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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *German Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Oct., 2000), pp. 477-505

Published by: [German Studies Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1432830>

Accessed: 27/08/2012 05:59

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# Feminism and Eugenics in Germany and Britain, 1900-1940: A Comparative Perspective

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In 1912, the prominent American feminist, Doris Stevens, commented in the British suffrage periodical *Common Cause* on the growing popular appeal of the field of eugenics. “It is significant that this new outburst of eugenic energy,” she wrote, “is coincident with the women’s movement.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, eugenics, and eugenic thinking—that is, the integration of concepts derived from the field of eugenics into theoretical and practical discourse—played a formative role in feminist movements during the period from 1900 to 1940. Contemporary historians, influenced by a present-day feminist perspective that regards the eugenics movement as an abhorrent episode in the oppression of women by patriarchy, have generally regarded the combination of feminism and eugenics as contradictory. The involvement of earlier generations of feminists in eugenic movements has thus often been attributed to the influence of sinister, male-dominated political forces, such as imperialism, conservative class politics, or fascism. In Germany, all eugenic thinking is still often included among the causes of National Socialism and the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> This article will reassess the history of feminism and eugenics by comparing the theory and practice of German and British feminist movements during the period from about 1905 until the 1930s. It will show that the relationship of feminist and eugenics movements developed quite similarly in these two very different political environments, and even that British feminists who faced little pressure from fascist or totalitarian movements were more enthusiastic proponents of eugenics than their German contemporaries. The comparison will call into question any facile connection of German feminism with Nazism or indeed with any other specifically German political tendency. My purpose, however, is not to absolve feminists of either nationality of complicity in what we now regard as violations of human rights, but on the contrary to explore the full extent of their responsibility for these actions. Though I will not deny that feminists were indeed influenced in varying ways by the major political movements of their time, I will attribute their enthusiasm for eugenics chiefly to problems specific to feminism rather than to the baneful influence of any male-led political

movement. And the continuity that will be emphasized will not be to the National Socialist period, but rather to the present, when what feminists at the turn of the century provocatively termed a “new morality” of planned and scientifically guided reproduction has now become normative in secular reproductive discourse throughout the West.

The ethical problem that underlay feminist support for the eugenics movement was, I will argue, their failure to embed arguments for women’s rights in a comprehensive understanding of human rights. One question must be addressed at the outset: why do I define this as a problem specifically for feminists? After all, human-rights theory, particularly in the area of reproduction, was so underdeveloped during this period that not only feminists, but most other progressive individuals and organizations supported the eugenic measures that will be described. But reproductive ethics created a particular dilemma for feminists. In other areas, such as education, suffrage, and property ownership, feminists had in effect created a doctrine of human rights simply by demanding that the rights of men be extended to women. But in the areas of sexuality and reproduction, no such simple extension was possible. Most feminists claimed that the traditional rights of men as husbands and as heads of households were so directly opposed to those of women that only their abrogation could protect women’s liberty and autonomy.<sup>3</sup> As this essay will demonstrate, the absence (indeed, the impossibility) of a human-rights perspective on reproductive issues led feminists to support some measures that victimized not only men but women as well.

Particularly considering its formative impact on some of the most important feminist campaigns of the twentieth century—including those for maternal and child health, birth control, and family allowances—a study of feminist eugenic thought and practice is overdue. Although historians of science and medicine during this period now discuss the prominent role of feminist activists and organizations in eugenics movements,<sup>4</sup> most historians of feminism entirely overlook these tendencies.<sup>5</sup> Christl Wickert, the biographer of the German feminist Helene Stöcker, is so anxious to make clear that Stöcker and her group did not “prepare the way for national socialist population policies” that she is more concerned to distance Stöcker from the eugenics movements of her era than to explore her numerous connections to these movements.<sup>6</sup> Lucy Bland’s exceptionally thoughtful discussion of British feminists’ use of eugenic arguments to reinforce their anti-male propaganda does not extend past 1914, when eugenics was more rhetoric than reality.<sup>7</sup> Other historians, depending on their overall agenda, either denounce or trivialize feminists’ involvement in eugenics. In the former category are the many studies that attribute eugenic proclivities to the influence of racism or specifically bourgeois class prejudice (while overlooking the much greater enthusiasm of socialist feminists).<sup>8</sup> In the latter category are works that characterize feminist eugenics an error, perhaps well-meaning, that marred an otherwise enlightened and praiseworthy program. Thus Susan Pedersen mentions in passing that British

feminists' discussions of family endowment were often "disfigured" by eugenic thinking; and John Macnicol puts British socialist feminists' support of their country's proposed eugenic sterilization law down to their confusion and ignorance.

But eugenic theory was a basic and formative, not an incidental, part of feminist positions on the vitally important themes of motherhood, reproduction, and the state. This article will briefly describe the organizational links between feminism and eugenics in Germany and Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, the origins of feminist eugenic thought and practice during the prewar period (1900-1914), and the formulation of a legislative program based on eugenics in the wartime and postwar periods (from 1914 until 1933 for the German, and until about 1936 for the British feminists). First some definitions: eugenics, a term coined by the British biologist Francis Galton, was a science based on Darwinian theories of natural or sexual selection that focused (in the words of Daniel J. Kevles) on "manipulating heredity or breeding to produce better people and on eliminating those considered biologically inferior."<sup>9</sup> "Feminism" is of course a general term which encompasses many movements: "mainstream" (sometimes also known as "bourgeois") feminists, the chiefly middle-class members of large, national organizations such as the German Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (hereinafter BDF), the British National Union of Woman Suffrage Societies (hereinafter NUWSS) or its successor organization the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (hereinafter NUSEC); "radical" feminists, the sexual reformers who were represented by such organizations as the German Bund für Mutterschutz (hereinafter BfM) and some segments of the British birth-control movements; "militant" feminists, the prewar British suffragettes organized into the Women's Social and Political Union (hereinafter WSPU); and "socialist" feminists, chiefly working-class women who were members of socialist parties such as the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) or Communist Party (KPD) or the British Labour Party or Women's Cooperative Guilds.

As we shall see, these groups and the individuals within them represented a wide diversity of opinion, on eugenics and population policy as on other issues. Almost all the feminists whose activities are described here belonged to what Daniel Kevles describes as the "social-radical" branch of the eugenics movement. Social radicals, who usually adhered to left-wing or progressive political movements, rejected the use of eugenic theory in the service of racial supremacy or anti-Semitism. Indeed, many of the most active advocates of eugenics (such as the British Eva Hubback or the German Henriette Fürth) were Jewish. Like other groups, feminists often used eugenic arguments for tactical reasons, in order to lend scientific legitimacy to their political demands. But the fact that these arguments were (or seemed) politically useful does not mean that they did not also express sincere conviction. For many feminists were as impressed with the claims of science as other progressives of their era, and they did not simply manipulate eugenic theory, but critiqued, expanded, and promoted it.

### New Motherhood, 1900-1914

In both Germany and Great Britain, the field of eugenics, though developed and led by men, appealed widely and strongly to female activists. By contrast to most other scientific fields, which during this era developed chiefly in male-dominated academic or other institutional environments, eugenics at the turn of the twentieth century evolved from an esoteric scientific specialty to a social-reform movement which appealed to many nonscientists. In Germany, this development was initiated by two organizations: the Bund für Mutterschutz (BfM, or League for the Protection of Mothers), founded by a teacher, Ruth Bré, in 1904, but re-established in 1905 under the leadership of the feminist Helene Stöcker and other feminists and sex reformers; and the Gesellschaft für Rassehygiene (GRH) founded in the same year by the biologist Alfred Ploetz. The difference between these two organizations (which nonetheless had overlapping memberships) reflected the deep divide between bourgeois and left-wing or socialist political groups in Germany. Ploetz, although once a utopian socialist, had by 1905 moved so far toward the right wing of his movement that he would allow no socialists or feminist sex-reformers to join the society or to write for its journal, the *Archiv für Rassen-und Gesellschaftsbiologie* (Archive of Racial and Social Biology).<sup>10</sup> By contrast, the BfM included both feminists and socialists of both genders, and became famous (or notorious) for its highly original synthesis of eugenics and sexual radicalism. The BfM was regarded with profound disapproval by the majority of mainstream feminists; indeed, the numerically largest German feminist organization, the BDF, gave little attention to eugenics or population policy until the war years. Nonetheless, many prominent feminists belonged to both organizations. The BfM, which had local branches in major cities, had 3,800 members, both men and women, in 1908—a large membership for such a radical group.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the GRH had only 150 members in the same year, and by 1914 (now called the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Rassehygiene, or DGfR) it had reached 425 members, about one fourth of whom were female.<sup>12</sup>

The founding and social composition of the British Eugenics Education Society shows that British feminists were much better integrated into their nation's mainstream political and intellectual culture, including its large and vocal eugenics movement, than their German counterparts. British feminists had no need to found a separate organization. The main British eugenics organization, the Eugenics Education Society (hereinafter EES) was in fact founded by a young woman, Sybil Gotto, who persuaded Francis Galton (the biologist who had actually invented the term "eugenics") to become president of an organization dedicated to the dissemination of the new science among the lay public. Throughout its history the EES was led by men (its president from 1911 to 1928 was Leonard Darwin, a son of the great biologist), but until 1930 its actual work was largely in the hands of women. About 40 percent of the original membership, and half of the first board of directors, were female; Gotto served as the first secretary and directed an office staffed by female volunteers.<sup>13</sup> The society's male leaders, though often themselves

unsympathetic to feminism, nonetheless tolerated and even encouraged the discussion of feminist issues as a means of recruiting prominent women to their movement. In 1913, female speakers from the society addressed both liberal and socialist women's groups on such topics as "Women and Economics in Relation to Eugenics," and "Women's Responsibility to the Race."<sup>14</sup>

