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THE DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLINING OF MARGARET SANGER:
US BIRTH CONTROL RHETORIC IN THE
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
C. Wesley Buerkle
BA, Biola University, 1997
MA, Arizona State University, 2000
December 2004

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To my foremothers.

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ABSTRACT

Margaret Sanger's rhetoric in the US birth control movement demonstrates the social forces that act upon rhetors and women's bodies, conforming both to established gender norms even as they attempt to violate those standards. This project studies Sanger's birth control rhetoric to understand how her arguments for women's right to contraception conformed women's bodies to traditional feminine notions despite her early efforts to contradict such dictates of domesticity. Research on nineteenth-century feminist rhetors demonstrates a pattern of women challenging feminine ideals by speaking publicly but replicating the familiar themes that women must care for others. To explain such a pattern, this study combines the theories of interpretation and genealogy to analyze texts' meanings with a respect for the ways that social forces conform speakers to already established norms and themes. This project follows genealogical demands for a complex history by discussing the discourses that challenge and support early twentieth century birth control rhetoric . Early themes in Sanger's rhetoric focus on issues of class and women's personal liberation. Analysis shows that Sanger begins by addressing the class oppression working class experience before engaging in class maternalism in which she condescends to lower class women setting upper class women as examples of bodily discipline. Sanger's early themes of birth control as women's liberation give way to an emphasis upon women using birth control to better serve their families, thereby fulfilling their maternal duties. Later themes in Sanger's rhetoric emphasize birth control's utility to the state for managing the rate and quality of women's reproduction. The movement from earlier to later themes in Sanger's rhetoric shifts from speaking about women as subject with control of their bodies to objects whose bodies must be controlled. Employing capitalistic themes, Sanger argues that women's rate of reproduction must be controlled to safeguard national security. Using

notions of social evolution, Sanger engages in eugenic discourse to demand the control of women's bodies who produce unfit offspring. The sweep of Sanger's rhetoric proves the utility of genealogical interpretation to understand the dynamics of power and discourse that conform feminist speakers to accepted gender definitions.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: “I DO NOT THINK SHE IS QUITE NORMAL”¹

Margaret Sanger received an indictment in August 1914 for mailing materials described in the indictment as “of such vile, obscene, filthy, and indecent character that a further description thereof would defile the records of this court” (Indictment). More to the point, Sanger had violated the Comstock Act of 1873, which made it illegal to distribute through the mails any material that gave instruction or could be used for the purpose of contraception or abortion.² Sanger’s 1914 obscenity indictment marks the beginning of a controversial figure’s forty year career in which she spoke against class oppression, defended women’s sexuality, named gender inequalities, and advocated compulsory sterilization. By concentrating on Sanger’s career we learn about a historically intriguing figure who has become iconic of the US birth control movement in the early twentieth century. Sanger’s rhetoric reveals the birth control movement’s early themes while also demonstrating the social forces that constrain feminist rhetoric, in general, and Margaret Sanger, in particular.

The indictment Sanger received in 1914 covered nine violations of federal obscenity laws in her short-lived periodical the *Woman Rebel*. On February 18, 1916 Sanger learned she would not have to stand trial for violating federal obscenity laws: the US Attorney’s office at New York had filed a *nolle prosequi* dismissing the charges against Sanger. Assistant US Attorney Harold Content argued in the *nolle prosequi* that Sanger had not mailed any more issues of the *Woman Rebel* since receiving her indictment a year-and a half earlier, she seemed to be “in no sense a disorderly person,” was not engaged in the “traffic in obscene literature,” and the prosecution could not guarantee a conviction (*Nolle*).

¹See H. Snowden Marshall, “Letter to [Thomas Watt Gregory], [William Wallace, Jr.],” 13 July 1916.

² As of 2004 the latter point remained as part of the US Criminal Code.

Content's rationale failed to mention the pertinent information that in the 18 months between her indictment and the government dropping its charges against her, Sanger's five-year old daughter, Peggy, died of pneumonia, as did Anthony Comstock, champion of public morals and the man who prompted Sanger's prosecution. These two events in combination contributed to the normalization of Sanger in public discourses, representative of the normalization of Sanger's rhetoric and the US birth control movement in general. The death of Comstock and then Peggy Sanger, less than two months later, allowed the discourse of sexual purity in the home to shift from challenging Sanger politically to endorsing her personally. Members of leagues for the suppression of vice thwarted Sanger's efforts on the basis of maintaining moral standards in the home. Comstock had spent his life campaigning against vice and attempting to remove the taint of lust from sexual relations so as to purify intercourse for the strict purpose of procreation in the bonds of holy matrimony (D'Emilio and Freedman 160). In so doing, the anti-vice movement glorified the maternal duty of childbearing. When a judge found Sanger's husband, William, guilty of obscenity for distributing a copy of Sanger's birth control pamphlet *Family Limitation*, the judge opined that, "Too many persons have the idea that it is wrong to have children. Some women are so selfish that they do not want to be bothered with them" (qtd. in Chesler 127). The judge's statement implies that Sanger's public advocacy of contraceptive practice marked her as opposed to femininity and maternity.

That same rhetoric, which celebrated maternity and thereby chastised Sanger, would produce a "groundswell of sympathy and support for Sanger" following her daughter's death (Katz "Historical"). The discourse that prized motherhood as woman's God-given duty to society found an eager mouthpiece in Comstock, but became malleable after his death allowing the discourse to produce Sanger as a new advocate of motherhood. Working within the theme of

maternal sanctity, Sanger posed for a publicity photograph in which she “wore a delicate lace-collared dress and posed with her young and winsome sons,” thus “[undermining] the notion that the support of birth control was a radical or immoral act” (Chesler 139). Sanger would write in her *Autobiography* that the photograph “seemed to alter the attitude of a heretofore cynical public” (Sanger 186). I argue, instead, that in posing for the photograph, pronouncing a maternal character, Sanger allowed a popular discourse to produce her in a way that conformed to rather than challenged the dominant discourse that defined white women in the US.³ Comstock and those who supported his efforts saw Sanger as contrary to motherhood. The sympathy leant to Sanger after the death of her daughter, spurred on by a popularized photo of Sanger with her two sons, normalized Sanger into the image of a mother rather than an opponent of maternity.⁴ Now a discourse defending motherhood, which had previously opposed Sanger, supported her on the basis of her maternal stature.

The same discourse that disciplined Sanger as maternal and reduced her ability to appear as a radical against gender norms also constrained the government’s response to her. Just as the general public’s response to Sanger saw her in a maternal light after her daughter, Peggy’s, death, prosecutors for Sanger’s case who indicted her on the grounds of obscenity released Sanger on the basis that after Peggy died Sanger seemed less threatening. Content characterized Sanger in the *nolle prosequi* as not “disorderly,” which omits the consideration that after receiving her indictment in 1914 Sanger fled to Europe, traveled under an assumed name and corresponding passport, and remained outside US for a year. While in that time, as Content said,

³ Chesler adds the note that Sanger had planned to dress in a white shirt and neck tie as many suffragists wore (139). The change in dress is indicative of the tensions and change of birth control rhetoric as seen with Sanger to move toward an accepted, matronly image of femininity and away from the image of a rebel against social conventions.

⁴ The role of sympathy has long been an important element in US feminist politics in which an audience creates an identification with another sorrowful experience (Barnes 2).

the *Woman Rebel* ceased publication, Sanger had continued to “traffic . . . obscene literature.” Content, however, also knew that after her indictment Sanger wrote and began mailing copies of *Family Limitation*, a pamphlet that did what the *Woman Rebel* avoided, provide detailed instruction in preventing conception.⁵ Though Sanger’s *nolle prosequi* mentions nothing of her daughter’s death, in a letter to the US Attorney at Portland, Oregon, Snowden Marshall, the US Attorney who oversaw Sanger’s case in New York, explained that public support for Sanger was such that he feared prosecution would, “make a martyr of her,” and coming “shortly after the loss of her child, [he] determined that the circumstances were such that it would be wiser not to prosecute the case” especially since the articles in question “were not particularly offensive” (Marshall). The US Attorney at New York closed the letter to his Portland counterpart with the assessment: “I do not think she [Sanger] is quite normal” (Marshall). The confluence of a public perception of Sanger as a suffering mother and concerns about her becoming a martyr seems to explain the decision to drop charges against Sanger. Whatever Marshall’s personal evaluation of Sanger, certain public discourses had worked to and would continue to normalize Sanger and the rhetoric of the birth control movement in the US.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

My own interest in this study stems from the ironies exemplified by the public constructions of Sanger. The US birth control movement in the early twentieth century contains many of these same contradictions and tensions. One of these fascinating points of contrast comes as advocates arguing for the distribution of birth control lose the cast of radicalism in the associations with the highly conservative Neo-Malthusian and Eugenic movements, which

⁵ In a reply to Sanger’s attorney, Leonard Abbott, US Attorney Snowden Marshall acknowledged receiving a letter from Abbott suggesting that Marshall drop the charges against Sanger pertaining to the *Woman Rebel* and in return Sanger would mail a copy of *Family Limitation*, for which Marshall could prosecute her. Marshall flatly rejected the offer (Marshall “To Leonard D. Abbott”).

sought to control the size and quality of the population, respectively. Another irony of the US birth control movement rests in its early socialist leanings that take on increasingly capitalistic interests. To study these and other changes in the US birth control movement I focus on one figure, Margaret Sanger, whose rhetoric stands at the center of so many of these intriguing shifts in the larger scene of the US birth control movement.

In 1955, eleven years before Sanger's death, Lawrence Lader published the first major study of Sanger and her role in the US birth control movement, *The Margaret Sanger Story and the Fight for Birth Control*. Though primarily a biography, both the title and subject demonstrate the centrality of Sanger in the US birth control movement and the subsequent difficulty in distinguishing between a focus on Sanger and the movement in general: "The story of Margaret Sanger is not only that of an individual woman. It is also the story of the birth and development of an idea of a movement" (Lader 9). Although I challenge Lader's language to depict Sanger as the mother of the US birth control movement—ironically suggesting her as fulfilling the traditional feminine role as child bearer and nurturer—Lader does inadvertently make the point that studying the US birth control movement in the early twentieth century will invariably include consideration of Sanger's activity.

Because of the inevitable overlap between a discussion of the US birth control movement in the early twentieth century and a consideration of Sanger's career, I focus this project on her rhetoric to understand some of the dynamics of the US birth control movement. Sanger's rhetoric deserves attention because of her approach to responding to women's need for contraception that employed arguments of conflicting interest and for her role as one of the primary figures in the twentieth-century birth control movement both in the US and internationally. As a leading figure in the US birth control movement, Sanger provides intriguing responses to women's need for

contraception by using contrasting messages that justify the availability of birth control for women's personal benefit as well as for the improvement of the nation. In the contrasting messages, Sanger initially constructs women as needing birth control for their autonomy and for fulfilling their responsibility as mothers. Later, Sanger stresses the need to control women's bodies for the sake of national interests, preserving natural resources, and improving citizens' eugenic qualities. The tensions created between these justifications for birth control require consideration to understand the competing interests that arise during an explicit, concentrated discussion of women's bodies as regards sexuality and reproduction.

Studying Sanger's rhetoric provides insight into the public discourse on women's bodies through an understanding of the social politics involved in the early US birth control movement. Sanger's sustained presence in the US birth control movement from the 1910s to the 1930s, as well as her continuing activity through the 1950s, warrants a concentration on her rhetorical activity as a way of grasping many of the issues surrounding the birth control movement and discourse on women's bodies. During her tenure in the US birth control movement, She helped to define the issues associated with birth control (e.g., women's sexuality, risks of overpopulation, etc.), bring about changes in laws affecting women's access to birth control, and develop public support and understanding of the need for birth control. Perhaps no other person in the totality of the US birth control movement has had as much impact on the movement in terms of raising public and government support of birth control and in so doing creating an ideology associated with birth control that remains prevalent today (e.g., the relation between birth control and the welfare burden on community economies). Concentrating on Sanger's involvement in the US birth control movement provides an opportunity to grasp the issues

involved with the socio-political changes of birth control in the early twentieth century and to understand the discourses of the period concerning women's bodies.

The exclusive attention to Sanger recognizes the efforts of others before and during Sanger's career while also limiting scope to a central figure and time. The focus on Sanger's rhetoric and the early-twentieth century sets this study's attention to a person who has a major role in the totality of the US birth control movement and a period when considerable change occurs. Other people before and during Sanger's career did take part in a movement for contraception in the US. Nineteenth-century US public speakers and authors addressed means of contraception, though not using the term birth control, and people such as Emma Goldman and Mary Ware Dennett worked at the same time as Sanger. That said, Sanger's rhetoric merits special consideration as a major figure in the twentieth-century US birth control movement for how she dealt with the social politics of birth control over a sustained period of time. The breadth of Sanger's career establishes a trend for birth control rhetoric from which subsequent discourse have had to follow or differentiate. The status of birth control in the first half of the twentieth century warrants attention because of the degree of change in contraceptive public policy during that time. The changes in the birth control movement in the early twentieth century provides an exciting history of the birth control movement changing public policy and congealing. During the nineteenth century the movement for teaching how to control reproduction suffered from a lack of organization and ailed under the development of laws, chiefly the Comstock Act of 1873, that brought about the arrest of those spreading contraceptives and contraceptive information. By contrast, the movement in the early twentieth century had nationally identifiable organizations and activists making legal strides, most notably, the repeal of the Comstock Act. The study of the

US birth control movement in the early-twentieth century and Sanger's role during that time enables a discussion of a significant actor and period in the movement

Recognizing Sanger as crucial to an understanding of the US birth control movement, I concentrate on her rhetoric to better understand the social politics of women's bodies, the rhetorical activity of feminist rhetors, and the inevitable cooptation of resistant discourses. Through this study I specifically focus on how Sanger's rhetoric constructs women's bodies, how social discourses produce Sanger as a rhetor, and how Sanger's transgressive rhetoric cannot resist cooptation by dominant discourses. Specifically I look to how Sanger spoke about women's bodies in her rhetoric of birth control. I follow her discussion of women's bodies in which she initially depicts women as subjects, with agency, who must fight for the control of their bodies to achieve personal liberation, and then as subjects who must control their bodies to better fulfill their maternal obligations to their children, husbands, and nation. My analysis follows Sanger's rhetoric as she turns to speaking of women as objects without agency, whose bodies must be controlled to achieve national goals of a civilized, eugenically superior, properly sized nation. This study takes into consideration the social discourses that Sanger responds to and supports, considering how her rhetoric relates to the rhetoric of capitalism, "race suicide," eugenics, and other strands of social politics. The example of the public response to Sanger before and after the death of her daughter, Peggy, indicates one way in which Sanger negotiates discourses that first frame her as anti-family and then maternal. Throughout the study I give thought to the inescapability of transgressive rhetoric from that which it opposes. Again, the public constructions of Sanger before and after her daughter's death show us that Sanger herself conceded to the social compulsion to frame women as maternal above all else. Studying Sanger

in these ways tells us about her own rhetoric as well as that of the US birth control movement specifically and transgressive rhetoric in general.

Looking at how Sanger discusses women, how discourses shaped Sanger, and the ways Sanger's resistance yields to popular discourses informs the study of rhetoric. The example of Sanger adds to the chronicles of rhetorical studies a case in which rhetorical challenges to dominant discourses succumb to that which they oppose and provides the opportunity to reconsider methods of analyzing and discussing rhetoric of opposition. The fact that Sanger begins by railing against the medical establishment and later came to endorse doctors' involvement in the birth control movement raises questions about how resistant rhetoric operates to achieve its goals. Sanger's change from openly despising capitalism in general and then employing capitalistic ideology also suggests inevitable tensions between challenging dominant discourses and reiterating them in some form.

An understanding of both of these examples, in which Sanger shifts from challenging to supporting established institutions, must resist trying to locate the true Margaret Sanger to determine what she really meant and accept that history includes ironic shifts and tensions. To do otherwise forces texts into a predetermined model of events. Resisting the compulsion to conform history to meet expectations requires understanding the dynamics of social power to explain how rhetoric resistant to dominant discourses can submit to its own opposition. In this study I demonstrate an approach to rhetorical analysis that empowers the interpretivist project with a genealogical perspective that understands history, identity, and rhetoric as never entirely coherent and an approach that provides a sensitivity to power as productive of bodies and discourses.

Genealogy as History

Against the interpretivist tradition of a master narrative that neatly explains history as the journey to progress, genealogy attempts to include many histories and avoids teleological structures that would otherwise hide the fact that each event holds a complicated and indissoluble relationship to other events. As Foucault describes it, genealogy studies “the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats” (“Nietzsche” 80). The genealogical reading of history resists the finality of theistically intoned pronouncements to create the illusion of the critic pulling back the drapes of speech to reveal a coherency that makes the seemingly incongruous entirely consistent. Beyond seeking tension and change, genealogy writes history in terms of many stories, presenting a collage of forces and discourses to resist telling a master narrative that attempts to explain the text as broken off from the web of discourses in which it sits. These discourses represent many histories that continually find new life and expression in surprising places (Roach 286). The genealogist must consider the matrix of discourses that form each text. Genealogy differentiates itself from interpretivist studies of situation and background. Historical discourses go past explaining the setting of the text to find new life through subsequent texts. The consequent analysis of texts considers how each has a relation to previous histories, not for purposes of categorization (e.g., eighteenth-century English prose) but to recognize where past cultures (of race, class, gender, and so forth) find reiteration in the present texts.

From looking at history genealogically comes a different way of understanding texts. As opposed to excluding one text or history as the imposter and the other as the truth, a genealogical approach allows us to consider history as a complex collaboration of events. Using a genealogical orientation to read responses to Sanger before and after her daughter’s death allows

for discourses to have situated her as a loathsome woman rebelling against public norms of feminine purity and docility as well as the embodiment of an equally cherished maternal spirit. The genealogical eye in this situation focuses on understanding the discourses that produced Sanger in both ways, and how and when those lines of belief intersected. Pierre Macherey writes, “Knowledge is not the discovery or reconstruction of a latent meaning, forgotten or concealed. It is something newly raised up, in addition to the reality from which it begins” (6). Likewise, the definitions of Sanger as either a radical or a traditional mother raise up identities of Sanger rather than reveal a true self. The death of Peggy Sanger created a moment when the public sated their compulsion to see women as maternal figures through creating Sanger as domesticated rather than out to destroy traditional notions of femininity. The complexity added to our understanding of history through a genealogical approach enables the critic to better understand the shifts that can occur in a transgressive rhetoric by taking in multiple fragments even when they conflict.

Power as Productive

A genealogical orientation calls for a shift in conceptualizing power as something that weighs upon us as an oppressive force to thinking of it as productive. Calling power productive means crediting it with the ability to create knowledge and bodies through the use of disciplines (Foucault, *Discipline* 194). Two examples demonstrate the function of disciplines and the productivity of power: the construction of children’s sexuality and the ways that Sanger and her adversaries used disciplines to produce women’s bodies. Commonly we think of power as oppressive toward knowledge in restricting certain people from access to particular pieces of information. In keeping with that model, we often justify the prohibitions upon children’s access to knowledge about sex and sexuality as needing to keep children from engaging in sex, having lascivious thoughts, or “experimenting” with their sexuality (Foucault, *History* 30). The effort to

keep children *from* something, such as the knowledge of sex in general and homosexuality specifically, implies that children naturally have no sexuality, so restrictions keep children from discovering sex and sexuality. The underlying assumption at work in this example takes for granted that children are sexually pure (i.e., virginal and heterosexual in thoughts and deeds). Restrictions on information, then, keep children from finding sexuality. Genealogy opposes the overdetermination, the unquestioned assumptions compulsively rendering particular conclusions, of children as sexually pure and heterosexually oriented and sees children as produced by disciplinary acts.

With power as productive, genealogy looks for the disciplines that yield bodies and knowledge. Disciplines produce bodies and knowledge by carefully including and excluding behaviors and information through coding them as ideal and non-normative. In the practices of knowledge and power the body exists as a key “object and target of power” (Foucault, *Discipline* 136). The example of children’s sexuality suggests that the careful exposure of children to representations of heterosexuality and the exclusion of anything contrary to heterosexuality in most educational settings means to produce the young bodies as heterosexual. This is not to say that the discipline will have complete success. The inevitable failure of these disciplines to produce exclusively heterosexual bodies will have the satisfaction of socially and deeply marking the rebellious as such.

Like the case of children’s sexuality, the case of Sanger reveals a series of competing discourses reciprocally producing knowledge and bodies. Comstock, Sanger’s early antagonist, and Sanger herself both employed disciplines that constructed knowledge of contraception and women’s bodies, though in contradictory ways. Within that tension comes a disciplining of Sanger herself by the power she opposed. The Comstock Law of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries constructed information about birth control as obscene, thus inappropriate for discussion among doctors and educators as well as women. The discipline of the anti-vice movement sought to create women's bodies as pure—free of sexual impulse—and thereby render their bodies to the sanctified duty of maternity. Sanger seems to contrast Comstock, wanting women to have the knowledge Comstock forbids them. Even though she violates Comstock's mandates on disseminating "obscene materials," she cannot escape practices of power. Power produced the information Sanger chose to distribute, how she distributed it, and its description. Sanger's description of birth control as information for women's sexual liberation as well as information that mandates increased maternal responsibilities for their families speaks to the ways power goes about producing knowledge and bodies. The fact that a rhetor enacts a disciplinary practice through rhetoric does not mean that she can escape power's reach. As much as Sanger evoked a discipline through her birth control rhetoric, she herself became subject to power's discipline. In the case of her daughter's death comes an example of Sanger disciplined through a gaze that normalized her as consistent with expectations of maternal womanhood with every newspaper that carried the sad image of a mother, her two young boys, and a missing daughter.

The case of Sanger's rhetoric and her public disciplining to a maternal ideal demonstrates the usefulness of a genealogical approach to understanding transgressive rhetoric in general and Sanger's activity in the birth control movement specifically. By approaching history and the brief example of Sanger genealogically, analysis can embrace Sanger as someone both challenging norms of maternity and also coming under control of that social discourse. Adding to that tension, Comstock smears birth control as against motherhood and Sanger changes to justify birth control as an extension of maternal responsibility. The genealogical orientation to these

histories seeks to draw out the relations between Sanger and Comstock's rhetoric rather than attempting to paper over them by casting them as wholly different in a simplified interpretation of left against right. A genealogical analysis can consider the ironic similarity between Comstock and Sanger's use of maternal themes in their rhetoric to achieve contradictory purposes. By taking a genealogical approach I come at the subject of the US birth control movement and Sanger in a manner different from existing studies.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF SANGER AND HER RHETORIC

Books, monographs, and dissertations about Sanger and her career as a birth control advocate have often depicted Sanger and her efforts as a valiant struggle of a wise woman (e.g., Lader) or the ambition of a vain and difficult woman to advance herself publicly (e.g., Kennedy). Finding tension and contradiction in her writing, oratory, and political alignments, some studies have depicted Sanger as duplicitous (e.g., Masel-Walters) or have simply taken no notice of any such conflicts in her career (e.g., Morehouse). I find none of these seemingly contradictory characterizations satisfactory, for each depiction takes one point of her activism, isolates it from other moments, and holds it up as representative of a "true" Margaret Sanger. These kinds of studies hold a close commitment to interpretation that cannot help but seek to find the true character of the speaker or situation. Interpretivist accounts of Sanger and her rhetoric stand out against a genealogically oriented approach that allows contradictory characterizations and moments to stand together, recognizing that history includes diverse discourses that create ironic and complicated relationships. The fact that Sanger began her career by chastising the capitalistic system for its exploitation of women and later uses capitalistic intoned justifications for birth control demonstrates that social politics operated in such a way that Sanger's own position on the matter altered as social politics at large also changed.

In contrast to the interpretivist accounts of Sanger I find studies much more engaging that take an interest in the ironies of Sanger's rhetoric and consider the complexities of the discourses that formed the web Sanger lived in and that produced her in particular ways (e.g., McCann; Hayden). This study operates under the premise that the tensions in Sanger's rhetoric warrant consideration because they present knots formed by competing discourses that yield a complex history rather than a neat story of events. An encompassing, though certainly not "authoritative," consideration of Sanger should add complexity to the history of birth control and women's bodies in America. In this examination of Sanger's rhetoric I intend to demonstrate that analysis of an individual's rhetoric must include consideration of the discourse that produces a particular speaking subject. My own study, therefore, draws heavily on the work of Foucault to interpret Sanger's rhetoric by using an approach infused with a genealogical attitude toward history and power.

Studies of Sanger rarely consider how the dynamics of history and power bear upon Sanger and her rhetoric. By using a Foucauldian-oriented approach this study exceeds the limitations of past scholarship. Some studies of Sanger represent her as simply a social actor or rhetor who has a female body assignment, rather than seeking to understand how Sanger's womanhood, the construction of and demands on/for her femininity, constitutes Sanger in specific ways. A majority of the research also fails to take an interest in the tensions and contradictions of Sanger's rhetoric and career such as her stances on the role of the medical community in the birth control movement. Those studies that have taken notice of contradictions declare Sanger duplicitous, take little account of the actual rhetorical turns in her career, or take a less expansive period of time and sample of texts than I undertake in this project. Foucault's discussion of genealogical analysis and power's role in disciplining bodies to meet cultural ideals

will provide an approach to studying ironies and contradictions in Sanger's rhetoric that considers the social forces that envelope and produce Sanger's rhetoric and Sanger as a speaking subject. I believe that the addition of Foucault to the discussion will enliven the conversation of Sanger and her rhetoric.

As much as every event of history has a complex relationship to other events, so too my own study of Sanger has a complicated relationship to past scholarship on Sanger. In the following I briefly review eleven accounts of Sanger's career and rhetoric, demonstrating both limitations and possibilities in the research to which my own study responds. The first category of research I review includes seven studies that either provide biographical and interpretivist accounts of Sanger. Both types of research seek to explain Sanger's activity in the US birth control movement as reflective of her personality rather than as the product of social politics. The second category of reviews I offer pertains to four studies that seek to complicate the biographies and interpretations of Sanger by recognizing and analyzing the contradictions in her career and situating Sanger within the social dynamics of early twentieth-century US culture.

The Biographical and Interpretivist Truth of Margaret Sanger

Biographical and interpretivist accounts of Sanger rely upon the determination that carefully study can unearth the truth of the subject. By biographical, I mean studies that historicize Sanger, concentrating on her beliefs and experiences to understand Sanger's actions. Similarly, the interpretations either offer explanations of Sanger's rhetoric by looking to her character and life history or make interpretivist pronouncements regarding the rightness of her choices, both of which rely upon the ability to discover the truth of Sanger and rhetorical practice. Sanger's own *Autobiography* and her biography written by Lawrence Lader offer a suspiciously coherent narrative of her career that avoids any hint of change in her tactics that

would have to suggest a corresponding shift in her personality. Ellen Chesler's biography makes a stronger effort at adding complexity to Sanger's story. The study of Sanger's rhetoric by William Morehouse follows a strict interpretivist tradition that evaluates her public speaking against a supposedly universal standard of rhetoric, á la Edwin Black. Likewise, Kevin McClearey assesses Sanger's rhetoric in one speech employing a biographical analysis and making assumptions about "good rhetoric." Janice Schuetz's study of Sanger on trial uses historical changes as the scene of Sanger's change in strategies rather than as a force moving Sanger. Lastly, Lynne-Masel Walters looks at Sanger's publication of the *Woman Rebel* to make pronouncements about Sanger's personal goals.

The first publication to focus on Sanger's personality and personal goals came from Sanger herself. Not surprisingly, Sanger's *Autobiography* fails to address tensions and contradictions in her rhetoric and career. Seldom does she speak to social forces that shaped her life. For example, of the public response to her daughter Peggy's death, Sanger makes comment about the change in public sentiment, but she forgoes any discussion of the public disciplining of her to a maternal ideal. Lawrence Lader's biography of Sanger reads much like Sanger's *Autobiography*, only reverent rather than proud. Lader's biographical account of Sanger provides little in the way of understanding the social forces and politics that drove her discourse (both the conventional notions of texts as well as her public activity in general). Discussion of social forces influencing Sanger comes sporadically and remains in the periphery as Lader glosses tensions that arise in the history he tells. Without notice of contradiction, Lader provides an account of Sanger's "strategy" that changed from speaking to working class women about their need for birth control to appealing to society women, whom Sanger described as being of "wealth and intelligence," for help in sharing birth control information (qtd. in Lader 116). Lader

misses the tension between Sanger seeking to help working women and appealing to a separate group described as women of “intelligence.” Lader lets pass without comment the tension created by suggesting working class women are less intelligent than upper class women. The comparison of upper and lower class women as intelligent and unintelligent creates a sense of condescension and disrespect toward those being helped. We might attribute some of these shortcomings to the fact that Sanger edited the final manuscript, creating the possibility that she saw to it someone else’s account matched her own (Chesler 429). Regardless, Lader provides a decidedly non-genealogical narrative of Sanger’s career by depicting Sanger as an individual operating free of social contingency and as someone whose biography follows a clear line of development.

In contrast to Lader, Ellen Chesler attempts to meet the goals of a genealogical look at history. Chesler’s biography of Sanger includes a somewhat careful consideration of the social dynamics surrounding Sanger and avoids the hero-worshipping in Lader’s work. Attempting to present a more humane image of Sanger than does Lader, Chesler demonstrates tensions in Sanger’s career, such as her base of support that included wealthy women driving out of Manhattan in chauffeured cars to “[help] their less fortunate sisters” (156). Later Chesler notes that Sanger’s involvement with those who enjoyed material comfort likely contributed to the change in her rhetoric from “rebellion to reform” (191). While such a note succumbs to a degree of psychoanalysis of the rhetor, Chesler critique does suggest an appreciation for Sanger as a product of those with whom she aligned herself. In approaching Sanger biographically, Chesler provides little in the way of analysis of those forces, Sanger’s rhetoric, or the confluence of the two. I do not use this to find fault with the biography as Chesler does not describe the project as

being rhetorical in nature but to point out one more work about Sanger that has neglected to focus on her rhetoric and its relationship to historical forces.

The first rhetorical study of Sanger, however, lacks the sensitivity toward social forces that Chesler shows. William Morehouse's 1968 dissertation on Sanger's rhetoric follows a model that shuns Thonssen and Baird only to turn to Edwin Black's theory of rhetorical criticism. Morehouse thus contemplates Sanger's motives, goals, modes of speech preparation, sources of research as well as her organization and delivery (4). In his analysis Morehouse passes judgment on Sanger's rhetorical appropriateness, going so far as to suggest that a particular speech may have had a negative impact on the audience and then proposing a "more appropriate" speech choice (81). Beyond prescription, Morehouse provides simple description under Black's taxonomy of public address, declaring Sanger's speeches exhortative and her an exhortative rhetor (85, 145). In this regard Morehouse's analysis of Sanger's public address provides little more than a history of her speech topics and style.

In the effort to provide a global description, and even particular prescriptions, Morehouse misses any ironic turns in Sanger's rhetorical path, like those found in Chesler's work. Despite reviewing her speeches over a thirty year period, Morehouse makes no comment about changes in Sanger's arguments for birth control, noting only that Sanger followed a four phase process of agitation, education, organization, and legislation. This pattern comes directly from Sanger and appears in the *Birth Control Review* that began in 1922 carrying the line under the periodical's banner, "Four Steps to Our Goal—Agitation, Education, Organization, Legislation." Morehouse's study provides little consideration of the complexities of social politics involved with the US birth control movement such as the awkward and contradictory alignments with socialist, eugenicists, and the hot and cold relationship with the medical community.

Furthermore, references to Sanger personally lack a consideration of how the public perception of her life fits into the sweep of her rhetoric but takes note of Sanger's attempt to hide her age and conclude that "her concern with age does not contradict other traits which would suggest a vain, egocentric quality in her personality" (Morehouse 35). Morehouse's descriptive approach to writing about Sanger's rhetoric leaves the reader wanting a discussion of tensions in Sanger's rhetoric and the social dynamics operating when she spoke rather than mere classification of Sanger's rhetorical style and commentary about her possible vanity.

This tendency toward flat analysis that fails to see contradictions in Sanger's rhetoric, ignores the social politics, and uses biographical information to analyze Sanger also applies to McClearey's Neo-Aristotelian oriented analysis. McClearey focuses on a single speech, Sanger's Fabian Hall address, to make assessment about Sanger's rhetorical competency and uses biography to speak about Sanger's "evolution" ("Tremendous" 184). The McClearey's study reviews the main arguments of Sanger's speech without providing insight into what the arguments tell us about rhetorical practice, feminism, the birth control movement, and so forth. The inclusion of Sanger's biography in this study sometimes provides little more than gossip (e.g., her extra-marital affair with a married man). Elsewhere the biographical data demonstrates teleological assumptions, that Sanger acted with a constant purpose toward a mature end, by stating, "lessons she learned . . . taught her to cloak her radicalism" (McClearey, "Tremendous" 195-96). The statement suggests Sanger matured as an activist developing a sense of cunning and that to understand her activity the critic must read through her actions and words to a true intent she keeps "cloaked." McClearey also reveals a driving concern with assessing the rhetorical effectiveness of individual speech acts: "In the absence of [information about audience response to Sanger's address], one is left to speculate about the speech's impact and consequences"

(“Tremendous” 194). For his analysis, McClearey only gets the conclusion, “Sanger was an inexperienced orator and she delivered an ineffective speech” (“Tremendous” 195). The totality of McClearey’s efforts tell us little more about Sanger than the arguments she used in a particular instance devoid of their relation to other social currents and, in passing, depicts Sanger as changing her rhetoric with time in such a way as to maximize gain for her hidden, “cloaked” intentions.

Like McClearey, Janice Schuetz’s also suggests that Sanger’s adjusts her rhetoric for calculated effect. Schuetz’s analysis of Sanger’s experiences at trial replicates the sense of Sanger’s rhetoric changing as part of a strategic rearticulation by Sanger. Schuetz uses the theory of agitation in social movements to explain three trials that directly involved Sanger and, like Morehouse and McClearey, relies upon a model of discourse that explains differences across time as the rhetor’s strategy rather than the product of contesting discourses. Describing the differences in Sanger’s rhetoric over time Schuetz says, “Sanger revised her strategic and moral advocacy as it evolved through three trials” (90). Although characterizing variance as calculated on Sanger’s part, Schuetz does demonstrate an awareness of change in Sanger’s rhetoric. Schuetz’s analysis also provides a nice example of locating Sanger’s rhetoric within other discourses, but, again, the historical location becomes the rationale for Sanger’s strategy rather than constituting the forces that themselves shape her rhetoric.

Where Schuetz offers something approaching a consideration of how social factors motivated Sanger’s discourse, Lynne Masel-Walters provides the most virulent critique of Sanger’s rhetoric as strategic and even duplicitous. Masel-Walters’s acerbic interpretation of Sanger’s rhetoric and political agitation takes the author-centered public address analysis to its extreme making the determination that “Publicity for birth control often was promotion for

Margaret Sanger” (3). In the study, Masel-Walters focus on “contradictions,” not in the sense of irony—as Foucault would suggest—but to demonstrate Sanger’s hypocrisy and self-serving ambition to “[mold] her image of motivator of and martyr to the birth control movement” (3). Using the example of the suppression of and trial for the *Woman Rebel*, Masel-Walters makes the point that the case itself carried significance for the birth control movement by developing public interest even though it avoided directly dealing with birth control. Biography and history in this case, however, get used for the purpose of character assassination in determining the “true” nature and goals of the rhetor: Masel-Walters’s analysis attempts to reveal Sanger’s intent to promote herself publicly.

Though Masel-Walters’s study provides the most extreme case of attempting to discover the truth of Sanger, it is but one in a series of similar approaches to considering Sanger’s career and rhetoric. The study of Sanger and her rhetoric necessitates a genealogical approach in order to understand the turns and ironies in Sanger’s texts as well as the ways that the discourses in which Sanger lived produced both her and her rhetoric. Biographical accounts of Sanger rarely take an interest in the contradictions and tensions that occur in her career and rhetoric, both within individual texts and over time. Rhetorical studies like that by Morehouse, McClearey, Schuetz, and Masel-Walters follow an interpretivist model of public address criticism and give no consideration to the social dynamics producing a rhetoric of birth control. Both the biographical and interpretivist studies have a tendency to depict Sanger as the point of origination for her rhetoric and ideas rather than as a part of the discourse already operating in society.

Complicating Our Understanding of Sanger

Against the biographical and interpretivist studies discussed above, the following works, like my own study, complicate our understanding of Sanger by accepting the tensions of her rhetoric that demonstrate the play of power and social discourses that produced Sanger and her rhetoric. Lisa Cuklanz's study of the *Woman Rebel* challenges common historical interpretation by considering how Sanger combined the previously separate discourses of socialism and feminism. Sara Hayden concentrates on the complexity of power and discourse by looking at how Sanger's female-adolescent educational pamphlet both resisted and colluded in the discourse of women as subordinate to men and the heterosexual compulsion for family. Unlike Morehouse, John Murphy studies Sanger's rhetoric and finds contradictions but avoids making a proclamation about which contradictory statement represents Sanger's true intentions and allows them to co-exist, challenging one another. Similarly, Carole McCann's history of the US birth control movement and Sanger's career follows the many lines of social power creating limited possibilities for Sanger and contributing to her rhetoric.

Like Masel-Walters, Lisa Cuklanz considers the role of the *Woman Rebel* in the birth control movement within its historical position and in light of the fact that it spoke very little about birth control. Unlike Masel-Walters, Cuklanz refuses to see this irony as serving Sanger personally but affecting the movement instead. Through rhetorical analysis of the seven issues of *Rebel* Cuklanz illustrates how Sanger, a socialist, melds socialism and feminism to provide a critique of class relations and their impact on women's lives. While Sanger provides no information about contraception in *Rebel* she does justify the practice by arguing that "women and children are the primary victims of American institutions and that unchecked childbirth guarantees their continued victimization" (Cuklanz 8). As Cuklanz demonstrates, Sanger's class-

oriented critique situates birth control as a political issue affecting men and women (12). Cuklanz argues that by recounting the trying experiences of middle-class women Sanger seeks to provoke those very women to rise up, in defiance of 1914 notions of appropriate feminine behavior, for the knowledge about contraception available to so many of their bourgeois counterparts (17). The analysis thrives on Cuklanz's ability to subtly weave in one area of social politics of the day to demonstrate the position of *Rebel* as part of and against other discourses. Though Cuklanz provides an insightful analysis of feminist and socialist concerns present in *Rebel*, she misses mapping how those change with time. This snapshot of Sanger's rhetoric in 1914 invites a complex collage of Sanger's speaking and writing.

Sara Hayden contributes to the collection of perspectives on Sanger's rhetoric when she analyzes Sanger's pamphlet *What Every Girl Should Know*, first published as a serialized newspaper column in 1912. Using the Foucauldian notion of reverse discourse, Hayden argues that Sanger appropriates the misogynistic rhetoric of sexologists, primarily Havelock Ellis, and uses it to argue for women's empowerment (289). In line with my own interests, Hayden considers how Sanger's arguments cannot escape the contra-feminist language of sexology. Hayden reveals a tensions in Sanger's rhetoric as she speaks of women having a natural sexual impulse yet defines its release as coming from the selection of a mate and the resultant children (301). The treatment of the tensions in Sanger's rhetoric differs significantly between Hayden's approach and that of Masel-Walters. Hayden finds that conflict comes as a product of Sanger's rhetoric exploring certain avenues of discourse. At the heart of Hayden's analysis stands the recognition that Sanger's rhetoric engages with and in other discourses—here the rhetoric of sexology—rather than arriving from some isolated source. Masel-Walters, in contrast, focuses on deriving Sanger's true intent and personal motivations. Of the same text that Hayden analyzes,

Masel-Walters might make a proclamation of Sanger's confusion and/or hypocrisy rather than Hayden's conclusion that reverse discourses have constrained potential. From Hayden's examination of one of Sanger's pamphlets comes the image of Sanger's rhetorical approach in a single text and an acknowledgement of the tensions that arise in a rhetoric that contests social norms.

With a similar interest in the tensions in Sanger's rhetoric, Murphy widens the period for examining Sanger's rhetoric. Murphy's study looks at change in Sanger's rhetoric over time by studying her writings in the *Birth Control Review*, a central publication in the US birth control movement. In his analysis Murphy finds that Sanger's rhetoric changes over a few years from arguing for birth control as part of social revolution to its use in maintaining "a conservative social structure against the poor and the 'unfit'" (24). Murphy acknowledges that the change represents a compromise with social values by framing birth control as an issue of population, thus social control, rather than women's empowerment. Such a conclusion represents a commitment to a model of criticism that stresses the role of the author as originator. Murphy's analysis demonstrates that the movement from one discourse to another presents a new set of possibilities and limitations. From Sanger's example Murphy takes away the lesson that social circumstances—or discourses—can explain the transformations of social movements. While Murphy's analysis has an interest in Sanger's rhetorical changes and, like Hayden, the author finds those changes interesting rather than part of some duplicitous scheme, the analysis includes only a brief consideration of social politics regarding gender involved with Sanger's rhetorical shifts. Murphy's approach also suffers from failure to explore the significance of the contradictions discovered, as Hayden does by using Foucault's theory of reverse discourses.

An expansive study of Sanger's career and social politics comes from McCann's book, *Birth Control Politics the United States, 1916-1945*. McCann's research on Sanger provides the most comprehensive overview of Sanger's work than any of the above studies. McCann focuses on tracking the changes in Sanger's "alliances, rhetorics, and practices formed in the effort to establish contraceptive clinics" (6). In that documentation McCann considers "the eclipse of feminist claims" in the US birth control movement as seen in Sanger's work from 1916 to 1945 (2). The "eclipse" McCann references is the change from framing birth control as necessary for women's empowerment and their claim to sexual pleasure to a program of social reform that served the interests of both men and women. The shift includes the adoption of the sexually neutral language of eugenics, which works to mute concerns of women's sexuality (McCann 58). The notion of "planned parenthood" as a product of eugenic discourse represents the change of birth control as liberating to women by improving their class status and sexual pleasure to birth control as women's responsibility to further care and provide for the family by preventing themselves from having children when it would hinder family advancement (McCann 201).

Though McCann provides the most broad-ranging study of Sanger as far as its temporal breadth and multiplicity of competing discourses, several aspects of the portrait of Sanger demand further consideration. While McCann says the study considers Sanger's rhetoric, the book provides no rhetorical analysis, only the occasional quote from Sanger to make a point regarding a larger argument about the US birth control movement. In this way McCann provides a historical analysis of Sanger's career rather than a rhetorical examination of Sanger's speaking and writing. I see McCann's research as invaluable to mine by providing a consideration of a number of social factors affecting the birth control movement in the US and detailing alliances and events that bear upon Sanger's rhetoric without performing the actual analysis I propose. In

accounting for the “eclipse of feminists claims” in the movement McCann does not explicitly engage with a rhetorical theory that would mutually inform the research and that particular theory of discourse. McCann takes a strong feminist orientation but by excluding rhetorical theory in the analysis McCann’s conclusions lend little to the study of feminist—women’s—rhetoric.

The wide-ranging study by McCann caps off a series of research that provides an interesting and complex understanding of Sanger’s rhetoric, from which I draw my own project. Each piece of research reviewed in this section provides a more rich analysis than that found in the preceding review of biographies and interpretations. The studies above, however, fail to satisfy my own interest in an expansive study of Sanger’s rhetoric that focuses on her construction of women’s bodies by tracing the discourses producing Sanger and her rhetoric, Sanger’s own reiteration of discourses, and the subsequent tensions and contradictions. The works by Cuklanz and Hayden consider the influence of social forces but limit themselves to either a single text or a seven issue periodical rather than concentrating on changes in Sanger’s rhetoric over a period of time. Murphy’s analysis of Sanger’s rhetoric follows Sanger’s changes over five years, but considers only the “broad strokes” of Sanger’s rhetoric and never fully engages with the contradictions that arise. The most comprehensive study of Sanger’s career comes from McCann, who tracks those changes from a historical, rather than rhetorical, perspective charting many of the dynamics affecting the birth control movement and Sanger but concentrating minimally on traditional notions of texts (i.e., speeches and published documents).

In the scholarship on Sanger and her rhetoric exists a collage of ideas demonstrating a continuing interest in her career, yet each has limitations to understanding the complexities of Sanger’s discourse. Rhetorical studies by Morehouse, Masel-Walters, and McClearey, as well as

the biography by Lader and *Autobiography* by Sanger, give little-to-no consideration to the operations of power that produce the politics of birth control. The works by Chesler, Schuetz, Cuklanz, Hayden, Murphy, and McCann each acknowledge the social forces contributing to Sanger's rhetoric, though sometimes depicting those factors as changing contexts to which Sanger adjusted her strategy rather than as actually producing changes in the discourses of Sanger and others. In discussing the tumult of social relations, the latter set of researchers have taken interest in the contradictions and tensions of Sanger's rhetoric. The studies reviewed here have an overt commitment to rhetorical theory to varying degrees, with Hayden's as the most stated. I suggest that from fully infusing the study of Sanger with Foucault's work on genealogy—to guide a project that watches for contradiction and tension, considers the ways that discourses meet and diverge to form texts, and understands how power produces bodies—will come a complex understanding of Sanger. Beyond understanding Sanger and her rhetoric, using Foucauldian theory adds to the study of feminist rhetoric a theoretical perspective that discusses the role of power in forming individuals to an ideal despite their resistance to those very social norms. Studies by Chesler, Schuetz, Cuklanz, Hayden, Murphy, and McCann certainly contribute to the discussion of feminist rhetoric, but they rarely explicitly add to feminist theory through an understanding of Sanger. My study of Sanger stands at the crossroads of Foucault and feminist rhetorical studies, seeking to add to our understanding of a specific feminist rhetor while suggesting the addition of a theory of discourse and power to that broader field of study.

Calling for the inclusion of Foucauldian theory into a feminist study requires addressing feminist scholars' concerns about the limitations of using Foucault's theories to discuss gender. I find that despite Foucault's failure to address gender and his emphasis upon docile bodies as passive objects, the Foucauldian theory of power carries potential for understanding a rhetoric

that produces women's bodies. Sandra Bartky raises concern that Foucault's work on social practices that control bodies collapses the distinctions between men and women's bodily experiences (241). The sexes play different roles in reproduction and therefore become subject to dissimilar social discourses about parental responsibility, such as the compulsion to construct maternity as providing emotional care and paternity as providing financial resources. Lois McNay expresses unease with Foucault's emphasis upon bodies as socially produced which replicates women's social status as passive to a monolithic construction (47). McNay worries that ignoring the divergent experiences of men and women, which Bartky also points out in Foucault's work, misses the point that the social production of women and men's bodies varies between and within the sexes according to identities of class, race, religion, sexuality, and so forth (McNay 41). The same social discourses that cherish middleclass parents with several children as valuing ideals of "family" also demean working-class parents with more than two children as irresponsible of their bodies and finances.

Both Bartky and McNay provide their criticisms as warnings rather than final judgments. Bartky's own project focuses on applying Foucauldian notions of discipline and docility to understanding the production of women's bodies in society as normalized against culturally specific notions of femininity. McNay's caution of Foucault's rigid dualism of masculine and feminine invites a complex understanding of gender relations that considers the individualized construction of women according to class, race, age, and so forth. My own approach toward these concerns mimics Jana Sawicki's conclusion on the viability of Foucauldian theory in Feminist studies: "In the 'final' analysis, proof of the value of using Foucault for feminism will be in the puddings, that is, in the practical implications that adopting his methods and insights will have" (109). Accordingly, the feasibility of using Foucauldian theory in my analysis of birth

control rhetoric in general and Margaret Sanger's rhetoric specifically lies in the utility of Foucault's work to provide insight into the discursive construction of Sanger's rhetoric and her own discourse construction of women's bodies.

Taking a genealogical approach, I align this project with those studies of Sanger's rhetoric that have sought complexity by opening themselves to the tensions present within her rhetoric, and I extend their work here by increasing the scope of the study to include a broader period of Sanger's career and the types of texts produced. With this study I also bridge the biographical approaches that discuss Sanger's personal experiences and the strictly rhetorical, or public address, orientations that focus exclusively on the texts Sanger produced. In so doing I wish to recognize that studying Sanger's rhetoric requires understanding discourses of the social milieu that exerted force upon Sanger. I do not mean that a biographical consideration of Sanger will lead to a "deeper" understanding of her texts or to the realization of their point of origination. Through the use of biography, as well as other historical accounts, I consider how the events of her personal life that bear significantly upon her social positioning (case in point, the death of her daughter Peggy) help us to understand the rhetorical impact of discourse that occurs outside the spoken and written word. By applying a genealogical interpretation, discussed in depth in chapter three, I consider in the present study the tensions and contradictions of Sanger's rhetoric within and across texts as she constructs women's bodies, the social discourses in which Sanger's texts emerge, and how those same discourses bear upon her body. The preceding summaries of research on Sanger's career and rhetoric demonstrate a continuing interest that has yet to examine rhetorically the tensions in her discourse over a broader period of time and to consider both Sanger's texts and her body as produced by social discourses.

In writing this study I also seek to meet the needs of rhetorical study partially answered by the preceding analyses. There remains a need for an expansive study of Sanger's rhetoric to consider her unique approach to publicly discussing women's bodies and women's needs for contraception, and history also requires a complex understanding of Sanger's contribution to formally establishing the US birth control movement. Considering the contradictions in Sanger's rhetoric as she discusses women and women's bodies lends to the history of public address on the subject of women's bodies. As a significant figure in the pronounced start of the US birth control movement, Sanger's career and rhetoric demand a complex telling of events that include many histories and the operation of power.

FROM "THE ANTI-CONCEPTION ART" TO "SANGERISM"

Historically speaking, contraceptive practices in cultural groups date back almost as far as intercourse among *homo sapiens*. The documented struggle for the use of contraceptives in the West has a considerably shorter scope. My own project focuses that perspective even more onto the social movement for women's right to contraceptives in the US, concentrating on the early-twentieth century. Every book that approaches the subject of the US birth control movement in the early-twentieth century squarely discusses Sanger's role in the movement, often bordering on biography.⁶ This project is no different. In the brief history I provide in this section, I start with a movement that has appreciable beginnings in the nineteenth century under a myriad of clunky names such as "the anti-conception art," "the laws regulating and controlling the female system," "regulating reproduction," and "the limitation of offspring" (Brodie 5). I then move to the twentieth century when Sanger takes a dominating role in a social idea that she helps to name

⁶ For examples of this pattern see David Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger*; James Reed, *The Birth Control Movement and American Society: From Private Vice to Public Virtue*; Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: Birth Control in America*; and Carole McCann, *Birth Control Politics in the United States, 1916-1945*.

and promote as “birth control,” for which the term “Sangerism” would be a synonym: “This identification of Sanger with contraception made her symbolically and practically the fulcrum of the birth control movement, despite divisions within it” (McCann 5-6). Because of that close connection, a brief biography of Sanger illustrates the birth control movement in the twentieth century.

The Scattered Start of a Movement

Women did practice contraception before an official birth control movement developed. Linda Gordon finds the use of vaginal suppositories and pessaries somewhat common, dating back at least as far as 1850 BC. A number of recipes call for the use of animal dung, such as recipes found in Indian, African, and Islamic cultures though not in Western cultures. Chopped grass or cloth in Africa, algae or seaweed on Easter Island, bamboo tissue paper in Japan, linen rags in Slovakia, wool in Islamic culture and Greece, and sea sponges in ancient-Jewish culture all served as contraceptive devices (42-43). This seeming universal desire by women for the control of reproduction emerges as a fledgling movement in the nineteenth-century US.

Just as the practice of contraception across history and continents had no clear organizing structure, so too the discussion of preventing pregnancy in the nineteenth-century US appears dispersed across the century. Through the better part of the nineteenth century men and women wrote and spoke on how to practice contraception and women’s right to it. Janet Brodie finds that as early as the 1830s discussion of reproductive control took place on the podium and in books and pamphlets: men and women speaking to single- and mixed-sex audiences. The exact content of these speeches eludes us, yet evidence suggests that some lecturers discussed means of contraception while others concentrated more on related topics of women’s anatomy and the process of conception: “Even if they did not impart direct advice about how to control

pregnancy, they encouraged a more positive perspective on fertility intervention” (112). Other women—for it would seem to have been primarily women—who took up the topic of birth control focused on issues of the right to contraceptive use rather than actual means (125-30). Where we have indications that speakers approached the topic of contraception practically and philosophically we know for certain that several publications took both tactics. Brodie reveals that by the mid-nineteenth century a number of books by men dealing with sexual physiology and contraception became widely available. Charles Knowlton’s *Fruits of Philosophy* must have circulated especially well as an edition that measured three by two-and-a-half inches, thus facilitating an easy perusal of the pamphlet before discreetly passing the pocket-sized publication on to friends. In these publications authors took up the matter of using contraceptives for the purpose of enhancing sexual pleasure for both man and woman and provided somewhat detailed advice including fold-out illustrations of male and female genitalia with cut-away views (187, 105, 188).

The actual methods of contraception discussed in lecture, publication, and private parlors constitute a variety of approaches advanced by varying forces. Withdrawal (*coitus interruptus*), douches, sponges, the rhythm method, pessaries, and condoms represent the work of “common sense,” medical and scientific advancement, commerce, and public virtue. The first of these methods, withdrawal, seems to have numerous inventors across the years as individuals came to realize that, in the words of one Appalachian woman, “If you don’t want butter, pull the dasher out in time” (qtd. in Brodie 60). Research indicates that nineteenth-century American women turned to douching as their primary contraceptive practice as the second most popular choice to withdrawal. Into the twentieth century a number of birth control advocates advise the use of douches to cleanse the vaginal cavity of sperm immediately after intercourse. This means

continued to receive substantial encouragement in the twentieth century from companies who sold the syringes and astringent washes, among them the household disinfectant Lysol. Vaginal sponges soaked in douching astringents also enjoyed popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. The rhythm method gained some medical encouragement and insight in the 1840s and 1850s but the accuracy and the effectiveness of the advice varied considerably (67, 70-71, 215, 85). Not until 1924 did doctors accurately chart women's fertile period, and it took almost another decade before doctors in the US came to accept the findings (Gordon 45, 99). This method did receive some acknowledgement from the Catholic church and birth control opponents like Anthony Comstock as a method ethically acceptable as it employed the "natural" means of abstinence (Tone 13).

Where withdrawal, douching, and the rhythm method have little-to-no respect today, two barrier methods, the pessary and condom, popular in the nineteenth century, have respect in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The pessary (forerunner to the Dutch diaphragm) and the condom proved effective in preventing conception and eventually gained legal acceptance. The rubber pessary (or cervical cap) became popular in the 1850s under the auspice of treatment for conditions such as a prolapsed uterus but quickly became a popular contraceptive device (Brodie 221).⁷ Despite the passage of a major obscenity law in 1873 (the Comstock Act), which effectively prohibited the sale of contraceptives, the pessary continued to sell as a treatment for uterine and cervical maladies. Before 1873, however, stores sold and advertised rubber pessaries along with condoms. Where publications seeking respectability shunned advertisements of contraceptives, such items constituted as much as one third of the ad space in sensational tabloids (Brodie 191). After 1873, major companies that produced and sold rubber contraceptives, such as

⁷ The "stem pessary," known today as an intrauterine device, was also prescribed for uterine and cervical maladies.

BF Goodrich, Goodyear, and Sears, Roebuck & Company, would evade prosecution. The use of condoms dates back to at least as far as the 1560s in Europe as protection against syphilis contracted from prostitutes (Tone 30, 51). Into the twentieth century both the medical and legal communities saw condoms in terms of disease prevention for men rather than contraceptive prevention for women, thus allowing the market to protect the interests of men's health from vile, diseased "whores." In the armed services, for example, venereal disease among the men represented the loss of military efficiency especially around the time of World War I, which explains the legalization of condoms by 1918 (Tone 99, 105). Throughout this time public discussion of contraceptives for women remained under the obscenity statute

The means of contraception popular in the nineteenth century and the practical and philosophical public discussions of contraception from that time echo through in Sanger's birth control pamphlet *Family Limitation*. Sanger's information on birth control represents a nexus of nineteenth-century information about and arguments for contraception. Throughout its eighteen or so editions, spanning the years 1914 to at least 1931, Sanger includes in *Family Limitation* a discussion of withdrawal (about which she presents serious reservations), douching (including recipes and instruction), sponges (giving direction in their preparation and use), the rhythm method (referring to it as "a safe period," which she dismisses as unreliable), pessaries (providing diagrams on their use), and the condom (of which she discusses benefits and care instructions). In *Family Limitation*, Sanger, like the lecturers and authors of the nineteenth century, includes diagrams of women's reproductive organs to help familiarize women with their bodies so they could use the contraceptive devices. Sanger's arguments for the use of birth control in *Family Limitation* also relates to guides that stressed the need for women to limit the size of their family for the sake of economic improvement, health, and sexual pleasure (Brodie

183-84). This comparison stresses both Sanger's significance in the history of the birth control movement and the importance of considering how each rhetoric comes as the product of those that preceded. The similarities stress Sanger's position as the coming together of the work of a number of people across the better part of the nineteenth century.

The Woman at the Center of the Movement

Sanger's rhetoric cannot be understood only by looking at previous discourses but by setting her rhetorical career within its own history and in relation to the birth control movement itself. To that end I briefly review Sanger's career and the birth control movement in the early-twentieth century including arrests, legal decisions, and affiliations that form a colorful history of the movement.

Born on September 14, 1879 in Corning, New York as the sixth child of Michael Higgins and Anne Purcell, Margaret Louisa Higgins lived an economically humble childhood. She would dedicate her first book, in 1920, to her mother "who gave birth to eleven living children" and died of tuberculosis on March 31, 1899. Sent to nursing school by her sisters, Margaret Higgins began working as a ward nurse when she met and married Bill Sanger in 1902 and had three children within a ten year period. The Sangers established themselves in the local socialist party and associated with notables such as "Big" Bill Haywood, strike organizer of the Industrial Workers of the World (Chesler 74-76).

During the early teens Sanger began activities that would formally tie her to the birth control movement. Most of her career would center on responding to the Comstock Act of 1873, a section in the US Postal Code which made it obscene and therefore illegal to send through the mails information about contraception or any birth control device. Sanger first ran into the Comstock Act when she wrote a series of articles, "What Every Girl Should Know," for the

leftist publication the *Call*. In early 1913, one of Sanger's installments was suppressed for mentioning gonorrhea and syphilis. Where the article would have appeared, the column read, "What Every Girl Should Know; NOTHING! [written vertically, the length of the column]; By order of the Post Office." A year later Sanger began her own periodical, the *Woman Rebel*, as a socialist organ for feminist issues, including mention of the need for reproductive control. The Post Office suppressed three issues of the *Woman Rebel* for obscenity and inciting violence and charged Sanger in Federal court for the infractions. Before the trial could begin Sanger finished *Family Limitation* and fled to England. Spending a little over a year there, Sanger researched information on contraception, became better associated with neo-Malthusians (who wanted reproductive control for economic reasons), visited Dr. Johannes Rutgers (who ran a birth control clinic in The Hague), and formed long term relationships with Havelock Ellis and others who supported the birth control movement.

Having gained both information and perspectives on birth control from her time in England, Sanger returned to the US in 1915 to stand trial. After returning, Peggy, Sanger's only daughter and youngest child, died of pneumonia and the court, under public pressure, dropped the charges against Sanger. Over the coming years Sanger would continue to agitate for birth control, finding the greatest strides by going to court. Each time she went to court Sanger would gain both public support and increased latitude in the law toward women's access to birth control. After a 1916 cross-country speaking tour about the need for birth control (but not the means), Sanger opened the nation's first birth control clinic. Known as the Brownsville clinic for the poor district of Brooklyn it resided in, Sanger's clinic opened on October 16, 1916 providing contraceptive information to approximately 464 women in the ten days before the police closed it for violating obscenity laws (Chesler 150). Ethel Byrne, Sanger's sister, worked in the clinic and

received a 30 day sentence that ended in her early release from prison after a much-publicized hunger strike. In early 1917, Sanger served her thirty days more quietly than did her sister. During Sanger's brief incarceration came the first numbers of the *Birth Control Review*, which Sanger would edit, help finance, and contribute to for a number of years.⁸

During this time, two other women went to court for publicly advocating birth control. Emma Goldman and Mary Ware Dennett, both of whom had a relationship with Margaret Sanger, sought to give women the right to contraception but both had their careers cut short as a result of court convictions. Goldman, a Russian-born anarchist living in the US, saw contraception as part of a larger program of social reform. In the first decade of the twentieth century Goldman spoke about women's right to contraception rather than providing actual instruction. Goldman called for birth control as part of leftist critique of capitalism to help the poor and emancipate women (Morton 76). Sanger's biographer, Ellen Chesler, indicates Goldman had a significant impact on Sanger's developing ideas about birth control and social reform (87). Goldman's biographer, John Chalberg, notes Goldman regarded birth control as a free speech issue (119). In contrast, Richard Drinnon finds that around 1915 Goldman decided "I must either stop lecturing on the subject or do it practical justice," at which time she addressed an audience of six hundred describing actual contraceptive messages (qtd. in Drinnon 167). Goldman's reluctance to speak openly about birth control came from her fear of deportation; rightly so as the US deported her in December 1919.

Where Goldman spoke about women's rights to contraception and its political importance, Dennett sought to change the attitude about sex in general. Dennett wanted to change public perception about sex so she could educate people about birth control and get

⁸ For discussion of Sanger's significance in financing the *Birth Control Review* in its early days see Chesler (167).

legislation that allowed for anyone to spread contraceptive information. Sanger and Dennett differed on several matters, including Sanger's efforts to open the mails to doctors versus Dennett's work at legislation opening the mails to all (Chen 205). Dennett's belief in enlightening the public's perception about sex in general lead her to write a 1918 sex education pamphlet, *The Sex Side of Life*, in which Dennett discusses human sexuality as entirely natural and an expression of love. After clashes with Sanger on the direction of the movement, Dennett worked less in the movement, though she continued to distribute her sex-education pamphlet, for which she received an obscenity conviction in 1929. Dennett precipitated the legal statute allowing the mailing of medical (non-obscene) discussions of sex by winning an appeal of her conviction.⁹

In the early 1920s Sanger wrote two books arguing for women's right to birth control—*Woman and the New Race* (1920) and *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922)—but her clinical efforts continued to provide an important source of direct action. In 1918 the first of a series of changes to the law as precipitated by Sanger occurred when Judge Crane, of the New York State Court of Appeals, upheld Sanger's obscenity conviction for operating the Brownsville clinic but interpreted the law broadly enough to allow “the physician who in good faith gives such help or advice to a married person to cure or prevent disease” (*New York v. Sanger*). This expansion allowed Sanger to open another clinic in 1923, The Birth Control Clinical Research Bureau (CRB). The CRB gave women counseling on contraceptives after a doctor's examination found health problems indicating their use. The CRB also provided valuable data on the effectiveness of varying types of birth control.¹⁰ In April of 1929, Police raided the CRB for fitting a healthy

⁹ For an excerpt of the decision see Chen 301.

¹⁰ In her *Autobiography*, Sanger claims credit for finding a 98% success rate by combining a spermicidal jelly and a pessary (363).

woman (an undercover police officer) for a diaphragm (Chesler 283). This second trial ended in Sanger's favor when outside doctors concurred that the police officer did have the gynecological conditions discovered at the CRB, which indicated birth control, thereby strengthening the clinic's legitimacy.¹¹ Carole McCann notes that by this time 28 birth control clinics exist in the nation (215).

Between the 1918 and 1929 court decisions Sanger took to other efforts to advance the birth control movement. During the 1920s Sanger had a busy career advancing the birth control movement on several fronts. Sanger began her international efforts by taking a trip to Japan in 1922, speaking about the need for birth control.¹² Afterwards she continued to travel in the region gathering information about the economic situation and women's lives (Chesler 246, 247). Within the movement, Sanger continued to attend conferences relating to birth control in both the US and Europe. Having divorced her husband, William, following a long estrangement, Sanger met and married millionaire Noah Slee, who would help fund her trips and efforts (Chesler 254).¹³ Still publishing actively in the *Birth Control Review* throughout the 1920s, Sanger also published *Motherhood in Bondage*, a collection of women's (and some men's) letters to Sanger explaining their need for birth control.

In the early 1930s Sanger took her work to the African-American community through establishing the Harlem Branch of the CRB. The history of the Harlem clinic demonstrates the racial tensions within the birth control movement and Sanger's orientation toward birth control

¹¹ Sanger seems to enjoy noting that after the trial, the officer, Anna McNamera, returned to the clinic for a follow-up visit for her original diagnosis (*Autobiography* 408).

¹² Sanger would have discussed actual means but her entry visa was granted on the stipulation she would not. Shidzue Kato, however, reports that she personally guarded the door at a small meeting of women where Sanger spoke in English on means of birth control (*Margaret*).

