her book, \textit{Woman and the New Race} (1920), to “the memory of my Mother, a mother who gave birth to eleven living children.”\textsuperscript{14}

The actions of Charlotte-Carmichael, the fiery feminist mother of Marie Stopes, played a crucial role in the development of Stopes’s views on women and their role in society. The daughter of an artist, Carmichael was a recognized specialist on Shakespeare and Bacon and the first woman in Scotland to obtain a university certificate. According to her diaries, Charlotte doted on her young daughter and exposed her to a variety of cultural and

\textsuperscript{12} Sanger, \textit{My Fight For Birth Control}, 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Chesler, \textit{Woman of Valor}, 40.
\textsuperscript{14} Margaret Sanger, \textit{Woman and the New Race} (New York: Pergamon Press, 1920), taken from the dedication of the book.
literary influences. Her work for rational dress reform and passion for the woman's suffrage movement in England instilled in Stopes a sense of independence and tenacity.\textsuperscript{15} Though critical of her daughter's movement later in life, "[Carmichael's] example gave Marie the confidence and freedom to take women's emancipation for granted and to effect a sexual revolution in her turn."\textsuperscript{16}

Sanger and Stopes both looked for guidance from a variety of female influences other than their mothers. Sanger adopted not only her feminist ideology but also much of her birth control rhetoric from Emma Goldman. A self-proclaimed anarchist, Goldman was the first to emphasize the need for emancipation within the family before institutional barriers could be dismantled. She also introduced Sanger to neo-Malthusian theories while both were living in Greenwich Village.\textsuperscript{17} In her first publication, Woman Rebel (1914), Sanger quotes Goldman as saying that a woman's development "Must come from and through herself...First, by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second, by refusing to bear children, unless she wants them..."\textsuperscript{18} Although Sanger never gives Goldman credit in her later writing, her rhetoric is obviously based in Goldman's thought. Stopes credits Mary Ware Dennett with greatly influencing her own thoughts on birth control

\textsuperscript{15} Briant, \textit{Passionate Paradox}, 24.  
\textsuperscript{16} Rose, \textit{Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution}, 1.  
\textsuperscript{17} Chesler, \textit{Woman of Valor}, 82-86.  
\textsuperscript{18} Margaret Sanger, \textit{The Woman Rebel volume 1 (June 1914)}: 4
advocacy. Dennett's Voluntary Motherhood League, considerably more conservative than Sanger's the American Birth Control League, influenced Stopes in both theory and practice. She wrote that she was "indebted to the publications of the Voluntary Motherhood League of New York" and called it "a very strong organization with an influential backing." These role models helped to define Sanger's and Stopes' unified belief that a feminist based, somewhat militant movement was needed to effect change within their societies.

MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCES

Sanger wrote of her first experience with her own children, "My own motherhood was joyous, loving, happy. I wanted to share these joys with other women." She goes on to write that she was "never dreaming that suddenly [I] would be thrust forth into the night of turmoil, uncertainty and despair." Sanger gave birth to three children, two boys and a girl, within seven years. She admits that the difficult births of all three of her children, pain she said she could still recall twenty-five years after the births, had a tremendous effect on her activities within the movement. She also suffered from a severe bout of tuberculosis after the birth of her first son and was not able to care for him during the early stages of his life.

21 Sanger, My Fight For Birth Control, 44.
More significant than the pain of childbirth was the loss of her beloved
daughter Peggy. "I feel there are no pains left on earth for me again," Sanger
wrote of Peggy’s death to a friend in 1917, "jails, bread and water, hunger.
Nothing can give me pain again compared to the torture of the realization of
my loss." Sanger generally refrained from speaking of the death of her
daughter. Her husband William pleaded with her to discuss it yet she
restrained, never giving him just reason for her silence.

Overwhelming sympathy mixed with a renewed urgency for birth control
advocacy is a recurring theme found in the letters written to Sanger upon
her daughter’s death. Many letters reaffirmed the depth of Sanger’s loss for
her daughter in relation to her cause. Gwyneth King Roe wrote to Sanger in
1917, “It is difficult to combat a world’s opinion and to be persecuted because
of their prejudices – this would seem to be enough for one person. I would
that you might be spurred this personal grief.” C.R. and Bessie Dryesdale
of the British Neo-Malthusian League wrote Sanger letters of support,
describing “how special a place little Peggy held in your affections and
ambitions,” while the Malthusian League wrote, “This blow would seem part of
your sacrifice for the progress of humanity and it will certainly rouse all your

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22 Margaret Sanger to Herbert A. Sturges, February 23, 1917. This letter was found in the
Sophia Smith collection, Smith College, Margaret Sanger microfilm edition, hereinafter
referred to as MS SS microfilm. This letter was on reel S01.
23 Gwyneth King Roe to Margaret Sanger, November 15, 1917, MS SS microfilm, reel S01.
friends to greater efforts for the cause of liberty." Almost every letter expressed the importance of Sanger's work towards birth control in connection with the "great sacrifice...called upon to bear after all you have given up for the benefit of humanity and its children born and unborn." One of the most poignant letters written to Sanger during this period was penned by Marie Stopes assuring "in your sorrow you know how much I feel for you...Be brave and remember not only we but women's children's children will always love you." Sanger herself attributed her dedication to Peggy's passing. "Sometimes it seems to me," Sanger wrote, "that intense as the pain and torture exacted of a mother is in bringing a child into the world it cannot be compared with her sorrow in letting it go out. Can men – even loving fathers ever truly understand the two edged sorrow the loss of a child inflicts upon womankind?" The combination of painful childbirth, debilitating tuberculosis and the death of her only daughter infused in Sanger the need for women to control and determine the amount of children they would bear and raise.

The stillbirth of her first child shortly after the publication of her second book deeply effected Marie Stopes’ views on childbirth and physicians. Fearing excessive pain, Stopes opted to use the anesthetic Twilight Sleep

24 Bessie Drysdale wrote the first quote in a letter to Sanger on November 26, 1915. The second quote was penned in a letter to Sanger by Binnie Dunlop and Olive Johnson on November 25, 1915, MS SS microfilm, reel S01.
25 Jessie Warriner to Margaret Sanger, November 1915, MS SS microfilm, reel S01.
26 Marie Stopes to Margaret Sanger, November 1915, MS SS microfilm, reel S01.
during birth. Stopes argued with doctors and nurses over the position she was to be in during delivery, feeling that the method of lying flat was dangerous. She was overruled and was forced to be in a horizontal position. The child was stillborn and Stopes immediately claimed her child was “murdered essentially” while she was “wantonly tortured” during the delivery. The experience resulted in Stopes lapsing into a semi-demented condition and obsessing on the inadequacies of the doctors in attendance. At one point, she threatened a lawsuit but never followed through. Her second child would be born by caesarian section. Although she never alludes to these experiences in her writing, her wariness of childbirth and contempt for the medical profession had its roots in her own ill-fated deliveries.

The tragic experiences of other mothers greatly influenced the two women to work towards accessible birth control as well. Both Sanger and Stopes would write books filled with letters from overworked mothers asking for help. The plight of other mothers, regardless of race or wealth, strengthened their conviction towards birth control.

The detailed experiences of working class mothers in need of contraceptive advice were outlined in books written by Sanger and Stopes. Published in 1928, Motherhood in Bondage was a collection of heart wrenching letters sent to Margaret Sanger by mothers in the United States and

28 Rose, Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution, 128.
29 Briant, Passionate Paradox, 128.
Canada. She introduces the book by stating that “the American public has shuddered with horror at recent exposures of the tragedies of womankind in India and the cynical bestiality of the white slave traffic in South America... here in our own country we are countenancing a type of slavery that is a disgrace to American ideals.”30 The book is categorized into seventeen chapters, with each one addressing a different case scenario such as “Girl Mothers” and “the Struggle of the Unfit”. A typical letter found in the book reads:

The reason I send for information is because I think if any woman needs help I am the one. I am seventeen years old. I married when I was thirteen years old and I am the mother of six children. My first baby was thirteen months old when another one was born, then ten months after that I had twins and ten months later another set of twins. Now I am to have some more. My husband gets awful cross with me when I get this way, because, like you say in your book, he thinks we have got plenty. It is also wearing me down. I never feel well.31

Sanger makes a convincing case for birth control through letters expressing concern about angry husbands, failed marriages, constant pregnancies, and unsuccessful contraceptive attempts. In a section entitled “The Doctor Warns – but Does not Tell,” Sanger chastises the medical profession, claiming “there are not enough words in my heart to express my gratitude for the nobility and self-sacrifice of the individual doctor...But one cannot work among women, or

31 Ibid., 6.
do social work, without eventually coming to a realization that the profession as a whole had been woefully blind to its responsibility to society and to the race... Even though the letters vary in scope, a reoccurring theme can be found: women who had too many babies, too close together, and were in desperate need of contraceptive advice.