In both countries, the context for feminists' appropriation of eugenic theory was provided by the reduction in marital birthrates, which ultimately shaped the family life of the West in the twentieth century. Between 1870 and 1910, marital birthrates fell 37 percent in Britain, 30 percent in Germany.<sup>15</sup> The response of governmental, military, and medical elites to this trend brought the "woman question" into the center of a heated public debate. Both governments and private organizations, fearful of the consequences of falling birthrates for military strength, responded with programs designed to cut infant and child mortality by enhancing the welfare of mothers and children.<sup>16</sup> But they combined these constructive measures with harsh invective against women who, misled by feminist movements, had forsaken their maternal duties to pursue education, professional advancement, or simply comfort and convenience. In this perplexing climate of benevolence and backlash, feminists in both countries struggled to reconcile the positions that authority-figures had defined as contradictory: the responsibility of the state and of society for the welfare of mothers and infants, and the right of women to limit the number of their children. They achieved this delicate balance through a new ideal of the maternal role, often termed "new motherhood:" a combination of enlightened reproductive decision-making and careful nurture which, they insisted, would produce offspring whose high quality, or value to society, would more than compensate for their lesser number.<sup>17</sup>

The use of eugenic theory to justify this program was motivated not only by tactical, but also by deeply felt ethical considerations. Of course, eugenic theory proved useful as a prestigious scientific argument for the production of high-quality offspring by enlightened mothers. But many feminists, especially those who were politically progressive, were also very sympathetic to the basic premise of the eugenics movement: that parenthood, an activity of vital importance to the public welfare, must like other such activities be guided by enlightened legislation. To today's feminists, particularly in the United States, where legal arguments for reproductive autonomy are based on the right to privacy, this disregard for privacy rights is surprising. But, in fact, the versions of the right to privacy that were current around 1900 seemed to feminists to have chiefly negative consequences for women. Privacy rights supported chiefly the rights of husbands to control their households, and particularly the marital relationship, free of outside scrutiny, control, or interference.<sup>18</sup> The prevalent male abuse of this right, according to many feminists, not only promoted irresponsible reproduction but also the sexual victimization of women; in the words of the British Frances Swiney, the female body had become the "refuse-heap of male sexual pathology."<sup>19</sup> In an era before widespread use of mechanical contraception, control of reproduction was not associated with sexual

indulgence, but on the contrary with extreme self-control. Many feminists of the prewar era, who assumed that women were better endowed with such self-control than men, thus advocated the reform of laws on marriage to limit husbands' traditional right to sexual relations.

As the influential Swedish reformer Ellen Key remarked in 1906, "it follows...that the new law of marriage must bring freedom...even if it restricts some of the existing rights of men for the sake of the freedom of women."<sup>20</sup> And such far-reaching changes in law and custom, many feminists claimed, could be brought about only by opening the marriage and reproduction to new forms of public scrutiny, in order (in the words of the British Sybil Gotto) to "strengthen public opinion against unhealthy marriages and a wilful propagation of an unhealthy and suffering race."<sup>21</sup> The involvement of the state in the regulation of reproductive life therefore did not appear to many feminists as a basic violation of individual freedom, but on the contrary as an essential prerequisite for women's freedom from (in the words of the British suffrage periodical, *Common Cause*) "outraged, unwilling, desecrated motherhood," which produced "maimed, diseased, unwanted babies."<sup>22</sup>

Feminists were not passive recipients, but active creators, of eugenic theory and practice. Although they accepted some of the basic principles espoused by male scientists, they were by no means co-opted by these men; on the contrary, they energetically exposed the male bias of much eugenic theory. The uses of eugenic argument varied according both to the position of the speaker within the feminist political spectrum and to the national political environment.

In both Britain and Germany, feminists across the political spectrum indignantly disputed the standard assertion of prominent male leaders that the falling birthrate was caused by women's selfishness or lack of social responsibility. Rather, they asserted that the refusal or limitation of motherhood could be a responsible response to social conditions that condemned many children to poverty, illness, and death. Many feminists thus appealed to the general concern for falling birthrate to argue for infant and child welfare programs such as well-baby clinics, pure milk centers, low-cost lunch and medical programs in schools, educational centers for mothers, and maternity homes. All of these were expanded or initiated during this period in both Britain and Germany.<sup>23</sup> Most prewar feminists thus made little distinction between heredity and environment in the production of healthy offspring; "new motherhood" required concern for both. This point of view was supported by many of the male leaders of the left-wing, or social-radical branch of the eugenics movement, for example, by the German socialist physician Alfred Grotjahn or the British Havelock Ellis, who termed their approach "social hygiene."<sup>24</sup> But it met with entrenched opposition on the part of more conservative eugenicists, who were convinced that the struggle against infant mortality, which was of course highest among the lower classes, would by perpetuating "degenerate" elements of the population detract from the quality of the new generation.<sup>25</sup>

Although this controversy occurred in both Britain and Germany, it took different forms in two different political contexts. In Germany, where military

strength depended directly on the size of the army and thus on birthrates, pro-natalist measures, and especially campaigns for the reduction of infant mortality, had wide popular support. One of these was conducted by the BfM and focused on the welfare of unmarried mothers and their children, traditionally among the poorest of the poor. The original founder of the BfM, Ruth Bré, who was herself an illegitimate child, declared in the organization's first manifesto that the illegitimate were "valuable offspring," indeed a "powerful source of national strength," but too often victims of a "merciless morality which stigmatizes the unmarried mother, deprives her of the means of economic survival, and forces her to give her child up to paid caretakers."<sup>26</sup> Bré's original utopian scheme was to create communities of unmarried mothers and children, in which state and private support would make degrading paternity suits unnecessary. The new group of leaders who took over the organization renounced such utopian undertakings but maintained the original commitment to the rights and welfare of mother-headed households. Not only did they engage in practical work—branches of the organization sponsored homes and other welfare measures for unmarried mothers and their children—but they used the plight of the illegitimate as a basis for denouncing the hypocrisy of conventional sexual morality and demanding both equal rights for the illegitimate, and legal recognition of nonmarital unions.<sup>27</sup>

Despite its sexual radicalism, which horrified many respectable people, this program gained wide enough public support to inspire concern among German medical elites. To be sure, most physicians, including the gynecologist Agnes Bluhm (the only regular female contributor to the *Archiv für Rassen-und Gesellschaftsbiologie*) dismissed the BfM's philanthropy as eugenically worthless, even counterproductive, as it assisted needy mothers and children without regard to criteria of health or hereditary fitness.<sup>28</sup> But in 1909, the founding of a new children's hospital under the patronage of the empress, the *Kaiserin Auguste-Victoria Haus*, was a sign that Berlin physicians and philanthropists shared some of the concerns raised by the BfM and wished to offer a respectable alternative to the radical measures that the organization proposed.<sup>29</sup> Britain produced no organization comparable to the *Bund für Mutterschutz*. In the absence of military conscription, popular support for pronatalism was weaker there than in Germany. Even more than their German counterparts, middle- and upper-class British eugenicists feared the threat to class privilege that an increase in the numbers of the poor might pose.<sup>30</sup> Most British feminists advocated the improvement of the status of illegitimate children, but (like the majority of feminists everywhere) were more concerned to prevent than to encourage their production. Thus many British feminists may have agreed with the otherwise extremely controversial Bessie Drysdale, a birth-control activist who commented in the feminist journal *The Freewoman* that such a radical organization as the BfM could arise in a backward country such as Germany only because the notorious German "militaristic spirit" shunned no means to gain "the greatest possible number of strong and healthy children."<sup>31</sup>



Among radical and socialist feminists in both countries, eugenic theory provided a new basis for a challenge to male authority within marriage. For the plight of unmarried mothers was symptomatic of the more general problem of motherhood under patriarchy: women who wished to bear children were forced to choose between the dependence of marriage and the disgrace of single motherhood. The most able women, argued feminists across the political spectrum, were precisely those who were likely to avoid the degradation imposed by what the British militant Cicely Hamilton termed "marriage as a trade."<sup>32</sup> Male eugenicists often advocated the restriction of women's career and educational opportunities in order to encourage marriage and maternity among middle-class women. Feminists replied indignantly that able women would become mothers only under conditions that would enable them to preserve their economic independence. They urged the elimination of the prohibition on marriage imposed on many teachers, nurses, civil servants, and other female professionals in both Britain and Germany. "The loss of these women to motherhood," lamented the German socialist feminist Lily Braun, "is very harmful to the evolution of the human race."<sup>33</sup>

Such arguments for what were usually classified as positive eugenic measures—that is, those that encourage the birth of healthy individuals—helped to justify the first steps toward the welfare state in both countries. German feminists affirmed the strong German tradition of social legislation. Middle-class feminists joined with socialists in advocating improved maternity insurance, which would combine a compulsory maternity leave with financial support for eight weeks; a raise in maternity insurance, though not to the extent that reformers such as Braun had advocated, was passed by the Reichstag and went into effect in 1914.<sup>34</sup> In Britain, the 1911 National Insurance Act also provided a modest sum to help with the expenses of childbirth and delivery, though not to compensate for lost wages.<sup>35</sup> Though generally supported of such limited measures, most prewar British feminists responded with great skepticism to proposals put forward by some British socialists for the so-called "endowment of motherhood," or the payment of state subsidies for childbearing, which they argued, with characteristic antimale militancy, would discourage responsible reproduction by relieving fathers of financial responsibility for the offspring whom they carelessly spawned.<sup>36</sup>

But positive eugenic measures were by no means sufficient to buttress women's claim to reproductive autonomy. The right to limit maternity was as essential to maternal and child welfare as the right to become a mother. Feminists occasionally asserted an intrinsic right to reproductive autonomy based on liberal arguments for individual liberty. However, in an era when individual liberty often meant the right of a man to control his household, such arguments were fragile indeed. Ethical arguments buttressed by eugenic theory, which linked the well-being of the mother to that of the community, were much more credible. Feminists' arguments for reproductive self-determination thus usually hinged on negative eugenic theory, which asserted that undesired and undesirable births were harmful both to the parents themselves and to society.