¹³ Chesler notes that in 1925 Slee gave approximately \$50,000 to the American Birth Control League, about ten times more than any other donor (254).

and race. Sanger established the Harlem clinic in 1930 as part of the recognition that the black community suffered from twice the maternal and infant mortality rates as whites. W. E. B. Du Bois endorsed the use of birth control as part of a program of racial progress, education, and stabilizing the family. Other African-American leaders advocated birth control for blacks, arguing for contraceptives' potential to help stabilize the family. The leaders focused on familial concerns rather than bringing up issues of sexual freedom, which held the potential for raising racist stereotypes of African Americans as excessively sexual (McCann 140, 143, 146). The higher fertility rates among blacks over whites had been argued as African Americans' only biological, and decidedly uncivilized, trait that enabled their survival as a race (Hasian 54).

The Harlem clinic sought to deal with racial prejudices as much as it also succumbed to those same biases. Sanger and her lieutenants who ran the Harlem clinic attempted to ease the concerns of both whites and blacks in their operation of the clinic but often gave in to "racial maternalism," speaking as though African-American women needed to be taken care of, before finally losing control of the clinic to white board members with fewer qualms about issues of race. Carole McCann finds that in the black community fears persisted that the white birth controllers wanted to end the African race through contraceptives, so Sanger made sure African Americans always worked on the clinic staff. Fears of racial extinction also lead the clinic to distinguish in its literature contraceptives as separate from sterilization (148-49, 156). Despite the effort to reach out to the black community with sensitivity to the racial divide, Sanger operated from the position of racial maternalism by assuming that women in the black community would have a harder time understanding birth control through science rather than superstition: "Because of her racial maternalism [Sanger] did not expect many to take advantage of that opportunity without special educational efforts to convince them that fertility control

existed and was useful” (151). In the face of racial maternalism, staffers at the clinic worked to avoid giving white opponents more ammunition. McCann finds that in one study Marie Warner creates a comparison of black and white women to accent the need for birth control in the black community without triggering racist stereotypes by writing, “There were an average of four living children and 47% dead per Negro family, and three living children and 23% dead per white family” (qtd. in McCann 153). As McCann notes, “This awkward phrasing makes the higher infant mortality African Americans quite obvious but requires readers to calculate for themselves the total pregnancies for each group before a difference in fertility rates is visible” (McCann 153). In 1935 Sanger allowed the American Birth Control League (ABCL) to fund the clinic, which quickly became a take over by the ABCL and effectively ended the clinic’s help to the women of Harlem (McCann 157-59).

Sanger fought once more for African Americans’ access to birth control in the late 1930s with similar results as the Harlem clinic. Through the Division of Negro Services (DNS), Sanger attempted to reach Southern black women but others would again undermine her efforts with racial insensitivity. Originally Sanger had to argue for the need to invest money in helping poor blacks of the South, rather than whites, as efforts to help poor whites had already begun (161). McCann finds that Sanger learned through her experience with the Harlem clinic that effective efforts to help African Americans had to include African Americans in the planning itself. For this reason Sanger wanted African Americans to train with white fieldworkers and then work on their own. The DNS efforts in the South found success only when African-American nurses were hired to educate women in either a clinical or home setting. The women who met with African-American nurses often dropped out of the program before a follow-up exam with a white doctor (162-63, 161, 164). Apparently, where the women would meet with a nurse of their own race, the

idea of being inspected by a white doctor created resistance. Either way, the DNS would continue, but primarily distributing information. As McCann notes, a race divide existed in all of Sanger's efforts with the black community, inviting African Americans to join after already establishing the program and never asking African Americans to join the larger movement (169).

For Sanger, the 1930s, 40s and 50s swing from great triumph to exclusion by the very movement and organization she helped to found, before she finally leaves a lasting mark on the movement in the US and abroad. Unable to bring about legislation, Sanger returned to the courts to gain judicial backing. In 1932 a Japanese doctor mailed a box of pessaries to Sanger, which the US customs office intercepted as violation of the Comstock Act. Seeing an opportunity to expand the law, Sanger had the pessaries mailed to Dr. Hannah Stone of the CRB. In *United States v. One Package Containing 120, more or less, Rubber Pessaries to Prevent Conception* the US District Court found in Stone's favor because of their legitimate medical use. A year later, in 1936, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the decision, giving doctors the needed freedom to ship contraceptives (Chesler 372-73). The decision cleansed contraception of its imposed obscenity. McCann explains that the decision "effectively legalized birth control because it did not require the presence of disease to legitimate contraceptive prescription" (75). David Kennedy finds an added effect: acceptance by the American Medical Association (AMA). In 1936 the AMA turned a cold shoulder to the issue of birth control, but in 1937 the AMA decided it should conduct contraceptive research, teach such information to its students, and give birth control to any woman wanting it without pathological indication (214-15). Just two years after the *One Package* decision, in 1938, McCann documents there were 374 birth control clinics operating across the country (217).

The sweetness of the 1936 victory faded as organizational issues soured Sanger's efforts. The late 1930s and early 1940s represent a change in the movement away from Sanger's vision. In the 1920s Sanger had left the ABCL, which she helped to found and support, over organizational differences, but Sanger continued to operate the CRB. Mending fences, the ABCL and CRB came together in 1939 to form the Birth Control Federation of America (BCFA), with Sanger as honorary chair of the board (McCann 193-94). Three years later the BCFA sought to distance itself from its radical roots—signaled by “Birth Control”—by becoming the Planned Parenthood Federation of America against Sanger's protest that it lessened the focus on women, a problem she had already observed in the organization's operation (Chesler 392-93).

Where the 1940s show setbacks in Sanger's personal involvement in the movement the 1950s mark a time of renewal for Sanger personally and strides for the birth control movement world wide. With a return to Japan in 1952, Sanger earned the distinction of being the first women to address the Japanese Diet. From Japan Sanger returned to India (having visited India in 1936), where she oversaw the chartering of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in Bombay (Chesler 424). According to her grandson, Alexander Sanger, though Sanger still disliked the name “Planned Parenthood” she was willing to use its familiarity in creating this new organization (*Margaret*). One last great achievement seals Sanger's role as central in the birth control movement. Katherine McCormick had occasionally contributed to Sanger's activities, but with the death of her husband, the heir of the International Harvester fortune, McCormick had the ability to donate significantly more. Sanger introduced McCormick to Dr. Gregory Pincus, who was researching a hormonal contraceptive (Chesler 432). For facilitating the union of money and science, many credit Sanger with bringing about the development of the birth control pill.

This last notable act in Sanger's career, 13 years before her death, follows about 100 years after the invention of the pessary and an increased public discussion and market of contraceptive information. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century the idea of birth control transformed into a readily recognizable movement. In the histories of the movement in the twentieth century, one must deal with Sanger and her career to a considerable degree. Social movements rarely revolve on the work of one person. In the nineteenth century, the beginnings of the birth control movement demonstrate the split focus of philosophical and practical discussion of contraception. In that period, however, basic ideas about means of contraception did emerge. As the history of the early-twentieth century birth control movement demonstrates, Sanger pulls the strands of argument for birth control and means of contraception together by writing extensively about women's right to birth control while working to provide that information to women and secure it as a legal right.

MY ENTRY INTO THE DISCUSSION

To add to the conversation and history of the US birth control movement I focus on Margaret Sanger's rhetoric in the early-twentieth century. In this study I analyze Sanger's rhetoric using the approach of genealogical interpretation covering her activity in the US birth control movement in the early-twentieth century. Analyzing Sanger and her rhetoric I focus on three central questions: how did Sanger's rhetoric produce women's bodies in relation to expectations of femininity?; how and which discourses bore upon Sanger as a rhetor and drove her rhetoric?; and what tensions and contradictions arise in Sanger's rhetoric that tell us about how power operates? To answer these questions I use the approach of genealogical interpretation. Drawing from genealogy, this analytical orientation takes interest in power's productive nature and writes history as an amalgam of events challenging one another.

Interpretivist at root, genealogical interpretation has the ability to focus on one individual and read the rhetor's production of reality as well as the rhetor's production to answer the genealogical concerns about power. Mutually influenced by its contrary relatives, genealogical interpretation writes history by collecting the many pieces genealogy prefers and uses interpretation to hold them together in an incomplete and ironic narrative.

To answer my research question using genealogical interpretation I consider a broad range of Sanger's texts over a forty-year period. The artifacts of analysis include Sanger's available birth control related articles, speeches, and manuscripts from the 1910s through the 1950s including her articles for the two periodicals she edited, her books that addressed women's need for birth control, and the pamphlets Sanger produced on methods of birth control. Sanger's various speeches and articles given and published around the country show the variety of arguments Sanger made about birth control at different locations in time and place. The short lived 1914 publication, *Woman Rebel*, Sanger edited holds historical significance, as previously discussed, for Sanger's efforts to combine socialism and feminism. Looking at the many articles Sanger wrote for the *Birth Control Review* (the publication of the American Birth Control League), which Sanger regularly contributed to and edited, provides insight into Sanger's position on a number of birth control related topics over the period of time when Sanger begins to discuss issues such as eugenics and sterilization. Looking at three books Sanger published on the need for birth control (*Woman and the New Race*, *The Pivot of Civilization*, and *Motherhood in Bondage*), provides a diverse picture of Sanger's arguments for birth control as women's empowerment, social uplift, and humane assistance. Lastly, looking at her birth control pamphlets reveals exactly how Sanger spoke to women about their bodies and the directives she gave regarding contraceptive practice.

This project follows a course that introduces past research on feminist rhetors, explains a fused theoretical approach of genealogy and interpretation, discusses driving histories of Sanger's career, and analyzes Sanger's texts to better understand birth control rhetoric. In chapter two I discuss past studies of US feminist orators, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frances E. Willard, to realize the pattern among feminist rhetors of emphasizing the traditionally feminine role of care taking even as they attempt to challenge social norms of womanhood. Chapter three details the analytical approach of genealogical interpretation (the union of genealogical and interpretivist principles) discussing its approach to power, history, and the role of the rhetor. With chapter four, I provide histories of the social politics and discourses that contributed to Sanger's rhetoric. Analysis begins in chapter five. The first chapter of analysis concentrates on the shift and changes in Sanger's rhetoric from birth control for women's personal benefit to birth control as women's maternal obligation. The analysis of Sanger's rhetoric continues in chapter six, where I demonstrate that Sanger's arguments for birth control become consumed by the discourse of capitalism, as she argues for the control of women's bodies for the purpose of better reproduction. The overall movement between the analyses of chapters five and six demonstrate a shift in Sanger's rhetoric from depicting women as subjects, with control of their bodies, to objects, needing control imposed on their bodies. The concluding chapter reviews the lessons learned from Sanger's rhetoric regarding the birth control movement in the US as well as the operation of disciplines in women's bodies. In the conclusion I offer a final analysis of Sanger's discursive production as a woman by discussing Sanger's interview with the journalist Mike Wallace as he confronts her on issues of feminism. Sanger's interview with Wallace presents a final disciplining of Margaret Sanger. Just as discourses disciplined Sanger by normalizing her to the image of maternity upon her daughter's death, Wallace

disciplines Sanger, in the sense of rapprochement, for her career of violating norms of feminine behavior, chiefly woman's responsibility to stay in the home.

CHAPTER 2

THE TERRAIN OF FEMINIST RHETORIC: MAPPING PREVIOUS STUDIES

According to some, the distinction of the first woman in the US to address an audience of both men and women goes to Maria W. Miller Stewart in 1832 (Campbell, *Man* 17). A little more than sixty years later Margaret Higgins (Sanger), a young-teen in boarding school, gave her first speech on women's rights: "I was so ardent for suffrage, for anything which would 'emancipate' women and humanity, that I was eager to proclaim theories of my own" (Sanger, *Autobiography* 38). Sanger's account of the experience places her in good company with her fellow suffragists:

When news spread that I was to present my essay, "Women's Rights," the boys, following the male attitude which most people have forgotten but which every suffragette well remembers, jeered and drew cartoons of women wearing trousers, stiff collars, and smoking huge cigars. Undeterred I was spurred on to think up new arguments. I studied and wrote as never before, stealing away to the cemetery and standing on the monuments over the graves. Each day in the quiet of the dead I repeated and repeated that speech out loud. What an essay it was! (Sanger, *Autobiography* 38)

Like many suffragists, Sanger encountered resistance to expanding women's influence in the public sphere. The act itself of speaking publicly is inseparable from the subject matter when considering the boys' response to Sanger's early suffrage activism, for both the topic of suffrage and speaking in public represent women's engagement in the traditionally masculine sphere of activity. Understanding the public response to Sanger in her early days of oratory must recognize that the message of women's need for increased rights colors any young woman speaking publicly as more radical than had she expounded on the virtues of, say, motherhood.

In 1916, twenty years after her boarding school declamation on women's suffrage, Sanger prepared for her three-month long, cross-country speaking tour on women's need for

birth control. Sanger's narrative about preparing for the venture harkens back to her graveyard rehearsals as an adolescent, but here Sanger underscores her reluctance and inexperience:

Although by nature I shrank from publicity, the kind of work I had undertaken did not allow me to shirk it—but I was frightened to death. Hoping that practice would give me greater confidence, I used to climb to the roof of the Lexington Avenue hotel where I was staying and recite, my voice going out over the house tops and echoing timidly among the chimney pots. (*Autobiography* 192-93)

Here too, Sanger frames herself in a manner consistent with women speakers before her.

Nineteenth-century social reformer Mary A. Livermore writes in her autobiography about her disinclination to take the podium and her lack of training: “I never sought the place, for I realized my disadvantages. I was no longer young, and lacked grace and beauty. . . . I had never recited an hour's training in elocution or voice culture, and had paid no attention to oratory, for I had no ambition in that direction” (qtd. in Johnson 132). Both Sanger and Livermore stress that their motivation for speaking in public comes from some other place than personal ambition, and audiences should likely understand that place as their compassion for others. By emphasizing a reluctance to speak but willingness to act for others' benefit, Sanger pointed to the traditional feminine quality of selflessness. Sanger, like countless women before and after her, would have to navigate the expectations for women's domesticity while acting in the public sphere. Using Michel Foucault's notion of discipline, the principle that discourse continually works to situate bodies to meet social norms, explains the descriptions of public speaking by both Sanger and Livermore as conforming to social expectations of performing femininity.

Foucault's work on power and bodies, however, has yet to be embraced by many studies of feminist rhetoric. Criticism of feminist rhetoric has reached a crisis of theory to directly discuss the unique circumstances of women speaking in public. As the review of literature below demonstrates, much of the criticism of feminist rhetoric “[produces] fairly traditional ‘great

speaker' studies, save the speaker is female" (Dow and Tonn 286). Many of the studies fail to consider the dynamics of what happens when women act rhetorically and how those dynamics bring about particular responses by the speaker. To date, the primary contribution toward a theory of feminist rhetoric comes from Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, whose notion of feminine style provides the basis for much feminist rhetorical criticism. Although Campbell's contribution has had significant impact on the study of feminist rhetoric, there remains the need for more theory to explain how women navigate the social forces that compel women to conform to certain notions of femininity and womanhood even as women attempt to challenge those norms by entering the public sphere. I suggest that Foucauldian theory can aid in that need. Drawing primarily on Foucault's notion of discipline, I offer the suggestion of thinking about women rhetors in terms of how they must negotiate social expectations for prescribed behavior as they act rhetorically.

In what follows I review the literature of feminist criticism to illustrate a pattern of findings to which Foucauldian theory can respond. I begin by discussing the idea of men and women's separate spheres of actions including the problems with such a model of social activity. Then, I move to drawing out the lessons of feminist rhetoric contributed by past research to provide an understanding of the history and scene of women's public address in the US into which Sanger enters and must act. From that review, I raise questions about the role and absence of theory in feminist rhetorical criticism and the particular needs for a Foucauldian approach. In this chapter I introduce the need for Foucault's theory in the study of feminist rhetoric, and I explicate that theoretical program in chapter three. The review of research begins with studies of women's oratory in the nineteenth century, divided into three categories of research: "great speaker" studies of women, the realization of women's gender in rhetorical activity, and studies

of feminist movements in the nineteenth century. The patterns and limitations of this body of research come together in an extended discussion of the need for theory in rhetorical analysis of feminist rhetoric and Foucault's ability to meet that challenge.

The review of nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric and the role of Foucauldian theory in that discussion create a context for the study of Margaret Sanger's rhetoric. The patterns and expectations of nineteenth-century feminists give perspective to Sanger's discourse on birth control, illuminating the historically based compulsion of feminist rhetors to align themselves with expectations of women's domesticity. That context explains the initial reactions to Sanger's radical call for women's right to birth control and her subsequent concessions to social demands for women to fulfill their nature. The utility of Foucault's theory of power to understand the dynamics of power acting upon feminists rhetors, indicated throughout this review of literature, builds the case for the use of Foucauldian theory to study Sanger's rhetoric and the social forces that acted upon her.

WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC (SPEAKING) SPHERE

The study of women's rhetoric must include a consideration of the ways in which women, as rhetors, have had to negotiate their role as speaking subjects. Public speaking clearly involves activity in the public sphere which has long been defined and controlled by men. In the nineteenth century, women speaking in public represented an abandonment of the private sphere, where women's duties lay, and usurping men's privilege. Discussing separate spheres of masculine and feminine activity has itself become a subject of debate. In the following I briefly discuss the debate regarding men and women's separate spheres of activity, mirroring lines of public and private, and situate this project as accepting the limitations of separate-sphere thinking while also recognizing that dominant nineteenth-century US culture included a strong

separate-sphere orientation. Having situated this project within the separate spheres debate I briefly review scholarship that looks at the tensions of women entering the public sphere as political activists. Specifically, I discuss Susan Zaeske's study of women's use of petitions as political action and Zaeske's history of the term "promiscuous audience" to describe women addressing audiences that included men. I add Ruth Laurion Bowman's research on stagings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that removes from the performances the opportunity for women to publicly engage in political debate.

The discussion of the tensions that occur when women speak emanates from the idea that men and women exist and operate in separate spheres that include contrasting expectations. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell finds that the framing of speaking in public as a competition requiring orators to display confidence, aggressiveness, and demand respect conflicts with notions of True Womanhood (*Man* 10-11). Barbara Welter's essay on "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" explicates the arguments of the mid-nineteenth century US for women's limitation to the domestic sphere. Discourse about True Womanhood combined with Christian patriotism to establish distinct arenas for men and women's activities: "If anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex virtues which made up True Womanhood, he (sic) was damned immediately as an enemy of God, of civilization, and of the Republic" (Welter 21). Welter finds that nineteenth-century women's magazines and religious literature outlined a True Woman's domain of interests as the moral support of the husband, care for children, and dedication to the Church and Union.

The characterization of social expectations of femininity Welter provides raises issues about the popular understanding of the masculine/ feminine dichotomy. Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher's edited volume *No More Separate Spheres!* challenges the binarisms of

separate-sphere ideology by illustrating the assumptions of women's race and class. The "Cult of True Womanhood" addresses standards of conduct for white, middle-class women who could avoid employment outside the home and did not suffer from the same kind of sexual abuse at the hand of their masters as slave women or degrading public expressions of their sexuality as did free black women. Davidson and Hatcher also challenge the tendency to attribute virtue to the "powerless" women of the domestic sphere and saving all the villainy for the men of the public sphere (12). White, upper-middle class women's employment of those women from outside the scope of the True Womanhood (white and nonwhite women of the working class) implicates the female employer of cheap, physical laborers as exploitative as much as the male, factory-floor manager. Further complicating a discussion of True Womanhood, Marsha Houston would add that the traits of True Womanhood reflect all that society cherishes about white women (e.g., passivity and sexual purity) and everything despised from the social attributions of black women (e.g., domineeringness and sexual promiscuity) (49).

The concerns of racial and class biases in Welter's analysis must take into consideration the utility of discussing the idea of True Womanhood. The 1976 thesis of True Womanhood bears the limitations of its time while providing a useful image of idealized femininity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Welter's understanding of the representation of women in the nineteenth century reveals its place in second-wave feminist scholarship, yet the image of True Womanhood provides a useful definition of the feminine ideal in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The idealized image of womanhood Welter presents provides context for understanding the evaluations made of feminist rhetors during the late- and post-Victorian eras. The notion of True Womanhood, itself, as gleaned from literature of the late-nineteenth

century represents the idealized model of femininity of that period rather than an accurate representation of women's lives and experiences.

In light of criticisms of the notion of True Womanhood, I position this project as both aware of the shortcomings of Welter's thesis and appreciative of what it offers. The review of literature on feminist rhetoric I provide in this chapter reflects the trend of focusing on the rhetoric of white, upper-middle class women. Taking into account Davidson and Hatcher and Houston's points about the construction of True Womanhood through the exclusion of non-white and/or upper-middle class women I use Welter's depiction of True Womanhood as representative of a dominant discourse about femininity that privileged white women of the upper-middle class, who, not incidentally, represent most of the primary figures recorded in the dominant histories of nineteenth-century feminist movements. Recognizing the specific scope of Welter's analysis I employ her description to understand the culture of the women who Welter and many feminist critics study while also acknowledging the contingency of the definition of True Womanhood to avoid reinscribing the bias back onto the subject. I also add that while True Womanhood far from represents the culture of all US women in the nineteenth century, it does represent the model against which nonwhite and non-upper-middle class women were compared.

Responding to Welter's claims from a different perspective, Monika Elbert takes issue with Welter's projection onto history of clearly delineated spheres of masculine and feminine activity, noting the problems of totalizing characterizations of history. Elbert challenges the idea that men and women inhabited such distinctly different spheres, suggesting that the "line between the spheres to be much finer and the boundaries blurrier than was maintained in the past" (2). In the edited volume *Separate Spheres No More*, Elbert shows that women in the nineteenth-century US challenged ideas espoused by True Womanhood doctrine as they took

interest in those things outside the domestic purview, such as physical improvement and a concern for business and politics (17-19). Susan Marshall, for example, notes that white women of certain social position authored many etiquette books establishing for many norms of behavior practiced in the home for public performance (37). Instead of taking Elbert's book as a way of refuting Welter, I see each as a study of discourses concerning men and women in the US.

Although Elbert demonstrates that women took part in matters outside the scope of True Womanhood, Welter's argument remains that popular discourses did depict a sphere of proper activity, to which the women of Elbert's study had to respond. In a Foucauldian vein, Welter speaks to the availability of a counter-discourse residing in the main: "The very perfection of true Womanhood, moreover, carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction. For if woman was so very little less than the angels, she should surely take a more active part in running the world, especially since men were making such a hash of things" (Welter 41).

Operating under the understanding that True Womanhood doctrine and separate sphere metaphors depict the experiences of many white, upper-middle class women and the biased standards against which all other women were judged, I move to considering rhetorical studies that focus specifically on women's entrance into the public sphere. Several scholars have considered the mediation by women rhetors as they violated expectations of their gender in acting rhetorically. The research discussed here finds that women's entrance into the public sphere of speaking and politics raised the ire of many in positions of social power as inappropriate of proper feminine conduct, read as expectations of white, upper-middle class women. In *Signatures of Citizenship*, Susan Zaeske discusses the means by which women attempted to break from and yet conform to conventions of True Womanhood by signing abolitionist petitions. Zaeske's second study analyzes the history and the application of the term

“promiscuous audience” to a woman speaking before a group of men and women as an insult of sexual corruption upon the speaker for attempting influence in the public sphere. The issue of promiscuity and women’s public address meet in Ruth Laurion Bowman’s study of theatrical representations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that construct the performance as a moral exhibition in part through the exclusion of women’s political statements. The studies by Zaeske and Bowman demonstrate both the need for discussing the way women have negotiated their role in the public sphere and where Foucauldian theory can aid in explaining the dynamics of power women must negotiate when acting publicly.

In her book, *Signatures of Citizenship*, Susan Zaeske studies the use of petitions by women in the abolitionist movement to better understand how a woman’s signature gave her the opportunity for public activity and defined herself as a political agent independent of her husband or father. In keeping with social demands like those of True Womanhood, the women who signed petitions engaged in “the religious speech act of prayer,” an act wholly consistent with the demands on/for their moral nature (Zaeske, *Signatures* 48). Former President and then US Representative John Quincy Adams argued for Congress’s acceptance of the petitions in a manner keeping with the expectations of women as caregivers. Adams argued that women had the right to speak about anything pertaining to “the general welfare” (qtd. in Zaeske, *Signatures* 143). The female abolitionists further linked their gendered expectations and the act of prayer by addressing their petitions to “the Fathers and Rulers of our Country,” a practice different from men’s petitions (Zaeske, *Signatures* 55). The phrasing positioned women’s petitions to men and prayers to God as synonymous. From Zaeske’s analysis comes the implication that women’s petitions operated as intercessory prayers for enslaved women who could not sign. As Zaeske points out, white women signing petitions for slave women placed the women signing in the

familiar position like that of “white men and all women” (*Signatures* 65). Signing petitions not only gave white women the power to affect the destiny of black women, it also redefined the women’s citizenship.

By signing a petition women declared themselves as a politically active, aware, and independent women existing as autonomous legal entities. Through blurring the lines of prayer and political action, women entered into the political scene by drawing upon their status as moral members of the household (Zaeske, *Signatures* 59). The women’s signatures also signaled their knowledge and their own opinion on a political issue, “Willingness to learn about a public issue and potentially express one’s opinion about it was a major step in becoming a public actor” (Zaeske, *Signatures* 107). The expression of a political opinion also represented the women’s resistance to ideas about women’s bodies (and minds) as men’s property. Women who signed petitions sidestepped the men in their lives for their political influence and “threw off the cover of their husbands or fathers and asserted their existence as political individuals” (Zaeske, *Signatures* 109). The use of petitions by women demonstrates both the ways in which the women used discourses that generally constrained their action to the domestic sphere to involve themselves in the public and also how discourses of women’s domesticity could continue to limit their social action by relegating them to topics of a spiritual nature. A Foucauldian consideration of this issue would better situate it within a theory of power and discourse by delving into the power dynamics that require women to form themselves as subjects to men’s authority even as they contest men’s actions.

The difference’s between men and women’s public persona evidenced by their respective use of petitions also arises in Zaeske’s study of the expression “promiscuous audience,” which shows a difference in response to women and men’s appearance before mixed-sex audiences. In

another study Zaeske turns to the topic of women as orators and concentrates on the phrase “promiscuous audience” to understand the way popular discourse framed women speaking. Zaeske shows that the description applied when women spoke to an audience that included men. The use of the word “promiscuous” served as a response to women’s entrance into the public sphere by reprimanding the female speakers with the charge of anti-femininity to which the women emphasized their moral, feminine duty in speaking. The term “promiscuous audience” came into popular use in the 1820s and implied concern about women’s sexuality and morality. Thomas Jefferson and others protested against women speaking to audiences of men because women use sexual rather than logical suasion drawing men to dangerous decisions like the Sirens of the sea or Eve in Eden. The charge of “promiscuity” applied only to women speaking to a mixed-sex audience and not men speaking to the same audience.¹ Zaeske points out that the difference in men speaking to an audience with women and women to an audience with men lies in the audience members’ political ability; when women spoke to men they had the chance to persuade a voting, politically recognized citizen and thus have an impact on politics and the public sphere (Zaeske, “Promiscuous” 197-98). The accusation of women’s promiscuity illustrates an attempt to force women back into the model of domesticity presented by the cult of True Womanhood. In response, the women positioned themselves as within the bounds of socially accepted domesticity because “they were fulfilling their duty as moral beings [in speaking against slavery]” (Zaeske, “Promiscuous” 203). The tensions that arose from the prescriptions of the domestic sphere and women’s defense that they had not left it could benefit from critique by Foucault’s theory of discourse and bodies, discussing the way that constructions of bodies must always conform to social patterns, even when those bodies try to resist them. The

¹ Despite the description of the audience as “promiscuous” the sense of impropriety was displaced onto the (female) speaker.

label promiscuous audience sought to discipline, in the sense of reprimand, women who violated social expectations in attempting to sway men's political action.

Issues of morality and promiscuity with regard to women's appearance in public come through in Ruth Laurion Bowman's look at theatrical adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Bowman shows that translations of Harriett Beecher Stowe's novel to the stage remove instances of women openly and intelligently articulating their abolitionist views. By situating her characters in the domestic sphere of the home, Stowe created a "site where the anti-slavery views of (white) women are privileged over the views of men" (119). Bringing Stowe's novel to the stage without sufficient change would have empowered women in a public venue and in the midst of a theatrical performance to speak articulately against slavery "very much like an abolitionist meeting where women would be standing in public before mixed audiences speaking intelligently and passionately against slavery" (122). Having removed the improprieties of women speaking publicly to a promiscuous audience one promoter called his theater a "Temple of the Moral Drama," and others experienced a surge in attendance of the socially respectable (Bowman 121, 123). From Bowman I take the lesson that, by removing women's overt political expressions and returning them to articulations secondary to men, the theaters disciplined Stowe's female characters back into an acceptable model for the upper-middle class, who had financial access to the theatre.

The rhetorical acts by which women have taken part in the public sphere demonstrate a pattern of defying the social demand for their maintaining woman's place in the domestic sphere and making concessions to expectations of woman's social function. Discussing the findings of this research through Foucault's theoretical lens of discipline as seeking to conform bodies to established norms sheds insight onto the relationship of these cases. Disciplines require that an

individual meet certain expectations. By engaging in the public sphere women violated those expectations. To keep themselves within an established place in the social order, women emphasized other areas of the discipline to which they surrendered themselves. The above studies each reconstitute this pattern. Women's use of petitions as prayers, which Zaeske discusses, to the men in government reaffirmed that their action could only come as pleading to the men in charge. The responses of women to charges of "promiscuity," that their work kept within the framework of True Womanhood, also discussed by Zaeske, reduced the change available by accepting that women had to justify their presence on the platform. Stowe's abolitionist exercises, analyzed by Bowman, only found expression when women were muted. I value each of these studies but suggest that the addition of Foucauldian theory would further the discussion of tensions that arise when women speak. The use of Foucault's theory of discipline and power would consider the resistance to cultural norms activated by women publicly speaking and the subsequent response of dominant discourses to return those women to their expected role.

A CASE BY CASE LOOK AT FEMINIST RHETORIC

Much like the studies of women's entrance into the public sphere, the literature on feminist rhetoric carries with it a preponderance of research dedicated to white, upper-middle class women. The analyses demonstrates a long history of women trying to negotiate their public activity with the expectations of late- and post-Victorian notions of domesticity and scholarship that reinscribes that role upon women. In the above discussion I argue that women face unique challenges when publicly speaking, namely the act itself of speaking in public especially to audiences that included men. Studies of feminist rhetoric must then consider how women gained access to the podium and credibility in speaking when cultural norms, like that of True

Womanhood, stood in their way. I organize the studies below into three categories according to their degree of conversation with women's challenges to speaking publicly. The first review covers research that seems unaware of expectations on gender, closely following Aristotelian assumptions of rhetoric. In the second review, I cover research that directly discusses the specific challenges feminist rhetors face. Last, I cover research on nineteenth-century feminist movements to consider how the lessons gained by an awareness of the gender constraints inform our understanding of women's involvement in the abolitionist, women's suffrage, and temperance movements.

A review of the literature on feminist rhetoric requires distinguishing between feminist and women's rhetoric. Reducing feminist rhetoric to traditional feminist topics (e.g., suffrage, rights of the body, etc.) has the unhappy consequence of forcing us to determine what issues constitute "true" feminist concerns and what a woman (or man?) must say to earn the title "feminist." In this project I purposefully conflate the term woman rhetor into feminist, for whenever a woman acts rhetorically, entering into the public sphere, she challenges hegemonic notions of femininity and redefines women's role in society. This admittedly brings about the curious instance of calling Phyllis Schlafly, who has made a career of deriding self-identified feminists, a feminist rhetor, and yet, it seems right. Despite her harangues against women leaving the duties of the home, Schlafly's participation in public discourse creates space for women in defining the order of the social structure, what I consider a central goal of feminism.

This review of literature, then, covers research that has discussed how those American women who come before Sanger have acted rhetorically and in so doing created space for women in the public sphere. First I look at those studies of women as rhetors that follow the tradition of "great speaker" studies. These case studies discuss women's rhetoric without

considering the feminist nature of their oratorical activity, or how the women managed their identity as women inhabiting a man's position by speaking publicly. The second set of analyses I review demonstrates what I call "an awakening to gender." In these criticisms of women's rhetoric, the critic recognizes the feminist nature of their subjects' work and the uniqueness of a woman rather than a man speaking. Rhetorical examinations of nineteenth-century feminist movements comprise the last group of studies I review. Specifically, I discuss rhetorical analyses of women's involvement in the abolitionist, nineteenth-century suffrage (both for and against), and temperance movements. Throughout the reviews I demonstrate that each study can add to the discussion of feminist rhetoric by the inclusion of Foucault's theory of discourse and discipline. Specifically, Foucauldian theory offers a discussion on the ways in which social discourses seek to align bodies and knowledge with predetermined ideals. The discussion of power Foucault offers recognizes that social cooptation often neutralizes resistance to cultural norms. The studies that follow repeat a pattern of women violating a cultural norm by speaking in public and reaffirming that norm through their persuasive strategies or through public response.

"Great 'Women' Speakers"

The earliest studies of women speakers, those from as early as 1943, discuss the rhetoric of US nineteenth-century female orators but give little attention to the feminist nature of women speaking in public. This set of analyses fails both to recognize the ways that these speakers, as women, faced unique rhetorical challenges and to consider how women responded to those barriers. Within these studies of women's rhetoric, however, lies the potential for discussing the social production of women in prototypical feminine roles even as they transgress that image through public speaking. Doris Yoakam's "Women's Introduction to the American Platform"

from 1943 discusses early feminist rhetors (going back to the 1830s) but neglects to consider how the descriptions of the speakers from their respective times demonstrate the continual production of women in terms of their feminine duty and skills. Similarly, Lillian O'Connor's 1954 Neo-Aristotelian analysis of early-American feminist rhetors, *Pioneer Women Orators: Rhetoric in the Ante-Bellum Reform Movement*, only inadvertently demonstrates the androcentric nature of traditional models of public address. The single-speaker studies by Beth Waggenpack and Richard Leeman concentrate upon the arguments of a single woman orator, yet neither Waggenpack nor Leeman consider how the speakers employed lines of reasoning usually considered more suitable to women than to men. In each of these four studies lies the opportunity for including a Foucauldian perspective to open up the discussion of power and the production of women's bodies occurring when women speak in public.

Fittingly, these great speaker studies of women begin with the cardinal anthology of public address analysis, *A History of American Public Address*. William Brigance's volume of great speakers in US history remains a significant volume on American public address. The chapter by Doris Yoakam in Brigance's volume possibly provides the earliest study of women speaking. Yoakam's account of responses to women speaking demonstrates the habit of popular discourse to define women in traditional terms even as they acted nontraditionally by speaking in public. In the review of feminist orators in the mid-nineteenth century, Yoakam demonstrates an awareness of the uniqueness of women speaking against the norm of men and draws out examples of the ways in which description of the women sought to depict the women speaking in the language of "feminine" activity. Yoakam opens her history with the critical observation that remains a central point in much scholarship on women's rhetoric, "In spite of the thrilling opportunities for action in the outside world, woman's 'sphere' was in the home where . . . it was

believed she could yield the greatest return” (153). Though others have since questioned the actual division of public and private spheres between men and women, the recognition that women’s experiences, versus that of men, situates women differently from male rhetors remains a defining point of feminist criticism. In the essay, Yoakam describes the activity and topics of a number of US women from Abby Kelly, who openly chastised those in her audience sympathetic to slavery (calling them robbers, liars, adulterers, etc.), to Sallie Holley, who sought to create a sense of sympathy among her audience for slaves (167, 183).

The description Yoakam provides of the pioneering women’s oratorical careers includes telling observations about the compulsion of discourse to normalize women’s activity. Frequently the descriptions of women speaking that Yoakam incorporates in the study reveal the normalization of women speaking in public to the expectations of/for their domesticity. Of Angelina Grimké one newspaper said she “could reel off an antislavery speech two and a half hours in length in excellent offhand style as easily as if she were engaged at the spinning wheel, where she should have been occupied” (Yoakam 152). Yoakam fails to make the point that the newspaper account prescribed Grimké’s appropriate sphere of action and insisted on describing her activity in the typically masculine realm by using expressions tied to feminine activity. Likewise Yoakam makes no comment on the feminization of Lucretia Mott’s presentation of arguments by the *Boston Post* as well done “as if she were home knitting a pair of socks for her sleeping grand-child, while she gently jogged its cradle with her well-employed toe” (qtd. in Yoakam 169). The depiction of Mott’s domesticity and maternity further demonstrates the continuing effort to locate women in the private sphere. Both the descriptions of Grimké and Mott, however, do depict the women’s abilities to engage in political discourse as no more impossible than the duties of the home left to women—taking for granted their ability to perform

those tasks well. The significance of Yoakam's review of women orators in the mid-nineteenth century lies in beginning the effort to include women's participation on the public platform in the writing of history. Yoakam's analysis, however, wants for a means to discuss how public discourses framed the women's activity to relocate them in the domestic sphere despite their emergence from it.

Lillian O'Connor's study of women from the mid-nineteenth-century US, the same period that Yoakam examines, provides a useful history of women's oratorical activity, but the attempt to discuss the uniqueness of women speaking through an Aristotelian analysis dampens under O'Connor's strict application of a theory unable to fully address the complexity of feminism. O'Connor's Aristotelian analysis finds the women in the study less than effective, but I take this as proof that the study of women's rhetoric requires an approach different from men's. The survey O'Connor provides opens with a careful description of the legal sanctions that disempowered women (e.g., lack of enfranchisement, laws against ownership of property, etc.) in the nineteenth-century US. In that history of women's social position O'Connor takes note of schools for women, like those founded by Catherine Beecher, that taught young women to take subordinate positions in society avoiding attention and modeling vulnerability (29). As with Yoakam, O'Connor's consideration of women's social position represents the importance, even in this early scholarship on feminist rhetoric, of considering societal norms regarding women's activity in the public sphere. O'Connor's attempt to work through this issue with Aristotelian theory demonstrates the need for a different theoretical approach when analyzing women's rhetoric.

In discussing the three nineteenth-century US locations that might be considered as Aristotelian forums of rhetoric, "the bar, the assembly, the pulpit," O'Connor takes note that

women had little entree into the first two of these. Therefore, women could only enter the public sphere as speaking figures through the pulpit (O'Connor 109). O'Connor's response to this demonstrates that Aristotelian theory of public address carries biases that exclude women, a point that O'Connor fails to address in the remainder of the study: "It may be conjectured that less animosity might have been encountered by these early abolitionists if the rhetorical textbooks had indicated another *scene* suitable for the oratory which women speakers could have utilized" (emphasis original) (109). O'Connor neglects to mention it, but, I infer from this that women's limited access to the platform via the pulpit required the use of spiritually intoned and related rhetoric. Again, O'Connor's study carries the potential for greater insight by adding to it a theory of discourse, like Foucault's, that better acknowledges the ways that discourse can only produce certain kinds of speaking subjects.

The use of Aristotelian theory also proves awkward when discussing feminist rhetoric when the critic must make determinations about a speaker's rhetorical effectiveness. By relying on Aristotelian theory, O'Connor cannot help but come to the conclusion that the women under study are less than completely proficient in public address, whereas a theory of feminist rhetoric could provide a response aware of the power dynamics affected and acting when a woman speaks. In this study the consideration of women's unique social location comes under O'Connor's discussion of the speakers' ethos: "Any woman who had the temerity to step forth upon the public platform to address a promiscuous assembly was considered by most people in nineteenth-century America to be without two of these characteristics ["good sense, high moral character, and goodwill"]" (135). O'Connor uses this to acknowledge that when women spoke they challenged notions of women's virtue by renouncing the social edict to remain seen and not heard and violated norms of goodwill by leaving their God-assigned sphere of the home. In the

analysis, O'Connor's finds that some of the women in the study shored up concerns about ethos through by citing passages from the Bible (139). In making her argument, O'Connor misses the opportunity to the discuss means by which women normalized their behavior to soothe the ministerial attacks made against women speaking, but she does at least recognize the use of Biblical scripture as an effort to establish credibility particular to women's position. As O'Connor summarizes, "The purpose of this book was to discover whether or not women of the early reform platform utilize *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos* in the texts of their addresses," therefore the analysis can only speak to the use of Aristotelian criteria and not directly attend to the concerns of gender and public speaking (230).

Other studies of feminist rhetors, coming after the development of feminist rhetorical theories, have also given less attention to discussing the ways that women, as women, speak and how social forces effect their rhetorical choices and strategies. Like the analyses by Yoakam and O'Connor, the respective single speaker studies by Beth Waggenpack and Richard Leeman of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frances E. Willard fail to address the constraints of women speaking but their findings do lend themselves to a feminist discussion of the women's rhetoric. Waggenpack's study of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's oratory, like the work by Yoakam and O'Connor, deserves merit for the attention given to a feminist rhetor, but, also like Yoakam and O'Connor, Waggenpack's analysis suffers from the absence of theory to understand Stanton's rhetoric in the context of a woman speaking. The investment of resources and thought into a study of a single feminist orator warrants respect as a kind of reparation for the absence of women in the cannon of great speaker's and the studies of their careers. For the sake of rich criticism, however, Waggenpack needs to add in a theory that will open up new understandings of Stanton's texts and career.

In the analysis, Waggenspack recounts a number of arguments that Stanton made in her career concerning women and suffrage, marriage, education, and other topics. The examination of arguments leaves absent any new understanding of the ways that women must make a case for women's rights to actually bring about change. The study requires some explanation of the social discourses acting upon women constraining Stanton's arguments. For example, Waggenspack observes that many of Stanton's supporters found her views on marriage, which pivoted on a defense of divorce, untenable as it connoted ideas of free love and challenged social and Christian traditions (Waggenspack 65-66). This example reads much like history, whereas a Foucauldian response might address the fact that in challenging dominant discourses that defined women, the lack of a pervasive and seemingly coherent counter-discourses to provide women with an alternate construction of self limited the potential of Stanton's arguments.

Waggenspack's study also needs a theoretically informed approach to better understand Stanton's navigation of power dynamics in making public appearances. Several times in the 1989 study, Waggenspack makes observations about Stanton that begin to critically respond to the ways that Stanton situated herself within the demands of dominant discourses, but Waggenspack inevitably stops short of a what has the potential for a more intriguing analysis. In particular, Waggenspack notes that "Stanton usually wore a matronly black silk dress with lacy white cuffs and collar She further legitimized her maternal identification by offering to help with crying infants and giving advice on baby care" (31). Only the comment that Stanton "legitimized her maternal identification" speaks to the necessity for Stanton to publicly perform the private obligations of femininity/motherhood. Just as Yoakam includes but does not respond to accounts of women speaking described through the frame of their domestic obligations, Waggenspack fails to consider how women speaking must continually establish their credentials to speak

through the irony of highlighting their ability to perform in the private sphere. Such discussion would add a richer understanding of what happens when women speak.

Similarly, the study of Frances Willard's oratory by Leeman also examines feminist rhetoric without discussing the complex matter of a woman speaking. Leeman's analysis of Willard's rhetoric studies the kinds of arguments that Willard used without discussing the relationship between the elements of her speeches and the social position of Willard as a woman. The examination of Willard's speaking notes technical aspects such as, "Questions are used as transitional as well as enthymematic devices" (35). This kind of criticism often earns legitimacy in the cannon of public address studies for its careful consideration of the use of language. In so doing, however, the critic elides the fact that a woman speaking evokes in her audience a distinctly different set of discourses from when a man speaks. These studies also show a lack of interest in how women have had to negotiate their experience of challenging social norms through the act of public speaking, as when Leeman discusses the arguments Willard used, despite the fact that the summaries provided beg for a consideration of the enactment of gender.

The study of Willard's rhetoric that Leeman provides includes some recognition of Willard's sex, but uses the social construction of women as a backdrop rather than applying the social context as a way of understanding how the forces within the scene constrain the kinds of things she could and would say. Leeman acknowledges—halfway through his analysis—that (white) women in early US history "were seen as arbiters of public morality" (55). In the analysis Leeman draws out examples of Willard's rhetorical construction of a new woman who complies with what Willard describes as her naturally separate spheres of action and concern, the home (72). In actuality, Willard's rhetoric complicates itself by celebrating women's domestic role while acting outside of it (speaking publicly) and a discourse that cannot imagine a new

woman who refuses to perpetuate a blatantly patriarchal system. Even though Willard criticizes men for having undue control over women's lives (the right to whip their wives, control their wives' property, etc.) the stress on the traditional roles of men and women pervades when Willard asks husbands to see wives as their "counselors" (Leeman 75). The discourses of the day, which produced women as men's property and for their benefit, and the Protestant doctrine that Willard relied upon so heavily restrained Willard from any radical conclusion. Laying a theory of power—one that understands people as produced in the image of cultural norms—over Leeman's analysis reveals that Willard's attempt to use Christian ideals to move men to grant women more rights confined and limited the extent of change she sought.

The studies by Yoakam, O'Connor, Waggenpack, and Leeman all demonstrate an interest in women's rhetoric but fail to give much attention to the power dynamics active when women speak. By adding Foucault's theory of discourse the studies would address not just women's arguments when speaking but how they argued *as* women, as feminists. I now turn attention to those studies that have tried to consider women's negotiation of feminist activity.

An Awakening to Gender

Where the previous studies reviewed discuss their subjects free of concerns regarding gender, the following demonstrate an awareness and interest in how women as public speakers negotiated their identity as women while acting out against dominant social conventions. The analyses discussed in this section exhibit what I call an awakening to gender that marks the shift toward a complex model of public speaking that accounts for how the social expectations of gender produce women's approach to public speaking as different from men's. The studies discussed above and those reviewed here provide the needed concentration on women in the history of American public address. The scholarship considered here goes further toward

understanding issues of power and gender with regard to public speaking. Charles Conrad's discussion of the emergence of a suffrage movement demonstrates an appreciation for the political direction and intent of feminists movements. Concentrating specifically on Aristotelian rhetorical criticism and women's rhetoric, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell argues that older models of rhetoric lack an ability to consider the oxymoron of women speaking publicly, instances of women speaking to an audience (i.e., other women) that has limited ability to act on the message. In *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Campbell extends her argument regarding the inability of Classical theory to understand feminist rhetoric by proposing the notion of feminine style, a manner of speaking Campbell describes as much like craft learning and therefore congenial to women. Phyllis Japp's analysis of Angelina Grimké's rhetorical style reveals a complex negotiation of expectations regarding the construction of women's oratorical voice that can only attempt a masculine style when wearing the vestment of a Biblical prophet. Collectively these studies contribute to our understanding of feminist speakers *as women* and the power dynamics that flow from that point, and yet each of these can still benefit from Foucault's theories of discipline to see how women must always demonstrate a commitment to convictions about femininity, thus reducing their feminist challenge.

The first of these studies, Charles Conrad's study of the "Old Feminist" movement, records the development of the suffrage movement.² Conrad finds that the shift from the "Old Feminist" movement to the suffrage movement marks a change in feminist rhetoric of the period that decentered the interests of women in working toward women's franchise. In tracing the social movement, Conrad finds that "Old Feminists" placed emphasis upon shaping societal attitudes toward women by challenging assumptions about women's biological predisposition to

² Let me clarify that although the term "Old Feminist" may read like a derision, Conrad uses it to distinguish feminists prior to 1860 before an intense focus on the goal of suffrage emerged.

the home in favor of a view of women as completely human (286). The latter view, coming after 1860, sought to improve the lot of (white) women for their own sake, yet the emerging suffrage movement tended to focus on how women's participation in the public sphere could enhance others: "A feminist rhetoric based on the selfhood of woman had been replaced by a suffragist rhetoric of national improvement" (287). Conrad's findings demonstrate more interest in the politics of women's rhetoric than do the previous studies reviewed. The study, however, could benefit from a theory of power such as Foucault's to explain how the "Old Feminists'" rhetoric proved less "effective" than suffrage rhetoric did by refusing to invest in popular discourses of women's obligations to the betterment of others (i.e., men and not other women). Conrad's recognition that feminist rhetoric carries unique complexities moves the study of feminist rhetoric toward a richer understanding of women speaking, a matter Karlyn Kohrs Campbell elaborates on in a fundamental way.

Campbell's article on the "Rhetoric of Women's Liberation" makes the point that women speaking constitutes a situation distinct from men speaking. The study of women's rhetoric requires a different approach from studying men's rhetoric because women speaking to an audience of women breaks assumptions in rhetorical studies about the importance of conforming to the social norms in public speaking. When a woman speaks, even to an audience of women, she simultaneously upsets social norms and creates an opportunity to persuade, a scenario outside the scope of Aristotelian theory since his work focused on speakers meeting accepted norms of the situation. The review of women's liberation rhetoric that Campbell provides illustrates the need to discuss the complexities of women's struggle for social power. A woman rhetor must violate social norms simply by speaking since "the role of rhetor entails qualities of self-reliance, self-confidence, and independence, *its very assumption is a violation of the female*

role” (emphasis original) (Campbell, “Rhetoric” 75). By speaking on feminist concerns even when women address other women, they “violate the norms of decorum, morality, and ‘femininity’ of the women addressed,” in an effort to move other women to construct their identities differently (Campbell, “Rhetoric” 81). Breaching social norms immediately seems contradictory to common precepts of persuasion. Analysis cannot, then, simply see women’s rhetoric as coming from a rhetor who happens to be a woman but, instead, from a rhetor who challenges the very assumptions of rhetorical activity.

Campbell demonstrates that consciousness-raising groups, which seek to raise awareness among women of women’s social oppression, also challenge the definition of public speaking. The study of consciousness raising groups pushes rhetorical critics to redefine what constitutes public speaking and the assumptions about the expectations of rhetorical activity. The form and function of consciousness raising groups defies critics’ propensity to find the single speaker motivating an audience because the groups encourage members to each their personal experiences and derive their own decisions for action. That consciousness raising groups mimic the pattern of private interaction—conversation—further problematizes what constitutes public speaking and constitutes a site for rhetorical analysis. Campbell goes on to explain that consciousness raising stands at the center of women’s rhetorical activity because of the very difference between men and women in society. Bitzer argues that rhetoric requires an audience who has the ability to affect change (305). As Campbell points out, consciousness raising among audiences of women plays an important role in feminist rhetoric because most women see themselves as incapable of bringing about change (“Rhetoric” 78). I suggest that women in earlier social reform activities, who did not even have the right vote, must have felt this all the more. Campbell finds that women use rhetoric for consciousness raising among other women as

a way of forming a community where the separation of women into their respective private spheres creates none. The rhetoric of consciousness raising itself contradicts notions about separating personal and political concerns as “the issues of women’s liberation are simultaneously personal and political” (Campbell, “Rhetoric” 84). In sum, Campbell describes women’s rhetoric as “a genre without a rhetor, a rhetoric in search of an audience, that transforms traditional argumentation into confrontation, that ‘persuades’ by ‘violating the reality structure’ but that presumes a consubstantiality so radical that it permits the most intimate of identifications” (“Rhetoric” 86). For these reasons Campbell concludes that women’s rhetoric represents an “oxymoron, the figure of paradox and contradiction” (“Rhetoric” 84).

Campbell’s later work adds to the “paradox of women speaking” with an expansive study of feminist orators of the nineteenth century. In *Man Cannot Speak for Her* Campbell presents the idea of a feminine style of rhetoric that she traces in the oratory of a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth- century feminists. Campbell’s explication of a feminine style of rhetoric proposes ways that women replicate norms of femininity in their public speaking. Campbell theorizes that a feminine style of rhetoric mimics the woman to woman education of “craft-learning” that takes place in the home. Feminine style counters the expectations of (masculine) rhetors, which expects men to call attention to themselves, demonstrate expertise, and speak aggressively as part of the “competition” of public speaking. In public address as “craft-learning” women share information with each other as peers using personal experiences and anecdotes to create a sense of identification between all involved. In studying the rhetoric of nineteenth century feminist orators Campbell finds that the arguments themselves reflect the negotiation of women’s gender and activity in the public sphere (*Man* 10-13).

While calling for women's rights, Campbell finds that the women of her study moved from an argument based on natural rights to one that better emphasized women's selflessness. The justification of increased rights for women based on natural rights declared that women deserved rights equal with men's on the basis of their shared humanity. The "Declaration of Sentiments" produced by the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention presents the clearest expression of natural rights ideology, based on the form of the Declaration of Independence and calling for women's equal rights as the "triumph of the Right and True" (qtd. in Campbell, *Man* 56). The "Declaration of Sentiments," though radical in its own time, avoided advocating anything as revolutionary as its forefather, instead the women of Seneca Falls sought reform as a way of "perfecting, not overthrowing, the democratic republic they loved as Americans" (Campbell, *Man* 69). Adding Foucault's discussion of discourse and power to Campbell's analysis would show that commitment to a discourse that originally excluded women, the Declaration of Independence, limits the potential of change because the women avoid breaking from the discourse but continue it. The demonstration of patriotism Campbell points to in the "Declaration of Sentiments" could ensnare the women as they had to conform their activities and desire for rights as part of national patronage rather than a quest for equality. Similar instances of compromises appear in the shift Campbell traces from natural rights arguments to those for suffrage.

The appeals used for suffrage that Campbell identifies also demonstrate the ways in which the women had to conform their behavior to the discourses producing the system of gender norms. Stanton, in speaking to the New York legislature, relied upon traditional notions of men and women's social roles in persuading men to empower women by "[asking men] to act in traditional ways to protect traditional womanhood, to act as women's champions to save them

from peril and to protect them from evil” (Campbell, *Man* 96). Such strategy seems to undercut arguments for women’s equality with men. Anthony’s tactic of defending herself after her arrest for voting also demonstrates the practice of women working within gendered expectations. Campbell notes that by defending herself, Anthony took an acceptable feminine role, that of one in the defense not the offense, as opposed to women who sued for the right, violating social edicts against aggressive, public action (*Man* 116). Here, again, the fight for equal rights subordinates itself to the social discourses of women’s powerlessness. The example of Willard further makes this point, as Campbell recounts that Willard’s appeals in favor of reform did not require men to change their understanding of the separation of gender and spheres—an assertion that seems especially true in light of the fact that Willard often had men read her speeches for her to avoid violating social norms (*Man* 128). The examples of Stanton, Anthony, and Willard could benefit from a thorough Foucauldian critique that further explores the tensions between drawing on traditional discourses of white women’s roles and challenging the legal structures that flow from that. The discourses of domesticity in these examples simultaneously support and constrain the rhetors’ efforts to create new social roles for women.

Phyllis Japp illustrates another aspect of the paradox of women speaking in discussing the contradiction in voices assumed by Angelina Grimké as part of the abolitionist movement. Japp finds that Grimké sought validation through the appropriation of both a masculine and a feminine Biblical voice. Grimké’s rhetoric demonstrates the tension between speaking submissively to approximate feminine ideals and speaking in a style better keeping with masculinist standards. Japp shows that Grimké begins her oratorical career by speaking in the persona of Esther “as a way to deflect criticism of her public appearance” (340). Through the guise of a Biblical slave Grimké could assuage concerns about a woman taking the contra-

feminine position of public speaker by using the communicative strategy of a servant before her king, pleading. The use of a pleading tone placed Grimké's audience in the position of master to maintain the arrangement of woman in the always subordinate position. From a slave to a prophet of God, Grimké later employed the voice of Isaiah. As the prophet Isaiah, Grimké invoked the name of God as she "admonished the uncommitted, exhorted the faithful, and rebuked opposition" (Japp 342). Japp notes that the change in persona to Isaiah enabled Grimké to speak about what women "*must do*" in contrast to the passive "*should be*" (emphasis original) (343). The significance of the shift lies in Japp's assertion that "[Grimké's] assumption of the roles of Esther and Isaiah foreshadows a century and a half of feminist expression and dramatizes the continuing dilemma of women reformers" (344). The "foreshadow" of Grimké demonstrates the tensions that persist when women speak, especially when seeking to empower themselves and others, and the appropriateness of Foucauldian theory to further the discussion. Introducing Foucault into Japp's discussion of Grimké's rhetoric would provide the basis for discussion of the ways that even her choice of Isaiah limits her because, for instance, Grimké's rhetoric must remain within the auspices of God and the Quaker church, who always stand ready to rebuke her for her political position or act of speaking.

The significance of Conrad, Campbell, and Japps's work lies in their awareness that when women speak they face particular challenges distinct from those that confront men. Conrad shows that feminists had to confront social norms in order to achieve their aims. Going much further, Campbell discusses the ways in which feminist rhetors, in entering the public sphere, challenge(d) social norms. In that essay, Campbell also makes the point that feminist rhetorical activity cannot distinguish between the personal and political nor the private and public because politics affect women personally and women often engage each other in non-traditional public

interactions (e.g., consciousness raising groups). Japp's study shows how Grimké mediated the tension of speaking outside of the private sphere by employing voices deemed appropriate for women. Lastly, Campbell's introduction of the feminine style of rhetoric also shows that women must maintain feminine norms even in the act of challenging them. Adding Foucault to these analyses enhances the discussion of each by framing these feminist rhetorics as the need to fulfill the expectations of traditional femininity while attempting to violate it, a choice that ultimately constrains the challenge.

Nineteenth-Century Feminist Movements

The literature on feminist rhetoric reviewed above contributes to a general understanding of the women's challenges to and negotiations of speaking in public, often to audiences of women, and the inability of classical rhetorical theory to explain the power dynamics of women speaking. From that framework of the uniqueness of women's rhetoric, I consider here studies of nineteenth-century feminist movements. Unlike the set of single-speaker studies reviewed earlier, these analyses take into consideration the politics of gender the women navigated when speaking in public. Collectively they show women gaining access to the podium through stressing their feminine nature even as they violated the feminine norm of political activity. A study of the abolitionist movement by Jacqueline Bacon demonstrates the raced nature of women and femininity evident amidst the struggle for enslaved women's freedom. In an analysis of the women's suffrage movement Suzanne Marilley shows how women sought rights equal to men by emphasizing their social position as the weaker, care-giving sex. Susan Marshall's study of women's involvement in the anti-suffrage movement reveals they too stressed their subordinate social position to combat the suffragists. In a look at the temperance movement, Carol Mattingly concentrates on women's use of feminine virtues to gain access to the political sphere. I suggest

that, because each of these deals with tensions women faced in meeting standards of femininity while contradicting them, the addition of Foucault would help us better work through the complexities of women challenging and conceding to notion's of women's domesticity.

The first of these studies, Jacqueline Bacon's rhetorical analysis of the abolitionist movement investigates the intersection of race and gender, considering the differences between white and black women's rhetoric that highlight the raced assumptions of womanhood. Bacon demonstrates that in the abolitionist movement white women spoke to norms of womanhood based on the experiences of white women, while black women had to discursively bring their bodies and experiences into being. The idea of separate spheres of action for men and women itself elides racial and class differences of experience (among others) by assuming that all women had the privilege of staying in their homes rather than working outside them to help support the family (Bacon 43). Topics considered appropriate for women to discuss publicly also demonstrated a racial distinction in matters of public and private. Bacon notes that white women's abolitionist rhetoric omitted the discussion of slave women's sexual abuse out of a sense of modesty whereas black women, "vulnerable to both physical and verbal attacks because of their race and gender," enjoyed no such luxury (120). The difference speaks to upper class white women's privilege to separate the personal from the public/political and the reality that slavery kept black women from doing so.

Even when white women did address the concerns of slave women, the "feminine sensibilities" of white women marginalized slaves' experiences (Bacon 126). Lydia Maria Child's *Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* characterizes a white woman who sells a slave woman to a desirous white man as violating feminine standards thus maintaining standards of white womanhood while ignoring the horrors of slave women's

existence. Bacon shows where Child claims that a woman who owns house slaves poorly fills her domestic role because she has handed those duties off to another woman (Bacon 126-30). I add that such rhetoric simultaneously expresses anxiety about the feminization of black women that occurs when they take up the function of well-trained white women.

Where white women could afford to ignore the experiences of slave women, black women's rhetoric drew from personal examples, as seen in Harriett Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "because experience is central to the force of her antislavery rhetoric" (Bacon 189). For precisely this reason Sojourner Truth bares her breast as a way of confronting her white audience with *their* shame of appropriating her body for their own use, nursing their children, at the exclusion of Truth filling the same maternal obligation to her own children (Bacon 181). Bacon emphasizes that black women focused on personal experiences to create "agency that arises from their particular oppressive circumstances and that contrasts with abstract—and white-centered—definitions of femininity" (190).

The respective traits of white women and black women's abolitionist rhetoric Bacon identifies invites a Foucauldian response to further the analysis. Foucault's approach to discourse, which understands utterances as coming from available social discourses, can add to Bacon's discussion of women and race contemplating the restraints of discourse upon white and black women in prototypical ways. Bacon notes that as white women argued from their feminine virtues they were "simultaneously privileged and restricted by conceptions of gender," which allowed them to argue for the need to end slavery on the basis of maintaining strict standards of femininity (140). Here Foucault's insights on power and discourse could easily add to our understanding of white women's rhetoric as demanding particular production of women's raced bodies. Foucauldian understandings of discourse might note that the rhetoric of black women

meant to constitute their bodies where white women had ignored them. In that, Foucault's approach could then consider how the awareness of black women's bodies could also introduce those women and their bodies into the matrix of popular discourses that specifically defined their social roles and functions as it had already done for white, middle-class women.

The study of suffrage rhetoric by Suzanne Marilley, like Bacon's, focuses on how the rhetoric for social reform emphasized and shaped notions of femininity. In an examination of the suffrage movement Marilley shows that women's rhetoric revolved on issues of enfranchisement by stressing women's obligation to society or illustrating how women, as the weaker sex, needed the vote for protection. In the case of emphasizing women's obligation to society, some drew from the already accepted vision of woman as caretaker by expanding woman's duties from caring for those in her home to all those in her community. Jane Addams, for one, articulated her idea of woman's obligation and ability for "civic housekeeping" (Marilley 193). Such an argument misses framing suffrage as woman's right but casts the right to vote as another obligation for the care of others. Carrie Chapman Catt commingled white-nativist concerns with ideals of patriotic, white femininity.³ By speaking of the terrors of increasing immigration of citizens from southern and eastern Europe to the US, Catt said that women voters "would 'purify politics' and enable the 'perpetuation of the American republic'" (Marilley 166). Here again, the duty—however racist—of social improvement falls to women. The nativist position often took the cover of classism "by arguing that southern blacks and new immigrants needed education before voting" (Marilley 172). The arguments for education, a privilege of the middle class, sidestepped claims against nativism and racism as undemocratic by describing an ideal enfranchised citizen, thus improving the democratic order that could include middle class

³ By "nativist" Marilley refers to the sentiment of native-born, white, mostly Protestants against new immigrants, primarily Jews and Catholics from eastern and southern Europe (2, 178).

women. Others, like Willard, argued for women's suffrage by mixing notions of women's maternity and lack of protection in society.

According to Marilley, Willard emphasized a patriotic-Christian femininity that obliged women to improve their country as a moral obligation to God and to protect themselves arguing to audiences of "traditional women that as keepers of virtue God expected them to achieve suffrage, temperance, and eventually a moral transformation of politics" (Marilley 100). Marilley uses the term "republican motherhood" to describe Willard's use of phrases such as "Home Protection" and "mother-heart" to emphasize the fusion of women's maternal obligations and patriotic duties (102-03). The duties of republican motherhood in Willard's rhetoric included the fight against vice as women needed the vote to protect their children and themselves from men who drank too much and turned from protectors to threats (Marilley 110). In her rhetoric, Willard submerges a radical call for women's suffrage as the path to woman having "undoubted custody of herself" (Willard qtd. in Marilley 112). As an extension of this irony Marilley notes that in the mid-twentieth century women's rights activists made more headway employing arguments about protection rather than those calling for the equal rights amendment (224).

In the contradiction of women coming closer to socio-political equality with men by asserting their weaker nature Foucault's theories on power and discourse would prove beneficial by explaining the irony as a success had by allowing discourses about women's subordinate social position to pass work through women. Adding Foucauldian theory to Marilley's analysis, would allow the critic to better play out the complexities of women demanding rights by using arguments dressed with the demands of republican motherhood. Marilley's analysis demonstrates, as Foucault would note, that subjects speak in the language of their own time. Women, such as Addams, Catt, and Willard, who emphasized the maternal role of bettering and

protecting the community at large found a resonance with the discourse of republican motherhood, but such a discourse also constrains women for they must continually place themselves in subjugation to the service of others. In so doing, the women's actions, which they justify in light of maternal roles, also carried the danger of reprimand on the basis of violating those roles. Willard's hope for women to gain the vote as possession of themselves seems unlikely when Willard herself often articulates women's character as selfless.