Stopes’ *Mother England: A Contemporary History Self-Written by Those who have No Historian* published in 1929 focused on the same general theme. Stopes' book concentrated on the plight of working class women who needed information on stopping “any more little ones coming”. Like Sanger, Stopes published the letters with a specific goal in mind - to enlighten the middle class to the situation of working class mothers and to lobby the need for proper birth control techniques to be used among the poor.

However, the Stopes’ book varies from Sanger’s in a variety of ways. Organizationally, where Sanger categorized the letters and added commentary on each chapter, Stopes “let[s] the letters make their own impression...” The letters to Stopes all ask for contraceptive information and are more graphic in their plight than the American letters, especially when discussing botched abortions. A typical letter in Stopes’ book reads:

> We (my husband and I) have eight children 14-2 years. I had a 4 months illness, following an incomplete abortion, last summer and feel I am physically and mentally unfitted to bring further

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32 Ibid., 361.
children into the world. Furthermore, I consider we are unable to bear any further financial strain, on our weekly income...Our Church tells us we must not use contraceptive methods, but deny ourselves all sexual intercourse. We suffer in health by doing so, my husband has stronger passions than myself and is practicing withdrawal before the act is complete.34

Stopes' writers speak freely of their abortions, criticize their churches, and give graphic details of their sex lives easier than women in America.

The books differ the most in how Sanger and Stopes choose to present their case for the spread of contraceptive information. Sanger is more intent on presenting the various problems facing working class women while tying the problems together in one justification for birth control. "But out of all the varieties of experience and humiliation recorded," Sanger argues, "a definite unity emerged. Each letter contains the record of a woman caught in the toils of unwilling maternity, enslaved not only by the great imperative instincts of human nature – hunger and sex – but hopelessly enmeshed in this trap of poverty heredity, ignorance... and the ever-increasing complications of successive pregnancies."35 Sanger chose letters of a common theme: poor women who have too many babies with husbands who are not supporting the family sufficiently.

Stopes is more focused on the financial difficulties of the women and is critical of government policies that extend welfare yet ignore what she sees as

34 Ibid., 98.
35 Sanger, Motherhood in Bondage, xiv-xv.
the core of the problem – laws against abortion. This focus becomes clearer in the comment section at the end of Mother England, where Stopes rails on Parliament and the press for their policies and presentation of the birth control debate. She is particularly hostile towards the Ministry of Health for refusing to allow members of her Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress organization from sitting on any committees. Her anger towards the press is directed to the London Times that refused to print a letter she penned in response to an article written criticizing midwives. Abortion is mentioned in just a few of the letters in Motherhood in Bondage. Sanger does not address the topic at all in the book. However, Stopes includes numerous letters describing failed abortion attempts. She is particularly critical of the government for refusing to decriminalize abortion practices. "A point of supreme national importance, all too generally overlooked," Stopes writes in her letter to the Times, "is the recent incredibly high proportion of deliberate and criminal interference with pregnancy among the ignorant class...In the last three months I have had as many as twenty thousand requests for criminal abortion from women who did not apparently even know that it was criminal." 36 Ironically, it was Stopes who was critical of government policy in her writing instead of Sanger.

36 Stopes, Mother England, 183.
COMMON INFLUENCES

In addition to these shared experiences, Sanger and Stopes were also bonded by common influences. Each woman was involved in the eugenics and neo-Malthusian movements in their countries. These movements were interconnected with one another as well as influenced by one another. These common influences, whether it was mutual acquaintances or shared organizational philosophies, adhered to a unified theme: birth control was needed to control certain segments of the population.

The eugenics movement in the United States was directly related to the birth control movement. Nineteenth century eugenicists believed that mothers were “natural” eugenicists who would desire to reduce births because of bad heredity or social situation. Havelock Ellis, a popular British writer and eugenicist, introduced Sanger to the theory of eugenics. In her early writing, Sanger emphasized the need for contraceptives to control segments of the population. “Birth control is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, or preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives.” In The Pivot of Civilization (1922), she argued that birth control was necessary to alleviate the pain of mothering to a sickly or feeble child. She stated that, “We [eugenicists] do not object to feeble mindedness simply because it leads to immorality and criminality; nor

38 Sanger, Woman and the New Race, 229.
can we approve of it when it expresses itself in docility, submissiveness and obedience. We object because both are burdens and dangers to the intelligence of the community."39 She concluded by stressing the importance of birth control education as a means to relieve society of its social ills, not as a tool to control the lower classes.40

Sanger's position on the eugenics movement is confusing. Sanger referred to herself as a eugenicist in The Pivot of Civilization yet separates herself from the movement in other writing. Sanger's biographer Ellen Chesler argues that Sanger aligned herself with eugenicists in their belief that the unfit should be "weeded out" yet disagreed with their philosophy of promoting fertility among the fit. Chesler defends Sanger for being "idealistic" in her conviction that a voluntary policy of eugenics to control births would bring true social change.41 Biographer David Kennedy was severe of Sanger's eugenic beliefs. In Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger, Kennedy argues that Sanger included immigrants in her definition of "unfit" and supported eugenicists who called for the control of "Negro stock".42 Sanger's stance on eugenics probably fell somewhere in the middle of both arguments. She advocated the control of breeding among the poor and mentally disabled, yet attacked eugenicists who called for legislation that would force sterilization.

40 Chesler, Woman of Valor, 196.
41 Ibid., 195.
among certain segments of the population. She strongly believed that the eugenic idea of boosting the fertility of the healthy was wrong, arguing "Eugenicist[s] believe that a woman should bear as many healthy children as possible as a duty to the state. We hold that the world is already overpopulated. Eugenicists imply or insist that a woman's first duty is to the state; we contend that her duty to herself is her first duty to the state."43 Sanger, while advocating the "sterilization of the feeble-minded, the insane and the syphiletic," simultaneously disdained the notion of forced population control. "Only upon a free, self-determining motherhood," she argued, "can rest any unshakable structure of racial betterment."44

The eugenics movement was stronger and more class based in Great Britain. Started by scientist Francis Galton in the mid-nineteenth century, eugenics would come to mean "good-in-stock." England sponsored the first Eugenics Society of which Marie Stopes became a lifelong member. She bequeathed her clinic to the society upon her death in 1958. She first joined the eugenics movement in 1912, being concerned with the proliferation of the lower classes. Stopes claimed that her interest in eugenics began as a child after meeting with Sir Francis Galton, a friend of her biologist father.45 She wrote of the overpopulation of the lower classes and its burden on the wealthy:

44 Ibid., 12.
45 Briant, Passionate Paradox, 31.
the poor "recklessly bring forth from an inferior stock individuals who are not self supporting, the middle and superior artisan classes have, without perceiving it, come almost to take the position of that ancient slave population."46 Class was the basis for her eugenicist thought and one of the motivations for starting birth control clinics.

Both women became involved with the neo-Malthusian movements in their own countries as well as in other countries. Neo-Malthusianism was a radical version of Thomas Malthus' theories on population. In 1798 Malthus, a British economist and clergymen, published tracts connecting unrestricted population growth with diminishing food supplies. Neo-Malthusians used Malthus' theories in justifying their belief that population could and should be controlled and that this control would lead to the perfect society. Thus, it was natural for Sanger and Stopes to be attracted to their rhetoric, since it they were concerned with the overpopulation of the poor.

Margaret Sanger had a close connection to the Neo-Malthusian movements on both sides of the Atlantic. Because of the Comstock law in the United States that prohibited birth control information to be distributed, Sanger would look to her French and British counterparts for help. She first obtained information on contraceptives while visiting France in 1914. It was in Paris where she would meet with French neo-Malthusians and syndicalists to gather birth control information. At the end of her trip she concluded, "In France the

word ‘proletariat’ was interpreted as meaning ‘producer of children.’ The right to knowledge of contraceptive technique was almost a national right. 47

“The neo-Malthusian movement in Great Britain,” Sanger wrote in Pivot of Civilization, “with its history of undaunted bravery, came to our support, and I had the comfort of knowing that the finest minds in England did not hesitate a moment in the expression of their sympathy and support. The connection Sanger had with European neo-Malthusians is self-evident. Her closest liaisons in Great Britain were prominent neo-Malthusians Havelock Ellis and George Drysdale. 48 During her exile from the United States after the publication of Woman Rebel, Sanger traveled to England several times and met with prominent neo-Malthusians, including Stopes.