One such measure was the repeal or modification of laws preventing access to contraceptive advice and technology and to abortion. On this deeply controversial issue, eugenic thinking could be used to support a wide range of positions. Though insistent on the right of women to control the number of their children, most feminists at this time did not endorse birth-control technology or abortion, which, they argued, did more to encourage than to prevent the sexual exploitation of women. Their preferred method was abstinence. The German BfM was among the first feminist organizations in any country to deviate from this position and openly to criticize laws that limited women's access to contraception and abortion. Because, for a few years, leading figures from the BfM also dominated the committee on legal issues of the BDF, the BDF's annual meeting of 1908 debated a resolution that recommended the entire abolition of all penalties for abortion. Although the proposal was defeated, the fact that the BDF even debated it puts it far ahead of the mainstream feminist organizations of other countries.<sup>37</sup> The advocates of legalization combined libertarian with eugenic arguments. Camilla Jellinek asserted that the right to the "control of one's own body" was among "the rights of a free personality;"<sup>38</sup> Helene Stöcker cited cases in which "a child would be a crime." "Society must answer for every defective life," wrote Stöcker, "...and thus it should prevent it."<sup>39</sup>

By contrast, though British feminists argued strongly for the right of women to limit the number of their children, most of them were notably reluctant to oppose, or even to discuss, the laws that forbade abortion and limited access to information about contraceptives. This comparative lack of interest in birth control and other sexual reform movements may be attributed in part to British feminists' far greater emphasis on suffrage, and to their bitter outrage at the repeated frustration of their demand for the vote, expressed in its most extreme form through the militancy of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Even moderate feminists who rejected the WSPU's violent tactics responded to its aggressive rhetoric. Christabel Pankhurst, the leader of the WSPU, asserted in a widely distributed pamphlet entitled "The Great Scourge and How to End it" that the only solution to the crisis in women's and children's health was total avoidance of men. Charging that at least 80 percent of men were infected with venereal disease, Pankhurst urged all women to refuse marriage and motherhood entirely until men gave up their customary "untrammelled licentiousness." Pankhurst, too, used eugenic arguments to support this antimale militancy; if men did not reform, she insisted, "the worst fears of the eugenicists will be fulfilled and the race bred entirely from inferior stock"<sup>40</sup>

Further negative eugenic measures included laws that were proposed by male legislators and physicians to exclude persons considered irresponsible from reproduction. Among the measures debated in the prewar era were required health certificates for married couples, sex education that would inform young people of the dangers of venereal disease, voluntary or involuntary sterilization of those considered "unfit," and the criminalization of the spread of venereal disease. Feminists were not uncritical of such proposals, but were often highly alert to the

threats to the rights and well-being of women that they might pose. However, their arguments were not based on any comprehensive theory of human rights, for in fact they often saw men's claims to liberty and privacy as directly detrimental to those of women. Among the measures that they debated were the criminalization of the spread of venereal disease in Germany, and the Mental Deficiency Act in Britain.

The criminalization of the spread of venereal disease was discussed in Germany as an alternative to the police regulation of prostitution—a practice which, of course, had been abolished in Britain. German proponents of abolition had for many years opposed existing police regulations which placed the entire responsibility for the spread of venereal diseases on prostitutes and subjected them to oppressive requirements, including a compulsory health examination. The feminist leaders of the German Abolitionist Federation (Deutscher Zweig der abolitionistischen Föderation), Anna Pappritz and Katharina Scheven, agreed with male reformers that venereal disease was a major, perhaps even the greatest, threat to the health of mothers and children. But they protested that prostitutes should not be given the entire responsibility for the disease, for their customers were equally responsible. Therefore, they argued that laws should be revised to penalize persons of either gender who knowingly exposed others to infection. The Abolitionists were a large and influential group within the BDF, where this proposal found wide support. Proponents of such legislation admitted that it would be unlikely to be enforced, but claimed that it would nonetheless encourage men to behave more responsibly.<sup>41</sup> In the interests of women, these feminists thus directly attacked the right to sexual privacy that was traditionally accorded to men.

German feminists who opposed this draft legislation defended the privacy rights of women, which they asserted were more important than those of men. The legal expert Camilla Jellinek objected that customers would be more likely to sue prostitutes for infection than prostitutes their customers, and that in both marital and nonmarital relationships, men would be more willing to risk the publicity involved in such a suit than women. "Naturally, women have the liveliest interest in provisions for public welfare and public health," wrote Jellinek, "but when such provisions conflict with questions of justice for women, and with the preservation of women's dignity, women should not necessarily give them priority."<sup>42</sup> The criminalization of the spread of venereal disease which was advocated by German feminist groups ranging from the religiously inspired Abolitionists to the socialists, was enacted as part of a package of anti-VD measures in 1927.

British feminist reformers were more successful than their German counterparts in their advocacy of eugenic legislation. Many supported the Mental Deficiency Act which was enacted into law in 1913. The act arose from the collaborative efforts of the Eugenics Society and the National Association for the Care of the Feeble-minded, under the leadership of the influential Ellen Hume Pinsent, who also had ties to feminist organizations. The bill provided that any person defined as "feeble-

minded” or “mentally deficient” by two physicians might, with the consent of parents or guardians, be confined in an institution for as long a period as the directors of the institution thought necessary. As Mathew Thomson points out, the many female supporters of this measure expressed both a charitable concern for a vulnerable population and a eugenically inspired intention to prevent “parenthood on the part of the feeble-minded and other degenerate types.”<sup>43</sup>

Because the law specifically targeted women—single women who bore children while on poor relief were classified as “feebleminded”—some feminists protested against it.<sup>44</sup> Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, editor of the suffrage periodical *Votes for Women*, objected that the bill “put new and dangerous powers into the hands of the police powers that we know will be used with greater ruthlessness and responsibility toward women...than toward men,” and Dora Marsden, editor of the *Freewoman*, called the Eugenics Education Society a “danger to the community” and the bill a “rascally conspiracy against the poor.”<sup>45</sup> However, because the objects of the bill were more often stereotyped as dangerous males—criminals, alcoholics, and sex offenders—most feminists took a very different tone. Another periodical, *The Vote*, called for the segregation of “all confirmed drunkards and lunatics.”<sup>46</sup> In Germany, similar measures found their greatest supporters during this era among socialist reformers, such as the well-known physician and eugenicist Alfred Grotjahn and the socialist feminist Adele Schreiber, who at the meeting of the BDF in 1908 included the confinement of the feeble minded in humane and sex-segregated colonies as part of a larger legislative program to protect underage girls from sexual abuse; this discussion, as we shall see, would continue in the postwar era.<sup>47</sup>

Thus by 1914, feminist positions on many issues had acquired a basis in eugenic theory. And these arguments had an ironic and fateful twist: in their attempt to justify reproductive choice as a right, the feminists had in fact conceptualized it as a privilege. For the New Morality had created the New Immorality: in the words of the influential Ellen Key, an enlightened society “must deem no common living of men and women immoral, except that which gives occasion to a weak offspring and produces bad conditions for the development of that offspring.”<sup>48</sup> By equating morality with responsibility, this doctrine could justify not only emancipation for those defined as “responsible,” but also various penalties for those defined as “irresponsible.” And the question of who would define “responsibility” was left unanswered. Such arguments would become more popular in both countries during the wartime and especially the postwar period.

### **How Will They Compel Us? The War Years, 1914-1918**

During wartime, population issues came into the forefront of discussion in both countries, but much more conspicuously in Germany, where pronatalism had been a highly visible political theme before the war, than in Britain. German feminists were often outraged at the brutally and blatantly misogynist tone adopted by male-

led organizations such as the German Society for Population Policy, which was founded in 1915 and advocated the suppression of contraceptive information and restrictions on women's access to education and to professional opportunity as means to enhance the production of cannon-fodder. Helene Lange, the president of the BDF, remarked that "these were meetings of men, with a very inadequate representation of women." The socialist Henriette Fürth furiously denounced "men who without consideration for our rights and welfare, demand children, children, and more children. How will they compel us?"<sup>49</sup>

German mainstream feminists adhered to a maternalist ideology which exalted the moral and spiritual role of mothers, in the family and society. They protested against the exploitation of mothers and their children in the service of militarism. Motherhood, wrote Gertrud Bäumer, president of the BDF, in 1917, was an end in itself—"there is nothing greater than to create and to build the life of another person." Not force or pressure, but only positive measures promoting the welfare of mothers and children, could motivate women to this important task. "The belief in social justice," she continued, "is the strongest basis for commitment to life and to parenthood."<sup>50</sup> In 1918, the Imperial Health Office proposed a law that greatly strengthened penalties against the advertising of contraceptives (apart from condoms) and against abortion. Both bourgeois and socialist feminists protested these coercive measures by once again invoking the familiar picture of female victimization and male irresponsibility. Without contraception, insisted Bäumer, women were often helpless to prevent pregnancy, even by "alcoholics and syphilitics;" thus their use of contraception often showed responsibility to their children and to society.<sup>51</sup>