Not surprisingly, Susan Marshall's study of the anti-suffrage movement shows that many of the same social discourses suffragists employed were used to refute their efforts. Marshall's study of the campaign against suffrage shows women employed many of the same arguments for suffrage in their attack on that movement for their purpose of protecting the privileges they enjoyed in complying fully with traditional femininity. In analysis of the campaign against women's suffrage, Marshall demonstrates that the concern of the white, middleclass interests, including women, overshadowed those of the liquor industry in combating the movement for women's vote. Women who fought the suffrage movement often felt that they did not need enfranchisement for their interests to be served. As Marshall shows, a number of women in the anti-suffrage movement were married or related by blood to men who held civic-leadership positions and even seats in legislatures (55). The class division becomes sharper when Marshall adds that the men themselves represented a distinct strata, often having old money, coming from colonial stock, and bearing the credentials of an Ivy League education (91). The protection of class interests focused on the same nativist fears Catt spoke to in arguing for suffrage. Where Catt argued for women's vote to purify politics spoiled by immigrants, the anti-suffragists feared that the more immigrant people voting the greater chance the country would succumb to radical ideologies such as socialism and anarchy. Attacks against Mormons also raised fears about

promoting the anti-feminine doctrine of polygamy (Marshall 137). Similar themes about women's domestic roles also emerge when comparing suffragist and anti-suffragist rhetoric.

Where suffragists had argued that women's feminine qualities could better society through the vote, anti-suffragists protested that those same feminine virtues should remain in the home. The anti-suffrage movement constructed women as emotional, and men and women both construed this point as a domestic resource and public menace. Emotionality gave women strength and ardor in the private sphere. Let loose in public, women, as emotional beings, would become easy prey to arguments that relied on sympathy rather than logic—a striking contrast to suffragists who likewise fueled arguments for enfranchisement by using the discourse of women's feminine nature.⁴ Using the theme of “household suffrage” some argued that women's energies should focus on rearing the male citizenry, which would itself give women a vote through the upbringing of their sons (Marshall 136). The argument clearly requires that women marry and have (male) children if they wish to influence the government. Those arguing for and against suffrage also emphasized the necessity of women in semi-domesticating men. Where Willard argued that women needed the vote to protect themselves from drunk men, anti-suffragists openly worried that if men saw women voting their chivalry would slip away and men's bestial nature would run rampant (Marshall 122). All three arguments against suffrage on the basis of women's feminine nature demonstrate, as Foucault would point out, that no counter discourse ever stands completely outside the position it challenges, as the social discourses defining women's service to their home and family fueled both the suffrage and anti-suffrage movements

⁴ Elizabeth Barnes notes the tradition in women's literature of using sympathy as a persuasive tool. Unlike anti-suffragists, Barnes views this as a mode of women's political engagement rather than a source of despire.

Another paradox of anti-/suffragist rhetoric comes from issues of women's public activity. Marshall demonstrates that the loss of involvement in the public sphere motivated women's interest in the anti-suffrage movement. Women of privilege had long engaged in public acts of beneficence through charity activities as a way of "[forestalling] lower-class revolt" (Marshall 35). Through philanthropic work women of the upper classes could engage in public works. Suffragists, who more often had the education and career experience that anti-suffragists did not, threatened the anti-suffragists' entrée into the public sphere (Marshall 44, 225). If women did get the vote, then government would begin to address, with professionals, the social concerns that women's clubs had worked to correct. Here tensions emerge as women who used charity as entrée into public works feared losing that privilege just as suffragists argued the vote would increase the rights for other women. All this makes the Foucauldian point that every model of human activity includes privilege for some and not others. In this case, the ability for educated women to engage in the political realm cut off the non-educated women of the upper classes from their political activity.

The comparison of suffragist and anti-suffragist rhetoric demonstrates that Foucauldian theory could enhance discussion of women's struggle for social power. Rhetors on both sides of the suffrage issue constructed images of women and their proper social roles. Arguments on both sides valued women's sacrifice of self as Willard declared that women must have the vote as part of their selfless devotion to improving the country and anti-suffragists called suffragists "self-absorbed" (Marshall 105). Both visions of womanhood demonstrate the point that rhetoric comes from discourses in culture rather than simply appearing from rhetors. As the contest over women's suffrage proves, a set of cultural values contains the possibility for manipulation in

contradictory forms, which, then, never truly contradict each other for they draw from the same strain of psycho-social assumptions.

The compulsory construction of women as domestically oriented appears also in the temperance movement. Carol Mattingly's look at the temperance movement shows that women wore the cloak of femininity as a way of gaining access to the public sphere and taking part in a socio-political issue. Mattingly's study of temperance rhetoric illustrates how women in the temperance movement negotiated their performances of gender in response to contemporary models of femininity. As Mattingly shows, the temperance movement did far more than change attitudes about the consumption of alcohol; it provided the opportunity for women to establish their political ability as a demonstration of their legitimate powers in the public sphere. Some in the temperance movement who sought change on behalf of women distanced themselves from the women's rights movement to assuage their audiences' fears that temperancists wanted radical change (Mattingly, *Well-Tempered* 18).

The example of Amelia Bloomer shows a woman balancing the tension between feminine ideals and seeking change. Mattingly finds that Bloomer "[couched] her desire for greater power for women as a selfless plea on behalf of abused women and children" (Mattingly, *Well-Tempered* 18). Bloomer's tact emphasizes the maternal obligation of women to care and protect others. Women of the temperance movement demonstrate the attempt of women to redefine femininity as maternal and Christian while also seeking rights for women (Mattingly, *Well-Tempered* 52). When taking to the platform the women of the temperance movement often made concerted effort to demonstrate a commitment to traditional notions of femininity: "Whereas male speakers, in order to be effective, presented strong, masculine persona, women found it necessary to reassure audiences that their public stance did not masculinize them" (Mattingly,

Well-Tempered 65). The case shows women's struggle for increased rights required that they demonstrate themselves as well-disciplined women—those meeting cultural expectations—thus suggesting that their use of any increased legal standing would continue to conform to social expectations. The depictions and descriptions of women in the temperance movement mirror the compulsion of the women themselves to meet cultural norms of femininity.

Newspaper accounts of women speaking in the temperance movement illustrate the need for public discourses to form them into their feminine role. Age proved significant to some reporters when assessing the women's performance of femininity. Mattingly finds that older women seemed to soothe fears of women rebelling against (white) feminine standards, "probably because of the grandmotherly connotations associated with age, but also because of reassurances that these women were not neglecting motherly and wifely responsibilities at home" (*Well-Tempered* 110). Most reports, Mattingly notes, looked for signs of masculinity and femininity in the women who spoke, commenting on their voice, face, dress, and use of gestures (*Well-Tempered* 114). One reporter describes Willard as ladylike and "not . . . out of place on the platform" whereas the author reprimands Anthony and Annie Dickinson for scolding too much (qtd. in Mattingly, *Well-Tempered* 115). As Mattingly explains, journalists emphasis on women's performance of gender demonstrates the inclination to place women into or outside of traditional womanhood, thus containing their efforts for change (*Well-Tempered* 120). Here as above, Foucault's insights on the ways that discourse disciplines bodies, compelling them to take certain forms, explains the impulse of the rhetors and reporters alike to emphasize the femininity of temperance women. In both cases, women must fit into the cultural expectations of women, especially if they seek acceptance. Relenting to social norms has the effect of limiting the change

women can make because the model of womanhood that receives acceptance also restricts other choices.

The analyses of Bacon, Marilley, Marshall, and Mattingly each work through nineteenth-century feminist movements to understand women's struggle to defy norms of femininity by speaking even while they drew on the very beliefs about women's obligation to the private sphere. That tension about women's social roles and the contradiction of their challenge to the discipline of domesticity and evocation of it seemingly begs for a Foucauldian response. Analyses of feminist rhetoric that demonstrate this tension have focused on the general arguments for feminist goals as well as the feminist justification of acting publicly.

A MATTER OF THEORY

The research on feminist rhetoric reviewed here has contributed a substantial amount to the history of women's public address. As studies have increasingly recognized the challenges that face women when they enter the traditional public sphere as speaking subjects and as analyses have more and more concentrated on how women negotiate the social expectations, like those of True Womanhood, while engaging in the politics there remains an absence of theory. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's discussion of feminine style offers one way of understanding the genre of women's rhetoric in nineteenth-century US culture. Campbell's description of feminine style, however, stops short of openly discussing feminist rhetoric as a product of discourse that requires women to demonstrate their commitment to norms of feminine domesticity even while transgressing them. Moving through the existing literature on feminist rhetoric I have contemplated the ways in which Foucault's theory of power might inform the study of feminist rhetoric. In the following I concentrate on the continued absence of theory in studies of feminist rhetoric and offer Foucauldian theory as a contribution to feminist studies.

Concerns about the lack of theory in studies of feminist rhetoric began to appear in communication journals in the last ten years or so. Bonnie Dow and Mary Boor Tonn represent other feminist scholars in rhetorical studies when they express the concern that much of the criticism of women rhetors has little connection to or concern for theory, with the notable exception of Campbell's work on the feminine style. As Dow and Tonn note, "Campbell's theory of feminine style . . . has provided an alternative critical orientation with which to understand the source, form, and function of female communicative strategies and their effectiveness in feminist movements" (286). I do not propose here a theory that would explicate the "source, form, and function" of women's rhetorical strategies. Instead, I offer Foucauldian theory as means of understanding feminist rhetoric as a struggle for, against, and with power as it manifests itself in social discourses that prescribe, produce, control, and constrain human behavior. Because I elaborate on Foucault's theory of power in the succeeding chapter, I only attempt to recognize here the pattern in the feminist rhetoric reviewed to see that an ongoing tension thrives between women fulfilling prescribed gender roles and challenging them through their feminist activity. Such a contradiction could be expanded by reading it through Foucault's lens of power, which looks for the operation of disciplines normalizing citizens to predetermines ideals.

To demonstrate the usefulness of Foucauldian theory to a project of feminist rhetoric I wish to understand the state of feminist rhetorical theory via the notion of feminine style. From looking at the work on feminine style I see where Campbell establishes that any rhetorical theory discussing women's rhetoric must recognize women's rhetoric as distinct from men's and the ways that women speaking confronts our "psycho-social" beliefs. Having done that, I move to consider Barbara Biesecker's response to *Man Cannot Speak for Her* in which Biesecker calls

for a “‘gender-sensitive’ history of Rhetoric” (156). From Biesecker’s challenge to rhetorical critics I briefly discuss my desire to use Foucault to discuss Sanger’s rhetoric.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Feminine Style

Studies of feminist rhetoric have predominately followed the theoretical perspective of feminine style, as first articulated by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. The presence of one dominating theory of women’s public address deserves proper consideration for it has created a foundation for feminist rhetorical studies and generated much of the criticism on feminist rhetoric. Because of the centrality of feminine style in analyses of feminist rhetoric I discuss the significance of feminine style for the study of women’s public address as establishing a unique and distinctive area of rhetorical studies. I then provide a brief discussion of the notion of a feminine style. Having explained feminine style I illustrate raced assumptions feminine style makes.

The theory of feminine style distinguishes itself from classical and traditional rhetorical theory because it focuses on the unique qualities of women’s public address. The process of actively developing a theory of feminist rhetoric begins with Campbell’s essay on the “Oxymoron” of women’s rhetoric, in which Campbell sets forth two principles affecting the study of feminist rhetoric, that feminist rhetoric differentiates itself from other forms of rhetoric and that feminist rhetoric confronts established notions of gender. To the first of these principles, Campbell declares that feminist rhetoric, here the rhetoric of women’s liberation, constitutes a “distinctive genre” (“Rhetoric” 75). With that statement Campbell wrenches the study of women’s rhetorical practice from the masculinist tradition in rhetorical studies. Edward Schiappa notes the significance of naming a unique area of study as leading to the “common set of issues identified as its focus” (10). Schiappa’s argument draws heavily from Foucault’s work on discourse and the “rules of formation” in which pronouncing a subject creates it as a location on

the field of discourse that includes some things, excludes others, and invites response (*Archeology* 40-41). Campbell's declaration of women's rhetorical activity as unique constitutes the practice of naming a sub-discipline, creating what we know as feminist rhetorical studies. In naming and framing areas of studies, Schiappa clarifies that he does not mean one cannot imagine activity of a certain sort occurring before its naming, but—in keeping with Foucault's arguments—naming has the ability to stabilize the category and practice (10).

Yoakam's review of early women orators in the US demonstrates the significance of naming an area of study to establish standards of study. Before the naming of the study of feminist rhetoric, critics, like Yoakam, had thought to analyze women's public address. The approach to those early feminist rhetors, however, lacked the appreciation that the study of feminist rhetoric deserves, an approach different from the study of, say, (men's) presidential address. In William Brigrance's collection of rhetorical criticism of "great speakers" stands Yoakam's analysis, giving consideration to a set of texts and rhetors that "has been flagrantly neglected" (187). Carole Spitzack and Kathryn Carter note the significance of Yoakam's kind of project that salvages women's history in an attempt to end the cycle of each generation of women having to reconstruct their history anew (404). Bonnie Dow expands this point in arguing that "women's public address has the fairly radical potential to redefine rhetorical excellence and to recast our understanding of what is worthy of study and why" (107). Similar to Yoakam, O'Connor's *Pioneer Women Orators* writes into history the presence and activity of women in the public/political sphere. To do so O'Connor evaluates women by the standards of Aristotelian criticism. Such an undertaking attempts to validate the women's rhetorical activity by placing them against masculinist standards, which, not surprisingly, comes to find the women incompetent. Spitzack and Carter find others who take that same tack and instead of coming to

“a radical questioning of applicability between Aristotelian criteria and women’s speech,” instead declare the speaker “to be ineffective” (406). In this lies the significance of the feminine style to the study of feminist rhetoric: by establishing women’s rhetoric as a distinct genre, Campbell opened the possibility for new standards of evaluating and coming to understand women rhetors, an element missing in both Yoakam and O’Connor’s work.

In arguing for a unique category of women’s rhetoric, Campbell articulates feminist rhetoric as “[attacking] the entire psychosocial reality, the most fundamental values, of the cultural context in which it occurs” (“Rhetoric” 75). This point cannot be made too often. Critics cannot write about women rhetors as rhetors who just happen to be women. The social discourses active when a woman speaks, rather than a man, dramatically alters the position from which that woman can speak and be heard. The consideration of women’s rhetoric requires an awareness of how women occupy different social positions from men and from each other on account of race/ethnicity, class, historical context, and so forth.

In *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Campbell expands on the differences of men and women at the psychosocial level that create differences in rhetorical style according to gender. In the first volume of *Man Cannot Speak for Her* Campbell asserts a feminine style in rhetoric that mirrors women’s social position. Yoakam opens her history of women speaking with an awareness of women’s location vis-à-vis men’s: “When the women of this period [early-nineteenth century] peered through the ruffled curtains of her well-protected home, she saw a world in which she had little place” (153). Barbara Welter states the matter succinctly: under the cult of True Womanhood, woman “was the hostage in the home” (21). The notion of a feminine style of rhetoric relies on assumptions garnered from discourses defining women’s domesticity. In keeping with the theme of women’s domesticity, Campbell describes women’s acquisition of

rhetorical skills and orientation to public speaking as “craft learning.” Where we think of traditional models of education as impersonal and top-down, craft-learning emphasizes personality seeking to build community through the activity of teaching/learning. The feminine style, therefore, works toward consciousness raising by using personal examples, employing an inductive structure, seeking audience participation and identification with the speaker, and trying to empower those listening (Campbell, *Man* 13). Campbell does not suggest that this model of speaking fits women on biological terms, but “it has been congenial to women because of the acculturation of female speakers and audiences” (*Man* 14).

The description of a rhetorical style as “congenial to women” requires further discussion. The matter of women’s “acculturation” at once resists the masculinist paradigm—one that relies upon competing, demonstrating expertise, and commanding respect—but also must recognize the diversity of that process. The importance of resisting the masculinist paradigm comes through in O’Connor’s presumption that Amelia Bloomer and Jane Jones’s use of emotional appeals “tends to confirm their knowledge of Blair and Whately” (162). Whether or not Bloomer and Jones had the training that O’Connor suggests they had, matters less than O’Connor’s affirmation of an “effective” rhetorical style wholly defined and received from men. In this way, Campbell’s emphasis on rhetoric as craft-learning challenges the “taken for granted assumptions” of rhetorical studies (Spitzack and Carter 401).

The need to avoid the “taken for granted” must haunt Campbell’s work in making generalizations that carry racial/ethnic assumptions among others (e.g., religion, sexuality, physical ability, nationality, etc.). In reading Campbell’s analysis of women involved in the US nineteenth-century social/political reform, a pattern emerges in which feminine style of rhetoric reveals itself as white. As Donna Haraway would say, Campbell writes with the false

presumption of the term “woman” as an innocent term, not actively including or excluding any woman despite Campbell’s construction of a generic woman as white and middle class woman according to the examples she uses (157). Marsha Houston adds that the “definition of womanhood” has come to us from white men of the upper-middle class who have created separate definitions, values, privileges, and constraints of American women according to race (48). M. Lane Bruner raises a similar concern that feminist theory avoid essentializing the experience and definition of womanhood. I make this criticism of Campbell mildly, for as Dow—echoing Haraway and Houston—expresses, a feminist theory of women’s rhetoric must struggle between the poles of creating a sense of community even while it recognizes the uniqueness of experience (113). Nevertheless, Campbell’s theory of feminine style presents a view of rhetoric strongly correlated to race as demonstrated in the analyses of *Man Cannot Speak for Her*.

In reviewing the rhetorical behavior of women engaged in the abolitionist and suffrage movements Campbell points to the ways that various women (e.g., Lucretia Coffin Mott, Stanton, Grimké) conform to notions of the feminine style. In that review lie challenges to feminine style. Campbell takes note that Maria W. Miller Stewart has the honor of the first American woman to address a “promiscuous audience.” As Susan Zaeske demonstrates, the model of True Womanhood that pertained to “white, middle-class women” had no allowance for the word “promiscuous” whereas the word often found use in describing black women (“Promiscuous” 198). With the case of Stewart, by simply speaking she resists the notion of feminine style, yet Stewart’s oratorical challenge defies social presumptions differently than it would have had someone like Anthony (a white woman) made that public bid. The cultural inscription of Stewart versus Anthony demonstrates the limitation of the application of feminine

style to understanding women's rhetoric. Campbell does make the point that when Sojourner Truth spoke she occupied a position distinct from white women: "The cult of domesticity took no account of the quality of her life, which had been totally unlike traditional nineteenth-century concepts of womanliness and femininity" (*Man* 21). This point extends to understanding feminine style in her case study of, black-feminist rhetor, Ida B. Wells. Of Wells's speech against lynching, Campbell says, "This speech contained no apparent indications or attempts by a woman speaker to appear 'womanly' in what was perceived as a male role" (146-47). By contrast, Mary Church Terrell, another black woman, spoke using Campbell's elements of feminine style (Campbell, *Man* 153). Not incidentally, Campbell remarks of Terrell's appearance that she "could have passed for white" (*Man* 152). According to the model of feminine style, Terrell passes for white both in physical and oratorical presentation as opposed to Wells's appearance and rhetoric.

Despite my concerns about the racial bias in the definition of a feminine style of rhetoric, I believe recognition must be given to the significance of Campbell's work in establishing the criteria for any theory used to discuss women's rhetoric. Chiefly, when women speak they confront the tradition of American rhetoric and the public sphere in which they act. From this point I see questions arise that Foucauldian theory can help to answer.

An Invitation for Foucault

In response to Campbell's arguments in *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, two different concerns have arisen that speak to theoretical needs in criticism of rhetoric. First, Bonnie Dow expresses concern about the over use of Campbell's theory at the expense of interesting analysis, and, second, Barbara Biesecker sees the study of feminist rhetoric as the opportunity for a radical

mode of study. To both of these concerns I suggest, as does Biesecker, that Foucault's theories of power and discourse will go a long way in achieving both of these goals.

Dow complains that as a reviewer for conferences and journals she sees a preponderance of rhetorical criticisms of women's rhetoric that place the subject against Campbell's notion of feminine style "even when such an argument was not germane to their purpose" (108). Such an approach to criticism naturally reduces what we can learn from the research endeavors. Merely determining the usefulness of Campbell's definition of a feminine style may tell us about the applicability of that model, but it tells nothing more about the ways in which women have had to negotiate their role as rhetors in a sphere largely considered men's domain. For this reason Dow wants more feminist theory in the hope that "if we [feminists] produce something that looks like a theory, an explanation for how and why women speak differently, then surely we will gain some respect for those who resist allowing us a place in the discipline" (108). Though I avoid offering a feminist theory, per se, I believe that Foucault can help us to understand the dynamics of power at play when women speak.

Where Dow raises concerns about the over-use of Campbell's theory in rhetorical criticism Barbara Biesecker takes issue with a concern of rhetorical studies in general, that pronounces itself most loudly when discussing feminist rhetoric. Biesecker's critique of Campbell boils down to the centrality of the rhetor in rhetorical criticism. In place of speaking about a rhetor in a social milieu, Biesecker seeks to "[displace] the active/passive opposition, radically [contextualizing] speech acts" (157). I describe that "radical contextualization" as Foucault's notion of genealogy, considering the rhetor as part of a network of forces and never independent of them. Similar to what I have argued throughout this chapter, Biesecker argues that "Foucault would chart the localized rules and mechanisms of disciplinary power that insure

the production and reproduction of differentially situated subjects in a nonstatic but hierarchically organized space” (150). In discussing Sanger’s rhetoric of birth control, my project considers discourses similar to Sanger’s, counter discourses, and those cultural dialogues that may not overtly address birth control but contribute to its social production. My study considers how Sanger, as a woman, becomes subject to demands for femininity and the signs of that disciplining in her rhetoric.

As a response to Biesecker’s critique, Campbell writes that “because [Biesecker] does not offer criticism, she can merely utter theoretical pronouncements” (“Biesecker Cannot” 156). The concern is well founded; how do critics go about rhetorical analysis without concentrating on a single person but must explore a whole network of relations? The answer does not come easily, but, as I discuss in chapter three, we must resist the impulse to study a speaker without considering the social discourses that produce the rhetoric under examination. The need for a theoretical approach such as Foucault’s emanates from the very foundation of feminist rhetorical studies. Two points from Campbell’s 1973 essay on the rhetoric of women’s liberation stand out as necessitating a Foucauldian-like approach. First, Campbell insists feminist rhetoric challenges the “psycho-social” reality (“Rhetoric” 75). If we accept this as true, then we must consider that reality to understand how feminist rhetoric challenges those discourses and vice versa. Second, Campbell finds that the “oxymoron” is the only fit metaphor of feminist rhetoric (“Rhetoric” 84). The oxymoron, the symbol of contradiction and irony, suggests that Foucault’s genealogical project, which takes a keen interest in understanding knots of discourse, would lend a great deal of insight into the study of feminist rhetoric. With this project I seek to find some middle ground between Campbell’s drive for detailed archival work on a speaker and Biesecker’s challenge for complex rhetorical analysis.

CHAPTER 3

GENEALOGICAL INTERPRETATION: THE MARRIAGE OF STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

From 1914 to at least 1931 Margaret Sanger published *Family Limitation* as a birth control manual providing instruction in contraceptive means and reasons for women to practice birth control. Across those 17 years and 18 editions a number of changes occur, especially between the 11th and 12th editions during 1921 and 1922. The introductions of the 1st through 11th editions stress the need for birth control to improve the lot of the working class. The 12th through 18th editions, however, emphasize the use of birth control among “the diseased and unfit” (*Limitation* 12th 3). The critic’s theoretical and methodological approach determines how one characterizes such a change. An interpretivist approach would likely characterize the change as a sign of Sanger’s adaptation as a politically savvy rhetor, Sanger’s evolution as a rhetor, or Sanger’s hypocritical and inconsistent nature. With that said, an interpretationist would then delve into the meanings of Sanger’s rhetoric (e.g., How does Sanger depict women in one or both of these instances?). A genealogist, on the other hand, would see the difference in editions of *Family Limitation* as the residue of different discourses passing through Sanger. As opposed to focusing on the meanings of what Sanger says, a genealogist would give attention to the discursive practices (e.g., a belief in the domination of the body by science) that create Sanger’s utterances. In the following I suggest a combined approach that accepts the presence of discourses moving through rhetors and investigates the rhetorical impacts of those articulations.

The preceding chapter on nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric explains traditions in both the feminine rhetorical style as well as interpretivist analyses. Throughout the review of literature a theme developed in which women adapted their rhetoric to conform to late- and post- Victorian notions of women’s domesticity, like True Womanhood. This chapter discusses a theoretical

stance that allows critics to approach an issue such as the compulsion of women to conform to norms of domesticity as the product of power and discourse that seeks to discipline bodies and knowledge to meet a predetermined ideal. Such an approach combines research interests of interpretation and genealogy. Interpretation and genealogy have a history of contestation. In short, the lifeblood of genealogists has been to critique and criticize interpretation; in response, interpretationists level accusations that genealogy contributes nothing. From this tussle I attempt to salvage an analytical approach, the marriage of interpretation and genealogy: genealogical interpretation. I see genealogical interpretation as maintaining the interpretivist interests in the meaning of messages with the genealogical understanding that power produces discourse. As such, this suggested approach can take an interest in the rhetoric of an individual (e.g., Margaret Sanger) and offer an explanation of that rhetor's activity without reducing the rhetor to teleological standards that require a singular, encompassing statement of the rhetor's ultimate purpose. Through focusing on messages rather than the total structure of power, genealogical interpretation can stay mindful of the way that power produces bodies and knowledge as well as accepting a writing of events that includes tensions and contradictions. In the following I explicate my vision of genealogical interpretation by discussing its form and function with regard to concerns about the nature of power, the function of disciplines, the writing of history, and the treatment of the author/rhetor. Having reviewed the conceptual framework of genealogical interpretation I move to a methodological discussion of genealogical interpretation.

THE NATURE OF GENEALOGICAL INTERPRETATION

Discussing the conflict and potential harmony between interpretation and genealogy requires momentarily contemplating the ways in which the history of rhetorical studies in communication has a dormant thirst for enhancing the interpretivist tradition by fusing it with a

genealogical approach. I take the tension and complement of Kenneth Burke and Michel Foucault's work as representative of the complex relationship between interpretation and genealogy. Against interpretation that seek to reveal what makes the text or speaker "great," Burke calls for a politically astute criticism that considers the social implications of rhetorical action denying the innocence of "mere words." In his essay, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," Burke shifts rhetorical criticism from explanation of speech acts to discussion of the social implications and stakes of rhetorical action (21). Burke's *Counter Statement* alters and expands what I see as worthy of study by widening notions of art to include that which falls outside the domain of "high culture," thus giving us today's study of popular culture. In *Counter Statement* Burke explains that artists draw upon the attitudes of the audience and create an effect within them (71). Amidst this discussion, however, Burke turns to psychoanalyzing the audience and artist (72, 75). Nevertheless, Burke's appreciation of a fundamental relationship between text and audience bears significance for genealogical approaches that, as Elizabeth Grosz notes, wish to consider the political effects of rhetoric (86).

Through reconceptualizing the importance of rhetorical study and what critics considered worthy of analysis, Burke argues for the material effects of those who—as he would say—consume messages. Drawing on the work of theorist I. A. Richards, Burke expands on the notion of the pseudo-statement, discussing the ways in which readers can identify with the protagonist of a text to such a degree they become inspired by the fiction (*Permanence* 255). The instance of the pseudo-statement allows for a shift from discussing citizens as consumers of messages to produced by messages. The transition brings critics to the doorstep of Foucault's writings in which he argues that power, via discourse, produces bodies and knowledge. Similarly, as Carole Blair notes, both Burke and Foucault appreciate the contingency of history on language choice,

which often succumbs to a narrative of progress (“Symbolic” 147). Burke’s contribution to rhetorical studies calls for a political relevance, appreciation of material effects, and concern with the writing of history creates a space for Foucauldian theory to enter. In the following I take advantage of that opening to discuss genealogical interpretation’s orientation toward power, discipline, history, and the role of the rhetor.

Power as Productive

The idea that power is productive stands at the center of a genealogically oriented analysis. Rather than something exercised at particular moments, genealogy sees power as ever active in social relationships (Foucault, *History* 92). For that reason genealogy concerns itself with “the relations of power, knowledge, and the body in society” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 105). Unlike most interpretivist studies, genealogy sees power as producing bodies and knowledge rather than something lorded over people, restricting their actions:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him (sic) belong to this production. (Foucault, *Discipline* 194)

Rhetorical critics, then, can study power through analysis of discourse to understand how rhetorical acts come to constitute bodies and knowledge. In the following I counter the interpretationist paradigm that supposes power acts oppressively on us. Then, to establish an understanding of power as productive, I explain how power produces bodies and knowledge and produces counter-discourses that never fully depart from what they challenge. Lastly, I discuss the role of rhetoric in understanding power’s productive force and how I see genealogical interpretation analyzing power.

To appreciate power as productive means beginning by understanding the shortcomings of discussing power as an oppressive energy. Speaking of power as productive requires a break from the interpretationist tradition of discussing power as restraining action. Interpretivist studies rely upon the assumption that people hold power and wield it in particular ways, which the interpretationist makes an object of study. Max Weber's theory of power broke with the tradition of thinking of power as something an individual has by right of position. Weber suggests that power of an authority figure comes from those in subjugation to that person. As a one-time substitute teacher in junior-high schools, I appreciate the notion that I held only as much power as the students yielded to me. From an interpretationist perspective one could discuss the ways that I abused my power or evoked it for the greater good. Perhaps an interpretation of students' behavior would describe what it means to the students to be in my class and follow my directions all day. This approach, however, passes up the opportunity to understand how the standard operations in the school system facilitated the power structure I enjoyed.

Saying that the students gave me authority misses the point that an entire system, in which the students had participated for nearly as long as they could remember, had formed them in the model of an ideal, students who walk in the classroom to their appointed stations, begin working diligently and independently, resist the temptation to talk to others, and raise a hand to ask permission of the instructor to speak, sharpen a pencil, or use the restroom. The students I held dominion over for a little under seven hours in a day did not acquiesce their free will to me, they simply carried on as a careful training had taught them to do (Foucault, "Afterword" 218). Because the students had learned a fear of the vice-principal's office—who near as I can tell shamed misbehaving students and then made them sit in the office waiting room on public display as though in stocks—they would learn to censure themselves. Engrained with the values

of academic excellence and social approval, the students generally sought such validation. I cannot then say that the students granted power to me, their itinerant teacher, but followed the dictates of power they had learned, which I too had learned and perpetuated. My use of power in the classroom did not restrict the students from the impulse of “misbehaving,” which is to say contradicting the ideal of the model student. The California educational system produced me in the shadow of a model student and then set me to work continuing to mold students to commit to that vision. The genealogist, therefore, studies the actual procedures by which power produces bodies, generates knowledge, and contains resistances.

The genealogical shift to thinking of power as productive means concentrating critical efforts on understanding how power produces bodies through technologies of power and cultural meanings of the body. By producing bodies I mean that power “effects” bodies. In forming the junior-high school student, power does not merely “affect” the student by punishing him/her with the public shame of having to walk around campus picking up pieces of trash, *affecting* a feeling of dishonor, embarrassment, or other debasement. The punishments serve as “technologies of power,” ways of making the body, the student in this case, conform to the norm set for students (Grosz 86). These technologies of power *effect*, or produce a student who wants social approval, thus abiding by institutional code. Consequently, technologies of power operate as discourses that produce bodies by instituting practices and defining their significance and meanings:

Power is most profitably seen as *embodied* in the lives of people with very real bodies saying things to each other, in their actual languaging, which includes uttering explanations, commands, dismissals, threats, and promises—as well as giving indications of acceptance, obedience, compliance, submission or agreement. (Krippendorf 107)

Therefore, the genealogist says that the power system *effects*—produces—a student with the school’s cultural values, a student who now will more likely seek to personally uphold the

standards set for students. Likewise, power produces women's bodies as needing medical management. Sally Shuttleworth, for example, shows a tradition in the mid-nineteenth century of producing women's bodies as out of control against a standard of regular and normative menstrual cycles. Women's erratic bodies, then, became subject to medical intervention to render the women's menstrual cycles regular according to textbook prescription to avoid insanity or suspicions of idleness (58-59). In this I find the unique contribution of genealogy to analyzing the body.

Interpretations of the body often indicate a symbolic meaning lacquered to the truth of biology; such interpretations get so caught up in representational analysis that materiality of experience gets buried or otherwise disregarded. Feminists have struggled with interpretations of the pregnant body that point to an instability of the female body, pronounce the feminine power of production, or discuss the pregnant body in such symbolic modes that the literalness of pregnancy seems forgotten.¹ Considering the body genealogically provides us with "a way of conceiving of the body as a concrete phenomenon without eliding its materiality with a fixed biological or prediscursive essence" (McNay 17). Instead of seeking to reveal the meaning of the biological experience of pregnancy, sexuality, and so forth, the genealogist accepts that to those very "real" experiences cultural practices affix meanings and create technologies to shape that experience into accordance with a preconceived ideal.

Foucault's study of Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, demonstrates a genealogical sensitivity to the materiality of body as well as a consideration of the body's cultural production. The example of Barbin provides us with the opportunity to discuss the production of the body as well as knowledge by considering a case that challenges the typical

¹ See Paula Treichler for a discussion of these tensions in feminism.

rendering of a body as male or female. Barbin lived as a woman, even living in a convent, until the time that a medical examination raised concern at Barbin's ambiguous genital assignment. For a short time after, Barbin lived as a man before committing suicide. When one's genitals failed to provide clear signs for the cultural production of the body, in the tradition of science of the day, "it was up to the expert to say which sex nature had chosen for him (sic) and to which society must constantly ask him (sic) to adhere" (Foucault, *Herculine* ix). By publishing the memoirs and a dossier of Barbin, "Foucault is clearly trying to show how an hermaphroditic or intersexed body implicitly exposes and refutes the regulative strategies of sexual categorization" (Butler 96). The careful attention given to Barbin's body reveals the compulsion of institutional practices to produce our bodies, lacquering a discursive meaning onto the materiality of biology.

The case of Barbin represents more than a naked case of the production of bodies but also the production of knowledge. Power produces knowledge by constructing what we know and how we know it, such as what we know about sex assignment and gender as the case of Barbin illustrates: "Ways of knowing are equated with ways of exercising power over individuals" (Sawicki 22). Knowledge refers to those things that "constitute social relationships. Knowledge is a way of ordering the world; as such it is not prior to social organization, it is inseparable from social organization" (Scott 2). As socially organizing statements, claims accepted as truth must come from those that society produces as authoritative and entrusted to effect the social order: "To utter a statement that counts as knowledge is to act in relation to others (power)" (Blair, "Statement" 367). The elevation in the status of the medical community over the remainder of the citizenry emanates from doctors' ability to produce knowledge about the body. By determining the truth of Barbin's sex as male rather than female, the medical community authorized the production of Barbin's sex in ways counter to how Barbin had lived, effecting

career choices and suitable sexual partners. Similarly the DSM, the primary diagnostic tool of the American Psychiatric Association, continues its proliferation by producing bodies understood as diseased and upon which technologies of power may act to produce the body in other, ideal ways (Barker and Cheney 23).² The cycle demonstrates how “power produces knowledge (and not by simply encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another” (Foucault, *Discipline* 27). In this mutual production of bodies and knowledge, power reveals its prolific abilities. By creating new categories for classifications of gender and sexuality, the discourse creates a multitude of bodies to be labeled according to their physical configurations and behaviors.

As a variety of categories for classification spring forth, so do the potential opportunities for challenging the production of truth creates a resistance. Challenges to the production of knowledge by contesting accepted truth or claiming access to forbidden information resists the mode of power upheld by the production of knowledge. Barbin’s physical ambiguity provided a challenge to received knowledge about the naturalness of sexual and gender division. Where the seeming polarity of male and female had justified the production of bodies as masculine or feminine, Barbin’s physicality challenged strict codes of gender conduct. Like all acts of resistances, however, Barbin existed within the matrix of power s/he contested for “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, *History* 95). The compulsion of medical production of knowledge to delineate humans as clearly male or female took Barbin in its grasp and ultimately yielded her as a man. This does not mean that “resistance is futile” but resistances can only offer minute breaks and shifts that in mass hold the possibility to effect greater change (Foucault, *History* 96). The matter of resistance demonstrates the extent of

² For an account of cases of treating Gender Identity Disorder see Phyllis Burke’s *Gender Shock*.

power's productivity that produces more than bodies and knowledge that serve its interests but also the very discourse that attempts to challenge power.

Asserting that power produces bodies, knowledge, and resistance leaves the critic needing a point of entry for critique, or, put another way, the critic needs to know how to go about critiquing that which power produces. In the context of producing gender, Joan Wallach Scott makes the point that post-structural critiques rely upon language as a symbolic order to understand the production of gender (37). Therefore, rhetoric's interest in the study of discourse as a system of symbolic arrangement necessitates the effort to bring the rhetorical tradition and genealogical approach together through the analytical frame of genealogical interpretation. Where Foucault maintains that power is exercised through people, Klaus Krippendorf adds that the exercise of power happens in rhetoric, as Krippendorf says, "*by someone in words*" (emphasis original) (107). The relationships of power and knowledge often manifest themselves in the discourses produced: "Power/knowledge is everywhere present in that the act of speaking delimits the objects of knowledge and excludes certain formations from mainstream discourse" (Sholle 37). The study of rhetoric allows us to understand the modes of production at play by analyzing the discourses engaged to effect bodies, knowledge, and resistance.

Concentrating on power's productive force yields potential for the study of birth control rhetoric. Within Sanger's rhetoric I find her discussion of sex produces knowledge of the types of sex, women's bodies as sexual, and resistance to dominant notions of sexuality. In arguing for women's right to birth control Sanger discusses sexuality in such a way as to produce categories for its classification, sex as spousal rape, sex as marriage enhancement, and sex as maintenance of health.³ Sanger's discussion of sexuality produces women's bodies as sexual and maternal

³ For an example, see *Woman and the New Race* (112).

thus creating a basis for women's right to sexual pleasure as well as an alternate identity of maternity to dominate women's sexuality. These expressions create a resistance to discourses of sexuality in culture as masculine. The resistance, however, also gives way to the insistence that women's bodies serve a maternal function that must bear an appropriate relationship to feminine sexuality, that is, restrained so as to best serve the needs of the family. This example of Sanger's production demonstrates the productive ability of power as manifested in discourse.

Discipline Is as Discipline Does

To examine rhetoric to identify power's signature, critics should direct attention toward the creation of disciplines. Power primarily produces subjects through the use of disciplines that fashion bodies into particular models. Disciplinary practices effect a "docile body," partly through the effective use of "body-object articulations," that effect bodies and gender. Like the genealogical theory of power in general, the notion of discipline requires a shift in thinking of discipline as mere punishment, such as Anthony Comstock arresting those who sold contraceptives. Imprisoning those who spread contraceptives and contraceptive knowledge the government urged distributors toward a particular model of social morality rather than away from obscenity. As in this example, disciplinary punishments seek to redirect the actions and behaviors of malefactors rather than merely restricting them. As disciplines go, the example of imprisoned distributors of birth control represents a gross caricature of the many insidious and intricate ways that disciplines work to produce bodies.

In an example above I discussed junior-high school students whom the educational system encourage to conform to a certain set of values and behaviors by both reforming malefactors and socially rewarding compliants. The formation and reformation of individuals toward a prescribed ideal represents a discipline: "Methods which [make] possible the

meticulous control of the operations of the body” (Foucault, *Discipline* 137). Disciplines invade the body and “regulate its very forces and operations, the economy and efficiency of its movements” (Bartky 240). Where the school uses careful observation and the recruitment of parental support to form the student into the model of an ideal, in Sanger’s day as now, organizations provide services to expectant mothers and produce a plethora of literature on the proper care of children before and after birth. The effort to assist and train women as mothers helps form them as maternal bodies that they might avoid either contraception or abortions. Through the effective enactment of disciplines onto an individual, the body is rendered docile: “A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, *Discipline* 136). Docility and discipline form a positive feedback loop in which discipline helps to form a docile body that thereby yields a body susceptible to continuing or further discipline.

Critics’ thoughts about the enforcement of docile bodies to particular disciplines must resist the image of discipline as only rapprochement. Disciplinary forces occur from two sources: the externalized and the internalized. As Barker and Cheney note, the whip, as an external source of domination, has less effect than the watch, which requires “our regular submission to it as a willing, almost wholly voluntary act” (20). The watch represents a key mode of discipline as a “body-object” articulation in which the body forms a “coercive link with the apparatus of production” (Foucault, *Discipline* 153). For students, the desk represents the articulation of the pupils’ bodies by bending their form into the predetermined shape, passing the students’ bodies through the groove created by the desk and chair. In an appropriately sized desk students cannot easily raise up from their appointed seats and have a default position physically aimed at the task at hand, much like the lower-management employee celled into a gray cubicle. Where the desk and the cubicle both look like obvious instruments of control the seemingly benign clock or

watch excels in its disciplining of the body over a continuous 24-hour period. The ever-presence of time pieces on our walls, in our cars, at our bedsides, towering up over cities and universities, and even strapped to our bodies with alarms that buzz, beep, ring, chime, or play music serve as constant reminders to us to regulate our waking—and even our sleeping—hours. Giving ourselves over to disciplinary practices stands as testaments to the effectiveness of micro-techniques when the discipline itself radiates from within the (self-)governed body.

The regulation of the body only begins with the management of time and extends even into the ways that we position ourselves within the network of social relations. Sandra Bartky demonstrates the ways in which women in Euro-American culture regularly subject themselves to disciplines of their bodies, relating to issues of their social and personal worth. Specifically Bartky references women's exercises classes designed to reshape the body, as opposed to reducing weight, as well as facial exercises meant to sculpt features (243). Exercise classes, body and facial sculpting guides, and dietary regimens all serve the purpose of disciplining the feminine form by immersing women into a cultural expectation and prescribing necessary courses of action. Citing one study, Bartky notes the docility of feminine-gender construction by comparing women's more restrictive bodily movements and minimal space used when seated versus men's more broad movements and expansive use of space (244). In these examples lies Foucault's point: "Discipline is a political anatomy of detail" (*Discipline* 139). Bartky's examples demonstrate discipline and docility that operate at an internalized level precisely because "no one is marched off to electrolysis at the end of a rifle" but because of a social compulsion—a product of the power-knowledge relationship—for the normalization of women's bodies to an ideal (250).

Discussing gender as the product of disciplinary practices presents one challenge to ideas about gender as performance. Bartky counters certain uses of the theatrical metaphor of gender as performance, asserting that women—and I would add men—do not enjoy the “self-determination” associated with performing artists (248). Against the notion of a theatrically-oriented performance based on free choice stands Judith Butler’s central work on gender as performance, which partly takes from Foucauldian theory. For Butler, gender as a performance means that we are each compelled to conform to a series of socially contingent and predetermined acts (*Gender* 24). Despite human free will, we often find it difficult, if not impossible, to deviate from traditional gender performances that contradict the expectations of family, friends, and social structures. Bartky, who shares a similar reading of Foucault with Butler, raises concerns about those who, unlike Butler, over-emphasize the liberating notion of gender as performance in that it supposedly allows for all people to simply perform their gender as their fancy strikes them. Teasing out Bartky’s use of the theatrical metaphor—though risking absurdity—critics can extend that each of us in our own cultural milieu have little choice in the selection of our social scripts, but we do receive much social rejection when we deviate from the prepared text: “Most of us received our gender training loud and clear. We knew from the time we could speak, perhaps before, what was expected of us as girls and boys” (P. Burke 233). Bartky notes the constant appraisal and discipline on women’s bodies—for one—that exist every where and yet nowhere as an entire culture directs them toward cultural ideals of feminine weight and beauty (249). The omnipresent and omnipotent nature of disciplines emanates from a corruption of democracy by which the collective collaboratively reinforces disciplines as norms of behavior (Barker and Cheney 29).

The use of disciplines to form docile bodies, sometimes through the use of body-object articulations, is important to the analysis of power's productivity. Genealogical interpretation relies upon a belief in power as productive largely through the use of disciplinary practices. Therefore, genealogical interpretation studies rhetoric for the production of bodies, knowledge, and resistances. The study of discourses works from the assumptions that power produces and that rhetorical activity constitutes an act of power. The focus lies upon considering how bodies, knowledge, and resistance are produced in rhetoric as a function of power often employing the use of disciplines. The genealogically oriented view of power moves away from power as hanging over us and restricting our actions and knowledge. Power as productive means rejecting the idea that subjects have certain abilities and truth for us to discover. Genealogical interpretation moves critics to see discursive action as creating the subjects for study, namely bodies, knowledge, and resistance.

The ubiquitous social pressure for women to conform to notions late- and post-Victorian ideals of femininity provides an example of the disciplined nature of women's gender performance. Throughout much of Sanger's birth control rhetoric she endorses the assumptions of women as domestically oriented, that women's primary obligation is to others rather than themselves. When Sanger broaches issues of women's responsibility to care for and improve the lot of others, she works from already understood cultural assumptions about women's duties in life. The arguments Sanger makes for birth control reinforce for women that they must care for their bodies in such a way that they can better serve their children, husbands, and society. Women's lifetime of hearing that they must care for others prepares them, as docile bodies, to accept contraceptive practice as but one more mode of service to others. The pessaries Sanger dispensed to women along with careful instruction on their use reinforced through a body-object

articulation, the application of an apparatus to a body, forming women as dutiful caretakers. The effectiveness of disciplines reveals itself in this example as neither Sanger nor anyone else has to explain to women the importance of being good maternal figures; a life of discipline has already laid that foundation upon which Sanger calls for birth control as another discipline of the body.

How We Write History

Much like the treatment of power, genealogy and interpretation have somewhat fundamental differences in their approach to the writing of history. Genealogical interpretation strikes a balance between genealogy's quest against teleology and interpretation's tendency to construct master narratives by creating a story of events that allows for contradictions and tensions. In its interpretivist leanings, genealogical interpretation attempts to tell a coherent story of action that provides a degree of "explanation," yet the genealogical side of this approach understands coherency as including "odd" breaks and shifts that undermine efforts to speak about history's teleological destiny. To understand this tension and struggle and how genealogical interpretation manages it, I begin by discussing the teleological tendencies of interpretivist studies and genealogists' problem with that habit. I then discuss genealogy's interest in the jolts, ruptures, and contradictions of history. Last, I offer genealogical interpretation as a middle ground between the two approaches that seeks to incorporate many histories into its consideration of texts.

To discuss the tensions between interpretation and genealogy requires first having an understanding of the teleological tendency of interpretation. Many formal rhetorical methods carry with them the danger of seeking out elements in texts that neatly build together a smooth line of development. Culpepper Clark and Raymie McKerrow note that "To preserve the continuous flow of ideas, these historians are constrained to search for similarities rather than

differences” (310). The search for similarity papers over intra/inter-textual tensions, contradictions, and ironies. In so doing the analysis represents the rhetoric as following a flawless system of logic and reaching toward a perfected state rather than representing the complexity and contradictions of humanness. Many rhetorical methods seek out continuity, looking for the metaphors used, the structure of the narratives, the various emphases of dramas constructed, and so forth (Blair, “Symbolic” 142). These methods, with their interest in coherency and consistency, produce scholarship that replicates and reifies that view.

The theoretical and methodological assumption of a logical order in texts discipline scholars to reproduce that belief. Rhetorical critics have a tendency to approach texts with the teleological assumption that an author’s rhetoric has a single unifying theme around which the author forms all utterances. Teleological assumptions in rhetorical analysis blind the critic to the complexities of the text: “They are driven by the future perfect, oblivious to the rhetorical transformations emerging from out of the past” (Clark and McKerrow 310). As Clark and McKerrow have put it, “such historians,” and I argue rhetorical critics, “have succumbed willingly, almost enthusiastically, to knowing who won” (311). A teleological analysis assumes that changes in an individual’s rhetoric come as a natural evolution, the progression toward some predetermined end. As critics working through texts, we realize the fiction of a clean, smooth development of history toward a predetermined point. The theoretical and methodological trainings we have had, however, direct us toward finding consistency and order. Studies of rhetoric then take on the tone of one who already knows “who won,” depicting each rhetorical act as a providential moment building to a climax. Genealogical interpretation, therefore, frees us, as critics, to write histories and analyses that acknowledge and accept the inevitable tensions of history and texts.

The difference of genealogy's approach to history from interpretation begins with the matter of teleological assumptions. Genealogy denies a clear coherence in history and texts that otherwise marks out the spectacular moment of an idea's inception and its careful evolution through time. In contrast, genealogy turns to seeing history as emerging awkwardly over time and influenced by an endless series of factors. The genealogical historian approaches the study of ideas aware of "the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 78). Where interpretation attempts to discover a text's truth genealogy wants to consider the factors that create the possibility for the text's being. Genealogical histories oppose themselves to interpretations by demonstrating "our history of constructing unities and pretending they are discoveries" (Ferguson 327, 335). To do so, genealogy seeks out discontinuities to remind the critic that history comes to us as a bricolage of events rather than a seamless whole.

Against the quest for absolute coherency in interpretation, genealogy invests its energies in the discontinuities of history. The search for discontinuities in history are not the end in and of themselves but serve as the "starting point," stimulating questions about why the shift came to pass, an effort that challenges an interpretivist, progressivist history of activity (Sawicki 57). The genealogical approach to texts "focuses on discontinuities in an attempt to discover why certain social relations occurred and not others" (McKerrow 96-97). Genealogy takes an interest in the contradictions and ironies amongst rhetorical moments to "record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 76). Where a teleological analysis may feel compelled to explain contradictions in such a way as to construct a scheme of progress, "Genealogy seeks out discontinuities where others found continuous development" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 106). Genealogical explanations of contrasts in rhetoric over time resist constructing a

coherent narrative of progress but find interest in contradictions or ironies present, “it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 81). The deviations of history matter for they provide a complex—though never complete—picture than do interpretations, which almost actively exclude details from history to render a tidy reading of events. Tracking the breaks and shifts of history opens up new possibilities in understandings of events and social organization.

If, as genealogy suggests, critics should write history as non-teleological, then the question arises as to how one goes about discovering discontinuities. Genealogy works against writing and discovering history as a smooth line of development by including as many fragments of history as possible. This approach depends upon “a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 76-77). That knowledge of details allows for their inclusion which leads to the inevitable recognition of events that fall outside the typical telling of history. Some feminist critics recognize the importance of genealogy for validating and incorporating into the writing of history sites of knowledge often overlooked (Sawicki 26). Those sites of knowledge include women whose experiences historians have often overlooked. As an example, Sara Evans’s *Born for Liberty* writes into US history how events that have enjoyed a prominent place in history’s construction effected changes in women’s lives and the organization of the home. For instance, Evans discusses how the US Depression in the 1930s led to a drop in marriage and birthrates because of economic uncertainty (200). By including non-dominant histories, genealogy allows for the simple line of a developmental history to become intertwined with other events that sometimes interrupt the smooth flow of a narrative. These histories must come together in such a way that they become “so interconnected

that they cannot be disentangled” (Scott 42). By accumulating and commingling many histories the critic can come to understand how “events make possible other events” (Grossberg 415). Genealogical interpretation, then, writes history that includes as many disparate histories as possible.

The integration of many histories to understand a particular moment makes genealogical interpretation an approach distinct from interpretation. The key difference between interpretation and genealogy lies in interpretation’s interest in the meaning of the message and genealogy’s interest in the social structure that created the message. Interpretation’s story of events often revolves on an autonomous individual from whom texts fall like apples from a tree. An interpretationist carefully dissects the fruit to determine its nutritional value, ripeness, protein, starch, and so forth. Under the microscope, interpretationists want to ascertain the meanings within the text. Through scrutinizing the message for its meanings, interpretationists attempt to understand the logical structure of the message, the depiction of people and events in the message, and so forth. Genealogy directs attention to the tree to understand how that particular tree, with its specific location and with a particular meteorological and agricultural history, could produce the apple the interpretationist holds under the microscope. Likewise, genealogy shies away from the close-textual analysis so familiar to interpretationists to include an understanding of how the author had the ability to produce a particular discourse. By this I mean the genealogist concentrates on how the rhetor’s social position produced that speaking subject and allows for a particular utterance (Foucault, *Archaeology* 92). Genealogical approaches avoid studying the history of rhetors that brought them to a particular speech act to focus on how their social production and construction enabled that rhetorical action (Foucault, *Archeology* 96). The fused

approach of genealogical interpretation looks at texts to understand both their meanings and how the streams of history helped to produce the speaking subject and the utterances that follow.

Rhetorical studies also include the production of critics and their texts. Carole Blair, Julie Brown, and Leslie Baxter demonstrate a masculinist structure in academic writing that produces texts that follow disciplinary norms: “Academic writing . . . is regulated by clear norms, usually among them the demand for a refined, ahistorical, smoothly finished univocality” (383). After reviewing and critiquing a published statistical ranking of scholars by their rate of publication in communication journals, Blair, Brown, and Baxter submitted their analysis to a journal, which returned harsh criticisms that reproduced the disciplinary norms the authors had challenged. The original critique Blair, Brown, and Baxter wrote found that the statistical ranking adopts a masculine assumption of publication trends among all scholars, demonstrates a masculine compulsion for marking territory, assumes the masculine desire for independence rather than interdependence, and employs the masculine propensity for hierarchy (389-94).⁴ As a transparent demonstration of the structures that produce scholarship the authors include with their published manuscript excerpts of the reviews from a previous journal that disciplined them by accusing the authors of being “feline, petty . . . [and] ball-bashing” (398). Genealogists point out here that the content of the articles must themselves be scrutinized for the disciplinary structure that produces them.

Genealogical interpretation distinguishes itself from both the tradition of interpretation as well as the trend of genealogy. By bringing the two approaches together, genealogical interpretation simultaneously delves into texts to understand how diverse histories contributed to

⁴ With regard to the rate of publications among men and women, Blair, Brown, and Baxter note that women’s publication rate often represents a “linear progression” rather than a saddle for men, higher at the beginning and end of their careers (389).

their construction and resists the compulsion for determining a teleological account. Against the interpretationist tradition of writing history as neatly progressive genealogical interpretation, like genealogy, takes an interest in how the events of many histories disrupt the telling of a smooth flow of development. As genealogy would, this approach takes an interest in understanding how those many histories created the possibility for the text's existence. The break genealogy makes from interpretation also resists the disciplining of critics and analyses, as in the case of Blair, Brown, and Baxter, to follow the predetermined writing of the academy. In so doing, genealogical interpretation retains an interest in textual meanings and thereby tempers the genealogical approach that might otherwise restrict its interest to how the text came to pass.

Writing history against the urge of teleology liberates analyses of Sanger's discourse when considering the divergent themes in her rhetoric. Over the course of 40 years Sanger's rhetoric contains sharp contrasts, which the genealogical side of genealogical interpretation embraces rather than attempting to smooth out the rough spots. A brief example from Sanger's rhetoric illustrates this point. Returning to the difference across editions of Sanger's birth control pamphlet (*Family Limitation*) I discussed in the introduction of this chapter, Sanger shifts in her discussion from speaking to working class women for the purpose of empowerment to speaking of the sick who must be stopped from reproducing. As a departure from interpretation, I am freed from having to determine which statement represents Sanger's true feelings and which is the act of political expediency. By direction of genealogical interpretation, I can work through that tension, considering how discourses in the surrounding culture had changed and enabled an alteration in her focus. Both Sanger's early and late explanation for the use of birth control in *Limitation* can coexist without one having to be discarded or treated as the less evolved

rhetorical scheme. Genealogical interpretation stimulates the critic by inviting a discussion of the tension.

The Death of the Rhetor(?)

Describing texts as the product of converging historical moments raises the question of the rhetor's role in textual creation. Genealogical interpretation avoids the tendency of historicizing the speaker and instead tries to understand how the rhetor draws from the social library of histories to construct the text. The tradition of great speaker studies is just that, an emphasis on he—historically speaking, it was “he”—who wrote the text. Similarly, my study of Sanger concentrates on a single person, so I must consider her role as a rhetor in relation to the discussion of texts as produced by history. For this discussion I raise Lloyd Bitzer's notion of the rhetorical situation and complicate the matter by comparing Bitzer with Roland Barthes and Foucault on the function of the author/rhetor.

With regard to the my previous discussion of texts as the product of their historical moment, I must distinguish genealogical interpretation's stance from Bitzer's discussion of the rhetorical situation. Where the notion of the rhetorical situation treats speech as a response to the moment, genealogical interpretation sees the situation itself as generating the response. In his well known essay, Bitzer stresses that rhetorical acts come as a response to a situation “to produce action or change in the world” (303). In two important ways genealogical interpretation breaks with the rhetorical situation. First, Bitzer's argument centers on the idea of events demanding and prescribing particular, “fitting” responses (Bitzer 307). In this way rhetoric becomes teleological, having a predetermined end in mind toward which rhetors design their response. Second, Bitzer's stress on rhetoric as changing a situation misses the point that utterances come from the discourses in the moment, and the “responses” *further* those

discourses. In the logic of the rhetorical situation, the message comes from a rhetor who intercedes from some objective distance. Where Bitzer sees the rhetor as responding to a situation, Richard Vatz characterizes the rhetor as creating the situation by naming it (464). Vatz's critique of "The Rhetorical Situation," like Bitzer's argument, fails to see the genealogical position that the rhetor neither responds to nor creates the situation but is in fact a product of it.

In contrast to the function of the rhetor as taken from Bitzer and Vatz, my understanding of the role of the rhetor comes chiefly from Roland Barthes's pronouncement of the "Death of the Author" and Foucault's consideration of "What Is an Author?" Barthes challenges the unstated assumption of many analyses that rhetors' messages come as new creations as God speaking the universe into existence from nothingness, suggesting instead that "The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" ("Death"). This argument goes further than saying that authors reference their culture, repeating values and norms, to posit that "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original" (Barthes "Death"). To this Judith Butler adds the notion of iterability, that actors feel compelled to replicate cultural discourses (*Bodies* 95). Understanding each rhetorical act as an iteration means considering it as an outgrowth of previous rhetorical moments as opposed to merely related to them: "A statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 99). An idea or text's originality, then, comes from its deviation, expansion, or other movement *from* previous discourse, rather than some new beginning invented by the rhetor.

Saying that a text comes from its cultural predecessors requires a new consideration of the rhetor's role. I borrow Barthes's title to suggest that the rhetor is dead in that, as a critic, I

ought to avoid the compulsion to speak about rhetoric in terms of the biography or psychology of the rhetor rather than the text in its relations to other discourses. Foucault specifically warns against equating authors/rhetors as synonymous with their texts and therefore using the text to understand the rhetor or vice versa: “It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him (sic) with the fictitious speaker” (“What” 112). This does not mean that critics do not, or should not connect utterances with their author, but that critics ought to reconsider the origin of the texts: “It is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse” (“What” 118). In this way discourses originate the author/rhetor as well as the text.

Looking at rhetoric as coming from operating discourses raises questions as to the agency of the rhetor, or put another way: “Is a rhetor nothing more than an automaton?” No. In this alternate relationship between text and author/rhetor Barthes suggests a new term. Because the author/rhetor does not occupy some pristine environment, but has knowledge created by discourses to which the text s/he contributes, Barthes suggests shifting from thinking of the writer or speaker as an author (and I add rhetor) who divinely creates the text, to calling it the role of a scriptor: “Succeeding the Author, the scriptor no longer bears within him (sic) passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he (sic) draws a writing that can know no halt: . . . the book itself is only a tissue of signs imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred” (“Death” 147). The transformation of the author/rhetor into a scriptor does not deny the agency of those who write and speak. Margaret Sanger, for instance, has choice in what she chooses to say, but Sanger’s choice is constrained to the available threads of discourse. If, as Butler suggests, speech constitutes acts of reiteration, then Sanger can only choose from a selection of normalized beliefs, values, and attitudes. The shift moves critics to concentrate on

author/rhetor's choices in selecting from those existing social discourses. Of my own project one might ask: "Why then study the 'rhetoric of Margaret Sanger' when she is not technically an 'author/rhetor'? Shouldn't you, Wesley, study all the discourses of birth control?" The answer, quite frankly, is one of practicality.

Discussing the matter of practicality I turn to my own project as an example. Discourses of and surrounding the birth control movement in the US produced Margaret Sanger and the works attributed to her, but selecting, in this instance, one person makes for a manageable project. By choosing to study Sanger as part of the rhetoric of birth control in the early-twentieth century US, I choose to chase out one strand, one thread, in the web of discourses that is generally named "birth control rhetoric." In following that line, I take an interest in the intersecting filaments while keeping a somewhat primary focus on the string tagged "Margaret Sanger." Then, too, I must decide which texts constitute the line I study. Foucault asks, in publishing Nietzsche's works, what must he include:

Everything that Nietzsche himself published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: Is it work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. ("What" 103-04)

In the passage Foucault, in a fit of ironic humor, unravels the fiction of a discrete body work by an author like a ball of yarn until he utterly ensnares himself in a jumble of string. The scene makes the point: this understanding of the author and texts creates a mess, yet I prefer that mess to the fiction of neatness. For my project, I offer the principle of practicality. Though the sweep of discourses is wide, I must limit myself to what I can manage in a given project (i.e., a dissertation rather than a life-long work). In this project I choose available texts to analyze a part of the discussion of birth control as—in Barthes's terminology—scripted by Sanger to

understand the ways that US birth control rhetoric in the early-twentieth century produced women's bodies.

Choosing a manageable amount of texts to analyze as an issue of practicality balances the needs of both genealogy and interpretation. In discussing the critic's approach to the rhetor, genealogical interpretation allows for decentralizing the rhetor as the producing figure but focusing on a single rhetor as a way of understanding part of a larger discursive action, here Sanger as part of the birth control movement in the US. Genealogical interpretation focuses on the relationship between the text and the social discourses that brought it about. Turning away from Bitzer's notion of the rhetorical situation, which understands context as requiring a particular text, genealogical interpretation responds to Barthes and Foucault's critique of the author's status and function and sees the moment as producing the text from an amalgam of other social discourses. This approach necessitates the uncomfortable decision making of which discourses demand consideration over others, yet I prefer this to the fable that a text has only an ancillary relation to existing discourses, which the critic can comfortably sever.

To come to an understanding of the reiterations of Sanger's rhetoric I include in this project as many histories as seem pertinent. In chapter four I gather together the lines of a number of different discourses in an attempt to provide some insight into the social texts and ideas that Sanger draws from and reiterates in her rhetoric. Bringing together the discourses of women's sexuality in the nineteenth-century US and the medicalization of women's bodies gives insight into the lines of thought that pass through Sanger's rhetoric as she speaks of both the "naturalness" of women's sexuality and the need for science to control the functions of women's bodies. Because of scientific assumptions of women as less biologically evolved than men, women's nature in terms of both sexuality and reproduction become subject to masculine,

medical intervention. Critically considering the social discourses moving through Sanger's rhetoric represents the ways in which she can only speak to and from the ideas of culture available to her.

SOME NUTS AND BOLTS OF GENEALOGICAL INTERPRETATION

With a conceptual framework of genealogical interpretation in place this project requires a methodological discussion as well. Integrating the approaches of interpretation and genealogy, genealogical interpretation concentrates on textual meanings, the ways that texts construct events and people, but with an orientation toward power, history, and authorship that reflect the interests of genealogy, and the ways that discourses produce bodies and ideas. The previous section provided an opportunity to explore theoretical assumptions of genealogy and interpretation that undergird the combined approach of genealogical interpretation. In this section I give attention to how the combination of interpretation and genealogy plays out issues and concerns of rhetorical analysis. To that end I begin by discussing how genealogical interpretation's understanding of power directs its analysis to the ways that social discourses produce bodies and knowledge. Then, I provide a discussion of genealogical interpretation's mode of writing history as against teleology, and toward a complex and diverse story. Last, I describe how genealogical interpretation's view of the rhetor affects the consideration of the text by focusing on the ways that lines of history produce the rhetor. In all this I attempt to discuss how this particular mode of analysis bridges the rift between interpretation and genealogy.

The post-structuralist assumption of power's productive nature conflicts with traditional practices of rhetorical criticism and requires mediation for a synthesis to occur. The interpretivist tradition in rhetorical studies presents a challenge to integrating it with genealogical analysis. Interpretationists insist that power *affects*, or impacts, bodies and knowledge by constraining the

situation to which an author responds; genealogists argue that power *effects*, or produces, bodies and knowledge through reiterations of social discourses. Genealogy's hesitance to acknowledge even resistance as outside power's domain aggravates interpretation's uneasiness with genealogy. Where genealogy sees power as productive of bodies, knowledge, and resistance, interpretation often relies upon the principle of speaking about power as independent of those things. The separation of power from that produced allows for interpretation of the body's meaning, analysis of particular knowledges, and examination of counter discourses. The difference in orientations between interpretation and genealogy's approaches requires further understanding before explaining how a collaboration between the two perspectives operate.

A look at two theorists demonstrates the inherent tension of genealogical interpretation. Blair raises the tension between the tradition of rhetorical studies and post-structuralism by discussing differences in the work of Burke and Foucault, whom I respectively call an interpretationist and a genealogist. In the comparison Blair notes that for Burke language represents an action in its symbolicity whereas Foucault sees languaging itself as an activity ("Symbolic" 134). This break is crucial to the rhetorical critic, for this disparity represents the difference in studying what a language is (means) and what a language does (produces). Clark and McKerrow critique interpretivist strategies for efforts to determine the truth of a text: "Rather than taking the discourse at its face value, energy is spent seeking to determine what is behind the document, what it really means" (310). Blair adds to such concerns by describing the myopia of interpretivist attempts to understand a text's political impact without recognizing that "the act of discourse is an act of power" ("Statement" 367). The Foucauldian critique of Burkean theory objects to seeing texts as a response to their situation rather than understanding how the dynamics of the situation brought the text to exist.