Marie Stopes’s involvement with the neo-Malthusian League was tumultuous. Stopes became a member of the League in 1917, yet soon split with the Drysdales over their intended plans to fund a London clinic headed by Sanger. She agreed with the League’s advocacy of birth control, yet said it was “handicapped by its ‘Malthusian’ economics, the advocacy of this society was very partial and voiced the views of but a small section of the public.” 49 Despite these complaints, she adopted the neo-Malthusian ideology of birth control to control population and credits Sanger and other neo-Malthusians as

47 Sanger, My Fight For Birth Control, 72.
48 Gordon, Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right, 216.
having influence on her thought. She first became interested in contraceptive techniques after attending a neo-Malthusian sponsored lecture given by Sanger in London. The two women would meet and aid each other in their early crusade for new birth control technology.\textsuperscript{50} Although Stopes would split publicly from Sanger and the League, their influence on her was evident in her writing and speeches.

Despite personal differences that developed later in their lives, Sanger and Stopes still recognized the valuable impact each had made on the birth control movements in their countries. Where Sanger privately denounced Stopes's arrogance in letters to her British friends, she publicly praised Stopes' work in her writing. She complimented Stopes in her autobiography in 1959, writing "for over forty years...brave women fought valiantly and consistently to inculcate the idea of family limitation into the minds of a generation of English people. It needed only a new voice, articulate and clear as Dr. Stopes' voice certainly was, to gain momentum."\textsuperscript{51} Stopes is not as generous in her writing. She is critical of Sanger's tactics her books \textit{Contraception} (1926) and \textit{Mother England}. However, when Sanger was put on trial for violating the Comstock laws in New York, Stopes and her husband were on hand for the trial and wrote letters of support to the magistrate. The complex nature of their


\textsuperscript{51}Sanger, \textit{My Fight for Birth Control}, 105.
relationship makes it difficult to specify whether or not the two women liked one another. However, it is evident that they respected the other's dedication to the cause.

**SHARED PHILOSOPHIES**

The relationships the women had with family members and acquaintances plus the influences on their lives also contributed to a shared philosophy on sex and marriage. Both women stressed the importance of reproductive autonomy for women as a means to achieve sexual fulfillment and equality within a relationship. Regardless of what each woman would call it, the message was the same – family limitation led to more fulfilling and equal marriages.

Margaret Sanger was a strong promoter of sex as a tool of both pleasure for a woman and as an equalizer within a marriage. On her trips to England, she came under the influence of Ellis, who stressed the beauty of human sexuality and the need for free sexual expression. She adopted the ideology of “free love” that helped shape Greenwich Village in the 1920's. Sanger defined her ideas as “reproductive self-determinism”. Linda Gordon stated that Sanger “turned birth control into a free speech as well as a sexual liberation issue.”52 She believed that using birth control could release the “feminine spirit” and provide the “key to the temple of liberty”. Only by taking

control of their reproductive rights could women achieve equality within their marriage. "Even as birth control is the means by which woman obtains basic freedoms, so it is the means by which she must and will uproot the evil she has wrought through her submission."\textsuperscript{53} Reproductive self-determinism was the key to sexually emancipating women.

Marie Stopes started her quest for "constructive birth control" by first advocating the need for sexual pleasure within marriage. Her first book, \textit{Married Love} published in 1918, was an explosive best seller that endorsed the need of women to enjoy sex. What made her message so compelling was this emphasis on sexual fulfillment, something that was missing in her own first marriage and the motivation behind writing the book. Tied in to this theme was her ignorance of sex and contraceptive techniques, something she saw as being necessary to overcome if a young married couple was to succeed.\textsuperscript{54}

The acknowledgement of a woman's sexual needs within a marriage would lead to more equal relationships and a better quality of life if they spaced the birth of their children. Constructive birth control enabled women to have richer and more satisfying relationships.

It is evident that Sanger and Stopes had overlapping experiences, backgrounds and philosophies on the need for birth control. However, their methods and goals within their movements were vastly different. These

\textsuperscript{53} Margaret Sanger, \textit{The New Motherhood} (New York: Elmsford Reprint Company, 1922), 11.
\textsuperscript{54} Geppert, "Divine Sex, Happy Marriage, Regenerated Nation", 403.
methods and goals did not reflect their experiences in life. Instead, they were a direct reflection of the society in which they lived.

POLITICS:

These differences are gauged by their involvement in legislative politics, the organizations and clinics they established, and the audiences they tried to reach. The extent to which each woman engaged in politics depended on their society's acceptance of birth control methods and availability of contraceptive devices. The organizations they established and whether or not they created clinics reflected the need and allowance for each within their culture. Finally, each woman tailored her writing and organizations to the audience she was trying to reach. Each employed different methods for the purpose of achieving a variety of goals based on their society's acceptance of birth control.

The extent to which each woman would engage in politics depended on their society's acceptance of birth control and contraceptive devices. In England, contraception and literature on birth control was legal to distribute. Thus, Stopes' engagement in the political arena was less tangible than Sanger's, who was fighting to get laws passed in order to legalize in the United States what was already accessible in Europe.

Margaret Sanger was radical in thought as well as action in connection with abolishing the laws that made contraception illegal in the United States.
Passed in 1873, the Comstock Law forbid any obscene material to be sent through the mail. Broadly construed, the law was strictly enforced, deeming inappropriate a wide variety of materials, including physiological information on human genitalia. Section 211 of the law read:

Everything obscene, lewd, or lascivious, and every filthy book, pamphlet, picture, paper, letter, print, or other publication of an indecent character, and every article or thing designed, adapted, or intended for preventing contraception...is hereby declared to be non-mailable and shall not be conveyed in the mail or delivered from any post office or by any letter carrier. Who ever shall knowingly deposit or cause it to be deposited for mail or delivery...shall be fined not more than five thousand dollars, or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

Sanger organized her early movement for birth control around challenging the Comstock Law through civil disobedience. In a letter written to Emma Goldman describing charges brought against her for publishing Woman Rebel, Sanger wrote, “We who have lost faith in the Justice of the Courts of Law are bound to work out a different method to achieve our purposes than those who still fall into the trap of its ponderous machinery.” Sanger openly acknowledged that she fully intended to break laws to gain support in changing policy towards contraception.

Marie Stopes opens chapter twelve of her book, Contraception, by stating “in Great Britain there is not and never has been any law against

55 Gordon, Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right, 212.
56 Taken from the text of the actual Comstock Law of 1873 printed in Stopes’s Contraception, 352-353.
57 Margaret Sanger to Emma Goldman, April 1915, MS SS microfilm, reel S01. The letter was printed in Goldman’s publication “Mother Earth” vol. 10, #2(April 1915).
contraception or the publication and distribution of contraceptive knowledge.\textsuperscript{58} Although Obscenity Laws existed in England throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contraception did not violate any aspect of the laws. In 1877, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were prosecuted for publishing a pamphlet, \textit{the Fruits of Philosophy}, which was deemed obscene. They were sentenced to six months imprisonment and a fine, however they would republish the pamphlet upon winning an appeal from the courts. The Bradlaugh-Besant case of 1877 is the only modern challenge to British law.\textsuperscript{59} Stopes cites two groups who challenged the legality of contraception in England, Catholics and a small faction of doctors. She condemns the Catholic Church for being "clerical fanatics who desire to shackle racial knowledge" and criticizes doctors for trying to control all knowledge of contraception given to patients. Regardless of these threats, birth control in Great Britain was considered, as one Medical Officer of Health put it, "as being for the National good."\textsuperscript{60}

Marie Stopes was less militant in thought and action in her campaign for birth control. The legality of birth control in England made contraceptives accessible among British society. The Ministry of Health conducted the

\textsuperscript{58} Stopes, \textit{Contraception}, 336.
\textsuperscript{59} Rose, \textit{Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution}, 158.
\textsuperscript{60} Stopes, \textit{Contraception}, 344. Stopes cites this quote from Dr. Meredith Young, as quoted in the Chester Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year 1921.
distribution of information and contraceptive devices at local maternity centers. When the legality of this practice was challenged in Parliament in 1923, British politicians chose to let it continue. After the First World War, there was a major population decrease in England yet no policy to ban contraceptives was passed. In a report issued by the National Birth Rate Commission in 1920, the government-funded commission encouraged the voluntary control of conception, claiming "it is one instance of the acquisition by civilized man of an increased power to control his environment. The urgent necessity is, therefore, not to condemn, without discrimination, the exercises of this newly acquired power of control, but to guide it into channels which shall lead to race regeneration instead of race decay." It was in this atmosphere of birth control tolerance that Marie Stopes would launch a conservative effort to establish private clinics to distribute materials and advice to mothers.