However wartime population pressures also brought some positive results: the implementation of some maternal and child-welfare measures suggested by feminists during the prewar period. In 1914, for example, the *Reichstag* (the lower legislative house) responded positively to a petition of the Bund für Mutterschutz for the extension of dependency allowances to the illegitimate as well as the legitimate children of military personnel. In Britain feminists within the Eugenics Education Society were temporarily able to overcome the male leadership's skepticism about the dysgenic effects of benefits to mothers and children and to bring the society's support to such legislation as the Maternity and Child Welfare Act which in 1918 committed national subsidies to local governments' intervention in the health of mothers and children. In response to this more positive climate, feminist organizations in both countries gave population policy a prominent place in their programs. In 1916, the BDF made population policy the central focus of its "war congress" or *Kriegstagung*.<sup>52</sup>

In the face of intense wartime pronatalist pressures, negative eugenic measures that affirmed "responsible" breeding, population quality, and women's right to limit reproduction became ever more important. In Germany, the BfM, along with many socialist women renewed the campaign for required health certificates for marriage, which were now also supported by such male-dominated organizations as the

Society for Population Policy and the Society for Racial Hygiene. Representatives from the BfM and from the socialist women's groups attended a meeting held by these societies in 1917. The female delegates fervently advocated the health certificates as a protection for young women, who were too often uninformed about the past lives of their prospective husbands, against marriage to diseased or drunken men. They further advocated the protection of the new generation (in the words of the socialist Adele Schreiber, a major advocate of such laws) against "births from inferior fathers."<sup>53</sup> Concerned about the consequences for individual liberty, chiefly of the men who would be required to reveal embarrassing details of their past lives, the Imperial Health Office rejected the proposal, and approved only the distribution of an informational leaflet (*Merkblatt*) to all couples who applied for a marriage license.<sup>54</sup> A law mandating the distribution of such a leaflet was passed by the Weimar republic.

In Britain, the requirement of health certificates for marriage was also strongly advocated by some female activists, particularly the physician Mary Scharlieb, with inconclusive results.<sup>55</sup> Feminist leaders Eleanor Rathbone, Mary Stocks, and Maude Royden were motivated by the good effects of dependency allowances paid to the families of military personnel to reconsider earlier feminist opposition to state support for mothers and children. Prewar British feminists had opposed such measures, which were advanced by some male socialists, on the grounds that they would merely enable fathers to evade their financial responsibility to their families. Rathbone, Stocks, and Royden founded Family Endowment Society, which in 1917 reformulated the socialist proposal for governmental subsidies payable to mothers for child-rearing as a feminist program.<sup>56</sup>

### **Let Us Protect Future Generations! The Interwar Period**

Thus in both countries, feminists had seen some of their eugenic agenda affirmed in wartime, and the winning of woman suffrage after the war seemed to promise further success. In both countries, expanding welfare states proposed new laws designed to reduce maternal, infant and child mortality rates: key measures were the British Maternal and Child Health Act of 1918 and the German Child Welfare Act, passed in 1922. As in the prewar period, feminists' positions on issues of population policy and reproduction were formulated in the context of male-dominated debates. But, as a consequence of the enfranchisement of women in both countries after the war, their position in these debates had changed. As voters and office-holders they now worked within political systems and sought alliances with male politicians. Therefore, feminists of the 1920s largely renounced the antimale militancy of the prewar suffrage campaigns. Denunciations of what Christabel Pankhurst had termed "untrammelled licentiousness" now gave way to appeals for cooperation between men and women in the task of enlightened reproduction. But feminists still needed a threat to population "quality" against which to rally support for birth control and other aspects of their expanding population-policy agenda. In

the place of men, feminists now increasingly ascribed the danger to marginal members of society, such as the physically and mentally diseased and the retarded. This tendency to target these defenseless people was of course not unique to feminists—it was shared by groups across the political spectrum during the decade of the 1920s.<sup>57</sup> A brief overview of feminist positions on eugenic issues in Germany and in Britain will show that both movements shared these tendencies, but that feminist programs in the two countries also differed strikingly. These differences reflected variations both in feminist ideologies and in political environments.

An important difference between the two political settings was in the importance accorded to population as a political issue, which as in the prewar period was far greater in Germany than in Britain. In Weimar Germany, organizations both of the left and the right aggressively promoted their varying programs, and feminists were often concerned more to protect the rights and interests of women against male policy-makers than to develop their own proposals.<sup>58</sup> German feminists were also deeply divided between the mainstream, or bourgeois wing, still led by the BDF, and the socialist wing, composed chiefly of women within the SPD. To be sure, the two groups agreed on many issues. Both had strong reservations about proposals for family allowances—financial subsidies, to be funded by the state or by a compulsory insurance program funded by contributions from unmarried people, to families with children—because these proposals were associated chiefly with a group known as the *Bund der Kinderreichen* (League of Child-rich Families). Firmly allied with the Catholic Center party and with the political right, this male-dominated group identified the still declining birthrate as a threat to national strength, attributed it partly to the sinister forces of female emancipation, and urged subsidies or tax-breaks for male breadwinners, graded according to their earnings, and other policies designed to keep women out of the workplace.<sup>59</sup> Gertrud Bäumer, who during this period took the lead in formulating population policy for the BDF, responded to this patriarchal agenda by affirming the importance of population quality rather than sheer numbers. “We stand for a population policy, but not one that uses mothers as instruments of the arms race,” she said in 1919, “but one that protects, cares for, and strengthens existing life.”<sup>60</sup> The BDF advocated the improvement of maternity insurance and maternal health care, and also state-financed educational aid to gifted children (a proposal designed to appeal to the organization’s middle-class membership). The socialist feminists likewise disagreed with influential male colleagues such as Alfred Grotjahn, who supported family allowances, to stress that (in the words of Henriette Fürth) their aim was “not to bring about an increase in births, but to take care that only healthy and strong children are born and all conditions for a healthy environment are created and guaranteed.”<sup>61</sup>

But despite their common use of arguments for population quality as a defense against pronatalist pressures, German mainstream and socialist feminists disagreed on most aspects of population policy, particularly those based on eugenic theory. Although many historians attribute the popularity of eugenics chiefly to bourgeois

class prejudice, the fact was that socialist feminists were very much more unreserved in their enthusiasm for eugenic science than bourgeois feminists, who were still constrained by their maternalist ideology and their continued adherence to conservative Christian morality. These differences came to the fore in debates on the spread of birth control and abortion-law reform. The socialists and the radicals of the BfM (many of whom, though of middle-class background, had strongly socialist sympathies) led an aggressive campaign for the distribution of contraceptive advice in publicly financed marriage-counselling centers, or *Eheberatungsstellen* (extensively described by Atina Grossmann and Cornelia Osborne). They justified the centers chiefly by citing the benefit to population quality of contraception used not only by healthy parents to space the birth of children, but also by hereditarily diseased parents who, through the influence of genetic counseling, could be induced to prevent the birth of handicapped offspring.<sup>62</sup>

The mainstream BDF, which included many religious women's organizations, responded far more cautiously than the socialists both to the birth-control movement itself and to the eugenic agenda that justified it. This opposition was motivated both by conservative religious morality and by a maternalist ideology that resisted the reduction of motherhood to biology. Marriage counseling, advised Luise Scheffendorfer, a Protestant conservative who headed the BDF's committee on population policy, should be given by "motherly women" and should emphasize the spiritual rather than simply the physical aspects of motherhood.<sup>63</sup> In their positions on the reform of laws against abortion, which was debated in the Reichstag in 1925, the bourgeois feminists showed a much more skeptical attitude toward the scientific claims of the eugenics movement than their socialist colleagues. Feminist leaders of the SPD took the lead in advocating changes in the law to permit termination for both the "social indication," based on the woman's social circumstances, and the "eugenic indication," in cases where the fetus was handicapped or diseased. By contrast, at its annual meeting in 1925, the BDF rejected both the social and the eugenic indication, the latter on the grounds that scientific knowledge was not sufficiently far advanced to identify which fetuses were abnormal. The BDF resolved to recognize only the "medical indication"—danger to the life and health of the mother—in which, the body further resolved, social circumstances should also be considered.<sup>64</sup> This debate brought few results—in 1926, the penalties were slightly reduced but otherwise the law remained the same.

On population and eugenic issues, the BDF thus defined its position against the left as well as the right. This policy reflected the practical needs as well as the ideological convictions of its constituent societies. The laws of the Weimar Republic gave a substantial role in the provision of social services to charitable, often religious, organizations, many of which were led by women, and these woman-led groups were important institutional members of the BDF (an umbrella organization including a wide spectrum of nonsocialist women's groups). The jurisdiction of these female-led charities was aggressively challenged by the largely



female leadership of the socialist welfare agency known as the *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (workers' welfare), which aspired to remove social services from private organizations and centralize them under state control.<sup>65</sup> This struggle for control over social welfare agencies influenced the positions of both mainstream and socialist feminists on the issue of eugenic sterilization, which became increasingly prominent during the latter years of the decade. Both groups agreed that the spread of reproductive responsibility through the practice of birth control had magnified the threat to society of the reproductively irresponsible, whose high birthrate would now produce an increasing proportion of the population.<sup>66</sup> As a remedy for this perceived problem, the BDF had since 1919 advocated *Bewahrungsgesetze* (custodial laws) that mandated the indefinite institutional confinement of a wide range of persons defined as reproductively "unfit," somewhat along the lines of the British Mental Deficiency Act. Such measures would of course justify the expansion of custodial institutions and the charitable organizations that ran them. During the first *Reichstag* debate on a so-called *Reichsbewahrungsgesetz* (imperial custodial law) in 1925, the SPD, and particularly its women's groups, also supported the expansion of custodial care, partly because they hoped to transfer it from private to state-run institutions.<sup>67</sup>

But when their attempts to displace the charities failed, many socialist women changed their opinion of such measures, which they now claimed were potentially costly and unacceptably vague in their criteria for institutional confinement. The views of the socialist feminists who had insisted since the prewar years that the sterilization—voluntary if possible, compulsory if necessary—of the reproductively "unfit" would be a more humane and effective measure than life-long confinement now gained increasing acceptance. Among the most fervent and outspoken of these was Henriette Fürth. "Let us have love and care for the handicapped children who are already born," she wrote in 1929, "but no tolerance for their unrestricted multiplication! Let us protect future generations!"<sup>68</sup> By contrast, the BDF, still guided by the interests as well as the religious ideology of the charitable organizations, continued to advocate the custodial laws and did not endorse sterilization.