The differences between Burke and Foucault demonstrate a shift in approach to texts when the notion of power's role changes. Interpretation separates itself from genealogy in its attempt to read the texts affected by power rather than the texts' power effects. For this reason interpretationists often seek to reveal "the various disguises that can cover up and distort reality" (Ferguson 326). The interpretivist attempt to reveal reality's distortions rather than the genealogical effort to understand the production of reality has proven itself a stumbling block to rhetorical critics. McKerrow's articulation of the project of critical rhetoric draws heavily from Foucault's writings on genealogy yet demonstrates an interpretivist bias. Under the auspice of critical rhetoric the critic "[demonstrates] the silent often non-deliberate ways in which rhetoric conceals as much as it reveals through its relationship with power/knowledge" (McKerrow 92). Because of the emphasis on "concealing and revealing" Ronald Greene argues against the project of critical rhetoric for its over-dependence on the interpretationist paradigm that chooses politics of representation over the production of bodies and knowledge ("Another" 38). I agree that our rhetorical practices need to consider more than the representation of bodies, yet I find it difficult to sever discussing how power produces bodies from discussing the representation of bodies.

Instead of attempting to neatly separate a critique of body production and a critique of body representation to distinguish between interpretation and genealogy, I suggest the practice of genealogical interpretation. I see genealogical interpretation as appreciating power's productive nature while also wanting to read those productions to understand the bodies, knowledges, and resistances produced. In so doing the critic can study the trajectories and effects of power's operation without speaking in terms of a subject's true essence. Genealogical interpretation negotiates a position between conceptualizing symbolic activity as both product and producer with the understanding that power produces the discourses that critics can analyze to understand

power's operation. This approach offers more than a method but a chance for reconciliation for rhetorical critics who, like me, have an investment in and see the value of the rhetorical tradition of textual analysis but who also wish to consider power in dynamic ways. Because of the tension between interpretation and genealogy I choose a position that fuses the abilities of both approaches, complementing each in turn.

The matter of how the critic addresses representation provides an opportunity to discuss the ways I conceive of genealogical interpretation as rendering the tension between genealogy and interpretation complementary and thereby useful to post-structuralist critics. By employing genealogical interpretation the critic examines the production of the body in its material forms that must include representation. Genealogical interpretation avoids the interpretationist tendency to study representation for the ways that it brings to light or obscures the truth of that which it represents. In its genealogical vein genealogical interpretation rejects the assumption that bodies have a pre-discursive essence or that a truth exists to be discovered and turns to an understanding of representation as one mode of producing bodies, knowledge, and resistance. Against interpretation, genealogy keeps a distance from discussing meanings of that which power produces, for the reading itself represents a production of the subject. The genealogical compulsion to avoid enacting power through the act of criticism inhibits its ability to fully analyze the operations of power through studying its subjects. The interpretationist thus contributes to genealogical interpretation the ability to analyze messages, that which power produces, where genealogy would only attend to the structures that produce texts.

From the complement that genealogy and interpretation's orientations to power offer to one another comes genealogical interpretation's contribution to rhetorical practice. Genealogical interpretation examines discourse for the ways that rhetorical acts produce bodies, knowledge,

and resistance. This approach differs from McKerrow's notion of critical rhetoric that "seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power" (91). Where McKerrow seems to rely upon "unmasking" as revealing some concealed truth I wish to understand the discourses of the culture that produce the texts under consideration without the assumption a truth exists to be revealed. Genealogical interpretation and critical rhetoric have much in common for McKerrow's critical rhetoric seeks out the means by which power sustains social practices (98). Foucault's articulation of the genealogical project means to help us understand how "some of our ways of thinking and doing have served to dominate us" (Sawicki 52).⁵ The rhetorical approach of genealogical interpretation recognizes the pivotal role that symbolic activity plays in power's productive habits and attempts to "uncover and reveal the constitution of systems of knowledge, power, and ethics by means of an analysis of discourse" (Blair and Cooper 165). In genealogical interpretation critics must read the emphasis on understanding the "constitution of systems" rather than the truth of the text. By keeping an interest in the production of subjects through discourse rather than their representation, genealogical interpretation in its post-structural bent enters into the debate of rhetoric's epistemic nature by suggesting that rhetoric creates reality (Foss and Gill 398). Genealogical interpretation ultimately uses interpretation's interest in textual analysis to the task of understanding what genealogy reveals about power's productive nature.

From power's productivity to the writing of history, genealogical interpretation provides another point of mediation between interpretation and genealogy. The metaphor of the seamless cloth represents interpretation's activity. It symbolizes interpretation's notion that history has a perfect unity. At its most complex, interpretation sees history as a quilt, a carefully planned and

⁵ Burkean theory speaks of occupational psychoses as the habit of thinking of the world using only a particular set of terms (*Permanence* 48). The key distinction between Burke and Foucault, however, remains with regard to their respective understandings of the distinction of discourse; Burke seeing it as responding to a situation and Foucault seeing it as emanating from the context.

well executed collection of coordinating ideas. The metaphor of scraps serves genealogy best. Thinking of history as innumerable odds and ends of events that can never merge together to become an interpretationist's tapestry demonstrates genealogy's outlook on history. For writing genealogical interpretation I choose the metaphor of a cloth with many seams, a piecemeal effort of many fabrics and many scraps. Genealogical interpretation writes history as bits and pieces stitched together that sometimes fit together awkwardly or perhaps barely at all, with tears, holes, and overlaps that provide a sea of texture. The approach of genealogical interpretation challenges the well-outlaid quilt of interpretation. Genealogical interpretation also contrasts genealogy in its attempt to actually stitch together as many fragments of history as it can manage into some kind of coherent system. Within this lies the recognition that the context of a speech act is produced and meta-produced. As I have already discussed, context exists as the production of many discourses, ways of thinking, speaking and doing. As a critic piecing together the "relevant" events I myself engage in a meta-production of the context, deciding which events have had the most telling impact on the situation at hand.

Bringing together diverse history fragments in genealogical interpretation stands in contrast to a straightforward genealogical approach. Genealogy's attempts to write a kind of "anti-history" avoids a progressive scheme in its writing to the point that no singular narrative ever emerges whereas genealogical interpretation works to construct a narrative, but one accepting of its own contradictions. Ronald Wendt demonstrates his understanding of genealogy, that it "seeks out the chaotic interconnectedness of different texts" by providing a pastiche of artifacts that resists "any special temporal, spatial, or logical progression or coherence" (257, 258). Michael McGee speaks of the importance of recognizing texts themselves as fragments of the culture that produces them. As such, the argument of any text comes from an amalgam of

“fleeting fragments of discourse.” Similarly, Roberto Avant-Mier and Marouf Hasain present their genealogy to stage the relationships among the cases of Anastasie Desarant, Homer Plessy, and Suzie Phipps regarding the social understandings of race in the US. Genealogy wants a writing of history that allows for resistant voices to emerge (Grossberg 416). Genealogical interpretation works to bring out resistant voices by placing against each other various histories and allowing tensions and contestations to come forth. Like genealogy, genealogical interpretation avoids seeking out differences “willy-nilly” but with an interest in discovering the ironies present in discourses of power that constitute knowledge and effect bodies: “The critic must attend to the ‘microphysics of power’ in order to understand what *sustains* social practices” (McKerrow 98). Points of friction in a history draw the critic to consider how power produces in that space despite or because of an incongruity.

Other than looking for points of tension, genealogical interpretation writes about events and authors/rhetors in the mindset of contingency. With regard to the role of the rhetor, genealogical interpretation resists the interpretivist tendency toward something like the rhetorical situation and moves toward a radical contextualization of speech acts (Biesecker 156-57). Against seeing the rhetor as responding to a situation genealogical interpretation embraces the fact that rhetors act in a situation from which they draw their discourse and that produces them as particular kinds of speaking subjects. With that in mind, genealogical interpretation, against standard interpretation, seeks to understand the contingency of symbols and rhetors in a given context (Blair and Cooper 164). To this end the interpretivist genealogist must take into consideration “the plurality of practices that together constitute the everyday must be conceptualized as a key site of social transformation and, hence, rhetorical analysis” (Biesecker 157). This means the rhetorical critic must consider how social practices and historical events

effected the speaking subject with the ability to speak about or from a particular position:

“Historians need . . . to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations” (Scott 44). In so doing genealogical interpretation builds upon the interpretationist need to understand the relationship of rhetor and context by infusing it with the genealogical concern for history’s construction of the speaking subject. How genealogical interpretation orients itself toward the rhetor brings together the first two components of this mode of analysis by focusing on the production of bodies and the convergence of different strands of history.

From the three facets of genealogical interpretation—power’s, history’s nature, and rhetors’ role—I find the resounding theme of the necessity for understanding the varied discourses that come together to produce bodies and knowledge, that constitute the diverse field of history, and that produce a particular speaking subject. First, by collecting histories genealogical interpretation comes to understand what and how bodies and knowledge get produced in culture. Second, in gathering together the scraps of history genealogical interpretation resists a totalizing narrative of events. Last, understanding how events merge together at a particular moment informs genealogical interpretation as to how social discourses enables the speaking subjects to act as they do.

WHY GENEALOGICAL INTERPRETATION?

In reflecting upon my explication of genealogical interpretation as an analytical approach I return for a moment to the distinctions between the perspectives of Burke and Foucault to consider how their divergent views of human rhetorical activity would yield a different kind of analysis. By using genealogical interpretation in this project I intend to examine how Sanger’s

rhetoric produced women's bodies and the knowledge thereof. With that I also want to consider how Sanger's resistances to dominant discourses retained an interior position to that which they opposed. I contrast this study to a Burkean analysis that would contemplate Sanger's rhetoric in terms of its meanings. Under the auspice of a Burkean critic I might look toward how Sanger's rhetoric demonstrates the operation of a certain frame that accepts or rejects the social order (à la *Attitudes Toward History*), I may examine the means by which Sanger uses herself or others for a sacrifice of social guilt (*Rhetoric of Religion*), or I could analyze the dramatic structure of her rhetoric (*Grammar of Motives*). These interpretivist approaches tell about the "particular effects arising from the message's relationship to the situation or the choices made by rhetors or their audiences or the event's place in history," but it does not tell us about "the present and potentially enduring presentative, constructive functions of discourse for knowledge and human affairs" (Cooper 15).

Against Burke's interpretivist approach genealogy would direct me to the larger social discourses of birth control. Through genealogical analysis Foucault would have me trace out the diverse social understandings of birth control over a period of time (as, for example, he does in his study of prisons in *Discipline and Punish*) by piecing together fragments of culture (much like Wendt or Avant-Mier and Hasain). Such an approach would allow me to challenge the writing of a clean seamless history, but I would remain without an analysis of the way that the rhetoric of birth control, even through one individual (e.g., Margaret Sanger), shifts radically in a relatively short period of time. Foucault's history of the prison system does concentrate on shifts and changes, but by design genealogical considerations move away from the rich textual analysis afforded by interpretation. For that reason I bring together the divergent perspectives of interpretation and genealogy as exemplified by Burke and Foucault, respectively.

I have decided to synthesize genealogical and interpretivist approaches to satisfy my personal research interests. Some critics attempt to merge theoretical and methodological perspectives for the sake of integration or to create a compromise, in which case both must give up something of value. My choice to combine genealogy and interpretation serves my goals of wanting to engage in interpretation, performing textual analysis and exploring meanings of texts, while applying genealogical principles, adopting a radical approach to power and history. This mode of analysis better serves my research questions and proclivities than either interpretation or genealogy alone. Using genealogical interpretation I investigate the social discourses producing Sanger as rhetor as they flow through her. With this approach I can also ask how Sanger's rhetoric produces and disciplines women's bodies considering the contradictions and tensions that arise in Sanger's rhetoric, which tell us about the ways Sanger produces discourse as discourses produce her. Interpretivist and genealogical approaches independent of one another have proven themselves useful to many scholars, and will continue to do so. I offer genealogical interpretation as another choice that, for my project, brings out the key insights of both approaches while eliminating those things that keep me from teasing out the questions that most interest me.

From these assumptions I begin the study of Sanger's rhetoric. The next three chapters include discussion of social discourses during Sanger's career to contemplate the lines of thought moving through Sanger's rhetoric and analysis of Sanger's speeches and writings to understand her production of women's bodies, knowledge of women's bodies, and resistances to some of the discourses operating at the time. Chapter four contains histories of dominant social discourses operating during Sanger's career. The collection of social discourses speak to the ongoing compulsion of feminist rhetors to conform themselves to notions of feminine domesticity (like

that of True Womanhood), the assumptions of science that have led to medical control and scrutiny of women's bodies, and the work of diverse groups to save the future through the contrasting means of inhibiting contraceptive use and promoting the reproductive limitation of certain people. The histories achieve no complete history but provide some insight into the social ideas and norms Sanger reiterates in her rhetoric. Chapters five and six turn attention to Sanger's rhetoric. From the principles of genealogical interpretation the analyses are directed toward understanding more than how, but why, Sanger produced women in her rhetoric as she did. The first analysis chapter focuses on the early portion of Sanger's career, looking at how Sanger resists some discourses of women's bodies where concerns of class and liberty are concerned and also succumbs to reproducing those very ideas. The second analysis chapter gives its attention to themes occurring in the late part of Sanger's career, concentrating on how Sanger reiterates ideas of national planning by placing women's bodies as a key site of discipline, forming women's bodies to the necessary standards of reproduction. The change in themes breaks from describing women as subjects, with control of their bodies, to objects, needing outside intervention.

CHAPTER 4

“A PROFUSION OF ENTANGLED EVENTS”¹: MARGARET SANGER AS A NEXUS OF DISCOURSES

For many hours I sat in the basement of Louisiana State University’s Middleton library, staring into a gently glowing microfilm reader zooming, focusing, and squinting to make out the documents from Margaret Sanger’s career that had survived the years. I anticipated my job would be easy: read and print. History never comes to us so easily or neatly. Many of Sanger’s articles and even some of her speech transcripts were there, in tact, and easy to read. Other texts had faired poorly, especially when transferred to microfilm, and some texts were glaringly incomplete. In rhetorical studies the term “artifact” often refers to the texts of analysis. The term “artifact” conjures up images of archeologists on digs finding broken bits of pottery and worn down tools unearthed from soil and time speaking about the past. The broken, worn down bits of texts are evocative of something much like the discoveries of the archeologist on a dig.

Rhetorical critics are not, however, archeologists. In the study of texts, archeology implies that critics attempt to exhume the truth of the subject from the dirt of time by careful digging, sifting, and dusting. Archeology assumes that researchers can recreate the clear truth of a lost time. Working through history genealogically means contemplating the relations of the many found fragments and accepting a history that defies neatness and complete coherency: “Genealogy is gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 76). Sanger failed to leave a complete collection of all her writings with dates and publication information or neat copies of her speeches with careful notation of deviations she made from them. As I studied the microfilmed I knew that what I had before me

¹ Foucault, “Nietzsche” 89.

was incomplete. I studied the microfilmed texts with missing and questionably fitting parts or parts unreadable. It seemed to me the collection left absent manuscripts believed to have existed at one time but elude capture and also texts whose existence has never been known or has been forgotten. Of Sanger's speeches, some clean, typed manuscripts do exist, contributing to the fiction of a careful record keeper from on high handing down the truth of the past. Manuscripts written in Sanger's hand challenge the idea of history as neat and carefully laid out. She wrote some of her speeches on hotel stationary in the city where she would give the speech: the "absolutely fire proof" LaFayette Hotel of Buffalo, New York (1922) or the "1000 rooms" Rice Hotel of Houston Texas (1931).² Where are all the other clear, typed manuscripts Sanger had carefully prepared in advance? In the place of the carefully prepared texts Sanger left behind speech outlines sketched in swift pen movements: "B.C. Keynote new social awakening—wealth, economic"; "Not a new idea – Nature"; "So will *abortion* cease when B.C. [indistinguishable]"; and "Charity today is a crime against future generations" (Buffalo).

Looking at the speech sketches Sanger left behind reminds the critic of genealogical principles. Some of Sanger's texts defy easy and complete reading. The texts have places impossible to read or simply absent. Likewise, when discussing the history of the US birth control movement and Sanger's involvement in it, critics must resist the compulsion to look for, expect, or create a clear, neat history. Critics must allow for a history made of many fragments, some more complete and intelligible than others. Including an interpretivist approach with genealogy allows the critic to offer possible meanings to the fragments collected in terms of how diverse strands of history (e.g., the eugenics movement, concerns about race suicide, and obscenity laws) contributed to the production of Margaret Sanger and her rhetoric as part of the

² The Houston, TX manuscript is an early version of "Need for Birth Control in America."

US birth control movement. Remembering that genealogical interpretation understands bodies and knowledge as produced by power and events in history as the nexus of diverse discourses, I turn now to considering the lines of history that seem most relevant to an analysis of Sanger and her rhetoric in the US birth control movement. Coming to some understanding of the production of discourse from those that precede it requires an attempt at describing the “profusion of entangled events” that lead to the moment under study (Foucault, “Nietzsche” 89). To that end I cover those people and events that supported, thwarted, or otherwise had a recognizable bearing on Sanger and her participation in the US birth control movement.

In selecting discourses that collectively cross to form Sanger as a nexus I recognize my own culpability in historically rendering Sanger and her rhetoric in a certain manner. The histories included to understand the birth control movement present an ongoing effort to sublimate the interests and concerns of women for the service on the nation. Whether the discussion pertains to women speaking in public, women’s bodies in medical discourse, sexuality in the late- and post-Victorian era, opposition to contraceptives, or those who support birth control, the interests of women become co-opted by social expectations of their duty to their family and nation. United States’ history of women’s public address, discussed in chapter two, tells part of the story regarding Sanger’s socially and historically produced identity as a woman and the ability to engage in her own way with the public sphere. Expanding on that discussion here I cover some specific ways in which women speakers endured discipline as they took to the podium. Moving to an issue central to birth control politics, I consider examples of the disciplining of women’s bodies in the medical and scientific discourses. From women’s bodies I shift to discussing social perceptions toward sexuality and movements on sexual thought and practice that continue to form women in terms of an idealized femininity. Last, I discuss groups

whose rhetoric opposed and supported the birth control movement, finding that in both cases there remained an interest in looking to how contraception could improve the future of society.

In discussing these people, events, and trends I try to view Sanger's relations to as many different discourses as possible rather than trying to fully capture her. As genealogical interpretation must always work, these histories will overlap each other, create some tensions, and leave gaps. Much like my experience of sitting before the microfilm reader collecting the bits and pieces of Sanger's rhetoric, the histories I bring together here sometimes blur together, make it difficult to make sense of Sanger, and defy a sense of completion. In this effort I attempt to add dimension and complexity to an understanding of Sanger by offering my own interpretation of her production by these varied discourses.

THE DISCIPLINING OF FEMINIST RHETORS

As discussed in chapter two, when women enter the public sphere as politically active, speaking subjects they often reaffirm notions of femininity, like that found in the cult of True Womanhood. This section shows that when women speak publicly they confront norms of womanly behavior and disciplinary reactions, responses that conform women to expectations of femininity even as they attempt to violate those norms. The responses to women speaking publicly demonstrate that, even as women strive against notions of True Womanhood in their rhetoric, public reaction will still attempt to contain women's resistance within expected ideals of femininity. The discussion below draws on examples of the public disciplining of feminists rhetors to meet feminine ideals and feminist rhetors disciplining themselves through choice of argument and dress to conform to the dominant production of women's bodies. Having explained in chapter three the perspective of power as productive and the use of disciplines as a primary means of producing bodies and knowledge, I move now to framing the history of how women

negotiated entering the public sphere as a disciplined response to norms of femininity. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's research on the rhetoric of Priscilla Mason and Deborah Sampson Gannett shows, when women took to the platform before an audiences of women, the women speaking responded to the sense of their transgression of gender norms by conforming to either a masculine or feminine ideal to meet the demands of the situation. Robert Brookey's analysis of Gannett illustrates that she both articulated and subverted the discipline of women's bodies. Like Brookey, Carol Mattingly looks at how feminist orators' use of dress, including Bloomers and men's suits, came under public disciplining by situating the choice in terms of women's typical concern for fashion, women's attempt to take men's social roles, or women's obligation as men's sexual property. I add to these analyses accounts of a response to Sanger on entering the public sphere as a speaker and two critical evaluations of her, all of which demonstrate Sanger's disciplining as she entered the public sphere.

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's look at Priscilla Mason and Deborah Sampson Gannett demonstrates a disciplining of feminist rhetors to ideals of True Womanhood. Campbell's essay on the speeches of these two rhetors around the turn of the nineteenth century demonstrates that early women rhetors had to conform to masculine expectations of rhetoric or make apologies for their violation of cultural norms. The essay comes from the understanding that power always seeks to form bodies to its expectations, "On every occasion when a woman spoke, there was an awareness of taboos being violated and an expectation that women would act rhetorically to reaffirm traditional notions of womanhood" (Campbell, "Gender" 480). Mason gave a commencement address published in 1794 in which she had to articulate the reasons why a woman had the right to assume a man's position at the lectern. Campbell finds that in this moment Mason's rhetoric creates a gendered conflict in which she must violate feminine norms

of speaking to justify her place on the platform (Campbell, “Gender” 485). Campbell’s critique that Mason’s rhetoric diverted feminine style itself seems to attempt to force—discipline—Mason into the mold of a model feminine rhetor despite her appropriation of a masculine style. The commentary that Mason contradicts feminine norms implies that she otherwise must conform her rhetoric to such strictures.

The tensions Campbell finds in Deborah Sampson Gannett’s rhetoric also presents a contradiction between masculine and feminine expectations. Gannett had literally impersonated a man and fought in the Colonial Revolutionary Army and had to subsequently manage her figural impersonation of men on the platform by taking up a feminine persona. Campbell notes that Gannett mixed a masculine and feminine voice in her rhetoric by speaking of her own heroism and love of her country—a masculine trope—and then asked for public forgiveness for having hidden her true sex when joining the army—a feminine posture. In her speeches, Gannett would speak about the proper spheres of men and women’s action in the most overt manner, yet she would then leave the stage and return to it in her Army uniform (complete with rifle) and perform the manual of arms. Campbell concludes her analysis of Mason and Gannett by proposing that the rhetors’ “ambiguity” may have given them a resource to speak publicly (“Gender” 487-91). The “ambiguity” of the women’s rhetoric is emblematic of their situation. As women, Mason and Gannett had to meet goals set for men while also meeting norms of femininity. The “ambiguity” comes from the nature of resistance to discourses, that even in challenging the status quo resistance reaffirms the dominant discourse. The irony of Gannett’s professing separate spheres and then performing soldierhood proves the necessity to praise the division between men and women and simultaneously subvert it, consequently placing the audience in a tension between the conflicting messages.

Taking a different tact than Campbell, Robert Brookey also considers the tensions of Gannett's rhetoric. Brookey responds to Campbell's analysis of Deborah Sampson Gannett and finds that Gannett never fully redressed her transgressions of impersonating a man as well as speaking in public, thus marking her as a standout feminist rhetor. To make the argument Brookey focuses on the tension between Gannett's affirmation of True Womanhood and her performance of the soldier-self. Referencing the demand that Gannett conform to popular discourses about woman's role, Brookey remarks that Gannett "had to negate and contain her transgendered experience [in the war] in order to win this acceptance" (77). In her speech, Gannett warns her audience against transgressing the strictures of True Womanhood (Brookey 82). Despite such warnings Gannett does provide her audience with the transgendered performance of her soldiering, thus failing to fully discipline herself as a True Woman. Brookey argues that Gannett's inability to fully "contain her transgendered experience" presents both a moment of feminist challenge and a critique of social practices regarding gender. Gannett's "failure" to fully discipline herself as a True Woman allowed her to inhabit a new, liberated space (Brookey 77). Brookey's use of Foucauldian theory enriches the discussion of Gannett by guiding the analysis to points of contention and considering how those struggles for definition effect the rhetor, actually constructing the rhetor in light of a particular mold. In the case of Gannett, a rhetor produced as a feminine ideal, asks forgiveness for her gender transgressions, while she continues to violate that norm. Gannett's use of irony allows her to engage in a masculine performance, by presenting herself as a man, as she conforms to a feminine performance, by framing her actions as inappropriate.

Taking an interest in the way women struggle with and against popular discourses to define themselves and their bodies, Carol Mattingly studies the dress of feminist orators and the

responses to their choices. Mattingly argues that women who decided against dressing appropriately feminine ways had to “make up” for it in other ways or endure criticism. The analysis of feminist orators Mattingly provides shows that a radical dress received public acceptance when the women could assure their femininity in other ways, but generating discussion about dress provided a topic that women could speak about and respond to publicly while it also validated public scopophilic desire for women’s bodies. Because women violated social norms by speaking, any deviation or commitment to other standards of white, middle-class femininity would either allay concerns or heighten them: “Men’s focus on appearance in reporting on women speakers was closely associated with the need to label and contain women—a need to maintain women’s place in a hierarchy that prevented their dominance over men” (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 35). Mattingly finds that women who spoke while wearing Quaker dress reassured audiences’ belief in traditional femininity by connecting the act of speaking with women’s Christian spirit and humility (*Appropriate* 26).

The complexity of understanding feminist rhetors’ use of dress comes through most clearly with the introduction of the Bloomer costume. The Bloomer, named for Amelia Bloomer who often wore them, drew audience attention with its knee length dress and loose fitting trousers underneath to cover women’s legs. For some women, such as Bloomer, the unusual style of dress created positive effects. First, it drew some crowds just to see the unusual performance. Second, it provided some women with an air of celebrity, granting them some ethos. Last, it also brought attention to the traditionally feminine topic of fashion and dress (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 38). Bloomer surprised reporters who commented on her womanliness that assuaged concern about her radical appearance. In contrast, Anthony, who violated social norms by remaining single, received criticism for her dress. Reporters suggested Anthony challenged societal norms

out of spite for receiving no man's love (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 49). Differences in the dress of white and black women underscores the racialized contingency of social expectations of femininity. Where white women could afford to violate dress/feminine norms black women, who were already marked as unfeminine, used traditional white-women's dress to claim the ethos that white women felt they could expend (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 125). Mattingly notes that all the talk of dress also helped to pronounce gender as a constructed category open to contest and change (*Appropriate* 61).

Raising the issue of femininity as a social construction failed, however, to keep public discourses from casting aspersions at women who too boldly transgressed feminine norms. Despite the positive response some women enjoyed from wearing Bloomers, other women, who wore clothes considered masculine, fared less well in public discussion. At least one article suggested that a woman who wore Bloomers "loved the race track, left her children in the care of their father, fought with her fists, drank, smoked, and believed that women has been mistreated by men" (qtd. in Mattingly, *Appropriate* 81). The foregoing description read as an assault on women rather than a glowing proclamation of feminist rights. Dr. Mary E. Walker went so far as to wear clothes like men's and even appropriate men's dress altogether. Her transgression struck reporters as "engaging" so long as she continued to display "her long dark ringlets" (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 93).

The need to cast women in either feminine or masculine roles by their dress reveals itself as a matter of heterosexual desire. Mattingly reviews journalists' accounts of feminist orators and finds that the reports often focus on "the visual rather than the aural," using the verbal accounts to eye the women from head to toe (*Appropriate* 141). The scopophilic, or visually fixated, performance went toward resituating women in the familiar social role of object for heterosexual

desire. The case of Walker's transgenderism reads as sexual consumption, using Walker's performance of gender to fulfill the wants of hetero-masculine desire. Reports found Walker intriguing when she wore men's clothes and yet maintained the feminine marker of her curled hair, but criticized her when she aged and lost the markers of a youthful femininity (Mattingly, *Appropriate* 97). The young Walker seems to have enjoyed the attention of a sexual fetish, the feminine woman playing in man's clothing, but the older Walker, who had less sexual cache, presented nothing of sexual interest to the general public.

The example of Walker further makes Mattingly's case that women's appearance served as a point of discipline for feminist orators. Mattingly opens her study with a Foucauldian bid, noting the similarity between issues of dress and "Foucault's notion of the ideal soldier," and the point that "if dress became a means of control, a way of *disciplining* women, it also provided an effective means of resistance" (emphasis added) (*Appropriate* 7). Following that passage, the project has no overt commitment to Foucauldian theory. Writing Foucault's theory back into the project extends Mattingly's opening observation that dress served the purpose of a discipline of femininity for feminist orators. Women who challenged standards of dress had to make reparations for defying femininity by demonstrating their commitment to feminine ideals in some other way. Walker presents a case when a woman had the ability to demonstrate her femininity and could therefore transgress some rules but, when she lost that marking, fell victim to disciplinary reprimands. The example demonstrates that disciplines, social norms of thinking and doing, allow certain transgressive actions but never relent in their demand for compliance.

The point that dominant discourses always demand reparations for transgressions made against them applies to ways that women have negotiated their entrance into the public sphere. The examples discussed here demonstrates a process of women challenging social norms but

unable to fully escape the demands for women to discipline themselves to standards of feminine virtue. Campbell provides no hint that Priscilla Mason disciplined herself to norms of womanhood but does find that Mason formed herself to certain masculine rhetorical expectations, which Campbell depicts as a tension between Mason's feminine presence and masculine speech. Gannett's speech demonstrates her efforts to regulate her gender performance in the face of a serious transgression, but, as Brookey adds, she fails to respond thoroughly and thus succeeds in better escaping the demands of femininity. Radical dress of women speaking affected reporters less when the women highlighted traditional notions of femininity in some other way. When Walker lost the feminine charm of her youth she became subject to scorn. As Mattingly adds, simply by speaking about women's appearance journalistic accounts forced women back into the familiar role as men's sexual objects.

The responses disciplining women in the public sphere evident in the cases above also apply to Margaret Sanger's political activity. Two first-hand accounts of Sanger speaking and two pieces of rhetorical analysis of her rhetoric indicate a response to concerns about Sanger's femininity. An existing first-hand account of Sanger's demeanor attempts to locate her safely in the bounds of feminine expectations. Two scholarly notes on Sanger's career also demonstrate concerns about her femininity, though in irrelevant contexts, thus signaling the compulsion for some critics to discipline Sanger post hoc, as it were.

On meeting Sanger, at least one person commented on her bearing versus expectations of a woman willing to challenge the law and go to jail for the sake of women's rights: "I was impressed with her modest demeanor and her low soft voice. I had thought of her wielding a hatchet with a strident voice, daring anyone to knock a chip off her shoulder. On the contrary, she seemed a perfect lady" (qtd. in Morehouse 56). Apparently, Sanger's converted admirer had

been prepared to make disciplinary statements against Sanger's inappropriately masculine manner, but found that her already fit at feminine standards of bearing. An author for *Nation* made a similar assessment that challenged stereotypes of a feminist activist by painting Sanger in tones of hyper-femininity:

Those who, in the early days, not having seen her, pictured her as a massive, masculine blustering creature . . . brandishing a hatchet in one hand and a contraceptive in the other, were amazed, if they had the good fortune to meet her, to find a rather slight woman, very beautiful, with wide-apart gray eyes and a crown of auburn hair, combining a radiant appeal with an impression of serenity, calm, and graciousness of voice and manner. (qtd. in Kennedy 34-35)

Both comments about Sanger's lack of a "hatchet" harkens back to at least two men's responses to seeing Frances E. Willard take the podium. One man commented that he "had never met such a woman. No affectation, nor pedantry, nor *mannishness* to mar the effect" (emphasis added) (Johnson 109). It seems the admiration for Willard came from the perception that she eschewed unnecessarily feminine, sophistic adornment and yet managed to completely avoid violating gender norms and coming across "mannish." Another man's assessment of Willard echoes the first, expecting to find a woman devoid of femininity: "I expected to find a cropped-haired, masculine-looking individual, with hands in pocket and voice keyed to high C, and could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw a graceful, beautiful woman, simply and yet tastefully dressed, standing modestly in front of the pulpit, and in soft, sweet tones, pleading for those who could not plead for themselves" (qtd. in Johnson 110). As in the response to Sanger cited above, by speaking out against the status quo and standing before an audience that includes men, an expectation persists that women would violate all standards of femininity. By complying with notions of appropriate feminine behavior and appearance, Sanger, like Willard before her, received greater acceptance because she demonstrated her conformity to a discipline of white, upper-middle-class femininity.

The indictment against these nineteenth-century men for their expectations of women extends to more recent scholarly analyses of Sanger's rhetoric. William Morehouse's dissertation and Kevin McClearey's study of Sanger both provide comments about Sanger that demonstrate the urge to locate her in relation to traditional notions of feminine decorum. In Morehouse's dissertation on Sanger's rhetoric I find the curious footnote regarding Sanger's age, which fills the better half of the page in single-line spacing that contributes little if anything to an understanding of her rhetoric. Morehouse notes that Sanger doctored the Higgins family Bible to make herself five years younger. Going on, Morehouse observes that Sanger's passports reflect various birth dates. Through an off-hand comment Morehouse conforms Sanger to meet expectations of feminine vanity: "She became increasingly sensitive about her age as the years passed" (1n. 35). McClearey's Neo-Aristotelian analysis of Sanger's rhetoric also reflects a curious obsession with comparing Sanger's to expectations of a wife, noting that "Sanger even went so far as to write a letter to her husband telling him coldly and directly that it would be her pleasure 'to relieve you of any duty toward me'" ("Tremendous" 185). The use of expressions such as "went so far" and "coldly" read to me as acts of disciplining Sanger posthumously in accordance to expectations of women's commitment to their husbands.

Judgments of Sanger against ideals of feminine behavior by both those who encountered her as auditors and those who encounter her as critics brings the discussion back to the expectations on Sanger's femininity that opened chapter one. The first chapter discussed the ways in which public discourses had positioned Sanger as a woman opposed to family because of her activism for the freedom of distributing contraceptive information. That chapter went on to describe the social disciplining, or production, of Sanger as maternal when her daughter Peggy died. Just as those who witnessed Frances E. Willard speaking expressed surprise at the ways in

which she conformed to standards of feminine expectations, so too people who have encountered Sanger “first hand” and as historians rebuke Sanger by comparing her to standards of femininity. The history of feminist rhetors covered in chapter two demonstrates a history of women conforming to expectations of feminine virtue, exemplified by True Womanhood, in their rhetoric by speaking as mothers or otherwise caring for others. The brief account provided here of responses to Sanger as a speaker locate her as part of a larger social discourse that demands women represent themselves as feminine in both the public persona established through their rhetoric and their personal nature recounted in historical texts. I will discuss in my analysis the ways in which Sanger disciplines her rhetoric to meet expectations of femininity, specifically framing birth control as an issue of women’s control of their bodies to framing birth control as women’s obligation to their family and society. The reviews of literature of nineteenth-century feminists rhetors in chapter two and the cases provided above account for the disciplining that insists upon producing Sanger as conforming to discourses of feminine ideals, such as True Womanhood, and therefore a model of behavior, or as a rebel, and thus deserving reproach for opposing standards of femininity.

THE INDUSTRIAL DISCIPLINE OF WOMEN’S BODIES

The disciplining of women in US culture extends beyond performance of gender in accordance with the norms of feminine behavior to the cultural production of women’s bodies. A long history exists in the US of producing women’s bodies in a manner consistent with a capitalistic orientation that sets men as superior by their physical nature. In the previous section I showed that late- and post-Victorian discourses produced feminist rhetors in accordance with social expectations, evident in both the ways that others spoke of the women but also the tendency of the women to form themselves in accordance with ideas of feminine domesticity.

Similarly, I discuss in this section how women's bodies often become subject to an industrial, capitalistic discipline that stresses productivity and the domination of nature. The production of bodies in an industrial discipline creates a system in which women perpetually fail to meet gendered standards where men find success much easier. In what follows I show a tradition in medical and scientific discourse of producing women's bodies that frames women as more animalistic than men, in less control of their bodies than men, and needing to be civilized by men.

Saying that scientific and medical discourse produces bodies implies their use of rhetoric. Against the claim that scientific study raises itself above human invention, Alan Gross asserts science as a product of rhetoric, knowledge established through language rather than the discovery of an ontological fact. Specifically, Gross finds that scientific rhetoric avoids emotional appeals in an attempt to present itself as entirely rational. Rationality, as the keystone of Western science, has motivated the overriding goal of science "to control nature through an understanding of its laws" (Gross 575). Brian Easlea echoes Gross, noting the "pervasiveness of the ideology and practices of the conquest of nature" (61). Science as a quest for the domination of nature carries highly gendered implications as women and nature have a long history of mutual association; woman as closely linked to nature and nature as feminine (Easlea 65). The assumption of women as more closely linked to nature than men has brought about the continual effort in science, especially medicine, to grasp an understanding of the functioning of women's bodies and to control them as well.

The link between women's situation in the economic structure and the control of women's bodies dates back to the Victorian era and the social tensions created in the tides of laissez faire economics. Within the capitalist framework women's bodies fail to meet the ideal of

controlled production. Gayle Rubin borrows from Karl Marx to define capitalism as “a set of social relations—forms of property, and so forth—in which production takes the form of turning money, things, and people into capital” (161). Rubin establishes women’s role in male-dominated economics as the principal property of exchange and economic relations (174). Sally Shuttleworth extends that idea by demonstrating that as Victorian men’s anxieties grew about the control of their destinies in uncertain economic fluctuations there came a rise in the compulsion to control the similarly inconstant flows of women’s bodies. Through medically regulating women’s menstruation men gained control over an economy of nature: “The disruptive social forces that had to be so decisively channeled and regulated to ensure mastery and controlled circulation in the economic sphere were metonymically represented, however, in the domestic realm, in the internal bodily processes of the women in the home” (55). Both contemporary and Victorian discourses render women through the lens of industrial capitalism as poorly producing and needing the mastery of ever-productive men.

The appraisal of women’s bodies as less civilized than men’s bodies and therefore in need of control underscores the continual comparison of women’s bodies to men’s, with men’s bodies as the standard. Emily Martin provides a sense of expectation for the use of male standards to evaluate the female body in a study finding that early anatomy books included diagrams of women’s reproductive organs that look remarkably like men’s genitals (*Woman* 27-29). The lesson comes through clearly: women’s bodies and experiences have often been understood in terms of men’s. The use of men’s bodies as the point of comparison comes with a capitalistically intoned reading of the male body that shows signs of higher development than all non-*homo sapiens* and renders the male body as an efficient and effective machine of production. Where anti-capitalists may also read the male body as superior to non-*homo sapiens*, the

emphasis on productive ability is very much capitalism's invention. Taking for example the case of men's reproductive organs, nineteenth-century US ideology abhorred male masturbation for its wasteful expenditure of energy for the production of semen that could yield no gain (i.e., a baby) (Barker-Benfield 377). Beyond control of masturbation, nineteenth-century commentators suggested men avoid anything that would drain their productive capacities causing fatigue and weariness, "including dancing, theatrical performance, gambling, and alcohol" (Kimmel 48).

Where discourses framed men's bodies as advanced and productive, women's bodies took on an understanding that cast them as inferior to men. Discourses from the nineteenth century to contemporary times have produced women's bodies as less evolved than men's and less disciplined to meet productive needs. Martin notes the use of heat as a measure of evolution (i.e., that humans possess more heat than other animals). Extending from that premise, the literature reported that men held more heat than women, meaning men had evolved to a higher order than women (*Woman* 30). More than body heat, medical research reported women's less advanced state of evolution by comparing women's physical dimensions to that of lower species and races. Nancy Ley Stepan shows that the racist medical reports that declared Negroes have a smaller brain size than whites and have less ability for higher order thinking also characterized women in general as like the less-evolved Negroes.³ In the mid-nineteenth century, Carl Vogt compared women's skull structure to those of infants' as well as "lower races," who in turn resembled apes in their body shape (Stepan 122). Stepan finds that scientific literature in the nineteenth and twentieth century worked on the assumption that "lower races represented the 'female' type of the human species, and females the 'lower race' of gender" (123). Such an approach to science lead Felix Pouchet to research women's fertility by studying female dogs

³ I make this reference to demonstrate the links of racism and misogyny without endorsing the racist research.

(Reed 13). The argument that women have an intrinsic link to lower races, and thereby species, resonated well in a scientific environment that already cast uncivilized nature as feminine.

The concept of femininity as under-civilized has proved useful in both explaining the relationship humans have to the beasts of the field and distancing men from the uncivilized nature of their humanity. As Londa Schiebinger demonstrates, the term mammal derives from the lactating nature of female humans, which scientific discourse has used to further cast women as less civilized and more animalistic. At first the use of a female-physiological trait seems to privilege the feminine over the masculine, a rarity in Western culture. The focus on lactation, however, turns quickly on women as a marker of lesser development from human's primal nature. The capitalistic compulsion to deny the animal nature of humans seized upon breast feeding as a way of both acknowledging human's link to wild creatures and yet allowing men to transcend their bestial nature: "a female characteristic (the lactating mamma) ties humans to brutes, while a traditionally male characteristic (reason) marks our separateness" (Schiebinger 144). In this schema, women, predestined to lactate, cannot escape their animalness as men can, yet women in pre-industrial Europe sought to surpass their debased nature by hiring women of lower classes to perform the duty on their behalf (Schiebinger 146). The understanding that the class divide mirrored the difference in evolutionary development facilitated women of the upper classes in surpassing the natural limitations placed on them as women while further handicapping those women who could not buy their way out of the (wild-)animal kingdom.

Where discourse framed lactation as the link between humans and lower-order mammals, childbirth too has become subject to discourses in which human science trumps nature. Discourses of childbirth reveal a competition between the medicalization (i.e., civilization) of the birth process and notions of "natural" childbirth, a term which means many different things to

different people and raises issues regarding the construction of women's relationship to nature. In a review of the definitions of childbirth, Paula Treichler shows that medical discourse represents the advancement of obstetrics as the "triumph of civilization over death and disease" (118). The medicalization of gestation represents a high point in the scientific control of nature by intervening in a process extremely complex and yet requiring no human intervention to progress. Turning to ideas of "natural childbirth" as a resistance to the medicalization of childbirth brings about its own complication. First, "natural" can mean anything from childbirth without anesthetics to childbirth outside the hospital. Second, and more importantly, "natural" childbirth implies a pre-discursive meaning to childbirth that can be salvaged from the past. The Odent Clinic in France offers one definition of natural childbirth by allowing women to give birth standing up, squatting, or in whatever position they choose. Martin notes, "In Odent's view, birthing women are perceived as moving back in time and down the evolutionary tree to a simpler, animal-like, unselfconscious state" (*Woman* 164). A woman, then, must negotiate for herself a choice in childbirth that falls between the intervention of obstetric science, dominated by men, and options of natural childbirth that further link her to the beasts of the field.

The tension between diverse constructions of childbirth as civilized or savage caps off women's ongoing struggle against discourses that cast them as less developed than men. In the capitalistic reading of bodies, the construction of women as less evolved than men signals their production, the second major standard of comparison in a capitalistic orientation. The scientific construction of women represents a physical inferiority by discussing women's bodies as less controlled and less productive than men's. Women's menstrual cycle has long served as a way of trying to prove women's lack of bodily discipline and thereby failure at production. As touched on earlier, the control of semen through avoidance of masturbation in the Victorian era

represented men's conservation of their productive energies. By denouncing masturbatory practices men disciplined their bodies to meet capitalistic needs of production. Sally Shuttleworth shows that according to Victorian-medical discourse, where a man disciplined his body through practices of self-control a woman was "rendered helpless by the tyranny of her body" and had to resort to medical intervention to "regulate the flow of her secretions" (51). Emily Martin's interviews with contemporary women reveals that many pre-menopausal women, unlike post-menopausal women, see menopause as a time when "You're not really in control of you body" (qtd. in *Woman* 174). In both nineteenth century medical literature and the attitudes of younger contemporary women, menstrual cycles or the lack thereof represents a body without proper discipline. It is significant in this comparison that both accounts come from those who have not experienced that of which they speak, either the male-medical practitioners or the pre-menopausal women. In both cases, the discourse casts a woman's physical event not personally experienced as something lacking control purely based on discursive tradition without phenomenological grounding.

Where those standing outside women's experiences construct the female body as lacking, middle class women and medical discourse both succumb to depicting menstruation as women's poor productivity. The capitalistic paradigm casts menstruation as the failure of production. In a study of textbook descriptions of the sperm and the egg, Martin finds that many of the narratives marvel at men's abundant production of sperm every day but look piteously upon women's ovaries, which yield only one egg approximately every month ("Egg" 30). Discourse depicts menstruation as failure for its minimal production of eggs but also the failure of producing a child that menstruation denotes. One medical text goes so far as to call menstruation "the uterus crying for the lack of a baby" (qtd. in Martin, *Woman* 45). As Martin explains, the sad failure of

uterine production relates to the industrial depression of an idle factory (*Woman* 45). Not surprisingly, middle class women discuss menstruation as a failure of production whereas working class women, less invested than middle class women in capitalistic discourses and hierarchy, generally avoid such a depiction (Martin, *Woman* 106-08).

If capitalism holds women in such low regard for a supposed lack of regular production, the birth control movement can only exacerbate that perception. As already discussed, science has consistently depicted women's bodies as closely linked to nature. The link between womanhood and nature has led to the control of women's bodies through obstetric and gynecological science as a necessary response to women's under-civilized, poorly disciplined nature and consequent lack of productivity. Women's contraceptive practice then becomes an act of women claiming the power to tame that which men cannot, nature. In the control of nature/their own bodies women further frustrate industrial capitalism by refusing to produce and thereby participate in the economy as men dictate. The birth control movement includes many moments of struggle, some publicly known but countless more hidden in private homes, for women to reclaim control of their bodies despite masculine intervention.

The story of Ethel Byrne, Margaret Sanger's sister, and her time in prison provides just such an example of the competition between men and women for the control of women's bodies. At the 1916 raid of Sanger's Brownsville birth control clinic (the first birth control clinic in US history) police arrested Sanger, her sister Ethel Byrne, and their interpreter Fania Mindell. Byrne's trial came up first where she received a guilty verdict for distributing contraceptives and was sentenced to thirty days at the workhouse on Blackwell's Island (Chesler 151-53). In the *Woman Rebel*, two years prior, Sanger had celebrated Becky Edelson for her hunger strike at Blackwell's Island after her arrest for government protest ("History" 46). Similarly Byrne vowed

to go on a hunger strike and “die, if need be, for my sex” (qtd. in Chesler 153). After 103 hours and increasing public attention, including continuing press coverage, the corrections commissioner tamed her savage and unproductive body by (for the first time in recorded US history) force feeding her: rolling Byrne in a blanket (so she could not struggle) and forcing a tube down her throat through which milk, eggs, and brandy were poured. The commissioner would say that Byrne offered little opposition and that he found the whole matter foolish (Sanger, *Autobiography* 228). The scene of Byrne wrapped in a blanket with men forcing a nourishing mixture to control her body for her fits with the model of women as foolish, savage, and needing discipline. The commissioner’s description of Byrne’s docility breaks from the fact that in literally forcing men’s will down her throat they broke Byrne’s front teeth (*Margaret*).

Byrne’s rough treatment and subsequent early release gives one more glimpse into the disciplining of Sanger. Just as the men of Blackwell’s Island attempted to discipline Byrne, her own sister would collude in that effort. Sanger fought for her sister’s early release by promising Governor Whitman that Byrne would never break the law again. Properly disciplined into the model of law-abiding woman, the physically-weak Byrne was carried from Blackwell’s “in the fur coat of one of her rich new benefactors” (Chesler 155). Thus Byrnes left prison literally wearing the cloak of a socially-respectable woman through her sister’s rendering of her to the expectations of a polite, middle class woman. Sanger also received a thirty-day sentence at a facility in Queens, but she chose against going on a hunger strike.⁴ The case of Sanger and her sister reads as a successful disciplining of the Higgins women: Byrne lived a quite life after her release and Sanger created much less publicity in prison and ate her prison food.

⁴ Chesler notes that Sanger would have gone to Blackwell’s Island, but she originally vowed to also go on a hunger strike, at which point “Blackwell’s Island refused to have anything to do with her” (158).

“THE SEX SIDE OF LIFE”⁵ IN LATE- AND POST- VICTORIAN US

With some understanding of the production of women's bodies in medical and scientific discourse during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the history of the birth control movement must also consider the social construction of women's sexuality. Just as the discussion provided of medical and scientific discourses of the body resists attempting to provide the “truth” of women's bodies (focusing instead in how social discourses have produced women's bodies), so too this section reaches for an understanding of how discourses of sexuality in the late- and post-Victorian era produced women's sexuality. Where discourses of women's bodies in general depict women as needing men to provide control and to enable women to become better producing bodies, the discourses of women's sexuality construct women's sexuality in such a way that men maintain a role as controlling women's sexuality and enabling its productive potential. This discourse of female sexuality, which cooperates with ideas that compel women to speak in accordance with the demands of women as maternal rather and sexually uninterested, also subject women to medical control. All three of these discourses mutually support one another to retain women's bodies for the service of masculine interests.

Discourses of female sexuality in the US from around the turn of the twentieth century reveal an increasing enlightenment of women's sexual desire as natural yet also constrained by androcentric and pronatal models of sexuality: “Intercourse dominated by and defined by the male in conformity with his desires and in disregard of what might bring pleasure to a woman” (Gordon 103). From the research on discourses of women's sexuality around the start of the twentieth century four important points emerge. First, popular thought had begun to recognize women's sexual desire and label it as natural. Second, these discourses recognized women as

⁵ The title comes from Mary Ware Dennett's 1918 sex-education pamphlet.

sexually interested but related their desire to reproductive purposes. Third, the discourses depicted women as endowed with sexual desire understood and constructed in relation to heterosexual-male desire. Fourth, in each of these, women have a passive role against men's active role. As a combination of these points the free-love movement of the nineteenth century proposed and failed to achieve within its own community a radical philosophy of sexual equality. To understand the relation of these events to Sanger's career, I look at the case of Mary Ware Dennett, one of Sanger's counterparts in the birth control movement, and the disciplining actions against her talk of sexuality that produced her as a woman violating norms of feminine sexuality.

Vernacular understandings of sexuality in the late nineteenth century often depict a period in which women hid their sexual desires, men seemed oblivious to women's sexual wants, and the medical community ignored women as sexual beings. Discourses of the period, however, demonstrate an awareness of women's sexual desire, even if caught within reproductive and androcentric ideology. Too often we think of nineteenth-century notions of feminine sexuality as summed up in the refrain, "Lie back and think of England." In contrast, historian Carl Degler shows that some medical writers felt that frustrating women's sexual gratification brought on illness and defined "mutual pleasure" as "essential to successful marital intercourse" (407-08). Havelock Ellis, a prominent sexologist of the turn of the century, likewise recognized women as having a sexual impulse comparable to men's and suggested the clitoris as the focus of women's sexual pleasure (*Sexual* 235). Advertisers capitalized on this growing sentiment by marketing products able to increase a woman's sexual desirability (Evans 178-79). The contrast of Ellis's writings and advertisers' strategies demonstrates a tension between speaking of women as sexual agents, those with sexual interest and desire, versus sexual objects, those used for others' sexual interest and desire.

A late eighteenth century study of women as sexual agents provides some insight into the private lives of late-Victorians. Clelia Mosher's survey of women's personal sex history and attitudes toward sex, probably the first comprehensive study of women's sexuality, demonstrates women's attitudes toward sexuality in the early twentieth century. Over a period of 28 years Mosher interviewed 45 middle class women born before 1900. Her study of white, generally well educated women demonstrates that many of these women accepted their sexuality, with only one woman of the 45 describing sex as for man's pleasure only. Almost a third of the women of Mosher's survey considered sex a necessity for both men and women. (Degler 417). One respondent considered sex a necessity to woman "if she be normal" (Mosher 23). As Mosher's research indicates, the white middle class of the early twentieth century, at least, saw sexuality of both men and women as acceptable but only heterosexuality and in marital confines (Evans 177).

Despite the increasing acceptance of women's sexual desire and pleasure as normal, discourses of sexuality continued to define sexuality in terms of industrial concerns, the demand to put all efforts toward the production of capital. Medical opinions on sexuality represent the concern that both men and women direct their sexual energies toward procreation. In the late nineteenth century considerable medical attention fell on the subject of masturbation, admonishing men and women against depleting their sexual energies for no productive gain (Degler 408). G. J. Barker-Benfield finds that many recommended even the energies deployed in sexual relations should expend only as much as "necessary for the production of a baby" (379). Degler depicts the effort of social reformers who encouraged all people to conserve their sexual energies for procreation, like John Harvey Kellogg (of corn flakes fame), as the minority voice in a swelling tide of Americans who sought sex for pleasure's sake. As expected from the discussion provided above pertaining to the medical discourses of the body, medical discourses

depicted man's role in the procreative process as of greater significance than the woman's, one doctor going so far as to label "sperm 'Danaean shower,' that is, a shower of procreative gold" (Barker-Benfield 379). Elisabeth Lloyd reveals that even in contemporary scientific discourses studying sex in the animal kingdom "it is simply *assumed* that every aspect of female sexuality should be explained in terms of reproductive functions" (emphasis original) (91).

The over-determination of women's sexuality in social discourses as meant for procreation allowed the vibrator, which could be used for clitoral stimulation, to gain public acceptance. Popular discourses regarded the vibrator as somewhat innocuous because such discourses separated stimulation of the clitoris as separate from a pronatal model of sex. In the early history of the vibrator in the US, Rachel Maines finds that "the speculum and the tampon were more controversial in medical circles than was the vibrator" (113). The distinction between clitoral stimulation and anything approximating penial insertion in the vagina explains the difference in attitudes. The vibrator seemed less threatening because discourse continued to contain women's sexuality within heterosexual coitus thus rendering clitoral orgasms irrelevant.

This distinction between relevant and irrelevant orgasms demonstrates the androcentric nature of discourses regarding women's sexuality. The discourses of women's sexuality in science from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century depict women as receiving their sexuality from men. The representation of women's sexuality as instituted by men normalizes women to fit with the social expectation of women as naturally non-sexual. Researchers studying female primate sexual behavior in the late twentieth century monitored the female's orgasms but only when the orgasm occurred in a heterosexual coupling. As one researcher told Lloyd, he discarded the majority of female orgasms, which occurred between two females, because "he was only interested in the *important* orgasms" (emphasis original) (94). Clearly, female orgasms

only matter when a male gets the credit for delivering it. Not much different than the attitude toward studying primates, Mary Poovey points out that nineteenth-century discussion of prostitution depicted woman as “a carrier of a sexual desire of which she is only belatedly and imperfectly aware” (35). Poovey finds that in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* the wedding night, ideally a woman’s first sexual encounter, serves as the inauguration of Jane’s sexuality (42). Women apparently receive their sexual want from their husbands at this time in history as women are only beginning to receive recognition as sexually desirous.

This notion of women’s sexuality as coming from men surfaces repeatedly. Discourses from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries that describe sex demonstrate the trend of attributing males with the power to imbue women with sexuality. James Ashton’s 1865 tract on the *Philosophy of Procreation* depicts females as “seldom troubled with sexual desires” and nymphomaniacs as experiencing with many men “sensations which were alone her husband’s right” (33, 27). In keeping with the already established theme of woman as nature, Barker-Benfield finds nineteenth-century views of feminine sexuality cast women as like nature itself with hidden precious minerals for men to exploit and express “mastery over his own resources” (382). Likewise, in the twentieth century Havelock Ellis similarly described women’s sexuality as “elusive” (*Sexual* 189). In each of these cases women possess sexual desire, which men must awaken or unearth for them.

Like general medical discourses in the nineteenth century, early twentieth-century sexology also rendered women as sexual but passive. Ellis enjoys the status as the prominent researcher on sexuality in the early twentieth century over the work of Sigmund Freud, whose work focused on the individual as part of a larger psychological system that offers “an unreliable guide to the basic assumptions of the modern sexual tradition” (Robinson 2). Paul Robinson

recognizes Freud as the more influential in the course of history, but Robinson finds that Ellis, over Freud, provided a “representative contribution to sexual modernism” (3). In his construction of modern sexuality, Ellis frames women as passive in their own sexuality. Taking from Honoré de Balzac’s metaphor, Ellis compares the sexual relationship of man and woman to the musician and instrument, with the man carefully playing the instrument for desired harmonic effect (*Sex* 525). The active/ passive dichotomy of musician and instrument, one a person the other an object, further demonstrates an ideology in which men bring women their sexuality.

The emphasis on the vagina’s role in female sexuality over the clitoris provides yet another way in which discourse frames women’s sexuality from the perspective of men. Discourse of women’s sexuality has repeatedly depicted vaginal stimulation as legitimate but clitoral stimulation as not really “sex.” Freud helped to solidify this tradition by describing vaginal orgasms as more mature than clitoral orgasms. Maines explains that, at least through the early twentieth century, much thought on sexuality worked from the understanding that women had orgasms predominately from vaginal penetration (112-13). Such an explanation secures a role for men as the provider of women’s sexuality. If clitoral stimulation does not constitute actual sex or real pleasure then vibrators become just one more home accessory for women’s work. Accordingly, Sears, Roebuck and Company sold a vibrator that could also be used with attachments to direct its energies to other domestic tasks such as sewing, churning, mixing, and buffing—as the catalog advertised, “Aids that every woman appreciates” (Maines 20, 105).

Amidst these somewhat conservative discourses of sexuality there came in the nineteenth century a movement meant to challenge the status quo of sex established by the medical, legal, and religious communities. The free love movement of the nineteenth century meant to democratize sexuality, creating equal opportunity of sexual expression for both men and women

but ultimately fell to somewhat familiar notions of female sexuality defined in androcentric and maternal terms. To challenge the status quo, free love movements disavowed marriage as a social institution serving the interests of men hoping that “ending legal interference in matters of love would be to encourage women to become socially independent and equal” (Spurlock 120). Therefore free love served as “the rallying cry for ultra-reformers who would not stop at one or two but demanded remedies for all the sexual evils they saw in society, whether marital unhappiness or adultery, jealousy or impotence and frigidity, kitchen drudgery or unwanted pregnancy, prudery or prostitution” (Stoehr 5).

As so often happens to revolutionary discourses, free-love institutions invested in dominant ideologies that ultimately undermined their radical potential. Despite the attempt to break radically with social conventions, “Like suffragists, sex radical women emphasized their inherent moral superiority to men and the potential it offered to reform the world” (Passet 156). Victoria Woodhull, a major free love proponent, would succumb to dominant social discourse in her “romantic preoccupation with women’s potentially infinite maternal powers” (“Feminism”). The communities themselves, such as the well known Oneida community of New York, often rearticulated androcentric norms of sexuality: “They make male concerns—for instance ejaculation—central, and female sexual concerns—such as contraception or female orgasm—peripheral” (“Feminism”). Despite the demise of free love communities, the overall attitude of freedom of choice in sexual relations would become the dominant ideology of middle-class attitudes toward sex by the early twentieth century (D’Emilio and Freedman 166). The cooptation of a free love tenant into middle-class ideology seems understandable in light of its conformity to notions of women’s maternal nature and the focus in these communities on men’s sexual interests.

The case of Mary Ware Dennett's sex education pamphlet and her subsequent trial demonstrates a similar push to conform a women's awareness into the model of socially accepted maternity. Dennett's federal obscenity conviction for publishing a sex-education pamphlet and the public response that followed conformed Dennett to a model of a sexually passive and unaware femininity. In *The Sex Side of Life*, first published in 1918, Dennett provides description and cut-away illustrations of male and female reproductive organs and discusses the danger of venereal diseases, which she describes as primarily coming from prostitutes. Far from radical talk, Dennett warns against wasting too many energies in masturbation, "nasty talk or thought about sex," and also alerts readers of prostitutes, who "will always be revolting to highly developed, sensitive people" (11, 12). Though Dennett's pamphlet appeared in the *Medical Review of Reviews* and many men had written similar tracts on sex education, the federal government deemed Dennett's pamphlet obscene, without specifying what specific content constituted such a charge. During the trial itself the prosecution's case rested solely on a dramatic reading of Dennett's pamphlet (Chen 285, 288, 242, 281). Only Dennett's femaleness constituted the obscenity of her actions since males writing similar material incurred no judicial reprimands. By only reading from Dennett's pamphlet the prosecutor implied that the obscenity emanated from the fact that the frank knowledge of sex came from a woman. Just as the term "promiscuous audience" reflected immorality upon a woman, and not a man, who addressed a mix-sexed audience, Dennett's obscenity conviction emanates from the fact that a woman, and not a man, explains sex.

After Dennett's conviction in 1929 there came popular support for her, but also responses that relocated her in the realm of a feminine ideal. Many newspapers carried headlines of her conviction calling her a "grandma" or "grandmother," to which Dennett replied, "I am not

doddering yet” (Chen 293). The moniker of grandmother may have created a humorous irony alongside an obscenity conviction by juxtaposing notions of matronly asexuality against lustful action. Dennett’s conviction for her sexual knowledge and the de-sexualization of the public’s response demonstrate the social tensions in the production of women’s sexuality in the early twentieth century. The public support for Dennett illustrates the social adjustment that allowed women to have a sexuality, but the emphasis on her maternal nature reveals a continuing discomfort with women’s sexuality independent of men—even if linked to knowledge.

SAVING SOCIETY BY OPPOSING/ SUPPORTING BIRTH CONTROL

In looking at the rhetoric of the respective groups that opposed and supported birth control an ironic similarity arises to remind critics that each utterance comes not from thin air but from the many scraps of social fabric. Those whose ideas opposed or supported the campaign for birth control shared a common interest in the future of society. Both sides believed society would run amuck if left to itself. Groups who opposed birth control, namely the Roman Catholic church, anti-vice leagues, and predictors of race suicide, expressed concern that individuals in society had given themselves over to their own selfish desires. Consequently society would begin to devolve until citizens recognized their responsibility to the collective. The society these groups meant to save carry clear class and ethnic biases of who should populate the nation and how they should run their homes. Those whose ideas would give credence to the birth control movement argued that individuals needed to give more thought to the future rather than reproduce without consideration for the nation. In the first instance, Neo-Malthusians and eugenicists both saw the resources of the nation depleting because of too many people able to reproduce, and, in the second case, too many unfit people replicating themselves. Together, the concerns about the future of society produced the federal appeals court decision (US v. One

Package) that essentially legalized birth control in the US. Despite the differences of these groups they share a theme with each other found also in the previously discussed discourses of feminist rhetorical discipline, science, and sexuality: the use of women's bodies for others' purposes. Groups opposing and supporting birth control discussed in this section want to improve the nation through either enabling or disabling women's productivity. Their arguments pass over women's concerns and focus on controlling women for national benefit much like the traditions of feminist rhetoric, science, and sexuality.

Saving Society By Controlling Desire

In their classic study of social movements, Charles Stewart, Craig Smith, and Robert Denton present the maxim that "For every movement created to bring about change, a countermovement determined to resist change with all available resources also appears" (1). So too with the birth control movement, multiple forces acted against those fighting for contraceptive rights: the Roman Catholic church, suppression of social-vice leagues, and those fearing race suicide. Collectively, they argued that selfish desires would have detrimental effects on society. The Catholic church formally argued against birth control in *Casti Canubii* as women giving into selfish desires of social independence thus defying God's will, denouncing their maternal duty, and committing acts of lust. As the leader of the vice-suppression campaign of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anthony Comstock saw contraceptives as obscene because they caused lust, and lust would lead to an erosion of upper-middle-class power ruining upper-middle-class youths' prosperous futures. Those who feared race suicide, especially Theodore Roosevelt, saw contraceptive practice as threatening the social dominance of non-immigrant, white Americans, so-called "natives." These three efforts share the common concern

that contraceptives allowed people to delve deeply into their personal desires with disregard for the theological, social, and national consequences.

Of these three forces, the constant and continuing challenge to the birth control movement in general and Margaret Sanger in particular comes from the Roman Catholic church. The Catholic church has consistently opposed the use of contraceptives as a sin for interfering with the will of God and wallowing in lust. The official statement on contraception from the Catholic church comes from Pope Pious XI's 1930 encyclical *Casti Canubi* (On Chaste Marriage). Although the statement comes as late as 1930, about 100 years after the beginning of a movement for the use of contraceptives, the encyclical articulates and defends the church's position. The Catholic church makes broad pronouncements against contraception in *Casti Canubii*, declaring that those who have sex while using contraceptives "deliberately frustrate its [intercourse's] natural power and purpose, sin against nature, and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious" (par. 54). Going on, the Pope explains the proper role of the wife against feminist models of women who avoid having children to pursue a life in the public sphere, implying that those who agitate for birth control have broken the sacred mold of women: "This, however, is not the true emancipation of woman, nor that rational and exalted liberty which belongs to the noble office of a Christian woman and wife; it is rather the debasing of womanly character and the dignity of motherhood" (par. 75). Even more than selfishness, the Pope proclaims that lust "is the most potent cause of sinning against the sacred laws of matrimony" (par. 97). The encyclical represents contraception as sinful for facilitating woman's abandonment of her maternal duty to serve selfish means and, worse still, to seek out pleasures of the flesh.