Where Sanger fought for the legality of contraceptive distribution, Stopes fought for its legitimacy. Although the practice was legal, it was still considered "immoral," and many women needed to "fight with [their] own conscience before using a preventative." Stopes believed her greatest foe towards making contraception a legitimate practice was the Roman Catholic

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62 *Problems of Population and Parenting*, xlv. This passage was written in the report's introduction, British Library microfilm, reel 9.
63 Peel, *Marie Stopes, Eugenics and the English Birth Control Movement*, 88. These excerpts are taken from the essay, "Marie Stopes and the Mothers' Clinics" by Deborah Cohen. Cohen cites comments written by women in letters published by Margaret Davies.
Church. She condemned Catholics who "force a Protestant Government in a Protestant country, while in the act of declaring birth control not to be a subject for interference, to exercise that actual interference day by day against the interest of the race."64 Her harshest words are found in *Wise Parenthood* (1925) where she asks, "Does divine law condemn scientific methods of controlling contraception?"65 Stopes argued that it did and that "the common folk who disobey and disregard [the] advice of the Churches, wrong they are in their methods, are right in their deep instinct to obey God's ordinance that the twain shall be one flesh."66 A rebellion against Catholic policy was acceptable to Stopes, who saw the Churches ignorance of the scientific justification of birth control harmful and antiquated.

Although Stopes was often critical of government policy, she refrained from breaking the law to initiate change. Stopes believed that as long as reformers remained tasteful in their distribution of birth control material and criticized policy through legal channels, they had nothing to fear from the law. When the Ministry of Health decided to control what information doctors could distribute, she condemned the interference. She quickly explained that the practice "is not sanctioned by any law, but is pure *ipse dixit*, not included in any act of Parliament and against the tendency of the Health Acts."67 When

66 Ibid., 15-16.
she called the Minister of Health a “despot”, she was careful to remain within her political rights. Although she was critical of the laws that make abortion a crime, she was quick to add, “You may be certain that those who have so frankly asked our C.D.C. nurses for abortions have not followed our advice and refrained from that attempt...”

Stopes also sought out respectable backers for her movement to give it legitimacy. She disassociated herself from radical organizations, instead seeking the support of conservative groups. She aligned herself with renowned politicians such as David Lloyd George and reputable doctors who aided her cause. She praises Mary Ware Dennett and the Voluntary Parenthood League in the United States which “had a programme for the foundation of properly staffed clinics directing the necessary Federal Law change was made.” She makes the important point that “American reformers have therefore been diverted into politics in the States, in order to get the necessary legislation through Congress.” A great deal of Stopes’ disgust was aimed at Sanger, who she thought was grandstanding to make her point. Stopes strove to maintain an air of respectability in her struggle to popularize birth control techniques.

PUBLICATIONS

68 Ibid., 187.
69 Stopes, Contraception, 322.
70 Ibid.
Sanger's first attempt at challenging the law was through her writing. In 1915, she wrote *Woman Rebel* which included articles on feminism, socialism, and neo-Malthusian doctrine. Although the pamphlet didn’t contain contraceptive information, it was still deemed "indecent" by the New York postmaster for its reference to reproduction. “But the fight was on,” Sanger would write in her autobiography, “and all classes of people threw themselves into it: laborers, radicals, liberals, anarchists, semi-revolutionaries, industrialists, and hundreds of others who were neither in nor out of the so-called radical movement…They challenged, defied me to publish them in the name of free speech.” Sanger was charged with violating New York obscenity laws for distributing the pamphlet among the working poor. She fled the country before her trial and became something of a celebrity among her British supporters.

Her next pamphlet, *Family Limitation* (1915) strictly contained birth control information and methods. Written while she was awaiting trial for *Woman Rebel*, the pamphlet was distributed among working class neighborhoods in New York by Industrial Workers of the World members. While Sanger was able to avoid prosecution in France, her husband William did not escape arrest. William wrote Sanger on January 21, 1915 that a man claiming to be a birth control advocate came to his studio looking for

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contraceptive information. William, not clear on who the man was and "being rather sleepy and in my pajamas and he further stating that it was for his own use personally" gave the man a copy of Family Limitation "finally to get rid of him." A few days later, the man returned accompanied with a "gray-haired, side whiskered, six foot ass." The man turned out to be Anthony Comstock who promptly arrested William for violating obscenity laws. When William asked Comstock what he would do to the author of a pamphlet like Family Limitation, Comstock replied, "He would recommend that such a party be given the limit, five years at hard labor." In a statement read at his trial, William Sanger vowed "I admit that I broke the law, and yet I claim that in every real sense, it is the law, and not I, that is on trial here today." William was convicted and served thirty days "as a guest of the city."

Margaret Sanger would return to the United States and eventually be arrested and placed in jail for her actions as an advocate for birth control. Sanger, like her husband, publicly advocated the violation of New York law. Letters of support for Sanger poured in from Europe and all parts of the United States. Even Marie Stopes, who rejected civil disobedience as a means of change, wrote a letter of support. Stopes encouraged Sanger to "keep joyous,

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73 William Sanger to Margaret Sanger, January 21, 1915, MS SS microfilm S01.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Statement made by William Sanger on trial in the Court of Common Session, New York City, September 10, 1915, MS SS microfilm S01.
77 William Sanger to Margaret Sanger from what he called "the dormitory", September 12, 1915, MS SS microfilm S01.
for, my dear, whatever happens now, tens of thousands of American women
will bless you later." Even when the movement gained mainstream
respectability after the First World War, Sanger maintained her radical edge.

Sanger’s publication, The Birth Control Review, directly challenged the
Comstock law and continued to advocate reproductive freedom for twenty-two
years. Published between February 1917 and January 1940, the contents of
the journal remained true to Sanger’s goal of dispensing information on birth
control in spite of the oppressive publishing laws in the United States.

Opponents and birth control advocates alike criticized the publication for being
too radical. For example, British doctor C.W. Saleeby said the publication was
“not concerned with the supposed ‘Law of Malthus’ like the ‘Malthusian’ [in
England] – but is violently feminist – or, rather, anti-masculine – and
concerned with the wrongs and rights of married women as against their
husbands.” Despite such criticism, Sanger maintained that the focus of the
articles was to challenge laws and views that kept women from safe and
effective birth control.

The first year of the Review revolved around Sanger’s attempt to
challenge the Comstock law through civil disobedience. Her flagship

78 Marie Stopes to Margaret Sanger, September 20, 1915, MS SS microfilm, S01.
79 Problems of Population and Parenthood: Being the Second Report and the Chief Evidence Taken by the National Birth Rate Commission 1918-1920 (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1920), 407. This particular passage was spoken at a Commission meeting on November 29, 1919. The Commission report is found on microfilm containing British Birth Control Material at the British Library of Political and Economic Sciences, reel #9. This source will hereinafter be referred to as British Library microfilm, reel 9.
editorial, entitled "Shall We Break This Law," explained her crusade and set
the tone of rebellion for following issues. In the article, Sanger argued that "no
law is too sacred to break" and compared her efforts to those of Moses, Jesus,
Joan of Arc, and George Washington.\textsuperscript{80} She stated that the will of the people
dictate law and that if a law is unjust, people have a duty to refute it.
Furthermore, Sanger maintained that the laws against birth control are an
"absolute and inexorable" violation of the rights of citizens. She concluded by
stating:

Woman has always been the chief sufferer under this merciless
machinery of the statutory law... Her protests have been in vain.
Her supplications have fallen on the deaf ear of the administrator
of law. Her petitions have lain unheeded under the cold eye of
the legislator, caught in the network and quagmire of politics.
Against the State, against the Church, against the silence of the
medical profession, against the whole machinery of dead
institutions of the past, the woman of today arises. She no
longer pleads. She no longer implores. She no longer petitions.
She is here to assert herself, to take back those rights which were
formerly hers and hers alone. If she is must break the law to
establish her right to voluntary motherhood, \textit{then the law shall
be broken}.\textsuperscript{81}

Although the Comstock law would eventually be overturned, the radical nature
of \textit{The Birth Control Review} remained intact.

The first three years of the Review focused on a wide array of causes,
including political, eugenic, and socialist concerns. The majority of the articles

\textsuperscript{80} Margaret Sanger, "Shall We Break This Law," \textit{The Birth Control Review} vol. 1, no. 1
(February 1917): 4.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
addressed laws and court cases that stood in violation of those laws. Several 1918 issues addressed the arrest and court case of Kitty Marion, an English actress and suffragette working on Broadway. Marion dispensed birth control information in theaters, and was arrested and jailed for thirty days. The Review sponsored a fundraising event to raise bail money and organized men and women to take her place on Broadway to distribute pamphlets. In an article entitled “Judges with Small Families Jail Kitty Marion,” it is stated, “Kitty Marion has no apology to make for her violation of a Dark Age statute. Neither have we to make one for her.”82 Thirteen articles between 1917 and 1919 addressed socialist issues, with two articles penned by Socialist party leader Eugene V. Debs. In the May 1918 issue, Debs wrote, “O, for a million woman rebels to catch the clarion cry of Margaret Sanger and proclaim the glad tidings of woman’s coming freedom throughout the world...She [woman], the mother of man, shall be sovereign ruler of the world. She shall have sole custody of her own body...”83 Most of the articles addressing socialist concerns focused on the need for workers to stop producing for a capitalist society. Other articles featured thoughts on eugenics and neo-Malthusianism, with an ongoing section entitled “The Malthusian Doctrine Today” written by renowned British neo-Malthusian C.V. Drysdale. Absent from the Review

82 “Judges with Small Families Jail Kitty Marion,” The Birth Control Review II, no. 10 (November 1918): 5. Most of the articles in the Review have no bylines for authors.
during all the years of its publication was any information on how to limit pregnancy. The purpose of The Birth Control Review was well defined – to criticize political policy and challenge critics who viewed birth control and contraception immoral in American society.