When the Great Depression and resulting financial crises shattered hopes for any extension of social services, including custodial care, sterilization legislation was ever more widely advocated on both the political left and right. All of the sterilization bills proposed before the Nazi takeover in 1933 provided technically for "voluntary" sterilization—they required the consent of mentally competent patients—but their voluntary nature was questionable because they allowed relatives or physicians to order the sterilization of those judged incompetent.<sup>69</sup> Within the BDF, a vocal minority of sexual reformers led by the physician AnneMarie Durand-Wever urged the organization actively to endorse sterilization. Durand-Wever, who ran a marriage-counseling center in Berlin, was the head of the organization's Committee on Marriage Counseling. She fervently advocated both the legalization of access to contraceptive technology, abortion, and voluntary sterilization, and the

compulsory sterilization of “alcoholics, criminals, and mental defectives.”<sup>70</sup> In 1931, Durand-Wever called on the BDF to adopt a “new law on sexual relations,” which would cover “the permissible time-limits for abortion, the role of a committee in abortion decisions, and the legal regulation of sterilization.”<sup>71</sup> In order to draft such a law, Durand-Wever entered into discussions with the BDF’s Committee on Population Policy, headed by Luise Scheffen-Doering, whose views on eugenics resembled those of Gertrud Bäumer (now a delegate to the Reichstag as well as a leader of the BDF). In April 1932, Durand-Wever and her supporters persuaded the BDF to plan a conference on “The Biological Basis of Politics,” and in the next two months a position paper for this conference was assembled by the two responsible committees.<sup>72</sup>

For most of the Weimar period, the feminists of the BDF, along with other educated Germans, had taken little notice of the Nazis. But by April 1932, when the NSDAP’s success in state elections made it the strongest party in all the state legislative bodies except that of Bavaria, the feminist leaders had begun to realize the danger to women’s rights of the party’s highly misogynist program.<sup>73</sup> Following the organization’s policy of nonpartisanship, the position paper on population policy did not specifically oppose or endorse any political party. But fear of strengthening the position of the Nazis, who now dominated debates on sterilization on both the state and the national levels, probably lay behind the cautious position taken by the two BDF committees. The position paper made some concessions to the prevailing political climate by calling for “a new organic and biological national consciousness” and stipulating that “for the sake of the advancement of the healthy...futile expenditure on the inferior should be cut back.” But its practical program emphasized positive measures for child health and welfare, and made absolutely no mention, either positive or negative, of voluntary or compulsory sterilization.<sup>74</sup>

This position paper was never passed by the BDF. On May 15, 1933, before the membership as a whole had had an opportunity to vote on it, the group had chosen to dissolve itself rather than to reorganize along the lines dictated by the Nazis, who had taken power in February. From June 1933, the organization’s magazine, *Die Frau*, accepted totalitarian control of the press and gave up most open protest against the new government. But more cautious protest continued, for example in an article by Luise Scheffen-Doering in the June 1933 issue. As the BDF had already been dissolved by this time, Scheffen-Doering no longer spoke for the organization or for its Committee on Population Policy. The article was clearly an attempt to balance conformity and dissent. It hailed Adolf Hitler and his decision to place “race in the center of national life,” and went on to quote in full the position-paper that the BDF had had no opportunity to pass. Scheffen-Doering then added her own commentary on the paper, and began by conceding that charitable efforts on behalf of the handicapped had gone “much too far,” and approving “voluntary sterilization for the prevention of life unworthy to be lived.” However, she went on to affirm the

central principles stated in the position paper. She quoted the paper's first clause: "The moral responsibility of parenthood is derived from a personal decision, of which no one may be deprived by any government," and then addressed herself to the new regime. "All new eugenic measures, all public marriage counseling, must respect this basic principle of all sexual morality," she insisted. "No ethically valid marriage can, as has been suggested, be contracted according to criteria of biological value, and children cannot be produced for any people by compulsion." Her conclusion, which warned against the "materialism of racial doctrine," and entreated legislators never to lose sight of the "sacred dimensions of all sexual questions" likewise cautiously protested policies that clearly violated religious precepts.<sup>75</sup> The Nazi law mandating compulsory sterilization for many categories of people came into effect six months later (January 1, 1934). Custodial laws for the "mentally deficient," though not passed on a national level, were enacted by many local governments during the Nazi period.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, the German feminists of the 1920s were deeply divided on eugenic and population issues, and the numerically largest group, the BDF, regarded some eugenic measures with severe misgivings. The attitude of British feminists toward eugenic legislation during this period was very much less conflicted and more positive than that of their German counterparts. The reason was that British feminists played a far more active role in initiating debate on such measures, a role that was permitted by their very different position in their country's political spectrum. In Germany, as we have seen, populationist and eugenic measures were proposed by all political groups, often in the service of highly antifeminist agendas, and feminists were often forced to steer a cautious and defensive course between left and right. In Britain the major political parties concerned themselves much less with such issues. The Conservatives, who headed the government for most of the interwar period, were more concerned with cost-cutting than with social-welfare measures, particularly those that might have the effect of increasing the numbers of the poor. Many male Liberals regarded all eugenic measures as an unacceptable limitation on individual liberty. The male leaders of the Labour Party (quite unlike their aggressively secular German counterparts in the SPD) were too afraid to alienate the party's important Catholic constituency to take any controversial stands on family life and reproduction.<sup>77</sup> Most important, perhaps, was the weakness in Britain of extremist right and left-wing political parties such as the National Socialist and Communist Parties which did so much to radicalize the discussion of population issues in Germany. Thus, though the vocabulary of eugenics was highly popular among educated people, the actual formulation and advocacy of family and population policy was left largely to the Eugenics Education Society (which in 1926 changed its name to the Eugenics Society) and to the civic, professional, and philanthropic groups to which it forged connections.<sup>78</sup>

Among these, feminist organizations were prominent. In 1921, Cora Hodson was appointed as its secretary and took over the day-to-day administration of the organization. In 1928 she was promoted to the position of Education Secretary in

recognition of her energetic and effective management of the society's public relations. Hodson, a graduate of Lady Margaret Hall Oxford, exemplified the combination of eugenic and feminist convictions that was typical of the society's female members. She spent a great deal of time cultivating relationships with leading feminists, including Eva Hubback and Eleanor Rathbone, the founders of NUSEC (the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship), which after suffrage was attained had replaced the NUWSS. Both Hubback and Rathbone were active members of the Eugenics Society.<sup>79</sup> Although as an umbrella organization for mostly middle-class feminist groups, NUSEC was the British counterpart of the German BDF, the outlook of the British leaders differed considerably from that of Gertrud Bäumer, who had often set the tone for the BDF's resolutions on population policy. While the romantic and religious Bäumer mistrusted the claims of science, the British feminists had a cheerful confidence, derived from their background in the Fabian Socialist movement, in the efficacy of rational planning in all areas of life and politics.<sup>80</sup>

Among the many social-policy initiatives taken by British feminists was the campaign for family allowances, or mandatory, tax or insurance-supported subsidies to assist families in the care of their children. In Germany, as in the rest of continental Europe, support for such proposals came chiefly from right-wing and male-dominated groups. In Britain, the Family Endowment Society, led by Eleanor Rathbone, Mary Stocks, and Maude Royden, set the terms of the debate. Unlike the systems advocated in Germany, all of which required payment to male breadwinners, the proposals formulated by Rathbone and her colleagues all insisted that payments should go directly to mothers. The British reformers thus clearly intended to raise not only the children's material standard, but the mother's status in the family, by providing a source of income that was independent of the whims of male breadwinners. Its strongly feminist emphasis commended this proposal to the women's section of the Labour Party, which endorsed family allowances in 1925. But it alienated the male leadership of the Labour Party, who feared that it would provide a pretext for the reduction of the wages earned by men.<sup>81</sup>

Rathbone also tried to overcome the resistance of the Eugenics Society, which feared that any general support of childbearing would lead merely to irresponsible and dysgenic breeding.<sup>82</sup> In a speech before the society in 1924, Rathbone defended family allowances payable to the mother as an eminently eugenic measure. By enhancing the morale and self-esteem of mothers living in "overcrowded and sordid dwellings" and enslaved to the sexual appetites of irresponsible husbands, Rathbone argued, the family allowances would actually encourage a rational limitation of births. Family endowment, then, would be both "the best cure for indiscriminate and dysgenic breeding" and a means whereby the state could "have its hand...for the first time on the tiller of maternity." In order to meet the Eugenics Society's objections, Rathbone conceded that family allowances should increase with family income, thus encouraging childbearing by the most "valuable" segment of the population, and also that truly unfit parents, those "suffering from certain diseases,

or convicted of alcoholism, or living in grossly unhealthy surroundings," would have to be disqualified.<sup>83</sup>