Much like the stand of the Catholic church, Anthony Comstock's efforts against birth control emanate from arguments about the dangers of contraceptives as facilitating lust. Many think of Anthony Comstock as the most well-known and menacing opponent of Margaret Sanger, even though he died very early in her career as a birth-control advocate.⁶ Comstock's attack on the fight for contraception came as part of his larger war against obscenity for the sake of future generations, representing upper-middle class and nativists' interests—these two groups, themselves, having considerable overlap. I briefly recap here Comstock's rise to power and then explore the significance of his fight against obscenity in relation to concerns about the future of society. The power Comstock wielded originated with his work with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (NYSSV) but drastically increased as the result of a bill he pushed through as the final piece of legislation the 42nd Congress enacted before adjourning in 1873 (Bates 90). The "Comstock Act," Sec. 1461 of the obscenity code, prohibits sending through the mail any information about or material for the purpose of contraception or abortion (18 USC 1461, 1873). Before passage, a senator from Vermont added a provision for "a physician in good standing," which Comstock had removed by subterfuge before the bill passed (Tone 21). The bill only served to widen the scope of Comstock's reach in the war on obscenity, which allowed him to confiscate materials and have offenders arrested.⁷ Comstock displays his orientation to his work when he publicly laments the "failure of the New York State courts to perform their duty" (qtd. in Tone 35). Despite Comstock's zealous efforts, a black market of contraceptives did thrive (Tone 26).

⁶ Comstock died on September 21, 1915, just before Sanger returned from her self-imposed exile in England.

⁷ To trap those dispensing contraceptive information and aids Comstock often used decoy letters, writing a suspect for help and then arresting the person when they mailed the materials. This ploy landed Sanger's husband William in jail while she lived in England. William served a 30-day sentence. Beisel provides a number of such examples.

The fight against contraceptives was but one front in Comstock's war on obscenity. Comstock sought to end—or at least curb—obscenity because it threatened the future of the nation by corrupting the youth of America, and upper-middle-class children in particular. In Comstock's view, lust caused obscenity, and lust traveled like a communicable disease leaving no one and no place safe from infection. Contraceptives facilitated the spread of this disease by allowing young people to pursue their lusts without consequence (i.e., pregnancy and venereal disease) (Beisel 199, 69, 40). As evidence of this, at William Sanger's trial Comstock shouted at protestors, calling Margaret Sanger "a heinous criminal who sought to turn every home into a brothel" (qtd. in Bates 200). The rhetoric of lust as disease also resonated well among Comstock's upper class supporters, who funded the NYSSV, and it enabled them to blame immigrants—already suspected of carrying actual pathogens (e.g., the case of "typhoid Mary")—for threatening their accumulation of social power by infecting/ corrupting their children (Beisel 51, 106). Nicola Beisel proves that the fear of immigrants motivated Comstock's supporters by demonstrating that his efforts met with little success in Philadelphia compared to his victories in New York and Boston. The lack of immigrant concentration in Philadelphia and less political action from such groups compared to New York City and Boston explains the difference (129). Rooting out obscenity, caused by politically-threatening immigrants, eased the upper classes' fears that their children would succumb to lust and thus erode their social power and position. That Sanger and those like her wanted "to turn every home into a brothel" meant she sought to infest the upper classes with lust through obscene materials (i.e., contraceptives) thereby destroying their social standing.

The concern about contraception as a danger to social strength translated to the national scene in the rhetoric of race suicide. Where Comstock argued that contraceptives incite lust,

those concerned about race suicide saw a movement for contraceptive rights as exacerbating the problem of a declining “native race” (i.e., at least second generation Euro-American, Protestants). The theory of race suicide believed that immigrants, especially those from Asia, would overrun the native race, who risked extinction due to their falling birth rate.⁸ The sociologist Edward Ross, believed to have coined the phrase “race suicide,” warned that Asian immigrants would out produce natives and monopolize industries: “I can find no words so apt as ‘race suicide.’ There is no bloodshed, no violence, no assault of the race that waxes upon the race that wanes. The *higher race* quietly and unobtrusively eliminates itself” (emphasis added) (53).⁹

Much of the blame of race suicide fell to educated women. Studies of the very early twentieth century showed that women who attended college had fewer children than women who did not, which drew criticism to women’s colleges for undermining the strength of the native race by “drawing off the best blood of the American stock and sinking it in a dry desert of sterile intellectuality” (Sprague 89). Saying that, “colleges for women . . . from the viewpoint of the eugenicist are an historical blunder,” two authors declared the failings and obligation of Wellesley graduates: “These select women, who should be having at least the 3.7 children each, . . . necessary to maintain a stationary population, are only giving to the race .83 of a child each. Their reproductivity is only 22 ¼% of being adequate merely for replacement” (Johnson and Stutzmann 92). Educated men also took some blame for race suicide when a study found Harvard and Yale men had lower birth rates, raising similar concerns about maintaining a particular class status as well as race: “Sample classes [of graduates] had failed to reproduce

⁸ Here and following I refer to the “native race” using the peculiar label of the period, but not endorsing it.

⁹ Perry declares Ross the first to use the term “race suicide” (52).

themselves by 28 percent . . . obviously the entering classes of Harvard can be recruited from the sons of Harvard graduates in only a small degree” (Phillips 95).

The danger for the graduates and their children came back to the issue of immigration. If immigrant population rose against the falling native population then immigrants might, they feared, take the nativists’ supposedly rightful place. Francis Walker, twice superintendent of the census in the nineteenth century, wrote “Immigration and Degradation” arguing that the native population decreased in light of the “flood” of immigration as a check on population control (24-25). Walker spelled out the concern in frank language: “Foreign immigration into this country has . . . amounted not to a re-enforcement of *our* population, but to a replacement of native by foreign stock. That if the foreigners had not come, the native element would long have filled the places the foreigners *usurped*” (emphasis added) (26). Walker gives the impression that natives lived in a utopia spoiled and stolen by (recent) immigrants.

Of those who prophesied the end of the native race, Theodore Roosevelt remains the most well known. In *The Foes of Our Own Household* Roosevelt both defends women as equal to men and declares their patriotic duty to have children. First, Roosevelt ridicules the notion that a husband deserves the title “head of the family, instead of a partner on equal terms with his wife” when women do equally important work in the home as men do outside it (231). Going on, Roosevelt defends women’s right to enter into any profession and finds it a necessity that women take up the professions as well (232-33). The feminist tone of Roosevelt’s proclamations end abruptly when he also declares that women must also “[be] the mother of a sufficient number of healthy children to insure the race going forward and not going backward” (235). As much as Roosevelt called for young men to do their patriotic duty by taking up arms, so too Roosevelt calls on women to do their part: “[Woman] *is* society. She is the one indispensable component

part of society. . . . Unless she does her duty, the whole social system collapses. If she does her duty, she is entitled to all honor” (emphasis original) (237). In his letters published some years earlier, Roosevelt defined duty as, “generally [meaning] pain, hardship, self-mastery, self-denial” (qtd. in Kennedy 171).

The theme of duty plays out in vivid terms in *Foes*. As Roosevelt outlines his expectations of women he addresses the courage of the fruitful and the indolence of the barren. his polemic on race suicide includes the letter of a poor woman, married to a now-invalid husband, raising eleven children and three step-children, who challenges Roosevelt’s position. In the spirit of recognizing a woman who has done her duty to God and country, Roosevelt does not back down from his statements but writes back to her, “You have described a career of service which makes me feel more like taking off my hat and saluting you as a citizen deserving of the highest honor, than I would feel as regards any colonel of a crack regiment” (245). As Roosevelt says, “There is no more fearless and danger-defying heroism than that shown by some women of the true heroic type, in walking through the valley of the shadow to bring into life the babies they love” (271). The woman with many children receives great accolades of patriotism in Roosevelt’s world whereas he calls those, especially of the “old stock,” without children—or having only one or two—selfish and fearful, because of whom “disaster awaits the nation” (264). Roosevelt and others with similar fears about race suicide cannot fathom why anyone would decide against having children. To them, proponents of contraception seek out the destruction of the native race by placing personal concerns above national/ nativist interests.

Roosevelt’s worries about the future of the nation represent many of the same concerns represented by the Roman Catholic church and Comstock. These three strands of arguments against birth control collectively demonstrate the fear that American’s personal, selfish desires

will bring ruin to society. The Catholic church, Comstock, and Roosevelt identified a specific personal desire that prompted the use of contraceptives. For the Catholic church, lust and the women's desire to abandon their duty in the home leads them to sin by using birth control. In Comstock's view, lust also motivates the use of contraceptives unbridling desire that would eventually ruin those it infected. Roosevelt says nothing of lust but cites men and women's desire for social and economic upward mobility at the expense of native strength as the root of the problem. The shared interest of the future of society creates an ironic relationship between those who opposed the birth control movement and those who supported it.

Saving Society By Controlling Breeding

Where those who opposed birth control did so for the sake of saving society from harming itself, proponents of birth control also focused on the future of society. Neo-Malthusians and eugenicists alike thought that unless Americans began to control their reproductive behaviors American society would fall under the weight of over population or become mired in the feeble-minded. In either case, social resources would break under the strain. Neo-Malthusian and eugenicist arguments become significant in late themes of Sanger's rhetoric as she turns to both of these to argue for birth control as benefiting society first and women second. The implications of both groups' arguments merit discussion as those consequences appear in Sanger's rhetoric on birth control. For neo-Malthusians, the future held the risk of a nation overburdened by its overproduction of healthy bodies who will deplete the resources of the nation (e.g., food). In contrast to the fear of over-population, eugenicists feared that less desirable portions of society would drain social resources (e.g., money to mental institutions) if allowed to reproduce unchecked. By adapting scientific investigation and research to meet predetermined ends, the eugenics movement demonstrated that the future could begin to perfect itself through the

elimination of the feeble-minded. In so doing, eugenic discourse also gives rise to racist concerns. Both of these orientations demonstrate a fear of society brought down by the crowding of people and thus needing to control women's reproduction.

Instead of turning to science, neo-Malthusians gave support to the birth control movement by approaching the problem from the vantage point of economics. American Neo-Malthusians, like Sanger, adopted and adapted the work of Thomas Malthus to argue that the US risked over population unless it encouraged citizens to engage in contraceptive practices. Malthus's writings problematized the healthy body in making the argument that healthy couples cause future problems of poverty and disease by over taxing national resources (Greene *Malthusian*, 38). Though concerned about a population crisis Malthus did not support the use of contraceptives. Instead, he believed in redirecting sexual energies into industrial production. Malthus saw contraceptives as inviting individuals to give themselves over to vice, ringing a familiar tone with the Catholic church and Comstock (Gordon 76). The link between contraception and Malthusianism began in the 1820s when neo-Malthusians "merged utilitarianism and the principle of population." For neo-Malthusians, contraception did more than reduce the problem of national over population. It also helped working-class families to match their household population to their ability to acquire resources (Greene, *Malthusian* 29, 31). This meant that birth control could solve the danger of the healthy, too readily producing body.

In contrast to the (neo-)Malthusians, eugenicists worried about the dangers of unhealthy bodies reproducing. The supposed science of eugenics directed federal policy on issues of health and immigration by arguing that a society can improve itself and secure a bright future by ensuring that only the fit reproduce and the unfit do not. This line of thinking in Sanger's rhetoric allows her to justify contraception and mandatory sterilization for the sake of national interests.

Theodore Roosevelt offered opposition to Sanger because of worries about the decline in the quality of American citizenry. Roosevelt, therefore, proposed an increase in the production of native stock, but “To eugenicists, however, Roosevelt’s statements were adolescent rantings. The issue was not quantity of offspring but quality” (Haller 79). Eugenicists wished to control breeding for the sake of “posterity,” ascribing themselves to “Faith in the Perfectibility of Man” (Reade 15). The Swedish feminist Ellen Key believed that, unlike other species, humans have the ability to transform themselves, as they have done over the past thousand years and must continue to do so, so that “a higher type of man will be produced” (65). Eugenicists, such as, Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for US president, made statements that mixed issues of class with terminology of animal husbandry: “If superior people are desired, they must be bred; and if imbeciles, criminals, paupers, and otherwise unfit are undesirable citizens they must not be bred” (31). Not all eugenicists took such harsh positions. David Jordan, the first president of Stanford University, articulated a more moderate position, noting that people cannot mate purely on the basis of eugenic outcomes for their heirs “would not know the meaning of love” (70).

Despite the advice of Woodhull, most eugenicists focused less on who should mate with whom (positive eugenics) and more on who should not reproduce (negative eugenics). Most eugenicists, including Sanger, directed their work toward identifying failings in individuals, which they considered hereditary and common among certain ethnic groups. Early in the study of eugenics scientists gave more weight to environment and imagined heredity in a greater state of flux than they do today. In the nineteenth century, researchers believed that an individual could acquire characteristics, both positive and negative, that were then transmissible to offspring (Gordon 269-70). By the early twentieth century much of this thought had eroded but

remnants remained. Researchers like Edward Ross, Madison Grant, and Lothrop Stoddard understood blood as transmitting cultural characteristics (Greene, *Malthusian*, 40). Ross, the man credited with christening the term “raced suicide,” contributed to eugenic study by diagnosing the attributes of European immigrants, often rendering vicious stereotypes: “He found that the Celtic Irish were gifted with imagination and oratorical ability to aid them in politics but that their lack of industry and love of alcohol often placed them on charity. Italians . . . were given to crimes of sex and violence” (Haller 147). Grant echoed such sentiments: “[Ross] found Nordics wherever civilization has flourished” (Haller 150). Stoddard used vivid language to describe a racial divide: “To such barbarian stocks belong many of the peoples of Asia, the American Indians, and the African negroes (sic). These congenital barbarians have always been dangerous foes of progress” (160).

Statements like those of Ross, Grant, and Stoddard may strike an early twenty-first century audience as flabbergasting, but such ideas had a more accepted place in the early twentieth century. As Marouf Hasian shows, the ideas of people like Ross, Grant, and Stoddard enjoyed a relatively mainstream status. Building on concerns about the future of the race—concerns discussed above relating to race suicide—the study of eugenics grew from relative obscurity in the 1880s to prominence a short time after the turn of the century (30). Where the eugenicists in England preferred studying large numbers of people to determine deviance, in the US the family became the primary unit of examination “to see how particular *families* contained generations of feeble-mindedness, pauperism, and hundreds of other traits” (emphasis original) (81). Mark Haller notes that between 1910 and 1920 there grew a myth about the menace of feeble-mindedness that hindered the educational process and led to the population of paupers and criminals (95-96). As a reaction to such fears, the Boy Scouts arose as a way of producing finer

individuals, slipping between arguments based on heredity as assigned at birth and gained through environment. Spreading the doctrine of eugenics, booths demonstrating the need for eugenics often appeared at fairs to bring the science of eugenics into the lives of Americans everywhere (Hasian 40-41, 44). For that reason, some socialists turned to eugenics as a way of achieving their ideal of perfect society: “Unless the socialist is a eugenicist as well, the socialist state will speedily perish from racial degradation” (Paul 108). Eugenics as a dominant force in the US came to an end in the 1930s when scientific studies from a variety of fields began to demonstrate the flaws of eugenics’ scientific underpinnings (Haller 7).

The discussion of eugenics always raises the specter of racism, which seems rather obvious considering the remarks of some regarding those from Western-European countries even. Race has a complicated place in the history of eugenics as used by some, including those in the African-American community, to designate the undesirable among the African race along lines of class. Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s comments on race and eugenics create a space for some African Americans to find social acceptance but relegate others to the responsibility of the state: “The decent, self-supporting negroes (sic) . . . call for nothing but congratulation. But the whole body of negroes (sic) who do not progress, who are not self-supporting, who are degenerating into an increasing percentage of social burdens or actual criminals, should be taken hold of by the state” (123). Hasian points out that leaders of the African-American community, among them Du Bois, stated concerns similar to that expressed above by Gilman: “The mass of ignorant Negroes still breed carelessly and disastrously, so that the increase among Negroes, even more than the increase among the whites, is from that part of the population least intelligent and fit, and least able to rear their children properly” (qtd. in Hasian 69). The division of desirable and undesirable made by Gilman and Du Bois contains a frightening relation to

Stoddard who, while arguing the barbarian nature of the African race (see above), believed that by nature the less civilized are more “fecund” having few options for self expression other than procreation (162).

The belief in civilized peoples and the danger of barbarians from across the sea lead to a change in immigration law. The extent to which eugenicists based their fears about the future of society on the belief in a golden past comes through in the immigration law of 1924, which meant to recreate the proportion of old-stock coming to the US in 1890. Haller finds that in writing the immigration law of 1924 Congress based its quotas on the ethnic backgrounds indicated by the 1890 census. Congress decided against using 1910 census data as it contained less Nordic representation and therefore did not adequately favor the old stock. By passing an immigration law, which took effect in 1929, Congress sought to maintain the proper balance of ethnic backgrounds among its citizens with a clear favoritism for those of Nordic descent (Haller 157).

Despite concerns about who entered the country, two cases of women living in the US became touchstones in the eugenics debate. The lives of Deborah Kallikak and Carrie Buck collectively demonstrate, first, the problem of poor breeding, and second, the means of stopping such problems. The cases of the Kallikak and Buck demonstrate the forward looking orientation of eugenics. For eugenicists, the future held great horrors unless those with unhealthy, unfit bodies reproduced in fewer numbers. These instances serve as central examples of eugenicists', including Sanger's, concerns about the need to force the sterilization of women for the better good of the nation. Kallikak became known nationally as part of a study of the consequences of poor breeding that began a century before her birth. The theory of hereditary feeble-mindedness, demonstrated in the case of Kallikak, served as justification for the sterilization of Buck, who

doctors also diagnosed as feeble-minded. At the center of both cases lies the term “feeble-minded,” and its slipperiness that enabled doctors to enforce social standards for medical reasons. The term feeble-minded carried dangerous implications as few could define it. Arnold Gesell gives the most clear definition available:

Medically, feeble-mindedness is a permanent, early arrest of the development of the nervous system, particularly of the brain, cortex, or “gray matter.” Pedagogically, feeble-minded persons are those who cannot be taught to read, write, or cipher, with any marked advantage to themselves or society. Psychologically, feeble-mindedness is a condition of permanent, incurable mental retardation limiting the individual to an intelligence less than that of a normal thirteen-year-old child. Sociologically, feeble-mindedness is a condition of relative mental incompetence, dating birth or infancy, which makes it impossible for the individual to get along in the world on equal terms with his normal fellows. (86)

The definition Gesell offers provides few specifics and allows for considerable interpretation during measurement. As proof of this David Smith shows that testing immigrants for feeble-mindedness at Ellis Island produced troubling results. One examiner declared a 21-year-old man as having the mental age of 12 years, 1 month despite the fact that he worked as a tailor and spoke three languages. Another 21-year-old man declared feeble-minded had a diploma and worked as a pharmacist’s assistant (120, 122).

The illogical treatment of immigrants coming to America demonstrates both the seeming absurdity of the testing done and the detrimental effects of Henry Herbert Goddard’s well known study of Martin Kallikak, Sr.’s descendants. In 1912 Havelock Ellis argued for the need to study one’s family genealogy taking into consideration the character of each individual: “When it is possible to obtain a large collection of accurate pedigrees for scientific purposes, and to throw them into a properly tabulated form, we shall certainly be in a position to know more of the qualities of stocks, of their good and bad characteristics, and of the degree in which they are correlated” (*Task* 199). That same year Goddard published *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the*

Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness, which traced two lineages—one legitimate, one not—of Revolutionary War veteran Martin Kallikak, Sr., to the then-present day Deborah Kallikak, a descendant of the illegitimate line. In his study, Goddard seeks to demonstrate that two distinctly different lines develop when a “normal” person and another normal person reproduce versus when a normal and feeble-minded person reproduce, one normal line and one feeble-minded line. Goddard’s point: “There are Kallikak families all about us. They are multiplying at twice the rate of the general population, and not until we recognize this fact, and work on this basis, will we begin to solve these social problems” (71).

In studying the Kallikak family and revealing the source of “social problems,” Goddard focuses on the respectable and pathetic nature of the two different lines from one individual. The story that Goddard crafts from his research demonstrates the class orientation of eugenics. The narrative of the hereditary nature of class attributes Goddard tells begins with Martin Kallikak, Sr., who lost his father at the age of fifteen “leaving him without parental care or oversight” (Goddard 18). Goddard implies that the absence of a father at such a time in Martin, Sr.’s life explains why he would later sire a child with a “a feeble-minded girl” he met at a “tavern frequented by the militia” (Goddard 18). Where Goddard defends Martin as merely without a father to guide him, the woman in the story comes across quite a bit worse suggesting *her* sexual looseness, hinting that she actively, lustfully sought the companionship of men. Although Goddard presents Martin, Sr.’s story as “a powerful sermon against sowing wild oats,” he defends Martin, Sr. and simultaneously throws the nameless harlot to the wolves, describing their bastard child as an inevitability:

Had Martin Kallikak remained in the paths of virtue, there still remained the nameless feeble-minded girl, and there were other people, other young men, perhaps not of as good a family as Martin, perhaps feeble-minded like herself, capable of the same act and without Martin’s respectability, so that the race would

have come down even worse if possible than it was, because of having a worse father. (102,103)

In Goddard's world, the single and pregnant woman should be glad that she was not impregnated and deserted by a man of lesser social virtues. The story of Martin, Sr.'s careless dalliance operates both at the expense of the woman as well as those of lesser social positions.

The bulk of Goddard's study continues to defend the genetic good of Martin, Sr. and the inherent misfortune of his one-time lover. As Goddard recounts, Martin, Sr.'s class status would continue on through a line begun by a marriage to a respectable woman, but the descendants of his illegitimate son, Martin, Jr., could not escape the taint of the feeble-minded woman. Leaving his illegitimate son to the past, Martin, Sr. "straightened up and married a respectable girl of good family" (Goddard 29). Goddard summarizes that Martin, Jr. has 480 descendants, 143 of whom Goddard confidently finds feeble-minded and only 46 normal—the others remain a question mark. Going on, Goddard lists the number of illegitimate children from Martin, Jr.'s line as well as the number of prostitutes or otherwise "sexually immoral persons," "confirmed alcoholics," epileptics, criminals, and operators of brothels (18-19). In contrast, from the marriage of Martin, Sr. has sprung 496 descendants: "All of them are normal" (Goddard 29). Normal, itself, becomes liberal in meaning when Goddard speaks of the respectable line: "Three men were found somewhat degenerate, but they were not defective. Two of these were alcoholic, and the other sexually loose" (Goddard 29).

Having rediscovered the actual Kallikak family, for Kallikak is a pseudonym, one researcher has gone back to reveal problems in Goddard's study. David Smith throws cold water on Goddard's research and his hot passion for eugenics. Where possible, Smith pulls from archival references to Martin, Jr.'s descendants and finds that some of the so-called feeble-minded, those specifically referenced by Goddard as "morons" as well as their children,

went into professions Goddard would have respected: education, banking, and aviation.

Admittedly, some of Smith's defenses slip into Goddard's mindset and prove the normality of Martin, Jr.'s heirs by noting their class markers, such as personal wealth and real estate (93, 95, 99). The strongest case against Goddard's research rests in the story of Deborah Kallikak, from whom Goddard had traced back to find Martin, Jr. and his parallel, normal relatives. For most all of her life Deborah lived in Goddard's institute, The Training School for the Backward and Feeble-minded Children in Vineland, New Jersey, from the age of eight, in 1897, to her death, in 1978 (Smith 111). Goddard gives a grim evaluation of Deborah at about age 23: "She has been persistently trained since she was eight years old, and yet nothing has been accomplished in the direction of higher education" (12). As proof of this Goddard offers the experience of Deborah having to perform basic subtraction ($12 - 3 = 9$) on her fingers (Smith 9-10). In contrast, Smith shows that at the institute Deborah worked as a nurse's aide during an epidemic and provided infant and child care to superintendent families: "Visitors and new employees often expressed disbelief when told that she was mentally retarded" (29, 33).¹⁰ Smith offers all this as a way of demonstrating Goddard's persistence in defining feeble-mindedness despite evidence to the contrary.

The case of the Kallikaks carried weighty implications when, in 1927, the US Supreme Court upheld a state's right to sterilize unfit citizens. Carrie Buck became the first person sterilized under Virginia law allowing for state intervention to keep the feeble-minded from

¹⁰ I cannot resist offering a sentimental note regarding Deborah's life in the institute. Goddard provides Deborah's wish list to Santa Clause from age 10-22. The items begin with requests for dolls and harmonicas but mature into requests for nice shoes, fabric for her handiwork, and money for a dentist bill (8-9). Deborah's ongoing participation in asking Santa for gifts strikes me as an example of resistance to discipline. The institution, as evidenced by Goddard's treatment of her, treated Deborah as a child. In turn, it seems that Deborah resisted this by making rather mature requests of a system by which one could receive gifts of his or her choosing. As such the example demonstrates the interiority of all resistances, for Deborah's assertion of her adulthood still had to come in the form of a letter to Santa.

reproducing. The basis for deciding to sterilize Buck has frightening resemblances to the case of the Kallikaks with regard to classifying behaviors as suggestive of hereditary traits. Buck's mother Emma, who tested as feeble-minded, had Buck with a man other than her husband. In court (*Buck v. Priddy*) the prosecution characterized Emma Buck by mixing class and morality in much the way Goddard described the nameless, feeble-minded mother of Martin Kallikak, Jr.: "He described [Emma Buck] as immoral, untruthful, maritally unworthy, and a prostitute. He asserted that she had been divorced by her husband on grounds of infidelity" (Smith 140). The emphasis on the mother's character, alone, demonstrates the hereditarian theory at play. As an illegitimate child herself, Carrie Buck's own bastard child made arguments easy about genetic patterns. Only now do historians challenge the charges of Buck's promiscuity, noting that Carrie Buck became pregnant after her rape by her foster-parents' nephew (Micklos). Worse still, the original case includes testimony from a doctor who references and reports on Goddard's study of the Kallikaks, even though Goddard had hesitations about forced sterilization (Smith 140-42). The Virginia court found in favor of the state and authorized their first sterilization.

Where the Virginia court upheld its own state laws, the US Supreme Court set a precedent validating all state laws allowing for compulsory sterilization: by 1931 27 states had such laws (McCann 114). The wording of the Virginia law as well as the Supreme Court decision, written by Oliver Wendell Holmes, argues for compulsory sterilization on the basis of the benefit to society. Sanger's encouragement of sterilization, then, endorses the medical control of women if it improves the state of the nation. The Virginia law opens with a concise justification of sterilization stating, "The health of the individual patient and the welfare of society may be promoted in certain cases by the sterilization of mental defectives" (569). In upholding the law, Holmes argues that: "The public welfare may call upon the best citizens for

their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices . . . in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence” (*Buck v. Bell* 3). In describing Buck and giving some clarity to the supposed tide of incompetence awaiting the nation, Holmes makes reference to her “illegitimate feeble minded child” emphasizing the moral nature of the declaration of unfitness (1). About ten years before this case went before the Supreme Court research indicated that as many as 90% of those in prison tested as feeble minded (Haller 101). In line with such findings, Holmes argues for states’ right to sterilize feeble minded citizens “instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime” (3). Employing a bit of entelechy, Kenneth Burke’s notion of discussing a perfected (i.e., ultimate) state, shows that Holmes renders all those deemed feeble minded as inherently criminal, if nascent at the time.¹¹

The cases of the Kallikaks and Buck reveal eugenicists’ concern for the future. Eugenicists feared a horrific future unless the state checked the reproduction of unhealthy and unfit bodies. As mentioned earlier, American eugenics focused on individual families to demonstrate patterns and present examples of who should and should not propagate. Smith finds that in psychology textbooks as late as the 1950s the narrative of Kallikak family told a class morality tale. One textbook illustration shows a drawing of Martin Kallikak, Sr. dark on one side of his body and light on the other. From the dark side the artist represents Martin, Jr.’s mother and offspring by drawing women with large, made-up-looking lips and long eyelashes to suggest an inherent sexual looseness and drawing the men with hair combed in such a way that they seem to have horns. In contrast, Martin, Sr.’s legitimate offspring look like wholesome Quakers with the men in pilgrim hats looking humbly downwards and the women with faces drawn with

¹¹ For Burke’s discussion of entelechy see *A Rhetoric of Motives* (14).

delicate features, encased in a bonnet, and eyes turned up to God (170-71). Such sentiment indicates a tacit approval of contraceptive use for the purpose of preventing the promulgation of feeble-minded, criminal individuals.

The decision of the Buck case, a decision built upon knowledge gleaned from Goddard's study of the Kallikaks, demonstrates the motivating fears of eugenicists and marries to such worries the concerns of neo-Malthusians. Both eugenicists and neo-Malthusians believed in a national threat of resources running short. For neo-Malthusians, resources ran short because healthy bodies could produce more children than society had resources to provide for in terms of food, housing, jobs, and so forth. The eugenicists concerned themselves with the ability of society to provide the resources to manage the number of feeble-minded people who came under the care of institutes like Goddard's as well as prisons and other charity organizations. As Holmes argued, families like the Bucks already "sap the strength of the State."

The rhetoric of eugenicists and neo-Malthusians also share common interests with those who opposed birth control. The Roman Catholic church, Comstock, and Roosevelt shared with neo-Malthusians and eugenicists a concern about the future. For the opponents of birth control there existed the threat that selfish desires—whether women's aspirations to leave the home, men and women's lust, or the want for social mobility—would have detrimental effects on society whereas neo-Malthusians and eugenicists endorsed birth control to head off the threat of society ruined by producing too many un/fit people.

The thinking of these two perspectives comes together in the court case heralded as the most important court decision for women's access to birth control. In the *One Package* decision Judge Hand used a broad interpretation of the law finding that if Congress, when it passed the Comstock Act in 1873, understood what the court knew in 1936 it would not have "denounced

[contraceptives] as immoral if it had understood all the conditions under which they were to be used” (7). Clarifying the conditions of use, he goes on, “intelligently employed by conscientious and competent physicians for the purpose of saving life or promoting the well-being of their patients” (7-8). Hand’s decision affected the statute on obscenity, here, redefining what constitutes an obscene or “immoral” material. Although this reading opened the law considerably, it complicates the court’s understanding of the “moral” use of contraceptives. The Comstock Act dealt with obscenity, which Comstock characterized as a product of and inciting lust. Hand’s decision references a woman’s health needs as justification for prescription while avoiding defending women’s desire for sexual gratification as moral. Calling for contraceptives for “the well-being of [the] patients” leaves open the interpretation that women’s sexual pleasure constitutes an aspect of their health.

Despite this feminist opening in Hand’s decision the statute set in the *Buck* case casts the *One Package* decision in a eugenicist light. Drawing from established concerns of neo-Malthusians and eugenicists, Hand would seem to justify the prescription of contraception as necessary for social needs rather than women’s health. Hand finds that in 1873 “information now available as to the evils resulting in many cases from conception was most limited” (7). Without clarification from Hand on the “evils” that often come from “many cases” of conception, the reader must infer the meaning of evil comes from the knowledge produced by Goddard in *The Kallikak Family* and Holmes’s decision in *Buck v. Bell*. From both instances, “evil” means the threat of burdening society with more feeble-minded (criminals) than state institutions can manage. Framing contraception as necessary for preventing these social evils removes birth control from the realm of selfish desires and casts its use as the selfless interest in overcoming social evils. In the close of her *Autobiography*, Sanger similarly demonstrates the way in which

the rhetoric of birth control represents the interests of diverse groups, both those in support and opposition: “‘Build thou beyond thyself,’ said Nietzsche, and this the birth control movement is doing. All people will in the future have greater regard for the quality of the bodies and brains which must be equipped for the task of building the future civilization; birth control will be the cornerstone of that great civilization” (496). Sanger, like those who opposed and lent support to the cause of birth control, demonstrates a concern for the quality of the future, and through birth control, offers her solution for achieving a “great civilization.”

LOOKING AT THE NEXUS

Previously, I discussed the ways in which discourse effects bodies, actually producing them rather than merely influencing—or affecting—they. This chapter provides an overview of a series of discourses to aid in an understanding of Sanger’s rhetoric, attempting to place her at a nexus of those discourses. The above discussions provide discourses that produce women’s bodies: a tradition of feminist rhetors enduring responses illustrate how encouraging them to remain within the bounds of domestic ideals (such as True Womanhood) and serve others; science speaks of women as underdeveloped and needing men to control them; discussions of sexuality disregard women’s sexual pleasure as possible away from men; and arguments from opponents and proponents of birth control struggle over whether women should be forced into or prohibited from childbearing. Margaret Sanger, as a person born near the end of the nineteenth century and professionally active in the early twentieth century, lived in a time that all these discourses acted upon each other and her. I cannot look at Sanger’s rhetoric independent of these discourses that helped to form her as a rhetor and from which she drew her own discourse on birth control. In the following analyses of Sanger’s rhetoric I find her both resisting and relenting

to these discourses, which effect her arguments on birth control—not influence, but actually bring about the ideas Sanger comes to articulate.

The histories that effect Sanger and her rhetoric, however, sometimes come across too neatly and cleanly even in the discussion given in this chapter. For each of the discourses discussed here that seeks to effect women's bodies into traditional roles of supporting masculine interests there lies the possibility to contest just such a conclusion. The discourses presented here provide varying perspectives on the ways that dominant discourses in the early twentieth century produce women's bodies as at the service of national and masculine interests. Such a summarizing statement, however, glosses over the finer points that complicate an understanding of this statement of history. Social practices that reproached feminist rhetors also accepted them, as seen in the sometimes popularity of women who wore Bloomers and the early positive responses to Dr. Walker's cross dressing. Scientific discourses of women have attempted to control women's menstruations and used women's mammary glands to characterize women as primal. Despite those efforts, women's bodies present a serious challenge to medicine to ever be fully regulated. Also, the origin of "mammals" from a female trait does recognize a female body process that otherwise has no acknowledgment in US culture. The discourse on women's sexuality has rendered women as sexual to the extent they serve men's interests. The blindness to women's sexuality as independent of men's also allowed women access to clitoral stimulation (through the discourse on vibrators) absent of their male sex partners. The case of research on primates, which ignored female-female orgasms, suggests a degree of inattentiveness (i.e., lack of interference) to women's sexual interaction with each other. Comstock, the Catholic church, and Roosevelt all called for women to have children, but in so doing they also pay tribute to women who pursue motherhood, which feminists often indicate receives no social recognition.

Precisely because of the conflation of class and intelligence in eugenic discourse, public policy took notice of the fact that poor family's have less access to the tools of contraception than the educated, upper classes.

Considering the tension in these discourses between conforming women to the ideal of women serving others' needs and women resisting such norms hints at the friction within Sanger's rhetoric. Sanger's career for women's right to birth control achieves the basic goals of legalizing birth control and opening up women's access to contraception by a means that employs the discourses discussed above. Early in Sanger's career she argues that birth control will bring personal liberation to women by enabling them with class mobility, sexual pleasure, and the possession of their own bodies (the key to true freedom). Later in her career, Sanger emphasizes women's obligation to their family and to civilization. In relation to the discourses discussed Sanger replicates those same tensions. She personally defies post-Victorian notions of feminine domesticity by speaking of issues of women's sexual pleasure as part of her birth control campaign. By conforming to expectations of women's speech as well as sexuality, Sanger decreases the interest in women's sexual fulfillment and instead focuses more on maternity. The initial arguments Sanger makes for women of the working class having a harder time accessing contraception begin to fall against arguments of women's over-productive bodies as needing better scientific control. The idea that women need birth control to improve the quality of their lives fades as Sanger increasingly discusses the eugenic/ national benefits of encouraging women to use birth control. Sanger even shifts from suggesting women have life ambitions outside maternity to encouraging women's striving for maternal glory, much like her own detractors. The next two chapters, both analyses of Sanger's rhetoric, demonstrate the power of social discourses to effect her rhetoric and the tensions that Sanger consequently replicates.

CHAPTER 5

BIRTH CONTROL AS WOMEN'S RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY: EARLY THEMES IN MARGARET SANGER'S RHETORIC

When Margaret Sanger began her career agitating for women's right to contraception, the issue at hand often went by the name "family limitation" or "voluntary motherhood."¹ In her *Autobiography*, Sanger recounts that in early 1914 she realized "a new movement was starting, and the baby had to have a name" (107). One evening in her upper-end Manhattan apartment Sanger and some friends began to debate various names for their cause. Sanger sought a name for the burgeoning movement that had popular appeal. In deliberating over names, Sanger decided "the word control was good" as opposed to a word like "limitation," which she thought sounded too authoritarian, suggesting the actual number of children one ought to have (Sanger *Autobiography*, 108). From the collaborative conversation, mixing and matching a variety of terms, Otto Bobsein offered the suggestion "birth control," and so it was (Chesler 97).

Sanger's preference for a term utilizing the word "control" rather than a popular phrase like "voluntary motherhood" signals the disciplinary nature of contraception that she envisions. The surface distinction between "voluntary motherhood" and "birth control," the contrast of "voluntary" versus "control," implies that Sanger wants contraceptive use to be understood as a discipline that controls the operations of bodies, with her focus always on the relation of this topic to women's bodies. In her 1922 book on birth control, *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger defines control as "to exercise a directing, guiding, restraining influence. . . . Control is guidance, direction, foresight. It implies intelligence, forethought, and responsibility" (183). Similarly, in a 1927 address Sanger defines birth control as "the conscious control of the birth rate by scientific

¹ Sanger used both of these terms. She used the former in a series of contraceptive-advice pamphlets Sanger wrote titled, *Family Limitation*. The latter Sanger included in the proclamation "Dedicated to Voluntary Motherhood" under the banner of the first five volumes of the *Birth Control Review*, which Sanger helped found and edit for many years.

means that prevent the conception of human life” (1). The use of contraception as conscious control stands opposed to the lack of birth control that Sanger casts as “shiftlessness and recklessness” and “self-indulgence, accident, or casual ignorance” (“Birth Control Steps” 27; “New Deal for Women [I]” 1). These brief excerpts alone demonstrate Sanger’s interests in “birth control” as emphasizing a planning and controlling of body processes rather than letting those functions run haphazardly.

The social roles that Sanger envisions birth control fulfilling demonstrate a variety of disciplinary actions that require an explanation before moving into analysis. Sandra Bartky discusses the use of Foucault’s theory of power when treating gender, Bartky lays out various functions of disciplines upon the body to form idealized citizens, which can inform an understanding of Sanger’s definitions of birth control. In a discussion of Foucauldian theory and social power, Bartky describes disciplines that control the functions of the body, form bodies within predetermined expectations, and seek a careful surveillance of the body (240-42).² To control operations of the body, such as reproduction, social discourses invent and enforce regimens and the use of objects to make biological processes controllable. Birth control pills and patches for women as well as home ovulation-monitoring kits enable the control of the biological function of reproduction. Social discourses dictate the appropriate application of these objects to form idealized citizens, simultaneously encouraging women to use the tools available to ensure having children as part of a social duty while also compelling women to properly inhibit a high rate of conception that might subsequently burden welfare programs. Disciplines monitor bodies

² I add to the list academic disciplinarity, creating discrete areas of study that must include and exclude certain areas of study and molding the content of study into expected ideals. Susan Jarratt’s discussion of the Greek sophists points out the exclusion of literature, science, and philosophy by the Aristotelian formation of the rhetorical discipline (13). Jane Sutton describes the Platonic disciplining of rhetorical studies as the control of a feminine unruliness within rhetoric (115).

through the pressure of social interaction, like nagging a newly married woman about when she will have her first child, and governmental regulation, such as reducing welfare payments to mothers with too many children. The creation, implementation, and oversight of disciplines to produce idealized bodies easily lends itself to Sanger's discussion of birth control.

If disciplines seek to regulate bodies to meet a predetermined ideal, then seeing birth control, by name alone, as a discipline requires considering the ideal toward which the social discourses of contraception seek to form women's bodies. Questions about the disciplinary effect of Sanger's rhetoric necessarily arise as part of the project of genealogical interpretation. This analysis follows from the previous discussions to understand the disciplinary nature of contraceptive practice in the birth control movement. The interrelated history of Margaret Sanger and the campaign for contraceptive rights and practice provided earlier shows that an analysis of the US birth control movement in the early twentieth century must squarely deal with Sanger's rhetoric. A review of nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric demonstrates a pattern of women orators having to conform, or discipline, their rhetorical strategies to meet the expectations of women's social roles represented in the cult of True Womanhood. The definition of genealogical interpretation as a theoretical orientation to texts requires an understanding of the lines of history that come together to form a node so that the critic may contemplate the meanings of a text. For this reason I discussed the social production of feminist rhetors, medical discourses of women's bodies, late- and post- Victorian notions of women's sexuality, and the early-twentieth century compulsion to save the future through regulating desire (anti-vice leagues) or the rate and quality of reproduction (Neo-Malthusians and eugenicists).

With these issues considered, I move here into a discussion of Sanger's rhetoric, focusing on the rhetorical strategies Sanger begins using in the early years of her career of agitation. Early

themes in her rhetoric in the US birth control movement constitute a model of arguing for birth control as an emancipatory discipline, one that liberates women (working class women especially) through their practice of body regimens, while also using birth control as a vehicle to normalize, or discipline, women to meet class and maternal expectations. Sanger discusses class concerns relating to birth control in such a way that she simultaneously depicts birth control as a privilege of the upper classes by which they maintain their social status and admonishes working class women to rise to the ideal of bodily discipline set by women of upper classes. In addition, her early arguments for birth control as providing women with personal liberty, including that of sexual pleasure, fade against an emphasis on birth control as a function of women's maternal obligation. The first section of this analysis examines class concerns present in Sanger's rhetoric and the class bias she adopts amidst a critique of class relations. The second section looks at the break in Sanger's rhetoric away from discussion of women's personal freedom to women's maternal responsibility. Per the discussion of genealogical interpretation, the analysis of early themes in Sanger's rhetoric avoids creating a chart of growth and development. Instead this analysis recognizes that some themes enjoy more prominence at one time than another, which speaks directly to the presence of dominant social discourses of the time.

CLASS CONCERNS

Early in her career arguing for women's right to birth control Sanger provides stinging critiques of US class relations in the early twentieth century. Embedded within that class critique lies class maternalism, a rhetorical tone in which Sanger addresses working class women as a mother to a daughter regarding the proper management of women's bodies.³ In her maternal persona, Sanger reproduces a class hierarchy of working class women as less developed and

³ I have coined the term "class maternalism" from Carole McCann's discussion of Sanger's "racial maternalism" (127-34).

mature than their upper-class sisters. This portion of the analysis focuses on analyzing the ironic construction of class in Sanger's rhetoric that upbraids upper class women and then encourages working class women to be more like them. To do this requires first considering Sanger's critique of class relations and the class system in the US of the early twentieth century. Where the critique of class relations seems to address working class women, Sanger later moves to building class sympathy by indulging upper class women in sad tales of working class women's struggles. Seeing how Sanger addresses these two groups of women differently creates the opportunity to unpack the ways that she motivates working class women to discipline their bodies according to the middle class norms of hygiene.

“Class and Character”⁴

Two series of publications from early in Sanger's career demonstrate her interest in class issues, both of which turned into a run-in with the law. Sanger's series of articles “What Every Girl Should Know” in the *New York Call* and her monthly periodical the *Woman Rebel*, both dealt to some degree with the struggles that working class women face.⁵ These writings occur over the years 1912-1914, but as Sanger continues her career into the 1920s and beyond she discusses issues of class with decreasing frequency. In the following the focus lies upon the ways in which Sanger discusses class oppression and the potential of birth control to bring about a revolution. Sanger's discussion of the evils of the current class structure says that those with wealth obtain it at the expense of the working class. Her depiction of class relations gives way to hinting at the workers' blame for poorly controlling their reproduction and exacerbating their

⁴ This title comes from Sanger's two part series in the *Woman Rebel*.

⁵ The *Woman Rebel* was very much oriented toward a total critique of the capitalist system. In keeping with the socialist orientation of the *New York Call*, “What Every Girl Should Know” dealt with themes of girl/womanhood that at times more clearly developed anti-capitalist sentiments.

problems. Then discussion moves into seeing how Sanger frames birth control as a discipline by which working women can escape their class oppression. Suggesting birth control as a way for working class women to promote themselves out of their economic oppression carries the radical suggestion that women play an important role in challenging the class structure.

To bring about the class emancipation of working women Sanger provides a harsh critique of the class system. Her critique includes three elements that surface across a series of texts: the pleasure of upper class women at the expense of the working class, the ways in which the current structure abuses workers, and the devaluing of labor that comes from workers having too many children, suggesting their own complicity in creating the problem. The primary source of these articulations comes from the *Woman Rebel*, where, as Lisa Cuklanz notes, Sanger carefully constructs a rhetoric that fuses the interests of socialism and feminism thereby creating “a precursor to contemporary socialist feminism” (2). The feminist tone of Sanger’s class critique comes from the fact that she addresses how issues of class affect women’s lives. Though Sanger includes some of these same themes in “What Every Girl Should Know” as well as writings that follow, the combination of feminist and socialist concerns dominate *Rebel* as compared to the remainder of her rhetoric.

In *Rebel*, published in 1914, Sanger creates a class antagonism that divides upper and working class women as morally corrupt and morally superior, respectively. With this critique Sanger creates an antagonistic relationship between women of the working and upper classes. This pitting of the classes against each other comes through most clearly when Sanger describes the wealth of the upper class as coming from the backs of the working class. To demonstrate a divide between working class women and those of the upper class, Sanger assails the “rich man [who] places his wife on a pedestal. . . . This deified woman is one of the new idols at whose feet

plundering plutocracy lays the shining gold wrung from the sweat and blood of the toiling long-suffering masses” (“No Gods” 40). The gulf separating upper class and working class women widens when Sanger declares “our [workers’] womanhood is being shamefully destroyed” (40). As Cuklanz notes, Sanger identifies herself with working class women that she might better condemn the upper class, creating clear we/they, good/bad dichotomies (14). Sanger aligns herself with working class women by referencing “our womanhood.” The divergent descriptions of upper and working class women builds a moral dichotomy of deified and idolized women who benefit from women enslaved in the “toiling long-suffering” class.

Elsewhere in *Rebel* Sanger condemns the upper class, shifting from the abuses of women to the abuses of children. To cast the upper class as nefarious Sanger speaks to the difference between children of the lower and upper classes. Where the children of the “rich” enjoy physical and mental development, especially educational opportunities, “The children of the working class are developed only that profits may be wrung from them as early in life or as soon as the masters dare to” (“Into the Valley” 12). Here, women of the upper class become vultures feeding on children. The description condemns upper class women for giving to their children that which they have taken from others. In her series “What Every Girl Should Know,” Sanger also expresses the inequality in the treatment of young girls: “The girl of wealth, of the so-called upper class, can beautify herself and adorn her body with the costliest jewels and fabrics. . . . Yet the same manifestation in a working girl is condemned” (“What: Girlhood II” 15). Casting the upper class as utterly despicable enables Sanger to draw those in the working class as morally superior. As opposed to the girl whose mother lives in a world of “highballs or cocktails” Sanger declares, “The girl who toils in sweatshop or mill is of greater natural purity and higher morality. . . . This girl comes from parents who have lived near the soil; whose senses are beautiful and

accustomed to the sweetness and perfume of the earth” (“Class, No. 1” 28). In fetishizing poverty as pure, presumably uncontaminated by the inherent evils of excess money and the luxuries it affords, Sanger reverses the popular thought that the economically challenged are socially and morally “dirty.” Sanger also calls for working class women not to “chase for things” (“Choose!” 29). She warns working women to keep themselves morally superior by refusing to indulge themselves in the luxuries that ultimately tax working class women and children.

Beyond constructing the moral divide between the classes, Sanger also provides a direct attack of the factory system. Her analysis of the factory system casts workers as victims of capitalist greed that creates a master-slave relationship. During her European exile, Sanger renders the upper classes as vicious in the *International Socialist Review*, “*We know the capitalist class must have a slave class, bred in poverty and reared in ignorance*” (emphasis original) (“Comstockery” 47-48). Here Sanger continues the supposition that the upper classes live on the hard work of the workers. Accordingly, Sanger finds that the wage system chains workers: “I believe that not until wage slavery is abolished can either woman’s or man’s freedom be fully attained” (“Why” 8). In the slave relationship the employer has no ethical obligation to the worker. Sanger recounts the commandments of workers to be courteous, accurate, speedy, punctual, loyal, and responsible without respect in return: “Does he [the factory owner] have any responsibility toward you, does he care if you are sick, or tired; if you live or are happy or have food?” (“Class, No. 1” 28). Just as Sanger describes women of the upper class as profiting from the pain of the worker she paints factory bosses as using workers and discarding them when convenient. Sanger becomes understandably enraged when, in response to the Triangle Factory fire, one newspaper expressed sympathy to the factory owners who would now be out the money to remodel the premises to carry on with business (“On Picket” 11).

The evaluation of the class structure leads Sanger to opine that the upper classes abuse working class women and children for the sake of widening profit margins. Sanger argues that the over-population of the working class allows for employer abuse by making labor cheap. As a result, Sanger casts the worker's lack of body discipline as part of the problem. In 1915, the year after publishing *Rebel*, Sanger declares, "Too long have the workers produced slaves for the enemy, children for the mills" ("Should"). The first edition of *Family Limitation*, Sanger's manual on birth control, includes a similar statement followed by the worker's means of freedom: "The working class can use direct action by refusing to supply the market with children to be exploited, by refusing to populate the earth with slaves" (*Limitation*, 1st 3). Sanger's analysis in *Rebel* of the solution to the situation comes from basic capitalistic principles of supply and demand: "Avoid overcrowding the labour market and keep down wages by competition" ("Little" 53). Ironically, Sanger must use capitalist doctrine to respond to capitalist abuse.

Where in the above example Sanger explains the need for small families to enable class mobility, she goes on later to discuss the cause of large families. Sanger holds true to the belief that abuses of the wage system continue because of the large number of workers available, therefore she increasingly discusses the collusion of the workers in maintaining their class suppression. In 1916, two years after arguing in *Rebel* that overcrowding lowers wages, Sanger writes for the socialist-oriented *The Melting Pot* that "Wage slavery, even in its worst aspect, is largely the consequence of the careless breeding of wage slaves, and it will continue as long as wage slaves continue to reproduce new beings necessarily condemned to lives of poverty and ignorance" ("Birth Control" 6). From the early days of *Rebel* in 1914 to two short years later the abuse of workers at the hands of management falls increasingly to those who lack the sense of

how to control their bodies to comply with basic supply/demand philosophy. The birth control pamphlet, *Family Limitation* implicates working-class mothers as complicitous in their class oppression. The mothers' crime? Failing to properly adhere, or discipline herself, to basic rules of capitalist success.

From this critique of the class system that blames upper class women, factory owners, and working class women Sanger moves into discussing the workers' way out of class oppression. She argues that by learning the discipline of birth control working class women can bring about a revolt. The discussion of the potential for class revolt in birth control practice includes a castigation of upper classes for hoarding for themselves the information of birth control and the potential for working women to free themselves. Though in 1916 Sanger casts excess child production among the working class as "careless breeding," in *Rebel* (1914), she places blame on women of higher classes: "The woman of the upper middle class have (sic) all the available knowledge and implements to prevent conception. The woman of the lower middle class is struggling for this knowledge" ("Prevention" 8). Sanger avoids openly blaming upper class women for the lack of contraceptive information available to working class women. The depiction of the upper class luxury at working class expense implies that the access to contraceptive information by some comes at the expense of others: "Women of wealth obtain this information with little difficulty, while the working man's wife must continue to bring children into the world she could not feed or clothe, or else resort to an abortion" ("Comstockery" 48).⁶ The construction parallels Sanger's description of upper class women as plutocratic gods to whom workers sacrifice themselves.

⁶ As discussed below, Sanger understands working class women's abortions as highly dangerous.

Having again antagonized working class women against the women of upper classes, who possess contraceptive information, Sanger calls for working women's action. In keeping with a socialist orientation, Sanger encourages working class women to demand and use contraception as a class revolt. In the first issue of *Rebel* Sanger defines this revolt as a political orientation different from common feminism. Sanger bemoans the "apologetic tone of the new American feminists" whom she finds "represent a middle class woman's movement" ("New Feminists" 1). The critique characterizes feminist organizations of the 1910s as attempting to maintain middleclass notions of civility and therefore avoiding full-throated protests. The challenges the feminists offer represent middle-class concerns such as the right of women to work and to ignore fashions, which Sanger sees have both found public acceptance. Sanger, then, despises the middle-class feminist movements for lack of attention to issues affecting working class women. In the same issue of *Rebel* as the castigation of middle-class feminists, Sanger announces working class women's mode of revolt: "No plagues, no famines or wars could ever frighten the capitalist class so much as the universal practice of the prevention of conception. On the other hand no better method could be utilized for increasing the wages of the worker" ("Prevention" 8). Having impugned women of the upper classes as hoarding contraceptive information, as they hoard material resources, and declaring dominant feminism as serving these interests, Sanger can call for a revolt that challenges the oppressor and increases the well-being of the worker.

Other than establishing the presence of class oppression, and naming contraception as the solution Sanger also defines the necessity of revolt. In Sanger's calculus the workers must naturally and necessarily revolt by using birth control. In *Rebel* Sanger effectively argues that, in terms of laws of nature, the lower class survives through revolt against the upper class. First,

Sanger establishes that humans survive by self preservation. She then quickly posits that human history “is the history of classes” (“Self Preservation” 16). The remainder of the column discusses the class war and the brutality of the police against workers “on the firing lines of the class war” (“Self Preservation” 16). The construction of Sanger’s argument depicts revolt as a natural instinct of the lower classes. Such a proclamation fits in line with her assertions that typical feminism cannot serve the interests of working class women. Sanger calls for solidarity to form a new feminism of working class women willing to revolt: “Solidarity is a means, not an end, it will unite the working class against its oppressors” (“Tragedy” 33). Working women’s solidarity comes in part through doing for each other what the upper classes refuses to do for them, share information. In the introduction of the first edition of *Family Limitation* Sanger instructs the reader “Pass on this information to your neighbor and comrade workers. Write out any of the following information which you are sure will help her, pass it along where it is needed. Spread this important knowledge!” (*Limitation* 1st 3). The significance here lies in the fact that Sanger’s call addresses women, whose interests rarely if ever reach the center of socialist political agendas.

Applying the familiar socialist theme of revolt to concerns of women’s bodies requires that Sanger address the tension between an ideology that often ignores women’s interests and a program meant to help women. Dealing with a standard socialist theme like revolt but adding to it feminist concerns requires Sanger to defend her prescription for birth control against Marxist philosophy and bolster her own arguments regarding contraceptives’ usefulness in the class war. Sanger’s reading of Marx challenges the idea that the growth of the working class and the consolidation of capital into the hands of a few will lead to revolution, something Sanger finds comparable to consoling a prisoner with the news that the penitentiary now covers the entire

state (“No Masters” 47). As an alternative to Marx, Sanger offers *Rebel*, which she describes the year after its publication as “a working woman’s paper” that advocated for women’s right to birth control (“Should”). In the pages of *Rebel* Sanger specifically argues for recognizing the revolutionary potential of birth control: “The working class in America has not awakened to the value of the birth control propaganda as the necessary corollary and powerful co-efficient of the revolutionary movement” (“Indictment” 49). Here the significance of Sanger’s feminist brand of socialism comes to light. Sanger’s socialism incorporates women’s interests and enables them with an active part in the worker’s revolution.

Looking over Sanger’s critique of class relations in earlytwentieth-century US reveals a complex review of and response to the class structure. For Sanger, those of the upper classes engage in class abuse because they can, and working class women can practice contraception to end that exploitation. The characters in Sanger’s tale of class relations stand opposed to each other as inherently evil and inherently good. The upper classes, cast as evil, wring profits from women and children in the working class to celebrate upper class women and children. Upper class greed encourages driving down wages, which the working class enables by having so many children that there exists a surplus of labor that cheapens wage pay. Solving the problem requires solidarity to build up among working women to form a feminism that addresses working-class interests. Only by engaging in a revolt that specifically includes women—using birth control—can the working class escape labor system abuse.

“Birth Control or Abortion?”⁷

Where the arguments Sanger presents in *Rebel* and during that time period address the working class women to join together in defense of themselves and their children to challenge

⁷ The heading comes from the title of an article Sanger wrote for the *Birth Control Review* in 1918.

domination by the upper classes, Sanger also appeals to a broader audience of women arguing for workers' access to birth control. To enlist the support of women of the upper classes Sanger utilizes a rhetoric of sympathy by creating identification and compassion with working women's struggles. Linda Gordon describes the US birth control movement in 1916 as radical because of its "ability to involve not only educated but also working class women in a participatory movement" (225). As evident in the 1916 tour speeches, however, these two classes of women receive different invitations to join the movement. In 1916 Sanger would engage in direct action aimed at helping working class women by operating clinics and writing birth control manuals, but she also spoke and wrote to upper and middle class audiences, often about working class women's need for birth control. In so doing Sanger separates women who need the help from women who can do the helping. Sanger employs the theme of sympathy to help women outside the working class understand the unique struggles of working class women, a strategy especially evident in her 1916 speaking tour. The following discusses her 1916 speaking tour, the tradition of sympathy in social politics, and Sanger's pathetic descriptions of working women's lives. To develop sympathy for working class women's lives Sanger discusses their general hardships, uses a narrative of a representative experience, and analyzes abortion as indicative of class privilege related to women's health.

Sanger's attempt to reach out to upper and middle class women begins in her 1916 lecture tour. After the government dropped its obscenity charges against her, Sanger left on her the tour, traversing the country addressing the need for women's access to birth control. From April 15 until July 30 of 1916 Sanger spoke primarily to audiences of upper and middle class women. During the 1916 tour Sanger delivered the speeches "Signal" and "Weapons" (which share approximately 45% of their content with one another) 37 times, collectively, in 19 cities

across the US, though not in the South (McClearey, “To Dramatize” 12, 20).⁸ In a study of the two speeches Kevin McClearey compares “Weapons” to “Signal.” McClearey comes to the conclusion that “No discernable rationale emerges as a guide for [Sanger’s] selection between ‘Signal’ and ‘Weapons’ for any given engagement during the tour. In other words, Sanger seems to have simply regarded them as equal and alternate forms of the same lecture” (“Dramatize” 21, 32). I direct attention to “Signal” as it includes the same key arguments as “Weapons” with more elaboration. Because of the similarity in content of “Signal” and “Weapons” they both provide clear insight into birth control movement rhetoric around 1916.

In 1916 Sanger utilizes a “sympathetic rhetoric” to move upper and middle class women to support social reform for working class women. her use of sympathy to create empathy and spark middle class support for working class women comes as part of long tradition of using sympathy for exactly such purposes. Literary scholar Elizabeth Barnes explains that since Jefferson’s writing in the Declaration of Independence identification has served a central role in creating political alliances. Sentimental fiction has employed this theme, working through sociopolitical struggles by using a female body, using narratives of women’s experiences to express concern about and argue change for social issues. The “pedagogical efficacy” of a sympathetic narrative comes in its ability “to make the story real for its readers” (2, 8, 4). Kenneth Burke writes that the sense of identification among people, the belief that they are like each other in some way, carries the potential to transcend a great many differences between people (*Rhetoric* 22). In contrast, Barnes focuses on audience’s projection of identification with

⁸ Kevin McClearey painstakingly reconstructs Sanger’s tour by using original newspaper accounts to track her schedule. The effort bears special significance as McClearey uses this evidence to dispute the claim often reproduced in Sanger biographies that she lectured 119 times during her tour—a claim that seems to emanate from a note in Sanger’s own hand attached to a tour manuscript available at the Library of Congress. The titles of the speeches I use here come from McClearey’s work as drawn from the opening lines of the respective speeches (“To Dramatize” 19-20).

another with whom they otherwise would disidentify. Barnes explains that in Adam Smith's work on political union lies the notion that empathy allows those who see themselves as members distinct from another group to imagine identification with the other so they can incorporate this new perspective into their own (21). Where Burke might argue that all identifications are imagined—or rhetorically constructed—Barnes speaks of audience members who fail to see themselves as having similarity with another yet allow themselves to engage in empathy by inventing that bond. In the state of identification Barnes describes, Burke's arguments about the persuasive power of creating a sense of shared experience among disparate people remain (*Rhetoric* 55).

To induce her audiences of the upper classes to invent an identification between themselves and working class women, Sanger focuses on the differences between her audience and working class women. Where Sanger provides a stinging critique of class relations in *Rebel*, she uses her 1916 tour speech to enlighten upper and middle class women of their class privilege in such a way as to develop sympathy, and thereby support, for working class women's need for birth control. In "Signal" Sanger speaks about rather than to the working class, making reference to "the poor people" and "these people" though also referencing "the wealthy women of this country" (2, 4, 9). Sanger provides piteous descriptions of a working woman's life "already broken in health and spirit, a shadow of the lovely woman she once was" and these same women who say "'Thank God' when . . . told that her child was born dead" aware of the high probability it would have died within a year (12, 4).⁹ Combining pity with hints of blame, Sanger describes infant-child laborers whose "little backs are bent, their faces bloodless, their little fingers keep

⁹ In the 1919 volume of the *Review* Sanger provides a pictorial of two impoverished families one with five surviving children (of six) and another seven surviving (of 10) children. The children and parents are all described as being in poor health and shown wearing ragged clothing. Above the double-page spread Sanger asks, "Shall women have children like these—or shall we let them control births?" ("Shall Women").

busy curling feathers, making artificial flowers, or rolling cigarets (sic). Year in and year out they toil in places where the sun has never shone” (6). Here Sanger makes the suggestion of what she says blatantly in *Rebel*, the upper classes, who purchase the fashionable artificial flowers, enjoy such frivolities at the expense of working-class children’s suffering.

The anecdote representative of Sanger’s appeal to sympathy comes in the story of Sadie Sachs.¹⁰ Sanger uses the narrative of the possibly fictional Sachs to sympathetically represent working class women’s desperation for controlling the size of their family, critique charity institutions, and discuss the class divide. Sachs, “the wife of a struggling working man and the mother of three children,” required a doctor after having attempted to perform an abortion on herself. Sanger went to Sachs’s tenement room as a doctor’s aide. After three weeks Sanger and the doctor had helped Sachs recover her health, who pleaded for information on how to avoid a future pregnancy. The doctor refused to help, and Sanger demurred from offering any herself. Three months later Sanger returned to Sachs’s bedside following another botched abortion. This time Sachs died (“Signal” 24-26). Sanger declares in both versions of her 1916 speech that when she returned to her home in the early morning she decided to stop nursing women like Sachs and, instead, begin a career fighting for their right to birth control (“Signal” 27; “Weapons” 14).

On the surface of it, the Sachs narrative appeals to the sympathy of the audience, but Sanger connects it to other critiques of the class system. In her 1916 speeches the story of Sachs enables Sanger to speak against the failings of the charity system and to illuminate privilege of the upper classes. Before launching into her story of Sachs, Sanger finds that charity organizations like Better Baby leagues work reactively rather than proactively as birth control would: “Our charity organizations . . . at their best are simply alleviations for their [working-

¹⁰ Burke provides a discussion of representative anecdotes as a drama that “sums up” the core beliefs of an ideology (*Grammar* 61).

class mothers'] present distress, would it not be better to help these women to help themselves by giving them the knowledge to control birth" ("Signal" 24).¹¹ In "Weapons" Sanger refers to charity as a "quack" solution (13). This precursor to her tale of Sachs dismisses the potential claim among upper class audiences that they already fight the problem by giving to charity organizations.

Sanger moves from helping her audience see how their charity work fails at solving the problem to demonstrating class privilege. The 1916 tour speeches include the issue of class access to contraception and abortion to further show her audience their own social privilege and the struggles that working class women face. Sanger declares, as in "Weapons," that "the women of wealth use means to control birth which is condemned when taught to the poor" (8).¹² In combination with an accusation of hypocrisy for withholding birth control Sanger adds a class analysis of abortion as a desperate last resort for the working class. In *Rebel*, Sanger argues that birth control will end the need for abortion, which she describes as highly dangerous ("Abortion" 24).¹³ Now addressing women outside the working class in "Signal" Sanger calls abortion a barbaric method of birth control used out of desperation and refers to the "horrible slaughter of abortion [by] quack abortionists" ("Signal" 2, "Weapons" 5). The barbarism and slaughter Sanger speaks of refers to the loss of working class women's lives. In "Weapons" Sanger uses this as a point of class division: "I found that women of wealth were able to have abortions performed if it is necessary, while such care and attention was given them that seldom did a

¹¹ Sanger writes in 1919 that birth control will reduce the amount of money wasted on charities every year ("Birth Control: Yes or No? [II]"). Conversely, in a 1923 article from the *Birth Control Review* Sanger argues that donations to the cause of birth control "means a blow at the root of the social diseases which call into existence our organized charities and philanthropies" ("Responsibility" 171).

¹² In both "Signal" and "Weapons" Sanger also states that wealthy women have had the knowledge of birth control for 25 years ("Signal" 9; "Weapons" 8).