Sanger spearheaded the Review for the first half of its publication, and while she was editor it never lost its radical edge. With the exception of a brief hiatus from August 1919 to February 1921 while in England, Sanger acted as Editor-in-chief until February 1929. That February, she relinquished control of the American Birth Control League that sponsored the publication to focus her efforts on a new organization, the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control. The NCFLBC was dedicated to amending federal law opposing birth control. The final issue under her editorial leadership was dedicated to her mentor, Havelock Ellis, in commemoration of his seventieth birthday. She wrote in her final editorial, "This is the work that lies before the league. To educate people as to what birth control means for the family, for the nation, for the world at large; to create a demand for birth control clinics and assist in establishing them; and to clear the field from obstructive laws and ignorant opposition."84 The January 1937 issue would open with an article reporting on the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals decision to allow medical doctors to distribute contraceptive devices in clinics. The article

84 Margaret Sanger, The Birth Control Review xviii, no. 2 (February 1929): 38. This article had no specific title.
proclaimed, "The dead hand of Anthony Comstock is powerless today to keep birth control information from any married woman whose physician feels that she needs it for the purpose of saving life or promoting well being... The decision stands as a land mark in birth control history." The Review continued to be published throughout the 1930's, yet the articles lost their radical edge after Sanger's departure.

Ironically, one of the few issues of The Birth Control Review to be censored was one discussing Stopes' book Married Love. The August 1918 issue included a review of the book by Bianca Van Bueren. Four paragraphs long, the review gave a broad account of the contents of the book, claiming what made the book enticing were "Dr. Stopes' discoveries in connection with the sex-life of women. The real beginning of a scientific study of woman is an encouraging sign that women will no longer acquiesce in the old man-made dogma that woman is the passive instrument of man's pleasure." Later in the same issue, it is reported that copies of Married Love were suppressed by the U.S. Post Office for being obscene. The article outlined that "the book was brought out in London a few months ago and received the most enthusiastic comment from some of the most conservative sources. It has not been suppressed in England, why in America?"

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85 "Court Upholds Clinic," The Birth Control Review IV, no. 5 (January 1937): 3.
87 Ibid., 8.
Three issues later in November 1918, an article entitled, "How About This, Mr. Burleson," reported that the Post Office refused to mail the August 1918 because of its review of Stopes' book. Claiming, "It would seem that so far as minor officials of the Post-Office Department are concerned, it makes less difference what is said than who says it," the article criticized the censorship and raised the issue:

A curious feature of the case is that Dr. Stopes cannot receive a copy of her own book through the international mails because of the ban upon it by the United States authorities. In order to mail "Married Love" to its English author, one must board a train, ride to the Canadian border and drop the parcel into the first Canadian mailbox one comes to. Unless someone does just that, Dr. Stopes, who has written for a copy of the American edition of her book, must go without it. Isn't about time that Mr. Burleson and his aides get together on these matters? And isn't it time that the two great sections of Anglo-Saxon civilization, the United States and the British Empire agree also? We have no hesitancy in stating our own position. Between the postal practices of the two, we much prefer those of the Empire. 88

While Stopes' book flourished in Great Britain, Sanger's publication fought for the right to publish a four-paragraph review. Marie Stopes spoke of the book's banning in America at the Queen's Hall Lecture on May 31, 1921, arguing that "the interesting thing about America is that she is a country of such extraordinary contrasts. She both leads in advanced ideas and dallies behind

88 Ibid.
in the Dark Ages." This controversy is indicative of the different political climates in the two countries.

In 1923, Married Love and Family Limitation both met with resistance on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Stopes' book was denied publication for violating the obscenity clause in the Comstock law. In England, Sanger's pamphlet was attacked, yet for different reasons. The January 11th issue of the London Times reported that two birth control advocates, Guy and Rose Aldred, had been arrested for selling copies of Family Limitation. Birth control advocates thought the question that arose in British court was not whether the book was obscene, but rather the manner in which it had been published and distributed. Harold Cox, a friend of Sanger's, argued in defense of the pamphlet's contents and Sanger's character. Marie Stopes and her husband attended the hearings yet did not take part in the proceedings. Cox wrote Sanger that he was "making first inquiries among my political friends as to try and find out what it was in back of this police attack on your book. Marie Stopes' books... are sold openly." Cox speculated it was not an attack on the pamphlet, instead the police were

89 Quoted from a speech published in The Queen's Hall Meeting on Constructive Birth Control: Speeches and impressions (G.P. Putnams Sons, Ltd., 1921), 27. This publication was found on the British Library Microfilm, reel #9.
90 Clip of the London Times, January 11, 1923, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
91 Harold Cox to Margaret Sanger, January 12, 1923, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
92 Ibid.
targeting the Aldred's because they were "more or less revolutionary communists." Cox later reports that he had been assured that the courts were less concerned with the pamphlets content as they were over the vendor's "indiscriminant distribution" of the material under British law. Cox proved to be wrong. *Family Limitation* was eventually banned from circulation because a passage discussing the sexual feelings of women was placed too close to an illustration depicting the insertion of a diaphragm. Both the text and the illustration were acceptable under British law, however, the placing of the two in close proximity was deemed indecent.

**CLINICS**

The clinics the women established also varied in scope and goal. Both Sanger and Stopes moved to establish clinics to dispense contraceptive information and devices. However, Sanger's clinic was met with resistance while the government praised Stopes's clinic.

Depending on the political environment in which they lived, each woman would approach the issue of dispensing contraceptives differently. Sanger's attempt to open her first clinic in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn in 1916, as she described "an event of social significance in the lives of American womanhood," was met with immediate resistance. It was shut

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93 Ibid.
94 Harold Cox to Margaret Sanger, January 26, 1923, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
95 Chesler, *Woman of Valor*, 250.
down within a month with Sanger arrested. Sanger admitted that she wanted to make the closing of the clinic a media spectacle in order to bring the issue of birth control to the forefront of debate. "The crusade was actually under way! It is no exaggeration to call this period of the birth control movement the most stirring period up to that time, perhaps the most stirring of all times, for it was the only period during which we had experienced jail terms, hunger strikes, and intervention by the Chief Executive of the state." After a brief stay in jail, Sanger aligned herself with the medical profession to gain credibility for her clinic, allowing doctors to give out contraceptives which was legal under the law. Although Sanger tended to be rebellious in her tactics, she was politically savvy when it came to doctors. She realized she needed licensed physicians in order to gain respectability and legitimacy for her clinics. Sanger radically attacked the law against private clinics and challenged the public to face the issue of birth control yet worked within the system to establish recognized clinics.

Sanger's choice of Brooklyn, New York as the cite of her first clinic was a politically strategic move. New York law forbids the distribution of contraceptive information by anyone with the exception of physicians in the case of disease. Known as Section 1142, Sanger "inquired about the section, and was told by two attorneys and several physicians that this clause was an exception to 1142 referring only to venereal disease. But anyway, as I was

97 Ibid., 158-159.
not a physician, it could not protect me. Dare I risk it?" She established the clinic with the direct intention of violating the laws of New York. The clinic was opened without the assistance of a doctor. The only workers in the clinic were Sanger, her sister Ethel Byrne and nurse Fania Mindell. Interestingly, it was rumored that the police were initially going to raid the clinic believing they were performing abortions, a practice Sanger did not support. The clinic was raided and Sanger, "not surprised at being arrested," reopened the clinic as soon as she was released from jail. Arrested a second time for creating a "public nuisance," she stood trial a few weeks later. According to Sanger, the judge in the case asked, "'All we are concerned about is this statute, and as long as it remains the law will this woman promise here and now unqualifiedly to respect it and obey it? Now, is it yes or no? What is your answer, Mrs. Sanger?' 'I cannot respect that law as it stands today,' I answered. Then I was sentenced." Sanger would spend thirty days in jail and upon her release she immediately sought to appeal her case and won. Sanger recalls in her autobiography:

The Brownsville clinic had been opened as a test and challenge to the New York State law, Section 1145. The court had refused to allow me to pay a fine pending my appeal. I had refused to promise to give up, to cease my activities: I had refused to promise not to inform women who wanted birth control facts. I had accepted the court's challenge. I accepted the prison sentence.