In support of this new view of responsible parenthood, the feminists of NUSEC overcame their prewar opposition to birth control and strongly endorsed it. Since the appearance of her book, *Married Love*, in 1918, the British birth-control movement had been led by the charismatic Marie Stopes. Stopes was a fanatical eugenicist (she disinherited her son for marrying a woman who wore eyeglasses) who argued for contraception as a means as much to the creation of "a new and irradiated race" as to the enjoyment of erotic ecstasy and marital harmony.<sup>84</sup> British middle-class feminists, though many had reservations about Stopes and her program, nonetheless often affirmed her picture of motherhood as a eugenic enterprise. Using matter-of-fact metaphors taken from commerce and agriculture, an editorial in the NUSEC journal exhorted the modern mother "to determine under what conditions she will or will not perform her function, and how far, by reasonable 'limitation of output,' she may improve her product," and warned her against sowing "the seeds of life...on unprepared ground."<sup>85</sup> Largely owing to women such as Cora Hodson as well as progressive male physicians such as Carlos Blacker, who took over as general secretary of the Eugenics Society in 1931, an important segment of the British eugenics movement reversed its earlier reservations about the dysgenic effects of contraception and forged connections to the birth-control movement during the 1920s.<sup>86</sup>

The women's sections of the Labour Party also endorsed birth control and demanded that the same advice that had long been available to the affluent patients of private physicians should also be provided to working-class women in the publicly funded clinics set up by the Maternity and Child Welfare Act; this demand was cautiously endorsed by NUSEC in 1926. The socialist women, though they emphasized the hardships imposed on mothers and families by too-frequent childbirth, were by no means averse to eugenic arguments. Mothers of handicapped children, insisted a delegate to the national conference of Labour women in 1924, should "have knowledge to prevent having other defective children."<sup>87</sup> The male leadership of the Labour Party refused to support birth control for fear of offending the religious convictions of Catholic voters.<sup>88</sup> In 1930 the Labour Government's Ministry of Health nonetheless authorized the distribution of contraceptive advice in public infant and maternal welfare centers to married women "in cases where there are medical grounds"<sup>89</sup>

As in Germany, the spread of birth control among responsible parents was widely considered to increase the danger to population quality from the allegedly prolific reproduction of the "mentally deficient." In 1929 a report by the Board of Control, the body that administered the Mental Deficiency Act, warned of an alarming increase in this group's numbers. In 1928, the Eugenics Society drew up a model bill which (like similar German bills before 1933) allowed the voluntary sterilization of such individuals and others who suffered from a genetically or

congenitally transmissible mental or physical disability. The society insisted that these sterilizations would be voluntary, carried out with the consent of the patient and of two physicians; but because a large segment of the targeted population, the insane or mentally retarded, were conceded to be incapable of informed consent (which in these cases was to be given by a parent or guardian), the truly voluntary nature of the proposed sterilizations was highly questionable.<sup>90</sup>

The Eugenics Society launched an intensive propaganda campaign among segments of the population which it thought to be sympathetic. Among these, women's and particularly feminist organizations were foremost. One reason for the different positions of German and British feminists on this issue was obviously that the Germans devoted their energy to the advocacy of custodial laws, which already existed in Britain. However, another reason was doubtless that much of the propaganda for the British bill was developed, not as in Germany by male-dominated and often misogynist groups, but by and for women. Both Hodson and Blacker, who took her place as general secretary of the Eugenics Society in 1931, called for and gained the support of women's groups across the political spectrum: the conservative Mothers' Institutes, the mainstream feminist NUSEC and National Council of Women, the socialist Women's Cooperative Guild and the Women's Section of the Labour Party. As Lesley Hall has remarked, sterilization was presented to these female audiences largely as a child-health and welfare measure; yet some of the old antimale rhetoric was also revived.<sup>91</sup> For example, the persuasive Blacker, who for this cause was willing even to declare himself a feminist, suggested to an aristocratic female supporter that the story of an unfortunate woman who had borne fourteen children by a "feeble-minded father" could be used to drive home the message that "it is improbable that this man's wife desired to have fourteen children and she would most likely have been grateful if, after the first six, the stream had been arrested.... By making [sterilization] facilities available, both humanitarian and social interests would be served."<sup>92</sup>

The Eugenics Society provided speakers to hundreds of meetings of women's groups (reports of many of these meetings survive in the society's archive) at which some participants voiced concerns at "what is happening on the continent," while others (particularly members of the socialist Women's Cooperative Guild) urged that sterilization should be "compulsory in the worst cases."<sup>93</sup> Eva Hubback, the president of NUSEC, served on the Eugenics Society's Committee for Legalizing Eugenic Sterilization, and she encouraged NUSEC to endorse the bill at its annual convention in 1931. Another endorsement came in the same year from the Women's Cooperative Guild Congress, with the further provision that sterilization be made compulsory in some cases.<sup>94</sup> Although most male Labour MPs refused their support—some in fact denounced the bill as an instrument of class oppression—the Labour women, as on the issue of birth control, broke with the male leadership and endorsed the draft sterilization bill "by a large majority" at their national conference of 1936.<sup>95</sup>

Catholic women's organizations, such as the St. Joan's Society, followed the Papal encyclical *Casti Connubii* of 1930, rejected the bill, and perceptively called attention to its abusive potential.<sup>96</sup> One of the few organizations that opposed sterilization for specifically feminist reasons (by contrast to the groups that opposed it for fear of offending the religious beliefs of their Catholic members) was the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, the successor organization to the Abolitionist Federation which had, in the 1860s, successfully protested state-regulated prostitution.<sup>97</sup> An editorial in the organization's newsletter, *The Shield*, criticized the governmental committee that had endorsed eugenic sterilization in 1934 with the assurance that the proposed law provided adequate safeguards against possible abuse. "In England under the Contagious Diseases Acts, there was what was called a Voluntary Submission by women to be registered as prostitutes and to be placed under medical examination," recalled the editors. "But it soon became in action a 'voluntary' submission which left no choice but to submit. With regard to sterilization...we are not so certain that the voluntary principle will be so firmly respected in action as it is in the Committee report"<sup>98</sup>

Nonetheless, the British sterilization bill was not passed by Parliament, and, as Blacker reflected in 1933, the high visibility of female supporters probably did the cause more harm than good. Indeed, its popularity among women damaged the scientific credibility and public image of British eugenics. "The Eugenics Society is still regarded by many scientific men...as a propagandist society, which derives its main inspiration from enthusiastic lay women," wrote Blacker to a colleague, Ruggles Gates, and the eminent Edinburgh physician and professor F.A.E.Crew, a supporter of the society, likewise found that "rushing round the country and talking to mothers' meetings" was an unworthy occupation for a man of science.<sup>99</sup> As Susan Pedersen has remarked, the failure of the campaign for family allowances in Britain was also at least partly due to the support of feminists, who by presenting the allowances as a support for the independence of wives and mothers alienated many male voters and politicians.<sup>100</sup> By contrast, of course, the very male image of German eugenics contributed to its success in the 1930s, when Nazi legislation upheld not only "racial" but also male supremacy in many aspects of private and public life. Claudia Koonz asserts that the failure of German women, particularly health professionals, to protest Nazi sterilization and other eugenic laws after 1933 was a sign of their National Socialist sympathies.<sup>101</sup> But, as we have seen, the support of sterilization by the Nazis created more aversion than attraction among most German feminists; and British feminists, entirely in the absence of any strong fascist party or totalitarian government, were very considerably more enthusiastic about sterilization legislation than were their German counterparts. Indeed, the abhorrent National Socialist example ultimately deflated the eugenic enthusiasm of both German and British feminists, to all but a few of whom the Nazi policies revealed the threats to the rights not only of women, but of all people, that coercive eugenic legislation posed. The formulation of a doctrine of human rights in regard

to reproduction was largely a response to policies of the Nazis and of other totalitarian states. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the United Nations in 1948, affirmed that “right to marry and found a family” must not be abrogated or abridged by the state.<sup>102</sup>

Feminist eugenic thinking, then, was for the most part not a sign of National Socialist sympathies. Nor have the questions raised by feminists during the early decades of the twentieth century disappeared with the Third Reich. On the contrary: although state control of population policy has been discredited, an ethic very similar to that of turn-of-the century “new motherhood,” based on individual choice, responsibility, and rational planning, now dominates present-day secular reproductive-rights discourse. More than ever before, the quality of the new generation is perceived to rest on the informed and responsible decisions of parents. The pursuit of “quality” through amniocentesis, eugenic abortion, and artificial insemination has gained wide acceptance, and new technologies may soon empower parents to produce “designer babies” to their individual specifications. “The right of the child to choose its parents,” fanciful when asserted by Ellen Key in 1900, has been translated into legal theory as individuals born with genetic diseases sue their parents, or the parents’ physicians, for the violation of their right (as the parents of a handicapped child put it) to “be born as a whole, functional human being.”<sup>103</sup>

Many contemporary feminists, though by no means unaware of the benefits of modern reproductive technology, warn against this revival of eugenics, even in this apparently voluntary, private, and non-coercive form. The definition of reproductive responsibility as the production of only perfect human beings by implication stigmatizes the parents of handicapped children as irresponsible, and might in the future justify discrimination against both parents and children. “To the extent that prenatal interventions implement social prejudices against people with disabilities,” writes the biologist, Ruth Hubbard, “they do not expand our reproductive choices—they constrict them.”<sup>104</sup> Jean Mc Ewen, speaking for the Council for Responsible Genetics, warns that the result of today’s pursuit of “elevated norms of perfection,” though voluntary and private, may not be “all that different from that envisioned by the early eugenicists.”<sup>105</sup> At the turn of the twenty-first century, the relationship of women’s rights to human rights in the area of reproduction remains as urgent and as vexed a question for us as it was for the feminists at the turn of the twentieth century.