¹³ As late as 1935 Sanger makes a similar argument for the value of birth control ("Important" 228).

death occur among them” (4).¹⁴ Sanger’s 1920 book, *Woman and the New Race*, goes on to decree that “The woman who goes to the abortionist’s table is not a criminal but a martyr—a martyr to the bitter, unthinkable conditions brought about by the blindness of society at large” (129). Sanger’s class analysis of abortion provides women of means with an opportunity to consider their own privilege of access to contraception and safe abortions vis-à-vis stories of those like the “martyr” Sadie Sachs.

The combination of Sanger’s story of Sachs and her comments on such women’s status as martyrs coalesces to form the center point of her appeal to upper and middle class sympathies. By telling stories like that of Sadie Sachs, Sanger demonstrates the piteous situation of a woman forced into a life other than that prescribed by True Womanhood and thereby calling for women of the upper classes to intercede. In an article from 1911, Sanger calls for the women of privilege to “awake, awake, to this system and help these downtrodden women back to their homes” (“To Mothers”). As already discussed, Barnes defines sympathetic rhetoric as concentrating on a feminine body, telling the stories of women’s experiences, to resolve socio-political questions. In Sanger’s narrative Sachs’s bodily experience of abortion becomes a site of intervention for women of the upper classes. Sanger’s 1928 *Motherhood in Bondage* also employs this method, printing 470 excerpts from letters of women and men describing their life struggles because of the lack of access to contraceptive information. Where upper class women already had a tradition of supporting charitable works, in all this Sanger seeks to redirect their energies into helping working class women control the size of their families. Using a condescending tone, in 1933 she calls for women with the knowledge of contraception to “pass the right and privilege on to the underprivileged woman who is too poor, too weak, too inarticulate to battle for her own rights”

¹⁴ Sanger makes similar assertions in an article from 1915, a 1918 issue of the *Birth Control Review* and her 1920 book, *Woman and the New Race* (“Comstockery” 48; “Birth Control or” 4; *Race* 125).

(“New Deal for Women [II]” 2). Such an effort on Sanger’s part calls for upper class women to engage in an expected mothering of their wayward sisters and opens the possibility to call for a disciplining of working class women to the standards of their upper class sisters.

“What Every Girl Should Know”¹⁵

Sanger pulls together her calls for working class women to defend themselves and their children from labor abuse and for upper class women to see their lower-class sisters as desperate when she addresses working class women using a condescending rhetoric. When providing working class women with contraceptive information Sanger engages in class maternalism. Carole McCann writes that when Sanger sought to help women of the black community she engaged in “racial maternalism,” teaching black women how to better control the size of their families though operating under the assumption that the women would not understand the importance of contraception (151). The maternalistic nature of Sanger’s approach manifests itself in her assumption that some women are too immature to understand the importance of birth control, just as a child may not understand the necessity of attending school. Sanger engages in class maternalism by appropriating a sense of authority over working class women using a tone that replicates the mother-daughter relationship. In so doing she addresses women of the working class as both a mother who must teach her daughters how to care for themselves and she generally speaks to working class women in a condescending tone in which she positions lower class women as less mature and intelligent than upper class women. Sanger’s maternalistic approach to helping women replicates the pattern seen in many of the late-and post-Victorian reform organizations in which well educated and affluent women dominated the business of the leagues (Evans 151).

¹⁵ This title comes from the series of articles Sanger wrote for the *New York Call*.

The maternalistic tone Sanger uses compels working class women to assume the discipline of birth control by establishing a social hierarchy, providing exemplars of success, and calling for remediation. As Sanger speaks to her working-class “daughters” she rhetorically creates a hierarchy in which women of the lower classes should look to their “mature sisters” of the upper classes. In her maternalistic rhetoric Sanger’s frames the possession and practice of contraceptive information as a distinguishing characteristic between those less and more socially mature. Within that framework Sanger chides working class women into controlling their bodies in an example set for them by women of the upper classes. The total effect of these strategies in Sanger’s rhetoric render working class women as immature and needing Sanger and upper class women to guide them. The construction of class maternalism creates an ironic moment in Sanger’s rhetoric as she condescends to working class women despite her efforts to help them and defend the status of working class women in society against that of upper class women.

To understand the development of class maternalism in Sanger’s rhetoric requires first recognizing the class bias evident in her rhetoric even in her passionately socialist critiques. Sanger constructs women’s knowledge of their bodies as a sign of social development implying that working class women, who have less access to such information, have matured less than women of the upper classes. In her 1912 and 1913 articles “What Every Girl Should Know” (“What”) Sanger discusses the cause of vice and names women’s lack of knowledge of their bodies and of sex as “the strongest [force] that sends *girls* into unclean living” (emphasis added) (“What: Introduction” 15). Two points are worth noting here. First, by describing women of the working class as having fewer morals Sanger echoes the rhetoric of the anti-vice leagues, led by people like Anthony Comstock, who saw immigrant (i.e., poor) groups as the source of vice in

society. Second, Sanger names females unaware of their bodies, again often of the working class, as “girls.”

Elsewhere in “What Every Girl Should Know” Sanger discusses sex education in “savage cultures” in such a way that she reproduces the mother daughter role of herself to working class women, inadvertently suggesting a savage, uncivilized nature of those women without knowledge of their bodies. Sanger speaks of a Native-American tribe in which “The girls are fully informed of menstruation. . . . Women of these tribes are virtuous” (“What: Puberty, I” 15). Here Sanger makes a causal link between informed girls and virtuous women. The use of an anthropological anecdote hints at the foundational assumptions of Sanger’s class bias as she links the idea of the socially unevolved, signaled by the descriptor “savage,” with uneducated working class women. Apparently upper and middle class women have developed themselves from a lower, savage state as “brood animals,” thus their class status. The comparison of social evolution and class status reveals the low regard Sanger holds for the intelligence of working class women and the impetus for her maternalistic frame.

The worldview that Sanger presents sets those with knowledge of reproductive functions and the desire to learn about contraception as more evolved than those without such knowledge. By reviewing the reproductive behaviors of plants and animals, literally discussing the “birds and the bees,” Sanger paints a picture of “higher creatures” as having sophisticated reproductive behaviors (“What: Reproduction, I” 15). The hierarchy of the plant and animal kingdoms includes dimensions of industrial imperialism. As Sanger notes, “The savages [i.e., Yuman Indians of California] have recognized the importance of plain sexual talks . . . while civilization is still hiding itself under the black pall of prudery” (“What: Puberty, I” 15). Sanger’s indictment implies that the least civilized are those who lack the knowledge of their own reproductive

functions, which would be women of the working class. In a 1915 pamphlet on *English Methods of Birth Control* Sanger states factually that “as soon as a woman rises out of the lowest stages of ignorance and poverty, her first step is to seek information of some practical means to limit her family” (4). The statement conveys the idea that as women evolve to higher classes they demonstrate this development in their desire to better know their bodies. Sanger makes this point all the more evident in the *Review* when she notes that “women of [upper] classes long ago refused to be mere brood animals” (“Birth Control or” 3).

With Sanger’s class bias identified, it becomes much easier to see how she attempts to discipline working class women’s bodies. Primarily by setting upper and middle class women as a standard, Sanger chastises working class women to improve the managing of their bodies by practicing birth control. *Family Limitation*, her birth control manual, demonstrates how Sanger frames the practices of birth control as a good body discipline as prescribed by middle class standards. The voice of class maternalism in Sanger’s birth control manual comes through in her comparison of working class and upper class women as well as the general tone used in her writing. These two expressions of maternalism have significant overlap. The first edition of *Family Limitation* (*Limitation* 1st) opens with a class critique on the demeaned status of working class women in society, who fill hospitals, jails, asylums, mills and the military all for the control and of the upper class. Sanger calls for the working class to emancipate themselves through the use of birth control: “The working class can use direct action by refusing to supply the market with children to be exploited, by refusing to populate the earth with slaves” (3). On the very next page, where she begins to dispense birth control advice, Sanger declares, “Women of intelligence refuse to have children until they are ready for them, keep definite track of the date of their menstrual periods” (4). Sanger explains that where upper class women have children at their will,

“Only ignorance and indifference will cause one to be careless in this most important matter” (4). Already tension builds between Sanger championing the plight of working class women and her invoking a comparison between upper class women’s intelligent practices and those who suffer from ignorance and indifference. One cannot help but see the intelligence/ ignorance division as a replication of the class divide.

Sanger further calls the intelligence of working class women into question in her introduction to *Limitation* 1st. The opening line of *Limitation* 1st declares, “There is no need for any one to explain to the working men and women in America what this pamphlet is written for . . . They know better than I could tell them, so I shall not try” (2). Despite her appreciation for working class couples to understand the importance of practicing contraception, the top line of the facing page states, “Women of the working class, especially wage workers, should not have more than two children at most” (3). Between the first and second page of her pamphlet Sanger creates a tension between respecting the intelligence of working class women to see the utility of birth control and needing to tell them plainly the proper size of their family. That Sanger directs these statements to working class women implies that they must be told by a mother figure how to properly manage their bodies and homes, while women of the upper classes require no such explanation.

The expressed class division of those with birth control information and those without gives way to Sanger endorsing middleclass standards of feminine hygiene. The standards of feminine hygiene that Sanger teaches regulate the processes of women’s bodies while also appealing to notions of cleanliness. As discussed earlier, Sally Shuttleworth argues that in the nineteenth century a medical practice arose that sought to delay women’s menstruation through the prescription of pills. Such medications provided women with the means of medicinal

abortions. Shuttleworth reveals that in Victorian medicine “the young female must turn to male medical guidance (or popular remedies) is to avoid precipitating herself into a state of permanent nervous disease or insanity” (60). Similarly, Sanger calls for women to regulate the processes of their body as a necessary regimen: “Don’t wait to see if you do *not* menstruate (monthly sickness) but make it your duty to see to it that you *do*” (emphasis original) (*Limitation 1st* 4). Just as Victorians used medicines to bring about delayed menstruations Sanger recommends in *Limitation 1st* the use of quinine capsules (4-5).¹⁶ Sanger’s reproduction of Victorian medical advice brings with it the tradition of a male institution regulating women’s bodies as bodily processes needing a steady discipline.

The instruction Sanger offers provides careful training in just such a discipline. In *Limitation 1st* Sanger compels working class women into monitoring and controlling their menstrual cycles as a responsible management of the body. Michel Foucault writes of the change in Western culture early in the first millennium in which an ethical subject develops by examining, monitoring and testing the body to determine the truth of the self (*Care* 68). In much the same way, Sanger’s rhetoric instructs working class women to examine and monitor their bodies and then to control their reproductive functions. To regulate menstruation Sanger says that women must keep careful track of their menstrual cycles, as discussed above, knowing their regular length so that they might intervene if they fail to menstruate on the date appointed on the calendar: “If a woman will give herself attention BEFORE the menstrual period arrives, she will almost never have any trouble, but if she neglects herself and waits to see if she ‘comes around,’ she is likely to have difficulty” (*Limitation 1st* 5). The note that delay comes from a woman who

¹⁶ It is worth noting that Sanger sees this as something other than abortion, for she describes in *Limitation 1st* an abortion as something done after the pills recommended have failed to bring on menses when pregnancy is suspected.

“neglects herself” suggests a woman without the drive to form herself in accordance with a middle class regimen of bodily control.

Sanger’s admonishment of women with poor body discipline also ties itself to popular discourses about the hygiene of women’s bodies. In *Limitation* 1st, Sanger adds another condemnation of slothfulness: “If a woman is too indolent to wash and cleanse herself [with a contraceptive douche] . . . then it will be difficult to find a preventative to keep the woman from becoming pregnant” (2). The scolding to cleanse the self carries with it the connotation of upper classes’ notions of hygiene that include women’s sexual tract. By the 1920s Lysol, which Sanger recommends in *Limitation* 1st as a douche when properly diluted, advertised itself as a contraceptive douche under the euphemism “feminine hygiene.”¹⁷ Amy Sarch finds that the ads depict women’s failure to practice proper feminine hygiene as leading to a loss of their husbands’ attraction to them (Sarch 34-35). The example of Lysol identifies Sanger’s support of a discourse that pins issues of women’s personal and social development upon their cleanliness, a by-product of diligent contraceptive practice.

The call Sanger offers for women to properly cleanse themselves and its parallel ten years later in 1920s’ marketing demonstrates the extent of Sanger’s capitulation to dominant class discourse. Amidst her defense of working class women as abused by the class structure Sanger endorses middleclass norms toward which she calls for working class women to conform themselves. To create that discipline Sanger establishes that women with the knowledge of their bodies and birth control are “women” rather than “girls,” and those individuals without birth control information have underdeveloped as humans and civilized people. Women of the upper classes, therefore, present a model of women more evolved than those of the working class

¹⁷ Sarch notes that Sears Roebuck, and Co. marketed Lysol as a douching agent as early as 1911 (33).

without contraceptive information. Seeing Sanger's tone toward working class women as maternal casts her advice as replicating the familial pattern of admonishing the younger daughter to be more like her mature sister. To achieve that maturity Sanger calls for working class women to regulate their menstrual cycles and properly cleanse their bodies. Both these suggestions demonstrate middle class notions of the proper care of women's bodies that Sanger endorses.

The maternal tone of Sanger's rhetoric in combination with her critique of the class structure and bid for sympathy among upper and middle class women creates an ironic picture of Sanger's rhetoric. Analysis of Sanger's discussion of class issues pertaining to birth control reveals the tension of casting working class women as victims of the upper classes while also calling for women of the working class to make themselves more like their named oppressors. Sanger presents an understanding of class relations that distinguishes between proper body practices and social abuse. Working class women in Sanger's depiction of class relations must seize the means to social development, which the upper classes possess, as part of their class revolt. Women of the upper classes must recognize their class privilege and help those women become more like themselves. The composite reveals a complicated and unclear system of class relations: working class women should feel antagonism toward women of the upper classes yet want to be like them; upper class women should feel compelled to help their lesser sisters and thus replicate their class advantage. The tensions Sanger creates between brazenly challenging the status quo and allowing those discourses to pass through her rhetoric arises again when considering Sanger's arguments for why women should have access to the means of contraception.

FROM WOMEN'S LIBERATION TO THEIR OBLIGATION

A tension in Sanger's rhetoric emerges in her discussion of birth control as personally liberating to women, a conflict similar to that created by defending women of the working class while encouraging them to be more like women of the upper classes. Sanger argues that the use of birth control will provide personal freedoms to women even as she articulates women's maternal obligations to themselves, their children, their husbands, and the nation to use birth control. This tension creates an irony in which Sanger promises that birth control will allow women to free themselves from domestic slavery, yet she also encourages women to practice birth control for the sake of better fulfilling the maternal functions of care taking. In the ironic tension, women's personal interests and needs become submerged under the compulsion to serve and care for others, a decidedly maternal obligation. The conflict demonstrates the extent to which utterances cannot escape the social discourses producing bodies and ideas. Because rhetors draw their words and ideas from the culture they live in, even acts of resistance work within a familiar set of ideas. As a rhetor immersed in US culture of the early twentieth century Sanger has no choice but to draw from existing discourses, like that of women's assumed maternal function, to construct an argument. The resulting tension of simultaneously freeing women and placing obligations upon them presents another example of the struggle that US women face in attempting to escape the normative social discourse of feminine domesticity that seeks to render women's bodies to the service of the family.

The break and return to ideals of femininity represented by notions of True Womanhood that Sanger presents in her call for women's use of contraceptives includes her articulations of the liberatory effects of using birth control and justification of birth control as a maternal responsibility, the duty of women to care for their husbands and children before themselves. In

her argument for birth control as emancipation Sanger explains three barriers to women's complete freedom. One, she names women's social disadvantages that range from social expectations to women's ignorance of their own bodies. Two, Sanger also addresses the challenges women face to finding sexual pleasure while she defends women's sexuality. Three, Sanger identifies the biological burden women face as child bearers. Sanger discusses birth control as liberating women by solving these challenges to their personal freedom. Despite an attack on the hurdles to women's social and personal freedom, Sanger dwells on women's maternal nature and obligation. To that end she celebrates women's maternal capacity as she discusses notions of women's maternal instinct to protect their home and children. In so doing, Sanger emphasizes women's responsibility to their children, husbands, and nation to control the number of children they have.

“A New Deal for Women”¹⁸

The discussion Sanger provides of the liberating potential of birth control focuses upon what birth control can do to personally benefit women by challenging precepts of feminine domesticity. To explain the emancipatory potential of birth control Sanger speaks to social barriers women face. Specifically, she focuses on social expectations placed on women and the empty hope represented by suffrage. Sanger also addresses barriers to women's liberation related to the body, the problem of women's lack of understanding of their own bodies, obstructions to women's sexual fulfillment, and the burden women face as child bearers. In discussing the liberatory effects of birth control, Sanger addresses how practicing contraception can aid women in all these areas.

¹⁸ The heading comes from the title of Sanger's 1933 manuscript.

In *Woman and the New Race* Sanger declares, “The basic freedom of the world is woman’s freedom” (94). Such a proclamation signals the feminist assault Sanger offers toward patriarchal notions of femininity. On the general state of women in society Sanger comments on the ways that society places women under men’s control. To make that point Sanger explains the ways in which men have legal authority over women and how men further dominate women by forcing them into feminine gender norms. Sanger finds suffrage incapable of fully liberating women from these oppressions because participating in the political process fails to change the fact that a woman cannot control when she will become a mother. Toward the end of self-ownership Sanger attempts to help women learn about and become comfortable with their reproductive organs to increase women’s control over childbearing, which has the added effect of improving women’s comfort with their bodies as sexual to improve their sexual pleasure.

Two writings from 1933 capture Sanger’s frustration with gender politics of the day. Both writings express Sanger’s belief that men hold legal and practical control over women’s lives. In the first of these Sanger writes, “Women have been compelled to be all things in nearly every country of the globe—beasts of burden, pack animals, slaves, servants, instruments of pleasure. . . . Everything has been in terms of the needs of men” (“Woman of the Future” 108). As part of her global critique of women’s domination by men, Sanger points to the limited definitions of women as daughter, mother, or wife. Building from the perpetual definition of women in terms of men, Sanger points out that men more than define women, men control women. She writes that whether father, boyfriend, husband, or even brother-in-laws or sons (after husband’s death) “at every stage of a woman’s life, from infancy to old age, her activity was always dominated by some male” (“Woman and the Future” 3). More than the legal subjugation of women to men, Sanger confronts the disciplining of women to social

expectations. According to Sanger, men have a “wooden image” of women, and men’s wooden model of femininity takes precedence over the woman standing before them. The unrealistic and ideal women that men desire have encouraged women to keep themselves modest, remain uneducated, and feign weakness all to help men feel superior (“Woman and the Future” 2).¹⁹ This leads Sanger to encourage women to become economically independent: “When women gain their economic freedom they will cease being playthings and utilities for men” (“What: Sexual Impulse, II” 15).²⁰

The importance of earning an income independent of a man emphasizes Sanger’s belief that women’s liberation must involve women’s ability to fully control their own destiny. For Sanger, the vote misses the vital point of self ownership because after a woman casts a ballot, she must return to a home where a man controls her daily activity. In 1936, speaking of her experiences in India, Sanger applauds Indian women’s quick recognition—quicker than that of most Western women—to see that “fighting for and obtaining the vote was insignificant as compared with fighting for the knowledge of and freedom of their bodies” (“Mother India” 2). Before the passage of the nineteenth amendment, Sanger writes in a 1918 article for the *Birth Control Review* that birth control is “a more immediate and effective emancipation of woman than suffrage” (“Trapped!” 3). After women gained suffrage, Sanger writes of suffrage in the 1921 volume of the *Review*, “Whether she won her point or failed to win it, she remained a dominated weakling in a society controlled by men” (*Race* 2).²¹ For Sanger the vote serves as a palliative that fails to grant women the basic freedom had by controlling their bodies: “No

¹⁹ Sanger discusses fashions as one way men’s expectations literally bind women (“Woman and the Future” 8).

²⁰ Sanger later bemoans the fact that women working has translated into cheap labor (“Woman and the Future” 7).

²¹ This same argument can also be found in “Woman’s Error and Her Debt” (7). I cite *Race* because it is earlier.

woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother” (*Race* 94). At the center of Sanger’s definition of liberation stands the ability to control one’s destiny. Economic independence from men and reproductive control both represent the ability of women to control their futures.

That women must control their bodies prompts Sanger to also address women’s ignorance of their bodies. Because the control of reproduction, deciding when to take up the responsibility of motherhood, empowers women with the control of their destinies, women without information to control their maternity have little power to decide their futures. Sanger attempts to develop women’s comfort with and control of their bodies. The birth control manuals she wrote and published from 1914 to 1931 address the issue of women’s common lack of bodily knowledge through description of both the problem of a lack of familiarity with women’s reproductive organs and discussion of women’s bodies in an effort to deal with this shortcoming. On her 1916 speaking tour Sanger opines that “we are as densly (sic) ignorant [of the biology of sex] as were our primitive ancestors” (“Weapons” 4). Accordingly, *Limitation* includes two cutaway-view diagrams demonstrating the placement of pessaries that also serve to chart the placement of women’s vagina, uterus, and bladder (*Limitation* 1st 13). Here Sanger seeks to form women as informed and empowered bodies by giving them some knowledge of their reproductive organs.

Sanger’s interest in empowering women with the knowledge of their bodies by providing information comes through in her discussion of the physical construction of women’s organs and her encouragement that women learn to physically handle their organs. Learning the internal construction of their organs empowers women with the ability to fully know, and thus, control

their bodies. That knowledge's utility depends upon the women's comfort with touching and caring for their reproductive and sexual parts. In her birth control pamphlets Sanger provides both labeled illustrations of women's reproductive anatomy as well as the encouragement for women to become physically comfortable with their bodies' construction. Every edition of *Limitation* includes labeled, cutaway diagrams of women's organs in relation to their bladder, colon, and so forth. Beginning with the first edition of *Limitation*, Sanger's effort to familiarize women with their bodies manifests itself in her contraceptive advice. Two illustrations demonstrate the placement of pessaries. One of these diagrams demonstrates a hand reaching into the vagina to touch the cervix. The neighboring text reads, "the trouble is women are afraid of their own bodies, and are of course ignorant of their physical construction" (*Limitation* 1st 12). The diagrams would seem to confront that problem. In a similar vein, Sanger's discussion on post-coital contraceptive douches includes the encouragement, "do not be afraid to assist the cleansing by introducing the first finger" (*Limitation* 1st 7). These instructions spur women to gain for themselves the knowledge and comfort of their bodies otherwise reserved for the male-dominated gynecological profession.

Along with discussion of how men dominate women and the means by which women can reclaim their bodies, Sanger also speaks to concerns of women's sexuality. Sanger addresses women's sexuality by talking about the problems women face in seeking sexual pleasure and by defending women's right to sexual enjoyment. Claiming the right and means to sexual fulfillment empowers women by providing them with the ability to enjoy their sexuality, which social discourses otherwise place in the realm of men's interests. In her rhetoric on women's sexuality Sanger addresses several points. One, she incorporates issues of men's overt and subtle sexual abuses of women by discussing the problem of marital rape and men's lack of

consideration for women; sexual pleasure. Two, she defends women's sexuality by naming sex as a life force and stressing women's health needs for sexual fulfillment. Third, Sanger emphasizes the importance of women's sexuality by evaluating specific contraceptives by the benefit offered to women's sexual pleasure.

Sanger addresses the extent to which men control women's lives through legal and social means. When speaking of sexuality she directs attention to how gender relations restrict women, focusing on marital abuse and men's inattentiveness. The discussion of marital abuse concentrates on the contemporarily termed marital rape. The arguments Sanger offers here regarding sex abuse in marriage bears note because she goes beyond public concerns of women's equality, such as suffrage, to raise the private issues of sex and power in marriage. In the *Woman Rebel* Sanger declares that, "Marriage laws abrogate the freedom of woman by enforcing upon her a continuous sexual slavery and a compulsory motherhood" ("Marriage" 16). Going further Sanger describes marriage as an institution of "forced prostitution" ("Conventions" 11). Letters from *Motherhood in Bondage* help make the point about men's sexual abuse of their wives: "He forces me to have intercourse whenever he wishes and will not use contraceptive measures" (281).²²

In an exchange of letters published in the *Review*, Sanger emphasizes the link between public politics and personal freedom. One reader declares the woman a fool who submits to her husband's sexual desires when pregnant, which makes her no better than a sow. Sanger fumes in response over the laws allowing for marital rape: "He [the husband] does not have to support his wife if she refuses him, so it is the human boars themselves who make these laws for their own indulgence" ("Letter" 17-18). The response Sanger offers refuses to blame the wife for her

²² Another key example of this from *Bondage* reads, "My husband is a big strong man but he will not be careful" (275).

marital rape. Instead, Sanger, in a separate publication, blames the state for presenting women with an impossible choice: “She has her choice between an enforced continence, with its health wrecking consequences and its constant aggravation of domestic discord, and the sort of prostitution legalized by the marriage ceremony” (*Race* 112). Her point demonstrates that public policy produces private relations because governmental regulations and statutes that disempower women in their legal standing vis-à-vis men encourage the replication of that relation in the home. By handing over women’s property rights to their husbands the laws also empower the man with the right to control their bodies.

Though Sanger does blame the state for creating tension in marital relations, she also discusses the ways in which men further inhibit women’s sexual pleasure. Speaking of women’s sex partners strictly in terms of husbands, Sanger characterizes the majority of men as indifferent to the women’s need for sexual release. In the first 11 editions of *Limitation* Sanger bluntly deals with the problem of men meeting their own sexual pleasure without consideration of the woman: “It is usual for the male to reach at the stage earlier than the female, with the consequence that he is further incapacitated to satisfy her desire for some time after” (*Limitation* 1st 11).²³ Denying women orgasms constitutes a problem because it creates women’s revulsion for sex and also endangers woman’s health. It creates women’s resentment toward sex for it fails to provide her with pleasure: “Nine times out of ten it is the fault of the man, who through ignorance and selfishness and inconsiderateness, has satisfied his own desire and promptly gone to sleep. The woman in self defense has learned to protect herself from the long hours of sleepless nights and nervous tension by refusing to become interested” (*Limitation* 1st 11). Here Sanger supports the

²³ This critique of men’s sexual behavior leaves a pronatal model of sex implicit and unchallenged. Though Sanger avoids discussing women’s clitoral pleasure for implying vaginal orgasm, she deserves credit for raising the issue at all. A more thorough discussion of the pronatal model of sexuality comes from Rachel Maines.

idea of men's responsibility for women's orgasms while also confronting the inattentiveness of husbands to their wives' feelings. Sanger also argues that women brought to heightened arousal without orgasm may have consequences upon their health: "During this time the woman is in a highly nervous condition, and it is the opinion of the best medical authorities that a condition of this unsatisfied state brings on or causes disease of her generative organs, besides giving her a perfect horror and repulsion for the sexual act" (*Limitation* 1st 11).²⁴ Precisely because of the health risks presented to women Sanger harshly condemns "withdrawal," *coitus interruptus* (*Limitation* 1st 6).²⁵ Freudian explanations of female sexuality support Sanger's view on the relation of women's sexual fulfillment and physical health, having once endorsed massage therapies of the clitoris to bring about women's orgasms and stave off hysteria (Maines 113-14).

The discussion of sexuality that Sanger offers goes beyond describing the inequalities of women's sex lives into arguing for women's right to sexual pleasure. Sanger appeals for women's sexual satisfaction on the basis that such pleasure comes from a natural human desire, maintains women's health, and can be increased through the use of birth control. As she argues, the sexual impulse in humans is natural but must remain pure, free from lasciviousness, as a characteristic of higher development. The defense of women's sexuality Sanger provides includes a defense of women's sexual fulfillment as necessary to live a full life. Birth control, as Sanger contends, can increase women's sexual pleasure by removing their fears of pregnancy.

Toward the first of these arguments, the matter of sexuality in general, Sanger defines the true character of the sexual impulse. Anthony Comstock, as a representative of anti-vice leagues,

²⁴ Answering the question "Are Birth Control Methods Injurious?" in the *Review* Sanger finds that only withdrawal presents health risks to women rather than men, characterizing it as "dangerous" to a woman's health risking physical and neurotic effects (3).

²⁵ This condemnation continues in the first 11 editions of *Limitation*. As will be discussed at the beginning of chapter six, Sanger's condemnation of withdrawal lightens in the 12th and subsequent editions.

gave voice to social concerns about sexuality and decency that implied women's sexual nature pertained only to the need for procreation rather than women's right to pleasure. Against those ideas, Sanger depicts humans' sexual desire as natural and the control of such desires a distinguishing characteristic of humans from the rest of the animal kingdom. This, however, does not validate sexual indulgence. To the contrary, Sanger warns young men and women in "What Every Girl Should Know" against masturbating physically or mentally, "thinking of obscene or voluptuous pictures" ("Sexual Impulse I" 15).²⁶ Thus, though natural, sex must remain pure, free of lustful characteristics. The concern for sexual purity in this regard bears a striking resemblance to the anti-vice leagues of Comstock's ilk that sought to rid society of that which leads to obscene thoughts and acts. The ironic similarity of Comstock and Sanger's mutual concern of sexual purity demonstrates the ways in which competing discourses can merge into a cooperative point.

The argument Sanger provides for maintaining the purity of human sexuality includes concerns about mastering this desire. The understanding of sexuality that Sanger provides stipulates that by controlling sexual desire humans demonstrate their higher development above the remainder of the animal kingdom. From observing the animal kingdom Sanger opines that "The lower down in the scale of human development we go the less sexual control we find. . . . The rapist has just enough brain development to raise him above the animal but be like the animal" ("What: Sexual Impulse II" 15).²⁷ The example constructs the rapist as a degenerate on the grounds that he lacks proper control of his sexual desire. In contrast, those who can control

²⁶ In this same article Sanger remarks, "I have never found any one so repulsive as the chronic masturbator" (15).

²⁷ By regarding the rapist as not fully human Sanger renders another assault on husband's who sexually abuse their wives, yet that construction has the unhappy consequence of defending the rapist as responding to natural sexual urges rather than actually seeking to dominate women.

their sexual desire have the potential for artistic and intellectual greatness: “I believe the sexual act involves a creative energy which can be directed into channels for creative work and self-expression” (*English* 13).

Beyond a justification of human sexuality Sanger specifically defends women’s sexuality. According to her, women’s sexual fulfillment leads to improved health. Because of the recognition that knowledge produces particular kinds of bodies she confronts the silence of women’s sexuality and the benefit of sexual pleasure to women. To name the problem Sanger addresses the lack of discussion of women’s sexuality: “The sex life of women has been clouded in darkness, restrictive, repressive and morbid” (*Race* 177). Sanger bolsters her position by associating an interest in women’s sexual fulfillment with men of developed minds. Specifically, she references the work of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, applauding them both for recognizing human sexuality as natural and normal in humans, generally, and women, specifically (“Vision” 225; “Sexuality” 3). In 1915, amidst other critiques of husbands as rapists, Sanger finds that some men do recognize the importance of a heterosexual partner’s pleasure: “Fortunately this idea is giving way, and men of ideals and fine temperaments dislike the idea of the relation when it is not mutual” (*English* 6). Freud, Ellis, and the men who understand sexologists’ ideas on women’s sexuality represent men who have socially developed, being “men of ideals.”

In addition to the natural desire of women for sexual pleasure, Sanger explains women’s physical need for orgasms. Using medical research Sanger deals with both the restrictions on contraceptive information and concern for women’s personal well being. In *Race*, as elsewhere, Sanger reviews medical research to defend her belief that women suffer health problems when they maintain abstinence too long (104). Because sexual pleasure improves women’s health

Sanger can assail the upper classes for keeping contraceptive information from the working class, thus making it difficult to have pleasure in sex without worrying over pregnancy. The first five editions of *Limitation* carry a description of the woman who has orgasms: “Her whole being is built up and beautified through it, her form develops, her eyes become brighter, her health improves, color comes into her cheeks” (*Limitation* 1st 7). Admittedly Sanger’s articulation of women’s orgasms come strictly from the marital bed. Even still, and despite questionable medical research, Sanger recognizes the effects of sexual satisfaction on a woman’s spirit.

Precisely because Sanger sees women’s general wellness improved by sexual pleasure, she evaluates contraceptives by the extent to which they provide women with the possibility for pleasure. As already discussed, she disparages withdrawal as a contraceptive measure for sexually frustrating women (*Limitation* 1st 6). Concentrating on the fear of pregnancy and on men’s habit of failing to sexually please women, Sanger names the condom and the pessary as beneficial in ways surpassing their contraceptive effectiveness. Sanger identifies fear of pregnancy as a prime reason women cannot enjoy sex. In *Limitation* 10th and *Magnetation Methods of Birth Control* discusses worrying about pregnancy as a block to women’s sexual enjoyment (22; 11). The class significance of this issue comes through in letters published in *Motherhood in Bondage*: “I am one of the many thousands who dread sexual intercourse simply because my husband is not able to provide a home for the child we have now” (170-71). The pessary’s values, apart from its general contraceptive effectiveness lies in its ability to go unnoticed by the husband: “If it is properly adjusted . . . the man will be unconscious that anything is used” (*Limitation* 1st 12). Sanger finds that condoms remove fear and also help men improve as sex partners: “It [the condom] has another value quite apart from prevention in decreasing the tendency in the male to arrive at the climax in the sexual act before the female”

(*Limitation* 1st 10). Admittedly, in this example Sanger again subscribes to a pronatal model of sexuality that also relies upon the man to provide the woman with her orgasm. Even still, her focus remains on contraceptive measures that can improve a woman's sexual pleasure.

Collectively, Sanger's discussion of women's sexuality concentrates on women's right and need for sexual pleasure. By discussing men's sexual abuse of women within marriage and men's frequent inattentiveness to women's sexual needs, Sanger makes public the concerns often dismissed as private and therefore inappropriate when deciding public policy. The defense of human sexuality Sanger provides has the virtue of focusing on women's needs even if based on medical findings of the day (e.g., the link between women's orgasmic deprivation and hysteria) that now carry little respect. For this reason Sanger's evaluation of contraceptives focuses on the extent to which a particular method increases women's pleasure in sex.

The discussion Sanger provides of women's subjection to social expectations and women's sexuality meet in her consideration of women's maternal function. Sanger argues that women's capacity to bear children has enslaved them and only birth control can free them from the limitations of an exclusively maternal identity. The argument includes a consideration of women's natural given burden and the social expectation for her to serve that task above all others. With that understanding Sanger calls for women to free themselves and claim an identity other than mother through practicing birth control. The approach to liberation that Sanger recommends strikes at the heart of late-Victorian assumptions about women's role and function in society. To free women from imposed domesticity Sanger must confront the cultural compulsion to define women strictly as mothers.

Sanger describes the burden of mother as biologically assigned and socially exacerbated. The distinction of sex and gender has served as the touchstone of gender studies by separating

individuals' biology, their sex, from the manner in which they perform masculinity and/or femininity, their gender. Likewise, Sanger discusses motherhood in such a way that she recognizes the biological ability of childbearing upon women but separates nature from the social meanings applied to motherhood, that motherhood is every woman's destiny. Sanger combats the social presumption of maternity as women's life purpose when she names nature's inequality of reproductive duties and challenges the idea that women must reproduce to find their greatest fulfillment. To increase women's life choices, Sanger discusses birth control as a mode of liberation from socially restricting ideas of womanhood as motherhood. From the first page of the inaugural issue of the *Woman Rebel* Sanger addresses the matter of "slavery through motherhood" ("Aim" 1). The "slavery of motherhood" comes from women's biological designation as the child bearers of the species: "Nature has not been altogether kind to woman in that she has not distributed equally the biological task of child-bearing" ("A New Deal for Women [I]" 1).²⁸ Though nature gives women the role of child bearers in the species, Sanger explains that society makes the ability to bear children a compulsory obligation for women that limits her personal freedom: "A woman is to look upon herself merely as a vehicle for the breeding of children. Her mind is of no consequence, her body is the main thing" ("Menace's" 23).²⁹ With the compulsory social definition of women as mothers in mind Sanger challenges the supposed purpose of a woman's life: "Motherhood should not be the highest aim of a girl"

²⁸ Sanger sees the women's risks to health and life as constituting the biological inequality placed upon women as each woman having a child "goes down into the valley of the shadow of death" ("Valley" 12). It is worth noting that Theodore Roosevelt used the same expression to pay tribute to women who serve, what he sees, as their primary responsibility (271). The similarity goes to show the availability of a single sentiment for competing discourses.

²⁹ Another prime example comes from *Race*: "She had chained herself to her place in society and the family through the maternal functions of her nature, and only chains thus strong could have bound her to her lot as a brood animal for the masculine civilizations of the world" (2).

("Class, No. 2" 36).³⁰ The statement makes an important break with the already discussed understanding of women's bodies as serving masculine interests, because it opens the possibility of women defining themselves in terms other than their relation to their family. Breaking the imperative link between womanhood and motherhood challenges dominant assumptions about womanhood and strikes at the core of US gender relations.

To achieve social liberation, women need birth control. Though Sanger argues for women to use birth control as a means of challenging the forgone assumptions of women as inevitable mothers, she refrains from ever telling women they should avoid motherhood altogether. Sanger wants women to have a choice other than maternity opened to them for finding self expression. By providing women with the possibility to form an identity outside motherhood Sanger describes birth control as "biological emancipation," "the foundation for a new glorified womanhood," and "for woman the key to the temple of freedom" ("Woman and the Future" 14; *Voluntary* 1; *Race* 5). Sanger calls for women to break the existing laws prohibiting the exchange of contraceptive information and devices in the Judeo-Christian tradition of Moses, Jesus Christ, Joan of Arc, and George Washington to claim this freedom for themselves ("Shall We" 4; *Race* 98). Just as the glorified lawbreakers before them, women should claim their rightful freedom: "Until that [maternal] function is under her complete control, woman can never hope to rise to the heights of her own spiritual destiny" ("Woman of the Future" 108).³¹ Though contraception implies the presence of both a man and a woman Sanger writes in, "A Parent's Problem or Woman's?," of "the hard, inescapable fact . . . that man has not only refused any such

³⁰ Some 19 years later Sanger maintains this same position: "Child-bearing and rearing are *not* the end and aim of woman's existence" (emphasis original) ("Woman of the Future" 109). Also see "Motherhood—or Destruction" (22).

³¹ Likewise, Sanger writes in the *Review*, "Birth Control will enable a woman to act as a free, self-directed, autonomous personality. It will liberate motherhood" ("Next" 278).

responsibility but has individually and collectively sought to prevent woman from obtaining knowledge by which she could assume the responsibility for herself” (6).³² By assuming for herself the responsibility of birth control women have the power to “prevent the submergence of womanhood into motherhood” (*Race* 226). Sanger does not want women to necessarily avoid becoming mothers, but to maintain their womanhood independent of motherhood. To this point she specifically discusses issues of marital sex life: “Women who have a knowledge of contraception are not compelled to make the choice between a maternal experience and a marred love life” (*Race* 55). Here again Sanger places women’s sexual happiness as natural to a woman’s fulfilled life experience.

Sanger’s discussion of women’s maternal function draws together her total arguments about the liberating effects of birth control. With regard to women’s maternal function, Sanger finds that nature has made women the child bearers and society expects women to serve men in that regard. Women, then, can use birth control to claim the control of their bodies, their identity as women, and their sexual pleasure. Sanger’s total argument about the liberatory potential of birth control follows this same line of thinking. Because social constructions of women imagine the ideals of the Victorian era, such as True Womanhood, Sanger must challenge the expectations on women’s femininity, the limits of suffrage’s effectiveness, women’s limited knowledge of their bodies, the barriers to women’s sexuality, and the expectation of women as maternally destined. Sanger sees birth control as the answer to these injustices. Most importantly, birth control, in Sanger’s arguments here, enhance the interests of women.

³² See *Race* for a similar statement of birth control as women’s responsibility (100).

“Woman’s Error and Her Debt”³³

Sanger’s strident call for women to defy the social compulsion to seek out motherhood as the only means of self-definition becomes co-opted by that very discourse as she articulates birth control’s value in improving women’s maternal function. In the above Sanger envisions birth control as benefiting women by liberating them from social structures that dominate women; in the examples below she focuses on women’s use of birth control as a duty of motherhood. I find in the following discussion of Sanger’s rhetoric that she focuses on women’s maternal obligation to serve their children, husbands, and society. These arguments, sometimes placed next to the examples discussed above for challenging maternal expectations, demonstrate the tension of competing discourses as Sanger attempts to create a liberated place for women in society even as she prescribes for women the familiar role of maternal figure. Sanger’s expression of women’s maternal obligation conflicts with her earlier arguments by celebrating the role of maternity and describing motherhood as a woman’s natural desire. To create a sense of obligation Sanger discusses women’s complicity in the problems of class struggles and over population. Accordingly, Sanger describes the duty women have to properly care for their children, their husbands, and their nation. Each of these points goes to support notions of feminine domesticity and undercut the social challenges Sanger offers in the excerpts above.

The first of these, Sanger’s celebration of motherhood, contrasts her statements about women’s maternal function. Though Sanger argues that women should avoid seeing motherhood as the one path to self-fulfillment she also fetishizes motherhood and constructs it as normal women’s natural desire. The fetish of motherhood in Sanger’s rhetoric manifests itself through her celebration of motherhood as a the greatest achievement of a woman’s life. In the Marxian

³³ The title comes from one of Sanger’s 1921 articles in the *Birth Control Review*.

sense, fetishes develop as society places social value upon an object, forgets that they themselves gave the thing its value, and, consequently, admire the thing as naturally valuable having forgotten that they created its value in the beginning (Williams 368). The fetish of motherhood Sanger engages in occurs as she seemingly forgets the socially defined value of motherhood she challenges elsewhere. Sanger comes to admire motherhood for the traits inscribed upon it by discourses on women's femininity as synonymous with serving others (e.g., True Womanhood). The fetish manifests itself as Sanger references motherhood as the natural and normal desire of women. All this bristles against Sanger's already discussed position that women should free themselves from the "slavery of motherhood."

The celebration of maternity in Sanger's rhetoric contrasts with her statements about motherhood as a means of socially trapping women. Sanger's praise of motherhood describes it as being women's greatest occupation and emanating from their "feminine spirit," which birth control can enhance. Where in *Rebel* Sanger calls motherhood a form of slavery she later describes motherhood as the "most important profession in the world" (*Pivot* 189). Such a proclamation celebrates the domestic functions of life that have long been undervalued, largely due to the fact that women perform the tasks. The complication to Sanger's description comes when she names motherhood "woman's noblest career" ("Family Welfare" 1). Even though Sanger elsewhere calls for women's freedom from the home and economic dependence from men she also places commitment to the family as the highest occupation. This profession suits women as it benefits from their "feminine spirit" defined in terms other than maternity but most often finds expression in that occupation (*Race* 10). That women have a "feminine spirit" to apply to their lives' activity makes motherhood a natural expression. More than feminine spirit, Sanger addresses the presence of women's maternal instinct. In opposition to speaking of birth

control as controlling maternity Sanger also describes it as enhancing women's maternal function: "Voluntary motherhood is motherhood in its highest and holiest form" (*Race* 226). Here Sanger justifies birth control for enhancing and elevating women's maternity rather than challenging a definition of womanhood independent of maternal action.

Beyond celebrating motherhood, Sanger also depicts it as a natural urge of women's being. Despite statements that encourage women to find modes of personal fulfillment other than marriage, Sanger describes the desire to have children as normal and natural. According to Sanger, "every normal woman, every normal man wants children" ("Family Planning [III]" 1).³⁴ In other places Sanger focuses on women in particular: "Every normal woman wants children. When she does not want them she should wait until she does" ("Family Planning [I]" 1). In this instance any woman who does not want children need only wait until her maternal urge develops, as it seems it will. The assumption of an inevitable maternal desire reveals Sanger's teleological vision of women as developing to the state of motherhood, which implies a woman who has no such desire has yet to fully mature as a woman. Sanger's proclamation in *Race* that womanhood must keep from submerging into motherhood seems contradicted by another statement in the same book: "These women [those with small families of 0-3 children], with the exception of the childless ones, live full rounded lives" (53). Despite her other claims that women ought to seek out diverse avenues of self-development, Sanger writes, "The potential mother can then be shown that maternity need not be slavery but may be the most effective avenue to self-development and self-realization" (*Pivot* 187). Collectively the arguments for motherhood as the noblest occupation for women and women's personal fulfillment mutually

³⁴ Also see "Family Welfare Through Birth Control" (1).

support one another; the greatest thing a woman can do and the greatest sense of accomplishment she can feel both come from being a mother.

With an understanding of women's natural inclination for motherhood, Sanger names the errors women have committed in performing their duties. Women bear the responsibility for creating the problems of working class domination and a pending crisis of over population leading to world famine. Because women have had too many children, social problems have arisen. Women, then, have an obligation to control their reproductive behaviors to help their children, husbands, and nation. Even as Sanger fights for women's access to birth control she blames women's reproductive nature: "Woman has, through her reproductive ability, founded and perpetuated the tyrannies of the Earth" (*Race* 3).³⁵ The tyrannies women have created primarily include the abuses by the factory system, such as child labor. In this line of reasoning, Sanger actually blames women for creating the problems for themselves: "Woman herself has wrought that bondage through her reproductive powers while enslaving herself has enslaved the world" (*Race* 93). As Sanger's argument follows, as published in the *Review* article "Woman's Error and Her Debt," that which women have done they must undo: "As she has unconsciously and ignorantly brought about social disaster, so must and will she consciously and intelligently *undo* that disaster and create a new and better order" (*Race* 6-7).³⁶ Beyond class abuse, Sanger also raises concerns about over population leading to food shortage: "The immorality of large families lies not only in their injury to the members of those families but in their injury to society" (*Race* 57). By linking women's guilt to problems in both their home and the world Sanger makes women responsible for solving both evils. Women's responsibility to repair

³⁵ This identical argument appears in "Woman's Error and Her Debt" (7).

³⁶ The argument appears in identical form in both the *Review* and *Race*, but I use *Race* as the citation because it is the earlier of the two.

problems in the home and the nation further ensconces women in their role as the caretaker, which Sanger describes as the “noblest career.” The choice to use birth control, then, grows from the supposedly innate desire of women to serve their family and country first and themselves second.

The crises women have created at home and abroad have the same remedy. When women learn to control their reproductive abilities they will serve their children better as caretakers, better address their husbands’ needs, and improve the state of the union. Women serve their children and nation simultaneously by limiting the suffering of all children caused by overpopulation that decreases wages and consumes national food resources. Wives serve their husband’s interests by increasing the buying power of his wages (because Sanger links income to men rather than women) and providing men with sexual intercourse in the home to keep them healthy and martially faithful. Sanger finds that women serve their children better when they practice birth control by fighting the class oppression of the factory system and thereby providing a better world for their children. As well as caring and feeding for their young, women must make the world a better place for their children “or our [mothers] life’s work will be all for nothing” (“To Mother’s”).³⁷ Seeing that children face economic hardships as well as the threat of a world food shortage, in 1920 Sanger calls for all women to engage in a five-year birth strike (“Birth Strike” 3).³⁸ By ceasing to have children for five years women give the world a chance to right itself in terms of industrial and financial problems such as a struggling working class and rising inflation (“Preparing” 7). Sanger finds that after only three months of calling for a

³⁷ Likewise, in *Rebel* Sanger also writes of mothers’ “revolt against introducing into the world another class of human beings to be starved, crippled and maimed for the masters” (“Into the Valley” 12).

³⁸ For other examples of Sanger’s explicit call for a five-year birth strike see “The Call to Women,” “Put Your House in Order,” and “Preparing for the World Crisis.”

cessation of births, “women are already beginning to act instinctively upon the principle involved in the suggestion made in these columns” (“Preparing” 8). The suggestion of women’s instinctive response implies that women’s maternal spirit, if well developed, will automatically direct women in their maternal duty to their children by ceasing to have children. As Sanger writes during this campaign, “No woman with the feelings of a true mother, will bring a child into being at a time like this [when there is disorganization and abuse in the labor system]” (“Women and the Rail” 3). With time Sanger drops the idea of a birth strike but as late as 1942 she encourages women to consider the national scene before having a baby, considering concerns about husbands at war and the possibility of food rationing (“Shall the War” 1). Sanger’s advice in these situations once more borders on informing women when they ought to and ought not have a baby. Though Sanger offers the advice to empower women she runs the risk of simply presuming control of their bodies.

Women’s responsibility to their family also includes a sensitivity to and respect for their husbands’ needs. Sanger argues that women must use birth control to better meet men’s sexual needs and limiting reproduction to husbands’ financial abilities. In the typical image of the mother who must clean up her family’s messes, Sanger finds that women must solve the problems that men have created: “Only thus can she free her mate from the bondage which he wrought for himself when he wrought hers” (“Parent’s” 7).³⁹ By using birth control women intervene into the social problems men have created when they forbade women access to contraception. Women must also use birth control to maintain their husbands’ fidelity and pleasant temperament. Sanger finds that a woman without birth control who must then maintain abstinence “drives her husband to prostitution” (*Race* 83). The troubling phrasing makes clear

³⁹ The same appears in *Race* (99).

that the woman's lack of sexual availability causes the husband's infidelity or weakened sexual restraint. Making women responsible for men's sexual behavior reifies notions of women as more sexually pure than men and, therefore, responsible for maintaining proper sexual behavior. Such an assignment ironically replicates Comstock's concern about purity in the home, but here using that ideology to endorse rather than condemn the application of contraceptives.

Letters from *Motherhood in Bondage* echo the sentiment that women believe they hold responsibility for their husband's fidelity and perhaps even morality. In line with Sanger's arguments, some letters she publishes set women's bodies as vehicles for men's well being. One woman recounts seeing her husband enter a house of ill repute when he said he would be out of town: "I have never let my husband know I saw him go there, but I feel heartbroken over it" (99). Another woman writes, "My husband says that if I do not want intercourse with him however, he will go where he can get it" (309). Other women express a concern for the husband's mental and emotional health due to abstinence, though the women express much less concern for themselves: "I know it's [abstinence] injuring his health awful for he doesn't even seem to have a pleasant word and he looks in bad health, doesn't eat and is not himself at all" (344). By using birth control women regain sexual intercourse in their marriage. The emphasis here, however, rests upon the husband's health rather than the wife's pleasure and adjusting her body to meet his needs.

The concern for the husband in this line of thinking once more makes women's bodies subject to men's interests. By talking about matching the number of children a woman has to her husband's income Sanger creates a capitalist logic in which men have a say over the regulation of women's reproductive behavior. In the 12th edition of *Limitation* Sanger combines notions of women's maternal instincts and the need to consider the husband's interests: "The working

mother knows through her natural instinct that she should not have more than her husband's wages can support" (4-5). Here women's instincts have a sensitivity to the husband's financial ability. Elsewhere the husbands' role takes a stronger lead. While meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, Sanger disagrees with his view that women have all the decision making in a marriage when it comes to having children. Sanger argued, "The woman should say 'when' and the man should say 'how many,' as he has to support them" ("Mother" 15). The stress that women should submit their reproductive decisions to the will of their husbands finds its strongest articulation when Sanger discusses men's role in contraceptive decisions in conjunction with women's concern for their personal health: "I believe that every married man should know about birth control so that he can plan for his family as he plans for his business or his job, so that he can equate his income and his expenses and give his children the best possible chance in life" ("Family Welfare" 4).⁴⁰ The example places women's healthy bodies at the control of their husbands' business-like decision about the family. The supremacy of women's interests expressed elsewhere by Sanger goes mute in these examples as women must show a deference for men's decisions.

Just as women must use birth control to put the interests of their children and husbands first, so too must she concern herself with national interests. Sanger argues that by practicing birth control women can improve the nation and the world by putting an end to factory system abuses and a possible world famine. Working from the established premise that women naturally seek to serve the family, Sanger sets the task of national improvement before women by depicting the nation as the macroscopic family. In her last contribution to the *Review* Sanger compares the family and society: "For society basically is the family unit, gigantically

⁴⁰ For similar examples see "Family Planning [II]" (1) and "Brownsville" (6).

multiplied” (“Christmas” 3). For this reason “women must put the national house in order” (“Put” 3). Extrapolating from the duties of “every good housewife” to plan “for the comfort of her household” Sanger finds that women must plan “for the security of the family and the security of the nation” (Family Planning [II]” 1). These examples make national and world salvation an extension of women’s typical domestic responsibilities. With the power of birth control, Sanger declares, “[Woman] will not stop at patching up the world; she will remake it” (*Race* 8).⁴¹ Her statement here and similar utterances create a conflict for feminist criticism. Declaring women’s ability to remake the world depicts women as powerful, capable of shaping the world. At the same time, Sanger sets this as an obligation before women in much the same way as preparing meals and mending clothes.

This line of reasoning creates another problem found in the whole of Sanger’s arguments on birth control as obligation. Even though laws prohibit women’s access to contraception Sanger blames women for having too many children and obliges them to serve their families and the nation better. As Sanger explains it, women have created or allowed problems to perpetuate in the US economic and class system. The responsibility women must take for neglecting problems created by men but growing around them creates as much obligation to fix those problems as the ones perpetuated by women having too many children. The ensuing duty of women to repair the damage done emanates from a problem instigated by men, like Comstock, who put in place laws preventing women from practicing birth control. In this way the article titled, “Woman’s Error and Her Debt,” might better read, “Man’s Error and Woman’s Burden.” Either way, this discussion of women’s responsibility bears little resemblance to Sanger’s alternate discussion of birth control as personally enhancing to women.

⁴¹ This also appears in “Woman’s Error and Her Debt” (8). Similar statements appear in “A Birth Strike to Avert World Famine” (3), “The Call to Women” (4), and “The Social and Individual Need of Birth Control” (11).

The play in Sanger's rhetoric between framing women's use of birth control as an act of self-liberation and women's use of birth control as a maternal obligation both relate directly to dominant social discourses of women's role in society (e.g., True Womanhood), which frame women as obligated to maintain the well being of their husbands and children. Even as Sanger argues for women's use of birth control as a break from definitions of women, which constrain women to the mothering roles of care taking (like those derived from the cult of True Womanhood), she invokes those same ideas of women's primary function as maternal. When Sanger argues for women's access to birth control on account of their personal freedom she challenges Victorian discourses of women as sexually uninterested and purely focused on their family by identifying the importance of women knowing and controlling their own bodies that they might find sexual pleasure and define themselves in some other way than as a mother. The focus on improving women's lives for their own benefit, especially speaking of sexual fulfillment, offers women an opportunity to break from their predetermination as mothers.

Despite Sanger's attempt to break from discourses that limit women's roles to serving in the home, that very line of reasoning moves through her rhetoric as a socially understood construction of women. The contrast of challenging and confirming discourses of women as maternally destined presents an irony rather than a sign of strategy. Enveloped in a culture that has difficulty seeing women as anything but mothers limits Sanger's ability to construct images of women completely free of the contemporary tradition. Sanger's discussion of women's sexual pleasure found support and constraint in Freudian discourses of sexuality by at once acknowledging women's sexual desire but also tying it to men's sexual satisfaction as part of a pronatal model of human sexuality. The anti-vice objections to birth control, such as those by Comstock, on grounds of sexual impurity constrained and supported Sanger's rhetoric by

challenging women's right to contraception, fearing immoral behavior, but ironically supporting an argument for birth control as maintaining men's morality and marital fidelity. Likewise, discourses that define women in terms of maternity, such as the cult of True Womanhood, constrain and support Sanger's rhetoric. Limiting women's social participation to the home and care taking functions constrains the degree of liberation birth control offers, by defining its purpose as meant to improve women's service to others—their children, husbands, and nation—rather than themselves. The availability of discourses that emphasize women's duty as mothers to support the struggle for birth control also demonstrates the way in which discourses that seem to constrain women's activity can also increase women's freedom by providing them with the control of their bodies.

CONCLUSION: WHY SHOULD WOMEN USE BIRTH CONTROL?

The discussion provided here of the pull between Sanger's arguments for birth control as women's right and as their responsibility demonstrates principles about the project of genealogical interpretation. The early themes of Sanger's rhetoric advocating birth control displays the rhetorical construction of women in US culture as it shows the need to consider the dynamics of power in rhetoric and the ways that competing discourses can move through a rhetor. The collective picture Sanger provides of women in the early-twentieth century shows women enduring social oppression affecting their income, knowledge of their bodies, health, sexuality, and personal identity as women. As she discusses the ways that women can escape these forms of domination Sanger returns to ways of speaking that reinforce the ideologies originally imposed upon women, specifically, their need to properly care for their bodies to be better caregivers. The composite picture reinforces the idea that women's bodies always belong to someone else. Any attempt for women to claim their body as their own must take place under

the cloak of conforming to already accepted notions of womanhood. From this image comes the lesson that resistance never operates completely outside the discourse it challenges. The tension in the scene Sanger creates also reveals the extent to which discourses of a competing nature can move through the same rhetoric.

The conflicting stances in Sanger's rhetoric provide an opportunity to consider the benefits of using genealogical interpretation. Sanger's discussion of both class issues and the relation of birth control to women's liberation/ obligation show the inability of counter discourses to fully escape that which they challenge because every rhetoric comes from available discourses surrounding the rhetor. When confronting class issues Sanger admonishes the upper classes and also succumbs to upper and middle class discourse as more evolved than working class ways of doing. As a result Sanger calls for the women of the working class to free themselves by being more like their upper class sisters. Issues of support and condescension mix in this interlude. Discourses of the early twentieth century, and even now, depict those of the lower classes as less developed than those of the upper classes. The language itself of "upper" and "lower" class creates a linguistic-spatial hierarchy that seems inevitable for replication in social debate demonstrating the human propensity to create hierarchies (Burke "Definition," 15). Contemplating Sanger's condescension in imploring working class women to form themselves according to the upper class model of body discipline requires consideration of the availability, or lack, of alternative discourses in US culture to discuss class issues. The idea that the upper classes, by virtue of their position, demonstrate a success at navigating social and economic structures that members of the working class must replicate to "promote" themselves has an unrivaled cache with a seeming absence of substitutes. The result explains Sanger's subscription to a rhetoric based on notions of class superiority even as she challenges that social structure.

The struggle of dominating and competing discourses seen in Sanger's discussion of class also comes through in her discussion of women's liberation and maternity. Sanger argues that by using birth control women gain the control and definition of their bodies, and she also maintains that the application of birth control can improve women's maternal function. The conflicting calls for women to serve themselves and to serve others' names and reinforces the feminine obligation of maternity represented by late- and post-Victorian discourses, such as True Womanhood. Sanger's rhetoric cannot seem to avoid the ubiquity of ideas in US culture about women as predestined for maternity. Despite her efforts to contradict the idea of women as always maternal Sanger allows an emphasis on women's maternity to run through her rhetoric. This struggle echoes that of nineteenth-century suffragists who often spoke of women's political activity as an extension of their maternal duties. Understandably Sanger's vision of women cannot fully escape the centripetal force of notions about women's primary function as serving their families. Though Sanger's challenge to the barriers women face conflicts with her rearticulation of those barriers, chiefly women's maternal obligations, the clash provides the hope for shifting those barriers out further even if allowing them to remain.

The tensions in Sanger's rhetoric tempt the critic to speak of her adaptation to create the greatest political effect for the moment or to see one set of arguments as the less developed form of later ideas. Approaching Sanger's rhetoric from the perspective of genealogical interpretation frees the critic from having to decipher Sanger's true intentions while applying an analytical lens that considers the social discourses that produce the rhetoric at hand. Rhetors cannot disconnect themselves from the social discourses that surround them. Sanger's treatment of class and women's maternity demonstrates that point as she replicates the very discourses she seeks to challenge. The tensions within Sanger's rhetoric of class and maternity also demonstrate the

extent to which resistances never fully escapes the precepts opposed. The occasional interest in the difference and disparity of earlier themes and later themes resists seeing chronological arrangement as evolutionary order. The focus on Sanger's earlier articulations of class as more resistant to dominant discourses than those coming just a few years later shows the power of the normative discourse of middle class politics to pervade through acts to resist it rather than the rhetor's rhetorical growth. In the next analysis the focus turns to themes in the birth control movement that occur more often in the latter half of Sanger's career. As compared to the analysis here, the following chapter represents ideas that often occur after in chronology rather than later in maturation.

CHAPTER 6

BIRTH CONTROL AS AN OVARIAN ECONOMY: LATE THEMES IN MARGARET SANGER'S RHETORIC

Early in her career, Margaret Sanger harangued the structures of capitalism for the greed that begets abuses of the working class in general and working class women in particular. On September 18, 1922 Sanger married the wealthy, American entrepreneur Noah Slee in a private ceremony in London, which did not make news in US papers for 18 months (Chesler 247-48). The marital union of Sanger and Slee, a pairing of strange bedfellows, created a professional union of a growing social movement and a generous benefactor. Slee made his fortune by producing 3-in-One Oil, making significant financial gains by mechanizing his factories and cutting labor (243). Sanger, however, assailed the factory system early in her career for doing things like cutting labor to increase profits. A number of editions of the *Birth Control Review* carry a full page ad for 3-in-One Oil. Now the money Sanger described as “wrung from the sweat and blood of the toiling long-suffering masses” went toward funding birth control clinics, advocacy publications, and contraceptive manufacturing (“No Gods” 40).

Slee's support of the birth control movement includes a particularly ironic example of capitalism's role in support of the US the fight for contraception. Because the law forbade the shipping of Dutch and German rubber-spring diaphragms, Slee had them smuggled into New York from Canada in 3-in-One Oil containers (Chesler 254-55). The anecdote seems emblematic of the change in Sanger's rhetoric in which she gains increasing legal support for women's access to birth control as she reiterates a capitalistic discourse applied to reproduction. By smuggling contraceptives into the country, Sanger and Slee worked within a capitalistic structure of market operations to increase women's access to birth control. Likewise, when Sanger accepts a discourse about the importance of properly controlling and managing women's reproduction,

the power of capitalistic discourse, as a disciplining action, rewards Sanger's conformity by enhancing the effectiveness of her efforts. Sanger reiterates a capitalist agenda in her framing of reproduction, which balances reproduction with resources and refines society's civilized nature by managing who reproduces. The application of a capitalist model allows Sanger to direct that discourse toward her desired end. In this process, however, Sanger's production of women's bodies replicates a capitalistic tradition of controlling women's bodies.

The previous analysis showed that Sanger argued for working class women's need to discipline their bodies to be more like women of the upper classes and women's obligation to use birth control as a means of improving their maternal service. When raising these issues Sanger speaks to women, assuming their right and ability to control their own bodies. The themes reviewed in this analysis reveal Sanger speaking about the need to better control the rate and quality of women's reproduction. By speaking about women, Sanger implies women lack the responsibility to control their own bodies thereby requiring outside intervention. The distinction of speaking *to* and speaking *of* or about women marks a change in understanding women as subjects with the ability and right to control their bodies to thinking of women as objects lacking agency and needing control by others. This difference creates a movement from helping women control their bodies toward controlling women's bodies for them.

Sanger's shift from describing women as subjects to describing them as objects signals a change toward a capitalistic orientation in which women become part of an industrial machinery. In this analysis I discuss how Sanger's rhetoric changes in orientation toward capitalism, moves to emphasize the goal of civilization, develops an interest in eugenics, and worries about a population crisis. Where Sanger earlier despises capitalism, she later comes to embrace its orientation as she frames reproduction in terms of business management. The change in Sanger's

stance on capitalism precipitates a concern in her rhetoric for the nation as progressing toward the industrial goal of civilization, defined as the control of nature. The concern for controlling human reproduction and use of principles of capitalism brings Sanger to the discussion of world population as depleting natural resources and precipitating war. Arguments about the control of nature enable Sanger to engage in a discussion of eugenics, focusing on the development of better humans. In each of these ways, Sanger speaks *of* controlling women's reproduction to better society rather than, as discussed earlier, speaks *to* women about helping themselves by using birth control.

These themes rest on concerns of regulating the reproductive economy of women's bodies, an ovarian economy, to achieve national goals. The total approach to discussing women's bodies seen in this chapter demonstrates the concern of managing an ovarian economy, based on properly controlling women's reproduction.¹ Describing women's bodies as an economy underscores the late theme in Sanger's rhetoric that understands women as objects needing control to protect national interests. The dominance of these themes in the latter half of Sanger's rhetoric does not imply they are more developed than those found in her early career, or that they come from a more mature rhetor who has grown in purpose. Instead, they represent changes, however ironic, that occur as different social discourses pervade.

In Sanger's rhetoric two themes emerge that represent women's bodies as an economy needing control: an interest in the quality of children women produce and a discussion of the quantity of children women produce. In the first case, Sanger ironically shifts to a rhetoric of women's bodies that mirrors capitalistic ideology, as evident in her discussion of a crisis of overpopulation and its relation to war. Second, Sanger uses the capitalistic ideology of social

¹ The inspiration for this term comes from Barker-Benfield's work, "The Spermatoc Economy: A Nineteenth-Century View of Sexuality."

evolution to express the need for the nation to civilize itself through the proper management of women's bodies as she focuses on issues of eugenics and the need for sterilization. The concerns of quantity (population size) and quality (eugenic properties) in Sanger's later rhetorical themes signal the extent to which Sanger reiterates a capitalistic discourse even though she sometimes speaks of the evils of capitalism.