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98 Sanger, My Fight for Birth Control, 152.
99 Ibid., 159.
100 Ibid., 175.
101 Ibid., 187.
Marie Stopes opened her first clinic in 1921 and spent a great deal of energy trying to gain the respect of middle class society. Because clinics were legal in England, they met with no resistance by the law. "Some distinguished people at the first," Stopes claimed in her first report on the Mother's Clinic in 1925, "kindly lent their names as Patrons to indicate the deep interest felt in very various quarters in a scheme of such racial movement..."\textsuperscript{102} In contrast to Sanger, Stopes would appeal directly to the Prime Minister for accreditation. Stopes rejected unsolicited endorsements of her clinics by radical groups and "had a horror of being linked to anything salacious or obscene". According to Soloway, "She was equally determined to grace her movement with distinguished patrons whose commendable reputations would redound to the credit of her society."\textsuperscript{103}

Opposite of Sanger, Stopes ardently fought to keep the medical profession from taking over clinics and succeeded in keeping doctors from administering them until 1930. Her dislike of most medical practitioners was widely documented. She wrote, "One of the most noticeable features of nearly all the earlier attending women was their shrinking terror of medical practitioners, and the publicity of the free clinics at the hospitals."\textsuperscript{104} Stopes made it clear to all her patients that she was not a medical doctor, but a Doctor

\textsuperscript{103} Soloway, Birth Control and the Population Question in England, 218.
\textsuperscript{104} Stopes, The First Five Thousand, 26.
of Science. No doubt her distaste for the medical profession was rooted in her own traumatic deliveries. Although she believed that most doctors were ignorant of the medical and social significance of contraception, Stopes was quick to solicit the support of highly respected doctors. The Mother’s Clinic was administered by Stopes and four certified midwives with two female physicians who were considered Honorary Medical Consultants. Stopes dispensed contraceptives and medical advice without the aid of the British medical community. It is ironic that Stopes, who dismissed unconventional tactics, would distance herself from the medical community while the more rebellious Sanger embraced physicians.

The purpose of the Mother’s Clinic was not to challenge laws but to act within the parameters of law. At a Birth Rate Commission meeting held May 12, 1919, Stopes argued for the institution of clinics as an alternative to State welfare programs. She asks at the meeting, “Would you be in favor of clinics giving [birth control] information? I should like it done quite openly – privately, of course, but in the proper official way.” The establishment of clinics served several purposes, all acting within the legal boundaries of law. Stopes claimed that “in addition to the heartfelt impulse directly to help the poor,” there were “three main intellectual ideas which we thought might develop so as to

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105 Ibid., 9.
help all humanity.\textsuperscript{107} The first idea was to challenge the belief that the poor were hostile to the concept of birth control because they feared that the term “birth control” meant sterilization. She reported that the first four years of the clinic’s existence proved this belief wrong and that the working classes were open to birth control. Second, the clinic was to be a means to obtain facts on the “practical aspects” of contraception to be used as ammunition against critics. Finally, Stopes hoped to collect data on the sex lives of women for study. Most important, Stopes wanted to make it clear that the clinics were legal. To insure that staff members performed within the boundaries of the law, they had to sign the following oath:

\begin{quote}
I,..... Of... in the County of.... Solemnly and sincerely declare as follows: 1. So long as I am in any way associated with ’The Mother’s Clinic’ I will not in any circumstances whatever either in my capacity as a Nurse of ’The Mother’s Clinic’ or in any other capacity impart any information or lend any assistance whatever to any person calculated to lead to the destruction in utero of the products of conception. 2. I know that an abortion is unlawful under the statutes of the Realm of England and also that it is physiologically detrimental to the health of the person affected and for these reasons I will not give any assistance or concurrence to the idea in any way.
3. And I make this solemn declaration scientiously believing the same to be true by virtue of the Statutory Declarations Act, 1835.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{107} Stopes, \textit{The First Five Thousand}, 13.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 17.
Stopes made each employee sign the declaration in front of the Commissioner of Oaths. Operating within the letter of the law, The Mother’s Clinic never received any problem from the police.

ORGANIZATIONS

The organizations the two women funded and belonged to were also indicative of the cultures in which they resided. Birth control organizations in the United States were legal yet contraception remained illegal. Thus, Sanger’s various organizations were rebellious in nature. The American Birth Control League and the Clinical Research Bureau were both created within the boundaries of the law, yet the average membership consisted of politically “independent” middle class women concerned with feminist issues.\textsuperscript{109} Both groups would bear the wrath of the medical profession who sought to control the movement. Prominent physicians like Robert Latou Dickinson considered the League “radical” and criticized its “use of propaganda” in gaining birth control rights.\textsuperscript{110} Ironically, it would be Dickinson that Sanger eventually defers to when it became apparent that the only way her clinic could remain open was to place it in the hands of doctors.

The ABCL was founded in 1921 to give a woman greater support in her ability to control childbirth.\textsuperscript{111} Sanger also used the ABCL as a sounding board

\textsuperscript{109} Chesler, Woman of Valor, 224-226.  
\textsuperscript{110} Gordon, Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right, 262.  
for her thoughts on a woman's right to experience sexual pleasure within a marriage. According to the organization's pamphlet, the ABCL "[held] that children should be conceived in love; born of the mother's conscious desire; and only begotten under conditions which render possible the heritage of health." Other goals of the organization included research and education programs, political activism, and state organization for the distribution of birth control information. Sanger would head the ABCL and preside over a National Council that involved men and women from fifteen states. Once the league was solidly established in New York, Sanger branched out to other states in an effort to dispense information and organize birth control efforts. At the second annual meeting of the league, Executive Secretary Anne Kennedy reported that Birth Control League activity had started in eight states, with Sanger speaking at meetings in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Maryland. The ABCL was also instrumental in instituting organizations in Alaska, British Columbia, and Mexico. Kennedy concluded the report by stating, "In summing up the accomplishments of 1923, the outstanding fact is that the first Birth Control Clinic in America has been operated for a year and 900 women treated at that clinic. Two-thirds of those applying had to be refused on the basis of not coming under the New York State law."

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112 This pamphlet, as well as most of Sanger's papers, is kept in the Sophia Smith collection at Smith College, hereinafter referred to as MS-SS. The pamphlet, entitled, "What We Stand For," can be found in box 37, folder 1.
113 MS-SS, box 1, folder 3.
114 Ibid., 2.
The organization would hold its first conference at the Hotel Plaza in New York City November 11-13th, 1921. It started with a series of lectures and ended with a police raid on its final day. The first two days of the conference consisted of a variety of presentations by both academics and medical professionals. Notable eugenicists such as Dr. Abraham Myerson and C.V. Drysdale led discussions on topics such as "The Inheritance of Mental Disease" and "Infanticide, Abortion, and Birth Control, the Three Stages in the limitation of Offspring and Control of Population."\textsuperscript{115} Topics ranged from the psychoanalysis of birth control to the woman's individual need for contraception. The League made sure to include speakers who presented all sides of the birth control argument. There were also special exhibits at the conference entitled "A Pictorial Appeal for the Motherhood of America" and "A Preliminary Exhibit showing Biological, Economic, Sociological Foundations of Birth Control."\textsuperscript{116} The conference was to conclude with a public mass meeting to be held at the Town Hall in New York City.

The conference went smoothly until the evening of November 13\textsuperscript{th}. When Sanger and the featured speaker Harold Cox, editor of the \textit{Edinburgh Review}, arrived at the hall, they found a large crowd surrounded by police. Police were told to keep the speakers and others from entering the building.