### **Acknowledgments**

The research for this article has been supported by individuals and institutions in three countries. At the Fawcett Library in London, I received the invaluable assistance of David Doughan and his colleagues. I thank the staffs of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, the British Library, the Landesarchiv Berlin, and the Staatsbibliothek preussischer Kulturbesitz. The librarians of the Deutscher Staatsbürgerinnen-Verband in Berlin graciously extended their working hours to



accommodate my rushed schedule. I am much obliged to the Galton Society for permission to use the archive of the Eugenics Education Society. I also acknowledge the assistance of the University of Louisville, which provided a travel grant through the President's Initiative for Research on Women.

<sup>1</sup>Doris Stevenson, "The Eugenic Vote," *Common Cause*, August 31, 1911.

<sup>2</sup>For example: Nancy Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1995), 221-258; Richard Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1890-1933* (London: Sage, 1976), 169; Heinz Niggemann, *Emanizpation zwischen Sozialismus und Feminismus* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1981), 271; Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört: Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995), 271-72; Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop* (1978): 11-65; Carolyn Burdett, "The Hidden Romance of Sexual Science: Eugenics, the Nation, and the Making of Modern Feminism," in *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, ed. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 60-59.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Rhonda Copelon, "From Privacy to Autonomy: The Conditions for Sexual and Reproductive Freedom," in *From Abortion to Reproductive Freedom: Transforming a Movement*, ed. Marlene Gerber Fried (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 27-43 for a view of the contemporary dimensions of this problem.

<sup>4</sup>For example, Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 70-75 and passim; Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany: Women's Reproductive Rights and Duties* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 102-36 and passim; Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1990), passim; Michael Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik: Eugenische Sozialtechnologien in Debatten und Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 1995), passim; Lesley Hall, "Women, Feminism, and Eugenics," in *Essays in the History of Eugenics: Proceedings of a Conference organized by the Galton Institute*, ed. Robert A. Peel (London: Galton Institute, 1997), 36-51.

<sup>5</sup>Examples of works on feminism or individual feminists that do not discuss their support for eugenics: Barbara Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1894-1933* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981); Pamela M. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1959* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Diana Hopkinson, *Family Inheritance: A Life of Eva Hubback* (London: Staples Press, 1954).

<sup>6</sup>Christl Wickert, *Helene Stöcker 1869-1943: Frauenrechtlerin, Sexualreformerin und Pazifistin. Eine Biographie* (Bonn: J.W. Dietz, 1991), 80.

<sup>7</sup>Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 318; John Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain," in *Forbidden History: The State, Society, and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe*, ed. John C. Fout (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 328; Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Sexuality and the Early Feminists* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 222-49. An early attempt to analyze the relationship of feminism and eugenics is my own article, Ann Taylor Allen, "German Radical

Feminism and Eugenics, 1890-1918," *German Studies Review* 11 (1988): 31-36.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Evans, "In Search of German Social Darwinism," in *Public Health and Medical Care in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Manfred Berg and Geoffrey Cocks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 55-80; Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, 145-70; Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazis, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Linda Gordon's now classic work, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Viking Press, 1975).

<sup>9</sup>Daniel J. Kevles, "Eugenics and Human Rights," *British Medical Journal* 319 (August 14, 1999): 435-38, quotation 435.

<sup>10</sup>On the founding and early history of this organization see Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 142-47.

<sup>11</sup>Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 174-79; "Die Gründung des Bundes für Mutterschutz," *Mutterschutz* 1 (1905): 47.

<sup>12</sup>Evans, *Feminist Movement*, 129; Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 146.

<sup>13</sup>Archive of the Eugenics Education Society, The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London (Hereinafter EES), SA/Eug./B.1: Early Papers re formation; see also Pauline Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7-57.

<sup>14</sup>Eugenics Education Society, Fifth Annual Report, 1912/1913, London (Eugenics Education Society), 1913.

<sup>15</sup>Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 4; John E. Knodel, *The Decline of Fertility in Germany, 1871-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 39.

<sup>16</sup>See Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," passim; and Sigrid Stöckel, *Säuglingsfürsorge zwischen sozialer Hygiene und Eugenik: Das Beispiel Berlins im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 1-260.

<sup>17</sup>Allen, "German Radical Feminism and Eugenics;" Wickert, *Helene Stöcker*, 55-83.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Copelon, "From Privacy to Autonomy."

<sup>19</sup>Frances Swiney, *The Bar of Isis, or The Law of the Mother* (London: C.W. Daniel, 1909), 43.

<sup>20</sup>Ellen Key, *Über Liebe und Ehe* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1906), 459.

<sup>21</sup>Sybil Gotto, proposal for the Moral Education League, 1907, quoted by Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings*, 29.

<sup>22</sup>"Motherhood," *The Common Cause*, September 8, 1910.

<sup>23</sup>Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," 30-44; Stöckel, *Säuglingsfürsorge*, 170-260.

<sup>24</sup>Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 70-79; Sheila Faith Weiss, *Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 114-25; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 85-92.

<sup>25</sup>Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 155-280; Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 38-109.

<sup>26</sup>"Bund für Mutterschutz," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 1 (1905): 164.

<sup>27</sup>Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 173-88; "Die Gründung des Bundes für Mutterschutz," *Mutterschutz*, 1 (1905): 47.

<sup>28</sup>Agnes Bluhm, "Mutterschutz und Rassenhygiene," *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 5 (1909): 134.

- <sup>29</sup>Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics*, 209.
- <sup>30</sup>Pamela Graves, "An Experiment in Woman-Centered Socialism: Labour Women in Britain," in *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women*, ed. Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998), 180-215; Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 86-109.
- <sup>31</sup>Bessie Drysdale, "Der Bund für Mutterschutz," *The Freewoman* 1 (30 November 1911): 35-36.
- <sup>32</sup>Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1910).
- <sup>33</sup>Lily Braun, *Die Mutterschaftsversicherung; Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Fürsorge für Schwangere und Wöchnerinnen* (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts), 23.
- <sup>34</sup>Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 173-187.
- <sup>35</sup>See Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," 22-24, for a more complete account of British welfare legislation of this period.
- <sup>36</sup>For example, Anna Martin, *The Mother and Social Reform* (Birmingham: Templar Press, 1913), 8-50.
- <sup>37</sup>Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood*, 188-205.
- <sup>38</sup>B Rep. 235-0, Helene-Lange Archiv, Bund deutscher Frauenvereine, Landesarchiv Berlin (hereinafter BDF):Stenogramm des 8. Generalversammlung, 420.
- <sup>39</sup>Helene Stöcker, "Von neuer Ethik," *Mutterschutz* 2 (1906): 9-10.
- <sup>40</sup>Christabel Pankhurst, "Concerning Damaged Goods," *The Suffragette*, February 20, 1914; Bland, *Banishing the Beast*, 242-46.
- <sup>41</sup>See Ann Taylor Allen, "Feminism, Venereal Diseases, and the State in Germany, 1890-1918," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4 (1993): 27-50.
- <sup>42</sup>Camilla Jellinek, "Die venerische Ansteckung und das Strafgesetz," *Centralblatt des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine* 12 (November 1, 1909): 115-18.
- <sup>43</sup>Matthew Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain c. 1870-1959* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 23-52; Ellen Hume Pinsent, "Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded," *The Nineteenth Century* 67 (1910): 43-57; ES, Eug/B3: Feeble-mindedness.
- <sup>44</sup>Great Britain, 3+4 Geo Ch. 28: Mental Deficiency Act, 1913.
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- <sup>46</sup>Mrs. Edward Francis, "Race Suicide," *The Vote*, January 21, 1911.
- <sup>47</sup>"Die achte Generalversammlung," *Centralblatt des Bundes deutscher Frauenvereine*, 15 December 1908; see also the favorable reference to Schreiber's speech in *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 5 (1909): 134-35.
- <sup>48</sup>Ellen Key, *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1905), 13.
- <sup>49</sup>Helene Lange, "Zur Wiederaufnahme der Bevölkerungspolitik," *Die Frau* 23 (1915/16): 100; Henriette Fürth, "Die Frauen und die Bevölkerungs- und Schutzmittelfrage," reprint from *Archiv für soziale Hygiene und Demographie*, in Nachlaß Henriette Fürth, Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam.
- <sup>50</sup>Gertrud Bäumer, "Der seelische Hintergrund der Bevölkerungsfrage," *Die Frau* 23 (1917): 129-33; quotation 132.
- <sup>51</sup>Gertrud Bäumer, "Gewaltsame Bevölkerungspolitik," *Die Frauenfrage*, October 1, 1918.
- <sup>52</sup>"Beschlüsse der Kriegstagung und der Gesamtsvorstandssitzung des BDF in Weimar am 25-30 Juni 1916: Zur Bevölkerungspolitik," *Die Frauenfrage*, July 16, 1916.
- <sup>53</sup>Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 172; see also Schreiber's many articles on this subject,

for example, Schreiber, "Gesundheitszeugnisse zur Eheschließung," *Die Frauenfrage*, Feb. 16, 1917.

<sup>54</sup>Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 293-95; see also R/18: Reichsgesundheitsamt: 3272: Gesundheitszeugnisse für Ehebewerber, Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde.

<sup>55</sup>*The Declining Birth-Rate: Its Causes and its Effects: Report of National Birth-Rate Commission* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1916); testimony of Mary Scharlieb, 267-68.

<sup>56</sup>K.D. Courtney, H.N. Brailsford, Eleanor Rathbone, Elinor Burns, and Emile Burns, *Equal Pay and the Family: A Proposal for the National Endowment of Motherhood* (London: Headley Brothers, 1918).

<sup>57</sup>Compare Michael Schwartz's account of a similar change in socialist arguments: Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 14-35.

<sup>58</sup>For an excellent discussion of these debates, see Osborne, *The Politics of the Body*.