The change in Sanger's rhetoric from women as subjects to objects as an effect of a movement toward capitalism spans Sanger's forty year career but manifests itself in the eighteen editions of *Family Limitation*. In the opening of this analysis I discussed the Sanger's marriage to Slee and gunrunning contraceptives as exemplary of the manifestation of capitalism in Sanger's activism. Beyond these anecdotes, changes across the eighteen editions of Sanger's birth control pamphlet, *Limitation*, demonstrate the shift from casting women as subject to depicting them as objects. Changes from the first to last edition, especially the considerable change of the twelfth edition from those preceding it, show a movement in Sanger's rhetoric from speaking *to* women about their bodies and rights to speaking *of* women and the need for them to use birth control.² As a way of framing and previewing the general shift in Sanger's rhetoric discussed in this analysis I offer a brief examination of *Limitation*'s eighteen editions, spanning from 1914 to 1931.³ In that time, three key changes occur. First, Sanger speaks to women about helping themselves avoid class struggle and then shifts to the need to help women not have children for health reasons. Second, the source of women's help changes from each other to the medical community. Third, concern for women's sexual pleasure decreases.

² There are only minor changes between the twelfth edition and last, eighteenth, edition of *Limitation*.

³ This date span represents the US editions only. Esther Katz adds the historical notes that a number of organizations, including socialist and labor groups, printed unauthorized versions of *Limitation* over the years (Excerpts 87).

The most significant change in *Limitation* from helping to controlling women's bodies comes through in the general approach in which Sanger speaks of the topic. The first edition of *Limitation* (1914) uses second person pronouns in her discussion of birth control where the twelfth edition and beyond uses third person pronouns almost exclusively, even in a section titled "To the Working Woman." Though Sanger continues to discuss class struggles, she does so addressing her audience with the assumption that they themselves are not familiar with the problem on a firsthand basis. The semantic difference of second versus third person pronouns may seem minor, but in conjunction with the content the difference becomes striking. The introduction of *Limitation* 1st addresses the class concerns related to contraception and its lack: "It is far more sordid to find yourself . . . burdened down with half a dozen unwished for children, helpless, starved, shoddily clothed, dragging at your skirt, yourself a dragged out shadow of the woman you once were" (2). In contrast, *Limitation* 12th emphasizes doctors keeping unhealthy women from having children: "In cases of women suffering from serious ailments, such as Bright's disease, heart disease, or tuberculosis, the physician usually warns the woman to guard herself against pregnancy" (3). Adding to this eugenic concern, Sanger goes on to write, "When either the man or the woman is afflicted with [insanity, syphilis, idiocy and feeble-mindedness], it is absolutely wrong to allow a child to be born. In such cases the man or the woman should be sterilized" (3). The twelfth edition's approach to the topic that speaks of helping and forcing women to not have children magnifies the concern of third person pronouns and reveals it as part and parcel of a change occurring in which women have less agency in the control of their bodies.

A second point of change in Sanger's movement toward a rhetoric of managing women's bodies in *Limitation* lies in her framing of the source of contraceptive information. In the early

editions of *Limitation*, Sanger calls for women to help each other, but the twelfth edition and beyond places that ability squarely on doctors. From the first to the eleventh edition of *Limitation* Sanger tells the women reading her pamphlet to “Pass on this information to your neighbor and comrade workers” (1st 3). Likewise, the first through eleventh editions tell women that they should teach each other how to adjust a pessary, once familiar with it themselves (1st 14). The twelfth through eighteenth editions encourage no such cooperation among women, and leave, by default, women to rely upon the medical community for assistance: “Responsibility on the part of physicians would reduce maternal mortality of the world tremendously” (12th 3).

A third change in *Limitation* toward the rhetoric of managing women’s bodies resides in Sanger’s treatment of women’s sexuality. The first editions of *Limitation* emphasize the need for women to enjoy sex and to have sex only at their will, where later editions increasingly dampen those arguments. The first edition of *Limitation* discusses the health benefit to women who have had an orgasm, “her whole being is built up and beautified through it,” but this statement disappears by the sixth edition (1st 6-7). Statements that emphasize women’s sexual pleasure and permission make it as long as the eleventh edition of *Limitation*. Of *coitus interruptus* Sanger says, “The greatest objection to this is the evil effect upon the woman’s nervous condition” (11th 6). By removing such passages the twelfth edition demonstrates less concern for women’s sexual pleasure. Also, Sanger’s stinging proclamation that sex against a woman’s will is prostitution appears last in *Limitation* 11th: “This is an act of prostitution and is degrading to a woman’s finer sensibility” (11th 6-7). The twelfth edition says only, “The submission of her body without love or desire is degrading to the woman’s finer sensibility” (7). The change marks a decreasing interest in arguing for women’s sexual pleasure and significance of women’s sexual control. The reduction of a concern for women’s sexuality in combination with the change from a second to

third person form of address and the shift to naming doctors as the exclusive source of contraception demonstrates a global change in Sanger's orientation. As representative of the overall shift in her rhetoric, comes a movement in Sanger's rhetoric from speaking *to* women to speaking *of* women, which highlights the utility of genealogical interpretation to discuss the ironic constructions as a product of the pressure of dominant social discourses.

The changes in *Limitation* represent the movement toward a capitalistic orientation in which women's bodies require control to manage the quantity and quality of women's reproduction. The themes of Sanger's rhetoric discussed in this chapter demonstrate an interest in properly managing the production of the ovarian economy by depicting women as objects needing control rather than subjects with independent agency. The change in Sanger's rhetoric creates a tension as her earlier critiques of become co-opted by a capitalist ideology. The ironic emergence of capitalism in Sanger's rhetoric occurs in her discussion of an impending overpopulation crisis and her articulation of civilizing the nation, an idea indebted to capitalism, through eugenic control of reproduction. The first section of this chapter argues that a capitalistic orientation ironically emerges in Sanger's rhetoric as exemplified by her fear of overpopulation. The second section continues the capitalistic assumptions of women's bodies by discussing the need to civilize the nation through controlling women's reproduction. The compulsion to civilize women's bodies enables Sanger's call for the eugenic control of population.

CAPITALISM AND THE RATE OF REPRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous analysis, Sanger begins her career with harsh critiques of capitalism and the factory system of labor. In this analysis it becomes clear that, despite her early criticism of capitalism, Sanger comes to employ capitalistic ideology in her rhetoric in which women's bodies need market management to keep reproduction in line with capitalistic

assumptions of economics. The irony of this shift demonstrates the pervasiveness of capitalistic discourse in US culture and the difficulty of escaping its rhetorical power as way of understanding life and bodies. In the following, I discuss the overall movement in Sanger's rhetoric from a critique of capitalism to a seemingly unintentional deployment of capitalism as a rationale for controlling women's reproduction. The explanation of controlling women's reproduction empowers Sanger's discussion about the possibility of overpopulation and the need for a governmental population policy to intervene.

“This Business of Bearing Babies”⁴

Despite her early critiques of capitalism, Sanger ironically slips into a discourse that appropriates a capitalistic way of thinking. To understand Sanger's relationship to a capitalistic discourse, I first look at the general critique of capitalism that Sanger provides early in her rhetorical career in which she depicts birth control as an enemy to capitalism. As a demonstration of the shift in Sanger's rhetoric, I then focus on her discussion of doctors and Sanger's shift from calling them culprits to naming them allies. To see the global change in Sanger's discourse on capitalism, I last examine the metaphors of capitalism that she uses to compare women's reproduction to a business in which the government has control of reproduction.

Sanger's critique of capitalism includes contempt for class abuse, as I have argued, and presents birth control as the greatest threat to capitalism. In the *Woman Rebel* Sanger draws attention to what she sees as a class war precipitated by those like John D. Rockefeller who abuse the workers and have the protection of law enforcement (“Civilization?” 20). Sanger understands birth control as threatening capitalism by decreasing the pressure of the working

⁴ The heading comes from the title of Sanger's 1925 manuscript.

class to work for low wages.⁵ Capitalism represents more to Sanger than labor abuses: “It is impossible to separate the ignorance of parents, prostitution, venereal diseases, or the silence of the medical profession from the great economic question that the world is facing today. . . . Until capitalism is swept away, there is no hope for boys or girls to build up strong and sturdy bodies” (“What: Some, III” 15). According to Sanger, capitalism produces unaware, prostituted, and diseased bodies, using doctors as a tool in this process. Here Sanger directly links economic discourse to the production of bodies, recognizing that the state’s ability to control social institutions precipitates events like the spread of disease and the occurrence of prostitution.

As a matter of health, the state controls information and products of contraception primarily through the medical profession. The change in Sanger’s remarks about doctors replicates the general shift in her approach toward capitalism as Sanger moves from decrying doctors to championing their role in the movement. Because the state uses doctors to dictate who will and will not have contraception and thereby the kinds of lives families will have, Sanger poses serious reservations early in her rhetoric about doctors in general, preferring instead that women turn to each other. In 1915, Sanger combines her concerns about the opposition of the government with reference to the Catholic church as she expresses her fear of the medical community gaining control of the birth control movement: “There is the danger of this movement being transferred from control of the State to the control of the medical profession, which in reality is only an exchange of high priests” (“Birth Control in America” 52). The designation of doctors as high priests clearly marks the medical community as a threat to the birth control movement. Unsurprisingly, then, the early editions of *Limitation* place emphasis on

⁵ For examples see “The Prevention of Conception” and “Should Women Know?”

women helping and teaching each other rather than on turning to physicians for help. Twenty years after calling doctors high priests Sanger criticizes the American Medical Association's (AMA) 1936 report that condemns birth control and, as Sanger describes, "the activities of the lay organizations which have not only educated the public but brought to the medical profession the methods which it uses in its practices today" ("Birth Control Crusade"). Here Sanger implies that the lay organizations can do what the medical community refuses to do. Her call in *Limitation* for women to rely upon other women represents a resistance to women's dependence on the medical community for the knowledge and control of their bodies.

In the twenty years between labeling doctors high priests and chastising the AMA for failing to recognize lay organizations' work, Sanger creates a role for the medical community in the birth control movement. Despite her early disdain for doctors Sanger comes to celebrate them for their god-like ability to impart scientific knowledge, replicating the very thing she once feared. To begin, she finds that only medical professionals should provide women with birth control: "This information should be disseminated directly to mothers through clinics by members of the medical profession, registered nurses, and registered midwives" (*Morality*). The emphasis on registration, the authorization by the state to perform certain duties, casts medical professionals as instruments of the state to oversee the information women receive about their bodies, much like ordained priests' relation to their church.⁶ The irony of Sanger's respect for doctors increases when, in an article coauthored with an MD in the *Medical Times*, she venerates them for their ability to bestow truth upon their patients in much the same way priests share truth with their congregations: "The physician today is in possession of truths of the most vital

⁶ In the *Birth Control Review* Sanger also explains why the law must be changed to allow only authorized physicians, nurses and midwives to dispense contraceptive information as they would have the proper training ("How" 8).

importance to the community; and it is his duty as a member of one of the noblest, if not the noblest of all professions, to co-operate to the full extent of his ability with Science in enlightening the public” (Edgar and Sanger 6).⁷ By addressing a medical audience, speaking of the “truths” of “Science” to “enlighten” patients shows the presumably male physicians their role in sharing holy knowledge. Speaking at the 1936 Conference on Contraceptive Research and Clinical Practice Sanger similarly describes doctors as saviors: “We must ask the scientist to come to our aid. We want his cooperation, his vision, his impersonal courage and wisdom” (“Future” 4). In this example she reproduces the role of men, as doctors, saving women from danger and leading them to a bright future.

Accepting the role of doctors as heroes and providers of truth gives Sanger access to a dominant discourse in the US. Despite her early misgivings about the medical profession, Sanger endorses the role of the medical community in the birth control movement on the grounds that they can further the progress of the movement. Sanger makes doctors into priests and heroes, admitting in 1919 that despite the medical profession’s silence on the issue of birth control “we are compelled to make use of the skill and knowledge of the medical profession” (“Meeting” 14). Likewise, when she makes use of the dominant discourse that reveres the knowledge and skill of doctors, she can employ a whole line of reasoning that doctors deserve knowledge for helping the greater good. The 1936 Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling giving doctors the right to dispense contraceptives came as part of Sanger’s acquiescence to the central role of medical professionals in health related issues. In 1932 US customs intercepted a package of Japanese pessaries addressed to Sanger. To bring about a federal case, Sanger had the pessaries shipped again, but this time to Dr. Hannah Stone who filed suit when customs again held the package (Chesler 372-

⁷ In 1937 Sanger wrote an article for *Clinical Medicine and Surgery* titled, “Birth Control: The Doctor’s Duty.”

73). By so doing Sanger makes strides for the birth control movement through accepting that as a private citizen she lacks the right that medical professionals have to obtain contraceptives. The court ruling in 1936 makes doctors the rightful purveyors of birth control without provision for clinics like the one Sanger operated for ten days in 1916. As a result of the court decision, the AMA reversed its 1936 statement and endorsed birth control research and education among MDs. Sanger's acceptance of the role of doctors in the birth control movement and society in general precipitates a change in the government's and medical community's attitude toward birth control. Rather than causing the change, Sanger's rhetoric contributes to the movement of social discourses.

The movement in Sanger's rhetoric from caution about the medical profession to faith in doctors demonstrates the disciplinary power of dominant discourses. Sanger's change to embracing the role of doctors in the movement reveals how dominant discourses' pervasive ways of thinking and doing in society enact a discipline upon rhetoric, excluding and frustrating the efforts of those who defy the social norms and rewarding with social success those who comply. Of the Circuit Court of Appeals decision in *US v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries* Sanger declares, "The birth control movement is *free*" (emphasis original) (Editorial 3). Birth control's freedom, however, is tied to doctors' willingness to cooperate. The court ruling in Sanger's favor and the support of the AMA demonstrates that the birth control movement's freedom depended upon the extent to which its discourse, as exemplified by Sanger, fell in line with a respect for the role of doctors as dispensers of knowledge and health. Sanger's rhetoric on the topic of doctors in the 1930s compared to 1915 shows an ongoing process by social discourse to conform her and birth control rhetoric to dominant ways of thinking and doing.

The change in Sanger's rhetoric with regard to her stance on doctors parallels the change in her orientation toward capitalism. Sanger despised doctors and capitalism equally and as cooperating culprits in the governmental control of women's bodies. Just as Sanger's stance toward doctors changed to accept their role in the birth control movement, her orientation on capitalism also transformed to create a place for it. Against the backdrop of her early opposition to capitalism Sanger ironically employs a capitalistic metaphor when speaking of human reproduction, describing childbearing as a business and appropriating the accompanying mindset that takes decisions of reproduction away from women. In "This Business of Bearing Babies" Sanger suggests "Putting child-bearing on a sound business basis—studying it, examining it, analyzing it, keeping the books of motherhood and starting budgets for babies, computing the cost of the 'overhead', and seeking to cut down waste and inefficiency" (4). The immediate implication of the metaphor places women's bodies as sites of production, which the model of business management now recommends be controlled according to economic principles. Using this perspective, Sanger can speak *about* the proper management of women's bodies as objects rather than speaking *to* women about helping them control their bodies; the difference casts women as object for control versus subjects with control.

Speaking of women's bodies as a business to be managed opens the opportunity for capitalist metaphors to spring forth. Within the framework of reproduction as a business Sanger uses a series of metaphors that opens the possibility for government regulation of reproduction and thereby supports a move to eugenics. Metaphors in Sanger's rhetoric depict children as products and mothers as producing employees. When discussing children, Sanger's metaphors focus on issues of product production, chiefly the relationship in a market economy between supply and demand. Frequently Sanger evokes the principle of quality over quantity, as seen in

“This Business of Bearing Babies”: “We are insisting more on quality and less on quantity” (3). Elsewhere in the same manuscript, Sanger takes the notion of children as a commodity to be produced at a controlled rate to discuss the relationship between large families and infant mortality: “It was found that the infant death rate increases with the increase in the amount of congestion and overcrowding in the home” (6). The reference to “congestion and overcrowding” suggests a volume of production that has gone unchecked. The significance of the product analogy becomes clearer when, in a later text, Sanger compares the proper pacing of children’s production to gardening and breeding: “Every gardener knows that if seeds are sown too thickly, the resulting plants will be poor in quality. Every breeder knows that if healthy stock is to be had matings must be spaced” (“Need . . . in America” 1).⁸ The metaphor of plants and livestock raises two issues. First, if children are the result of proper planting and mating then women’s bodies, analogically, are soil or cows into which a seed is planted, thus removing any sense of women’s agency. Second, the plant and livestock metaphors upon up the possibility for discussing which plants and animals ought to be reproduced for the gardeners’ or breeders’ benefit, thereby inviting the issue of eugenics in Sanger’s rhetoric that I turn to later.

The frame of children as products allows Sanger to discuss women’s roles as employees. The metaphor of childbearing as business in Sanger’s rhetoric presents women as employees producing children, which separates women from the possession of their bodies and of their children while putting women under evaluation. Sanger works from the premise that women place the home on a model of business management because many of them have had business experience before marriage, which implies that women contain such experience only to their premarital years. Having worked outside the home for an employer in the past the women can

⁸ For similar examples of these metaphors see “The Children’s Era” (1), “This Business of Bearing Babies” (12), and “Human Conservation and Birth Control” (13).

expect to work for another employer inside the home. In Sanger's business metaphor women would seem to work for the state. The discussion of mothers' health and well being in Sanger's rhetoric takes the tone of discussing employee safety: "We are as a nation losing more mothers in childbirth today than we did ten years ago. . . . Instead of making mothers safe . . . it is constantly growing more dangerous" ("This Business" 11-12). In the metaphor it falls to the government to provide better safety for its workers. Because women work for the state Sanger can discuss employee job performance. Sanger creates a comparison of two types of women: business-minded women who "revel in the discipline of housekeeping on the budget system," and "the poverty-stricken, the improvident, the criminal, the mentally and physically defective," who "are reckless and irresponsible" (1, 6). The comparison implies some should be allowed to produce for the state but not others.

Though Sanger uses this metaphor of business and childbearing most intensely in "This Business of Bearing Babies," the implications of the metaphor arise elsewhere. Treating childbearing as a business invites the government to use the necessary means to produce the products it so desires, a process in which women lose the control of their bodies. "A License for Mothers to Have Babies" outlines Sanger's idea of a government office certifying parents to have a baby based upon the parents' physical health, mental health, and financial standing. The metaphor of government regulation of business goes so far as to appropriate the government's agricultural policy of regulating production through farm subsidies that asks farmers to not produce for the sake of the national good. Similarly, Sanger suggests the government pay parents to not reproduce for the greater good of the nation (9). In this instance the metaphors of children as product and mothers as employees, come together. As before, children in this metaphor are products to be judged as fit or unfit. Subsequently, mothers are employees/ producers whose

work the government should regulate. Both of these understandings serve as a basis for the turn toward eugenics in Sanger's rhetoric that I address later.

The moment of calling for governmental regulation of women's reproduction comes as a stark contrast to the early, anti-capitalist themes of Sanger's rhetoric. Where Sanger began her career agitating for birth control by focusing on the evils of the capitalist system with a harsh distrust of doctors she comes to accept the role of doctors and endorse the involvement of government in matters of reproduction in ways similar to market management. Early on, Sanger saw birth control as a great threat to capitalism by undermining the factory system of labor. In approximately ten years time Sanger uses principles of capitalist production to discuss the control of women's bodies. As an intervening point of change, Sanger accepts the role of doctors in the birth control movement. Just as she foreshadowed in 1915, endorsing the involvement of doctors lead to endorsing the involvement of the government. By accepting the social discourse of doctors' central role in health matters Sanger also relents to the popular mode of thinking about life in terms of business. These discourses have an inevitable end: women's bodies controlled under the auspice of the greater good. The case of Sanger demonstrates the ability of dominant social discourses to bring rhetors into similar ways of thinking and doing. The use of an ideology oriented around controlling women's bodies for the greater good raises other issues in Sanger's rhetoric to be explored: the balance of population growth, and the progress of civilization measured by the eugenic development of the nation.

“Pressure of Population as a Cause of War”⁹

Sanger's application of a capitalistic ideology manifests itself in her concern over the proper rate of reproduction. In Sanger's rhetoric on the danger of overpopulation a tussle arises

⁹ The section title comes from a 1938 and 1939 manuscript of the same name.

over who controls women's reproduction and to what end. Appeals to overpopulation concerns demonstrate the need to keep women's bodies from overproduction, which threatens national security by depleting natural resources and increasing the chances of war. Opposition to birth control are those who want women to reproduce more for the sake of the Anglo-Saxon-American race and to meet demands for conquest. Throughout her arguments on overpopulation Sanger implies the duty of women to control their reproduction for national safety and the need for the government to intervene where women fail. Put in other words, when women fail to meet the responsibility required of subjects with control of their bodies the government must takeover and thereby, render women as objects. The concerns Sanger voices regarding the threat of overpopulation confront the early twentieth century effort to fight the danger of race suicide, discuss the drain a large population places on resources, and blame war on women's overproduction. In each of the instances women's excessive reproduction creates dangers to the well being of the nation.

Early in her career Sanger came up against the concerns of race suicide, popularly promoted by Theodore Roosevelt, that women of the nation's native stock (those of Anglo-Saxon decent) had a duty to fight their declining birth rate. In response to such fears, Sanger argues women have a greater duty to the nation to have fewer children. The lower birth rates of college educated women as compared to those without college education provided alarm for race suicide predictors. Sanger uses college educated women's lower birth rate as proof of a greater sense of national duty in "An Answer to Mr. Roosevelt": "The best thing that the modern American college does for young women is make them highly sensitized individuals, keenly aware of their responsibility to society" (14). Here Sanger depicts a decreased birth rate as demonstrative of women's sense of duty rather than an act of self-control for personal interests.

The assumption that women control their reproduction for national, not personal, benefit reinforces women's function as always serving the greater good. Sanger also critiques race suicide worries for the base assumption of the need for more production using against these capitalists their very foundational assumptions: "Any business man calculating his income from investments would never think it was declining if a reduction in the rate of interest was accompanied by an equivalent increase in his capital" ("Need . . . in America" 2).¹⁰ The retort to fears of race suicide shames poor capitalistic logic as it reaffirms women's function to protect national interests.

A decrease in the birthrate represents a protection of the nation because of Malthusian fears of overpopulation. As a stark contrast to the fears of race suicide Sanger discusses the dangers of women's overproduction. As a Neo-Malthusian, Sanger fears overpopulation will drain the resources of the nation, declaring, "[Thomas] Malthus was correct, if premature in his prophecy" ("Planned" 6). Sanger saw the Malthusian nightmare of overpopulation eating up the natural resources upon which a nation depends: "As population increases in any given territory, it encroaches upon all natural resources—forests, grasslands, soil fertility, water levels and water sheds" ("Humanity" 4). The depletion of resources brings about a weakened society that Sanger casts in appallingly frightful terms: "A stifled, weakened, undernourished, dirty group of humans is the very breeding ground of the great racial scourges, such as tuberculosis, typhus, typhoid, venereal maladies, trachoma, as well as lesser contagions" ("Birth Control—Past [II]" 5). At her most pessimistic, Sanger expresses her fears of an over consumption of resources leading to our ultimate demise: "Mankind is likely to breed itself clean out of existence" (Lasker 171-72). The

¹⁰ Sanger also critiques the capitalist "*laissez-faire* policy" who use the Biblical injunction to go forth and prosper from when "the entire population of the globe was eight" ("Is Race" 25).

dark picture Sanger paints of women's high production scares off the fears of race suicide by depicting a world of too many people altogether rather than too few of a certain kind.

Both race suicide and Neo-Malthusian followers see women's reproduction as the point of concern. Like an earlier theme in her rhetoric, Sanger stresses the seemingly instinctive nature of women to act in the interest of their nation by stopping their excessive reproduction. Consistent with the total of her rhetoric on reproduction, Sanger focuses on women's reproductive bodies rather than men's: "Women . . . submit anew to their task of producing multitudes who will bring about the next tragedy of civilization" (emphasis original) ("Woman's" 7).¹¹ In this passage women do not have the control of their bodies necessary to combat the problem. The assumption built into the argument implies that when women do have control of their bodies they act in accordance with the interest of their nation: "Whether she live in Europe or America, the woman who has the welfare of society, or of her own children at heart, will not bear another child until the world's productive capacity becomes equal to the task of caring for the people already here" ("Sheer" 4). The problem of overpopulation that Sanger discusses requires women to fulfill their care-taking function by ceasing to reproduce in the face of depleted resources.

With an outline of the dangers of overpopulation and women's necessary role in place Sanger moves into the root and solution of the problem. Sanger describes opponents of birth control as those seeking conquest, and she names the control of women's reproduction as the only way of stopping such colonialism. Capitalists, militarists, and ecclesiastics, three broadly and vaguely defined groups of people, impel women to have more children. Each group represents the interest of increasing the population to further their own interests through the

¹¹ See the same statement in *Woman and the New Race* (4).

domination of others, whether it be lower wages or territorial expansion (“Birth Control—Past [I]” 13; “Tragedy of” 6). Malthus writes that preventative checks (non-contraceptive means of child spacing) and positive checks (wars, disease, and famine that actively reduce the population) keep a population within its proper limits (Sanger “Birth Control—Past [I],” 5). Understandably, Sanger recommends preventative checks to reduce the strain on natural resources and increase national security. In 1940, with World War II growing, Sanger claims that “Educators, scientists, clergymen, see planned parenthood as a way to strengthen our human resources in a time of great national need” (New Bedford 5). The program title “planned parenthood” implies a shift away from helping women to focusing on families, thereby dismissing women’s needs for families’ (i.e., husbands and children) concerns. The presentation of planned parenthood as the means to strengthening national resources implies the application of birth control methods but fails to name women’s activity in the process, suggesting their role as objects rather than subjects of control. Likewise, Sanger refers to the control of population as a national, not a woman’s, concern in “Population—Everybody’s Business”: “Population control can contribute to your happiness, security, and prosperity, on the one hand, just as lack of it must inevitably result in poverty, famine and—too often—war” (16). The term “population control” for the sake of social betterment elides the fact that women’s reproduction must be controlled. These passages about “planned parenthood” and “population control” say nothing of women’s interests and fail to address women as agents. Both euphemisms for birth control operate on the assumption of controlling women’s bodies for national benefit without needing to address actual women and their own concerns.

The national benefit of controlling women’s bodies includes the ability to stop war. Sanger’s call for managing women’s reproduction to bring world peace replicates militaristic

interests in controlling women's reproduction on the basis of national interests. Where Sanger wants to limit the number of children born to preserve resources and maintain peace, she finds that others want to increase the size of the population to increase resources and wage war. The critique of militarism Sanger presents explains colonialists' desire for women to have more children, who serve as "cannon fodder" in the conquest of lands and, to justify the expansion itself. The militarists, as Sanger calls them, use women for inciting the evils of war: "From her body have come the sinews of war, the cannon-fodder that feeds enmity, greed, and exploitation" ("Woman of the Future" 30). Talk of "cannon fodder" stresses the theme of militaristic indifference to life and the vision of women as war-machine factories. In an article from 1937, Sanger writes that Mussolini wants the women of Italy to have more children because "Italy looks toward war, and must have fodder for the cannon of the enemy" ("What Margaret" 16). The characterization of the Italian situation depicts women's bodies as a tool used by the state to make wars. Likewise, she calls for reproductive increase also provide the basis for wars by necessitating expansion: "Populations are to be *increased* to make war, and *wars* are justifiable to *increase* populations" ("Pressure [I]" 15). In 1939 Sanger speaks of the dangers of European countries who use their swelling population as an excuse to exceed their borders: "Germany and Italy are calling for colonies and more land while at the same time they offer prizes to their people to bring more children into the already overcrowded country to increase their numbers" ("Pressure [II]" 2).¹² The collective picture of the militarists Sanger presents shows them using women's bodies to feed the nation's colonial conquests.

¹² Also see Sanger's 1938 discussion of Von Berhardi's 1911 work on the use of a growing population as an excuse to acquire new land ("Pressure . . . [I]" 2-3). On a related matter Sanger critiques Russia's post World War II program of encouraging parents to have children as a way of rebuilding the population ("Russia's").

Ironically, Sanger herself attempts to control women's bodies for an opposing purpose than that of the militarists. The call for implementing family planning and population control in Sanger's rhetoric demonstrates her desire to control the reproduction of women's bodies for a national goal, if different from the militarists. Early in her career, in 1917, Sanger spoke of the state abuses of women's bodies and implored women to end the tragedies the government subjected them to endure: "She must deny the right of the State or Kingdom hereafter to make her a victim of unwilling motherhood, and the handmaiden of militarism" ("Woman and War" 5). The call for women to help themselves fades by 1933 when Sanger stresses women's responsibility to bring peace despite the efforts of men to make war: "To the pleas of the militarists woman must refuse to listen. She must awaken to the responsibility. . . . She shall become an instrument of peace" ("Woman of the Future" 25). In the passage Sanger emphasizes women's obligation rather than the benefit of stopping war. The distinction between women's duty and advantage comes through loudly when Sanger describes creating peace by controlling women's reproduction as a public matter: "A great cosmic paradox lies hidden here: that the union of male and female—a communion that seems so private, so personal, that it can scarcely be spoken of in public—is actually of the most public significance . . . for the peace of the whole world" ("Woman of the Future" 28). The public nature of women's reproduction necessitates public intervention: "The growth of population with the resulting desire and need for economic expansion was a necessary cause of war *Yesterday is Today* and will be *Tomorrow*, unless we recognize that vital factor and do something about it" (emphasis original) ("Pressure [I]" 3). By making the control of women's bodies a public matter, which the public must "do something about," Sanger replicates the militarists' strategy of using women's bodies for a prescribed national goal.

Sanger's concerns of overpopulation bear an ironic resemblance to those she opposes. Those who predict race suicide and militarists share with Sanger a concern for national safety and strength. Race suicide forecasters and militarists want women to increase their reproduction to secure the status of the Anglo-Saxon population and create a large army for territorial expansion. Sanger wants women to decrease their reproduction to avoid depleting natural resources and to end the need for expansionist wars. Against concerns of race suicide Sanger depicts a decline in birth rate among educated women as a sign of social responsibility. Her orientation as a Neo-Malthusian causes her to forecast the depletion of natural resources if the birth rate fails to decrease. She also argues for controlling the size of the population to impede wars. Each of these reasons for birth control gives no attention to the personal benefit for women when using birth control, but focuses instead on how women's bodies can better serve national interests. Whether it be Theodore Roosevelt (a prognosticator of race suicide) or Mussolini (a militaristic expansionist) arguing for an increase in women's reproduction or Sanger calling for a decrease in women's reproduction, the principle of public regulation of women's bodies for national rather than private interests persists.

CIVILIZATION AND POPULATION QUALITY

As Sanger conforms her rhetoric to the norms of capitalist discourse she also ties into the line of social argument concerning the social progress of the nation. In this section the focus first turns to discussing Sanger's arguments for birth control related to US national progress toward the goal of civilization, which presents women's bodies as a site for social progress through perfecting and taming nature. Next, the need to better control nature leads Sanger to call for implementing eugenic principles in determining who should and should not reproduce as part of program of improving nature. Last, the industrial discipline of nature includes the use of

sterilization when women prove unable to manage the responsibility of controlling their reproduction.

“The Civilizing Force of Birth Control”¹³

Disciplining women’s bodies through the use of birth control represents a conspicuous break in the stated objective of contraceptive practice between women’s interests and national interests. Across a series of texts Sanger explicates the goal of civilization by taking three rhetorical moves. To make this point, first, I show that Sanger’s rhetoric on the goal of national progress defines civilization as control and responsibility of reproduction for the purpose of realizing the fullness of human potential. Then, I look to how the explanations of the civilized, those who act on intelligence, include contrasting descriptions of the savage, those who act on instinct alone. Next, I argue that the contrast of civilized and savage moves Sanger to produce women’s bodies as another site in the natural world to be conquered in the name of progress. Last, I find that as Sanger discusses civilization she uses “man” as both a generic and specific term that emphasizes the elimination of a concern for women’s well being in birth control rhetoric.

To begin the discussion of Sanger’s articulation of social progress I start with her defining civilization as a national goal. Sanger promotes the belief that all humans must strive toward the goal of civilization through gaining control of their bodies that they might realize the human race’s full potential. Humans can achieve the goal of civilization through controlling their reproductive behavior and thereby having children as a conscious decision. Controlling reproduction will bring humans one step closer to achieving perfection, which means the ultimate goal of the human race is the effective control of women’s bodies. As far back as 1916,

¹³ The title of this section comes from Sanger’s 1929 speech of the same name.

Sanger alludes to the theme of birth control as part of the goal of civilization. The discussion in chapter five shows Sanger touching on themes of civilization as she discusses the class distinction of abortion and birth control, citing birth control as a luxury of those with money and abortion as a desperate act of barbarism (“Signal” 2; “Weapons” 5). The “Hotel Brevoort Speech” includes a similar note on barbarism when referring to infanticide and abortion (178). At the end of her speech on women’s need for birth control, Sanger adds a final handwritten line at the bottom of the typed manuscript: “Let us put US of A on the map of the civilized world!” (“Hotel” 179). This seemingly late addition to her speech introduces the powerful discourse of civilization in which Sanger would increasingly participate. Sanger defines civilization as social evolution: “There is probably no other subject of equal importance which cuts so deeply into the foundations of social evolution as birth control” (“Social” 1). Because social evolution employs teleological notions that there exists in the ether of the universe an idea of an ideal state toward which society ought to strive, attention, must turn to Sanger’s image of a highly evolved society.

As Sanger describes the role and function of birth control to advance society in its development she explains her idea of an evolved society. Her notion of civilization rests on the conscious control of reproduction. Throughout this study I have shown that Sanger connects the issue of birth control to women’s bodies by addressing women specifically or concentrating on women-controlled contraceptives. With the relationship of women’s bodies and birth control established, when Sanger calls for the control of reproduction she implies that women’s bodies must be controlled for the sake of social evolution. Birth control brings about the evolution to civilization through providing a means of self discipline: “I believe in self control. . . . I believe in it as part of our social evolution. We have to be controlled” (Need . . . in America” 25).¹⁴

¹⁴ For a similar example see “The Morality of Birth Control.”

Sanger's description of control hints at a sophisticated appreciation of bodily discipline, a celebration of a body that self-reflexively monitors itself to conform to the ideals placed before it: "Control is a beautiful thing which we should evolve to and develop within ourselves" ("Need . . . in America" 27). Whereas Sanger initially saw birth control as a means to empower women, Sanger's talk of civilization frames women's bodies as a site for social improvement; to better itself, society must gain the proper control of women's reproduction. The comparison shows a dramatic shift in Sanger's rhetoric from helping women to controlling them.

The importance of controlling women's bodies reveals itself in Sanger's explanation of birth control's role in social evolution. Sanger presents undisciplined maternity as proving the absence of civilization in modern society. As a contrasting example, Sanger explains that a well planned, civilized family consists of a husband telling the wife how many children she may have and the wife controlling her body to her husband's decision. In *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922) Sanger argues that civilization requires control, which maternity lacks: "If we define civilization as increased and increasing responsibility based on vision and foresight, it becomes painfully evident that the profession of motherhood as practised to-day is in no sense civilized" (189).¹⁵ The characterization of "the profession of motherhood" as chaotic and therefore uncivilized implies the lack of evolution (i.e., control) of women's bodies. Eighteen years later, in a 1940 radio address, Sanger makes a similar criticism when she directs blame less specifically to mothers: "people are born into the world by chance rather than by the intelligent choice of parents" (New Bedford 1). By 1940 Sanger adopts the philosophy that the decision of parenthood consists of the husband informing the wife of how many children she can have and

¹⁵ A nearly identical statement appears 33 years later in "Civilizing Power of Planned Parenthood" where Sanger substitutes "parenthood" for "motherhood" (6).

the wife deciding when she will have them. Consequently, “the intelligent choice of parents” means the control of the wife’s body in accordance with her husband’s will.

Intelligent control of reproduction represents progress toward civilization. Sanger defends her plan of civilization through controlling women’s bodies as an important step in our social progress comparable to colonial conquest and industrial advancement. In so doing, she frames women’s bodies as another staging ground for national advancement. An analogy from one of Sanger’s articles compares the struggle for birth control to those who opposed the advances made by Christopher Columbus and the Wright brothers, who themselves were “brave enough, strong enough, courageous enough to bear aloft to carry on the torch of civilization” (“Meaning” 110-11). The comparison equates controlling women’s reproduction with colonial and industrial advances. Where Columbus had to face off against King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I, Sanger must confront president Calvin Coolidge. In an open letter to Coolidge in the *Birth Control Review*, she writes of “a solution of which depends the fulfillment in our high destiny in the creation of the future” (“Message” 131). Elsewhere, Sanger explains, “The birth control program is not concerned with the fruits of culture [art and so forth], but with sowing the ‘seeds’ of civilization” (“Civilizing”). In talking of sowing the seeds of civilization the underlying premise rests upon the control of women’s bodies as a step in the nation’s social evolution. From Sanger’s first mention of birth control as civilization follows the relationship between civilization and the necessary control of women’s bodies to accomplish social evolution.

Sanger intensifies her arguments about the goal and need for social evolution by using the second of her three themes of civilization: a contrast between the civilized and the savage. The comparison Sanger uses depicts the savage as most like humans’ animal nature, the common scientific view of women’s bodies, and civilized as disciplined, the masculine oriented ideal of

bodily control. As I have discussed, scientific discourse closely links a long tradition of depicting women's bodies with the natural/ animal world. Specifically Brian Easlea addresses the tradition of framing nature as feminine against industrialism as masculine, and Londa Schiebinger reveals that the term mammal, referencing mammary glands, links women with the beasts of the field and presents men as having evolved from their animalistic relation.¹⁶ The same parallel contrasts of feminine/ masculine and savage/ civilized emerge in Sanger's rhetoric. Sanger replies to the allegation that birth control is "contrary to nature" by explaining it only violates nature "if by 'nature' you mean primitive or mere animal nature from which the race graduated when it emerged from the status of the higher mammals." Birth control is natural, however, as social evolution comparable to the human drive to acquire food, clothing, and shelter ("Birth Control: Yes or No? [I]"). The comparison presents uncontrolled women's bodies as indicating primitive human development but controlled women's bodies as the natural course of human evolution: "Another characteristic of man alone is the ability to plan the birth of his young" (New Bedford 2). The use of "man" and the masculine possessive seems appropriate in this instance. Sanger's insistence that men, not women, should decide the number of children in a family and the relation of women's uncontrolled body to human's animalistic nature implies that the evolution of humans depends upon the disciplining of women's bodies by men and masculine interests (i.e., industrialism).

Arguing that humans must control natural functions, like sexual intercourse and reproduction, requires Sanger to explain the dominance of the brain over other organs. Sanger finds that evolved humans use their brain to control their animal instincts, insinuating that the masculine mind must discipline women's animal-like reproductive organs. The lack of

¹⁶ For further reading on the link of nature and women's bodies see Genevieve Lloyd's "The Man of Reason."

immigrants' access to birth control has an effect contrary to the effort to civilize all US residents: "Instead of saying we Americanize them [immigrants], we should confess that we animalize them" (*Race* 37). In this way the government must take responsibility for making savage those whose bodies it fails to regulate. A discussion of animal desires combines sexual desire and the effect of reproduction: "The opposition assumes that certain organs like the stomach and sex organs make certain demands and these demands must be fulfilled, but these two organs are no the limit of nature's demands. We have another organ—a brain" ("New Day" 7). Elsewhere, Sanger compares sexual desire to hunger, arguing, "in the realm of sex we may bolt our pleasure, greedily satisfy deep-seated physiological and psychic cravings, selfishly usurp as much of the crude sexual pleasure as we can, and always with the reckless indifference to the consequences of our selfish acts, and with total irresponsibility to its penalties" ("Civilizing"). Because Sanger refrains from calling for couples to not practice abstinence but birth control, she seeks to contain the "penalties," too many children, by controlling women's reproduction. The argument for birth control on the basis of controlling animal desires constructs domesticating women as the means to civilization.

A pictorial in *Look* from 1939 provides a visual example of Sanger's argument. Sanger illustrates the consequences of uncivilized behavior in a photographic comparison of two families (one poor black family and one middleclass white family) whose class and race differences Sanger fails to mention. The difference between the images of the white and black families suggests that society has failed to properly civilize a large, poor, black family the way it has a small, middleclass, white family. The two pictures sit on the same page with one above the other. The top frame is of a black family of 16, dressed in worn clothes, standing in front of a rickety shack for a home. The bottom frame is of a white family of four, well dressed, enjoying

an afternoon picnic on the grass. Between the two pictures sits Sanger's commentary: "**These Two Pictures Illustrate the Difference** between planned and unplanned parenthood. Below is a happy, well planned family, with the children properly spaced. Above is a family which knows nothing about birth control" (emphasis original) ("This Is" 13). "The difference" of these two families is the issue at hand. Sanger's discussion of the two families fails to mention the class and race differences that keep the knowledge of birth control from one family and allow it for the other. In an article on her experiences with race in the South (Elizabeth City, NC) Sanger recounts the interest of the black community to learn birth control ("Breaking"). Sanger once states, "Civilization, then, implies the development and the actual realization of the inherent potentialities of the individual and the race" ("Civilizing").¹⁷ The stated interests of at least one sample of the black population and the need for society to develop the human race's potential indicts the government for causing families overburdened by children. Shifting the blame for unplanned families to laws further insults race and class minorities by suggesting that society has failed to properly civilize all its citizens, which marks the poor, black family of Sanger's pictorial as savage.

The emphasis upon controlling women's bodies as evolutionary progress builds when Sanger launches into an industrial understanding of human history. Sanger weds a story of industrial progress to the control of women's reproductive bodies thus making the masculine domination of women's bodies another step in the masculine domination of nature. A speech from Sanger's 1916 speaking tour includes an early mention of industrial progress compared to women's bodily control of contraception: "Through it [birth control] she will triumph over

¹⁷ Presumably, Sanger is using race in this instance as a reference to the human race. The juxtaposition with her pictorial argument, however, raises the specter of other possibilities` an issue raised by the entirety of the eugenics movement.

nature's and man's laws which have kept her in bondage, just as man has triumphed over nature by the use of electricity, ship building, bridges, etc." ("Signal" 22). Women's use of birth control in this example works as a parallel case to men's industrial progress where women gain control of their own bodies as men control other forces of nature. Later, however, Sanger's comparison of industrial progress loses the parallelism of women and men's arenas of control as she slips into setting women's bodies as yet another force of nature for industry to tame:

Every step forward in our history, from those remote days when our prehistoric ancestors first discovered fire, tilled the soil, and domesticated the animals, has been gained through control over some force of NATURE. One by one these great wild powers, each one of them destructive and overpowering, have been harnessed, directed and mastered by human intelligence and made to serve some constructive purpose. The power of the wind, the power of steam, the power of electricity, all and with increasing rapidity have thus been subjugated. ("Meaning" 110)

In the example Sanger employs the tradition of linking women's bodies more closely to nature than men's bodies and the subsequent, masculine quest for dominating nature. Reproductive power, which in Sanger's rhetoric always focuses on the relation to women, presents another wild and destructive force of nature to be tamed and harnessed for social benefit. The example above excludes specific gendering of actors, but elsewhere Sanger names "man" as the one to domesticate a force of nature:

Primitive man's energies are devoted to the pursuit of food. Industrialized man is able to give his time and mind to other things: building homes, design and manufacture clothing, painting, music, singing, constructing roads, bridges, railways, steamships. He conquers the air and the sea. He develops his mastery over matter, sends his voice by wire and now by air—hundreds of miles away. ("Need . . . in America" 7)

Here, as elsewhere, it is man who masters the forces of nature.¹⁸ This example's use of masculine nouns and pronouns as generic invokes a (sic)-less "man" (a seeming generic use of "man" that reads more appropriately as gender specific), implying that men and not humans (i.e., men and women) have and continue to conquer nature.¹⁹

The key in the discussion of Sanger's metaphor rests upon the purpose for mastering nature. The pursuit of gaining industrial control of women's reproduction as a force of nature serves the interests of the nation, not women, by advancing civilization. Sanger explains that "man . . . has harnessed natural energies and controlled them for his own use" ("Creating" 1). Though Sanger may use "his" as a generic, in this metaphor Sanger aligns herself with the masculine pursuit of gaining absolute control of nature and using natural forces to serve national interests rather than women's needs. Sanger argues that the control of nature (i.e., women's reproduction) is necessary as part of "man's onward march towards civilization" ("Meaning" 111).²⁰ The progress toward civilization includes the development of hygienic concerns: "The nineteenth century—however—began the task of cleansing and improving the conditions of life under which lived the creators of the new industrial age" ("Need . . . in America" 10). Likewise, in the nineteenth century comes the development and popularity of douching that advertisers in the 1920s take to calling "feminine" hygiene (Tone 151). The change to calling douching a hygienic practice stresses that if women fail to properly cleanse and control their bodies then

¹⁸ For similar examples see "Civilizing Power of Planned Parenthood" where Sanger includes the splitting of the atom as an example of man's mastery of the forces of the universe and "Creating World of Tomorrow" where Sanger speaks of the "great creative force within human nature itself" (1-2; 1).

¹⁹ There is a tradition among some writers to add (sic) behind every instance of a masculine noun or pronoun used as a generic. I like this practice as it signifies that "man" is often incorrect as well as limiting (e.g., suggesting doctors are always and naturally male). There are times, however, when (sic) seems inappropriate. This example of Sanger's rhetoric strikes me as just such a one. I call for a recognition of a (sic)-less "man" when the use of a masculine noun or pronouns as supposedly generic exposes a masculine bias that, itself, requires recognition.

²⁰ "Sexuality" includes another instance of Sanger blatantly naming industrial advance social evolution (2).

they risk social rejection (Sarch 35). The link of cleansing and disciplining women's bodies as part of social advance seems inescapable. Through the proper maintenance of bodies comes better society: "We want our young people who are to become parents to look upon their bodies as fit and perfect instruments . . . of human evolution" ("Creating" 8). The calculus of society that Sanger presents measures the goal of civilization with controlling the forces of nature in women's bodies to create industrially, perfect bodies.

The desire to produce perfect bodies explains the compulsion of social discourses to control women's bodies. This discussion reveals the ways in which Sanger uses the social goal of civilization as backing for birth control on the basis of contraception's ability to tame and harness women's bodies as a manifestation of unindustrialized nature. Such arguments for birth control omit any discussion or interest in the benefit of contraception to women personally. Talk of civilization directs attention to masculine goals of industrial progress for the sake of national interests. The definition Sanger offers of civilization focuses on the importance of controlling reproduction that the nation might evolve socially. Description of the savage and the civilized reduces the distinction to the ability to intelligently control animal instincts, which constructs women's bodies as the uncivilized element in society. The nation, then, achieves social progress by imposing control upon women's bodies in the industrial tradition of conquering nature. Within the argument for the control of women's bodies Sanger's uses "man" as a supposedly generic term for humans that often implies masculine interests.

"Birth Control and Racial Betterment"²¹

Sanger's expression that society advances itself toward the goal of civilization through the control of women's bodies makes it so that she can then launch into a eugenic critique of

²¹ The title comes from an article of the same name in the *Birth Control Review*.

society. The eugenic arguments in Sanger's campaign for birth control implicitly indicate the need for state, medical control of women's bodies to produce a higher quality citizenry. Sanger's eugenic track of rhetoric focuses on two basic points: defining the problem of the feeble-minded in society and explaining the solutions to decrease the unfit population. The discussion of controlling the reproduction of the feeble-minded in Sanger's rhetoric often eludes direct mention of women and women's bodies. Despite Sanger's silence of overtly naming women's bodies in her eugenic arguments, the concern for regulating women's reproduction always runs just below the surface. As I have discussed, since the beginning of her career Sanger consistently relates contraceptive means to women's bodies. Sanger's framing of social progress emphasizes this theme as she advocates civilizing society by controlling women's reproduction. Her explanation of eugenic problems and solutions replicates the focus on women's bodies. The definition of the eugenic problems in the US that Sanger offers paints the picture of a dangerous number of feeble-minded people at large in the general population who deter the path to industrial notions of progress by corrupting the democratic process, perpetuating immorality, disease, and crime, and reproducing feeble-minded offspring in high numbers. The problem of women's bodies producing socially undesirable children is submerged in this scene. The solutions to the eugenic crisis Sanger offers consist of birth control as the first choice and sterilization when contraception fails. That Sanger's whole career focuses on women's right and access to birth control remains an underlying assumption in these arguments and strengthens the assumption that the state and the medical industry must intervene to discipline women's bodies, conform them to predetermined ideals of operation. The belief that the feeble-minded reproduce feeble-minded at high rates in conjunction with Sanger's arguments that society must control the wild, reproductive energies of women's bodies depicts women as producing unfit citizens at dangerous rates. As before, society

must gain a control of women's bodies even through sterilization, in order to save itself from its savage nature and advance toward civilization.

Birth control provides the primary means of controlling women's bodies in Sanger's schema, but when birth control fails the state must intervene and permanently cease women's reproduction of unfit citizens through sterilization. Sanger's rhetoric illustrates three problems in the crisis of the unfit with regard to the danger they present to society. First, Sanger paints the problem of the unfit in the US as reaching a crisis due to the high number of feeble-minded people in society, which reduces the quality of life for the whole nation. Second, Sanger represents the problem of the unfit in society as exacerbating itself because of their high fertility rate. Third, she depicts the fit as having the responsibility to assist in reproducing more fit children to offset the damage done by the unfit. In this logic women's bodies become reproducing objects that must be regulated according to state needs.

The first means by which Sanger represents the crisis of the unfit concentrates in the escalating number of feeble-minded in society. Key in Sanger's discussion of eugenics lies the cloudy notion of who constitutes the unfit. Most often, Sanger speaks of the unfit as those with intellectual handicaps, which has such a broad definition anyone of Sanger's choosing can be caught in its net. Consistently, those deemed unfit in some way hinder the advance of social goals. The blame for low value production often falls to the government for failing to properly controlling women's bodies to prevent the reproduction of those deemed unfit: "The Government of the United States deliberately encourages and even makes necessary by its laws [against contraception] the breeding—with a breakneck rapidity—of idiots, defectives, diseased, feeble-minded and criminal classes" (Address 100). The statement indicting the government underlines the importance of the state controlling women's bodies for public benefit. The reference to laws

mandating reproduction points to the laws affecting women's access to birth control (since condoms are legal at this time) thus revealing the interest of Sanger and others in eugenic control of women, specifically. The definition and extent of the problem, however, rests upon what constitutes feeble-mindedness. The definition of feeble-mindedness remains somewhat vague in the eugenics movement, as already discussed in chapter four. In *The Pivot of Civilization* Sanger provides a definition of feeble-mindedness that substitutes one equivocal term, like "feeble-mindedness," for others: "Mental defect and feeble-mindedness are conceived essentially as retardation, arrest of development, differing in degree so that the victim is either an idiot, an imbecile, feeble-minded or a moron, according to the relative period at which mental development ceases" (250). Defining feeble-mindedness by using terms like "moron" and "imbecile" still leaves room for quite a bit of subjectivity in determining who is feeble-minded. Sanger also moves back and forth between the terms "feeble-minded" and "unfit." The ways in which Sanger uses these terms demonstrates that "unfit" most often correlates to concerns about mental abilities but on occasion includes issues of physical abilities as well.²²

Because of the looseness in defining the condition of the problem, Sanger, like so many other eugenicists of the time, can depict the problem in somewhat drastic terms. Sanger explains that feeble-mindedness threatens the nation because of the prevalence of the feeble-minded at large in society who bring down the standard of living for the fit, which makes a compelling case for the government to control women's bodies from the threat they breed. A statement from *The Pivot of Civilization* outlines Sanger's concerns about the dangers of feeble-mindedness: "We do not object to feeble-mindedness simply because it leads to immorality and criminality. . . . We object because both are burdens and dangers to the intelligence of the community" (*Pivot* 204).

²² For an example of Sanger using "unfit" to describe physical abilities see her discussion of two blind parents who continue to have blind children ("Sterilization: A Modern").

The passage emphasizes the danger of women who produce feeble-minded citizens to social evolution while also naming the threats to morality and safety. The description of the problem Sanger provides explains a threat level by arguing that institutions have failed to contain the feeble-minded: “The great majority of mental defectives are not in institutions, but are at large in the community” (“Birth Control: Yes or No [II]”). The inability of institutions to contain the feeble-minded suggests the need to control the supply of the unfit.

The need to control the unfit’s numbers relates to concerns of national welfare, such as criminality, because Sanger links feeble-mindedness and social ills. She argues that the feeble-minded affect the national goal of progress through hindering the democratic process and perpetuating social ills (i.e., immorality, disease, and crime). She defines eugenics as “the attempt to solve the problem from the biological and evolutionary point of view” (*Pivot* 232). The fusion of biological and evolutionary matters implies the importance of controlling biological functions to achieve social evolution. The threat to social evolution by the feeble-minded rests upon the ways in which the feeble-minded encumber the US political process: “Eighty five percent of our population have an I. Q. below that of a fifteen year old juvenile. Yet in a democracy the majority rules” (Tucson 1).²³ In her speech to the Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference Sanger notes the specific dangers to democracy posed by the feeble-minded: “The moron’s vote [is] as good as the vote of the genius” (Address 100).²⁴ Both of these instances cast the actual danger of the feeble-minded to society as hindering the ability of the fit to properly run the country. Another danger of the feeble-minded found in

²³ Sanger makes a similar statement regarding the extent of the feeble-minded as demonstrated by those who served in the first world war: “The figures of those men drafted for service for the World War [I] in the United States, showed a level of about 12 years, mentally” (“Human” 2).

²⁴ In *Woman and the New Race* Sanger calls for the reproduction of individuals physically and mentally fit who “are the ideal of a democracy” (44).

Sanger's rhetoric addresses a relationship of feeble-mindedness to disease, immorality, and criminality:

Other studies and numbers indicate the close relationship between feeble-mindedness and the spread of venereal scourges. . . . [Seventy five] per cent of the prostitute class is infected with some form of venereal disease, and that 75 per cent of the infected are mentally defective. . . . At least 25 per cent of the inmates of our prisons . . . are mentally defective. (*Pivot* 204)

Though Sanger's statement refrains from arguing legal and moral delinquency as the result of feeble-mindedness, she clearly implies that the feeble-minded have a greater propensity to spread and perpetuate social ills like prostitution and crime. These dangers to society emanate from women's production of unfit citizens.

The problems of the unfit that Sanger explains literally multiply themselves. The second point in Sanger's rhetoric on the crisis of the unfit emphasizes feeble-minded reproduction. The greatest threat the feeble-minded pose to society emanates from, what Sanger believes to be, a high fertility rate among the feeble-minded that holds back society from achieving progress toward civilization. The over production of the feeble-minded that Sanger speaks of implies the uncivilized and anti-capitalist nature of the unfit who, then, pose a threat to social evolution. Secure national interests and a civilized nation requires society to better control the reproduction of women's bodies. The link between feeble-mindedness and disease, immorality, and criminality further proves the dangers of the government failing to properly civilize all citizens. Sanger names four "basic truths" about the unfit that affect national security and explains feeble-mindedness as most always passed from one generation to the next thus continuing to lower the national standard of living (Tucson 1). The perpetuation of the problem, however, goes unnoticed: "Few voices have been heard asking why the people of this country should be asked to drag this increasingly heavy ball and chain forever" ("Human" 7). The increasing burden of

the feeble-minded arrives primarily from the high birth rate Sanger finds among those deemed feeble-minded: “The feeble-minded are innately fertile and multiply faster than the normal. They have no fore-thought and no self-restraint” (“Need . . . in America” 13).²⁵ The belief in the innate over-fertility of the feeble-minded and their lack of control signals a concern about humans civilizing their savage nature through the control of women’s reproduction.

Sanger offsets her discussion about feeble-minded reproduction with consideration of reproduction by the fit. In her third point on the crisis of the unfit Sanger argues that where women’s bodies that produce the unfit pose a threat to national interests, the fit have a responsibility to shore up the damage done by the feeble-minded. The fit can lessen the negative impact to society created by the feeble-minded through increasing the ratio of the fit to the unfit and insuring that they, the fit, only reproduce when their children demonstrate the potential to contribute talent to society rather than burden the government. Sanger’s *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922) contains a chapter titled “The Dangers of Cradle Competition” in which she argues against positive eugenics (calling for fit classes of people to have more children) finding that whenever a family increases in size the problems of child mortality and financial strain always increase. By 1928, Sanger argues for more of certain types of people in subtle ways: “Any intelligent analyst must admit that today there are too many of the wrong kind of people in our world, and too few of the right kind” (“Need for Birth Control”). This passage allows for the reader to interpret Sanger as saying that the low number of the “right kind” of people is a ratio which needs to be corrected by reducing the number of unfit. Similarly, the next year Sanger suggests the reduction in the births of the unfit, whom she calls weeds, that geniuses might have

²⁵ In *The Pivot of Civilization* Sanger states a similar fact that she purports has been found in every country but also criticizes a lack of scientific study to validate her claim of a causal relationship between feeble-mindedness and high fertility (247, 202).

a better chance rising up (“Genius” 23). By 1944, Sanger makes a naked call for an increase in the production of fit children as she makes predictions about the state of birth control (using the term planned parenthood) in 1964 as including “encouragement to those who should bear more children” (“From” 8).

Despite Sanger’s call for an increase proportion of geniuses she does broaden her definition of ideal citizens to include traits outside typical academic standards: “We have got to change the inference that the quality of our population depends upon the birth rate of college graduates. . . . There are just as sound qualities to be found in the Arizona cowboys, in the artisans, the mechanics, and artists” (“Doors” 6). The implication of these comments references the desirability of “normal” people against the concern about the unfit. Those who Sanger regards as valuable citizens, like cowboys and mechanics, have a duty to reproduce themselves, but only if their children promise to be equally valuable to society: “A woman or couple should not have children when the children they have already are not normal, even though they themselves are normal, but the children they have are subnormal” (“Need . . . in America” 15). The statement reminds fit citizens of their social obligation to produce only those children who can contribute to society. Also in this passage Sanger underscores the relation of eugenics as a topic concerning women first and couples second. The order emphasizes that efforts at change must control women’s bodies as the primary mode of adjusting the composition of families.

The combination of concerns about feeble-mindedness in society and women’s social responsibility form the center of Sanger’s eugenic worries. At the crux of her eugenic rhetoric lies the concern that women reproduce unfit bodies, primarily the feeble-minded, who impede society’s path to progress because of uncivilized rates of producing citizens that hinder the democratic process and perpetuate immorality, disease, and crime at rates faster than do the fit.

Amidst this discussion comes the implication that women's bodies must respond in accordance with the national situation: women who produce unfit children should cease reproduction and women who produce fit children should continue to reproduce.

“Sterilization: A Modern Medical Program for Human Health and Welfare”²⁶

Bringing together eugenic studies and Sanger's ever-present interest in women's reproductive functions presents solutions to the problem that emphasizes government intervention in the management of women's bodies. Sanger uses eugenic arguments to call for the government support of birth control including the practice of compulsory sterilization as a way of civilizing and improving the production of women's bodies. Sanger's discussion of the government's need to involve itself in women's reproductive lives presents an ironic break to her early arguments for women's autonomous control of their bodies. The movement in Sanger's rhetoric from her early rhetorical career to this moment seems unlikely. Sanger had once railed against the domination of women's bodies by the upper class through laws prohibiting birth control. Her arguments for compulsory sterilization submit women's reproductive behavior to the control of others, this time taking the right of maternity away from women.

Sanger prescribes sterilization as a means to the goal of civilization. Birth control and sterilization represent the ability of the government to employ science to control the national production of its citizens mimicking a market-management ideology that monitors producers to cease low quality production.²⁷ Within Sanger's sterilization arguments she articulates the need for the US to regulate the production of its citizens to socially evolve and justifies sterilization as a necessary tool in regulating human reproduction. Sanger advocates for governmental

²⁶ The title comes from a 1951 manuscript of the same name.

²⁷ When I speak of “birth control,” I refer to non-surgical practices (condoms, pessaries, etc.).

intervention in reproduction to improve the intelligence of the nation, by prohibiting some people from reproducing, as an expression of communal goals' supremacy over individual interests, something already seen in US immigration laws. Sterilization, then, becomes a justifiable remedy to apply the advances of medical science to control women's bodies when women prove too careless to do so or represent too much of a threat through the low quality of their reproduction.

As Sanger moves to explaining the role of birth control and sterilization in a eugenic program, she employs the theme of civilization to justify governmental regulation of women's reproduction. Toward the argument of social progress through medical control of women's bodies Sanger makes four points. One, Sanger describes the improved intelligence of the nation through limiting the reproduction of the feeble-minded. Two, she calls for negative-eugenic practices, focusing on who should not reproduce rather than who should reproduce more. Three, Sanger justifies the use of eugenics to achieve community goals which trump individual interests. Four, she proves the precedent for the government regulating the population found in US immigration laws.

The first argument for the government's intervention that Sanger provides requires using medical advances for national improvement. She calls for governmental regulation of women's bodies using the tools developed by industrialism, such as automobile-traffic management and medical advances, to control the quality of reproduction. Because of the eugenic concerns of society regarding the democratic process, crime, and so forth, the government must work toward eugenic progress: "We can never permanently improve the general standard of life until we greatly lessen the precaution of physically and mentally unfit to the general population" ("Program" 2). Sanger clearly explains that the improvement of the US standard of living must

come from a regulation of reproduction: “While the congestion of American population in our cities has forced upon us a system to regulate traffic in city streets and country roads, America as a nation refuses to open her eyes to the problem of biological traffics and *racial roads*. Biologically this country is ‘joy-riding’ with reckless carelessness to an inevitable smash-up” (emphasis original) (Address 100). The imagery of regulating traffic corresponds neatly to regulating the flows of women’s bodies; keeping too many children from arriving at one time insures community safety. Elsewhere, Sanger builds on the idea of industrial advance and reproductive regulation as she chides the use of scientific progress for helping the unfit: “Why should we take pride in the advance of medical and surgical skill, when its use is to be the salvaging of the defectives, the morons and prolonging the lives of the diseased” (“Women of the Future” 1). The statement implies a misapplication of medical resources to helping the unfit survive rather than using medical technology to cease their reproduction.

The application of medical knowledge and skill to controlling reproduction promises to advance the effort toward national betterment. Working under the assumption that large families cause an decrease in intelligence, Sanger envisions the practice of birth control as furthering the march toward civilization through improving the national intellect. Sanger finds that the nation can only achieve social evolution by employing birth control to increase the intelligence of those born. The promise of progress toward civilization by helping women use birth control is sometimes cast in broad, nonspecific terms: “We believe that Birth Control is the key to the greatest of human problems,—that of reconciling humanitarianism with race improvement” (“Need . . . in America” 3).²⁸ Similar statements by Sanger promise that birth control brings

²⁸ This statement from 1931 differs little from an article Sanger wrote twelve years earlier, in 1919: “We believe that if such information [of birth control] is placed within the reach of all we will have made it possible to take the first greatest step toward racial betterment” (“Prudence”).

about “a cleaner race” (“Morality and” 14) and “makes possible the creation of a new race . . . strong and fit as instruments to carry on the torch of human destiny” (Town Hall). The logic Sanger uses predicts that, by lowering the number of children born, the strain upon individual families and the nation as a whole lessens and a better breed of people can develop. A rare mention of the relation between eugenics and women’s personal benefits names the importance to women of having physically fit children: “No mother should be forced through ignorance to bring a crippled, defective or sickly child into the world” (“Birth Control and Civil Liberties” 14). Intelligence, however, is the primary characteristic Sanger sees as distinguishing a better population, with maternal health as mentioned a latter benefit: “Birth control can be used as a means to raise the level of the intelligence of our population; to lower infant and maternal mortality” (“Doors” 7).²⁹ The desire for a more intelligent population comes from Sanger’s quest for the nation to advance toward industrial progress thereby achieving firmer standing as a civilized nation.

Despite the intense eugenic tone of Sanger’s rhetoric, she restrains herself from calling for a total application of eugenic philosophy. The second point of Sanger’s eugenic arguments for using of birth control articulates the use of negative eugenics only, restricting the reproduction of some and not forcing the reproduction of others. A thorough eugenic philosophy specifies who should reproduce and who should not. Using birth control to designate reproducers for a desirable nation transforms contraceptives from a possible means of women’s liberation into an instrument of the state better controlling its citizenry. Sanger clarifies that she supports the role of birth control for preventing the reproduction of certain kinds of people while shying

²⁹ Likewise, Sanger declares in the closing paragraph of *Woman and the New Race* that from the improved population created by birth control another Newton, Socrates, Plato and Jesus will come, all of whom society will accept this time (234).

away from prescribing the reproduction of others, a distinction that becomes quite blurry in her arguments. An article Sanger wrote in the *Birth Control Review* explains the goal of the birth control movement as seeking to practice only negative eugenics, prohibiting unfit from reproducing without trying to get fit couples to mate (“Birth Control and Racial”). Sanger’s orientation toward a capitalist discourse depicts women’s bodies as producers and leads her to call for eugenic control using market-management language: “The supply of defectives should be cut off at the source” (“Birth Control: Yes or No? [II]”). The cutting off of a bad “supply” of humans initially means the use of birth control but later includes the practice of, sometimes compulsory, sterilization: “To me this need of checking the defective increase of our population is so imperative that immediate action is necessary and sterilization is the answer” (“New Day” 5). Though Sanger sees herself as only applying the principles of negative eugenics by stopping the reproduction of some, one cannot separate notions of positive and negative, which mutually imply one another.³⁰ The discussion of Sanger’s eugenic rhetoric has already shown that Sanger did sometimes encourage fit couples to reproduce. The emphasis in Sanger’s rhetoric, however, almost always discusses who should not reproduce rather than who should.