\textsuperscript{115} Taken from "The Programme of the First American Birth Control Conference", MS-SS, box 2, folder 1.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
When they opened the doors to let the people already in the hall out, the crowd rushed the doors, pushing Sanger and Cox inside. Cox barely made it to the platform before he was dragged from the stage. 117

Acting on the orders of the Archbishop of the New York Diocese, the policemen told Sanger to disperse the crowds. She refused, and took the stage to the sound, as she recalled, of “such a thundering applause, as if it were the only relief for their angry, indignant, rebellious spirits. The fight was on, and every man and woman in that hall was there beside me to fight to the finish.” 118 She was promptly taken to the forty-seventh Street Police Station and then quickly released thanks to the efforts of her lawyers. Ironically, one of the first people to show up at the police station to testify in her behalf was Mary Ware Dennett. Despite differences in philosophy, Dennett supported Sanger, believing “when it comes to a question of free speech all differences as to policy and procedure must be forgotten.” 119 Secretary to the Archbishop, Monsignor Joseph P. Dineen, stated afterward, “Decent and clean-minded people would not discuss a subject such as birth control in public.” 120

More noticeable than who attended the conference was who was missing from the event’s roster. Sanger had no intention of sharing the stage with anyone she was vying with for public attention. Anne Kennedy, secretary

117 Kennedy, Birth Control in America, 95.
118 Sanger, My Fight for Birth Control, 215-216.
119 Mary Ware Dennett to Margaret Sanger, November 15, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
120 Kennedy, Birth Control in America, 96.
of the ABCL, drafted a letter to Marie Stopes informing her of the conference and asking her to participate. Sanger was in England at the time Kennedy sent the letter yet never personally asked Stopes to attend. In a letter Sanger penned, "I do not intend to ask her."\textsuperscript{121} Stopes responds to the letter by writing Kennedy that she had seen Sanger twice, yet Sanger never mentioned the conference. In light of these events, Stopes explained, she declined attending.\textsuperscript{122}

Another noticeable absence from the conference was Mary Ware Dennett of the Voluntary Parenthood League. Dennett drafted a letter to the ABCL upon finding out they were holding a conference, explaining she found it a "rather surprising inadvertence" that her organization was not invited to participate.\textsuperscript{123} Dennett wrote a scathing letter to Sanger claiming that the Voluntary Parenthood League was better equipped financially to conduct the conference and cited a list of "requests" for their attendance. Sanger, obviously annoyed at Dennett's forwardness, penned comments such as "the nerve" and "joke" in the margin of the letter. At one point, Dennett refers to the ABCL as "the informal group which is attached to Mrs. Sanger," to which Sanger comments "cute."\textsuperscript{124} Dennett, believing that a combined effort between the two organizations could further the cause, asked Sanger to

\textsuperscript{121} Anne Kennedy to Marie Stopes, July 19, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{122} Marie Stopes to Anne Kennedy, August 12, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{123} Mary Ware Dennett to the Board of Directors of the Birth Control Review, July 25, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
refrain from forming the American Birth Control League and instead join forces with her.\textsuperscript{125} Sanger responded by stating that it had taken Dennett "all this time to come to accept the idea I started seven years ago...I do not think an amalgamation of interests would really succeed so well."\textsuperscript{126}

Sanger made clear the reasons why she refrained from merging with the Voluntary Parenthood League; she felt their tactics were inadequate in getting laws changed. "Yes, legislation and organization can be minor matters and very inadequate," she wrote to Dennett, "unless agitation and ideals are advanced sufficiently to make them fruitful."\textsuperscript{127} In turn, Dennett drafted an eight-page letter entitled "Special Message to the Council, Contributors and Friends of the Voluntary Parenthood League" in which she attempted to answer the question of why there were two separate organizations fighting for the same cause. She claims the reasons were twofold, differences in platform and problems between she and Sanger that she referred to as "significant points in recent history."\textsuperscript{128} Dennett is unmerciful in her criticism of Sanger, considering her egotistical and lambasting her treatment of Stopes. Sanger later referred to this letter as "an eight page document of trash... [which] is beneath the dignity of a reply."\textsuperscript{129} The end result was that Dennett and the

\textsuperscript{125} Mary Ware Dennett to Margaret Sanger, July 29, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{126} Margaret Sanger to Mary Ware Dennett, July, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Mary Ware Dennett in a Statement to Friends, November 18, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
\textsuperscript{129} Margaret Sanger to Isaac Blanchard, January 18, 1922, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
Voluntary Parenthood League held a separate conference on October 27, 1921, and had Marie Stopes as their keynote speaker.

It was during this period that Sanger also made clear her feelings towards Stopes' efforts in the British birth control movement. Sanger wrote various criticisms of Stopes in a letter to Mary Ware Dennett. The letter was a response to Dennett's disapproval of Sanger's behavior towards the British birth controller during her visit in October 1921. Claiming that Stopes' "intense egotism, [and] her ridiculous conceit have rendered her obnoxious in England," Sanger explained that Stopes made little to no sacrifices towards the cause of birth control.130 Sanger criticized Stopes' choice of the rubber-cap pessary as the primary means of contraceptive control and accused her of giving false information in Married Love. She called Stopes' eugenic rhetoric nothing more than "bourgeois tricks". Her most revealing criticism pertained to Stopes' conservative efforts in the British movement. Sanger stated, "I might also add that it has required very little courage for Dr. Stopes to join the birth control movement because she joined it at the tail-end, when the movement had become well established in every civilized country, and even after it had acquired a stamp of respectability."131 Sanger's final comment, "a stamp of respectability," was very indicative of the various means by which the two women achieved their goals.

130 Margaret Sanger to Mary Ware Dennett, December 16, 1921, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.
131 Ibid.
Although Sanger's organizations were legal, they retained a radical spirit because of the oppressive laws they were addressing. Both the American Birth Control League and Sanger's later organization, the Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau, catered to respectable patrons for support. The ABCL directors and Council were a veritable who's who among America's wealthy elite. The BCCRB acted within the confines of the Comstock Law, which allowed doctors to distribute contraception "for the prevention of disease."\(^{132}\)

However, neither organization was able to escape controversy. According to Planned Parenthood sources, Dr. Hannah Stone who took control of the BCCRB after the death of her husband, "Suffered professional ostracism and public humiliation for her association with Sanger and with birth control. She lost her connection with Lying-In Hospital and for years was denied membership in the New York Medical Society."\(^{133}\) The American Birth Control League continued its radical agenda even after Sanger left the organization in 1927. New President, Mrs. F. Robertson Jones, sent a letter nationwide to possible supporters in 1929 that read:

Anthony Comstock wanted to keep all of us in the dark about sex, so he got birth control put into the list of obscene things that are prohibited by law. Many of your constituents think that birth control does not belong in these lists, because it is a good thing — good for the family, the

\(^{132}\) A Traditional of Choice, 17.
\(^{133}\) Ibid., 17.
community, and the country. They want birth control taken out of the obscenity laws. What do you think about this?  

Almost a decade after Sanger's first organization would meet, birth control was still considered an immoral topic.

Because of the tolerant attitude of the British government and society towards birth control, Marie Stopes would form a conservative organization in the July of 1921 to promote her ideas. The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress served as a moderate alternative to the more liberal Neo-Mathusian League. Stopes said of the organization, "The time was ripe, indeed over-ripe, for a consideration of the essential medical and physiological factors of contraception apart from a controversial cult of economics and party politics." The organization was arranged at the time of the Queen's Hall meeting and Stopes solicited members in the program's pamphlet. "From many quarters," the advertisement read, "a desire has been expressed that a society should be formed to deal not only with the practical work of expressing this ideal and object and of furthering its consummation, but also to discuss and contribute further knowledge..."

The Society, often referred to as the CBC, stated the following as its objectives in its Constitution:

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134 Taken from a letter sent on November 1, 1929. MS-SS, box 2, folder 2.
136 Taken from the program of the Queen's Hall pamphlet, found on the British Library Microfilm, reel #9.
The objects of the Society are (a) to bring home to all the fundamental nature of the reforms involved in conscious and constructive control of contraception and the illumination of sex life as a basis of racial progress; (b) to consider the individual, national, international, racial, political, economic, scientific, spiritual, and other aspects of the theme, for which purpose meetings will be held, publications issued, Research Committees, Commissions of Inquiry and other activities will be organized from time to time as circumstances require and facilities offer; (c) to supply all who still need it with the full knowledge of sound physiological methods of control.\footnote{The guidelines for the CBC were found attached to a letter written to Margaret Sanger by Humphrey Vernon Roe, Honorary Secretary of the organization and Stopes' second husband. Roe sent Sanger a letter asking her to join the CBC and inviting her to visit the Mother's Clinic, which he described as "the first birth control clinic to be founded in the British Empire". He asked Sanger to join, claiming the CBC "has a universal basis for its membership". H.V. Roe to Margaret Sanger, July 10, 1922, MS SS microfilm, reel S02.}

Like the American Birth Control League, the CBC geared its activities around scientific research, education, and nationwide distribution of materials, and literature. Six years after Sanger began publishing the Birth Control Review, the CBC started publishing a penny monthly paper entitled Birth Control News. Unlike Sanger, Stopes made sure her organization avoided any controversy that might have surrounded the birth control campaign in England.