<sup>59</sup>A statement of this group's position by one of its chief spokesmen is Friedrich Burgdoerfer, *Familie und Volk* (Berlin: Deutscher Schriftenverlag, 1930).

<sup>60</sup>Gertrud Bäumer, "Rede zum sozialen Teil des Regierungsprogramms," *Die Frau* 26 (April 7, 1919): 201-2.

<sup>61</sup>Henriette Fürth, "Zur Sozialisierung der öffentlichen Wohlfahrtspflege, Teil III," *Die Gleichheit* 29 (1919): 154-55; see also Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 182.

<sup>62</sup>Osborne, *Politics of the Body*, 164; Grossmann, *Reforming Sex*, 46-77.

<sup>63</sup>Luise Scheffen-Doering, *Frauen von Heute* (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1929), 246.

<sup>64</sup>BDF, Veranstaltungen des Bundes, Generalversammlung 1925: Maschinenschriftliche Stenogramme der 14. Generalversammlung von 4 bis 7 Okt. in Dresden, 164-78, Fiche no. 3032-3035.

<sup>65</sup>Edward Ross Dickinson, "Welfare, Democracy and Fascism: The Political Crisis in German Child Welfare, 1922-1933," *German Studies Review* 22 (February, 1999): 43-66.

<sup>66</sup>Compare Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 23-35.

<sup>67</sup>Angelika Ebbinghaus, "Helene Wessel und die Verwahrung," in Ebbinghaus, ed., *Opfer und Täterinnen: Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus* (Nördlingen: Franz Greno, 1987), 152-73.

<sup>68</sup>Henriette Fürth, *Die Regelung der Nachkommenschaft als eugenisches Problem* (Stuttgart: Julius Püttmann: 1929), 45. Schwarz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 265-310.

<sup>69</sup>Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik*, 293-327; Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, 441-88.

<sup>70</sup>Anne Marie Durand-Wever, "Umfang und Ursache der Geburtenbeschränkung," *Die Medizinische Welt* (1931): 1-27; quotation 18.

<sup>71</sup>Anne-Marie Durand-Wever, Mitglieder des Ausschusses für Eheberatung, April 18, 1931, BDF, Ausschuss für Eheberatung: Correspondenzen, Sitzungsprotokolle, Fiche no. 2122-32.

<sup>72</sup>"Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Ausschusses für Eheberatung," October 3, 1931; Durand-Wever, "An den Ausschuss für Bevölkerungspolitik," April 2, 1932; Luise Scheffen-Doering, "An die Mitglieder des bevölkerungspolitischen Ausschusses," March 2, 1933; BDF, Ausschuss für Eheberatung, Fiche no. 2126-2127.

<sup>73</sup>Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung*, 185-89.

<sup>74</sup>Scheffen-Doering, "Bevölkerungspolitischer Ausschuss," May 10, 1932; "Bund deutscher Frauenvereine: Richtlinien zur Familienpolitik," (attached to this memo), BDF, Ausschuss für Eheberatung, Fiche no. 2122-32.

<sup>75</sup>Luise Scheffen-Doering, "Die Familie im Volksaufbau," *Die Frau*, 40 (1933): 530-35; quotations 530, 533, 535.

<sup>76</sup>Ebbinghaus, "Helene Wessel und die Verwahrung," 166-67.

<sup>77</sup>For background on this political situation, see Pamela Graves, "An Experiment in Woman-Centered Socialism: Labour Women in Britain," in Pamela Graves and Helmut Gruber, eds., *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe between the Two World Wars* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998): 180-214; and Pedersen, *Family, Dependence*, 138-223. I am indebted to Pedersen's analysis of French and British debates on family allowances, which points out the differences between British and continental European pronatalist politics.

<sup>78</sup>On the society's network of supporters, see Mazumdar, *Eugenics, Human Genetics, and Human Failings*, 7-57.

<sup>79</sup>EES, SA/Eug./C77: "People: Mrs.C.B.S. Hodson;" on Hodson see also Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 178.

<sup>80</sup>On NUSEC, its program, and its role in feminist organizing see Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement* and Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement 1918-1928* (London: Tauris, 1997). The organization's archive is held in the Fawcett Library, London. On Rathbone's background see Petersen, *Family, Dependence*, 135-52 and Mary Danvers Stocks, *Eleanor Rathbone: A Biography* (London: Gollancz, 1949); on Hubback see Hopkinson, *Family Inheritance*.

<sup>81</sup>Pedersen, *Family, Dependence*, 178-233; Graves, *Labour Women*, 135-38; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, 236-49; Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 161-67.

<sup>82</sup>Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 292-301.

<sup>83</sup>Eleanor Rathbone, "Family Endowment in its Bearing on the Question of Population," text of lecture to Eugenics Society, 1924, in Teresa Billington Greig Papers, Box 408, Fawcett Library, London; Rathbone, *The Disinherited Family* (London: Edward Arnold, 1924), 247; Rathbone *The Ethics and Economics of Family Endowment* (London: Epworth Press, 1927), 112

<sup>84</sup>Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 163-225; Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love: a New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (London: A.C.Fitfield, 1918); and *Radiant Motherhood: A Book for Those Who Are Creating the Future*, (London: G.P. Putnam, 1920); Richard Soloway, "The Galton Lecture 1996: Marie Stopes, Eugenics, and the Birth Control Movement," in *Marie Stopes and the English Birth-Control Movement*, ed. Robert A Peel (London: Galton Institute, 1997), 49-76.

<sup>85</sup>"Is Birth Control a Feminist Reform?" *The Woman's Leader*, October 2, 1925; see also Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, 249-256; and Law, *Suffrage and Power*, 168-71.

<sup>86</sup>Richard Soloway, "From Mainline to Reform Eugenics—Leonard Darwin and C.P. Blacker," in *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, 52-80.

<sup>87</sup>National Conference of Labour Women, *Report of the Work of the Labour Party in Women's Interest at Home and Abroad, May to April, 1924* (London: Labour Party, 1924), 96; see also Graves, *Labour Women*, 80-97.

<sup>88</sup>*Report of the National Conference of Labour Women, May 16 and 17, 1928* (London: Labour Party, 1928), 26-27; see also Graves, *Labour Women*, 90-97.

<sup>89</sup>Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration*, 188; Graves, *Labour Women*, 97-98.

<sup>90</sup>Macnicol, "The Voluntary Sterilization Campaign in Britain"; Macnicol, "Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization between the Wars," *The Society for the Social History of Medicine* (1989): 147-69. C.P. Blacker, "Voluntary Sterilization: The Last Sixty Years," *Eugenics Review* 54 (1962): 9-23.

<sup>91</sup>Hall, "Women, Feminism, and Eugenics."

<sup>92</sup>Blacker-Askwith, November 7, 1932.EES, SA/Eug./C.7: Eugenics Society: People: Lady Askwith.

<sup>93</sup>Reports of these meetings, submitted by the speakers, are contained in numerous files: EES, Eug./D236: Eugenics Society: General Voluntary Sterilization. Joint Committee on Voluntary Sterilization: Specimens of Circular Letters sent 1934 to 1936; SA/Eug./D214: Eugenics Society: General Voluntary Sterilization; SA/Eug./D 132: Eugenics Society: General: National Council of Women; SA/Eug./C.5: Propaganda and Publicity: Reports on Lectures and Meetings, Women's Cooperative Guilds, 1927-39; SA/Eug./G6; Eugenics Society: Propaganda and Publicity: Reports on Lectures and Meetings, Women's Institutes 1931-1940; SA/Eug./G4 ES: Propaganda and Publicity: Reports on Lectures and Meetings, National Council of Women; SA/Eug./D.132: General: National Council of Women 1926-1931; SA/Eug./D 147: National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, 1921-1937.

<sup>94</sup>On NUSEC endorsement, see EES, SA/Eug./D147: General: National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship. Text of the endorsements of NUSEC and of the Women's Cooperative Guild are quoted in Committee for Legalizing Eugenic Sterilization, *Better Unborn*, London, 1932, 16. See also Hall, "Women, Feminism, and Eugenics."

<sup>95</sup>*Report of the Seventeenth National Conference of Labour Women, May 19, 20, and 21, 1936* (London: Labour Party, 1936), 92; see also Macnicol, "Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization," 164.

<sup>96</sup>"St. Joan's Society and Political Alliance, 24th Annual Report," *The Catholic Citizen*, March 15, 1935; Review of Letitia Fairfield, *The Case against Sterilisation, The Catholic Citizen*, November 15, 1934.

<sup>97</sup>For a list of the organizations that endorsed the sterilization law, see EES, SA/Eug./D 387: Resolutions.

<sup>98</sup>"Sterilisation: Report of Departmental Committee," *The Shield*, March 1934. For a Catholic dissent, see Letitia Fairfield, *The Case against Sterilisation*, (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1936).

<sup>99</sup>Blacker-Ruggles Gates, February 22, 1933: EES, SA/Eug./C.120; Crew quoted in Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 177.

<sup>100</sup>Pedersen, *Family, Dependence*, 413-26.

<sup>101</sup>Claudia Koonz, "Ethical Dilemmas and Nazi Eugenics: Single-Issue Dissent in Religious Contexts," in *Resistance against the Third Reich*, ed. Michael Geyer and Charles W. Boyer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15-38.

<sup>102</sup>United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948*, Article 16.

<sup>103</sup>Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 292.

<sup>104</sup>Ruth Hubbard, *The Politics of Women's Biology* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 198.

<sup>105</sup>Jean E. McEwen, "Public and Private Eugenics," *Genewatch: A Bulletin for the Council for Responsible Genetics*, 12 (June 1999): 2-3; quotation p 3.