The arguments Sanger makes about who should not reproduce open the door for the government to involve itself directly in the regulation of women’s bodies. The third point in Sanger’s eugenic control arguments justifies government involvement for the sake of putting the collective before the individual. The established dangers of the unfit to society and the described need to control of women’s bodies allows Sanger to invite the government to regulate women’s bodies. Using metaphors that compare women’s bodies to animals and plants furthers Sanger’s arguments by constructing women as but another object for domestication to improve output. In

³⁰ Kenneth Burke provides an especially insightful discussion of the intrinsic relationship between the positive and the negative in the second part of “A Dramatistic View of the Origins of Language.”

defense of a call for the state to control reproduction, Sanger invokes the importance of community goals over individual rights: “The rights of the individual could be well safeguarded but in no case should the rights of society, of which he or she is a member, be disregarded” (“Human” 17). Dismissing individuals’ concerns for communal progress allows her to ignore the humanity of those whom she seeks to control. The dehumanization of reproductive objects, those without agency, comes through in the use of animal husbandry and gardening metaphors: “In [the] animal industry the poor stock is not allowed to breed; in gardens the weeds are kept down” (“Human” 13).³¹ These metaphors invite control by the government, who already regulates livestock and agriculture production.

To control who reproduces, Sanger calls for a Baby Code that specifies which individuals should have permission based on physical health, mental health, and economic standing (“License”).³² The idea of the government certifying fit parents seems farfetched and likely served as a rhetorical device to draw attention to the issues. Suggesting something as radical as a Baby Code provides Sanger with another opportunity to elaborate on the dangers of unplanned offspring to families and the nation and to speculate about means by which the government could involve itself, including the use of agricultural-like subsidies for encouraging parents to avoid having more children (“License” 9). Sanger calls for a government bureau to manage reproduction, declaring, “You cannot have a garden if you let *weeds* overrun it” (emphasis original) (“Children’s” 1). In “A License for Mothers to Have Babies,” she explains the government regulation of reproduction to maintain a healthy garden. The full page newspaper article includes a half-page illustration of a genealogical chart showing the reproduction of

³¹ For similar examples of these metaphors see “The Children’s Era” (1), “The Need for Birth Control in America” (1), and “This Business of Bearing Babies” (12).

³² Sanger also calls for a bureau to manage reproduction of children in “Program for the Future” (4).

individuals in Colonial finery springing from the respectable Mrs. Elizabeth Tuttle Edwards contrasted to the “disastrous consequences” of thieves and drunks from a John McGurk (shown wearing prison stripes) and Ada Stebbins (wearing what appears to be a maid’s uniform). Sanger remarks elsewhere that “Nature eliminates the weeds, but we turn them into parasites and allow them to reproduce” (“Is Race” 25). The literal illustration of respectable and unfit strands of reproduction in Sanger’s “License” article visually demonstrates the strain of “weeds” and the beauty of “flowers.” The class biases of those represented as ideal and unfit, respectively, in combination with concerns about weeding a garden of fit citizens reveal Sanger’s ideal citizens as those most like the upper class.

Sanger proves that her call for governmental involvement is within the government’s norm of conduct. The fourth point in Sanger’s arguments for government regulation explains US policy precedent for monitoring the nation’s composition. By referencing the US policy on immigration, Sanger demonstrates the government’s already existing interest to control reproduction. As I explained earlier, the US government established an immigration policy in 1924 to set ceilings for the number of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants entering the country. Sanger’s analysis of this action shows the government interested in eugenics but poorly engaging itself with the problem: “[The quota system] is a crude method adopted by the United States to control our population” (Address 99). The crudity of the approach lies in avoiding eugenic principles to manage the citizenry of those already within the country (“New Day” 6). Sanger questions the policy of “[keeping] out those individuals who will become a burden upon the state” but not doing anything about “the enemy within” (“Need . . . in America” 12). The critique of the existing citizenry management policy gives Sanger the basis to articulate a more aggressive social planning policy. This fourth point in Sanger’s rationale for the government

regulating reproduction builds on her arguments for improving national intelligence, using negative eugenics, and placing the community before the individual. Together, these four points enable Sanger to make the case for sterilization.

Sterilization as a tool for managing the eugenic makeup of the nation demonstrates the fullest extent to which she calls for the subjugation of women's bodies to state interests. Sanger's sterilization arguments operate under three assumptions. One, sterilization is but a tool of industrial progress exhibited by medical advancement, and, therefore, a means for advancing social evolution. Two, the government must focus its attention on regulating women's reproduction less so than men's. Three, women require sterilization when either they cannot properly control their bodies themselves or they produce unfit offspring who will burden society. Where she had once argued that birth control represents women's revolt against state domination, Sanger suggests compulsory sterilization for the sake of improving national interests.

Sanger's pro-sterilization position represent her interest in the onward march of industrial progress. Historian, Carole McCann notes that though Sanger supported the practice of sterilization she withheld a degree of support because "If sterilization were widely implemented, then legal access to contraception might appear to be unnecessary to racial betterment" (117-18).³³ Even still, Sanger discusses sterilization as a necessary part of improving the quality of US citizens. In a 1944 speech, Sanger makes predictions about the state of birth control in 1964, hoping that in twenty years "the correction of sterility is beside child spacing in every health program" ("From" 7). The prediction of the future Sanger makes is a hope for progress as

³³ As an example, see "Prudence or Prudery in Sex Matters" in which Sanger endorses sterilization of the unfit but expresses greater concern for those who have children they cannot afford because they have not been given access to birth control.

demonstrated when she salutes the legislators of 27 states with sterilization laws for being “far sighted and fearless” (“Sterilization” 2). The prediction and appreciation of sterilization laws demonstrates Sanger’s understanding of sterilization as another act of industrial progress toward the goal of civilization.

Sanger’s promotion of compulsory sterilization and her persistent focus on women’s bodies builds the second point in her agenda, contributing to legislative and medical discourses that sterilize women more frequently than men. Though sterilization laws affect both men and women, the records of sterilization rates demonstrate a greater interest in preventing women’s reproduction. Three discourses operate collaboratively in the case of women’s sterilization. One of these discourses includes Sanger’s advocating the control of women’s bodies to serve state interests. Another discourse has the legal system creating and supporting compulsory sterilization laws as a necessary procedure to protect the public from unfit citizens’ reproduction. The third of these discourses comes from the medical community’s perception of women’s bodies as needing intervention and control. Sanger’s ongoing rhetorical theme of controlling women’s bodies interrelates with the combined discourses of the legal and medical communities to collaboratively support the sterilization of women at rates higher than men. In *The Pivot of Civilization* Sanger calls for the practice of quarantining the feeble-minded as an alternative to sterilization, but even then she focuses on the isolation of women’s bodies: “Every feeble-minded girl or woman of the hereditary type, especially of the moron classes, should be segregated during the reproductive faces” (235). Not surprisingly, then, the national statistic for sterilization shows higher rates of sterilization for women over men.

While some states sterilized men in greater numbers than women, the rate of sterilization in New England, where Sanger lived and agitated for birth control over many years, illustrates

the confluence of her rhetorical action with legal and medical discourses. No discourse causes another, but each discourse acts upon the other attempting to constrain or support each others' objectives. Accordingly, Sanger's discourse nor the legal and medical discourses caused one another, but, in this case, each supported the other contributing to an increased rate of sterilization of women compared to men. A table of individuals sterilized per state through 1940 shows that 30 states had cases of sterilization on record totaling 35,878 people nationwide.³⁴ Of those sterilized 14,900 were men and 20,978 women: or 41.5% men and 58.5% women. Comparing the rate of sterilization between men and women reveals women sterilized at a rate 40% greater than that of men. The distribution of sterilizations by states shows that in some states men were sterilized in comparable or greater numbers than women. In New England, where Sanger spent most of her time working for birth control, the statistics of those states with laws that allowed sterilization expose a striking disparity of distribution among men and women: New York, 1 man (2%) and 41 women (98%); Connecticut, 25 men (6%) and 393 women (94%); Maine, 14 men (7%) and 176 women (93%); New Hampshire, 73 men (17%) and 357 women (83%); and Vermont, 66 men (31%) and 146 women (69%).³⁵ Of the New England states, only Delaware (322 men [53%] and 288 women [47%]) had a comparable rate for men and women's sterilization (Table). The statistical evidence indicates a greater emphasis on controlling women's bodies, a common theme in Sanger's rhetoric.

Part of the rhetoric for sterilization that helps explain the disparity in men and women's rate of sterilization comes from Sanger's discussion of sterilization's use. The third point in Sanger's sterilization platform contributes to the over-arching rhetoric of sterilization by defining

³⁴ The year 1940 generally marks the end of compulsory sterilization in the US.

³⁵ New York's sterilization law was ruled unconstitutional for failing to provide patients with a trial to determine the necessity of their sterilization.

compulsory sterilization as necessary when women cannot control their bodies. Descriptions Sanger provides depict sterilization as enhancing the lives of all concerned. Sanger defends the viability of sterilization as a form of eugenic management on the basis that sterilization helps women who otherwise cannot control their bodies and protects society from those who have socially undesirable traits. According to Sanger, the incompetence of some women necessitates the practice of sterilization over the use of birth control because they cannot control their own bodies: “For those mothers—and there will always be such—who are too dull, too careless or too inert to use even simple methods, under direction, sterilization is indicated” (“Human” 16). Elsewhere Sanger calls for sterilization in cases where women have an unhealthy discomfort with touching their own genitals (“Sterilization: A Modern” 5-6). Carelessness and personal hindrances as indication for sterilization depicts some women as incapable of properly managing their bodies and creates a broad basis for recommending and even forcing sterilization. The strongest claim Sanger makes for the forced sterilization of those incapable of practicing birth control creates a double bind in which the lack of knowledge or interest in birth control proves the need for compulsory sterilization: “It is my firm belief that men and women of mental or physical maladjustment *would not want* to bring children into the world with their handicaps if they knew *how* to prevent it. There is no use expecting this group of people to practice contraception. The risk is too great. There should be permanent protection such as sterilization” (emphasis original) (“Sterilization” 1). By stating that if the unfit were fit they would not want to have children, Sanger creates a basis for forcing sterilization on grounds of incompetence demonstrated by the patient’s resistance.

Women with mental and physical handicaps also require sterilization because of the threat they pose to the nation. Given their risk of spreading their impediments to future

generations. Sanger describes those in need of sterilization as those “who never should have been born” (*Pivot* 207) and the “unfortunate as now fill our hospitals and institutions” (“Sterilization: A Modern” 4). The specific qualities Sanger singles out include mental and physical disabilities had by “the feeble-minded, the insane and the syphilitic” (“Prudence”) and “the blind, deaf mutes and others whose misfortunes are transmissible” (“Sterilization: A Modern” 3). By stopping the reproduction of these mothers Sanger hopes to stop the damage they do to society. Though Sanger avoids calling for the forced sterilization of criminals she seeks their compliance in ending criminal progeny, sometimes with a bit of arm twisting, suggesting inmates volunteer for sterilization as part of a request for parole: “A proper sympathetic lecture to these inmates regarding the benefits of sterilization would bring their consent and acquiescence to the operation” (“Sterilization” 3). Here again, the rationale for sterilization rests upon perpetuating the reproduction of dangerous citizens. Sanger’s persisting reason to sterilize those based on their potential burden or harm to society comes through in her discouragement of sterilization for the “fit”: “We do not think sterilization advisable for strong. Healthy people, for they may change their minds about having children in four or five years’ time” (“Margaret Sanger’s” 150). Here again, despite her preference for negative eugenics, Sanger encourages some to have children as a counterbalance to the unfit already born.

The eugenic arguments encouraging some to be sterilized and others to reconsider continue the theme in Sanger’s rhetoric of reproduction directed toward national goals. The solutions that Sanger offers to the eugenic problems of the nation reinforce the role of the government in managing the reproduction of women’s bodies. Sanger calls for the government to support birth control as a means of increasing intelligence by applying the principles of negative eugenics. The eugenic approach to social improvement relies upon placing community goals

before those of individuals, an interest already demonstrated by the US immigration policy. Sterilization emerges in Sanger's rhetoric as a solution to eugenic concerns that employs the advances of science to the control of women's bodies. The statistics on sterilization show the interest in controlling women's bodies when they are deemed too careless in controlling their bodies themselves or producing unfit offspring. Government control of women's bodies, sometimes compulsory, through birth control and sterilization seems acceptable in light of the dangers of the unfit to society that Sanger explains in defining the eugenic troubles of the nation. The need for eugenic control, itself, emanates from an established understanding that the nation must advance itself to the goal of civilization through the control of women's bodies.

CONCLUSION: WHY MUST WOMEN USE BIRTH CONTROL?

Sanger's rhetoric in the latter portion of her career calls for the control of women's bodies despite the libratory potentialities of birth control she focused on in her early career. The late themes in Sanger's career, however, are accompanied by greater legal success. Earlier I demonstrated that Sanger's rhetoric changed to focus increasingly on women's obligation to their family and country as a caregiver. Here, I find that the obligation Sanger articulates rests upon the state, who must manage women's bodies to control the quantity and quality of women's production. The collective concerns of Sanger reviewed in this chapter demonstrate a continuing focus with the control of an ovarian economy, an economy based on the reproduction of women's bodies. The theme of controlling women's reproductive economy in Sanger's rhetoric includes the shift in her orientation toward capitalism, in which she applies principles of market management to women's reproduction. When the economy of women's bodies exceeds the natural resources to support it, overproduction likewise threatens national safety and security. The emergence of a capitalist ideology in Sanger's rhetoric includes a push for civilizing the

nation by gaining control of the last frontier of industrial conquest, women's reproductive ability. The drive for civilization extends into a eugenic rhetoric that expresses a concern for the quality of citizens produced from women's bodies. Those women's bodies that produce citizens who hurt democracy and spread immorality, disease, and criminality represent an economy based on dangerous products that must be stopped through sterilization.

The themes discussed in this chapter reveal an ongoing production of women as objects and not subjects (as things controlled not actors with control), which bring about changes in laws on birth control. Such themes also line up with social discourses that see women as objects and not subjects. The industrial orientation of science frequently removes the idea of women's agency, preferring instead to invoke control of their bodies. The industrial mode of thinking and doing serves as fuel for Sanger's arguments on the capitalistic control of women's bodies and the civilizing of women's bodies that leads to controlling the amount and quality of women's reproduction. These justifications for birth control occur during the time when the laws affecting birth control change in favor of the birth control movement. Since her early days in the birth control movement Sanger railed against Comstock Act, which prohibited mailing contraceptive information and materials. The 1936 court decision (*US. v. One Package of Japanese Pessaries*) that struck down the Comstock Act's comes at a time when Sanger accepts into her rhetoric a discourse that discusses the state's obligation to manage women's bodies. By conforming her rhetoric to the demands of dominant discourses Sanger finds a greater access to swaying the decisions that affect women's access to birth control.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE SCOPE OF DISCIPLINE IN MARGARET SANGER'S CAREER

At the start of this project I discussed public attitudes toward Margaret Sanger before and after her daughter, Peggy's, death in 1915. In that instance, certain public discourses had cast Sanger as an opponent to maternity because she advocated birth control, but upon the death of her daughter and a subsequent publicity photo with her two mourning sons, public attitude toward Sanger framed her as maternally oriented. The example of public responses toward Sanger before and after her daughter's death provides one instance in Sanger's career of her challenging social norms, here the theme of women's maternity, before popular discourses conform her to an acceptable image of feminine behavior. This episode represents much of Sanger's experience advocating for birth control.

In the sweep of the US birth control movement during the early twentieth century, Sanger resists feminine norms even as she succumbs to perpetuating such discourses. Early in her career, she challenged ideas such as women's primary role of caregiving, expected place in the home, and natural subjection to men's will and interests, yet her rhetoric increasingly reiterates those very ideas. The general movement in Sanger's rhetoric begins by addressing women as subjects, those with the control of their bodies, and shifts to speaking about women as objects, those whose bodies need control by others. Within this change Sanger replicates normative social constructions of women's bodies as she calls for women to discipline their bodies—in the sense of conforming them to stated ideals—as she herself becomes disciplined by dominant social discourses. Sanger begins her career calling for working class women to emancipate themselves economically and socially through gaining the control of their bodies, which meant forming themselves in line with middle-class notions of bodily control. With time, Sanger continues to

reiterate discourses that construct women as always domestic as she instructs women in using birth control to improve themselves as mothers. The very discourses that Sanger initially challenges, those of capitalism and governmental regulation of women's lives, eventually co-opt her as she argues for state intervention to manage women's bodies. Capitalistic discourses' emergence in Sanger's rhetoric speaks of controlling the rate at which women reproduce as well as the quality of those produced. This movement from helping women emancipate themselves to subjecting them to governmental control mirrors Sanger's resistance to dominant discourses that eventually render her cooperative.

In her script for a 1954 appearance on Edward R. Murrow's *This I Believe*, Sanger discusses her involvement in the US birth control movement, ironically describing changes in her focus similar to what I find in her rhetoric. Sanger describes her career as beginning with an interest in helping women and gradually including a focus on serving the interests of the nation. Similarly, I argue in my analyses that the change to emphasizing national interests comes at the expense of women's needs. The narrative of her early years demonstrates Sanger's shifting emphasis from womanhood to motherhood: "I started my battle some forty years ago [from 1914]. The women, mothers whom I wanted to help, also wanted to help me; they too wanted to build beyond the self, in creating healthy children and bringing them up in life to be happy and useful citizens. I believed it was my duty to place motherhood on a higher level than enslavement and accident" ("This I"). The effort to help mothers, as women, that Sanger describes quickly becomes helping mothers, as caretakers of their children. The description of mothers' service in this quote, however, emphasizes women serving their children to better their country, as indicated by a concern for "useful citizens." The emphasis on helping women serve

their children and nation elevates the status of motherhood to overshadow women's personal needs and interests.

Sanger's summary of her latter years in the birth control movement names the change from helping women to focusing on helping society: "My interests have expanded from local conditions and needs, to a world horizon, where peace on earth may be achieved when children are wanted before they are conceived. A new consciousness will take place, a new race will be born to bring peace on earth" ("This I"). The change to focusing on a "world horizon" mimics the movement away from focusing on women to concentrating on national and global problems. Within that movement Sanger names her interest in world peace and a "new race." These concerns appear in her later rhetoric where she discusses the need to control population to prevent wars started by the shortage of natural resources, and where talks of improving the populations' eugenic qualities. In "This I Believe," Sanger alludes to changes in her career but fails to recognize the ironies and consequences produced by emphasizing national and global interests over those of women.

Ironic changes have been the central concern of this study. The following sections recap this project and point to future research. First, I review the previous chapters that frame and analyze Sanger's rhetoric, collectively demonstrating her resistance to discourses of women's social subjugation to men and her cooptation by those same very forces. Next, I move into considering the theoretical implications of this project, focusing on the utility of genealogical interpretation to present Sanger as resisting and supporting a series of social discourses. Last, I consider how Sanger's interview with Mike Wallace reprimands her at the end of her career for having upset social norms, implying that despite her cooptation by dominant discourse she continued to present a threat as a feminist radical.

PLACING SANGER IN THE CONTEXT OF DISCOURSE

The histories and analyses provided throughout this project come together and form a complex image of Sanger as a woman produced by discourses that she both challenges and supports. Briefly I review here the previous historical and analytical arguments I have made in this project. First, this review looks at the birth control movement's history before and after Sanger's career began. Then, attention falls to the literature on nineteenth century feminist rhetoric. Next, the focus turns toward genealogical interpretation as an analytical tool. Following the theoretical restatement, the summary recaps the discourses of history that socially locate and situate Sanger. Last, I review the key points from analyses of Sanger's rhetoric.

The history of the birth control movement demonstrates persisting efforts in the nineteenth century congealing in the twentieth century through Sanger's involvement in the movement. Her role as an epicenter of activity in the twentieth century provides the rationale for focusing this study on Sanger to the exclusion of others. Histories of the US birth control movement show dispersed activity in the nineteenth century that ranged from those arguing for women's access to contraception to those who provided actual information on preventing conception. The public activity of some on behalf of contraceptive rights in the nineteenth century, however, had no clear focus or organization. Early in the twentieth century Margaret Sanger began to agitate for birth control and quickly became the most recognizable figure in the birth control movement, which she helped to name. Accounts of the twentieth century's birth control movement and biographies of Sanger become indistinguishable from one another because of Sanger's intense activity in the movement. She "made history" by opening the first birth control clinic in the US, going to jail for it, and then beginning a national organization of clinics known today as the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Sanger proved prolific as

an author and speaker, writing for and editing two periodicals (the *Woman Rebel* and the *Birth Control Review*), authoring three books (*Woman and the New Race*, *The Pivot of Civilization*, and *Motherhood in Bondage*), and producing a number of articles and speeches over the thirty years from the 1910s to the 1940s. Through Sanger's direct agitation two court rulings changed laws on birth control, a 1918 ruling allowing New York doctors to prescribe birth control and a 1936 decision that opened the US mails to contraception, effectively legalizing birth control. Near the end of a long career Sanger helped locate financial resources for the creation of the first birth control pill.

Recognizing Sanger as a center of attention and activity must avoid excluding others' activity in the movement. This study has made Sanger's rhetoric representative of early twentieth century birth control politics as a means of managing a movement that includes many people over many years. Innumerable stories have been lost in recorded history, but some figures other than Sanger do remain. Emma Goldman and Mary Ware Dennett, for example, participated in the birth control movement before Sanger's time (in the case of Goldman) and early in her career (as with Dennett). Studying either of these women would also provide insight into twentieth-century birth control politics. The history of the birth control movement provided in this study discusses the contributions of both Goldman and Dennett without providing an in-depth analysis like that provided for Sanger. For the purposes of this study, I chose to concentrate on Sanger because the breadth of her career covers many of the issues contributing to the birth control movement's course through history, eclipsing the activity of people such as Goldman and Dennett. Histories of the twentieth-century birth control movement and biographies of Sanger include considerable overlap, suggesting the usefulness of studying Sanger's career to grasp major trends in the movement's history.

Understanding Sanger as a rhetor requires creating a relation between her and the tradition of feminist rhetoric coming before her. The review of nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric demonstrates that, despite their departure from feminine norms by speaking in public, most feminist rhetors conformed to dominant notions of feminine domesticity (such as the cult of True Womanhood) by presenting themselves as helping others rather than themselves. Studies of nineteenth-century feminists' rhetoric reveal a pattern of women relenting to dominant discourses about femininity as part of their efforts to challenge those very ideas, which suggests Foucauldian theory's utility to understand the dynamics of discourse that perpetually produce women within feminine norms. Nineteenth-century US culture presented white, middle-class norms of femininity that judged all women and chastised them for taking to the podium. Some contemporary reports of feminist rhetors during this period ignore the social forces compelling women to comply with conventional notions of feminine behavior, primarily fulfilling care-taking responsibilities. Other analyses discuss the gendered nature of women's public speaking, how their womanhood uniquely positioned them as speakers. These criticisms name the social norms nineteenth-century feminist speakers confronted, such as the home as women's realm, but they need a theoretical orientation to discuss the cycle of women resisting feminine norms and then capitulating to them by emphasizing their role to protect and care for others. Studies of nineteenth-century feminist movements—temperance, abolition, and suffrage—also demonstrate the habit of feminist rhetors to employ traditional themes of femininity in their arguments for social change.

I suggest the use of Foucauldian theory to explain the pattern in feminist rhetoric of women challenging and relenting to norms of femininity as a disciplining action in which social discourses inevitably force women into already established roles. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's

model of feminine style has become a dominant theory of feminist rhetoric. Though Campbell's theory works well to describe the differences of men and women's approach to speaking (e.g., cooperation versus competition) it does not adequately explain the dynamics of power compelling women to conform with dominant gender definitions. As an alternative, Foucault's theory suggests that resistance is always constrained by the fact that counter discourses must draw from ideas already present in culture. In other words, the available ideas for feminist rhetors to draw on inevitably include the elements of culture being challenged.

The need to discuss cultural discourses' influence upon rhetors seen in the review of feminist rhetoric demonstrates the need for a new theoretical attitude. I present genealogical interpretation as a fusion of the interpretivist and genealogical traditions that considers both the meaning of texts and the social discourses that produced them. The combined approach appropriates the genealogical definitions of power, discipline, history, and rhetors for interpretation's use. First, genealogy recognizes that power produces bodies by normalizing behavior and creating distinct categories of knowledge to contain how we can define a subject. This orientation, layered onto interpretation, studies rhetoric for the ways that language produces bodies and knowledge. Second, genealogy's view of power emphasizes the role of discipline to produce bodies, presenting ideals of behavior and then encouraging conformance and chastising dissenters. Adding interpretation to the idea of discipline directs the critic to consider how texts establish norms of behavior and then celebrate or demean those who vary from it. Third, the genealogical attitude toward history avoids teleology, writing events as building toward a clear end as interpretation often does, preferring instead to write a history that defies completion and a smooth coherency. Genealogical interpretation combines these two approaches to writing a history of many pieces, representing diverse discourses, and avoiding teleology or a sense of

completion. For that reason, genealogical interpretation seeks to combine many scraps of history that each tell “part” of the story, though they themselves may seem to contradict or contrast one another. Last, genealogical interpretation borrows heavily from genealogy to define rhetors’ role. Where interpretation, a la Lloyd Bitzer, sees rhetors as actors responding to the events of the scene, genealogy understands the scene as producing the rhetors’ utterances. Because a rhetor can only draw from the existing social discourses to create a text, genealogical interpretation sees rhetors as reiterating already present ideas rather than developing them from the vacuum of space. The fused approach of genealogy and interpretation requires an analysis of Sanger’s rhetoric as the product of social discourses.

The cultural forces lending to the production of Sanger’s arguments, both supporting and constraining her actions, demonstrate the ironic combination of discourses that contribute to Sanger’s rhetoric. The history of Sanger and the birth control movement I construct combines the cooperating and competing discourses emanating from public response to women speaking in public, medical and scientific discourse on women’s bodies, understandings of women’s sexuality, and those both opposing and supporting birth control. Studies of feminist rhetorical activity in the nineteenth century demonstrate that when women stepped outside the familiar bounds of domesticity to speak publicly they resituated themselves or were resituated by others within familiar expectations of white, middle-class womanhood. Some women, such as Priscilla Mason and Deborah Sampson Gannett apologized for violating feminine norms. Others, such as Amelia Bloomer and Mary Walker, transgressed feminine fashion lines by appropriating masculine-like attire. The public responses to Walker, especially, demonstrate the acceptability of controversial fashion choices so long as women remain sexually intriguing to men. Just as public responses forced women into familiar roles of womanhood, medical and scientific

discourses rendered women through capitalism's industrial lens, depicting women as less developed than men. Reviews of medical research provide a pattern that links women to lower-order animals, whereas men enjoy status as the most evolved creatures. Discourses that talk about women's reproductive behavior compare women to men in an effort to depict women's bodies as irregular and poorly producing against men's bodies constant, mass production. Scientific and social discourses create a tradition that defines women's sexuality as a function of reproduction and men's sexual desire. The research on women's sexuality often depicts women's sexual desire as directed toward reproduction and otherwise irrelevant. The exclusive focus on women's sexuality as reproductive links female desire to males' sexuality. Consequently, social discourses have often constructed women's sexual desire as something received from men, making men naturally sexual beings.

Where the above discourses contribute to the social milieu in which Sanger worked, the following groups directly engage the birth control movement either thwarting or supporting Sanger's efforts. Both groups challenging and advocating the early twentieth century US birth control movement focused on improving national interests, but through divergent means. Birth control opposition—primarily the Catholic church, anti-vice leagues, and people fearing race suicide—believed that practicing birth control would lead to social demise. The Catholic position maintained that women using contraception signaled dissolving feminine norms that threatened the status of the family in general. Anti-vice leagues, headed by people such as Anthony Comstock, suspected that contraceptive use would encourage lascivious behavior among upper class children and endanger their fortunes. Those predicting race suicide, chiefly Theodore Roosevelt, feared that the use of birth control among Anglo-Saxon Protestants would permanently reduce that portion of the US population to the point of extinction. Those

supporting the US birth control movement—primarily neo-Malthusians and eugenicists—hoped birth control would save the nation from the threat created by unregulated reproduction. Neo-Malthusians worried that an ever-increasing population would deplete resources required to support a population (e.g., food, housing, etc.). By reducing the rate of reproduction, birth control could improve the nation's future through preventing resource shortages. Eugenicists concerned themselves with the quality rather than the quantity of those born every year. Fears of feeble-mindedness in society founded many eugenicists' arguments, even justifying compulsory sterilization.

The significance of these selected strands of history manifests itself in the study of Sanger's birth control rhetoric. The analyses collectively demonstrate Sanger's shift from speaking of women as agents who control their bodies to objects needing outside regulation of their reproduction. In this movement, Sanger goes from emphasizing women's benefit provided by birth control to stressing national interests served by regulating women's bodies. Toward underscoring women's benefits, Sanger explicates the class and maternal improvement contraception offers. In both cases, Sanger's arguments take an ironic turn to replicate that which she first sought to challenge, namely class hierarchy and demands for maternity. Sanger's discussion of class complicates itself by describing birth control as a means of class liberation before succumbing to class maternalism, in which she replicates the role of a mother speaking down to her daughter. The tone of maternalism reconstitutes the class structure by setting upper-class women as models of bodily control whose example working class women ought to follow.

Another irony in Sanger's justification of birth control for women's liberation occurs in her explanation of the link between maternal duty and contraceptive practice. Sanger initially discusses birth control's potential to improve women's sexual pleasures and its ability to

empower women with personal definitions outside the bounds of motherhood. With time, Sanger de-emphasizes sexual liberation for a growing interest in women's maternal function. Despite having argued that women ought to consider definitions of womanhood other than maternity, Sanger explains women should use birth control to better serve their husbands, children, and nation. This transformation includes Sanger's description of motherhood as women's highest calling. The shift from birth control as women's pleasure to obligation parallels the ironic turn in her class arguments that first challenge and then replicate the class hierarchy.

The ironies Sanger presents as she discusses women's class status and maternal definition constitute the first half of the overall shift in Sanger's rhetoric. The second half of the global change in Sanger's arguments appears in her movement toward stressing birth control's ability to improve national status through controlling women's bodies, specifically the rate and quality of reproduction. The turn in Sanger's rhetoric to emphasize national interests over women's interests also marks an ironic break in her capitalistic orientation. Early in her career, Sanger defamed capitalism as a system of abuse, but, by the latter portion of her career, she employs language that mimics capitalist principles, namely the metaphors of market management to the control of women's reproduction. Sanger works within capitalistic metaphors that define children as products and women as producers, thereby requiring a monitored production to ensure a proper spacing between children. The need for regular spacing invites governmental controls to manage another production industry. Sanger links her capitalist-intoned arguments with neo-Malthusian concern for population control. Limiting women's reproduction to ensure national security, endangered by unchecked repopulation leading to resource shortages and war, defines women's uncontrolled bodies as a national threat and birth control as a national—not women's—issue.

Sanger's capitalist arguments that focus on production quantity lend themselves to eugenic sensibilities that direct attention to production quality. As an outgrowth of her industrial-capitalistic ideology, she emphasizes social evolution toward the goal of civilization. Birth control represents to Sanger a bodily control that demonstrates human's evolved status from the rest of the animal kingdom. Women who do not practice birth control, therefore, have a closer relationship to the wild animal kingdom than men. For this reason, Sanger calls for the scientific control of women's bodies as one more force of nature to be tamed in the quest for civilization. The emphasis on civilizing bodies paves the way for eugenic arguments concerning improved quality of production. Building on fears of a growing feeble-minded population that burdens society, Sanger calls for birth control as a way to improve the population as a means of social evolution—or race improvement—by limiting low value citizens' reproduction. When birth control fails to civilize the feeble-minded, Sanger suggests sterilization as a means for the government to control population quality and evolve the nation. The changes in Sanger's rhetoric that bring her from calling for women's class and personal liberation to their control under government regulation demonstrates social discourses' power to align rhetors' goals with dominant ways of thinking and doing.

The analyses of discourses and Sanger's rhetoric reviewed here create a picture of Sanger as the node through which many lines of thought pass in her career. From nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric a pattern emerges of women replicating the feminine norms they challenge. Similarly, Sanger resists class hierarchies that disrespected working class women only to succumb to a maternalistic tone that condescends to the very women she seeks to help. Also, where Sanger defied the discourse of woman as always maternal she later supports birth to improve women's service to their families and nation. The maternal emphasis buries her defense

of women's sexuality and makes it an issue concerning men, much like most post-Victorian sexual discourses. Neo-Malthusians and eugenicists' supporting discourses clearly lend themselves to Sanger's advocacy for birth control as she expresses those themes in overt terms. Birth control opponents' rhetoric, however, also manifests itself in Sanger's arguments. Those opposing birth control (the Catholic church, race suicide prognosticators, and anti-vice leagues) each express concern about the future of the nation in terms of morality and social composition. Sanger uses these very themes to illustrate that the wrong kind of citizens reproducing threaten the moral and genetic character of the nation. Her suggested controls for women's bodies, including sterilization, replicate the industrialist and scientific discourses that see women's bodies as under-evolved and out of control, thus requiring science and medicine's intervention. The undividable relation between Sanger and the aforementioned social discourses illustrates the web of relations any rhetor acts in and the need to approach that study through a genealogically oriented interpretation that seeks out the network of relations at play.

BEYOND MARGARET SANGER

One importance of studying Sanger's rhetoric lies in the lessons gleaned for future study. From the beginning I have positioned Sanger as an exemplary sample of birth control rhetoric in the early twentieth century. Such a positioning defines Sanger's career as important to the study of a particular movement, namely birth control. Beyond such a limited scope, I hope to demonstrate that from my study we learn something about rhetorical criticism as well as issues affecting women and their bodies. Lessons learned concerning rhetorical studies include—what Barbara Biesecker calls—radically contextualizing speech acts, choosing social history over a rhetor's biography as the impetus of action. Also, this study suggests a new approach to single speaker studies that balances the genealogical demands for breadth in textual sources with the

history of focusing energies upon one individual's work. For feminist critics, this study makes a theoretical suggestion and raises more questions than it answers. First, I suggest the applicability of Foucauldian theory to feminists-rhetorical scholarship as a way of understanding the power dynamics at play when women speak publicly. Second, studying Sanger's rhetoric raises questions as to whether saying women have an obligation to improve society burdens or celebrates women and whether the stated purpose of birth control (women's liberation or control) makes a difference when the net sum is legalized contraception.

The first lesson for rhetorical critics gleaned from studying Sanger's rhetoric pertains to critics' use of history in analysis. This study understands history as a dynamic process, creating effects upon rhetors and their rhetoric rather than providing mere background information. Rhetorical criticism has a history of individualism, focusing upon one speaker whose biography we study as a component in understanding his/ her rhetoric. Barbara Biesecker suggests breaking from "the ideology of individualism" to a mode of criticism that "radically contextualizes speech acts" (157). Biesecker's notion of radical contextualization places the rhetor within a web of discourses, redefining rhetors' activity as a product of social forces rather than personal experience and moving the analytical emphasis from individuals' actions to social forces and discourses. My study of Sanger has attempted to contextualize Sanger's rhetoric as a product of social discourses, such as scientific rhetoric that sees women's bodies as a force of nature to be controlled and eugenic arguments that seek to end the reproduction of those deemed undesirable.

Delving into the many lines of social reasoning that contribute to any rhetoric pushes critics toward a model of criticism that seeks out a complex constellation of social forces and away from teleological assumptions. The implication for using a history driven approach prompts the critic to consider the possibility of rhetors being overtaken by their own discourse.

The search for disparate histories liberates critics to recognize the lack of neatness in our criticism, that events in history sometimes compete more than they coordinate and rhetors' careers demonstrate that same sense of internal struggle. A teleological approach to the changes in Sanger's rhetoric, such as the difference in arguments that depict women as subjects then objects, might see her as conniving and willing to use whatever arguments suit her best. A genealogical, history-driven analysis understands Sanger as a product of competing social discourses and emblematic of her historical location. That Sanger's rhetoric includes so many ironic turns in which she challenges a discourse before succumbing to it suggests the potential for discourse to seemingly overtake a rhetor. Sanger's career begins with an intense focus on directly benefiting working class women. With time, her discourse shifts to emphasize controlling women's bodies. That movement occurs gradually as Sanger first tells working class women to follow the model of bodily discipline set by middle class women to control family size for their own benefit that becomes a rhetoric of controlling the nation's size for social improvement. Sanger's concern for women's health when pushed to have children expands to become a rhetoric of national, eugenic health when women's bodies are not controlled. In these instances, regarding size and health, Sanger contributes to a discourse that seemingly co-opts her initial efforts. Sanger does not become hostage to her own rhetoric so much as she feeds one ideology and thereby invests herself in it as it consequently morphs beyond her early themes.

The call to radically contextualize speech acts as a break from an individualist ideology in rhetorical studies threatens the tradition of single-speaker analyses, or, stating the matter as a question, "Wither 'great speaker' studies?" Though challenging an over-emphasis upon the individual, Biesecker defends continuing single-speaker studies but only as part of a historically-centered approach: "Although the historiographical approach advocated here does not deny that

over time distinguishable and distinguished speaking subjects emerge, it does suggest that the conditions of possibility for their emergence must be located elsewhere” (157). “Great speaker” studies have the asset of meticulous archival research, that dedicate significant time and energy to recreate a speaker’s career. Biesecker only suggests that the critic divert energies spent rewriting the speaker’s biography into developing the historical contingencies that made the individual’s rhetoric possible. Studies, such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s, that go into archives to find the work and words of women often overlooked by historians and critics alike deserve proper respect for their contribution to feminist study. The historically-contingent, genealogical approach, like their one used in my own study of Sanger, would add to Campbell’s work the historical dynamics that brought about Susan. B. Anthony’s rhetoric, for example.

Despite the respect for single-speaker studies’ archival research, genealogy requires an answer to selecting a particular rhetor as “distinguished,” to use Biesecker’s adjective. The continuation of single-speaker studies requires ample justification to focus on one rhetor at the exclusion of others who collaborate in the events under study. Studying birth control rhetoric by focusing on Sanger represents accepting a bit of synecdoche, accepting a part for the whole, here Sanger for the US birth control movement in the early twentieth century. Earlier I discussed the utility of focusing upon one strand in a web of discourses, in this case a string tagged Margaret Sanger, rather than becoming uselessly tangled in more lines of discourse from the birth control movement’s matrix than one study can handle. With that principle in mind, I must also justify the choice of Sanger as the line of study. Why not, one might ask, study Mary Ware Dennett, Emma Goldman, or those who seem to have been forgotten in writing history?¹ One answer to the question: surely I could, and such studies would likely tell me something new about the US birth

¹ Upon hearing my dissertation topic, one renowned feminist-rhetorical scholar provided the comment, to the effect, “Mary Ware Dennett is the unsung hero of the US birth control movement.”

control movement. Another answer to the question: because, as I have said already, Sanger seems to have played such a pivotal and lengthy role in the movement, she provides a greater source of information on birth control in the US than, say, Dennett or Goldman. Furthermore, the contrasts and ironies within Sanger's rhetoric stimulated my own rhetorical interests, leading me to dedicate the time and energy this project represents. The issues of radically contextualizing speech acts and reconsidering single-speaker studies must return to the question, "Wither 'great speaker' studies?" I say, "no," but critics must undertake single-speaker studies with a consciousness to the genealogical demands for a historically-contingent analysis that also justifies the limited scope upon one speaker.

Where this study directs future rhetorical criticism the contribution to feminist interests includes both a theoretical offering as well as questions for further contemplation. First, I have intended to demonstrate in this study the utility of using Foucault's theories of power and discourse to understand issues that produce both women's rhetoric and their bodies in culture. Second, the analysis of Sanger raises question about means and ends that, one, struggle between honoring and obligating women and, two, achieving primary goals through less than ideal means. Early in this study I reviewed the literature on nineteenth-century feminist rhetoric, finding a tradition in which women either conformed to dominant feminine ideals or received public response that resituated the women within established feminine traditions. Such patterns demonstrate disciplines, in the Foucauldian sense, that seek to produce all people in accordance with an ideal through encouraging compliance and reprimanding deviation. Using Foucault's theory of power and discourse in this project enabled me to contemplate how Sanger, who begins ardently challenging traditional feminine models, succumbs to them, replicating their philosophies in her rhetoric. Carole McCann's study of the US birth control movement lacks

what I have attempted to provide, a concentrated study of Sanger's rhetoric and a contribution to understanding the feminist rhetoric's power dynamics. Foucault's understanding of power's ability to always form bodies and knowledge in accordance with predetermined models and contain resistance works nicely to explain the process by which feminist rhetors, Sanger being but one example, often conform their utterances and themselves to that which they challenge. Though Foucault neglects to discuss the social forces acting upon women as gendered subjects and objects, the use of his theory in feminist rhetorical studies may help to further our understanding of the unique social forces at play when women speak.

Where I suggest using Foucault as a contribution to feminist studies I can only raise more questions when it comes to the lessons of Sanger's rhetoric for women's social status. Both questions I offer revolve on issues of means and ends. First, does the use of national service and obligation themes by Sanger celebrate more than it constrains women; or, how does the means' tone affect the end? Second, what difference does it make if feminists achieve their goal by means that undermine women's subjecthood; or does the means used matter when the end is achieved? Toward the first question, the possible implications of using obligation themes to define women's ability, I reflect upon Sanger's ostensible, feminist intent and the easy feminist rhetorical read. Sanger concludes the opening chapter of her first book, *Woman and the New Race* (1920), with the decree that when a woman has access to birth control "she will not stop at patching up the world; she will remake it" (8). Almost ten years earlier, in 1911, Sanger writes an article for the socialist publication the *New York Call* titled, "To Mothers—Our Duty." In these texts and elsewhere, Sanger celebrates women's abilities to save the future where men have failed. Sanger's call for women's activity signals their importance in the social system and ability to surpass men, but a cursory feminist read raises concern that Sanger perpetuates the

burden upon women to solve others' problems. I feel we cannot dismiss either reading but must retain the tension between honoring and encumbering women in instances like those that Sanger provides and further contemplate the implications of both approaches. The determinations attempted will have to address whether celebrating or obliging women makes any difference when the end result is women's access to birth control, and how the achieved goal differs if we understand it as part of revering women's ability versus compelling women to duty.

Another question for feminists arising from Sanger's rhetoric pertains to achieving common, feminist goals while undermining those same objectives in the process. Sanger represents one example of the tension of means and ends as she argues for women's access to birth control, defined early as women's ability to own their bodies, on the basis that women's bodies threaten national interests and need management. Here, I briefly explore the tension created by Sanger's rhetoric, Francine Hughes's murder trial, and Eva Perón's suffrage rhetoric. Women's ability to control their own bodies and futures has long been a goal of mainstream US feminism. Controlling bodily functions stands as a central tenant of subjecthood, managing one's life. Sanger initially reiterates the basic subjecthood philosophy but comes to argue for birth control as a means for the state to control women's reproduction for its own interests. The question, then, is whether it matters if Sanger argued for or against women's subject hood if in the end women have access to legalized contraception. For those women whom states sterilized under fear of eugenic disintegration, a discourse Sanger heartily fed at one time, the means matter a great deal, but what about women who evaded direct governmental intervention? Does it matter to women who have two children and cannot afford a third whether or not the courts felt compelled to legalize birth control because they endorsed the idea that women must control their bodies to meet state interests?

Two other cases raise similar concerns about rhetorical means and judicial/ legislative ends. The examples of Francine Hughes (acquitted of murdering her abusive husband) and Eva Perón (the Argentine first lady who fought for women's suffrage) provide two more discussion points regarding rhetorical means and feminist ends. Jennifer Jones examines Hughes's case and finds that the jury acquitted her in such a way that they maintained traditional, feminine gender roles while excusing Hughes's murder: "Women who kill their husbands have made the ultimate transgression against conventional gender expectations. To preserve the normalcy of those expectations, women who deviate from them have historically been constructed as irrational, insane, or sexually uncontrollable" (61).² The jury decided that Hughes suffered from temporary insanity and thereby contained Hughes's ending the cycle of her husbands' abuse to a momentary break from feminine norms. With few exceptions, feminists frown upon murder, but many support battered-woman's self defense as necessary for women's survival. In Hughes's case, the feminist victory for a battered woman comes with reinscribing gender stereotypes about feminine docility that feminism otherwise challenges.

Like Hughes, Eva Perón's fight for Argentine women's suffrage came at the expense of traditional feminist aims. Perón based her arguments for women's right to vote on the principle that women would better serve the will of President Juan Perón, a process in which she undercut the efforts of feminists to establish suffrage as a woman's right independent of men's will. Marifran Carlson studies Argentine feminism and finds that the push for women's suffrage had stalled in the 1930s. In the mid 1940s, aspiring Labor Secretary Juan Perón, revived the effort. Socialist feminists of the day opposed Perón, accusing him of "trying to use women as

² Jones also notes that a 1994 New Jersey Supreme Court decision established traits of a possible Battered Woman Syndrome as including a woman who subscribes to traditional feminine norms, suggesting that a woman can only claim such a defense when she otherwise relented to her husband's will. Women who resist feminine norms to begin with become subject to skepticism when arguing Battered Woman Syndrome (68).

‘instruments’ of his power,” and worked to stop his move for women’s right on the basis that women’s interests would not benefit through a right derived from masculine interests (179-80, 187).³ After Juan Perón’s ascension to the presidency in 1946, his wife Eva Perón began to agitate for women’s suffrage. Not unlike Sanger, Eva Perón addressed the concerns of working class women (as her husband had in 1945) explaining that working women suffered twice the difficulties of working men by sacrificing themselves in the home and then to lower wages at work (Dujovne Ortiz 245). Anthropologist J. M. Taylor states that Eva Perón’s justifications for women’s suffrage defined women as always seeking to conform to submissive, domestic roles: “The virtue of the Peronist woman lay in never aspiring to supplant the opposite sex. . . . Peronist women carefully emphasized they had no intention of denying their domestic nature” (76). Just as some feminists had feared when Juan Perón first attempted to give women the vote, Eva Perón’s suffrage rhetoric became indebted to her husband: “Our movement is inspired theoretically and doctrinally by [Juan] Perón’s words To be a Peronist is, for a woman, to be loyal and to have blind confidence in Perón” (qtd. in Fraser and Navarro 107). Eva Perón successfully campaigned for women’s suffrage on the platform of serving a man, Juan Perón, rather than women.

As with Sanger and Hughes, the case of Eva Perón raises the question of what consequences follow achieved feminist goals by seemingly counter-feminist means. I can only suggest that understanding the consequences of counter-feminist means for feminist ends—generalizing feminism as oriented toward serving women directly through increasing their rights—requires further attention to chase out the consequences of the means used. The proof is likely in the pudding; whether researchers can demonstrate that the justification itself affects

³ Carlson notes that the feminists’ efforts probably had no bearing on Juan Perón’s failed 1945 resolution (187).

women's needs and rights will help to resolve—or further complicate—this conundrum. In the case of Sanger's arguments for contraception denuded of women's interests, analysis needs to consider women's subsequent access to and use of contraceptives: did some women have greater or less access to contraception than others, and did some women face greater or less resistance from their family reflective of Sanger's arguments? Hughes's case and those like her, women who use Battered Woman Syndrome as a defense for killing abusive partners, raises similar questions as to how defining women as domestically oriented as a legal strategy constrains women in other situations in which a woman must resist gender norms to protect herself. Eva Perón's suffrage rhetoric, heavily invested in service to her husband in particular and husbands in general, needs investigation as to how her arguments may have helped or hindered women in exercising their political prowess or other issues of personal control.

In studying Sanger's rhetoric, I have attempted to develop an understanding of how social discourses acted upon her leading to an ironic series of arguments for women's access to birth control. This project challenged me as a rhetorical critic and a feminist scholar. As a rhetorician, I have struggled against an individualist ideology to radically contextualize Sanger's speech acts as the products of history. The effort has moved me to, one, recuperate single-speaker studies as a viable approach by intensely reviewing archival materials while emphasizing history over biography and, two, justify Sanger as one strand in a web of birth control rhetoric. As a feminist, I have sought to utilize Foucault as a means of understanding the power dynamics producing Sanger as she advocates birth control and to suggest such an approach for future studies. In so doing, I have wrestled with my own conclusions about Sanger's rhetoric, deciding to leave open to further study and discussion to what extent the means feminists use effect their goals.

CONCLUSION: THE FINAL DISCIPLINING OF MARGARET SANGER

“Tonight we go after the story of a woman who violated convention and fought powerful opposition to lead the Birth Control Movement in America,” and so began Margaret Sanger’s last major, public appearance, an interview with Mike Wallace on ABC, September 21, 1957 (Interview A). From the opening of their interview, Wallace depicts Sanger as a woman opposed to social norms. This study opened with an early episode from Sanger’s career in which she experiences social disdain for challenging women’s maternity, loses her daughter to pneumonia, and subsequently receives public support as an aching mother. I wish to end this project as I began it, considering how social discourses discipline Sanger—through a reprimanding public response—to bring her in line with dominant notions of feminine behavior. The sweep of Sanger’s career represents a pattern in which she contests cultural norms attached to womanhood and then undermines those challenges as she conforms to dominant discourses. Some feminists, including me, question Sanger’s potential to effect change in cultural gender norms when she often returns to rearticulate them. Sanger’s Mike Wallace interview, however, provides a bit of perspective on her rhetoric and career, suggesting that despite feminist concerns that Sanger gives way to conservative gender definitions, in her own time she continued to represent a threat to rigid, feminine ideals, a common goal of US feminism then and now.⁴ To consider both the feminist potential Sanger represents as late as the 1950s and the public reprimand she received for her liberalism I give attention to her last major public appearance, her 1957 television interview with Mike Wallace. In the transcript of their exchange I find that Wallace reveals the radical, feminist nature of Sanger’s career and a persisting desire to make her account for having

⁴ My own arguments about Sanger’s feminism as a product of her challenge to gender norms borrows conceptually from Robert Brookey’s analysis of Deborah Sampson Gannett that finds her feminist potential lies in the fact that she never apologizes for having literally assumed a man’s role (cross dressing to fight in the American Revolutionary War).

stepped outside familiar norms of feminine behavior. Unwittingly, Wallace saves Sanger as a feminist hero even as he attempts to chide and conform her. Beyond the feminist nature of Sanger's work, the interview reveals the necessity of genealogical analysis to discuss the role of social forces in rhetoric.

Wallace opens the interview by describing Sanger as a "woman who violated convention" (Interview A). As he turns to question her, Wallace articulates the "conventions" Sanger has broken, all of which pertain to social definitions of women's social role and function strikingly similar to the cult of True Womanhood. Specifically, Wallace touches on Sanger's supposed failure as mother and wife and her thoughts on sexuality vis-à-vis Christianity. The charges against Sanger include the indictment that she failed her domestic function as a mother and wife. Wallace subtly chastises Sanger as a poor mother when he describes her work in the birth control movement as having "kept Mrs. Sanger away from her children for long periods" (B). The implication of the comment suggests that for all the good Sanger may have done for others she failed at her first task of caring for her own children.

Against the brief comment on her maternity, Wallace gives more attention to Sanger as a non-traditional (i.e., failed) wife. Wallace attempts to show that Sanger's feminist work corrupts the ideal marriage. Of her first marriage, he remarks that the Sanger's time in the birth control movement "helped to break up her first marriage," clearly implying that her work outside the home caused the divorce (B). To make Sanger singularly responsible for her first marriage's dissolution, Wallace notes, "You led a movement against overwhelming pressure . . . you even left your first husband" (1). The pairing of her feminist activity and "leaving" William Sanger implies that feminist radicalism naturally corrupts women to abandon their husbands. Sanger's retort strikes a missionary-like tone, justifying her actions for the good of alleviating suffering in

the world (1). Near the interview's end, Wallace raises a question about Sanger's second marriage in which she and Noah Slee maintained separate residences and passed notes back and forth to each other for dinner dates and so forth; asks Wallace, "Would you call this a sound formula for marriage?" (13). Once more, Wallace suggests that Sanger has corrupted her womanhood and, consequently, the ideals of domestic life.⁵

From Sanger's supposed failure as a wife and mother, Wallace moves into discussing her thoughts on sexuality and Christianity. Wallace questions Sanger on her personal beliefs in such a way as to suggest that she undermines US Christian morality. Quoting a Catholic church publication, Wallace cites procreation as the primary end of intercourse and marriage, marking birth control as unethical and unnatural. Sanger responds that childbearing and rearing is marriage's secondary function, to which Wallace retorts, "but they [the Catholic church] say it violates a natural law as I have just explained, therefore birth control is a sin. . . . Now the violation of the natural law accordingly can take no issue with the natural law as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church" (5). Against the social pressure to see marriage and sexual intercourse as the means to the end of childbearing, Sanger calls such an attitude "unnatural." Going on, Sanger criticizes celibate priests for making determinations about marriage's function when "they don't know marriage, they know nothing about bringing up children nor any of the marriage problems of life, and yet they speak to people as if they were God" (6). Wallace and Sanger's mutual linking of sexual norms and Catholic doctrine subjects her to reprimand for challenging feminine virtues of a maternally oriented sexuality and Christian piety.

While the Wallace-Sanger exchange on Catholicism and natural law pertains to one religious group, Sanger's comments on other sexual issues broadens her critique of Judeo-

⁵ When Sanger replies that it worked for her and Slee, Wallace relents and moves on.

Christian sexual morals. Wallace helps mark Sanger as a radical feminist by prompting her to discuss her views on pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and marital in/fidelity. Referencing the argument that birth control encourages promiscuity by removing the fear of parenthood, Wallace suggests Sanger supports pre-marital sex. To support the claim, he reads a quote in which Sanger says that without birth control, abortion and illegitimacy will continue as a matter of human nature. Though the quote contains no vindication of pre-marital sex, Wallace accuses Sanger of “not advocating Christian morality, but rather ways for single women to avoid bearing illegitimate children” (9). In response, Sanger only questions the quote’s validity. In the exchange, Sanger and Wallace both leave unchallenged the assumption that human’s sexual nature operates independent of marital compulsion, earlier described by Wallace as a component of natural law. Moving swiftly to his next point, Wallace first reads a quote from Sanger’s *Autobiography* in which she commends Havelock Ellis and then asks her to clarify herself. Sanger responds by recognizing Ellis’s writings on homosexuality that make it “not exactly a virtuous thing, but a thing a person is born with. . . . He didn’t make all homosexuals perverts, and I thought he helped clarify that, to the medical profession and to the scientists of the world as perhaps one of the first one to do that” (10). Sanger’s willingness to support depathologized homosexuality further marks her as a sexual radical. Last, Wallace prompts Sanger to challenge traditional marriage definitions and US morality by asking her if she believes “infidelity is a sin?” (12). After first dodging the question, Sanger says only, “I wouldn’t know about infidelity [as a sin], because of—it has so many personalities to it” (12). Sanger’s comment risks social backlash as she opens possibilities for alternative definitions of marriage unique to the relationships themselves.

The questions Wallace asks Sanger about women's roles and sexuality collectively frame her as a radical feminist. Using biography and quotation Wallace positions Sanger as opposing traditional feminine roles—such as dedication to children and husband—and challenging US sexual morals derived from Christianity—regarding marriage's goal, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and infidelity. By no means does Sanger represent universal feminist goals defined in the interview as desiring to neglect child care, end marriages, support homosexuality and so forth. Some US feminists do challenge the necessity of marriage and fidelity in romantic relationships, while others may defend the status of marriage as heterosexual only. Many feminists do contest the idea that women must take full responsibility for child care, where some see that duty as exemplifying feminine nature. Together, Sanger's opinions, as expressed to Wallace, demonstrate a common theme of US feminism: questioning the social roles prescribed for women as a natural fact. This much comes through clearly in Sanger's time with Wallace. At one point in the interview, Wallace questions Sanger on her concerns about overpopulation, but then returns to the interview's persisting theme: Sanger's challenges to US gender doctrine.

Near the interview's end, Wallace asks a question that both blames Sanger for US social problems and marks her as a feminist hero. Wallace states that nearly four-hundred thousand couples divorce each year and then turns the issue on Sanger, "May I ask you this, could it be that women in the United States have become too independent—that they followed the lead of women like Margaret Sanger by neglecting family life for a career?" (13). Without waiting for an answer, Wallace leaves the accusation standing as he asks her about her marriage arrangement with her second husband, Noah Slee. The first question, left unanswered, condemns Sanger for instigating marital instability but also, in feminist terms, valorizes her for encouraging women to become independent "like Margaret Sanger" by choosing a career over childbearing.

Neutralizing Wallace's word "neglecting" in the passage makes Sanger an early hero of second-wave feminism, which sought to provide women with the choice for career life. Many feminists have raised serious objections to Sanger's work on the grounds that she comes to emphasize women's domestic nature and that she uses dangerous themes on eugenics and sterilization. Being kind, some might call Sanger conservative or anti-feminist. Wallace's rendering of Sanger, however, reminds us of the radical nature of her career and rhetoric to challenge gender norms—a frequent signifier of feminist activism.

The pattern in this study of showing Sanger's feminist zeal to redefine womanhood before capitulating to the existing norms continues even as Wallace brands Sanger a feminist. Having suggested Sanger opposes the traditional family as well as Christian morality, Wallace successfully captures Sanger in a mold of femininity that implies even a social rebel like Sanger has an innate maternal drive. Just after blaming the US divorce rate on Sanger's influence upon women and critiquing her marital arrangement with Noah Slee, Wallace asks Sanger about her grandchildren to prove Sanger's maternal nature her career has resisted:

WALLACE. One final question. You have two sons. How many children have they?

SANGER. Would you like to see them?

WALLACE. I would indeed.

SANGER. [LAUGHS]

WALLACE. How many children—six in this family.

SANGER. Five boys and a girl in that family.

WALLACE. And in the other family?

SANGER. Two girls.

WALLACE. Two girls. (14)

The sharp turn in Wallace's questioning to Sanger's children and her grandmotherly pride creates a break from the image of Sanger as a radical against feminine norms seen in the preceding half hour of question and answer. This last exchange between Sanger and Wallace as they dote on pictures of her grandchildren reduce her to the culturally idealized image of a proud

grand/mother. The juxtaposition of Wallace interrogating Sanger's feminist departure from traditional gender norms and his bringing out her maternal nature suggests to the audience that despite women's effort to deny their destiny as child bearers and caretakers they all naturally want children. I certainly support anyone—including Sanger—who desires having and caring for children. The comparison, however, of Wallace's earlier critiques of Sanger as abandoning her family for her career, which she says fulfilled her, and his prompt for family photos makes a mockery of the possibility that a woman would not want children in the first place. If all women really want children then birth control—in Wallace's frame—becomes unnecessary (since he never recognizes that parents would want to space their children) and all birth control advocates' work contests women's inevitable desire for domestic pleasure. Once more, Sanger comes across as a radical against the status quo before reiterating it.

The exchange that normalizes Sanger demonstrates one theme of this study, the ability of power to always bring resistance into conformity. A second theme from this project also emerges in the Sanger-Wallace interview, the value of genealogy to understand Sanger and her rhetoric. Genealogical lessons emerge in two ways, one, Sanger's insistence upon forces of history as the impetus of action, and, two, the historical contingency of any social discourse. Regarding the cause of events, Wallace asks Sanger early in the interview for the single reason motivating her work: "What event—what emotion in your life, made Margaret Sanger a crusader for birth control?" (B). Wallace's search for a single event expresses the individualist criticism genealogy eschews, which seeks out an understanding of discourse from the rhetor's biography. Sanger counters Wallace with a genealogical explanation of history: "It's hard to say that any one thing—has made one do this or that. . . . Certainly there are numerous things that are—one after the other that really made you feel that you had to do something" (C). Wallace persists in pinning

her work upon a single motivation, namely a deep-seeded hatred for the Catholic church, but Sanger continues to name various events and feelings that lead her to her career: her mother's death after having eleven children, her dislike for seeing people suffer, and so forth. Between Wallace and Sanger comes a debate on rhetorical analysis itself, whether to focus on biography for a rhetor's inspiration or history for the many forces colluding to produce a text. This project lands firmly on the side of studying histories' forces to understand rhetoric.

In addition to history producing texts, genealogy focuses on the historical contingencies of rhetoric. Genealogy's non-teleological orientation accepts the ironies of history, like those seen in fluctuating discourses on public safety regarding birth control and smoking. Wallace's condemnation of Sanger for threatening national well being by advocating birth control sits ironically against his cigarette advertisements at the top and bottom of the interview. Today social discourses about smoking legally and popularly censure the tobacco industry for endangering the lives of smokers and non-smokers alike. Advertising smoking on television in the US is now both illegal and socially considered tantamount to overtly promoting reckless driving. By contrast, Wallace began his 1957 show advertising his sponsor, Phillip Morris: "Today's Phillip Morris is made of mild, lighter leaf tobacco. . . . To me that accounts for the genuine mildness I get in every package, what I call a man's kind of mildness, with no filter, no foolin', no artificial mildness, because you see there's nothing between you and the tobacco itself" (B). Within today's context, Wallace's endorsement would be illegal and socially appalling. Talk of birth control today still has a contested existence in US culture, but it has greater acceptance than we find at Sanger's interview with Wallace in 1957 or her death in 1966. Conversely, smoking has become a public health issue to be managed despite its social

acceptance when Wallace used to pitch for Phillip Morris.⁶ The contrasting experiences of these two discourses demonstrate the historical contingencies dictating any rhetoric.

Throughout the interview Wallace attempts to discipline Sanger with reprimands for her transgressing norms of feminine behavior and to push her toward the familiar model of maternity. In the process Wallace reveals the genealogical principles of a historically-oriented analysis that recognizes history as producing texts that include ironies. A combined lesson of discipline and ironies seen in the Sanger-Wallace interview represents my own purpose in writing this study: within her own historical location, Sanger represents a fairly radical feminism that resists cultural norms despite her occasional cooptation by them. After all the studying, thinking, and questioning, I had come to think of Sanger as a fairly conservative rhetor, one who always collaborates with the social structure more than she challenges it, but reading the Sanger-Wallace transcript helps bring me back to a different period. Critics can never fully separate themselves from their own time and social location to understand another, but reading Sanger and Wallace battle over the meaning of birth control and feminism prompts me to reconsider Sanger's historical status. In her debate with Wallace, I see Sanger's persisting revolutionary rhetoric that seeks to create a more liberated space for women in society despite her arguments that sometimes seems to undermine that goal. Wallace closed his interview with Sanger by saying, "In the eyes of some Margaret Sanger has been a heroine, in the eyes of others she's been a destructive force. The purpose of this interview has been not of course to try to resolve this issue but to open it to a little sensible discussion" (14). In much the same way, I have meant for

⁶ The ironies multiply in the example as we turn to the 1990s and Wallace's experience as a journalist for CBS's newsmagazine *60 Minutes*, in which the network took part in a protracted legal dispute to air a segment critical of Phillip Morris and smoking's health risks.

this project to attempt a “sensible discussion” of the possible meanings and effects of Margaret Sanger’s US birth control rhetoric on the lives of women.

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VITA

C. Wesley Buerkle, II was born in the year of his country's bicentennial and lived his formative years surrounded by his parents' cotton fields in Buttonwillow, California, before his family moved to nearby Bakersfield. Wesley realized his love of speeches in the fifth grade while composing and performing an address on the virtues of the United States' Constitution. Upon completing his basic education, Wesley studied communication, with a minor in Biblical studies, at Biola University in southern California, where he discovered the joys of rhetoric and feminism under the guidance of Dr. Margaret Cavin. From Biola, Wesley went to Arizona State University, where he worked with Drs. Thomas Nakayama, Cheree Carlson, and Frederick Corey. While in the Grand Canyon state, he first met Dr. Laura Sells, who spoke with him about rhetoric, theory, gender, and teaching over many meals that she bought for him at the local Applebee's. Wesley tore himself away from his beloved desert environ and moved to the bayou state to study rhetoric at Louisiana State University. Once more he crossed paths with Laura Sells, who again mentored him in the ways of his academic pursuits. Eventually, Sells took upon herself the responsibility of shepherding Wesley through the dissertation process, balancing his needs for academic direction and personal nurturance. Throughout his life, Wesley has relied upon the continuing support of his family and the friends he has made along the way.