Believing that the birth control movement needed to be freed from the "negative connotations of the past," Stopes and her husband actively sought out respectable middle class patrons to support their cause. According to Soloway, "Churchmen, doctors, lawyers, politicians, scientists, journalists, artists, writers, and of course the titled nobility were inundated with invitations
to lend a portion of their reputation to her crusade... Not even the royal family
was spared occasional solicitation."\textsuperscript{138}

In 1921, the same year that Sanger held her first conference in New
York, Stopes organized a successful meeting at Queens Hall in London.
Prompted by Prime Minister David Lloyd George to "hold a great public
meeting and start to make birth control respectable," Stopes organized a
lecture series consisting of speakers from universities, the medical profession,
Parliament and members of the clergy. Striving to make the meeting
respectable in upper class circles, Stopes invited people of considerable
reputation to attend and speak at the meeting. Letters from such people as
the Right Honorable Lady Constance Lytton, Lady Glenconner and Sir James
Barr, Vice President of the British Medical Association were read at the
beginning of the meeting showing support of Stopes and her goals. Sir
James Barr said at the meeting that Stopes "inaugurated a great moment
which I hope will eventually get rid of our C3 population and exterminate
poverty. The only way to raise an A1 population is to breed them."\textsuperscript{139} Dr. E.
Killick Millard, Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, "deemed it a privilege to
be allowed to take part in this magnificent meeting..."\textsuperscript{140} Stopes addressed a
largely middle class audience when she rose to the platform and announced

\textsuperscript{139} Stopes, Contraception, appendix. Stopes published extracts from the meeting in the back
of the book.
\textsuperscript{140} Queen's Hall Meeting on Constructive Birth Control, 14.
that "constructive birth control is the key of all racial progress. It should be one of the planks of the League of Nations platform. It is the only true safeguard of international peace."\textsuperscript{141} Although described by the press as disappointing, two thousand people attended the Queen’s Hall meeting and Stopes would be considered the new leader of the more respectable campaign for birth control.\textsuperscript{142}

**AUDIENCE**

Both women tailored her speeches, writing, and associations to the audience they were trying to reach. Sanger coordinated her organizations and writing to attract the middle class yet her clinics catered to poor and working class women. Stopes exclusively wrote for upper middle class women with a practical manual for the working class, yet her clinic attracted all classes of women. The women addressed different audiences.

Sanger aimed for the middle class with her writing and organizations, however she catered to the working class with her clinics. Early on in her career, Sanger associated with the socialist working class movement. Yet her later organizations attracted a middle class clientele despite their radical agenda. As birth control became more legitimate after the First World War, Sanger searched out the wealthy to help finance her movement and eventually catered to the medical establishment to lend credibility to her clinic. Leagues

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{142} Rose, \textit{Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution}, 149.
would sponsor balls and white tie dinners to attract the wealthy to their cause.\textsuperscript{143} Sanger's writing also targeted a middle class audience. \textit{Women and the New Race} and \textit{The Pivot of Civilization} discussed the need of the middle class to get involved in the birth control movement to help regulate births among the poor. In a chapter entitled "Two Classes of Women," Sanger described the overburdened plight of the working mother and argued that it is the duty of the middle class to help them rise above their poverty. "Fit mother of the race are these, the courted comrades of the men they choose, rather than the 'slave of slaves'. For theirs is the magic of power - the power of limiting their families to such numbers as will permit them to live full-rounded lives."\textsuperscript{144} She expected wealthy women "to give still greater expression to her feminine spirit – we expect her to enrich the intellectual, artistic, moral and spiritual life of the world. We expect her to demolish old systems of morals, a degenerate prudery, Dark-Age religious concepts, laws that enslave women by denying them the knowledge of their bodies, and information as to contraceptives."\textsuperscript{145} This was a direct plea to the middle class, imploring them to engage in birth control activity in an effort to help the poor reduce their numbers.

\textsuperscript{143} Gordon, \textit{Woman's Body, Woman's Right}, 252.
\textsuperscript{144} Sanger, \textit{Woman and the New Race}, 55-56. Also see Margaret Sanger's \textit{The New Motherhood} (London: J. Cape, 1922).
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 70.
Sanger admitted that she opened her first clinic in Brooklyn with class in mind. "Our inspiration was the mothers of the poor," she wrote in her autobiography, "our object, to help them."\(^{146}\) The pamphlet set out to attract clients was printed in English, Yiddish, and Italian. The clientele of the Brownsville clinic was almost exclusively poor. Women of all races and religions attended the clinic in the first days it was opened, with an estimated 464 cases on file after nine days.\(^{147}\) Although Sanger would open her clinic to women of all classes, the focus of its work was directed to giving information to poor and working class women.

Marie Stopes wrote specifically for the middle class. Her writing focused on the need for sexual pleasure in a relationship and centered on the importance of a satisfying sex life to achieve autonomy in a marriage.\(^{148}\) Her first book, *Married Love*, was a guide to sex advice, erotic pleasure and contraceptive techniques. In 1925, she wrote *Radiant Motherhood* and *Wise Parenthood* for the "enlightened," stating on the first page of the latter that "there can be little doubt in the minds of rational people that heredity does tell, and that children who descend from a double line of healthy and intelligent parents are better equipped to face whatever difficulties in their environment may later arise than are children from unsound stock."\(^{149}\)

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\(^{147}\) Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, 231.
\(^{148}\) Neushul, "Marie C. Stopes and the Popularization of Birth Control Technology", 246.
read *Married Love* were "predominantly the middle-or-upper-middle-class book-buying public" and after its publication she would attract an even wealthier audience.\(^{150}\) According to Alexander Geppert, *Mother England* "had an almost sociological objective, for they were intended to enlighten their educated middle-class readership about the deplorable state of affairs among the lower orders of society."\(^{151}\) The one exception in her writing was the pamphlet, *A Letter to Working Mothers: On How to Have Healthy Children and Avoid Weakening Pregnancies* (1926). Written as a response to the tragic health conditions of working class women who attended her clinic, the pamphlet was a practical guide to contraceptive techniques.\(^{152}\) Nowhere in the guide did it discuss the virtues of erotic pleasure as in her previous books; this was saved for the upper classes. Stopes targeted a middle class audience with her writing in an attempt to gain support to control pregnancies among the poor.

Her clinics, although geared towards the poor, provided for women of all classes. Stopes argued that clinics were needed to regulate the population

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\(^{150}\) Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution*, 118-120. Ellen Holtzman also discusses the middle class audience Stopes tried to reach in "The Pursuit of Married Love: Women's Attitudes Toward Sexuality and Marriage in Great Britain, 1918-1939", *Journal of Social History* 16 (1982). She specifically discusses the married, middle class women who would write to Stopes about their sex lives.

\(^{151}\) Geppert, "Divine Sex, Happy Marriage, Regenerated Nation", 392.

growth among the "C3" class, however her clinics often targeted a middle class clientele. Historian Deborah Cohen argues that Stopes's Mother's Clinic had a conflict of interest – Stopes's rhetoric called for birth control to contain the poor but her clinic fitted all women with cervical caps to prevent pregnancy, regardless of class. Stopes would "subordinate eugenic and political considerations to her overriding concern for the individual woman's health and happiness." Stopes defended her practice of distributing contraceptives among the wealthy, claiming "her husband may be a millionaire but I should still describe her as a poor woman if she did not know how to control her own motherhood..." Competent midwives to make the women more comfortable staffed clinics and the central London clinic was tastefully decorated with marble fireplaces, cut flowers, and elegant furniture. Stopes abandoned her eugenic agenda and assisted women of all classes at her clinics. Ultimately, she placed a woman's happiness above her eugenic concerns.

CONCLUSION

In the United States, Sanger would consolidate her movement with other organizations and the medical profession to create the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Sanger's goal of a recognized

154 Ibid., 81.
155 Ibid., 85.
organization to distribute birth control information nationwide was achieved in 1942 during the liberal administration of Franklin Roosevelt. The current Planned Parenthood Mission Statement reads:

Planned Parenthood believes in the fundamental right of each individual, throughout the world, to manage his or her fertility, regardless of the individual’s income, marital status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, or residence. We believe that reproductive self-determinism must be voluntary and preserve the individual’s right to privacy. We further believe that such self-determinism will contribute to an enhancement of the quality of life, strong family relationships, and population stability.

The impact that Sanger has made on the current organization cannot be denied. Faye Wattelton, former President of PPFA, said in 1991, “Margaret Sanger planted the roots of our movement in political change. She referred to the fight for reproductive freedom as ‘the fundamental revolt... for woman, the key to the temple of liberty.’ She risked everything, including prison, for that revolt.” Sanger’s vision of an international organization to distribute information has become a reality.

Stopes’s Mother’s Clinic evolved into the Marie Stopes International, an organization that provides family planning services worldwide. The success of the clinic movement in England was directly related to the tolerant attitude of British politicians towards birth control. MSI states that it is a “global partnership that currently works in over thirty countries offering the full range of

157 A Tradition of Choice, 93.
reproductive services. These include contraception; male and female sterilisation; abortion; health screening; obstetric and primary health care.\textsuperscript{158}

The organization estimates that over one and a half million people visited MSI clinics around the world. Stopes' goal of easy access to reproductive information has been recognized worldwide.

Margaret Sanger and Marie Stopes shared the common philosophy that birth control was necessary for women to gain reproductive independence. How they would attempt to achieve this goal, and any resistance they met, depended on the culture in which they lived.

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END OF TITLE